



Episode 426 – Mr. Ludi Lin | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there, everybody! Welcome, this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 426. Today, my guest is Mr. Ludi Lin. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, your host for this show, founder of whistlekick and a martial artist who has found a way to make martial arts his job and the job is pretty varied. In fact, if you want to see all the varied parts of my job and everything that the team at whistlekick is doing, head on over to whistlekick.com, check out all of our projects, check out the story, use the code PODCAST15 to get 15% off but if you want stuff specifically to this show, you want a different site. Yeah, there's a link between the two but if you want to go direct, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, make it nice and easy. You can find everything we do for this and every other episode, photos, videos, links, transcripts. Everything from the 2 episodes we bring you each week is there, it's all for free. Let's talk about today's guests. Today's guest is one of those names that, if I was a betting man, I'd put down some money and say, in about 24 months, everybody's going to know this guy's name. With roles in movies you guys have absolutely heard of and most likely watched as well as upcoming roles in movies that you're going to watch, Mr. Lin is a rising star but he's also a martial artist and on today's episode, he goes deep. In fact, quite a few of the questions that I asked him, he kind of dodged and not in a disrespectful way but because he wanted to answer it in a different way, a way that was much more authentic, much more thoughtful and I appreciated that. We had a great conversation and I hope you enjoy it. Mr. Lin, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Ludi Lin:



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Hey, Jeremy, thanks for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great to have. It's an honor. It's always an honor to have all of our guests but we're going to talk about some things today that a lot of our guests haven't had the opportunity.

Ludi Lin:

Yeah, the honor's all mine.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Everybody that comes on this show is a martial artist in some way and because of that, we have these shared experiences but you've got some experiences that most of us haven't shared in and so, I'm looking forward to talking about some of that but before we do, we generally kick off this show in a fairly straightforward way and that's because it helps us to understand who you are and everything else we're going to talk about so let's start with the most fundamental of questions we could have on a martial arts show, how did you find martial arts?

Ludi Lin:

How did I find martial art? It's an interesting question because I get the same question with martial art as with my acting as how did I find martial arts and when did I decide to act and I think, Jeremy, I think the answer's not how did I find martial arts. Rather, when did people lose martial arts because I feel like the best actors and the best martial artists, they're always kids that makes the moment you're born, you're at your most flexible stage, you're actually the strongest. Unfortunately, that body shape, size, weight, because you're born like a little gorilla and you're just way freer to express yourself and to perform so I think, it's not that I found martial art, it's that I never lost it and part of that is because I was always the scrapper because I was born in China but I moved around a lot. In the beginning, everywhere I moved to, I got kind of bullied and I had no one to back me up because I was always moving around and alone. Each time I had to make new alliances and new friends so I was always standing there alone so I had to really defend myself. It was really from street fighting and actually, the video game Street Fighter, from scrapping and then, after that, it was really after, during the last years of high school, when one of my best friends really introduced me and took me under his wing and taught me how to exercise properly and on kind of a whim, I went on a trip to Thailand and got in touch with Muay Thai over there and that's really when, I guess, my professional journey started with martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, we've had a lot of people on this show who have started training in something. Often, MMA or Muay Thai and they look at Thailand as a destination. They want to go, they want to discover a little bit



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more what's trained there, how it's trained and kind of combine a training experience with a vacation but if I'm hearing you right, you didn't have formal training in martial arts prior to that?

Ludi Lin:

I didn't have any formal training. I was training in the school of hard knocks, in the streets really.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, sure and I'm certainly not dismissing the value of that in any way but the idea of headed to Thailand to do some Muay Thai, that's kind of unique, at least from what we've heard on this show. What was it about Muay Thai that you said I'm going to go do this?

Ludi Lin:

I fell into it. The first time, I didn't have any intention of doing Muay Thai. It was during a trip after high school graduation, me and a couple of friends decided to take a trip out there and we had some time alone to explore different aspects of Thailand so one of my friends took diving and another one of my friends took rock climbing down in Tonsai. I took to Muay Thai up in a little village called Bai and I've been back there ever since. It's near Chiang Mai, in Chiang Rai so it's up there. The first time I only spent, I think, a month there and it affected me and left such a deep impression that I knew I had to go back at some point but I didn't know when so I started that and once I got back, I explored different other areas of martial arts. Jiu Jitsu, of course, Wushu and all of the memories from when I was watching these Wushu movies, Kung Fu movies when I was a kid came back to me so that was something I was fascinated by and the more I learned about it, the more I knew. It's like the more you learned, the less you knew ever since and it's so true for martial arts for me as well because the more I learned about it, the more I felt like an idiot and I hate that feeling so I started to get rid of it and the deeper I went and to answer your question about Thailand, I know a lot of people and this is a long time ago, this is probably 15, almost 20 years ago, probably so I think the scene's changed a lot because the last time I went back to Thailand, already it's changed a lot. The first gym that I went to wasn't there anymore. There's a sort of different system between training foreigners and training locals when the first time I went, there wasn't and we communicated mostly through body language but now, everyone knows how to speak American and knows how to charge in American dollars so I'm not really sure what kind of experience people have in mind and what kind of experiences people will have once they get there but if people are interested in it then, all the power to you. You won't find out until you go and see.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, sure. Now, what was it like for you as someone who, your experience with anything martial, as you said, on the street, school of hard knocks and you stepped into something formal and I'm going to guess, just based on the words that you've used, it kind of shifted your paradigm of what that might look like.

