

The Last Men in Aleppo (2016)

104mins *****



The Last Men in Aleppo follows the White Helmets, an urban search and rescue unit of volunteers who operate in rebel-controlled Syria and Turkey. The film itself combines breathtaking footage of in-progress searches, bombings and the short-lived ceasefire in 2016.

The combination of strength and resilience of the two main characters, Khaled and Mahmoud, and the resilience of the people is held in juxtaposition with the crumbling buildings from which people are rescued.

There are some truly outstanding moments caught by a team who risked their own lives while embedded with the White Helmets. They were present when a rocket hit one of the cars they were travelling in.

There are moments in this film when we see hope and normality return to the people in Aleppo, only for it to be cruelly ripped away again. In those moments it becomes strikingly real that normalcy to Aleppo is not the moments of peace, but the explosions preceded by the sound of jets flying overhead.

This documentary brings what I can only assume are some of the horrors of war to our doorstep. It includes graphic imagery that is not for the faint of heart.

A lot of this may have been presented to us before through news reports, and even Netflix's own series on the work of the White Helmets.

What The Last Men in Aleppo introduces is the human angle built around Khaled and Mahmoud. These two men show bravery

and strength that most could only hope to have. Observing their day-to-day lives and allowing the audience to see more than just a reporter on the screen is why this film stands out.

The stunning shots of a devastated city run alongside the story of these men who even in low moments find the drive and determination to keep going.

