



A FILM BY
MARCIN JAMKOWSKI

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Stronger than Ever

Documentary feature, Poland (2024), 71 min.

Directed by: Marcin Jamkowski



#rock climbing #accident #second chance #Greece #nothingwillstopme

Trailer <https://vimeo.com/jamkowski/stronger-than-ever-trailer>

"Stronger than Ever" is an intense, intimate portrait of a passionate man who embarks on an adventurous journey through the mountains of Spain, England, Greece and Poland. He suffered near-fatal fall while rock climbing, breaking dozens of bones, but from his hospital bed he vowed to come back stronger than ever. He has set his sights on the hardest climb of his life - a very steep, challenging limestone route called "Andromeda" on the Greek island of Kalymnos. He needs his wife as a partner, and he needs the help of friends. The film deals with crisis and second chances in life with a sense of humor. It's about how we deal with life when it takes a sharp turn, but let's not forget to have some fun!



Maciej Kubera “Pastor” falling on the climbing wall broke his arm, leg, pelvis, four vertebrae in his spine and completely crushed his heel. “The doctor said that on an X-ray that bone looks like someone dropped a cup on concrete,” says “Pastor”. For a climber in his 50s, such an accident could mean the end of his beloved sport. On his hospital bed, however, “Pastor” makes a commitment to get out and be stronger than ever.

“We started this project as a small, intimate film about a damaged climber. As we followed the twisting fate of our protagonist with the camera, our film grew. I think that thanks to this long-term observation, our story achieved a universal dimension. It became a film about crisis and about second chances in life. About the power of passion, friendship and love,” says Marcin Jamkowski, director and screenwriter of “Stronger than Ever”.

A great role in his recovery and climbing come back lays in the hands of his wife Ewa “Bibi” Kubera and friends who accompany “Pastor”, keeping his spirits up and supporting him as he prepares for his personal confrontation with a great challenge and a lifelong dream. Will he emerge victorious from it? And what will he learn along the way?

“Everyone will face some kind of crisis in life. Some will face a financial one, others a job crisis, others an emotional, love or health crisis. The question is how we will respond then. Will we give up, or will we fight? How will we take advantage of this turning point in life?” says Marcin Jamkowski.

“What impressed me about my protagonist was his will to live and his energy to fight – for himself, for his passion, for his dreamed goal. And, in fact, for reclaiming his life as he dreamed it. Watching these struggles and doubts up close was fascinating to me. Even more so because it involved a person close to me, a friend of mine,” adds Marcin Jamkowski.

“Stronger than Ever” is a humanistic story about a middle-aged man's struggle to regain his shape, where bouncing back from the bottom, standing on one's own feet and striving for a goal are symbols of a life of passion.



“Stronger than Ever”

Documentary feature, Poland (2024), 71 min.

Written and directed by Marcin Jamkowski

Cinematography: Adam Suzin, Marzena Hmielewicz, Marcin Jamkowski

Edited by: Natalia Jacheć, Maciej Pawliński

Cast: Maciej „Pastor” Kubera, Ewa „Bibi” Kubera, Marcin Gala, Adam Pawelec, Zbigniew Skierski, Aleksandra Piechnik, Mirosław Falis, Tom Randall, Adam Pracownik, Rafael Ford Gonzalez and others.

Produced by: Adventure Pictures

Producer: Marcin Jamkowski

Coproducers: Canal+ Poland, Mazovia Film Fund

Co-financed by: Polish Film Institute, Polish National Foundation

Postproduction: FDR Studio

Shot on locations in Poland, Spain, UK and Greece.

IMDb: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt35888989>



Festivals and Awards

"Stronger than Ever" received two awards at the first two festivals where it was screened: Grand Prix at the International Film Festival in Kosice (Slovakia) and 2. Audience Award at the Mountain Festival in Łądek-Zdrój (the biggest mountain festival in Europe).

Was also shown at:

International Mountain Film Festival Graz, Austria

Friday Harbor Film Festival, USA

London Mountain Film Festival, UK

OFF Festival Poznań, Poland

Wanda Rutkiewicz Film Festival, Warsaw, Poland

Belgrade International Film Festival, Serbia

INKAFEST Mountain Film Festival, Arequipa, Peru

Transylvania Mountain Film Festival, Romania

Alpin Mountain Film Festival, Romania

International Mountain Film Festival Poprad, Slovakia

Krakow Mountain Festival, Poland

IX Mostra Filmes de Montanha, Brasil

Sofia International Film Festival

Starting Valentine's Day 2025 it's available on Canal+ VOD (Polish territory only).

A TV premiere is scheduled on Canal+ Poland (Polish territory only) in April 2025.



