Vicarious Voyaging
Category : October 1998
Published by Anonymous on Oct. 02, 1998

DOCUMENTARIES

Vicarious Voyaging

Remote and exotic, Bali has been captured on film for all to see

Fortunately for those who don't have the means to travel to Bali, the island is one of the most thoroughly and sensitively documented exotic destinations. If you can settle for being an armchair wayfarer, you're in for a lengthy and fascinating journey to cultures and places you've never even heard about, and people you wouldn't dare to meet in person.

Released May 15, 1989, and seen by millions of public television viewers, the exciting Ring of Fire series (four 58 min. videos, 1988, Mystic Fire Video, New York) documents the ten-year voyage of two filmmakers, brothers Lorne and Lawrence Blair, through the world's largest and least-known archipelago--the spectacular islands of Indonesia. The Blair brothers found themselves drawn into danger and discovery in a magical land where ancient myths still flourish. "It was a form of meditational surrender and possession by a higher energy," offers Lawrence. "Isolated and living for long periods amongst little-known peoples, I felt that we were drawing closer to the shadow screen, beyond which lay a much subtler and perhaps more dangerous adventure. Trance and possession of every form were all around us."

The Blair videos include, but are not limited to, the island of Bali, which the Blairs made their port of call. They end up living there, with the local community volunteering to build their house.

A complementary Blair classic is Lempad of Bali (58 min., $24.95, 1989, Mystic Fire, New York), revealing the incredible and mystically creative life of Lempad, one of modern Bali's most highly revered spiritual figures, now deceased. After accompanying the Blairs throughout Indonesia in these five videos, you will anguish at Lawrence's account of his brother's sudden death in Bali in Beyond the Ring of Fire (58 min., $24.95, 1996, Mystic Fire, New York). The story of the tragedy is briefly told, then this latest video records a new voyage of discovery, eight years later, into some of the same areas first visited in the initial series, as well as others never previously filmed.

Keep your seatbelts fastened, there's still more adventure to be had. Bali: Beyond Good and Evil (50 min., $19.98, 1997, WinStar, New York) centers around the spiritual quest of Ed Ross, professor of fine arts at the University of South Florida, who has returned to the Indonesian island every year for the last ten. Ed climbs the sacred volcano of Batur in search of spiritual vision, visits an astrological calendar-maker for personal guidance and meets with Hindu priests and festivals. Revering Bali as his special "place of vision," Ed tenderly presents the place ritual and prayer holds in Balinese life. He comments, "To the Balinese, the spirit world is real, and exists right here, right now."

A highlight of Beyond is an insider's look into the enthralling kecak, monkey dance, in which Ed participates. The exciting, rare footage of this dynamic village performance, along with personal meetings with the dancers, leave us with a feeling of intimate rapport with these gracious people--a people who dare to defy change.

MYSTIC FIRE VIDEO, 524 BROADWAY, #604, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10012 USA. 1?800?291?9001 (USA). WINSTAR HOME ENTERTAINMENT, 419 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10016; 1?800?414?1690 (USA); 212?674?9505.