



fish

*Kumiko the Treasure Hunter*  
(USA 2015)

DIRECTOR : David Zellner  
RUNNING TIME : 105 mins  
RATING : NR

**Synopsis:**

Kumiko lives a shy and solitary life in a cramped Tokyo apartment shared only by her beloved pet rabbit, Bunzo. Increasingly isolated and constantly browbeaten by her mother, Kumiko devotes all her spare time to compulsive viewings of the Coen's Bros. Classic *Fargo*. It's not so much the film that fascinates her but the suitcase of cash buried beneath the snow. Kumiko sets out on a life changing odyssey to claim it!

**Review: Neil Genzlinger**

The real-life story that inspired *Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter* was too good to be completely true, but that doesn't diminish the film, a delicate, haunting study of a woman who has in several senses lost her way.

Rinko Kikuchi, nominated for a supporting-actress Oscar for *Babel*, does lovely work as the title character, a Japanese woman who gets the disastrously incorrect idea that the Coen brothers' movie *Fargo* depicts a true story. It's an easy mistake to make for those not acquainted with the Coens' wit; after all, that movie starts out with the words "This is a true story."

In any case, Kumiko gets addicted to watching a battered, grainy videotape of *Fargo* that she finds buried in a mysterious opening scene, and she becomes convinced that her destiny is to go to North Dakota and dig up the case full of cash that Steve Buscemi's character buries near the film's end.

'Kumiko' written by another pair of sibling filmmakers, David and Nathan Zellner (with David directing), follows this journey in all its frozen, aching misguidedness. But a strength of the film is that, before Kumiko ever gets on a plane for the United States, we see a significant slice of her life in Tokyo, enough to realize that this is a woman who is slowly losing her grip on reality.  
Cont.



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**FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC**

10.00 am Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
8.15 pm Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017

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## Review Cont.

Kumiko, who is 29, works an impersonal job where her boss treats her dismissively, but in her fantasies she is beginning to see herself as a treasure hunter. "I am like a Spanish conquistador," she tells the security guard at a library where she tries to learn more about North Dakota. Ms. Kikuchi has already made your heart ache by the time Kumiko embarks on her trip, especially with scenes in which her character puzzles over what to do with her pet rabbit.

Speaking no English, Kumiko struggles once she reaches the Minneapolis airport and ventures into the frigid outdoors. "This is not the right time of year to go sightseeing," a well-meaning woman tells her, one of several strangers who extend courtesies to the obviously confused woman.

Most memorable of these is a sheriff's deputy (played by David Zellner) who goes out of his way to try to help her, albeit clumsily. These kindnesses of strangers contrast with the landscape, which is beautiful but vast and inhospitable.

The tale is drawn from a story that began circulating after a Japanese woman was found dead in Minnesota in 2001. The idea that she was searching for the *Fargo* money turned out to be an urban legend — suicide fueled by a romantic disappointment is suspected — but the Zellners decided to stick with the yarn.

Source: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) Neil Genzlinger 17/3/2015 – Edited extracts / accessed 19/4/2017

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## Review: Jonathan Romney

There's always room for another writing-directing brother act in cinema – the more oddball, the better. The Zellners of Austin, Texas have spent years accumulating an underground oeuvre that includes such titles as *Redemptitude*, *Aftermath on Meadowlark Lane* and their rather fine feature *Kid-Thing*. Now they sail closer to the mainstream, but not too close, in a haunting road movie about morbid obsession.

The normally hyper-chic Japanese star Rinko Kikuchi (from *Babel* and *Pacific Rim*) drabs it down as Kumiko, an alienated Tokyo "office lady" whose increasingly frayed psyche latches on to a bizarre fixation. Watching a VHS of the Coen brothers' *Fargo*, she decides to head for Minnesota in search of the money stashed away by that film's Steve Buscemi character.

Among the eccentric but benign Americans she meets en route are Nathan Zellner, playing a born-again travel guide, and his co-writer David Zellner, who directed, as a gauche but solicitous deputy sheriff; they're both as charming, and as downbeat, as their movie.

