

A FILM BY **PEPE DANQUART**

# TO THE **LIMIT**

95 minutes, color, 2007, Germany  
35mm, Dolby SR-D, 1:1.85



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### **Short Synopsis – TO THE LIMIT**

Thomas and Alexander Huber, risk takers in the extreme, rank as two of the best mountain climbers of our time. Now the two Huber brothers have set out to break the record in speed climbing at the wall of all walls, the 1,000 metre high granite wall of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. Extreme sports don't come any more extreme than speed rock-climbing, in which climbers compress a normal three-day ascent into less than three hours. . Intensive practice and split-second timing are required, and one false step can bring fatal disaster

Featuring breathtaking footage of the mountains of Patagonia and Yosemite National Park, Academy Award® winner Pepe Danquart follows the Huber brothers to locations never before reached by a film crew. To the Limit is a portrait of two competitive brothers who go to the very edge of the possible, physically and psychologically. These brothers, who ordinarily live very different and separate lives, become like twins when they climb together, as they have since childhood, each driven to find their own limits.

TO THE LIMIT completes a trilogy of sports films by Pepe Danquart, the other films being Home Match (2000, German film prize for Best Director) and Hell On Wheels (2004).

### **Press Notice**

TO THE LIMIT is the third of Pepe Danquart's Sport trilogy (HOME GAME 2000, German Film Prize winner for Best Director, and HELL ON WHEELS) where he explores not only sport, but also the human side of athletes.

TO THE LIMIT is a co- production of Hager- Moss Film, Lotus Film and Quite Film in association with the Bayerischen Rundfunk, ARTE and the Österreichischen Rundfunk, supported by FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, the Filmförderungsanstalt and the Austrian Film Institute.

## **Production Notes**

Pepe Danquart was already searching for a topic for the final documentary in his sports trilogy (HOME GAME, 2000 and HELL ON WHEELS, 2004) when he met Alexander and Thomas Huber. "I realized I had found what I was looking for the moment I met them. It was not just about climbing for them."

Two brothers always pushing themselves to physical limits, searching for their own identity at the same time: Two brothers prepared to fail, to find themselves anew in victory or failure. Or to put it in Pepe Danquart's words: "I had no interest in making a film purely about climbing; I wanted to show the Huber boys personalities and use their climbing as a metaphor for life."

The first part of the shoot of TO THE LIMIT shows the brothers' preparations for the speed climb of El Capitan in the Yosemite Valley in the summer of 2005. The film crew travelled to Patagonia with the extreme climbers in February 2006. Thomas and Alexander attempt to climb the three peaks of the Cerro Torre Group. These peaks are among the most spectacular and most difficult to climb. The crew returned to Yosemite Valley in June 2006 to continue filming the attempt of the brothers to break the speed climbing record on the vertical 1000 metre high Granite wall.

A film such as TO THE LIMIT places special challenges on all those involved. The director needs experienced climbers as well as visual visionaries in his team. His demand on the camera crew was clear from day one: "You have to be a proficient climber and feel at home in the vertical world of El Capitan."

The four camera crew had to be on the cliff face filming between eight and twelve hours a day, exposed to the searing sun and dangerous gusts of wind that build in the Yosemite Valley system. He needed a camera crew able to excel in these conditions, able to climb to the best position in their harness carrying their equipment and relaxed at altitudes of 600 meters. "I value the achievements of the crew equally to the achievements of the brothers. At times it seemed that the realization of the film was as difficult as the climb itself. I planned the shoot step by step to get the best possible visual outcome; every angle of the camera, every step was planned. There was a plan to calculate the 'King Swing', where the climbers swing twenty to thirty metres through the air. We had an extra three to four metres of rope set up for the crew next to the brothers' climbing route." The whole team was in touch constantly through mics and radio. Ten people were suspended from the wall at any given time and an extra thirty were at the peak or below to assist." I tried to direct with my walkie talkie and binoculars. "

This is how we achieved takes never seen before; breathtaking settings that might make some cinema goers suffer vertigo. But the difference is that this is not fiction, but documentary. Real climbers going TO THE LIMIT! This makes the film unique; the "new drug in cinemas" as the renowned magazine Spiegel put it. Or as Alexander Huber exclaimed when he saw the first pictures: "This will revolutionize the mountaineering film."

There were many obstacles to overcome as well. A bag containing 30 000 Euro worth of equipment was lost when it fell. The bag was returned by park rangers who found it at the foot of El Capitan with all its contents shattered. “All the park rangers were concerned about was that there was a muesli bar in the bag; there are signs all over the national park that tell you not to feed the bears.” laughs Pepe Danquart.

