

Mongrel Media

PRESENTS

THE SUMMIT

A FILM BY NICK RYAN

FILM FESTIVALS

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Distribution



1028 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6
Tel: 416-516-9775 Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com

Publicity

Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Fax: 416-488-8438
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca

High res stills may be downloaded from <http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html>

SYNOPSIS

In August, 2008, 18 mountain climbers reached the top of K2. 48 hours later, 11 people were dead. While memorials paid tribute to those killed, there were also condemnations about 'the why.' Why do these athletes risk everything to reach a place humans are simply not meant to go? With breathtaking cinematography and jaw dropping reenactments based on the testimony of those who survived the climb, this thrilling film is about the very nature of adventure in the modern world.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

The Summit is a feature length documentary about the deadliest day in modern mountain climbing history. K2, commonly known as Savage Mountain, is an extension of the northwestern Himalayan Mountain range, and is located in the remote region between Pakistan and China, though most mountaineers won't risk climbing the more hazardous side of China. With an unprecedented fatality rate of one in four climbers, K2, has rightfully earned the title of the second most murderous mountain. But with any high risk sport comes the love of the challenge and in August 2008, 22 climbers from several international expeditions converged on High Camp of K2, the last stop before the summit. 48 hours later, eleven had been killed or simply vanished into thin air. Like a horror movie come to life, it was as if the mountain began stealing lives, one climber at a time.

At the feet of the heavens, the body is dying with each passing second and the mind can play tricks on oneself. Morality in the death zone, above 8,000 meters, is skewed 180 degrees from the rest of life. When a climber falls or wanders off the trail, the unwritten code of the sport is to leave them for dead. Survival depends on self-preservation at all costs.

At the heart of The Summit lies a mystery about one extraordinary man, Ger McDonnell, the first Irishman to summit K2. His team leader left him behind in the death zone, his best friend on the mountain, Pemba Gyalje Sherpa, searched in vain to find him, rescuing several others. Ger's final moments have been called into question by the last climber who spoke to him alive. By all accounts, he was faced with a heart-breaking dilemma— at the very limit of his mortal resources, he stumbled onto a disastrous scene: three climbers tangled up in ropes and running out of time. Had Ger McDonnell stuck to the climbers' code, he might still be alive.

In a century of assaults on K2, only about 300 people have ever seen the view from the second highest peak on the planet. More than a quarter of those who made it didn't live long enough to share the glory or even tell the tale. They were simply killed by trying to get down. The Summit is about the very nature of modern adventure. Those who survive carry with them a commodity to sell, their story. This one remains contentious and fiercely debated, at the expense of the memory of Ger McDonnell and the 10 others who died with him. In this way, the monster of K2 feeds itself. As the legend grows, new climbers are drawn to test themselves against the deadliest mountain on Earth.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR NICK RYAN

Why did you decide to make a documentary about climbing K2? How did you learn about this story?

I was aware of the events on K2 as it was a major news story across the world, as confusion reigned over what had happened.

The film came about through a meeting with climber Pat Falvey, who had climbed Everest in 2003 with Ger McDonnell. Ger, along with Pemba Gyalje Sherpa, had helped to save his life when he ran into trouble a short distance from the summit. Pat had come in to talk with us very soon after the tragic events on K2, and at that time, we weren't aware of what had transpired.

There was a lot of commentary as the tragedy unfolded, criticism about commercial climbing, bad preparation, and lack of experience.

The Sherpa, especially Pemba, who had done so much to help save lives were being written out of the story, and this was initially an attempt to redress that.

Many climbers attempt the summit at K2, why did you decide to focus on this group and specifically on Ger McDonnell's story?

24 climbers left for the summit that day. The events that took place over the next 48 hours are complex and at times confusing, made more so by the conflicting memories of the various survivors. Writer Mark Monroe and myself found that the Dutch team which included Ger McDonnell and Pemba Gyalje, held a lot of the central story, having being the first there at basecamp in 2008.

We started the process of making the film by interviewing Wilco van Rooijen (in October 2008), the leader of the Dutch team. From that interview it was clear to us that not all was as it seemed initially. It was still unclear at that early stage what had really happened, and as is the case in these situations, the stories didn't add up. By the time we interviewed Pemba and the other Sherpa in December 2008, the stories about what Ger had tried to do and had died so tragically doing, were becoming apparent.

This incredible story of courage and heroism, one that flies in the face of the conventional wisdom of high altitude mountaineering emerged. Had Ger adhered to the unwritten codes of the mountain, then he may have survived. It's a terrible truth that a family has to face, but one which they understand because of the very nature of who Ger was.

Pat explained the nature of Ger and Pemba and the portraits he painted were very vivid, and of extraordinary people. The dynamics involved in climbing seemed fascinating to me.

I am not a climber and I was initially struck by the incredible statistic, that one in four climbers who successfully summit will die on descent. You have better odds playing Russian roulette. What drives someone to face that challenge with such overwhelming odds? That fascinated me as a non-climber.

Why is Pemba's role in the film and story so vital?

Pemba was a full-fledged team member of the Dutch team alongside Ger. They became fast friends on Everest in 2003, and Ger wanted to climb K2 with Pemba.

The story is a mystery, and Pemba was instrumental in unraveling it. I believe the physiology of the Sherpa is such that they react and respond better than most western climbers, certainly those who either climb without oxygen or worse still, those who did, but ran out on descent.

There will always be elements in the story that will remain a mystery, but Pemba shed a light on key aspects of the events, with the photographs that he took, as well as the radio conversations he had with other Sherpa attempting rescues that day.

