



SN WMAN

A true story of risk and redemption in the mountains

SHORT SYNOPSIS



From childhood, Kevin Fogolin dreamed of living and working in the mountains. After breaking the shackles of small-town expectations, his dream comes crashing down in a helicopter avalanche bombing mission gone horribly wrong. In the aftermath, Kevin and his childhood friend, freeskiing icon Mike Douglas, are forced to confront the risks and rewards of following their passion for the mountains. Set in British Columbia's rugged Coast Mountain Range, SNOWMAN is a familiar tale of dreaming big and a life where the greatest risk is *not* daring to dream at all.



LONG SYNOPSIS

"A lot of people associate risk with danger, but risk is everywhere, in everything. There's risk in skiing in avalanche terrain, there's risk asking a girl to dance. There's also risk in breaking away from the path you were expected to take."

From childhood, Kevin Fogolin dreamed of living and working in the mountains. Growing up on an island on British Columbia's west coast, the view of the mountains across the straight became a compass by which he would navigate life. Early on, he shared his obsession for skiing and snow with an equally snow-crazed friend from up the street named Mike Douglas. Through a youth spent skiing and exploring together in the mountains, they developed a bond founded on adventure and an unspoken relationship with risk.

SNOWMAN follows two dreamers as they graduate from an adolescence spent roaming the hills into the real world, where they are faced with the choice between following their passion or appeasing the expectations typical of any blue collar town—the more certain path to a good job. Opting to step off the path Mike succeeds in living and prospering in the mountains. As a professional skier based in Whistler, he graces magazine covers, stars in films with ski icons like Shane McConkey and Jonny Moseley, and becomes an icon himself.

Having abandoned his mountain dream, years later Kevin breaks the shackles to find his way back to the snow. His original dream is realized when he becomes an avalanche forecaster and consultant in B.C.'s rugged Coast Range. There he evaluates the threat of snowpack on industrial projects, and frequently stabilizes these

through pre-emptive avalanches triggered with 25-kg bags of explosives deployed from a helicopter. The dream, however, comes crashing down when one of these missions goes horribly wrong.

In the aftermath, Kevin and Mike are forced to confront the risks and rewards of a shared passion they prescribed to in childhood. By returning to the mountains to process events, they rekindle their friendship, and Kevin finds new perspective on risk and, ultimately, the courage to pursue the dream to its logical conclusion.

Set in B.C.'s dramatic Coast Mountain Range, SNOWMAN is a familiar tale of dreaming big and the barriers—both benign and catastrophic—to realizing a childhood fantasy. It's the story of a friendship forged in the mountains, and a life where the greatest risk is *not* daring to dream at all.