TO THE LIMIT is the last of the sports trilogy by Pepe Danquart; a film for cinema that the director considers to be the best of his career. The Hubers are thrill seekers and the director considers himself the same. “I am an anxious person by nature, but I always put myself in challenging situations, where I cannot help but keep going.” I grow with the challenge; with every victory and every defeat. “There was a sign in the cottage we stayed at in Yosemite: What would you do if you could not fail anymore? I thought about this a lot; and in this sense find that TO THE LIMIT is a metaphor for life. It is not the mountain you conquer, it is yourself.”

## **The Huber Brothers - Alexander and Thomas Huber**

Alexander enjoyed climbing mountains from early childhood. He climbed a peak 4000 meters high at twelve years old. He was born in 1968 and is the patient pragmatist of the brothers. He is a physicist and as such the analytical planner, the rationalist who follows his goals persistently. He is also a professional mountaineer and ski guide. He lives in Traunstein.

Thomas is the opposite of his brother at first glance. He is two years older; an enthusiastic dreamer, idealistic and seemingly chaotic, full of curiosity, not phlegmatic, but with a laissez-faire mentality. He plays with his band "Plastic surgery disaster" and dreams of flying. He lives in Berchtesgaden with his wife Marion and his two sons Elias and Amadeus.

Alexander and Thomas are among the best climbers of our time. They have proved their skill with several firsts, free, speed and solo climbs. They pursue their goals separately in every day life and their rivalry is noticeable. They rely on one another as well and there is a constant tug for dominance. There is a desire to lead, yet they will conquer the most extreme rock face together, trusting each other with their lives. The brothers have much in common; dependability, helpfulness, honesty and their family ties.

The brotherly conflict which almost seems like a twin relationship is the centre of the film. Pepe Danquart: "I know only too well as a film making twin about competition and dependence, I know the incredible closeness and the search for distance. The search for your own identity is familiar to me as is the wish to be unique and to find my limits."

Part of the story is the attempt at breaking the record in speed climbing El Capitan. What motivates them to risk their lives and to have the mental and physical strength to reach for their limits time and time again? The film asks why some people will go through such extremes to prove themselves. A cinematic journey to the unknown; a cinematic journey to the extreme; a journey of two brothers always testing their abilities.

They take the step into the unknown, the step you have to take to achieve the extraordinary, the step that can lead to your death. The film raises the question of the fear of losing a brother being greater than the fear of dying yourself. Is the distance in every day life a shield for the question that they must ask themselves on the mountain?

The Brothers deal with it differently. Alexander fears that it can go too far one day. That it is not healthy to always push yourself to the limit. But he is also aware that he can't just leave it. "I have to be on the go; always! I can't relax until I'm off again."

## **Dean Potter**

Dean Potter was born in 1972 and is one of the top climbers in the world. He assisted in the preparation for the record breaking attempt. His personal best on El Capitan is three hours and 22 minutes. He is the only person ever to have climbed the Half Dome and El Capitan on the same day.

His specialities are speed climbing and solo free climbs. “In speed climbing there is no time to think, ‘Place my hand here, place my foot here, hope I don’t fall...’ It’s just doing, and I think that’s where the attraction is.”

### **Chongo**

Used to be a climber and now lives rough in Yosemite Valley. He works on his memoirs every day and comments on his observations in the film.

„Happiness is a very short moment. It’s rather a perpetual thing. Once you kind of get there you’re stuck. No matter what happens, I think. But I suppose in the end happiness is always a matter of luck. Just being lucky enough to be there in the first place. Because once you’re there it’s so cool that you wouldn’t want to not be there. And you understand how to remain there. Either that, or I’m just a crazy homeless man babbling. I’m not sure.”

### **Pepe Danquart - Biography**

From 1975-81 Pepe studied Media & Communication at Freiburg University and was a founding Member of Media Workshop Freiburg (MWF). He has completed about 30 films/videos as author/director in the filmcollective MWF and in 1978 he won the National Documentary Award for the "entire output" of MWF. He became a member of the European Film Academy in 1994 and graduated from the European producers school EAVE in 1995. In 1994 he won an Academy Award (Oscar®) for the Live-action Short "Black Rider". In 2000 he won the National Film Award (Lola®) for Best Director for "Homegame". Beside his work as a director/writer, Pepe works as a teacher (directing films) at various film schools in Germany (dffb in Berlin, film academy in Ludwigsburg, ZFP) and works as a dramaturgical adviser and producer for documentary films. He is creative partner of producer Mirjam Quinte (Quinte Film Production) and is a commission editor at the National Cultural Film Fund (BKM) in the Ministry of Culture of Germany.