How much research did you do into mountain climbing history and K2? What do you think is the lure and attraction with K2, and why do you think mountaineers risk their lives to make the climb?

K2's history is mired in controversy. It has earned its name, the 'Savage Mountain' or the 'Killer Mountain'. I felt it also had a lure that changed those who wanted to climb it. This stretches all the way back to the first attempts in the early 1900's. Walter Bonatti's story from the 1954 Italian expedition, which is told in the film, was one that demonstrates the hold it seems to have over those who attempt the summit. Bonatti's story echoed that of 2008, and it shows not a lot has changed other than some technology advances in clothing and gear. It is still man vs. nature.

When we started out on the film, I was interested in finding out why they go there, knowing the risk, knowing that one in four won't make it back from the summit. I think everyone climbs for their own reasons, and they are different reasons, but I believe that some of the attraction is that statistic, that one in four. 'Can I be the one to beat the odds?'

But ultimately, Mark and I also wanted to show the human side of the stories from that fateful expedition of 2008, and not make it so much about mountaineering history, but to tell these individuals' and Ger's stories.

Talk about the preparations you and your team took prior to shooting and production. Did you shoot all the mountain footage yourself? Were there any technical concerns you had to address when filming at such a high altitude?

We initially interviewed and filmed all the contributors, all the surviving climbers who successfully summited that day, as well as a few who didn't. The exception was the Korean climbing leader, the sole survivor of the Korean team, who refused to be interviewed for the film. We also interviewed members of Ger's family.

The film utilizes interviews, archival footage from 2008, recreations and aerial footage of K2. The recreations were filmed in the Jungfrau region in Switzerland, beneath the north face of the Eiger, a mountain in the Bernese Alps also in Switzerland. We did a test shoot in April 2010 to see how we could achieve the look for these scenes, and used lead safety climber Paul Moores in a sequence, replacing the surrounding alpine mountains with the correct Himalaya landscape. There is a significant difference in the two regions. We wanted to keep the audience in the moment and part of that was making it feel like this material was there in Pakistan. The test proved we could make convincing and compelling footage work in that accessible region. If you turned the camera around 180 degrees, there were groups of tourists taking photos from the 'highest train station in Europe'!

We filmed at 3700m (12,140 feet) for some of the footage, which takes a small amount of acclimatization. Making decisions at that altitude is a little tougher than normal, you feel you want to go to sleep, so preparation was important. Also with actors who weren't climbers, safety was paramount. This made everything take a lot longer than on the test shoot the previous year, as dropping Paul Moores over a cliff edge was quite different to one of the actors.

The crew was composed of traditional film personnel, which was mainly a camera department. Robbie Ryan (Wuthering Heights, Ginger and Rosa) was the director of photography. Making a film is like climbing a mountain. So making a film on a mountain is twice as difficult!

Filming the aerial footage of K2 was a different matter altogether on many fronts. The initial idea was to fly to K2 in a helicopter as high as possible, and film with a small hand held camera. A lot of investigation and planning went into it which resulted in a group of four of us, Nisar Malik (coordinator), Mike Wright (Cineflex camera engineer), Stephen O'Reilly (cameraman) and myself, travelling to Skardu, Pakistan and flying from there with the Pakistan Army to K2. We attached a gyro-stabilized Cineflex camera, which I operated on two of the three flights to K2. Stephen O'Reilly operated the third flight. We flew to height of 7400m (24,300 feet) far in excess of the operational ceiling of the helicopter, possibly because of the extraordinarily good weather.

When flying over glaciers in a single-engine aircraft, you must fly two helicopters, in case of an emergency, which happened in our case. On the second flight out, the 'backup' helicopter's fuel system was blocked by debris in the fuel, causing the engine to cut out, resulting in an emergency landing. Thankfully all on board were fine.

We spoke with Pat in depth about the various factors surrounding oxygen, as we were concerned about the safety of the endeavor. The camera helicopter was fitted with oxygen tanks for the two pilots and a free flow tank for the operator in the back. To use this you have to physically place the mask to your face and breathe in deeply. At that altitude the air pressure is very low, and I spent an hour above 7000m (22,965 feet). Concentrating on filming, I only used 3 or 4 hits of oxygen, which resulted in a mild case of hypoxia, which at the time was massively disorientating. It certainly gave me a firsthand feel of how it must have felt for these climbers in 2008.

How did you acquire the first-hand footage from the climb?

Several of the climbers had been documenting the climb. Ger was interested in making a film about Pemba and the Sherpa, and filmed the trek in, as well as the crucial basecamp meetings.

Wilco also was filming, more on the mountain, physically climbing, as was the Swedish climber Fredrik Strang. He brought a camera to K2, with the idea of making a documentary about climbing the mountain. He filmed many hours at basecamp and interviewed various team leaders, as well as a huge amount of material on the mountain. He had his camera with him morning of the summit push, and filmed the line of climbers ascending slowly towards the bottleneck as the sun rose.

Strang also had a smaller Canon camera with him, which he brought up with him when he climbed up to help the fallen Serbian climber, Dren Mandic, who was the first to die that day. He had the camera on in his pocket when they were attempting to lower the body to camp four, so it was still recording, and the audio from his recording was what we used in the film for that scene. It is truly shocking.

Some of the climbers were quite upfront and willing to sell their footage or photographs for use in the film, and we deliberated for a long time over what we would show and use in the finished film. The photographs that Pemba took of the two Sherpas that died in the final avalanche are brutal testimony of what happened, but were crucial to showing the events. We felt the archive material was vital to piecing the story together and helped show the astonishing scale and beauty of the mountain.