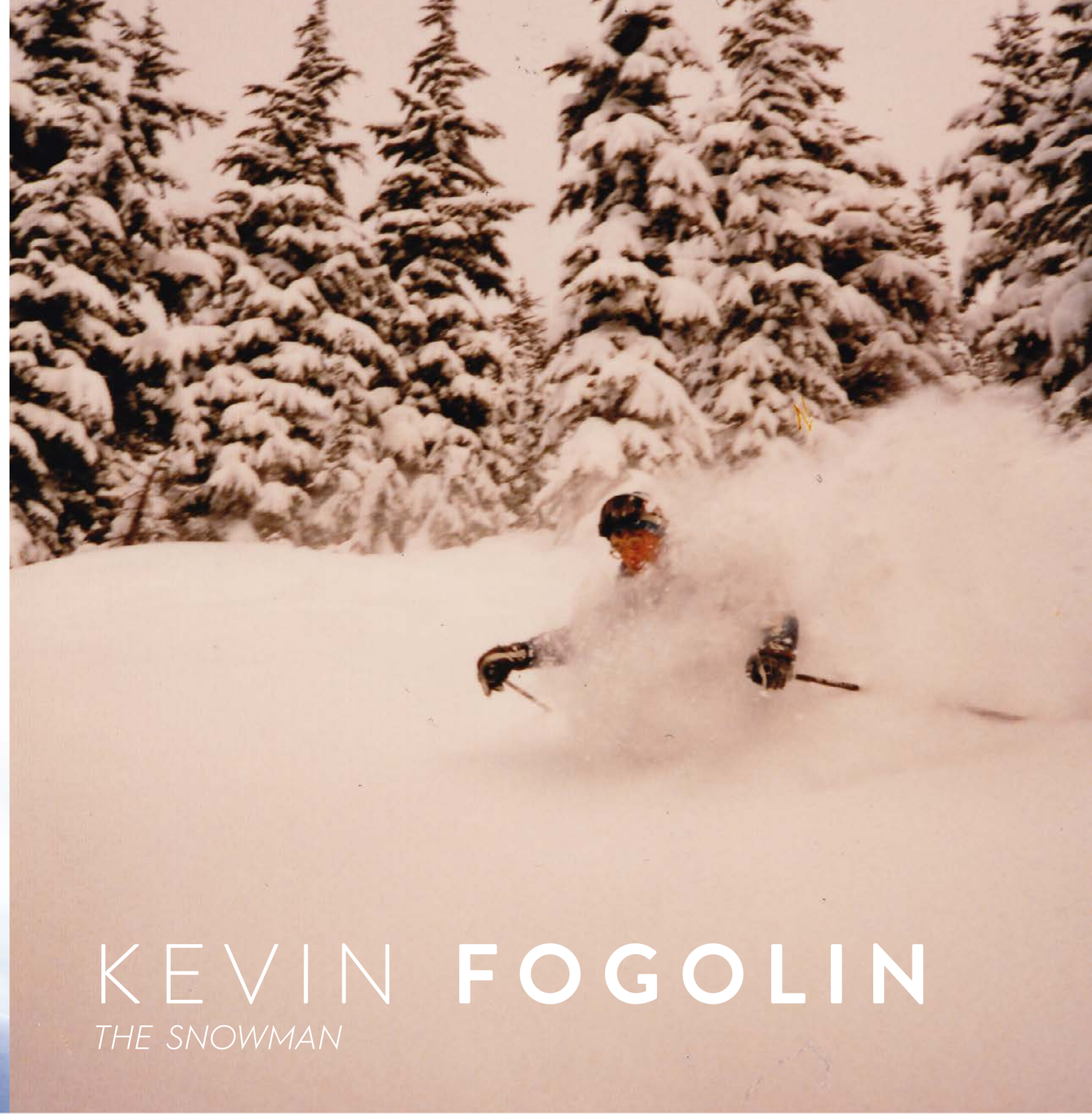
THE JOB

From October until June, Kevin Fogolin travels between work sites in the mountains of British Columbia, Canada. His job is to protect industrial and resource-sector workers, and infrastructure from the threat of avalanches. Clients include forestry, transport, and hydroelectric companies whose employees often work in mountainous terrain raked by avalanches. In order to assess the risk, Kevin closely monitors local and large-scale weather changes in precipitation, temperature and wind, each of which can affect the strength of the snowpack and its probability of sliding.

Kevin skis to specific sites high on mountainsides to dig a “snow profile”—a pit in the snowpack in which layers and their characteristics can be observed and the data collected. There the real-time stability of the snowpack is tested through a variety of “column compression” tests. Based on weather and data from the snow profile, Kevin writes a daily report forecasting the expected avalanche risk. When the risk is deemed high and a potential threat to workers, there are two options: close the work site at great expense to companies, or remove the threat of avalanches by trigger-

ing them. In the latter case, the most effective method is to deploy 25-kg bags of explosive from a helicopter in strategic “start zones,” with the aim of pre-emptively triggering potential avalanches in a controlled matter.

It’s a high-stress environment. There is pressure to keep employees working, and also the challenge of dropping bombs - often during uncertain weather conditions and in extremely remote areas. When a big avalanche breaks loose, however, aficionado like Kevin see it as “mother nature at her finest and fiercest.”



