

Utah Video Production Studio Documents the Untold Origin Story of Little Cottonwood Canyon Climbing

With a cast including Olympians, local civic leaders, old and young climbers, this documentary marks a critical moment in the sport of climbing.

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, July 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Headlamp Studios, a [video production company](#) in Millcreek, Utah, announces the release of *Alpenbock*, a short documentary chronicling the untold story of the first climbers to ascend the granite walls of Little Cottonwood Canyon (a group of University of Utah students who made their way up the rock with little more than hemp rope and determination). Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson serves as Executive Producer on the project, a role made personal by the fact that her father, Ted Wilson (himself a three-time Mayor of Salt Lake City) was one of the original climbers featured in the film.

Original records from the late 1950s and early 1960s were thin. Director Simon Fraser notes that what made the documentary possible was the discovery of preserved journals, photographs, and climbing equipment saved by the Alpenbock Club members themselves over more than six decades. "We are lucky to have dozens of key characters still alive to pass down their history. A legacy which, until now, has only been told around the campfire," Fraser said. "It is our responsibility to gather these voices and put them on the record, before their great-grandchildren step into their shoes for good."

Legacy and authenticity were not just creative goals on this project. They were guiding principles. To honor the era faithfully, Fraser and the Headlamp team made a deliberate decision to film reenactment sequences on period-authentic Super 8 film, using original climbing gear donated by the Alpenbock members, the same equipment carried on those first ascents more than sixty years ago.

Fraser notes that this was time consuming and costly, but also necessary. This documentary stands in deliberate contrast to the rising wave of push-button, AI-generated video content saturating the media landscape. Where modern production tools can try to simulate texture and tone, they cannot replicate the weight of gear that has actually touched the rock, the grain of film that existed at the time the story was lived, or the nuance of emotion that defined each shot, each cut, and each character.

"When we decided to film a reenactment, I knew I wanted to do it differently," Fraser said. "We filmed in Super 8, giving it an authentic quality that leans into the setting and feels true to the story."

Where no footage existed at all, the production developed a visual animation style drawn directly from the textures of the original Alpenbock scrapbook — handwritten journal entries, trip reports, and photographs brought to life on screen. Interviews with surviving Alpenbock members, including Ted Wilson, George Lowe, and Milt Hokanson form the emotional core of the film alongside perspectives from a new generation of Wasatch climbers. Rounding out the cast includes Salt Lake City Olympian (Silver Medal, Climbing) Nathaniel Coleman, Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard, and Royal Robbins (first climber of El Capitan in Yosemite).

The project took three years to complete and was produced in partnership with the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance.

Mayor Wilson, whose personal connection to the story runs through the film's central characters, expressed her support plainly: "I am proud of it and believe the audience will be thrilled to have the chance to view it. It covers a broader era of climbing and addresses the evolution of the sport and its impact on our local area."

The film's premiere on July 6, 2026 at Industry SLC in Salt Lake City sold out both scheduled screenings. A second public event is planned for September 3, 2026 at Storm Mountain Amphitheater in Big Cottonwood Canyon, where the film will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers, storytellers, and members of the Salt Lake Climbers Alliance. Tickets are available at saltlakeclimbers.org. Alpenbock will be submitted to film festivals in 2027.

Headlamp Studios is a full-service video production company based in Millcreek, Utah, specializing in documentary, brand, and commercial film production across the Mountain West, South West, and Pacific region.

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