

---

May 5, 2007

## The High Country Is Ready for Its Close-Up

By NATHANIEL VINTON

A documentary called “Steep,” which premiered at the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), is the first ski film to use Cablecam technology, the system that allows cameras to swoop over quarterbacks in N.F.L. telecasts.

The technique takes audiences closer to the experience of skiing some of the biggest and most dangerous mountains in the world in a 92-minute documentary directed by Mark Obenhaus.

The footage was gathered at several sites, including Bella Coola, British Columbia, where helicopters were used to install 3,200 feet of synthetic rope between two peaks to hold a joystick-controlled camera on a pulley system.

The cameras moved with the skiers as they descended a long, steep mountain chute at an estimated 30 miles an hour and hovered alongside as skiers made turns through powdery snow in a glade of low-lying trees.

“I never expected anyone would call me for a ski movie, but when they brought it up I knew exactly how to do it because that’s how Cablecams started,” said Jim Rodnunsky, a former professional skier who invented the system as a skiing instructional tool.

Since Rodnunsky developed the award-winning system in the late 1980s, he has used it at the Olympics and the Kentucky Derby, and for numerous feature films. But setting up the equipment on a remote location was a challenge. A crew of expert mountain climbers spent several weeks at 9,500 feet, installing the system and waiting for the weather to improve.

They had emergency shelters with food and sleeping bags in case storms prevented the helicopters from picking them up.

“I wish there was more budgets for ski movies, because we’d like to do more of that work,” Rodnunsky said. “It was really fun.”

Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

---