As a filmmaker, why did you decide to include reenactment footage to tell some of the events of the story?

There were huge tracts of the story which were not filmed. Nobody seemed to film the event surrounding the fall of Dren Mandic at 11am that morning, with the exception of Fredrik Strang who zooms in on the bottleneck from camp four, searching for the fallen climber. When the teams started to descend from the summit, night had fallen and the concentration was on trying to get down the mountain safely, not on filming.

From the very beginning Mark and I felt the narrative of the film needed to flow as smoothly as possible, so that we are not taken out of the story. I worked with Pemba, as a technical advisor, on the reenactments. Alongside Pemba were Chhiring Dorje and Pasang Lama, who also summited that day, and Tshering Lama who was sent up on a rescue mission the following day. This was to ensure a reality was present in this material, and to portray the events as accurately as possible.

What are some of the difficulties you and your team faced during production, and how did you overcome them?

At all times we have been aware of the tragedy of the events portrayed in the film. Everyone in the film lost or knows someone who lost their lives. I am so grateful to everyone who spoke so openly and honestly about their experiences, placing a lot of trust in us to make the film as truthful as possible.

Mark and I had an incredible amount of material, and many strands and stories which we could use. I think documentary comes to life in the editing room. We worked with Editor Ben Stark who focused and defined a lot of those strands, it is where it really becomes collaborative, and a lot of problem solving comes into play.

Are you and/or any of the filmmaking team active mountain climbers?

I am not a climber myself. Pemba, Chhiring, Pasang and Tshering who were all on K2 in 2008, were also present for the reconstruction shoot, and they advised on the material. They worked closely with the mountain safety team lead by Paul Moores and Brian Hall in Switzerland.

Executive producer Pat Falvey has successfully summited Mount Everest twice. He was a huge benefit in helping us understand the language of climbing, the mentality behind it. It was really helpful to have someone who had spent a great deal of time in basecamps and on high altitude mountains. He was a fantastic resource of knowledge in an arena I knew very little about. He was also instrumental in the story as Ger had stopped to help in 2003, and his firsthand knowledge of this bears testimony to how Ger thought and acted on the mountain.

What would you like your audience to take away from this film and story?

Whilst the film portrays tragic events, it is also a film about survival. There are many reasons why climbers make the choices that they do. I don't think it as simple and straightforward as many at first imagine. I believe that Ger McDonnell and Pemba made incredible sacrifices on the mountain that day, and Ger paid the ultimate price. The film is a mystery and I hope that it engages the audience and provokes questions as well as answering some of them.

ABOUT K2

K2 - The Mountain

K2, as it is commonly known, is the second highest but most dangerous mountain on Earth. The 8,611-metre Himalayan peak is so remote that the villagers along the Chinese/Pakistani border don't even have a name for it. Even in this day and age, it takes weeks of hiking through one of the most intimidating regions on the planet just to get to the base of the mountain.

Conquering K2 takes commitment, not just to the task, but also to every other climber on the mountain. The window of ascent is so small, the weather so unpredictable, the person who saves your life may be the one next to you. Or behind you. Or the one you just met at Base Camp two days before. In a century of assaults on the Summit, only about 300 people have ever seen the view from the second highest peak on Earth. More than a quarter of those who made it didn't live long enough to share the glory or even tell the tale. They were killed simply trying to get down. Experience is paramount but there is no guarantee. A climber can do everything right, be certain of every step, let caution rule every decision, and yet they could still take their last breath on the face of the monster known as K2.

Put very simply, climbing this mountain is tantamount to Russian roulette. Because of the age we live in, with every experience at our fingertips, those who survive The Summit carry with them a commodity to sell— The Story.

K2 2008 Tragedy

The 2008 K2 disaster occurred on August 1st, 2008, when eleven mountaineers from international expeditions died on K2, the second-highest mountain on Earth. Three others were seriously injured. It was the worst single accident in the history of K2 mountaineering.

The climbing season at K2 lasts from June to August, but in 2008 adverse weather prevented any groups from summiting during June and July. At the end of July, ten different groups were awaiting the possibility to reach the summit, some of them having waited for almost two months. The months preceding the summit push were used for acclimatization and preparing for the camps higher on the mountain, the highest of them, Camp IV, just a little short of 8000 m above sea level.

The Sherpas and Pakistani high-altitude porters (HAPs) started to prepare fixed lines upwards before midnight. They were joined by Spanish climber Alberto Zerain who had come up from camp III during the night and decided to continue his summit push rather than stay at camp IV. However, the most experienced HAP, Shaheen Baig (from the Serbian team), had to go back down with symptoms of high altitude sickness. His

experience was missed and in the confusion, ropes may have been left behind or placed too far to the right side of the Bottleneck.

When the groups started upward at 3 a.m., the Sherpas and HAPs had prepared lines from the shoulder, where they were not needed, up into the Bottleneck (a steep couloir—a gully—leading to the summit slopes), and then had run out of rope for the traverse just above the bottleneck. This forced them to take rope from the lower portion of the route and use it to prepare the lines above the Bottleneck, causing an unplanned delay. At this point the American group decided to abort the attempt and return to the Base Camp.