Ludi Lin:



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It continue to shift my paradigm.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, what do you mean by that?

Ludi Lin:

Martial arts continues to shift my paradigm and so does acting because, at first you think, I mean, coming from just street fighting and scrapping and trying to defend yourself. All you want to do is to be strong, to be powerful, to conquer, destroy, and I think that's something that surprised me about Thailand and Muay Thai is that although you're on the stage, in the ring, exchanging punches and killing each other, but they always do with a smile and they do it with respect so it's more of an exchange and by the way, to press everything I say in the interview, I'm going to, it would be credited to Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li because they profoundly affected my view of life just by what they did in the media and popularizing martial arts into a medium where everybody can enjoy so for sure, a lot of respect to B-J-J. So, it's like the more you read into Bruce Lee, the more you discover the art of martial arts. Sometimes, it's more important than the martial. It's a good balance between the two words as the artist expressing yourself, finding yourself so the more you learn about it, the more it's not about someone else, the more it's about conquering your own fears, your own challenges and then, it's about exchanging those to affect another person in turn to get something back from them and that to me is martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One of the things I've said periodically on this show, if you take the term martial arts and you break it down, art is really the noun and martial is an adjective. Martial arts is a type of art.

Ludi Lin:

Right, that's right. at the end of the day, it's an art form. It's just the expression. It's just like Bruce Lee had said. I got into martial arts at a very late stage and I started being captivated by Bruce Lee at an even later stage, really when I first started getting martial arts roles and some stuff that's coming from Bruce Lee's own original scripts or based on his character so I really started reading into him and watching his interviews and getting his persona because, unfortunately, that's all we have now but he was so ahead of his time and his philosophy is really eternal. He can delve into it forever and ever so that's pretty cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. Now, you mentioned Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li and the impact that they had on you, when did you first notice them or their films?

Ludi Lin:



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I noticed Jet Li first because that was around the time, I was born in China so that was when Jet Li's *Once Upon a Time in China* and *Shaolin Temple* came out, that was about the time where I got my first black and white TV in China and it had a little cool knob, no remote to change the channels. We didn't have many channels back in China so whatever's on is on and a lot of time, it's those two movies. It's *Once Upon a Time in China* and in Chinese it's [00:12:23] it was like our almost a mythical character, almost a superhero to Chinese kids and this person exemplified everything virtuous about being a Chinese person and the Chinese kids, superheroes weren't someone different from you. The superheroes were people that trained so hard and read so many of these traditional martial arts tomes that they became enlightened. They leveled up to another league so to us, that was always something that we can aspire to so Jet Li really started it and then, we didn't get a lot of Bruce Lee in mainland China. It wasn't until I moved to Hongkong that I discovered this person named Bruce Lee but Jackie Chan is always a kid favorite because he's humorous and he's personable and his martial arts are always so varied. Drunken Master doing his own stunt, jumping here and there. It's really cool how, I mean, Jackie Chan, for me, is the person who originated parkour. Bruce Lee is the person who originated MMA and Jet Li is just crazy cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Couldn't agree more. You've named 3 people that had tremendous impact on my life growing up for similar reasons. Jackie Chan's humor, I remember the first time I saw *Rumble in the Bronx*. There was a snowstorm, I was at the theater with 2 friends and we were the only 3 people in there so, not only were we watching the movie but we're acting the stuff out. We're sparring with each other in the theater and it really set the tone for me in a lot of ways and it sounds like, in a similar way, you had the same experience.

Ludi Lin:

Absolutely interesting. That's really cool. It's kind of a shame because I, there was a bit of a shame in how I feel about their, the paths of their career because I work in the film industry both in China and Asia, in general, and in the West but I feel like a lot of great martial artists, a lot of Chinese stars have given up on the Western cinematic industry because they weren't given the respect. How many times do we see stunts that's been done before by Jackie Chan or things that are impressed by Bruce Lee and other great martial artists in China but we'd never pay due credit or respect to them in these films. Everyone is just so eager to take their own credit but this is how it started because nothing really original. Even Jackie Chan's stuff, actually, a lot of his gags and stunts remind me of things taken from the generations before him as well, there's a real history of it but here, I just feel like sometimes that history is not recognized and that's a shame and that's reflected by how many people like Jackie Chan, really, had a great start with *Rumble in the Bronx*, *Operation Condor*, the *Rush Hour* series but eventually, he thought that he was only playing second fiddle to everyone here whereas he already has more than a billion fans over in Asia and China so why was he not paid the due respect he well deserved?



