

## Broadcast



### Nat Geo doc film-makers praise Netflix's influence

By **Manori Ravindran** | 23 November 2017

Dian Fossey: Secrets In The Mist makes extensive use of Nat Geo's archive of the primatologist

Oscar-winning director James Marsh and 12 Year Old Lifer filmmaker Zara Hayes have hailed the impact of Netflix on factual storytelling and the power of archive footage, ahead of the release of National Geographic doc series Dian Fossey: Secrets In The Mist.

The US cable channel's latest premium offering examines the life, work and death of American researcher Fossey, who was the inspiration for the 1988 film Gorillas In The Mist.

The Tigress series premieres on 6 December and features The Jinx-style recreations of Fossey's unsolved murder in Rwanda, alongside extensive Nat Geo archive.

Marsh, who directed Man On Wire and Project Nim and executive produces Secrets In The Mist, said there are more options than ever before for factual storytellers, ranging from feature docs to 10-part series, by way of shorter series with advertising breaks, such as this project.

Director Hayes added that projects such as Netflix's Making A Murderer follow-up The Keepers have "allowed broadcasters the assurance to say, 'we can tell a story in detail, leave clues and

come back to those clues'. The Netflix model has pioneered that style, and allowed broadcasters like Nat Geo to be confident that you don't have to be recapping the entire time."

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Marsh, whose previous docs have drawn heavily on archive, credited Nat Geo's 40 hours of previously unseen footage of Fossey as a "remarkable" discovery.

"Nat Geo was there in Rwanda and documented it all," he said. "It was the way in to understanding her story because you can see her doing things and her reaction to a gorilla's death is absolutely devastating."

He noted that "certain bits of archive can enter the culture", describing Attenborough's 1978 encounter with Fossey's gorillas at the Karisoke Research Centre, documented in Life On Earth, as "mythical".

"The jewel in the crown of the Fossey archive are those moments when she is so close to the gorillas. You can see interspecies comfort and habituation, which is unbelievable. These kinds of films almost start with the archive."

Secrets In The Mist, alongside the release of Nat Geo's Brett Morgen-directed feature doc Jane, on primatologist Jane Goodall, is another entry in the broadcaster's 'fewer, bigger, better' strategy of premium titles. These include Emmy-nominated scripted series Genius.