At 10 a.m. people were advancing through the Bottleneck. Dren Mandic from the Serbian team decided to attend to his oxygen system and so unclipped the rope to let other climbers pass. Mandic lost his balance and fell, bumping into Cecilie Skog (Norway). She was still clipped to the rope and was only knocked over. Mandic however, fell over 100 m down the bottleneck. Some climbers claimed that he was still moving after the fall. People in Camp IV saw the fall and sent a group to help recover his injured or dead body. Swede Fredrik Strang stated he took command of the recovery operation.

When Strang reached the body, Serbian climbers Predrag Zagorac and Iso Planic and their HAP Mohammed Hussein had already arrived. They had found no pulse and judging by the severity of his injuries, Mandic was pronounced dead. The Serbian climbers decided to lower the body down to camp IV and Strang assisted them. They were joined by HAP Jehan Baig (from the French-led independent expedition). He had fulfilled his assisting duties and had been allowed to head down. Several people later indicated he may have been suffering from high altitude sickness, since he had displayed questionable behaviour in abseiling down the bottleneck. Strang also noticed that he was incoherent, first offering to help in the rescue, later refusing to help, only to return moments later to assist them again.

Jehan Baig lost his footing, bumping into Strang who then urged him to let go of the rope attached to Mandić harness, before all four climbers would be dragged down. Baig finally let go of the rope, but to Strang and the others' surprise, he did not try to stop his slide by using the self-arrest technique. Jehan Baig fell to his death. It is unclear why he did not try to stop his slide. Strang decided to descend without the body of Mandić. The Serbian group wrapped the body of Mandić in a flag and fastened him to the mountain before aborting and starting to descend.

These delays, together with the traffic jam in the Bottleneck, resulted in most people reaching the summit much later than planned, some as late as 7.30 p.m. (the typical time for summiting being between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.). Altogether, 18 people summited that day. On the descent, the Spaniard Alberto Zerain, who had topped out first and alone at 3 p.m., managed to pass through the Bottleneck without trouble. But at 8:30

p.m. when the Norwegian group — including Lars Flato Nessa and Cecilie Skog who reached the summit two hours later than Zerafin — had almost negotiated the traverse leading to the Bottleneck, a serac (a large block of ice) broke off from the ice field above. As it fell, it cut all the fixed lines and took with it Rolf Bae (Cecilie Skog's husband), who had abandoned the attempt only 100m below the summit and was descending at the front of the group. Lars and Cecilie continued descending without the fixed lines and managed to reach Camp IV during the night.

As a result of the serac fall, the climb in the Bottleneck became steeper and more technical. Chunks of ice lay scattered around the route, and the mountaineers above were stranded in the so-called death zone above 8000 meters. Since the climbers were counting on the fixed lines, they were not carrying additional ropes and fall protection devices, forcing the climbers to "free climb" the descent through the notorious Bottleneck. There were still multiple climbers above the Bottleneck, and according to Dutch mountaineer Wilco van Rooijen, panic broke out among them. Some tried to descend in the darkness, while others decided to bivouac and wait until morning before descending.

Pemba Gyalje descended in the darkness without fixed ropes and reached the Camp IV before midnight. Sherpa Chhiring Dorje also free-climbed the Bottleneck with "little" Pasang Lama (who had been stranded without an ice axe) secured to his harness.

Two members of the Korean expedition, Kim Jae-soo and Go Mi-Young, also managed to navigate the bottleneck in the dark, although the latter had to be helped by two Sherpas from the Korean B team — who were supposed to summit the next morning — Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote. The men had climbed up around midnight with food and oxygen and found Go Mi-Young stranded somewhere in the Bottleneck, unsure of which route she had to take. They guided her down safely.

Meanwhile, Dutchman Cas van de Gevel and Frenchman Hugues D'Aubarede had also decided to maneuver the bottleneck in the dark. As he reached the bottom of the Bottleneck, Cas van de Gevel witnessed a climber falling to his death, a story corroborated by the two Sherpas Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote, who also had witnessed one or two objects falling from the mountain. This climber was likely Hugues D'Aubarede, whom van de Gevel had passed just above the Bottleneck in the dark on the way down. D'Aubarede had run out of bottled oxygen hours before, and when van de Gevel had passed him, he had looked tired and insisted van de Gevel descend before him.

Marco Confortola, Wilco van Rooijen and Ger McDonnell bivouacked above the traverse, as they could not find the fixed ropes leading across the traverse. Confortola claimed that during the bivouac, he heard screams and saw headlights disappear below him after a roaring sound came from the serac field. At that point, 8 people were still above the Bottleneck, stranded in the death zone.

The rescue efforts started in the base camp as a group was sent upwards with ropes to help those still stuck in the Bottleneck. The group included Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote, who had previously helped Go Mi-Young down the Bottleneck and now went to search for their relative Jumik Bhote. Jumik was left stranded with the remaining climbers of the Korean expedition somewhere above the Bottleneck.

Early in the morning above the traverse, van Rooijen gave up the search for the fixed ropes and descended alone. His vision was deteriorating and he feared he was going snow blind. He needed to get off the mountain fast. Marco Confortola and Gerard McDonnell did not follow him immediately. Later, van Rooijen reached the remaining Korean climbers (Confortola claims one of them was Kyeong Hyo Park) and their guide Jumik Bhote. The men were tangled in several ropes and had clearly been hanging there, some upside down and bloodied, for quite a while. But they were all alive. It is unclear what exactly happened to them. It is believed the men were the victims of a second serac fall, an avalanche or perhaps a regular fall leaving them tangled in the ropes. Some sources mention only two Koreans and Jumik Bhote, whilst other reports indicate three remaining Koreans (one near death). It could be that this was the event Confortola had witnessed during the bivouac the previous night. It could also be that this was the second object Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote saw falling off the mountain. There is however, little evidence to support both claims. Wilco van Rooijen handed Jumik Bhote his gloves, but was unable to help them anymore. He claims Jumik Bhote informed him a rescue mission was under way from camp IV. Van Rooijen decided to descend farther.

