

focusing Beyond the classroom

Students present and past
showcase success in
making independent films

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SIUC is rarely mentioned in the same breath with universities such as Harvard and Stanford.

But student independent filmmakers such as James Saldana have ranked SIUC among these universities as one of the top finalists for the Angelus Awards, a humanitarian student film reward larger than the Student Emmys.

Saldana's three-year project, "Team Kosovo," which explores the struggles, turmoil and triumph of one Albanian family during the Serbian-Albanian battles about four years ago, was a spur-of-the-moment trip that landed him international acclaim.

Josh Hyde, a 2002 SIUC alumnus in cinema and photography, helped with Saldana's project along with developing his own independent documentary about Peruvian shamanism, "Despacho."

By raising their own money and traveling and filming the production with other friends and students, these students hope their risky and ambitious efforts can provide an encouraging example for SIU student filmmakers.

Coming into focus

Hyde remembers visiting a small village in the depths of Peru, looking at the stars, when he began to hear the saxophone of Kenny G wailing in the distance.

"Damn that American culture," Hyde said as he recalled the experience. "You found me Kenny G." Hyde had traveled to third world countries, since his mother was from the Phillipines, but he was not prepared for the documentary and future experience he found in Peru.

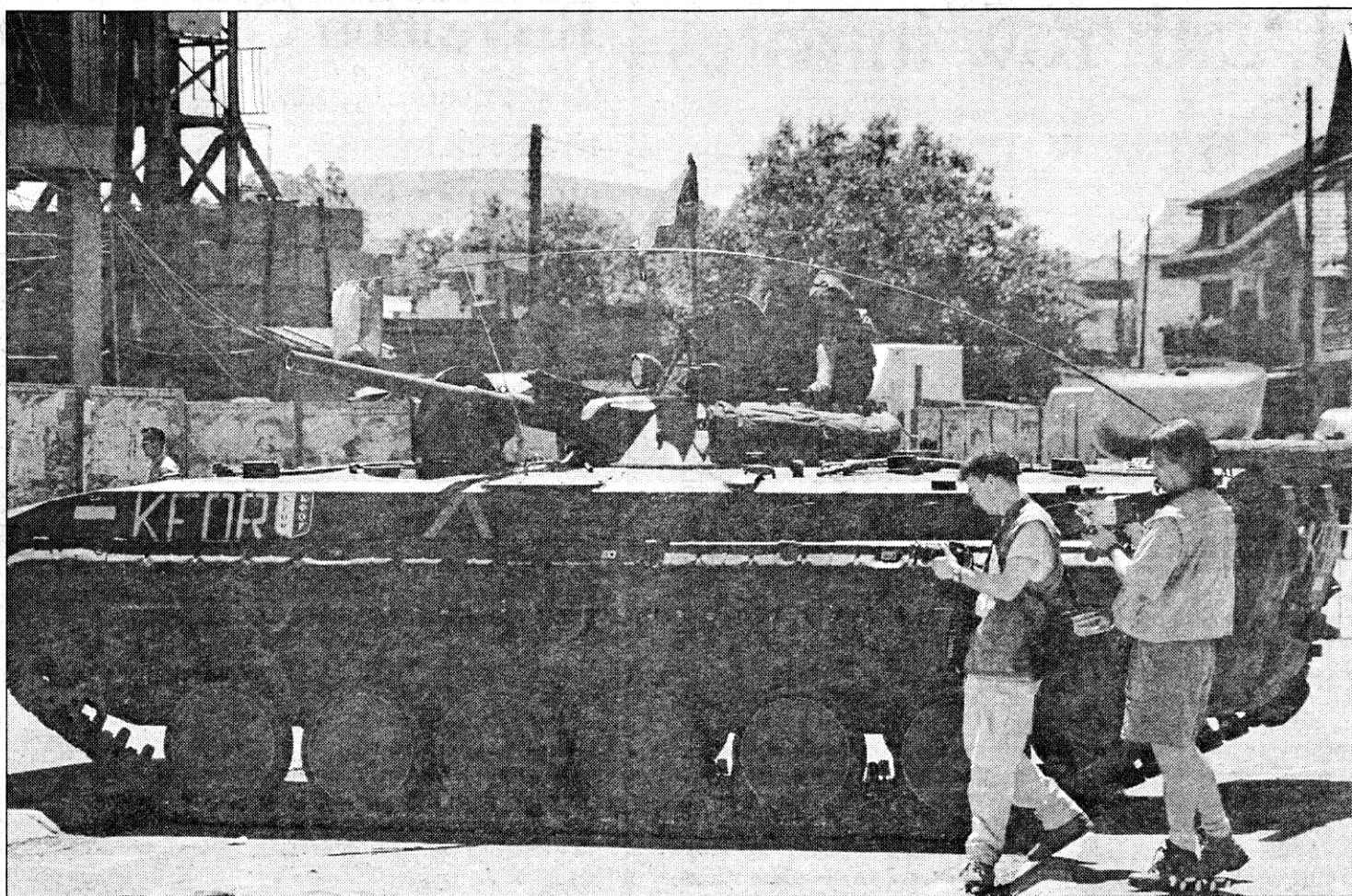
His sophomore year, Hyde attended a presentation on Peruvian shamanism and its correlation with medical providers and organizations. Finding the topic intriguing, Hyde began to write a script hoping to explore the tourism in the area, also hoping to find a shaman angle to the film.