### **Pepe Danquart - Filmography**

2002/3 HÖLLENFAHRT (HELL ON WHEELS)  
2002 C(R)OOK  
2001/2 PRIMADONNEN  
2000/1 SEMANA SANTA  
2000 RELEASE  
1999/2000 HOMEGAME  
1994 -97 OFF SEASON  
1995 OLD INDIANS NEVER DIE  
1996 ITINERARY ALSACE - NOTES FROM A GERMAN FILMMAKER  
1994/5 PHOOLAN DEVI - REBELLION OF A FEMALE BANDIT (Co-director) 1993/4 BLACK RIDER  
1991/92 ... AND OTHER EMISSIONS  
1989/90 DAEDALUS  
1988 LOTHAR QUINTE – 40 YEARS OF PAINTING  
1986 SCHATILA  
1985 GEISTERFAHRER  
1984 A WORD CAN BE A CARICATURE - PEACE  
1983 THE LONG HOPE  
1982 S'WESCHPENNÄSCHST  
1982 MALFUNCTION  
1981 NEWS ABOUT A CHANGE  
1980 WATCH OUT...

### **Pepe Danquart - Selected Awards**

"Adolf Grimme Prize", (Television Award for Best Cultural Film) 2003, "Primadonnen"  
Academy Award (Oscar®) for Life-action Short "Black Rider", L.A., 1994  
Double Nomination German Television Awards (Actress in a Leading Role), "Release", 2001  
Nominated for Best Film (German Film Awards, Lola®), "Homegame", 2000  
National Film Award (Lola®) for Best Director "Homegame", 2000  
"Special Mention" at European Film Award (EFA) "Homegame", 2000  
Winner of the Peace Award at Berlin Film Festival, "Off Season", 1997  
Winner Best Film at Minsk Film Festival, "Off Season", 1998  
Winner of the Grand Prize at the San Francisco Film Festival, "Off Season", 1997  
Nominated for Best Film (German Film Awards, Lola®), "Off Season", 1998  
Pare Lorentz Award (Los Angeles) awarded by IDA (Int. Documentary Association)  
German Camera Award for Cinematographer Michael Hammon, "Off Season" 1998  
Nomination German Camera Award (Michael Hammon) for "Home Game", 2001  
Audience Award Prag Filmfestival, "Off Season", 1998

"Espiga de Oro" (1st Prize) at Valladolid International FF, "Schwarzfahrer", 1993  
"Trofeo del Norte de Castilla" (Winner of the Documentary Award), Valladolid, 1997  
Double Winner of "Golden Spire Award" and "Grand Prize" of San Francisco IFF, 1998  
"Golden Prize (First)" Kairo International Film Festival, "Black Rider", 1993  
Winner of "Sheik Sensi Thin" Montreal International Film Festival, 1993,  
Winner of "Espiga de Oro" (Grand Prize) Valladolid International Film Festival,  
Winner of "Best Short" Berlin International Film Festival, "Black Rider", 1993  
Audience Awards Hamburg, Munich and Augsburg ShortFilmFestival, "Black Rider", 1993  
Winner of (1 st Prize ) Nordic International Short Filmfestival, "Black Rider", 1994  
Audience Award Videoforum Freiburg, "And Other Emissions" 1992  
1st Prize Short Film Festival Hamburg, "The modern Art of Punishment", 1989  
Winner of 1st Prize Schwerin Film Festival, "Daedalus", 1990  
Grand Jury Prize at the International Film Festival Puerta de la Cruz, "Daedalus", 1989  
Special Prize Moscow (Invironment ) Filmfestival, "Daedalus" 1989  
German National Documentary Award for "entire output" of MWF-Films/Videos, 1987

**Cast**

THOMAS and ALEXANDER HUBER  
DEAN S. POTTER  
CHONGO

**Crew****Writer & Director**

PEPE DANQUART

**Camera**

WOLFGANG THALER

**Extreme camera**

MARTIN HANSLMAYR, FRANZ HINTERBRANDNER, MAX REICHEL

**Production**

HAGER MOSS FILM, LOTUS FILM, QUINTE FILM

**Producers**

KIRSTEN HAGER, ERICH LACKNER, MIRJAM QUINTE

**Production Management**

PETER WIRTHENSOHN, RONALD VIETZ

**Editor**

MONA BRÄUER

**Music**

CHRISTOPH ISRAEL, DORIAN CHEAH

**Sound**

JOE KNAUER

**Mixing**

MAX RAMMLER

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ÖSTERREICHISCHER RUNDFUNK  
(Film-/Fernseh-Abkommen)

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