

Staff report

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Aspen's Wheeler Opera House announces MountainSummit lineup

A documentary about the life of iconoclastic Western writer Edward Abbey, one about a fight between Sherpas and climbers on Everest, some politically charged international stories and a kid-friendly entry from the director of "March of the Penguins" round out the lineup of the Wheeler Opera House's MountainSummit.

The Wheeler announced the program Wednesday. The sixth annual film festival, presented by the Wheeler and Mountainfilm in Telluride, runs Aug. 21 through 24.

"We concentrated on building a diverse program where every day's events would be irresistible, and we think we nailed it," Wheeler director Gram Slaton said in a statement.

The festival opens on Aug. 21 with "The Grand Rescue," which tells the story of a 1967 mountain rescue in the Grand Tetons. It's followed by "Wrenched," which explores the life of author and activist Abbey and his legacy in the environmental movement in the American West.

Aug. 22's program begins with the first of two early "Cocktailer" events, where a free Aspen Brewing Co. beer is included with your ticket. The event includes a screening of "Walled In," following kayakers on a dangerous descent of the Kaweah River and exploring questions about the risk and reward of outdoor adventure. It's followed by "Vessel," a look at Women on Waves, which provides health care and abortions to women from countries where abortion is illegal by taking them into international waters. The Aug. 22 lineup closes with "Point and Shoot," an entry from Oscar-nominated filmmaker Marshall Curry about a young American with obsessive-compulsive disorder who takes a transformative international motorcycle trip.

Aug. 23's slate of films begins with an afternoon screening of "Once Upon a Forest," a family-friendly story about the rebirth of a forest by "March of the Penguins" director Luc Jacquet. It's followed by a "Cocktailer" presentation of "High Tension," a film capturing the 2013 confrontation between climbers and Sherpas on Mount Everest. Then comes "Virunga," an investigation of the political turmoil that erupted when an oil reserve was discovered in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Saturday's late show features "Queens and Cowboys," chronicling a year on the gay rodeo circuit.

Aug. 24's closing-day presentations begin with "Last Days in Vietnam," a portrait of the close of the Vietnam War and the American evacuation of Saigon. Then-director Tom Shadyac — best known for features like "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" — presents "Tashi and the Monk," about a former monk working in an orphanage in the foothills of the Himalayas. The festival concludes with "An Honest Liar," following magician James Randi on his quest to expose phonies in the magic field.

Filmmaker discussions throughout the festival include the directors of "Wrenched," "Walled In," "Vessel" and "Last Days in Vietnam" as well as Shadyac. The festival also hosts coffee talks at 10 a.m. on Aug. 23 and 24 at the Wheeler. The Aug. 23 talk features festival guests discussing the evolution of social and conservation movements. Aug. 24 includes Randi, Shadyac and subjects from "Queens and Cowboys" discussing civil rights.

The Ute Mountaineer also will host free screenings of adventure movies — yet to be announced — at 8:30 p.m. on Aug. 22 and 23.

Passes and single tickets go on sale online and at the Wheeler box office on July 22. Prices range from \$14.50 for single tickets to \$112.50 for full festival passes. For more information, visit www.wheeleroperahouse.com/MountainSummit.

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