

We Shall Remain:

history from a different perspective

We Shall Remain is a five-part documentary series that re-visits key moments in United States history from the perspective of Native Americans. Subjects include the first Thanksgiving, Tecumseh, the Trail of Tears and Wounded Knee. The program will premiere in HD format on PBS' *American Experience* in April 2009. A high-definition Blu-ray disc release is also planned, which is a first for an *American Experience* documentary.

Native American Chris Eyre (*Smoke Signals*, *A Thief of Time*, *Edge of America*) directed two episodes, and co-directed a third with award-winning documentarian Ric Burns (*New York: A Documentary Film*). The first three episodes, photographed by Paul Goldsmith, ASC, make extensive use of dramatizations.

"Films that feature recreations start off behind the eight-ball," says Goldsmith, "because the initial impetus is to make an illustration of an event. This is not cinema, which is based on character, conflict, and narrative. Trying to make an effective dramatization of a historic event is like walking on eggshells. Any mis-step is a disaster and ruins the effect. We envisioned these scenes as part of a movie, with characters that follow arcs, and not illustrations of history."

Goldsmith's approach purposefully leaves a lot out. "The European New Wave cinema taught us that leaving things out can be beneficial, because we become more involved as we try to fill in the gaps," he says.

Goldsmith's primary tool was a handheld ARRIFLEX Super 16mm film camera with a Canon 11:163mm zoom lens. He used a monitor rather than the eyepiece. "I find that working with the monitor, I'm willing to make 'mistakes' that make the image more compelling and draw the viewer in," he explains. "I tried to keep the camera searching, sometimes peeking past people's heads to try to catch a glimpse of the scene. I often used a very long lens to create a sense of observation, as if we are viewing the scene from afar, experiencing something unseen or happening by chance."

The Super 16 format allowed Goldsmith to frame the images in a 16:9 aspect ratio using the entire negative area. He loaded the

cameras with KODAK VISION2 50D 7201, KODAK VISION2 250D 7205 or KODAK VISION2 500T 7218 films.

Scenes with Native Americans were processed using a bleach bypass process that muted color and reduced contrast. "That created a slightly unfamiliar look that had a roughness that helped place the scene in the past," he says.

Goldsmith's main lighting tool was usually a single 7K or 4K Xenon lamp. He avoided filtration of any kind. In keeping with the "searching" aesthetic, he used smoke, wind, rain, dust, heat distortion and other foreground elements like branches or waving blades of grass to obscure the images whenever possible.

"Photographically there really was a lot of potential."

"With a big close-up, after you absorb the image, your eye can become bored, and you might start to think that this isn't real," he says. "So I made sure we looked away as well, at the people watching, at details of wardrobe, or an ear being pierced, or a weapon in a hand—anything to keep the cinematic language involving. If your eye is involved, hopefully you are engaged with the script and the characters, and you feel the full impact of the scene."

Many scenes were filmed at or near the places where the actual events took place. Breathtaking landscape shots were processed normally, helping to draw a visual connection between the historical events and the contemporary world.

"Photographically there really was a lot of potential," Goldsmith concludes. "The trick was avoiding making it obvious or pretentious. It would be a shame if we failed to do justice to these stories cinematically, since the Native American re-enactors were spectacular in their presentations, and the landscape was majestic."



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