

A Woman's Perspective of the Quest and the North

A remarkable DVD came to my attention the other day, Dog Gone Addiction: Women of the Yukon Quest, a film made by independent film maker Becky Bristow.

The focus is on three women who participated in the 2004 Yukon Quest from Fairbanks to Whitehorse: Michelle Phillips from Tagish, a first-time Quester; the late Agata Frankzac, another rookie from Dawson; and Kelly Griffin, a Quest veteran from

Wasilla Alaska.

"You can make a couple of mistakes that turn into ugly in a hurry." -Michelle Phillips

Competition and facing the gruelling hardship, an all-male measurement and main theme of many documentaries of this race, is the mainstay of how the Quest is seen by the outside world.

The challenges faced by these women are the same as their male competitors but the focus on the women is what makes this film

interesting to me.

"... handling for a woman is a whole other experience, I don't know, but the girls seem to be a little bit nicer." -Leif Videen, Dog Handler

Bristow has captured our Northern land and the raw harshness of what a 50-below dog sled race is all about.

Tempered by the beauty of her camera's eye, the struggle of these women to challenge themselves to overcome fear and fatigue in this vast, lonely land, Bristow captures a humanity that never flinches from the truth.

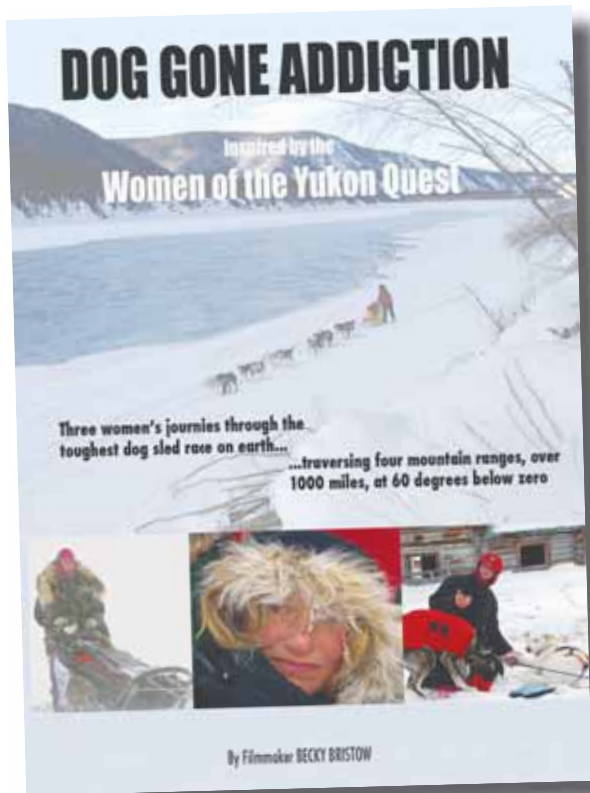
As the race progresses, we see the participants slowly getting more fatigued, puffy and disheveled.

This film shows in a practical way how the human mind is wired to accept stimulus and process it as pleasure. Even though they start to talk of hallucinations, chasing their bliss keeps them focused.

"It's you, yourself, that can get into a boatload of trouble in a heartbeat and it's you, yourself, that can avoid that trouble or get yourself out of it. So, that's the kind of challenge I like." -Kelly Griffin

This film, made by women and about women, while not prompting me to take up mushing in any way, has given me a truer sense of what is in our natural backyard

I'm going to live in a forest and have lots of dogs ... to say something like this in Poland I might as well have told her that I'll be living in the Moon. When I turned 35



than any film I have ever seen.

The awful realization of our insignificance and the awe-inspiring hugeness of the Great White North are recurring themes that hit you in the head like a Northern wind chill.

Dog Gone Addiction: Women of the Yukon Quest is a great watch and had me feeling chilled on a warm evening.

"When I was 14 years old and I told my Mom ... when I'll be older

years old, I moved here and I had a cabin in the forest and lots of dogs. So, sometimes it takes just time."

-Agata Frankzac from her cabin in Dawson

Becky Bristow offers this film for sale at her website at wildsoulcreations.com.

Bill Polonsky is available to review any format disc at his website, strangethingsdone.com

Dog Gone Addiction:

Women of the Yukon Quest is a DVD that will show Yukoners what their own "backyard" looks like. And it tells of three compelling stories on the Yukon Quest trail ... and 50 minutes of bonus material.

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