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New Jeremy Lin Documentary Inspires **By Kevin Ding (Guest Columnist)** on September 6, 2013

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Just like the phenomenon was, the movie is rich with life lessons.

The lessons get learned again so well only because we go about an hour into the movie before we even see Jeremy Lin become amazing as a New York Knick.

Yes, the documentary is called *Linsanity*, but its genius is not dwelling primarily on the wild success even Lin describes as “miraculous” or leaning too hard on those highlights all the world already savored in February 2012.

There is a deep, meaningful understanding built up over the movie’s first hour about Lin’s unwavering dedication and small-time achievements—and the heart of the movie grows strong from being behind the scenes for so long before reaching center stage.

How could producers Christopher Chen and Brian Yang and director Evan Jackson Leong fill so much time before getting to the obviously good part?

They did their own dirty work behind the scenes.

They pushed and prodded a reluctant Lin and his uncertain family to let cameras into his life for what Chen, Yang and Leong envisioned would be a niche web video series. Eventually, Lin relented—and the persistent filmmakers chronicled what turned out to be, well, a pretty nondescript and uninspiring first season for Lin in the NBA. The Asian-American basketball crusader and Harvard hero basically rode the Golden State Warriors bench.

Still, the filmmakers kept up in tracking Lin, gathering private footage of the low points in 2010 and ’11 on the cusp of NBA irrelevance and unemployment. Lin was moved to admit on film: “Maybe that’s all it is. Maybe that’s all I’m good for.”

But same as Lin did with his career, the filmmakers kept mining what they believed was promising. It’s just one of those many lessons, but it is the message Lin and his chroniclers are sending together:

See something through because it's a meaningful journey...even if you have no idea what cool place it's going to bring you.

I was invited to watch *Linsanity* on Thursday at an advance screening in Beverly Hills, Calif. The film already succeeded at Sundance, and it opens for mass consumption in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle on Oct. 4—the eve of the NBA season's first exhibition games. (Lin's parents were born and raised in Taiwan, and *Linsanity* debuts in theaters there Oct. 11, just before Lin and the Rockets play an exhibition game in Taipei.)

The film begins with home movies of little Jeremy banging out a song at a piano recital in 1995. And playing the exact same song at another recital in '96. And again in '97.

Amusing, but not exactly inspirational stuff there.

It sets the tone for Lin as a movie character: Regular, funny guy who developed what he felt he was best at. The ultimate overnight sensation who actually has brought lifelong work ethic and drive.

Lin's mother, Shirley, looks back and sums up Jeremy as a little boy this way: "He will do anything to get what he wants."

We track back Lin through his AAU success despite what then was a heave-style jump shot, him lamenting his parents' lack of height while standing 5'3" in high school, his belief that he would've gotten a Division I basketball scholarship if he were black, and him reliving the harsh taunts he heard on the court: "You chink! Can you even open your eyes?! Can you even see the scoreboard?!"

We are with him through real stress over the unrequested expectations placed on him post-college as a cultural pioneer: "I hate when everyone's looking at me. I hate the spotlight." We see how David vs. Goliath usually works in the NBA when after a veritable "Rocky" montage to convey how hard Lin worked during the 2011 NBA lockout, he still gets waived by the Warriors so they have salary-cap space to make an unsuccessful free-agent chase for rare specimen DeAndre Jordan.

We see the softness of a depressed young man confiding to the camera about the sting of being waived again by the Rockets on Christmas—just 12 days after being cut by the Warriors. (It was also for a big man: Houston needed a roster spot to add center Samuel Dalembert.)

Lin even recalls asking then-Knicks coach Mike D'Antoni if Lin should ship his car out to New York so he's not taking taxis everywhere the rest of the season after getting claimed by the Knicks. D'Antoni's stuttering reply: "Uh, no. Probably not."



Chris Trotman/Getty Images

"Oh, hell," Lin said. "I'm going to get waived."

Instead, with Lin given one last chance in one last game, the world got Linsanity.

And in movie form, after all the proper build-up and context, the magic really pops.

The pick-and-rolls are beautiful, the fearlessness and victories are real, and it helps a lot that Mike Breen is on the mic as Knicks broadcaster all the way.

Lin scores more points in his first five NBA starts than any player in the modern era. Lin drills a winning three-pointer before the buzzer in Toronto and admits he always wanted to do that and then strike the cocky pose. The scuffling, injury-ravaged Knicks suddenly go 8-1. Everyone from Durant to Letterman to Obama salutes Lin in snippets that seem horribly cheesy-fake but aren't at all.

And that little web series is now coming to a theater near you.

Kevin Ding has been a sportswriter covering the NBA and Los Angeles Lakers for OCRegister.com since 1999. His column on Kobe Bryant and LeBron James was judged the No. 1 column of 2011 by the Pro Basketball Writers Association; his column on Jeremy Lin won second place in 2012.

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