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**CONTACT**

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS 415-356-8383 x 244  
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190  
Cara White 843-881-1480

[voleine\\_amilcar@itvs.org](mailto:voleine_amilcar@itvs.org)  
[lugo@negia.net](mailto:lugo@negia.net)  
[cara.white@mac.com](mailto:cara.white@mac.com)

For downloadable images, visit [pbs.org/pressroom/](http://pbs.org/pressroom/)

For the program companion website, visit [pbs.org/independentlens/beetle-queen-conquers-tokyo](http://pbs.org/independentlens/beetle-queen-conquers-tokyo)

**BEETLE QUEEN CONQUERS TOKYO PREMIERES ON  
INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2011 AT 10 PM**

**A Spellbinding Look at Japan's Love Affair with Insects**

(San Francisco, CA) — With startling evidence of the cultural divide between East and West, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* presents us with scenes of Japanese families intentionally bringing large bugs into their homes and children playing with pincered beetles like living action figures. Using insects like an anthropologist's toolkit, the film uncovers Japanese philosophies that will shift perspectives on nature, beauty, and life, and just might make you question whether your "instinctive" repulsion to bugs is merely a trick of Western conditioning. *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* will premiere on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

In a country with 128 million people crammed into a space the size of Montana, it is only fitting that the Japanese have become captivated by nature's most efficient invention in space, design, and function. Sold live in vending machines and department stores, included as plastic prizes in the equivalent of a McDonald's Happy Meal, and the subject of the No. 1 videogame, MushiKing, insects inspire an enthusiasm in Japan seen nowhere else in this world.

Like a detective story, the film untangles the web of influences behind Japan's captivation with the six-legged creatures. *Beetle Queen* opens in modern-day Tokyo (where a single beetle



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recently sold for \$90,000), and then slips back to the early 1800s, to the first cricket-selling

Be more  **PBS**



business and the development of haiku, and other forms of insect literature and art. Through history and adventure, *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* travels all the way back in time to stories of the fabled first emperor who named Japan the “Isle of the Dragonflies.”

Along the way, the film takes side trips to Zen temples, Buddhist shrines, nature preserves, and art museums in its quest for the spark of inspiration that moved Japan toward this singular fascination, while other cultures hurtled off towards an almost universal and profound fear of the very same creatures.

Interspersed with the philosophies of one of Japan’s best-selling authors and anatomists, Dr. Takeshi Yoro, and laced with poetry and art from Japan’s history, the film becomes about much more than insects. *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* is set to the rhythm of traditional Japanese values in its attention to detail, harmony, and the appreciation of the seemingly mundane. It quietly challenges the viewer to observe the world from an uncommon perspective that will shift the familiar to the fantastic and just might change not only the way we think about bugs—but the way we think about life.

To learn more about the film, visit the *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* interactive, companion website ([pbs.org/beetle-queen-conquers-tokyo](http://pbs.org/beetle-queen-conquers-tokyo)), featuring detailed information on the film, an interview with the filmmaker, and links and resources pertaining to the film’s subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

### **About the Filmmaker**

**Jessica Oreck (Producer/Writer/Director)** works as an animal keeper and docent at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. When not at the museum, Oreck spends her time inventing new ways to create a sense of wonder in the world. *Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo* is Oreck's first feature film. It was nominated for the 2010 Truer than Fiction Independent Spirit Award and won the 2010 Cinema Eye Honors Spotlight Award. Oreck was also named one of *Filmmaker Magazine*'s 25 New Faces of Independent Film (2009), and her short film *Venus* was recently selected for inclusion in the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. Oreck is currently in production on several animated science shows, building her own museum exhibition, and shooting her next two feature films.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities, and moments in history. Presented by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.