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Jeremy Lesniak:

And that's a great question and it probably ties back to the way we view martial arts in this country. We have such a conflicted relationship with it in that, it's something that, I would say, the majority of parents would agree is good for their children to learn yet most of them are not going to take those lessons themselves. It's something that we hold in regard but yet, it's something we mock.

Ludi Lin:

I think that's really interesting because a lot of American sports are based on individual success where you do have a lot of team sports but even team sports have their stars like the quarterback, like Michael Jordan in basketball or LeBron James. Individuals are celebrated for their success but really, the origin of martial arts especially in China is about the shaolin temple. It's about unity, harmoniousness and it's about following in your gurus instruction where, I mean, we just come from different myths. That's why history is so important to me and history has become more and more important lately because there's a phrase in Chinese called [00:17:53] that means you can't forget your roots and it's not just the fascination, it's not just a curiosity but the more you find out where those roots come from, the more secure and the more stable you'll be in whatever you do whether it be in martial arts, whether it be your career or whether it's just being a good person going forward.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. So, being that you're a participant in the movie industry in Asia, what are people saying? From my understanding, certainly as an outsider, the path used to be start in Hongkong, start where you could and ultimately, you try to move up and get to the West but from what you're saying and from some other things I'm reading about the growth of Asian-inspired films in Bollywood, that may no longer be the case. What are you seeing and what's your opinion on that?

Ludi Lin:

That's definitely no longer the case. That's definitely no longer the case. The martial arts scene in Asia in the film industry has been growing and growing along with the industry's growth. The film industry in China is huge as many would know. I think the Chinese box office has saved a lot of American movies that didn't do as well here and Chinese fans have such varied taste and Chinese fans actually love American stars but they love all sorts of stars. Two years ago, one of the biggest box office hits in China that had the most money was an Indian-language sport film based on wrestling on a true story of a father training 3 daughters to the national Indian wrestling team and this film was a blockbuster in China where nobody speaks Indian. Can you imagine this film in America? Can you imagine people lining up outside of the theaters to watch an Indian-language film about wrestling?

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, not a chance.



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Ludi Lin:

It's hard to imagine, right? My imagination's pretty vast but it's a little bit difficult to imagine as with China, with a lot of films like Fast and the Furious series and constantly these action-oriented films, they're trying to develop new ways to display martial arts, to film martial arts and to, not just to choreograph it, but to tie it to the story and mixing different forms in a lot of different ways and that's not to say that China doesn't love action films. I think Dwayne Johnson and Jason Statham Fast and the Furious spinoff has just come out this weekend in China and it's already breached a hundred million, more than the box office when it opened up here so they love that stuff but to me, a lot of action films or action martial arts films filmed in the West, they're basing the formula where it's, to me, it's kind of like martial arts porn and believe me, I don't think there's anything wrong with porn. Personally, I haven't watched porn for a little while but we're getting a little bit too personal now but what I mean is, I feel like any film or any art in general that's made to make the audience to want something, that's made for an effective desire as pornography whereas martial arts films that is deeply rooted on something and is trying to communicate something that's sublime to you, I think that's the true form of art and that's only films in terms of martial arts films. I think films, in general, when they try to communicate something sublime without outwardly telling you that this is going to be scary or this is going to be action-packed or this is going to have a lot of special effects, a lot of times, that's really exciting and entertaining porn and people eat that up. There's nothing wrong with that but on the other side, to really cultivate something in yourself, to feel something deeper, you need to have a mix of the other as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It sounds like this is something you've spent a lot of time thinking about.

Ludi Lin:

Not just thinking about. I think gradually feeling too. I think that's the more important out of the two. You can think about things or you can feel things and act upon them. A lot of times I think if you feel it, you're more likely to act upon it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And was it from your time acting that you started to think and feel these stuff or did that come before?

Ludi Lin:

I think it's just life. I think my acting, my martial arts and everything ties into it. My experiences, my conversations with people, the books I read, the things I watch and the things I think about and the things I see, hear, taste, touch and feel about those things mix into one and they kind of...yeah, there's something emergent from that that's kind of strange and scary and really exciting and fun at the same time.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, of course, we've talked about you being in movies. We hinted at that in the very beginning and the audience is probably saying, hey, Jeremy, it's time to talk about some of his roles or how he got in...something about acting so let's jump in there and let's, again, start at the beginning. How did you find acting?

Ludi Lin:

Again, like I said, it's not finding acting. I think every kid is an actor. Let me ask you, Jeremy, have you ever put on a towel and pretended you're Superman?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, absolutely.

Ludi Lin:

Have you ever played doctor?

Jeremy Lesniak:

This morning. What's that?

Ludi Lin:

Have you ever played doctor? Have you ever played house?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course. Definitely.