After researching and saving \$15,000 between his summer job and a filmmaking friend's income, Hyde and his team traveled to Peru, finding more than a shaman angle, but a real representation of the presentation he liked so well.

Hyde's original idea was transformed into following Vanishing Cultures, a medical provider for indigenous tribes in Peru, while they helped treat families and led a tour through the small villages where they worked.

"In the film a lot of things happened in sync," Hyde said. "We met the founder leading both the medical trip and a tourist trip that met with shamans."

One shaman, Don Manuel Quispe, 97, is believed to one of the oldest living people from



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JAMES SALDANA & JOSH HYDE

(Above) James Saldana, a graduate student in Mass Communications in Media Arts, and cinematographer Jeff Norman walk beside a tank in Kosovo and seek footage for his documentary, "Team Kosovo," which is up for an Angelus Award. Saldana followed military refugee families and even traveled across a minefield while making the three-year project.

(Right) Peruvian Shaman Don Martin Pinedo holds a cocoa leaf offering, or "kintu," before he finishes the ceremonial task Despacho by blowing their prayers into the wind. This scene is included in SIUC 2002 alumnus Josh Hyde's documentary, "Despacho," which describes the crossing of cultural paths between Peruvian shamans and Western medical providers.



the Inca tribe and is preparing to die from increasing lung failure. Hyde said Vanishing Cultures was also providing care for the shaman, but Quispe wants to die without further treatment.

Hyde said he learned a lot about filming, producing and editing, but more about other cultures as well as his own. He said the shamans would go tell a doctor if they or one of the local people needed medical treatment, but they tried to heal spiritually — as Vanishing Cultures and Hyde came to understand.

"I was always interested in shamanism and how globalization was affecting it, but the real shaman will always be there," Hyde said. "Why do they need to be in front of a camera, because they are supposed to be connecting with outer worlds and people?"

Through this experience filming, "Despacho," Hyde learned to utilize what he learned at SIUC. He hopes by eventually screening his film for students, they can learn independent filmmaking does not have to wait until after graduation.

"If we can help gain their right to film and gain rights to the program, we can give them enough self-confidence to do something themselves," Hyde said.

Tackling an international issue

Saldana had the self-confidence to jump on a plane with his filmmaking friend and arrive near

the Yugoslavian border ready to film the events of Kosovo four years ago.

Venturing around refugee camps, Saldana and his friend found their own refuge in a camp the first night they were in the country.

Without money and knowing the language, local families, one which eventually let the students follow them around the camps, helped the students tell the Albanian struggle.

After two more visits, Saldana followed the family that helped them film their initial struggles, experiences after the war and post-war events two years later.

"We felt guilty because they were helping us when they were the ones needing help," Saldana said.

As part of the showcasing process, Saldana and other filmmakers will make a presentation in MCMA 201 class this fall, telling students about their projects.

"For me, it is not just promote ourselves, educate other students and do it themselves," Saldana said. "You already have everything you need to make your own films and productions by simply looking at the people sitting across from you; the talent is already here — be bold enough of taking risks."

Directing future filmmakers

Jan Thompson, a radio-television professor, has developed the idea for a documentary center

that will help provide ideas and companionship for local filmmakers, faculty researchers and filmmaking students.

"It would be a catalyst, so that it will help faculty and or independent producers, people who are not students, such as people in the community, help them finish," Thompson said. "Documentaries take many phases. They will be able to have a companion that would be able to put that into a documentary form."

Thompson said the center would be dynamic programming and exposure for the University. The radio-television department already has a documentary unit for their department, but the center will be accessible to all University students.

Thompson said Saldana and Hyde are creative and courageous for funding and producing their own documentaries, and she hopes they will provide an example for current SIU students.

"You have to take risks," Thompson said. "The risks [Saldana] took made it worthwhile."

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Saldana's film, "Team Kosovo," will be shown
at 8:30 p.m. Sept. 6 at Longbranch Coffeehouse.