

WOLFING DOWN THE REWARDS OF SUCCESS

A BADENOCH man who has become an animal trainer for Hollywood movies is winning awards for a remarkable documentary about wolves.

Forty-five-year-old Andrew Simpson's movie 'Wolves Unleashed' has just started showing in the US film festival circuit.

It has already won the Sierra Nevada Award in California at the Mountain Film Awards, and won Best Documentary in New York at the Winter Film Awards.

The film has also been selected to screen at another seven US festivals within the next two months, and it is hoped the movie will break into Europe soon.

Mr. Simpson lived in Glenshero, near Laggan Bridge, until his early 20s, when he started travelling

and ended up in Canada. His brother Norman (47) still lives at Strathmashie, by Laggan, and his mother, Shona, at Glenshero.

Mr. Simpson said: "A Scottish festival would be a dream come true for me, as none of my family have seen the film yet! Fingers crossed.

"When you make an independent film project all you ever want is the exposure, and the festival circuit is the best way, but to actually win the awards is getting confirmation that you did a good job."

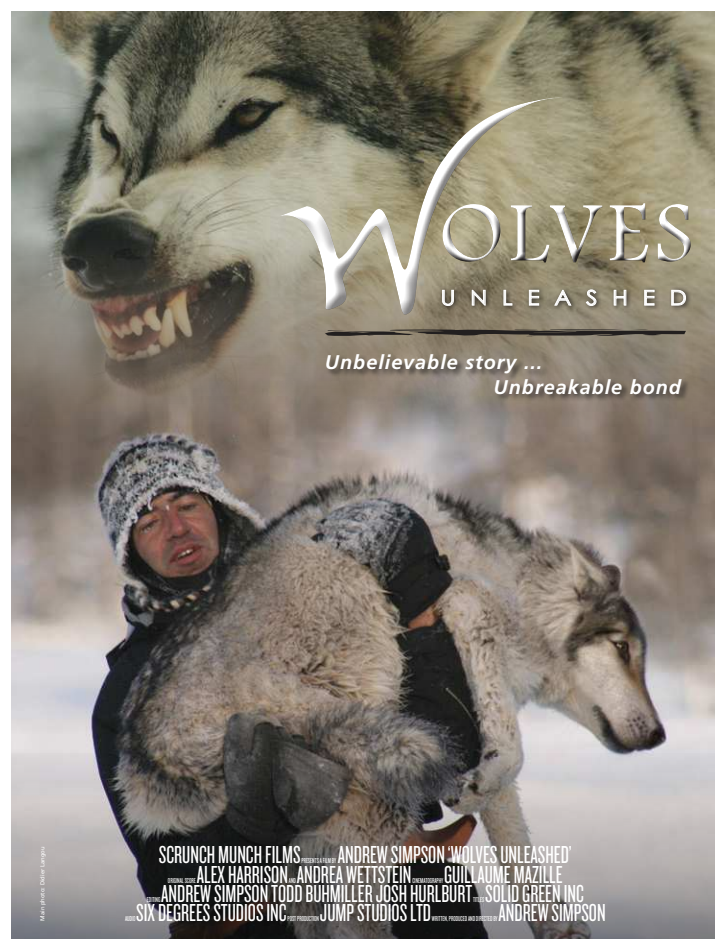
He added: "Some days it seems as if I'm a million miles away from my home in Glenshero where I grew up, dreaming of working in the film industry. But like most Scotsmen, no matter where I go or what I do, Scotland is always in your blood.



Mr. Simpson with one of his wolves in China. Photo by David Gilchrist.

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– Andrew Simpson



A poster for Mr. Simpson's film 'Wolves Unleashed'.

"At the moment we are currently working outside China's capital, Beijing, on a film adaptation of the novel 'Wolf Totem'. We are nine months in with another 19 months to go."

His brother Norman said: "My mum and I are incredibly proud of what Andrew has achieved.

"The success of 'Wolves Unleashed' could be the start of even bigger things for him; he is certainly getting a lot of publicity off it."

'Wolves Unleashed' is about Mr. Simpson journeying to Siberia, one of the coldest places on Earth, to make the biggest wolf film ever attempted, a French movie called 'Loup'.

Together with his pack of 20 wolves, Mr. Simpson and his crew lived in a remote camp for five months, dealing with temperatures as low as -60°C.

The documentary shows that Mr. Simpson's wolves are graceful, caring, affectionate, trusting and capable of expressing different

emotions. It also shows the bond between the trainers and the wolves – a bond that occasionally must be put at risk for the sake of the scene.

He explained: "Most of the films we do with wolves portrays them as snarling and evil, the werewolf and all that kind of thing.

"Hopefully, with this movie people will see the gentler side of wolves"

"They will see that they are capable of showing affection and emotion, and are bonding with people in a positive way."

Mr. Simpson has been working with animals in the film and TV industry for 20 years.

Although he now specialises in wolves, he has trained many species, from insects and birds to bears, around the world. He and his wolves live in Alberta, Canada.

Information about the film 'Wolves Unleashed' can be found on the website www.wolvesunleashed.com.

by Clive Dennier, Badenoch and Strathspey Herald