Marco Confortola and Ger McDonnell reached the three men somewhere in the morning. They worked for several hours trying to free them. It is unclear what happened next. Confortola claims McDonnell, after working with Confortola for at least 1.5 hours, suddenly climbed back up the mountain, leaving him with the three stranded men. Confortola assumed McDonnell had succumbed to high altitude sickness and was growing delusional, believing he had to climb back up. Left alone, Confortola did all he could for Jumik Bhote, giving him his own equipment. They had managed to get the Koreans back into at least a comfortable position. Confortola says he was able to radio with Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote who were on their way up to rescue the men. Confortola had spent at least three hours with the entangled men and was exhausted. He continued down.

Several people dispute Confortola's version of the events. Wilco van Rooijen, who had seen Confortola and McDonnell helping the stranded Koreans and their guide from below, believes McDonnell did not climb back up the mountain. Gerard McDonnell must have climbed up to the highest anchor supporting the three stranded men to try to transfer the load. He then may have returned to the three men and spent another several hours alone helping free the men from the ropes. In his book "Surviving K2", van Rooijen provides some photographic evidence for these claims.

Confortola has claimed that sometime after he left the three men, an avalanche struck just feet away from him. In the rubble of this avalanche, he spotted the remains of one climber. After investigating them, he suggests these were the remains of McDonnell.

Just after noon, Tsering Bhote and "big" Pasang Bhote had reached the bottom of the Bottleneck. There they found Marco Confortola crawling on his hands and feet. The two Sherpas radioed Pemba, Gyalje and Cas van de Gevel to come up for Confortola so that they could continue the search for their relative Jumik Bhote and the Koreans. "Big" Pasang Bhote later radioed Pemba Gyalje with more news. He had met Jumik Bhote and two members of the Korean expedition just above the bottleneck. Apparently they were freed after all. He also radioed in bad news. A fourth climber, climbing behind the two Koreans and the two Sherpas on the lower parts of the traverse, had been swept away by a serac fall and was dead. The description of the climber matched Ger McDonnell's red and black down suit. This would suggest Confortola was mistaken in identifying the remains in the avalanche as McDonnell's and supports the theory that McDonnell freed the two Koreans and Jumik Bhote before perishing in a different serac fall. Tsering Bhote, from his position at the base of the Bottleneck, has also claimed to have seen a serac fall strike the rescue party as they were descending near the top of the bottleneck.

Minutes after "big" Pasang Bhote had radioed in the news that he had found his relative Jumik Bhote and two Koreans, another avalanche or serac fall struck. It swept away the four men. Tsering Bhote, who had climbed more slowly than fellow rescuer "big" Pasang Bhote, had not yet reached the top of the Bottleneck. He miraculously survived the avalanche, as did Pemba Gyalje and Marco Confortola at the bottom of the Bottleneck. The death toll had now risen to eleven.

Ger McDonnell had given his camera to Pemba Gyalje on the summit. Pemba photographed two of the climbers who came down in the avalanche. It was 'big' Pasang Bhote and Jumik Bhote. Meanwhile, van Rooijen was making his way down the mountain alone. He had climbed down a new route to the left of the Cesan route, bypassing Camp IV. Van de Gevel and Sherpa Gyalje descended from Camp IV to Camp III after they had heard van Rooijen was still somewhere on the mountain. Van Rooijen had managed several satellite phone calls that may have helped pinpoint his location. He would have to spend a second bivouac out on the mountain. After an evening of searching the slopes between Camp IV and Camp III, Cas bivouaced for the night. Pemba who had made it Camp III called off the search around 1am, and rested. On the morning of August 3rd, Cas made it to Camp III and together with Pemba, located Wilco van Rooijen nearby. The three climbers descended to base camp, where Wilco was treated for frostbite by Dr Eric Meyer.

On the 4th August, the Pakistan Army flew in to basecamp, evacuating Wilco and Cas to Skardu. The next day Marco reached base camp and was evacuated by helicopter on the 6th August.

CLIMBERS/TEAMS

The below is a list of the climbers and the teams they climbed with, that attempted the summit on August 1st 2008.

* Died on K2 in August 2008

French independent team

Hugues D'Aubarede*

Nick Rice

Karim Meherban*

Jehan Baig*

Korean 'Flying Jump' Team

Kim Jae-soo (Mr Kim)

Go Mi-sum (Ms. Go)

Kim Hyo-Gyeong*

Park Kyeong-Hyo*

Hwang Dong-Jin*

Pasang Lama

Jumik Bhote*

Pasang Bhote*

Tshering Lama

International Expedition

Fredrik Strang

Dr Eric Meyer

Chris Klinke

Chhiring Dorje Sherpa

Italian Team

Marco Confortola

Roberto Mani

Norit Dutch Team

Wilco Van Rooijen

Cas van de Gevel

Ger McDonnell*

Pemba Gyalje Sherpa

Norwegian Team

Cecilie Skog
Rolf Bae*
Lars Nessa

Serbian K2 Vojvodina expedition

Iso Planic
Predrag Zagorac
Dren Mandic*

Serbian independent climber

Hoselito Bite

Spanish (Basque) solo

Alberto Zerain

K2



K2



CLIMBER BIOS

Ger McDonnell



Photo courtesy of Pat Falvey

Gerard McDonnell (20 January 1971 – 2 August 2008), mountaineer and engineer, was the first Irish person to reach the summit of K2, the second-highest mountain on Earth, in August 2008. He lost his life along with ten other mountaineers following an avalanche on the descent, in the worst single accident in the history of K2 mountaineering.

