



Itinerant Media and Little Monster Films Present

MERU

Directed by Jimmy Chin and E. Chai Vasarhelyi
Produced by E. Chai Vasarhelyi, Jimmy Chin and Shannon Ethridge

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2015

Distribution



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

After suffering dramatic set backs in their lives, three close friends who are among the world's best professional climbers battle their complicated pasts, inner demons and nature's harshest elements in an attempt to confront the Shark's Fin on Mount Meru, the most technically complicated and dangerous peak in the Himalayas, one that has never been scaled to completion.

SYNOPSIS

In the high-stakes game of big-wall climbing, the Shark's Fin on Mount Meru may be the ultimate prize. Sitting at the headwaters of the sacred Ganges River in Northern India, the Shark's Fin has seen more failed attempts by elite climbing teams over the past 30 years than any other ascent in the Himalayas.

The layout of the 21,000-foot mountain's perversely stacked obstacles makes it both a nightmare and an irresistible calling for some of the world's toughest climbers. Hauling over 200 pounds of gear up 4,000-feet of technical, snowy, mixed ice and rock climbing is actually the simple part of this endeavor. After crossing that gauntlet you reach the Shark's Fin itself: 1,500 feet of smooth, nearly featureless granite. There are few pre-existing fissures, cracks or footwalls. It is simply a straight sheet of overhanging rock.

To undertake Meru, says Jon Krakauer, the bestselling author of *Into Thin Air*, "You can't just be a good ice climber. You can't just be good at altitude. You can't just be a good rock climber. It's defeated so many good climbers and maybe will defeat everybody for all time. Meru isn't Everest. On Everest you can hire Sherpas to take most of the risks. This is a whole different kind of climbing."

In October 2008, Conrad Anker, Jimmy Chin and Renan Ozturk arrived in India to tackle Meru. What was meant to be a seven-day trip with the equivalent amount of food became a 20-day odyssey in sub-zero temperatures, thanks to the setback of a massive storm that showered the mountain with at least 10 feet of snow. Like everyone before them, their journey was not a successful one. But they had reached further than anyone else, beaten back just 100 meters below the elusive summit.

Heartbroken and defeated, Anker, Chin and Ozturk returned to their everyday lives, swearing never to attempt the journey again. But they faced sudden physical and emotional challenges back home, too, challenges only exacerbated by the siren song of Meru, one that Anker perhaps heard the loudest. By September 2011, Anker had convinced his two lifelong friends to undertake the Shark's Fin once more, under even more extraordinary circumstances than the first time around.

MERU is the story of that journey—one of friendship, sacrifice, hope and obsession.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENTS

JIMMY CHIN

"I've spent much of my life in the mountains as both a climber and as a professional photographer. I always wanted to make a film that gave an audience the visceral experience of going on a difficult alpine big wall climb. I hoped to give people a glimpse of the stakes, the risks and sacrifices involved.

But I also wanted to show that following your passions is not always a beautiful thing. It can be fraught with internal conflict, doubt and intractable compromise. I often ask myself: Where do you draw the line between following your heart and your responsibility to others?

When you're making a movie on a mountain, the camera is an added appendage; one you often wish you didn't have to carry. While shooting *MERU*, it was a real struggle just to keep the two small cameras we carried from getting destroyed.

I always say the rules of filming on a mountain climb are fairly straightforward. Shoot whenever you can. Don't hold up the team. And don't drop the camera."

CHAI VASARHELYI

"As someone who isn't particularly comfortable with heights, it was important for me that *MERU* be more than just about mountain climbing. It's a truly personal story, one about pursuing one's passions, though in this case those passions are unusually extreme.

In these kinds of stories, people often get caught up in the accomplishment, but there's another side, of course. Being married to Jimmy, I'm especially interested in what the female characters in the story—the ones back home, often wringing their hands—had to say. How did they tolerate the risks these climbers, their closest family members, take as part of their professional careers? What drove their lives, and what kept them steady?

Despite the fact that this film reaches an apex of 21,000 feet, I felt *MERU* had to also remain firmly on the ground."

