

SNOLIFE

Mike Hatrup, Stephane Dan and Kye Peterson at the top of the Aiguille du Midi, Chamonix, France

Steep Thrills



On Hollywood's big screen, the glitz and glam of racing — its fierce rivalries and fraction-of-a-second finishes — have long captured the spotlight. But the easy plot lines have overshadowed the experience that most skiers relate to: a private interplay between the soul and the mountain, the bliss of surfing a deeply three-dimensional medium and the admiration of the art left behind on the mountain canvas. That is, until *Steep*.

A landmark documentary on the experiential side of skiing, *Steep* begins in 1970s Chamonix and weaves risk, reward and adventure around its pioneers. One of them is Doug Coombs — whose skiing death in La Grave, France just days after filming for *Steep* fittingly focuses on the delicate balance of life in the mountains.

Produced by The Documentary Group — a collaboration of former ABC News execs — *Steep* traces ski history through interviews and footage

of yesterday's founders and today's ground breakers including Bill Briggs, Shane McConkey, Seth Morrison, Andrew McLean and more. Capping spectacular locations in Alaska, Wyoming, Canada, France and Iceland, the team used high-definition cameras and at times a 3,200-foot-long Cablecam to place the viewer squarely in the skier's seat.

Steep holds the promise of exposure to the world at large. Picked up by Sony Pictures Classics for release on December 21 in 25 top markets and on DVD, *Steep* is fueling more than ski-town buzz. It was Sony Pictures Classics, after all, that threw studio muscle behind Stacey Peralta's acclaimed action-sports epics *Dogtown* and *Z-Boys* and *Riding Giants*, which followed the heartbeat and the history of skateboarding and big-wave surfing, and fueled dramatic industry growth. Indeed, skiers might get ready for the warm glow of the action-sports spotlight. — *Graham Gephart*

Blowing Up Boundaries

Soon after *Steep* this winter comes *Swift, Silent, Deep*, a feature-length documentary on the Jackson Hole Air Force. Named after the group's motto, emblazoned on the sewn-on patches that signified membership, the JHAF were the skiing elite who quietly ducked ropes to pioneer bold lines around Jackson. With credibility on the slopes to back their considerable film experience, producers Peter Pilafian and Jon 'JK' Klaczkiewicz chronicle the history of the once-secret cadre of skiers and the impact their exploits had on modern backcountry and big-mountain skiing. — *GG*