Ludi Lin:

And all of those things. Have you ever pretended to be a Kung Fu hero? Have you ever pretended to be Dirty Harry?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Ludi Lin:

Have you ever played Cops and Robbers? All those things that kids do, it's all acting and when kids do it, they're really committed to it and even babies are actors. You know how babies can switch sometimes from just screaming their lungs out to all of a sudden, in a split second, they start giggling and laughing? That's acting. They're screaming their lungs out, not because they're deeply sad, just because they're



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hungry and they're trying to get your attention. The babies scream their lungs out to get your attention and then when you look at them, they start giggling, going I gotcha, that's acting. It's just that at some point that society told a lot of us that this isn't life because you need to make money and to make money in a stable way and that's not entirely wrong. You need to find a career like you need to become an accountant, you need to become a lawyer, you need to become a doctor and for those Asian-American kids out there or Asians in general, you'll find this very familiar. This is probably been drilled into you since you were a kid but on the other side of things, I'm trying to promote to parents that the art is very important as well because, personally, my mom had given me this choice when she found out that I got into the art. She said hey, get a real career. You can either be a doctor or a lawyer so, with that being said, and back then her spanks really hurt so I enrolled in, first, Dietetics and went into med school but after 2 years of med school, I had 2 years left and that's already 6 years at school while doing theater as a major at the same time, all of a sudden, one day I discovered hey, her spanks don't hurt anymore then I dropped out of med school and really followed my dream and it's like those things, it's not when a person decides to be an actor is when did the person not to be an actor and not to do that and not to pursue that discovery of yourself as a lifelong thing but for me, it's when, I guess the question is when did I decide that I could put food on my table while doing acting, while taking acting seriously as a career and that really comes from just finding people that would support me, that believes in me and then landing that first role and then keep rolling on from there. I mean, there's no overnight successes and right now, far be it for me to claim to be a success yet and I don't know if I'll ever get there, even if I do, I won't ever say that because what's the fun in that, right? That's like a period and for me, I just want a couple of it to be continuous after that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If not a success, maybe I can ask the question in this way, when did you know that this was going to work? That you were going to be able to put food on the table?

Ludi Lin:

When did I know? When I knew that this was going to work and when I knew that I could put food on the table is when I had the realization that I don't need a lot of food in my table to be able to live and to be able to do what I like and then, when I found out that I really wanted to devote my entire life to this is when I started finding out how little it takes out of me to affect a lot of other people. When I did Power Rangers and we're doing press tours, I had so many kids just coming up to me and so many adults just coming up to me telling me how much Power Rangers had changed their life. I watched power rangers growing up as a kid and I always thought that it was kind of a little thing that I enjoyed myself. I didn't know that I was sharing on this global phenomenon that would touch people in Europe, in Brazil, in Asia and in North America but I had so many people coming up to me telling me that this little teenage show to help them through some of the most difficult time in their life and that's way beyond how it affected me personally so that's what I want to do is I want to influence people as much as possible and I want to make sure that I can influence them positively because I don't want, it's not my



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prerogative to lead the world down to Armageddon so, I need to, at the same time, cultivate myself to become better and better so that tiny show or whatever I put out there is a negative for humanity. It's a negative for the universe.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Does that philosophy impact the roles that you go after?

Ludi Lin:

It doesn't impact the roles that I go after but it impacts how I portray those roles. I guess, yeah, it does impact the roles that I select but before I reject those roles, I always try to see the bigger picture. First of all, what role does this character play in the entire story? Will the story impact the world in a positive way and then, whether I can find a different perspective on how to play these roles.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it like, you brought up power rangers, what was it like being in the reboot of a series that you watched growing up? I mean, was that closing a loop? Was that a childhood dream?

Ludi Lin:

It was a surprise. I'll give you a little statistic. 99% of actors are out of work so to land a role like that especially being an Asian working in the North American industry and this is just a few years ago, this was before Crazy Rich Asian, before Always Be My Maybe, before even the Farewell that came out recently; a little indie movie that did more than \$13 million in box office and 70% mandarin and this is, I'm talking about North America. Before those things and being an Asian and auditioning for roles that are like may I take your order? Here's your fortune cookie or bracket Chinese gangster or yelling closed bracket just make up the lines as you go along to having a lead role in a superhero film where the cast is really diverse, that really changed my life and that was a hint for me that changes our coming. There's something brewing in the waters and I had a feeling back then and I think it's coming true now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm pausing to consider where we're going.

Ludi Lin:

Crazy times.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You put that out there in a pretty dramatic fashion and I want to make sure I can follow it. Alright. You talked about what it was like watching these, I think we can call them token roles given to Asian actors, where as you said the dialogue really didn't matter and may not have even been written, was that



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frustrating for you? As you said, there's a shift happening and it's amazing to watch. Now, I'm personally very thankful for it because we should not have a media landscape that is so grossly misrepresentative of the population. It should be reflective but you're in the midst of, not just watching, but participating in this shift. What was it like early on? Was that emotionally difficult for you watching these roles being given out as you said, can I take your order?

