

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Day in the Life of Jimmy Chin

An explorer of the world's highest peaks takes on his latest challenge: Hollywood

By **CHRISTOPHER ROSS**

Updated March 1, 2016 5:21 p.m. ET

Tracking Jimmy Chin »

Follow the explorer as he goes skiing in Mount Glory.



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8:10 P.M. DINNER at Il Villaggio Osteria, a favorite après-ski spot in Jackson Hole. *PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID STUBBS FOR WSJ. MAGAZINE*



AN EARLY JANUARY morning in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, finds a groggy Jimmy Chin, 42, in his kitchen struggling to make tea and conversation. Though it's still dark out, a steady stream of people funnels through his front door. Officially, the skier, mountaineer and photographer-filmmaker is supposed to be enjoying a break this week, but today he's being trailed by a Red Bull film crew that is documenting preparations for two descents down Mount Glory, one of his favorite local ski slopes. "I'd like to say it's not always like this, but it kind of is," he says, stepping around a film producer as he adds almond milk and raw honey to his thermos.

Chin—a North Face-sponsored athlete—has long been renowned for pulling off maneuvers that some might call death-defying (like skiing Mount Everest from the summit). And now, with the success of *Meru*, a 2015 documentary that he co-directed, he's taking a headlong leap into the entertainment business. The film, seven years in the making, recounts the efforts of Chin and fellow elite alpinists Conrad Anker and Renan Ozturk to tackle one of the last great unsolved "problems" in mountaineering: Shark's Fin, a fearsome route on India's Meru Peak, whose summit had eluded countless climbers.

With some help from award-winning documentarian Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (whom Chin married after they became collaborators), his passion project ended up snagging the audience award for U.S. documentary at the Sundance Film Festival. Suddenly, the sun-weathered mountain man finds himself sitting down to Los Angeles power lunches with the likes of Matt Damon and Ridley Scott.

As Chin's career suggests, today's top athletes are expected to do more than perform physically daring feats—becoming a content producer and developing a niche brand are part of the package. Chin's specialty is shooting from dizzying heights. He's shot far-flung covers for *National Geographic* and ad campaigns for apparel companies like Roxy, Nau and Timex; and now, after *Meru*, Chin has a new documentary project in the pipeline. (He's keeping the topic under wraps.) The hazards of such exploits don't seem to faze him. "There are two main dangers in life," he says, "risking too much and risking too little."