

The Rescue

This is a heart-pounding story of a rescue that gripped the world in 2018 after a group of 12 young Thai boys (ages 11 to 16) and their football (soccer) coach were isolated by an unexpected flood in an underground cave in Northern Thailand. All were eventually found (unemotional and barely alive) clinging to an exposed rock formation but by this statement I am not indicating spoilers, because this international savoir story was a media phenomenon for days and because the true drama is in the daunting and harrowing retrieval itself.

The Thai government (esp., Thai Navy Seals) undertook the principal rescue mission, along with many other country's contributions, but it was the efforts of two assuming Englishmen (Rick Stanton and Richard Harris) and one Australian doctor—all amateur cave-divers--that did most to conceive of and organize the extraction. It is amazing that, despite all the differences in nationalities, training cultures, and languages, a dogged cadre of middle-aged, non-professional cave divers headed this unbelievable rescue.

"The Rescue" is the latest from a husband and wife documentary team steeped in mountain climbing stories. Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasahelyl are producers and cinematographers who have had an spectacular pair of mountain movies: "Meru" (2015), followed by "Free Solo," (2018), which won the Oscar for Best Feature-Length Documentary. Their films are the more amazing when you realize, as you are watching them, that they are the ones **filming** their dare-devil subjects up close and in the same space!

Though this time Chin and Vasahelyl are working underground rather than on rock faces, their challenge is no less fascinating and exacting. They take on their story using real footage, TV reportage, and interviews with the rescuers, and reveal the distinctive mentality of the dedicated cave divers. "Rescue" also provides, in re-enacted footage, an expert procedural re-creation of the perilous extraction process, with divers having to sedate the boys (so as not to send them into panic) and haul them out one-by-one.

By aware, this is a pulse-pounder.
(*The film runs 147 minutes and is rated "PG."*)

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