FILMMAKER BIOS

JIMMY CHIN - DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Jimmy Chin lives a life of art and adventure, combining a career as a photographer, documentary filmmaker and a 14-year veteran of The North Face Athlete Team. In the past decade, Chin has collaborated with, filmed and photographed some of the world's most progressive athletes and explorers while participating in breakthrough expeditions around the planet. He has made notable first ascents in the Karakoram, traversed the

Chang Tang Plateau in Tibet on foot and skied first descents in the Himalayas. He is one of the few people to ski Mount Everest from the summit. Chin shoots for a wide variety of commercial and editorial clients. His photography has graced the cover of *National Geographic* and garnered recognition from *Photo District News*, Communication Arts, the American Society of Magazine Editors and the Lowell Thomas Journalism Awards. Chin has shot and directed documentaries, television and commercial projects for The North Face, Pirelli, Apple, *National Geographic*, Working Title and RSA Films. As a professional athlete, he has been featured in *National Geographic*, *Outside*, *People* and *Men's Journal*. He splits his time between New York City and Jackson Hole, Wyoming with his co-director and wife, Chai Vasarhelyi, and their daughter Marina.

E. CHAI VASARHELYI - DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

Elizabeth "Chai" Vasarhelyi's films as a director include *Youssou N'Dour: I Bring What I Love* (Oscilloscope, 2009), which premiered at the Telluride and Toronto Film Festivals; *A Normal Life* (Tribeca Film Festival, Best Documentary, 2003); *Touba* (SXSW, Special Jury Prize Best Cinematography, 2013) and the upcoming *Incorruptible* (2015). Vasarhelyi has participated in the Good Pitch and received grants from the Sundance Institute, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Bertha Britdoc, the William and Mary Greve Foundation and the National Endowment of the Arts. She holds a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Princeton University and lives between New York City and Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

RENAN OZTURK - CINEMATOGRAPHER

Renan Ozturk is an expedition climber, filmmaker and landscape artist. His cutting edge first ascents, mountain murals and short films have taken him from the high Himalayas to the remote jungles of Burma. Ozturk has pushed the art of filmmaking in extreme locations in particular through his use of lightweight technology. His video "dispatches," produced during expeditions, bring the adventure to a worldwide online audience in near real time. Through digital recognition and top film festival awards, Renan's visual storytelling style is on the cutting edge of the outdoor industry.

BOB EISENHARDT, A.C.E. - EDITOR

Bob Eisenhardt is a three-time Emmy Award winner and Oscar nominee. With over 60 films to his credit, he has edited documentaries for Barbara Kopple, Maysles Films, Susan Froemke, Matt Tyrnauer, Marc Levin, David Grubin and Alex Gibney. Recent films include *Wagner's Dream*, which received an Emmy nomination for editing, *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up & Sing*, *Living Emergency: Stories of Doctors Without Borders* and *Dancing in Jaffa*. He is currently editing the HBO film *Everything Is Copy* on the life of Nora Ephron.

J. RALPH - COMPOSER

J. Ralph is an Academy Award nominated composer, singer/songwriter and producer from New York City. Over the last six years, he has written and produced the music for *Man On Wire* (2009), *The Cove* (2010) *Hell And Back Again* (2012) and received Oscar nominations for his work on *Chasing Ice* (2013) and *Her* (2014). Most recently, he wrote and produced the music for the documentaries *Virunga*, *Finding Vivian Maier*, *Racing Extinction* and *Garnet's Gold*, which features his original song "Until the End," performed by Liza Minnelli and Wynton Marsalis. J. Ralph is a fellow of Yale University, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the only composer ever to win two consecutive A.I.C.P. awards. Several of his works are included in the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection.

SHANNON ETHRIDGE - PRODUCER

Shannon Ethridge has worked in the entertainment industry as a producer of commercial and branded campaigns for almost 15 years. Her clients range from Fortune 500 companies to startups, and her content experiences scale from passionate social issues to risky outdoor pursuits. She embarked into the world of documentary filmmaking through this expansive network with the cause-related film *Summit On The Summit* with MTV.

