

Alumni's river documentary to be completed this summer



Photo courtesy of Paul Collins

Paul Collins, Dean Brennan and Anlo Sepulveda plan to submit their documentary, "Yakona," for next year's South by Southwest film festival.

By Glen Tadych
Trends Reporter

Some filmmaking alumni are already looking ahead to next year's event to submit their documentary film, even before the 2013 South by Southwest has begun.

The film "Yakona" will be a feature-length documentary when completed and will tell the story of the San Marcos River from periods preceding human existence to today.

Directors Paul Collins and Anlo Sepulveda and producer Dean Brennan originally expected to release "Yakona" in the fall of 2012, but creative decisions pushed the film back by almost a year.

The film is now in the final stages of production, and should be completed by the end of the summer. Once finished, "Yakona" will be submitted for entry in both the upcoming Sundance Film Festival and South by Southwest 2014.

"Other things came up, and new ideas emerged," Sepulveda said. "The processes

of discovery, going with ideas and having the freedom of not having a deadline or structure have been helpful in letting the film evolve and grow organically."

"Yakona" is pure cinema, unlike most documentaries. The film will feature no narration or on-screen interviews but instead present the viewer with the river's journey through imagery, sound and music.

"(This style) makes it very subjective," said Collins, alumnus. "Nothing's going to anchor a direct thought into the audience, and everyone will get something different from it."

Filmmakers traveled to locations in the Texas Hill Country that have remained relatively unchanged for thousands of years, such as Enchanted Rock and Jacob's Well, to capture scenes depicting times predating human interaction.

"We didn't have to recreate anything," Collins said. "We just had to focus on things that have been here forever."

The film's style of telling the story from

the river's perspective eliminated the need for strict historical accuracy. However, the film's later scenes portraying the cultural clash between settlers and native tribes required detailed recreations.

"Yakona" will close with scenes on the river as it is today, showing the regular day-to-day activities and postcommencement traditions of Texas State students.

Accompanying the imagery will be the music and sounds of composer, sound engineer and alumnus Travis Austin, selected for his work on Collins and Sepulveda's previous film, "Otis Under Sky."

Sepulveda described the desired sound design and music to Austin as if they were the voice and emotions of the river throughout the film.

"The river is basically the main character of the film, and we want the music to speak to that," Sepulveda said.

Collins spent several days researching tribal languages native to the Hill Country to find a suitable title for the film. The Tonkawa tribe stood out because of their cultural ties with the river and the area. The fact their language is almost extinct today resonated with Collins, resulting in "yakona," meaning, "rising water," to be used as the film's title.

The filmmakers are planning to use other water-associated Tonkawa terms as chapter slates separating the different sections of the film in addition to the title.

"(The terms are) kind of a tool to help drive the narrative," said producer Jillian Hall. "Because there isn't narration or anything linear that dictates what's happen-

ing, (the terms help) guide the audience."

The film will be distributed for home media on DVD and Blu-ray Disc formats. Plans for a release of the film's soundtrack are also being discussed.

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