



June 03, 2011

Movie Review Friday: The Last Mountain

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[The Last Mountain](#) (2011)

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If it weren't for the change underway and the Appalachian community's tremendous heart, this stark look at mountaintop-removal mining would be hard to watch.

Producer [Clara Bingham](#), a Kentucky native and a veteran reporter, collaborated with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and director [Bill Haney](#) to investigate Massey Energy's effect on the area surrounding West Virginia's [Coal River Mountain](#). They — and we — see the decimation of entire mountains and their residential neighborhoods. Elementary schools sit a stone's throw from toxic operations. Local governments are deeply enmeshed with the coal industry.

The Last Mountain is an eye-opening documentary about what really happens when we flip on the light switch. This may look like a regional struggle, but it's actually a nationwide energy story; nearly half of America's electricity still comes from coal, and 30% of that from Appalachia. The burning of coal is the number one source of greenhouse gases worldwide.

As an American story, though, it's fitting that *The Last Mountain* includes snippets of Kennedy family history, including references to Senator Robert F. Kennedy's early work on water and labor protection, and his perseverance in creating laws to protect critical water resources.

To date, mountaintop-removal mining has destroyed 500 Appalachian mountains, 1 million acres of forest, and 2,000 miles of streams. This film is about saving Coal River Mountain, the last peak with the capacity to generate wind energy and transcend the cycle of destructive consumption.

The Last Mountain addresses America's energy future, and we're still writing the ending.

--Pamela Biery

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