

**MUSIC  
BOX  
FILMS**

**presents**

# **MERU**

A film by Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi



**90 min | USA | 2015 | Rated R**

**Official Site:** <http://www.merufilm.com>

**Press Materials:** <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/meru-press>

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## **FESTIVALS AND AWARDS**

**WINNER** – Sundance Film Festival, Documentary Audience Award  
Official Selection - San Francisco Int'l Film Festival  
Official Selection - True/False Film Festival  
Opening Night Selection – Full Frame Film Festival  
Official Selection – Nashville Film Festival

## **SYNOPSIS**

In the high-stakes pursuit of big-wall climbing, the Shark's Fin on Mount Meru may be the ultimate prize. Sitting 21,000 feet above the sacred Ganges River in Northern India, the mountain's perversely stacked obstacles make it both a nightmare and an irresistible calling for some of the world's toughest climbers. In October 2008, renowned alpinists Conrad Anker, Jimmy Chin and Renan Ozturk arrived in India to tackle Meru. Their planned seven-day trip quickly devolved into a 20-day odyssey in sub-zero temperatures with depleting food rations. Within 100 meters of the elusive summit, their journey - like all previous attempts - fell short of the goal.

Heartbroken and defeated, the trio returned to their everyday lives, where the siren song of Meru continued to beckon. By September 2011, Anker had convinced his team to reunite and undertake the Shark's Fin once more, under even more extraordinary circumstances. MERU is the story of that journey, an expedition through nature's harshest elements and one's complicated inner demons, and ultimately on to impossible new heights.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

After suffering dramatic set backs in their personal 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. MERU is the story of their journey, an expedition to impossible new heights.

## **LOGLINE**

Three renowned climbers navigate nature's harshest elements and their own complicated inner demons to ascend Mount Meru, the most technically complicated and dangerous peak in the Himalayas.

## **DIRECTORS' 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."

## SUBJECT BIOS

*Bios for featured climbers Jimmy Chin and Renan Ozturk appear in the Filmmaker section on the next page.*

### **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 folky medium that is intended for marking the hides of sheep and cattle. She began using the oily paint-sticks in 1985 while a student at MSU, and since graduating in 1987 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. Meanwhile, *Into Thin Air* redefined the genre of adventure writing and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in literature.

## 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 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.

### **ELIZABETH 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 and producer from NYC whose music has sold more than 10 million records worldwide and reached the No.1 spot in over 22 countries. His career began with the signing to Atlantic Records as a recording artist and since then J. Ralph has written and produced the music for numerous Grammy Award winning artists, symphony orchestras, The United Nations, The President of The United States and more Oscar winning/nominated documentaries than any other composer in the history of the Academy Awards. Such films include *Man On Wire*, *The Cove*, *Hell And Back Again*, *Chasing Ice*, *Finding Vivian Maier* and *Virunga*. He is widely regarded for the original songs he writes and produces for these films such as the Oscar nominated "Before My Time" performed by Scarlett Johansson and Joshua Bell, "Hell & Back" performed by Willie Nelson, "We Will Not Go" performed by Youssou Ndour, Salif Keita & Fally Ipupa and "Until The End" performed by Liza Minnelli & Wynton Marsalis. J. Ralph is the only composer to win two consecutive A.I.C.P. awards. Several of Mr. Ralph's works are included in the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection of film and media in New York City.

## **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.

## 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, 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 Figenshau, 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

**Picture Finishing Services** Goldcrest Post – New York

**Colorist** 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, Kina Pickett), 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

**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

**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  
Mixed at The Theater, New York City

**Featuring the Performances** of David Garza  
**Additional Music by** The Rumor Mill

**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

**Legal Services**

Frankfurt Kurnit Klein and Selz PC Hayden M. Goldblatt Reavis Parent Lehrer LLP

**Accounting** Michael Heyman, CPA

**Distribution Advisor** John Braun/ Submarine Entertainment

**Special Thanks to Expedition Sponsors** The North Face Revo

**In Loving Memory** Yen Yen Chin, Alex Lowe, Mugs Stump

### **About Music Box Films**

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a leading distributor of international, American independent, and documentary content in North America along with the best in international TV series and mini-series.

Releases in 2014 included Roger Michell's LE WEEK-END, written by Hanif Kureishi and starring Jim Broadbent; the Emmy Award winning French-language series "The Returned"; Pawel Pawlikowski's 2015 Academy Award® winner IDA; and the Sundance Audience Award-winning documentary THE GREEN PRINCE.

Recent titles include Dominik Graf's BELOVED SISTERS, Germany's official submission to the Academy Awards®, Shlomi and Ronit Elkabetz's GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM, Israel's official submission to the Academy Awards®, and Anne Fontaine's GEMMA BOVERY.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.