

Man on Wire (dir. James Marsh)

A real treat, especially for documentary lovers, this film will undoubtedly resonate for all of us around the anniversary of September 11th 2001. It tells of tightrope-walker Philippe Petit (the French have a wonderful word, *funambule*) and his obsession with conquering the Twin Towers. And yes, I do mean what you think I mean.

Having strung a wire between the towers of Notre Dame de Paris, and then between those of the Sydney Harbour bridge, and proceeded to walk, kneel, lie down, turn around and juggle on them, Petit and his accomplices planned the spectacular and all but impossible challenge of doing the same for WTC North and South towers. It is of course illegal to do this sort of thing, but they had got away with it before.

Interweaving documentary footage, reconstruction and talking head reminiscences of the participants – Petit himself is infectiously enthusiastic – Marsh fashions a film which tantalisingly revisits the progress of events on the day and then leaves us dangling (sorry) to go back and explain or amplify earlier events and preparations.

Despite the security challenges, the dangers of cross winds, wire oscillation and tension, not to mention the difficulty of getting an extremely heavy length of cable up a hundred flights and getting it two hundred feet to the opposite tower, the group pulled it off. It's a breathtaking viewing experience, conveying something of the awe the event inspired in bystanders back in 1974, and this despite the lack of moving images depicting the coup itself.