

‘Ambiguous loss is a trauma like no other’: The Director of MH370: The Plane that Disappeared on the Biggest Mystery in Aviation History

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Planes go up. Planes go down. What planes don’t do is just vanish off the face of the Earth.” These are the words of aviation journalist Jeff Wise, who features in [Netflix’s](#) chilling new docuseries, [MH370: The Plane that Disappeared](#). But on 8 March 2014, that’s precisely what happened. A Malaysia Airlines flight with 227 passengers and 12 crew on board departed its home capital of Kuala Lumpur and never landed at its planned destination of Beijing. What occurred after the aircraft last communicated with air traffic control 38 minutes after take-off has been the subject of innumerable theories in the years since – some plausible, some risible – many of which are explored in this three-parter. “It’s important that people still talk about MH370 and don’t just forget about it,” director Louise Malkinson tells me over Zoom. “It’s a mystery that hasn’t been solved and I think it’s really important that there’s a push for a resumed search for the plane.”

In January 2017, the three-year search for MH370 was called off, leaving the most baffling case in aviation history unsolved. Using what little satellite data there was, scientists had identified a vast search area in the Southern Indian Ocean. While various bits of debris – some alleged, some confirmed – have been recovered over the years, the main underwater wreckage and its crucial black box data recorders have remained elusive. For the next of kin of the passengers on board, this lack of evidence represents a lack of closure, which has defined their lives for the past nine years. In one piece of archival footage, Jiang Hui – a Chinese man whose mother was on the flight – is handed what is believed to be a small chunk of the plane. The pain is writ large upon his face as he recalls, “When I had the debris in my hand, I thought, ‘This was probably the thing that was closest to my mother in her last moments.’” This may be the nearest thing to a resolution that Jiang ever gets. “Ambiguous loss is a trauma like no other,” Malkinson says. “To be nine years on and having no answers... you just can’t imagine it.”

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