Ludi Lin:

It's really interesting. It's really interesting that you used the word token, Jeremy and that's something that was frustrating to me and something that's still frustrating to me to this day. I don't understand the phenomenon of tokenism. I love playing video games as a kid. I go to arcades a lot but I didn't think that I was a token until I really started noticing how come there's always only one Asian on screen and that felt like the token Asian and they really didn't get a lot of airtime, didn't get any lines, they would just sit there being Asian as if the media was saying, well, we'll give you one just to quiet you guys down and this really, they were really quiet when you watch a lot of these Asian roles, they didn't speak very much at all. They were just there kind of like an animal at the zoo where you walk by and you go oh, that was interesting. Hmm, it's there. That's nice and when you use the words there's no representation, no equality and for me, I mean, having been born in China and then moving around the world and having received part of my education in North America and growing up around the American culture, I think there's something beautiful in this. There's something beautiful in that everyone gets the right to talk about what they want. Everyone gets this idea of equality and this idea of everyone getting a good chance to pursue happiness that they deserve and for me, a step further from equality, is equity is what you deserve. So, for me, it's not even about the number, the percentage that represents the percentage in the population, the percentage of Asians onscreen that's your equal to the percentage in the population but it's about deserved, it's about who deserves, it's about equity rather than equality and someone else has coined this. This isn't my idea but equity is about what you deserve. Equality is about the proportion of percentage that you should have. What you deserve amounts to what the country is founded upon and who participated and who was owed from history and believe me, Asians are owed a lot from history and similar to a lot of minorities but, for me, is I'm selfish as well because I feel this keenly and personally. I feel like that's not being reflected. Our voices have always been suppressed and we've been stereotyped in ways where it's untrue and it's affected and impacted the ability for our community to contribute back to this American culture and then, further on to global culture because we have a lot of good ideas and we have a lot of good expressions. Things like martial arts because a lot of Asians don't feel like they have the ability to express those things like martial arts, again, the art of it is an expression. When you don't feel like you can express it, you just become reclusive and cultivate it within your own community, within your own culture and you don't have a platform or a means to share that with the world and media is that. It's the best way to share those things so one thing I want to do and hopefully, it won't take the rest of my life to do this, is to destroy the idea of tokenism of Asians. At least, give us two. Come on! At least give us two people on the screen. Just one more so we can kind of relate with because there is something visually important about seeing people that looks like you that



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you can relate to. There is something that automatically is a shortcut. Like before, when I said feeling is a shortcut to thinking. That visualization is a shortcut to people explaining to you although this person looks different than you and come from a different surrounding and doesn't have the same cultural background but they share the same challenges as you but all you need to do is show a person that looks like you on screen with a group of people that looks like you on screen to realize that you're not alone in this world. A lot of people feel alone because the worst thing is that they don't see themselves represented in the most popular form which is the media. We get it on our cellphones, on our TVs, streaming, on the big screens, right? First thing and the worst thing, you don't see yourself at all and then, second most detrimental to that is you only see that one person on screen so you only think that you're the only person like that in the world but you're not. A quarter of the population of the entire world is Chinese, is Asian and how come we don't see that on screen? A quarter of the entire world is like that where we have these massive fantasy shows. Just going off on a tangent, you may have to reel me back in, Jeremy, is one of my favorite genres is fantasy. One of my favorite novels is the Song of Ice and Fire series which a lot of people know it by the Game of Thrones because the TV show has been way more popular than the books. How many Asians did you see in the Game of Thrones over 8 seasons?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't recall any.

Ludi Lin:

You don't recall any. Well, there was one and she was a sex slave and she got killed in the episode after that so how come you have these wonderful authors and screenwriters that can dream a fantastic world with dragons, ancient knight wielding laser sabers in a galaxy far, far away but you can't picture one single Asian in these worlds? Is there some kind of super villain out there creating a holocaust for Asians in this fantasy worlds? I don't understand. Either there's something very myopic or shortsighted in the purview of the Western media in general of imagination or also, Asians need to take responsibility for ourselves and speak out more rather than believe in the false narrative that you don't have a voice, that you're weak, that you're not worthy of being represented because you are and you have a lot of things to contribute so don't just be reclusive and kind of hold those things in your own chest. Let it out. Let it out! Let that voice out. Breathe, for once, and just scream if you have to but get your voices out there. Get your representations out there. Get your opinions out there. That's important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and it seems like there's been some screaming. Crazy, Rich Asians did amazing at the box office and I think it opened up some people's eyes to say that hey, there's a demographic here that we've been tokenizing that want to be represented, that want to identify, want to feel like they're not alone. What are other ways that people can shout and yell and make people hear them beyond spending their dollars in certain ways?