McDonnell was born in Kilcornan, County Limerick. A decade before his K2 success, he had moved to Anchorage, Alaska. He hoped not only to work there but also to develop his skills as a mountaineer. McDonnell was well known in Anchorage's Irish community. Among his interests was playing the bodhran in a band. He was described as a "philosopher" and a "great storyteller" McDonnell famously pucked a sliotar with a hurley from the south col achieving the highest Poc Fada in the world and later summited Mount Everest with Mick Murphy in 2003. He was unsuccessful during an earlier attempt on K2 in 2006 when he was hit by a rock and airlifted to hospital.

Ger McDonnell's satellite phone was given to Pemba Gyalje Sherpa on the summit and he brought it along with Ger's camera back to base camp. Ger McDonnell's partner Annie Starkey, brother JJ, sister Denise and brother in law Damien O'Brien flew to Islamabad in search of answers. Whilst McDonnell's body was not recovered, a memorial service was held in Kilcornan on 17 August 2008 and an online book of condolence was opened. Irish President, Mary McAleese was among the dignitaries to pay tribute to him following his successful Everest climb in 2003 and in 2008 following his death.

Pemba Gyalje Sherpa



Photo courtesy of National Geographic

Born in the shadow of the Himalayas, Pemba Gyalje is a man of the mountains. But he is not a Sherpa in the western sense— a high altitude helper or porter. Before this expedition Pemba Gyalje had distinguished himself as a professional mountaineer with nine summits above 8000 meters. He was recruited by the Dutch-based Norit Expedition to climb as an equal, contributing to the team effort. He became the last hope for so many on K2.

To date, he has climbed Mt. Everest 7 times with 6 summit, K2, Cho-Oyu, Ama Dablam, and uncountable 6000m peaks. When first generation Nepalese mountain guide certification program was held in 2009 by UIAGM he was officially known as International Mountain Guide. His aim beside climbing and guiding is to contribute for the promotion and development of healthy climbing and mountaineering activities in Himalaya.

Wilco van Rooijen



Wilco van Rooijen is one of the few Dutch professional adventurers. He has climbed the highest peaks of the Alps and the Himalayas. He is one of the few people to have reached both the geographic North and the South Poles.

On 20 May 2004, Van Rooijen summited Mount Everest via the north side without using supplemental oxygen. On 2 August 2008, Van Rooijen after an accident on the

K2 went missing, but returned after 3 days from the "death zone". Eleven other climbers died on the mountain. Van Rooijen was hopelessly lost and missed camp IV in his descent. After spending two nights in the death zone he was found by Pemba Gyalje Sherpa and teammate Cas van de Gevel, and brought him to Camp III. Van Rooijen climbed back to the base camp where third-degree frostbite to his toes were noted. Eventually he lost all his toes to frostbite. It was his third attempt on K2, after being severely wounded by rockfall in 1995 and an unsuccessful summit bid in 2006.

On 10 January 2011, Van Rooijen stood on the summit of Mount Vinson in Antarctica. For him that was the last summit of the Seven Summits, the 7 highest summits on 7 continents continents. He calls this '7 Summits + 3 poles', a series that he was the first Dutchman to complete.

Wilco is ambassador for Right To Play, Respect The Mountains and To the Top for KiKa. He has his own company, he also gives lectures.

FILMMAKERS BIOS

Nick Ryan - Director/Producer

Nick Ryan was a founding director of Image Now Films in 1995, and works as a director and producer of films.

Nick wrote, directed and produced the award winning short film A Lonely Sky. In 2008 he wrote and directed the award winning The German.

Nick also produced Ruairi Robinson's short films The Silent City Blinky™ and Imaginary Forces.

He is represented as a director in the United States by United Talent Agency and by Independent Talent Group in the UK.

Filmography

2000 Are We Alone?

2006 A Lonely Sky, Electric Picnic '05: The Documentary

2007 Electric Picnic '06: The Documentary

2008 The German

2012 The Summit

Mark Monroe - Writer

A journalism graduate from the University of Oklahoma, Mark began his television career in Atlanta as a CNN news writer for "Headline News" and "Newsnight". He has since become an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose theatrical credits include: Writer, "The Cove" ('Best Documentary Feature' 2010 Academy Awards & winner 'Best Documentary Script', W.G.A. 2010); writer, the critically-acclaimed "The Tillman Story"; writer, "Chasing Ice"; writer, "Last Play at Shea"; writer, "Once in a Lifetime: The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos", nomination "Best Documentary Script", 2007); writer "Amazing Journey: The Story of The Who", and writer/director, "Morning Light", Disney Pictures 2008.

Currently, Mark is working on numerous documentary feature films including: the seminal documentary film about Formula 1 Racing entitled "1" for Spitfire Pictures; "Stolen Seas", a hard-hitting emotional tale about Somali pirates; "The Summit", which chronicles the deadliest season on K2, the second highest and most dangerous mountain to climb in the world; "Who is Dayani Cristal?", an investigation into an unidentified body found on the U.S./Mexican border; and "The Singing Planet", academy award winner, Louis Psihoyos' follow-up film to "The Cove".