SUBJECT BIOS

CONRAD ANKER

Conrad Anker has made a specialty of climbing the most technically challenging terrain he can find. This search has taken him from the northern realms of Alaska and Baffin Island, to the farthest southern reaches of Patagonia and Antarctica, where in 1997, with Alex Lowe and Jon Krakauer, he climbed Rakekniven, a 2,500-foot wall in Queen Maud Land. That climb led to both a film and magazine piece by *National Geographic*, an organization with which he frequently collaborates. As captain of The North Face Athlete Team, Anker urges climbers to be boots on the ground in observing the changes wrought by man-made climate change. He is also civically active in his home state of Montana, serving on the boards of the Montana State University Leadership Institute, Protect Our Winters, Bozeman Ice Tower Foundation, Gallatin County Fair Board and the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation.

JENNI LOWE-ANKER

Jennifer Lowe-Anker's paintings are rendered with the vivid color and rich texture of livestock marker, a folkly medium that is intended for marking the hides of sheep and cattle. Lowe began using the oily paint-sticks in 1985 while a student at MSU and since graduating in 1987 she developed a style that is now her signature. She and her husband Conrad Anker reside in Bozeman, Montana with their sons, Max, Sam and Isaac. Lowe-Anker is the author of *Forget Me Not*, a memoir published by Mountaineers Books and

winner of the National Outdoor Book Award for literature. She is president of the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation, a nonprofit created in memory of her late husband that works to bring a safer and better life to indigenous mountain people in Nepal.

JON KRAKAUER

Jon Krakauer is an internationally acclaimed best selling author. His works include *Eiger Dreams*, *Under The Banner of Heaven*, *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air*. For the past two decades Krakauer's writing has been published in the likes of *Outside*, *Architectural Digest*, *Rolling Stone*, *Time*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *National Geographic*. His 1996 book, *Into The Wild* spent more than two years on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was made into a feature film directed by Sean Penn. *Into Thin Air*, meanwhile, redefined the genre of adventure writing and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in literature.

*** JIMMY CHIN & RENAN OZTURK APPEAR IN THE FILMMAKER BIOS SECTION**

CREDITS

Directed by

Jimmy Chin
Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi

Produced by

Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi
Jimmy Chin
Shannon Ethridge

Cinematography by

Renan Ozturk
Jimmy Chin

Edited by

Bob Einsenhardt, a.c.e.

Music by

J. Ralph

Executive Producers

Daniel T. Reiner
Elizabeth Lauren Reiner

Executive Producers

Jonas Tempel
Chris Wright
Loren Bough

Featuring

Conrad Anker
Jimmy Chin
Renan Ozturk
Jon Krakauer
Jenni Lowe-Anker
Amee Hinkley
Grace Chin
Jeremy Jones

Additional Cinematography

Chris Figschau

Sean Aaron
Jim Aikman
Conrad Anker
Patrick Brooks
Kris Erickson
Anson Fogel
Anjin Herndon
Amee Hinkley
Jim Hurst
Matt Irving
Tim Kemple

Andy Maser
Travis McMunn
Pete Mortimer
Curt Morgan
Jenny Nichols
Emily Nichols
Jojo Pennebaker
Paul Roderick
Nick Rosen
Mickey Shafer
Cedar Wright