For all its surface eccentricity, *Kumiko* is a tender portrait, observing its heroine's slow implosion closely, but with gentle discretion. Kikuchi says little, but her body language, a listless hunched shuffle, is immensely eloquent. By the time the film has plunged deep into snow-covered Minnesota – shot with poetic starkness by Sean Porter – *Kumiko* has become something like a mythic heroine. This quietly magnificent piece should put the Zellners on the map: one day, the Coens will make movies inspired by them.

Source: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) : Jonathan Romney 22/2/2015 accessed 10/11/2017

## Some Thoughts On: *The Last Hammer Blow*

Not to labour a point, but FISH films are inevitably wonderful in the way they unfold before us, especially when or if we can experience the challenges laid out before the protagonists, often represented through powerful metaphors, without foreknowledge – a bit like how we experience our own lives. At least that's how I like to experience film.

*The Last Hammer Blow* – what a wonderfully ambiguous title. Is it the final nail in the coffin, or an act of violence by one human upon another, or the latest Thor instalment from Marvel, or simply what life dishes out? Well, as it turned out, it was, and it wasn't. It was a film about mortality – Victor's mother is facing her own demise throughout the film in the form of terminal cancer. And you certainly can't deny that poor Victor is clearly under life's or God's hammer.

But as it turned out, the 'hammer' referred to in the title, related to Mahler's Sixth Symphony and the missing third hammer blow, which he fatalistically believed would signal his own ending. Samuel, Victor's estranged father, informs him of Mahler's belief that he could somehow control his own fate by omitting the final hammer blow. Victor is inspired, arguably transformed, by this revelation and regains some semblance of control over his life and those of his family. He follows through with his football ambitions, manages to establish a connection with his father, but most importantly convinces Nadia, his mother, to recommence her cancer therapy. She may well avoid, or at least delay fate's final blow.

So, it is fitting that Delaporte's final scene involves this pairing of mother and son. The pathetic fallacy of the sunset in the background as Mahler's symphony plays on in the background is a wordless tribute to life, art and beauty. The sunset, like the hammer may suggest the approaching end of life's day, or simply an opportunity to reflect on the blessings and beauty of this life. Perhaps it suggests that, after all, tomorrow is a new day, to quote Scarlet. Ultimately we don't know, just like they don't. We'll just have to wait and see.

### Paul Williams

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### COMING UP:

February '18	<i>Jimmy's Hall</i> (UK)	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup>
March	<i>Just to be Sure</i> (France)	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup>
April	<i>Neruda</i> (Chile)	Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup>
May	<i>Like Crazy</i> (Italy)	Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>
June	<i>The Teacher</i> (Czechoslovakia)	Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup>



## Message from the President

In last month's newsletter I alluded to coming changes to, and upgrading of, our website. Those changes are in place and we're up and running. Go to our site, (see below), and see for yourself how good it looks and works. Click on film posters to see their reviews, look at past films, look at coming films, read backdated newsletters or perhaps find a section on our history. This is an exciting development for us. Thank you so much again Steve and Helen Jones at Highland Creative and our committee website co-ordinator, Neill Ustick. It just looks terrific.

It was so pleasing to support CanAssist with their fundraising premiere screening of *Murder on the Orient Express* a few weeks ago. They are such a pleasant and hardworking crowd putting their energies into such a worthy charity. Congratulations CanAssist for raising a cool \$6000 on the night. Well Done!

Just a reminder.....if you would like to bring a guest to a screening, please contact Caro, (details below), well before the actual screening day ~ preferably a week in advance where possible. In the last couple of months, poor Caro has been fielding requests and enquiries as she's leaving home for the screening!!!! Also, if you are taking a guest, please make a point of informing the committee members at the door to cinema 1, that your guest is indeed with you for the film. Similarly, if your guest can't attend with you as expected, please let the committee members know that too, as your entitlement to bring another guest in the future can be restored without confusion. Thanks everyone.

Finally, have a wonderfully safe, happy and healthy festive season everybody. Thank you for your ongoing support and feedback. May Santa be good to you and ENJOY THAT CHOCTOP!!! On behalf of the committee, Merry Xmas to one and all and we look forward to joining with you again in February 2018 for the much anticipated, *Jimmy's Hall*.

Yours in film, **Ross Armfield**



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