John Battsek - Executive Producer – Passion Pictures

Launching with Oscar and Emmy award winning ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER in 1999, John Battsek has since produced a slate of over twenty five feature documentaries many of which have been launched at prestigious film festivals and achieved international distribution. These include IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOON; Oscar nominated RESTREPO; Academy Shortlisted SERGIO; Grierson Award Winner FIRE IN BABYLON; Academy Award Shortlisted THE TILLMAN STORY; triple Emmy nominated BETTER THIS WORLD, and James Marsh's PROJECT NIM - which marked the start of Passion's strategic alliance with Simon Chinn's Red Box Films.

Two new films executive produced by Battsek premiered at 2012's Sundance Film Festival; SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN played as the opening night film and was awarded the Jury Special Prize and the Audience Award in the World Cinema Documentary category and THE IMPOSTER, based on the extraordinary story of serial imposter Frederic Bourdin, also played in competition. Both films were released theatrically in UK and the US this summer.

Battsek and the production company he runs, Passion Pictures, are currently working on several new feature film projects, including two new films with Greg Barker; Nadav Schirman's THE GREEN PRINCE based on the NY Times Bestselling memoir THE SON OF HAMAS by Mosab Hassan Yousef, and a narrative adaptation of Meg Rosoff's award-winning dystopian novel HOW I LIVE NOW is currently shooting in the UK with Kevin MacDonald directing for Film Four.

Darrell Kavanagh - Executive Producer - Image Now Films

Darrell Kavanagh has a BA in Visual Communications and co-founded Image Now in 1992 and he has been advising and directing clients on brand and vision strategies for over 17 years. These include Bank of Ireland, Transport for London, City of London, Vodafone, DAA, TV3, DCC, UN ICT Task Force.

Darrell was awarded the Sunday Times Ian Parry photography award and has undertaken a number of domestic and international photographic assignments for the Sunday Times Magazine

Pat Falvey - Executive Producer

Pat Falvey is one of Ireland's leading team trainer and motivational speakers as well as being a world-renowned adventurer and explorer. Pat has over 62 high adventures completed around the world to his credit. He has Climbed Everest and completed the 7 Summits twice.

Pat has also trained and lead the first Irish team to complete the 1140km trek to the South Pole, in honor of Ernest Shackleton and Ireland's unsung polar hero's, across the coldest, loneliest, most barren, desolate and dangerous landscape on earth to reach the South Pole on the 8th Jan 2008.

Pat has just completed his current book "A journey to Adventure. the stories I never thought I tell" and is presently working on two new books.

John McDonnell - Executive Producer –Fantastic Films

John McDonnell is one of Ireland's most experienced producers. In 2000 he founded Fantastic Films and since the company's inception, John has produced and collaborated on a diverse range of film projects receiving over 50 international awards, including an OSCAR™ in 2006 for SIX SHOOTER (2004, Martin McDonagh).

Current projects include LAST DAYS ON MARS, directed by Ruairi Robinson and starring Live Schrieber and EK THA TIGER, the highly anticipated Bollywood film, which is due for release in August 2012.

John is also working with be Active Media on developing and producing a comic book and game based on Fantastic Films re- cent production STITCHES, which is due for release in Autumn 2012.

John has recently executive produced SONGS FOR AMY direct- ed by Konrad Begg, and BEAT GIRL a trans media series, avail- able on several platforms, including TV, the web, smart phone app, a comic book and a novel.

In addition to receiving his Hons MA in Screenwriting from DLI- ADT in 2008, John has designed producers' courses for FAS/ Screen Training Ireland and lectured in Film in Trinity, DLIADT and Griffith College, Dublin. He also consults for Film Finances, UK and is a regular juror for the Irish Film & Television Awards.

CREDITS

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY
Nick Ryan

WRITTEN BY
Mark Monroe

EDITED BY
Ben Stark

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Robbie Ryan
Stephen O'Reilly

MUSIC BY
Nick Seymour

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
John Battsek
Pat Falvey
Darrell Kavanagh
John Mc Donnell

CLIMBERS/ INTERVIEWEES

Tshering Lama Bhote
Hoselito Bite
Marco Confortola
Chhiring Dorje Sherpa
Pat Falvey
Pemba Gyalje Sherpa
Pasang Lama
JJ McDonnell
Eric Meyer
Lars Nessa
Damien O'Brien
Cecilie Skog
Annie Starkey
Fredrik Strang
Cas Van De Gevel
Wilco Van Rooijen

Predrag Zagorac
Alberto Zerain

Line Producer
Olivia Leahy

RECONSTRUCTIONS

Line Producer	Niall Foley
Production Manager	Stephen O'Reilly
Director of Photography	Robbie Ryan
Camera Assistant	John Watters
Grip	Rob Barlow
Grip Assistant	Andy Sauer
Data Wrangler	Niall O'Byrne
Sound Recordist	Dan Birch
Make-Up	Niamh O'Loan
Hair/ Costume	Lorraine Brennan
LEAD Mountain Guide	Paul Moores
Mountain Guide	Brian Hall
Mountain Guide	Hansruedi Gertsch
Mountain Guide	Andreas Abegglen
Consultant	Pemba Gyalje Sherpa
Gaffer	John Colley
1st Assistant director	Andrew Hegarty
3rd Assistant director	Dave Bailey
CLIMBING PROPS	Niall Foley
	Stephen O'Reilly