Additional Editing

Renan Ozturk
William Lehman
Anson Fogel

Associate Producers

Hilary Gish
Samantha Knowles

Assistant Editors

Brian Ariotti
Jessie Dorfman
John Kersten
Ned Thorne

Trailer Editing

Renan Ozturk

William Lehman

Picture Finishing Services

Goldcrest Post – New York

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John J. Dowdell III

Finishing Artist

Ricardo Madan

Supervising Finishing Artist

Michelle Ambruz

Technical Supervisor

Tim Spitzer

Digital Intermediate Producer

Margaret Lewis

Graphics, Animation and Special Effects

Helio Collective

Jim Menkol – Helio Collective

Kina Pickett -- Helio Collective

Marty Blumen

Eric Bucy

Barry Thompson

Music Supervisor

Adam Foley

Music Consultant

Tracy McKnight

Supervising Sound Editor

Deborah Wallach

Mixed by

Tom Fleischman

Soundtrack New York

Additional Dialogue Recording

Soundtrack New York

C5 Sound

Coupe Studios Music and Sound Design, LLC

Score Composed by

J. Ralph

Produced, Arranged and Orchestrated by J. Ralph

Co-Produced, Arranged and Orchestrated by Arthur Pingrey

Additional Arrangements by Brian Binsack

Score Engineered and Mixed by J. Ralph

2nd Engineer – Arthur Pingrey and Brian Binsack

Pro-Tools and Programming – Arthur Pingrey and Brian Binsack

Music Editor – Arthur Pingrey

Studio Coordinator – Guy Rabinowitz

Legal by – Alan Kress, Esq.

Mastered by Bub Jess / Out a Sound

Recorded and Mixed at The Theater, New York City

Featuring the Performances of David Garza

Additional Music by The Rumor Mill

Transcribers

Ruth Angrand

Brian Ariotti

Catherine Cannon

Jeremy Pague

Archival Material Provided Courtesy of

Alpinist.com

American Adventures

American Alpine Journal

Conrad Anker

The Associated Press

Valeri Babanov

David Breashears

Michael Brown

Jimmy Chin

Rob DesLauriers

Kris Erickson

Josef Friedhuber

Andrej Grmovšek

Jackson Hole News and Guide

Michael Kennedy

Andy Maser

Ian McIntosh

Michael Muller

National Geographic

Chris Noble

The North Face

Outside Magazine

Renan Ozturk

Roger Payne

Planet B6

Steve Quinlan

Cory Richards

Brady Robinson

Sender Films

Serac Films

Sherpas Cinema

Anne Sherwood

Teton Gravity Research

Under Solen Media

Freddie Wilkinson

Gordon Wiltsie

Music

“MERU”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“BIG DAY”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“DEVILS FREE”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“MOUNTAIN CEREMONY”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“SIDEWAYS WEATHER”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“CABINET SPLIT”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“THE WOLF”

Written and Performed by Eddie Vedder
Courtesy of Monkey Wrench, under exclusive license to RCA Records
By Arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

“MOON”

Written by Laurent Clerc
Published by Youth & Progress Records
Performed by Little People
Courtesy of Youth & Progress Records

“CHRONOGRAPH”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“DISTANT PLANET”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“PLANET 3”

Written by Philip Sheppard
Radiomovies Limited

“HEARTBEATS”

Performed by José González

Courtesy of Mute

By arrangement with Bank Robber Music

“DREAD”

Written by Philip Sheppard

Radiomovies Limited

“NIGHT ASCENT”

Written by Philip Sheppard

Radiomovies Limited

“HOUSE OF CARDS”

Written by Philip Sheppard

Radiomovies Limited

“THE ANSWER (TRENTMØLLER REMIX)”

Written by James Lavelle, Pablo Clements, James Griffith, Matthew Pierce, Mike Lowery,
Gavin Clark

Published by Lullabies And War Cries Songs, Copyright Control, Hosmer Music,
Albinopines Publishing, Luvean Says Music, Music Sales Corporation

Performed by UNKLE

Courtesy of Surrender All Ltd.

“RUSKA”

Performed by Apocalyptica

Courtesy of Polygram Finland under license from Universal Music Enterprises

“THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE DAY”

Written by Christopher Hrasky, Michael James, Munaf Rayani, Mark Smith

Published by Explosions In The Sky Music

Performed by Explosions In The Sky

Courtesy of Temporary Residence Ltd.

“RISE UP”

Written by Andra Day and Jennifer Decilveo

Performed by Andra Day

Courtesy of Warner Bros. Records Inc. and Buskin Records

By arrangement with Warner Music Group Film & TV Licensing

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Julie Schaffner
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The Summit Family
Pete Takeda
Aimee Tetreault
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Kenji Tsukamoto
Hennie Van Jaarsveld
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Freddie Wilkinson
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Jon Winsour
Wookie
Doug Workman

In Loving Memory

Yen Yen Chin
Alex Lowe
Mugs Stump