

movies SOLDIER REVIEW

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Legendary footsteps: 21st century climbers follow the ill-fated lead of George Mallory in this enjoyable Altitude Films epic

Praise from up high

Stunning documentary depicts the fearlessness of George Mallory on Everest

Review: Joe Clapson

THIS film is a perfect example of how real life, when expertly captured, cannot be beaten by multi-million-dollar special effects or an A-list Hollywood cast.

The Wildest Dream is the story of one man's obsession with retracing the ill-fated steps of British explorer George Mallory, who disappeared on Mount Everest in 1924.

Mallory's body had remained unfound until 1999 when renowned mountaineer Conrad Anker discovered the climber's corpse high in Everest's notorious "death zone".

Emmy Award-winning Anthony Geffen's breathtaking piece of cinema captures Anker's journey to answer questions that have plagued the mountaineering fraternity for more than 70 years.

The film shows how Mallory's belongings, including unsent letters, were found on his body.

The only item missing was a photograph of his wife, Ruth, which Mallory had promised to place on the summit if he succeeded.

We see Anker strive to prove that Mallory could have died on his return from the summit rather

than on the way up to it, as previously believed.

Told through the poignant and evocative letters between Mallory and his beloved Ruth, the movie combines previously-unseen photographs and restored film footage with the present-day story of Anker's expedition.

The narration of Liam Neeson (*Schindler's List*) guides the audience up the deadly mountain while intertwining Mallory's emotional letters, read by Ralph Fiennes (*The English Patient*), and the talking heads of family members connected to this remarkable story.

Aside from the awe-inspiring images from the highest point on the globe, the film is about far more than conquering a mountain.

It shows the astonishing lengths Mallory went to in pursuit of a dream, as well as the passionate link between Anker, the modern-day climber and his predecessors.

Geffen explained that he was especially drawn to the parallels between Mallory and Anker.

"Both were risking everything, both had wives and children at home and their lives intersected on the mountain," he said.

"The real story is about a human journey and its consequences."

With the idea to mirror Mallory's attempt to

take on the 8,848m Himalayan peak as accurately as possible, Anker chose young British climbing prodigy Leo Houlding as his partner.

"The main thing was the parallel between us and Mallory and Andrew Irvine [Mallory's partner]," Anker said.

"There was the same age spread, the same difference in experience levels."

At certain points in *The Wildest Dream*, the fearless pair even swap their state-of-the-art kit for much lower-tech, 1920s'-style attire.

Dressed in gabardine and wearing hobnailed boots, Mallory had frozen to death in the snow. But still, Anker and Houlding wanted to replicate the journey as closely as possible.

Nearing the end of their mission Anker and Houlding attempt to free-climb the infamous second step, which nowadays is overcome via a metal ladder.

Anker insists on removing the aid to stay true to 1920s' conditions, in the knowledge that one misstep would mean death. Whether you are a mountaineer or not, this is compulsory viewing for anyone looking for intense, emotional action coupled with stunning backdrops.

● *The Wildest Dream* is out in cinemas across the UK on August 6. ■



White stuff: Renowned mountaineering master Conrad Anker joins British climbing phenomenon Leo Houlding to scale Everest with 1920s' equipment