

"NAIL-BITINGLY SUSPENSEFUL!"

—TIME OUT NEW YORK

**"SUPERB!
A CINEMATIC TOUR-DE-FORCE!
ONE OF THE GREAT
TALES OF HUMAN
SURVIVAL."**

—John Anderson,
VARIETY

**"RIVETING
A MIRACULOUS
STORY!"**

—Bilge Ebiri,
NEW YORK
MAGAZINE

**I'VE COME
FROM A
PLANE
THAT
CRASHED
ON THE
MOUN
TAINS**



STRANDED

A FILM BY GONZALO ARIJÓN



watch the trailer at www.zeitgeistfilms.com/stranded

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2008

When Survival Hinged on Team Spirit

Gonzalo Arijón's documentary "Stranded: I've Come From a Plane That Crashed on the Mountains" offers an incontrovertible

**STEPHEN
HOLDEN**

**FILM
REVIEW**

argument for the necessity of team spirit in the face of catastrophe. Without it, the 16 survivors out of 45 in a famous 1972 plane crash in the Andes that decimated a Uruguayan rugby team wouldn't have made it

through 72 days in a frigid wilderness with scant provisions.

To stay alive the passengers eventually resorted to cannibalism, consuming the flesh of friends and loved ones who had died in the crash. Even when forced into doing "things that I don't think any animal is capable of doing — eating its own species," in the words of one survivor, discipline and teamwork prevailed. The carving and eating of human flesh became a rite that more than one compares to taking Holy Communion. Although many words are devoted to evoking the spiritual implications of eating human flesh, hardly any are given to describing the physical experience, which is just as well.

Because the story has already been told in "Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors," the 1974 best seller by Piers Paul Read, and retold in its 1993 screen adaptation starring Ethan Hawke, why again? The short answer is that in "Stranded," all 16 of the survivors, now middle-aged, tell the story in their own words. Since many of those words are eloquent, the assumption must be that their thoughts and impressions are the distillate of years of contemplation.

Their memories, akin to those of returning astronauts who studied Earth from outer space, are worth hearing. Mortal terror is outweighed by an overwhelming sense of wonder and personal discovery, as a ferocious will to live, not only for themselves but for one another, propels them to perform superhuman feats while exhausted and near starvation.

The director, a childhood friend of several of the survivors, has filled out their recollections with dreamlike re-enactments shown in bluish black-and-white sequences in which faces and bodies are blurred, as if observed through a blizzard.



Survivors of the 1972 crash, from the documentary "Stranded: I've Come From a Plane That Crashed on the Mountains."

As their hopes faded while they awaited rescue, one setback followed another. In the worst, eight people died and many nearly suffocated in an avalanche that buried the plane's fuselage, where they had taken refuge, improvising sleeping bags out of seats and cushions.

As the days passed, they could hear on a radio that the air search for them was being abandoned because of bad weather. Their only hope was to dispatch the hardest on an expedition to scale the mountains and find civilization beyond the peaks ringing the Valley of Tears glacier, in which the plane had crashed during a thunderstorm. One justification for the movie's more-than-two-hour length seems to be its attempt to put us in the shoes of people who had a sense of being separated from the rest of humanity, in an almost timeless state of suspended animation.

Of the many voices heard in the film, the closest one to a group spokesman is Fernando Parrado, a k a Nando, who lost his sister and his mother in the crash. Carrying no equipment, he and a fellow survivor, Roberto Canessa, hiked 44 miles over peaks more than 13,000 feet high until they discovered signs of civilization. Three

days before Christmas, they were spotted by a Chilean shepherd, who remembers, "They smelled of the grave; no animal would go near them."

As the rescue is undertaken via helicopter, any lingering cynicism you might have harbored evaporates, and you may find yourself on the verge of tears. Long after the film ends, the words echo: "solidarity," "sticking together," "no laws, just habits and practices accepted by the group." Noble ones, I might add.

Stranded I've Come From a Plane That Crashed on the Mountains

Opens on Wednesday in Manhattan.

Directed by Gonzalo Arijón; directors of photography, César Charlone and Pablo Hernán Zubizarreta; edited by Claudio Hughes, Samuel Lajus and Alice Larry; music by Florencia Di Concilio-Perrin; produced by Marc Silvera; released by Zeitgeist Films. At Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, Greenwich Village. In Spanish, with English subtitles. Running time: 2 hours 6 minutes. This film is not rated.

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