KEVIN FOGOLIN

THE SNOWMAN

Kevin Fogolin is a weather geek, obsessed with snow, an avid skier, and a dreamer. Growing up in small town Campbell River on British Columbia's Vancouver Island, the view of the mountains across Georgia Strait beckoned him. Working his dream job as an avalanche consultant in the Coast Mountains of BC, Kevin is

tasked with mitigating the threat of avalanches to both personnel and infrastructure for industrial clients in the forestry, transport and hydro electric sectors. In 2009 the dream came crashing down literally and metaphorically when a helicopter avalanche bombing mission went horribly wrong. In the aftermath of a crash strang-

er than fiction, new perspective lead Kevin to fulfil his ultimate dream.

Away from work, Kevin can be found spending time in the outdoors with his wife, Joanne, and three boys, Jared, Reilly and Braden.

A close-up portrait of Mike Douglas, a man with a beard and mustache, smiling. He is wearing a blue and red jacket. The background is a blurred green forest.

MIKE DOUGLAS

DIRECTOR - PRODUCER - EDITOR

In his 26 year ski career, Mike Douglas, has done it all – World Cup mogul competitor, coach, film star, TV commentator, innovator, adventurer, event director, writer, film producer and more.

Most notably, he is credited with the design of the modern twin-tip ski – an innovation that changed the sport. Known as the ‘Godfather of Freeskiing’, Mike is constantly pushing forward and challenging the boundaries of skiing and the media that surrounds it.

Though he has dabbled in filmmaking since his first high school project – a short 8mm film called “Born To Ski”– it wasn’t until 2006 that he started to take his production work seriously. At that time he founded Switchback Entertainment and began production on the web-series, Salomon Freeski TV. Since then he has worked on more than 100 productions and has won several filmmaking awards. Mike’s passion lies in directing and the creative process of filmmaking.

A close-up portrait of Anthony Bonello, a man with dark curly hair, smiling. He is wearing a blue and white jacket. The background is a blurred green forest.

ANTHONY BONELLO

PRODUCER - EDITOR

Anthony brings a honed style of storytelling that transports viewers beyond geography to convey the feel of a place and it’s people. The founder of b4apres Media, he independently directed and produced the documentaries AZADI:Freedom and STAND which have both won numerous awards internationally while screening in over 30 countries. Anthony has worked with Switchback for a number of years and joins the team exclusively for their first feature documentary. Anthony is also a published freelance writer and photographer.



BLAIR RICHMOND

VFX & MOTION DESIGN SUPERVISOR

Blair Richmond started his career in film working as a videographer in the Sea to Sky area. After working on various projects with Theory-3 Media, High North Ski Camps, Resort TV and others, he moved into the world of Visual Effects. As a compositor and project coordinator, he focused his talents on feature films, Television and Video Games. His credits include the TV show: Lost; the films: RED, Oscar-Nominated Invictus, Killers, Apollo 18, Underworld: Awakening; the video games: Mass Effect 2 & 3; and the award-winning web-series: H+: The Digital Series. Since joining Switchback Entertainment Blair has brought his unique skills and approach to such projects as The Burn, Super Pillows, Tempting Fear, The Architect, Ghost Town, and many more. Contributing to the look and design of the Whistler Blackcomb Wonder Reels and Salomon Freeski TV web-series Blair has helped Switchback produce high quality content from conception to final output.



JEFF THOMAS

PRODUCER

Jeff Thomas was born and raised in the coastal mountains of British Columbia, Canada. After graduating from film school he has spent the last 10 years focused on action sports & commercial film making. Whether it was producing films under his company - Theory-3 Media, co-directing/editing multiple award winning Poor Boyz Production films, or producing award winning short films such as "The Freedom Chair", "Tempting Fear" and "The Burn" with Switchback Entertainment and Salomon Freeski TV, Jeff's creative drive for outdoor films will always remain his ultimate passion.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

You never really know where life is going to take you. When I was kid I didn't think you could make a decent living as skier or a filmmaker. Careers like that weren't available to kids from Campbell River.

Life in the mountains taught me that dreaming big was OK – if you were passionate enough about something, you could make it happen, no matter how impossible it may have seemed.

I never thought I would direct a feature-length film. I never expected that if I did, it would be about my best friend, and I never guessed that my own story would be told as part of it.

