

Time Out

New York



Rare is the film about Antarctica that doesn't concern itself with the playful antics of penguins, which is why Anne Aghion's documentary comes as such a welcome surprise. The polar opposite of Discovery Channel fare and a small-scale counterbalance to Werner Herzog's similar but subjective *Encounters at the End of the World*, Aghion's film follows four geologists on a quest in the mostly snowless McMurdo Dry Valleys to learn more about prehistoric Antarctica and its effect on global climate change.

Majestically shot in HD over several months, *Ice People* is as much a character study as it is a science lesson, both detailing the team's research — they find indisputable proof of a once-green Antarctic — and understanding the mind-set of those who willingly choose a day job at the end of the earth. There's little in the way of context or background information, with Aghion opting instead to let the explorers do the talking: It's lonely at the bottom, and the appearance of the camera is an opportunity for the subjects to discuss matters metaphysical (religion versus science), dermatological (the effects of not showering for extended periods) and unavoidable (those damned snotcicles). With its lack of narration and subjective distance, the film is a uniquely meditative, psychological portrait of individuals who approach scientific exploration with the passion and fervor of artists.

—Andrew Grant, *Time Out New York*, April 30 – May 6, 2009