



## Film Reviews

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Posted: Tue., Oct. 12, 2004, 6:04pm PT

Toronto

### Kings Of The Sky

(Docu)

By SCOTT FOUNDAS

A Pythagoras production. (International sales: Pythagoras Prods., Chicago.) Produced, directed, edited by Deborah Stratman.

**The ethnic/political tensions between Turkistani Uyghurs and Han Chinese are delicately observed by experimental filmmaker Deborah Stratman in "Kings of the Sky," which follows famed Uyghur tightrope artist Adil Hoxur as his troupe tours the China-controlled desert regions of Central Asia. Capturing the intricacies of Hoxur's art as well as the oppressive circumstances under which it is performed, docu should be welcomed by fests and by the museums and galleries that regularly showcase Stratman's work.**

Though less conceptual than Stratman's superb 2002 Sundance short, "In Order Not to Be Here," "Kings" reps an admirable attempt to find a new documentary language. A tourist in China herself, the American Stratman avoids voiceover narration or other devices that might have imposed false authority on pic, instead presenting her collected images and interviews in a seemingly random, collage-like fashion that evokes the experience of a stranger visiting a strange land. Bodies in extravagantly ornamented costumes walk the highwire, while crowds of demonstrators are quelled by police. And somehow we come to understand that, for Hoxur and his colleagues, their performances are at once personal expression and nonviolent resistance.

Camera (Color/B&W, DV), Stratman. Reviewed at Toronto Film Festival (Real to Reel), Sept.14, 2004. Running time: 67 MIN.

Date in print: Mon., Nov. 1, 2004