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Ludi Lin:

I think spending your dollars in our materialistic, I think Keanu Reeves once coined the term materiality, so in this society, dollar is power and dollar is the most direct way to show your support for something so don't make that phenomenon. Don't make Crazy, Rich Asians a token because the only, the other movie, the last movie that came out that had an all-Asian cast in North America that was shown in the big screen was Joy luck Club and that was 25 years ago before Crazy, Rich Asians so don't let Crazy Rich Asians, and by the way, I think we're pretty lucky that 2 sequels are in the works on that, don't let that be a token phenomenon. Keep that going. Show your support for Asian films. Show your support for Asian casts and let that broadcast out there and show your support for diversity in general but make sure that diversity is not just referring to black and white. Make sure colored people are not black and white because if you grew up in Asia and this is, to me, sometimes in America, people think this is racial, it's a slur but it's not because in Asia we call ourselves [00:43:45] which literally means yellow people and that history comes from the fact that the Chinese people, our civilization was brought up around the Yangtze river in China, in Chinese, [00:44:05] yellow river so because, the river, the dirt was yellow so we drank that water and we called ourselves and that water gave us life so we're like the descendants of the yellow river, the yellow people. There's no stigma towards that. I feel like a lot of times, we've been sold this false narrative of a stigma. There's something inherently wrong in being Asian. There is none. Even the Asian accent, if I start talking like, if I talk like this, be like water, like a Bruce Lee accent, then people go oh, that's not so wrong but other Asian accent you hear onscreen, you always think that it's unattractive or you don't want to portray it. I hear a lot from Asian actors against portraying characters in accents or even portraying martial arts roles because they don't want to be stereotyped as that Kung Fu role but my thinking is that's the wrong way to think about it because inherently, there's nothing wrong with the accent. What's wrong with the British accent? What's wrong with a European accent? What's wrong with a French accent? There's nothing wrong with those things. What's wrong with an American accent, for that matter? There's nothing wrong with those things. How come there's something wrong with an Asian accent. There's not. It's just that you've been sold a story that this accent is no good, is unattractive. There's nothing wrong with a martial arts role. It's just that you've been sold the story that the martial arts character can only be portrayed in a certain way. It's only a stereotype when other people put that on you. It's just like martial arts has been portrayed as a violent thing. Martial arts is completely the opposite. The more you study it, the more you know that it's the opposite so when you personalize it, when you find the meaning of it in yourself then it stops becoming a stereotype so my answer to how to get this out there and how to be an activist for support in minority rights, for support in Asian representation to support and having more fun in life because there's more things to explore for everyone is to personalize things, get your voice out there. Make things unique and express what you want to say.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Okay. I can dig that. Now, the timing of this, I brought this up to you before we started recording. The timing of our conversation today is not too long after the public announcement of another role that you're taking on and listeners, I know, I don't usually do research and to be perfectly honest, it just popped into my newsfeed because of what it is but would you like to talk about that a little bit because personally, I'm excited.

Ludi Lin:

I'm so excited. I'm always excited to get work. It means I get to eat, like I told you. It really means I get to put food on the table and I get to prove to my mom that it wasn't a mistake in dropping out of med school and pursuing acting. It's a new challenge, a new chance to see a character in a different way. So, the film you're referring to, I think, is the sequel to the latest Fast and Furious, Fast and Furious 23.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Actually, no. That's not the one.

Ludi Lin:

I'm joking. I'm joking. It's Mortal Kombat. The movie you're referring to is Mortal Kombat, yes? And yeah, I get to play Liu Kang in Mortal Kombat. Originally portrayed by Robin Shou which is such an amazing phenomenon. Such an amazing miracle. Back then, when you see an Asian lead in any American film, yeah, people grew up on that series and felt too excited.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One that makes it feel authentic.

Ludi Lin:

One that felt authentic, one that felt cool, one that felt strong, one that felt inspiring. All those things. It's pretty wonderful. I was really stoked. I haven't played video games for quite a while and when I found out that it was a possibility, I immediately added that Mortal Kombat to my shopping cart and got a Nintendo switch but I held on to it because you never know when it's actually real until you sign a contract so I had that thing. I had that videogame sitting in my shopping cart for 3 months just in kind of the state of flux in purgatory wondering whether or not it's actually going to come true and the day I signed the contract, I immediately purchased it and I've been playing the video game ever since but there's still so many stories from Mortal Kombat. Yeah, go ahead.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I got to ask the question, I got to ask the question. When you're playing, who are you playing as? Are you playing Liu Kang or are you mixing it up?

Ludi Lin:



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I'm only playing as, no, I'm only playing as Liu Kang. I literally got one of the best jobs in the world, guys. This is why you guys should pursue the arts and become actors because this is a part of my job, playing video games. Part of my job is watching movies, is reading stories. You're thinking about how to make things more fun. How to make things more interesting. The proof of my devotion to work is the calluses on my thumbs from button-smashing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Growing up, I used to call that Nintendo thumb with my friends.