ACTORS

Ger Mc Donnell	Lochlann O'Mearain
Wilco van Rooijen	Garrett Philips
Marco Confortola	Christo Mitzkov
Pemba Gyalje Sherpa	Pemba Gyalje Sherpa
Chhiring Dorje Sherpa	Chhiring Dorje Sherpa
TShEring Lama Bhote	Tshering Lama Bhote
Pasang Lama	Pasang Lama
Fredrik Strang/Cas van de Gevel	Niall Foley
Cecilie Skog	Christine Barness
Rolf Bae	Johannes Moser
Lars Nessa	Stefan Grossniklaus
Hugues D'Aubarde	Brian Hall
Korean CLIMBERS	Kelsang Dawa

Walter Bonatti

Nyima Tsering
Phurbu Tsering
Concetto La Malfa

Casting
Dorothy MacGabhann

Cameras supplied by
Vast Valley
Volker Elhers
Galahad Goulet

Trains/transport
Jungfraubahnen Management AG
Daniela Fuchs
Phillipe Kuonen

INTERVIEWS

Camera	Stephen O'Reilly
Sound Recordist	Dan Birch
Production Co-ordinator	Dumnac Goulet
Travel Coordinator Kathmandu	Kathryn Kennedy
Coordinator Kathmandu	High Country Trekking
Attorney Nepal	Mr. Ang Rita Sherpa
English/Nepali Translators	Pemba Gyalje Sherpa
	Gourish K Kharel
	Gava Shrestha
	Snigdha Dhungel
Trainee Make-Up	Rachelle Guiry
Transcripts	Laura Danaher

CINEFLEX K2 AERIAL FILM SHOOT

Director /Producer	Nick Ryan
Production Manager	Stephen O'Reilly
Camera Engineer	Mike Wright
Camera Operators	Nick Ryan
	Stephen O'Reilly
Liaison Manager	Pakistan Mr. Abdus Samad
Production Coordinator	Nisar Malik – Walkabout Films
Drivers	Naveed Shah
	Omar Khan
Helicopter	5 Army Aviation Squadron

Commanding Officer	<i>'Fearless Five'</i>
Operations Officer	<i>Lieutenant Colonel</i> Ahmed Anwar Baig
Pilots	<i>Major</i> Imran Jadoon
	<i>Major</i> Anjum Raffique
	<i>Major</i> Amin Kattakazai
	<i>Major</i> Javed Alam
Crew Chief	Hav Ishrat
Engineer in-Charge	Capt Sameem Shabbir
Maintenance Team	Hav Shabbir
	Hav Rizwan
	Hav Kanwal Zia
	Hav Amin
RECORDING equipment	Visual Impact Dublin

LEGAL

Matheson Ormsby Prentice	James Hickey
	Katie O'Sullivan
Eugene F Collins	Andrea Martin
Production Accountant	Fionnuala Dorney
Insurance	Media Insurance Broker

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE

1954 Italian expedition - Club Alpino Italiano - Pino Brambilla

2008 K2 Footage

Hoselito Bite, Gerard McDonnell, Fredrik Strang, Wilco Van Rooijen

2008 K2 Photographs

Hoselito Bite, Marco Confortola, Chhiring Dorje Sherpa, Pemba Gyalje
Chris Klinke, Pasang Lama, Tshering Lama Bhote, Gerard McDonnell
Lars Nessa, Nicholas Rice, Cecilie Skog, Oystein Stangeland
Wilco Van Rooijen, Alberto Zerain

Additional Archive

DocLab, Pat Falvey, Kevin Hughes, West Limerick Radio, McDonnell Family
Cecilie Skog, Annie Starkey, Wilco van Rooijen, Karl Unterkirchen/Montagna.tv,
Cineteca Storica Museo Nazionale della Montagna – CAI-Torino

News Archive

Australian Broadcasting Corporation Library Sales, AP Archive, BBC Motion Gallery
Explorers Web, The Independent, National Geographic, NI Syndication, Ermanno
Salvaterra, Spiegel Online, Thomson Reuters

Additional VO
Avril Daly

Post Production

ADDITIONAL EDITING	Helen Chapman
Trainee Editor	Nick Ryan
ADDITIONAL MUSIC – BONATTI	Julian Ulrichs
SEQUENCES	Simon O'Reilly
Sound Design	Simon O'Reilly
Sound Mix	Ardmore Sound
Sound Engineer	Garret Farrell
Colour Grading	The Mill, London
Colourist	Aubrey Woodiwiss
DATA & COLOUR ASSISTANT	Jim Bracher
Telecine producer	Cath Short
Visual Effects	Image Now Films
Compositing	Nick Ryan
3D Modelling/animation	Dave Head
Graphics sequences	Nick Ryan
Archive Clearances	David Torpey
Post Production Co-ordinator	Mary Carson
Production Trainee	Deirdre Levins
FOR BORD SCANNÁN NA hÉIREANN/THE	Niamh Barry
IRISH FILM BOARD	Alan Maher
For RTÉ	Sarah Ryder
	Ian O'Brien
	Conor Sweeney
Executive Producers for BBC	John Dunne
	Nick Fraser
	Kate Townsend
Section 481 Finance	Crowe Horwath: John Gleeson
	and Róisín Henehan
Financing and Tax Advisor	John Gleeson
Production Executive for Passion Pictures	Nicole Stott

'Poc Ar Buile'
Written by Sean O Riada
Published by Real World Works
Performed by Ger McDonnell

'JULY'

Written and performed by Terry Reid
Published by Carlin Music

Produced with the support of investment incentives for the Irish Film Industry provided
by the Government of Ireland.

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Sweden.

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