In the aftermath of the helicopter crash, I had mentioned to Kevin that the story is so incredible that it needs to be told on film. It took a couple of years, but eventually Kevin agreed and we began what was supposed to be a short film about the crash. As we dug deeper into the story we discovered there was more to it than we had thought.

Now 3 years later, this 'short film' project has become something much bigger than we expected and something deeply personal for both of us. It's transformed our lives and has brought us closer together than we've been since high school. For that, I am thankful for where this journey has led me. I will continue to dream big.

Mike Douglas
Director

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MIKE DOUGLAS

How did you come to the film?

Kevin has been my best friend since childhood and when the crash happened, I was just getting into filmmaking. Once Kevin and I had come to terms with the emotional fallout, I told Kevin that if he was ever prepared to talk about the crash publicly, I'd love a chance to document the story. About two and a half years later he mentioned that he felt he was ready so we started working on the film a couple of weeks later.

This is your first feature length documentary. Was that a daunting prospect to undertake?

When I started working on it, it wasn't supposed to be a feature. It was just going to be a short about the crash for the web series Switchback produces- Salomon Freeski TV. As we dug into the story we discovered more and more interesting layers and the project just kept growing. It kind of crept up on me and before I knew it, it had become this huge entity. I certainly underestimated it in the beginning.

You did a Kickstarter campaign that reached its goal and raised over \$50,000. How was the process?

Kickstarter has become a great tool for independent filmmakers. It definitely gave us a boost during that time when it felt like all you do is spend money. Aside from the fundraising, it was a great way to create buzz for the film. It gave us a good indication of whether or not audiences were interested in the topic. It was nice to see people get behind the film and get excited about the project.

What were some of the greatest challenges in making the film?

Most of the film was shot in the Toba Valley in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. It's very remote and is only accessible by boat or helicopter. Each time we'd go in there to shoot it was a fairly large commitment in terms of both time

and money. Weather was the biggest challenge though. There are so few days each winter with clear blue skies, and even fewer days where the avalanche hazard was high enough to cause avalanches. Luckily, we managed to get several of those days close to the end of the project.

What have been the highlights in making the film?

The greatest highlight for me is the closeness I now have with Kevin again. This project has brought us together in so many ways. Aside from that, filming the avalanches up in Toba was a major highlight. It's so amazing to see something so powerful so up close like that.

The crash is the dramatic climax of the film. How did you go about recreating that on film?

The crash scene was the biggest unknown for the crew going into production. We knew it had to be convincing, yet we had limited budget to execute it. It was a really fun process though. We got together in the office and watched a bunch of helicopter crashes on Youtube to try figure out how a helicopter disintegrates in a crash. What we realized was that none of them behaved the same way. We realized we just had to create some form of carnage. Speaking with a remote control hobbyist friend, we figured out we could buy a scale model of the Hughes 500 helicopter and crash that. Because the crash didn't happen in a forest with trees to give scale, but on a large, blank, snowy slope, we could use the remote control helicopter and shoot it at specific angles to give the effect that it was a actual-size machine. With that, we bolted our model helicopter onto a green stick and crashed it into a plywood board covered in corn starch. We learned that corn starch is used in wind tunnels by snow and avalanche researchers as it behaves similar to snow. The final bill for that shoot was approximately \$3000 and thankfully the final product seemed to work out.

How did the film evolve during production?

About a year into production, Kevin called me up one day and told me that he and his family were moving to Whistler. My first reaction was. 'What? You can't! The film is set in Campbell River and we still have a lot to shoot.' At that point, we were still really focussed on the crash as the story. But once we opened up the story, we realized that the move was actually the ending we'd been looking for. It was also really cool to have my best friend living down the street from me again.

As a professional skier whose job it is to take risks and having lost friends in the mountains, how do you reconcile the risk versus the reward?

As I get older, it's become harder to justify those things in my own mind. It's part of the reason I've become a filmmaker. The risks you take as a filmmaker are physically quite safe when compared to skiing. Fortunately, the rewards are quite similar. I get the same feeling watching a story come together as I do when I jump a big cliff on skis. I still like to jump cliffs on skis, but I don't do it as often as I used to.