Ludi Lin:

It's so awesome. That's right! the proof of how hard I work is my Nintendo thumb. How many accountants can say that? Because this is it for now. I'm only playing Liu Kang until the movie is wrapped. Until mission accomplished and it does really help, it's really fun to see what's out there. Not that I'm saying my entire character will be based on the video game and all I'll do are lines that after you finish a fatality on someone but it's actually pretty fascinating because the video games have followed their own storyline as well. I found out in Mortal Kombat 11, Liu Kang is dead so he's like some sort of zombie. I still have to delve back into the story because I'm just getting started and learning all the combos and cool stuff and generally, making amends with video game sets and even when it's a large portion of my life since I was a kid but yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's been a lot of Mortal Kombat stuff between the movies and the games and everything and if I'm, and so, there's a lot for you to dig into. I've got my fingers crossed. There's this one rather beloved and, to my knowledge, completely persistent actor from the Mortal Kombat universe has been Scorpion and every iteration is Chris Casamassa, Shihan Chris Casamassa has been on the show so my, I've looked. I haven't actually seen anything that he's coming in to play Scorpion in the movie and I don't know if you can say anything but my fingers are crossed because he's a great guy.

Ludi Lin:

I definitely won't say anything because I only go into movies fresh and I hate spoilers. I don't even watch spoilers. I just know what I want to see and then, I just try to stay, plug my ears and go in as clean as I can so I think people should experience it that way but I didn't know that Scorpion was one parallel line with the entire universe of Mortal Kombat. I had no idea. I've always loved Sub-Zero but that's really cool. I didn't know that at all.

Jeremy Lesniak:

To my knowledge, he's done the voice and the acting for every incarnation. It's something that we talked about a little bit when he was on the show and he's just so passionate about the character and if



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you, if anybody out there follows Shihan Chris on social media, you'll see that he, people send him fanart and he posts it all the time, he's just so honored and proud. He's a martial artist. He runs a martial arts school.

Ludi Lin:

That's so awesome.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's one of us. He's a good guy. So, what about the future? We've talked about the past. We've talked about the present. When you look forward, that can be as close to your feet or as far to the horizon as you want that to be, what are you seeing and what are you hoping for?

Ludi Lin:

The future, I don't know. Because this is your thing is interviewing martial artists so do you ever get the answer that, I mean, there is no future. It's just the present and I learned that from martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe once or twice but it's certainly not common. People generally, when I ask them this question, they talk about their goals. They talk about what they want to accomplish. They talk about when I'm 80 and looking back on my life, I hope I have done these things. There's...and maybe they're just trying to give me what I'm asking for. Maybe they're not trying to give the honest answer which you are here just living in the moment which is something we all could probably do better at. Something I need to work on for sure. Have you ever been a goal-driven person?

Ludi Lin:

For me, the more I do this, the more I realize that goals are just direction and kind of the future is an illusion because the future is an expectation. It's one in an infinite amount of possibilities and it's just such a tiny possibility. I mean, what's one in infinity? It's zero. It's nothing but the future is an expectation, is a direction that I want to aim for but that's based on the present. You know what I'm saying?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I do, I do.

Ludi Lin:

So, my present wants give me that direction to the future and I've talked about all those wants already is for the future, I want to recognize what's limiting myself right now and a lot of those limiting to me are false. They're illusions. Things like money. That's false because what is money? Money is just energy.



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What is time? Time is false. Time is something that we give ourselves to do things at a point that we're expected to do them but really, what's important in that? Why do we go to sleep when we're supposed to go to sleep? This year, I've been starting to get up at 3 in the morning to train for maybe 4 to 5 hours sometimes and that doesn't really matter to me because time doesn't really matter. I mean, when you have it, why don't you just devote everything to what you enjoy doing? Training is not a task that I hate. It's something I love so why don't I get up early in the morning? Just because it's dark outside? That doesn't really matter, right? You can be awake when it's dark. You can get to see the sunrise when it comes up and the sunset when it goes down. It's great so in the moment, in this present moment, I want to destroy some of those beliefs that are limiting me in what I want to do and one thing that's limiting me right now is the pronunciation of the word limiting, apparently. I want to affect people. I want to pursue the truth. I want fairness. I want justice and a part of being that is bringing representation to those under represented, especially personally to me, are the Asian population, my friends and family so that's what it is for me. For the future, it's just based on the present that I want and that's the direction and I don't really expect too much from it but I want to do something huge.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We've had quite a number of people involved in the film industry on this show. Folks from Daniel Wu to Shannon Lee. Your conversation today has been very, very different. You've been incredibly open and it's clear that you're really thoughtful in what you're doing and my hope is that as you move forward that directors will give you the space to let this part of your personality come through because it seems like, even though you're saying you're focused in the moment, I think you can be, beacon doesn't feel like the right word but a clear signal that everyone can look to, to follow regardless of their cultural heritage and I'm going to be excited to watch you onscreen and in your future projects but I've got, as we start to wind down here, I want to take a twist to a question I often ask. Often, I'll ask people if you could train with anybody anywhere in the world but I'm going to ask you if you could do a movie with anybody from anywhere in the world, anywhere in time because time isn't real, as you said, who would you star opposite in that movie?

