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EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD plays Hot Docs 2013

by RYAN MCNEIL on Apr 25, 2013 • 8:00 am

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When Mozart gives way to Metallica, you're watching a whole different brand of nature film. Matter of fact, to label EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD as merely a "nature film" does it a disservice, since the film is about not just this planet we live on, but the way we live on it.

Thanks to global warming, a narrow path to northern Greenland has become passable for a few weeks every year. Knowing this, a wild bunch of scientists and artists board a ship to research and document this seldom-explored sliver of our planet.

As the adventurers are introduced, one gets the sense that the team we meet is a team Danny Ocean and Steve Zissou would have assembled in tandem. Bringing together a wonderful blend of creative and academic energy, the crew is made up of a captain, a geologist, a photographer, a zoologist, an archeologist, a marine biologist, an artist, a geographer, a geochemist, and another artist. Seriously, he's introduced as "the other artist". Despite their various disciplines and levels of experience, they share a common spirit...one of harmony with the planet and existentialism.

One undeniable allure of EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD is its eye-popping visuals. The film brings us somewhere we seldom see – a place we begin to feel we weren't *meant* to see. It is a landscape that is both inspiring and humbling, and seems to mock our puny existence on this planet. As we stare at cliff faces the size of apartment buildings, we are told that they are capable of whispering to us or screaming at us. Ordinarily, such declarations could be eye-rolling. However, when one considers how much this corner of the earth inspires observation, exploration, and thought, it's easy to subscribe to the poetic philosophy.

Truly, the film illustrates that the mind can go to some wild places at the end of the world, and perhaps that's why the expedition has folded in some artists to go along with the scientists. While we're shown a moment or two that suggests the artists might not make it back alive, their enthusiasm and introspection is welcome and gives the film a sense of wry, bent humour.

As the film gives us scene after scene of visual splendour, we're given a wonderful amount of breathing room to make sense of its meaning. It could be seen as a cautionary tale about what we're doing to this planet. It could be

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seen as a reminder of how insignificant we are in the grand scheme of the earth's history. Most importantly though – EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD wants us to look and think. To paraphrase one of the explorers, the evidence we find means nothing. All it says is whatever we want it to say. Knowing this, director Daniel Dencik gives his audience nothing but humour and serenity while they decide what the evidence gathered from Greenland says to them.

The explorers in this film refer to their mission as a voyage into the "Heart of Lightness", and in some ways that nicely sums up the feeling one comes away with after seeing the film. We journey with them, well away from the pieces of Earth man has any measure of control over, and arrive to find a place that humbles and inspires. This film encourages us to lean over the edge and peer into an endless abyss...and as the abyss peers back up at us, it leaves us with a feeling of grace and awe.

EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WORLD is playing tomorrow Friday April 26 – 7pm at TIFF Bell Lightbox, Sunday April 27 – 3:30pm at The Bloor, and Saturday May 4 – 6:30pm at The Bloor.

Tags: daniel dencik, danish, documentary, expedition to the end of the world, hot docs 2013

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2 comments



NICK says:
Apr 25, 2013

I find this one intriguing. Sounds a little like Werner Herzog without all the existential dread. Keeping an eye out for it. Thank you!

Reply



RYAN MCNEIL says:
Apr 25, 2013

[Give the trailer a look!](#)

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