You are a professional skier and celebrated action sports figure yourself. How did you make the transition to becoming a filmmaker?


As you see in Snowman, film is something I've had an interest in since I was a kid. I've dabbled in small projects for most of my life, but I didn't start taking it seriously until I turned 35 and realized it would be tough to continue to make a living as a pro skier into my 40s. I've been very fortunate to have built up a lot of good contacts through my ski career. The transition to film happened quite naturally.

ABOUT SWITCHBACK ENTERTAINMENT


Switchback Entertainment specializes in high quality, emotional storytelling. Based in the mountains of Whistler, BC, Switchback has forged it's name through 8 seasons of the highly-popular web series, **Salomon Freeski TV**, their internationally award-winning short films, **The Freedom Chair** and **Tempting Fear**, as well as numerous cutting edge commercial campaigns. **SNOWMAN** is their first feature length project.

CONTACT



 snowmanfilm.com

 facebook.com/snowmanfilm

 twitter.com/Snowman_Film

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Switchback Entertainment

Mike Douglas

Producer/Director

+1.604.935.2995

mike@switchbackentertainment.com

switchbackentertainment.com

Publicity

After Bruce PR & Marketing

Tracy Nguyen-Chung

+1.626.720.4832

tracy@afterbruce.com

afterbruce.com

STILLS



sm_miss_swiss.jpg

An unnamed peak in the Toba Inlet affectionately referred to as Swiss Miss by Kevin Fogolin, is a snow profile favorite site for gathering field data. It is also a beautiful ski.
Photo: Mike Douglas



sm_avalanche.png

A size 3 avalanche in the Toba Valley triggered by a 25kg (50lbs) bomb deployed by Kevin Fogolin from a helicopter. Avalanches are categorized from 1 to 5 based on their destructive potential and mass.
Frame grab from SNOWMAN.



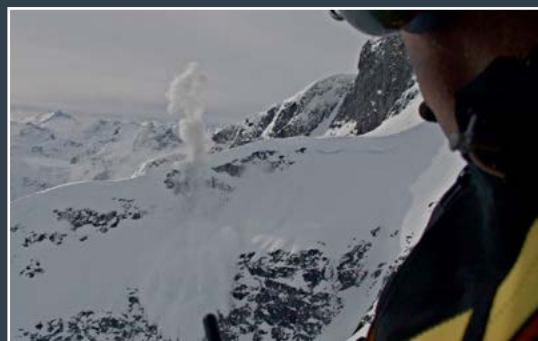
sm_fracture.jpg

A crown line from a naturally triggered avalanche in Toba Inlet. After a big storm avalanches often occur naturally, triggered by the weight of new snow, fluctuations in temperature or in some instances, cornices at the ridge tops falling.
Photo: Kevin Fogolin



sm_fogolin_location.jpg

Kevin Fogolin on site in a snow pit, studying the snowpack near Toba, British Columbia.
Photo: Mike Douglas



sm_bomb.png

Kevin Fogolin watches from the helicopter as an explosive charge detonates, triggering a size 1 avalanche. Kevin sits strapped into the helicopter by a harness system with the doors removed in order to deploy bombs from the machine. It is the best seat in the house.
Frame grab from SNOWMAN.



sm_helicopter.png

Kevin Fogolin and crew commuting back to base in Campbell River after a day in Toba Inlet. The flight usually takes 35 minutes and crosses mountain passes and open stretches of ocean. Traffic is never an issue.
Frame grab from SNOWMAN.

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CAST&CREW



Kevin_Fogolin

Kevin Fogolin, professional forester specializing in snow avalanche consulting.



sm_anthony_bonello.jpg

Producer - Editor



Fog Glasses Shred.jpg

Kevin Fogolin as a young skier on Mount Washington, Vancouver Island.



sm_blair_richmond.jpg

VFX & Motion Design Supervisor



sm_mike_douglas.jpg

Pro skier, producer and director.



sm_jeff_thomas.jpg

Producer

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POSTER AND LOGO



SNOWMAN - Official Poster
PDF JPG



SNOWMAN

Official Poster horizontal
PDF JPG



SNOWMAN - Official logo
white, black
vector eps, png

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