

# MACGILLIVRAY FREEMAN FILMS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **John Harlin Reaches The Summit Of The Eiger North Face Forty Years After The Infamous Mountain Claimed The Life Of His Legendary Father**

*The Academy Award®-nominated team of filmmakers from MacGillivray Freeman Films photographed John Harlin's ascent for "The Alps: Giants Of Nature," an IMAX® Theatre Film coming to Giant Screen Theatres In Spring 2007*

**LAGUNA BEACH, Ca. (October 6, 2005)**—In a bold attempt to make climbing history and reconnect with the memory of his father, **John Harlin III**, son of mountaineering legend **John Harlin II**, has successfully reached the summit of the infamous Eiger North Face in the Swiss Alps, forty years after the same mountain claimed the life of his famous father. With him were renowned European climbers **Robert and Daniela Jasper**. The team summited on September 24 after a climb that lasted three days, with two nights spent bivouacked on narrow ledges high on the sheer face of the mountain.

The Eiger North Face is considered the most treacherous climb in all of Europe with its dangerously exposed 6,000-foot vertical wall of jagged limestone made more perilous by the constant threat of falling boulders, avalanches and unpredictable weather patterns. Scores of climbers have tempted fate on the Eiger's craggy slopes, and more than fifty have lost their lives on the mountain.

John Harlin III was nine years old when his father, aged 30, fell 4,000 feet to his death while attempting the first "direct" route up the Eiger in 1966. A climbing legend even at that relatively young age, Harlin II was already as identified with the Eiger as Mallory with Everest or Whymper with the Matterhorn. John Harlin II was the first American to scale the mountain's infamous North Face in 1962, and finally, in 1966 after many more attempts, he became the leader of the climbing team that, despite his death, would eventually become the first to ascend the now-celebrated "Eiger Direct," otherwise known as "The John Harlin Route," which leads almost straight up the North Face of the Eiger from base to summit.

"I am relieved, after so many years, to have finally made my peace with the Eiger," said Harlin, aged 49. "This climb is something I've needed to do for a long time. The Eiger has cast a shadow over my family for decades, and while this climb does not change the fact of my father's death, it allows me personally to close a significant chapter in my life. The Jaspers were great climbing partners and have become great friends; I'm thrilled to have made this climb with them."

Two-time Academy Award®-nominated film producers and creators of the giant screen hit documentary *Everest*, **MacGillivray Freeman Films** were also on the mountain to film the historic climb and start principal photography for their upcoming film, *The Alps: Giants of Nature*, slated for release to IMAX Theatres in spring 2007. The crew was led by producer **Greg MacGillivray** and director/editor **Stephen Judson** with cinematographers **Michael Brown**, **Jochen Schmol**, and **Brad Ohlund**, line producer **Anne Marie Hammers**, and expedition leader **Pasquale Scaturro**.

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When Harlin II's rope broke 4,000 feet above the base, the whole world was watching. The U.K.'s *Weekend Telegraph* was reporting daily on the climbers' progress, and reporter Peter Gillman witnessed Harlin's fall. News of his death swept the world. Features ran in *Life* magazine and the *Weekend Telegraph*, and later Harlin's life would be chronicled in James Ramsey Ullman's biography *Straight Up—John Harlin: The Life and Death of A Mountaineer*. At the time of his death, Harlin left behind a wife and two young children: John Harlin III and his sister Andrea.

“John Harlin's family history is incredibly rich and emotional,” said producer Greg MacGillivray. “It's a story of human endeavor and physical endurance, of great beauty and great tragedy, of the forces that can drive an individual to risk everything to climb a mountain, and the sense of personal accomplishment that comes with that. John and the Jaspers made a great climbing team and we congratulate them on the success of their climb.”

Working under extreme conditions, the filmmaking team faced daunting physical and logistical challenges as they worked to capture footage of the climb with a cold-weather ready IMAX camera and videocam. In addition to filming on the Eiger, the crew also filmed scenes at the Matterhorn, the most famous mountain in the world. The film crew will return to the Matterhorn in March 2006 to shoot sequences on skiing and avalanche control.

“We've never attempted a more challenging shoot than this,” said director, Stephen Judson, who was at Base Camp during MacGillivray Freeman's *Everest* shoot. “Mount Everest is much higher in elevation but it can't begin to compare to the Eiger in terms of technical difficulty. This massive vertical wall of rock looms over a mile high—the tallest, stormiest cliff face in Europe—and has long been feared as the most extreme climb in the Alps. But we had a superb climbing team, and they successfully captured gripping footage of this harrowing ascent. It's going to put the audience right there in the heart of this exciting and emotional story “

A film that invites audiences to celebrate the timeless beauty and unique culture of the Alps while experiencing this exciting climb side by side with John Harlin and the Jaspers, *The Alps: Giants of Nature* ([www.alpsfilm.com](http://www.alpsfilm.com)) is a Great Adventure Film<sup>®</sup> produced by MacGillivray Freeman Films and distributed by MacGillivray Freeman Films Distribution Company. The film is presented by **Holcim Ltd** ([www.holcim.com](http://www.holcim.com)), in association with **4iS Four Eyes** ([www.4is.ch](http://www.4is.ch)).

### **More About John Harlin III**

John Harlin III grew up in Leysin in the Swiss Alps, where his father, John Harlin II, founded the International School of Mountaineering. After his father's death, John returned with his mother and sister to the U.S., where he has been an active mountaineer, skier, adventurer, editor, and writer. After stints writing climbing guidebooks and serving as an editor for *Backpacker* and *Summit* magazines, Harlin is currently the editor of the prestigious *American Alpine Journal*, the journal of record for new mountain routes worldwide. He has made first telemark and first ski descents,

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climbed new routes, and made first river descents in such places as Peru, Bolivia, Tibet, Alaska, Canada, the Alps, and throughout the U.S.

### **More About Robert and Daniela Jasper**

Members of an elite class of extreme mountain climbers, Robert and Daniela Jasper have assembled an impressive list of climbing accomplishments including ascents of the North faces of the Eiger, the Matterhorn and Grand Jorasses, and expeditions to Cerro Torre, Nuptse East and Denali. Together, they have made first ascents on some of the most difficult routes, including the “Symphonie de Liberté” route on the Eiger North Face and the “Betablocksuper” route on the largest ice fall in Europe. With 14 successful attempts on the Eiger to his credit, Robert Jasper is fondly known as Dr. Eiger. Of German origin, the Jaspers live at the foot of the Eiger.

### **More About MacGillivray Freeman Films ([www.macfreefilms.com](http://www.macfreefilms.com))**

MacGillivray Freeman Films is the largest, most experienced independent producer and distributor of IMAX theatre films with more than 30 giant screen films to its credit. Throughout the company's 40-year history, the company's films have won numerous international awards including two Academy Award<sup>®</sup> nominations. The company's 1998 blockbuster hit *Everest* achieved unprecedented acclaim and box office success and is the highest grossing giant screen film of all time. MacGillivray Freeman's films are known for their artistry and celebration of the natural world.

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