Ludi Lin:

Oh god, I don't know why but that just gave me goosebumps. Who would I, from any time anywhere in the world? It really depends on the movie. I mean, gosh.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can be any genre. You get so many that comes out of nowhere, they say, you know what? Here's a \$50 million budget, I don't even care if we break even. I just want to be involved in this process and they've watched you on screen and you're their favorite actor and they just want to see you in a bit of a producer and director seat as well and help you bring your vision to light and there's a time machine and bam! Who else is in that movie?



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Ludi Lin:

Okay, so I'll tell you what, Jeremy, since we're talking about martial arts, I would love to do a martial arts sci-fi epic going back to the beginning of martial art. To the Neanderthals and the cavemen and see how they fought and then, throughout time tracing that in every single lineage, in every single culture of martial arts to the future to see what we're going to explore then with cybernetics and robotics and virtual reality and video games. All that combined into one to see how that turns out then.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like the martial arts version of Doctor Who.

Ludi Lin:

Yeah, maybe, that would be a great, wouldn't that be an awesome TV series?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'd watch that. I'd watch that all day.

Ludi Lin:

That'd be incredible. That'd be incredible maybe with a backup time machine too where you travel in that. Yeah, that would be amazing but truly, again, oh god, I would...I'm just so...I mean, I told you, I came late to Bruce Lee and his legacy but I'm just so inspired by him and so fascinated by the person himself. He was so charismatic and for me, I know I'll never get the chance to meet the real person so this thing in my mind has become so iconic that he has so many facets to him. He loved dancing, he loved music. He loved the arts and culture. He embraced the Chinese side of him. He loved martial arts. He loved to have fun as well, to party, to rock and roll, right? And then, at the core of that is his philosophy, his expression because that, really, was a paradigm shift for me when he said that the best form is no form because best form is a personal expression and that's martial art and that's not only martial art, that's art. Art, to me, is something that comes within you that affects another person and that's truth and there's no, and this is told to me by a sensei of mine by a Shifu previously saying that when you're on a stage, when you're in the ring, there's no lying because your expression is the physical expression. When you hurt someone, when you punch someone in the face, there's no lying there. You know what I mean. Your language is everything that you can utilize within your body. When it hurts, it hurts. There is no prevarication, there is no dancing around the subject. The subject is whatever goes down, goes down and it's a beautiful thing because that's why people become friends after they fight. That's why I've become best friends with almost every single person I fought in the past, all my bullies, because after you fight, you share the truth and there's no denying that truth and you've shared something special and I think to me, that the core of martial arts so to come back to the question, I would die very happy if I ever get a chance to perform with Bruce Lee but that will only be able to accomplish in my dreams or who knows some technology comes along in the future.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

That'd be super cool. Well, this has been great! If people want to find you, social media, websites, any of that, where would they go?

Ludi Lin:

If people want to find me, they can find me. I don't want to promote myself so much. I think people are pretty smart out there. If they want to find me, they can find me. My name's Ludi Lin, it's easy to find.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, and of course, we're going to drop those links on the show notes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, people, so you can, even though he's not going to promote himself, we're going to make sure you get easy access to all that stuff over there.

Ludi Lin:

Yeah, if they can find you, they can find me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's right, that's right. They already found us. If they're listening right now, they found us in some way.

Ludi Lin:

There you go.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As much as I would like it, it's not socially acceptable for me to go house to house and say, hey, listen to this! So, you know, that's not part of our marketing platform but let's send it off, we got one way that we send out every episode and that's what parting words, what advice, what wisdom, just what do you want to leave the audience with today as we close out?

Ludi Lin:

Oh god, far be it from me to give advice but I can pass along a really good piece of advice. A couple pieces of advice that's affected me in the past. One is by one of my colleagues, one of my agents actually and she's an amazing Jiu Jitsu artist that trains here but when she trains, she never wears her color belt. She always wears a white belt. I think that's very important so never forget your white belt because you're always a student and there's always something to learn and white is emptiness so you can only learn when you're empty. Another piece of advice I received was by my makeup artist and she said, don't take this too seriously. Never take it too seriously. That's because life is just temporary and then, actually, one more piece of advice and this is personal, this is coming from me. No matter what you do,



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you have to love the way you suck because you're going to suck at a lot of things but you're going to get a lot better but only if you love the way you suck. If you don't love it and you won't work at it then you won't get better but if you work at it and you really love the way you suck, you will get better and you will succeed and that's it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What a great conversation. I learned a lot, had a lot of fun and I hope you can see what I'm seeing now that this man is headed for greatness. I have no doubt of that so thank you, Mr. Lin, for coming on the show. I hope to talk to you again. Head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, see the photos, the links to his social media, website, all that stuff right there and don't forget whistlekick.com, use the code PODCAST15 to get 15%. If you want to follow us on social media, we are @whistlekick everywhere you can think of and my personal email address, jeremy@whistlekick.com. I look forward to hearing from you.