People behind the project

Marcin Jamkowski

Marcin Jamkowski is a filmmaker and writer. Passionate climber and diver. Marcin studied chemistry in Warsaw, Poland, and after graduation conducted research with lasers and organic dyes at the Color Science Laboratory. In his mid-20s, he changed his career path and became a science writer for the science section of the largest newspaper in Central Europe. He wrote about a thousand articles and shot his first two short documentaries before being hired as editor-in-chief of National Geographic magazine in Poland. After five years in that desk job, he went freelance, wrote six books, and followed his passion by studying filmmaking at Harvard and MIT.

Marcin's favorite subjects have always been expeditions, exploration and popular science stories. He has participated in or organized more than a dozen expeditions to five continents with exploratory, archaeological, or scientific goals. He led the Nat Geo scuba diving expedition to the Steuben Wreck in the Baltic Sea (with a quarter-million-dollar budget) and the 10-year expedition that discovered 350-year-old Polish Royal treasure in the Vistula River. A feature-length documentary about that premiered in NYC. He was a TED speaker and a recipient of a scholarship from the Polish Ministry of Culture. Marcin is a Fellow of The Explorers Club and is currently serving his second term as Vice Chairman and Treasurer of the Polish Chapter of the Club.

“Stronger than Ever” is his second feature-length documentary.

Marzena Hmielewicz

Photographer, artist and cinematographer. She was the first to toss around the idea of filming the heartbroken “Pastor,” which resulted in “Stronger than Ever” after four years of work.

She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Poznan, and for many years was a photojournalist for Gazeta Wyborcza in Poland. She is currently active at Adventure Pictures, where she and Marcin

Jamkowski shoot documentaries on exploration, science and history. She has photographed for National Geographic, Polityka, Newsweek, Forbes and Financial Times. She has participated in exploration expeditions in Madagascar, three wreck expeditions in the Baltic Sea, Afghanistan and in... downtown Warsaw, where she spent a decade documenting the search for King Jan Kazimierz's treasures looted by the Swedes during the 17th century deluge. For her contributions to exploration work, she was admitted to The Explorers Club in 2024.

Marzena has won awards at the Euro Press Photo Awards (Stockholm), the Polish Press Photography Contest (Warsaw) and the Humanity Photo Awards (China). She is also one of the protagonists of the book "The Only Ones. Untold Stories of Polish Women Photographers". She climbs, but as she emphasizes, mainly "for health and beauty."

Adam Suzin

Cinematographer, graduate of the Department of Cinematography in Lodz Film School, Poland. Hailed by the culture.pl portal as one of the most talented cinematographers of the young generation. For his cinematography in "Over the Limit" he received awards at the Krakow Film Festival and an award from the Society of Cinematographers. The short film "Crocodile," for which Adam was the cinematographer, premiered at the Cannes Film Festival. He is currently working on his feature film debut. Since shooting "Stronger than Ever" in Kalymnos, Adam has started climbing regularly.

Maciej Pawliński

Editor. Head and teacher at the Department of Editing at the Lodz Film School, Poland. Member of the Polish Film Academy and the European Film Academy (EFA) and the Polish Editors Association. He is the author of editing for dozens of feature and documentary films and series. From under his hand came "Over the Limit," "Broad Peak," "Pact," "Pitbull" and "Illegals," among others. He climbs, but (so far!) irregularly.

Natalia Jacheć

Editor, PhD student in the Department of Film Editing at the Lodz Film School. Author and co-author of the editing of several documentaries and feature films shot in Polish, Arabic and German. She is the only one of the team (yet) not climbing.

Production company profile

Adventure Pictures was founded in 2007 as an arthouse documentary production company. It is dedicated to storytelling and authenticity with a focus on exploration, adventure and popular science. The company has produced a feature film for Canal+ about an eccentric rock climber who challenges himself to be "Stronger than Ever" (the title of the film), a successful hunt for underwater antiquities in "River of Treasures" (another title) for Polish TVP, about the struggle of archaeologists around the world "Against the Sands of Time" for UNESCO, and a documentary about the last battle of the Vietnam War (shot in Cambodia), where the title motto "No Man Left Behind" turned out to be unfortunately an empty Marine Corps slogan.



“A beautiful, moving, universal and sincere film”.

“True from beginning to end”

“A great documentary with a universal message, for everyone! About the struggle with one's own limitations, which, regardless of the outcome, is a key part of the protagonist's development.”

“This is the first movie that shows us a female partner. Usually, we see the main character and somewhere in the background we hear about a family that just lives in fear from expedition to expedition. Here we had a partnership that was beautifully shown.”



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