

# Cannes World Film Festival to debut Chris Anthony film 'Mission Mt. Mangart'

Local filmmaker's six-year project named a semifinalist in two award categories

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**John LaConte** [FOLLOW](#)  
jlaconte@vaildaily.com



Chris Anthony, center, holding skis, is photographed on set in Slovenia in June of 2018 with cameraman Tex Tessari, filming "Mission Mt. Mangart," a documentary about the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division.

*Special to the Daily*

Eagle County filmmaker Chris Anthony thought he was being spammed when the email arrived, telling him his documentary has been accepted into the Cannes World Film Festival.

The idea for "Mission Mt. Mangart," a film about the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division ski troopers in World War II, came to Anthony six years ago. Since then he's been working non-stop in his efforts to produce a documentary about a few of the discoveries he made in Europe about the 10th Mountain Division.

"Like most people, I thought the whole story of the 10th took place at Camp Hale, Mt. Bevedere and Riva Ridge," Anthony said. "But I discovered that there's a lot more to their story."

The women of the 10th, a sunken DUKW boat containing 10th Mountain troops, the identity of a soldier killed in action, and a fabled ski race on Mt. Mangart are a few of the lesser-known 10th Mountain Division tales the film explores.

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**Chris Anthony on set at Mt. Mangart in Slovenia, filming "Mission Mt. Mangart." The film has been accepted into the Cannes film festival in the categories of history and biography.**

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The idea started when Anthony learned of the 10th's Mt. Mangart ski race, something he thought would make for an interesting short.

"I pitched the idea to Warren Miller as a 10-minute film segment," he said.

Now sitting on a complete, 90-minute documentary which he produced himself, Anthony is happy that Warren Miller Entertainment didn't jump at his pitch.

"I kept finding more and more segments that needed to be added," he said.

A fourth-grade girl asked him if there were any women in the 10th, inspiring him to create a segment about the important role women played at Camp Hale.

An English historian reached out to him about Lake Garda, asking if he had plans to feature the 10th Mountain Division's sunken DUKW boat resting at the bottom of the lake.

A tale of a 10th Mountain Division ski trooper from Mexico came to him complete with pictures.

The list goes on.

Anthony begins the documentary by saying that great stories "find a storyteller and won't let them go."

While Anthony's stories would not let him go, the execution of the film medium of storytelling proved to be challenging.

Anthony is well versed in the ski documentary format through his decades of work for Warren Miller Entertainment, but "Mangart" is his first attempt at a full-length, independently produced project.

He received help from award-winning composer Carlo Nicolau, who is not a skier but saw the makings of an important piece of modern media in Anthony's effort.

"He's so passionate about it, his passion has become contagious," Nicolau said.

Eventually, Anthony was able to complete something that could be of film-festival caliber, although he says he still sees many things that could be improved with a bigger budget.

In applying to film festivals, Anthony received a few of the rejections which are to be expected in the process, and those issues of low budget started to become magnified in his mind. He said the acknowledgment by Cannes has lifted a large weight off his shoulders.

"I think people had invested in me as a person, more than the project, because they wanted to help me," he said. "Now, for people who have supported this, for them this now feels like it's real."

## European appeal

Anthony said he was a bit overwhelmed by the news from Cannes. But he also said he can see why a European film festival might be interested in this film, because the 10th Mountain Division has wide appeal there.

"The 10th Mountain Division was made up of a lot of Europeans," Anthony said.



People from Slovenia helped Chris Anthony make "Mission Mt. Mangart," a documentary which Anthony made as a project for his youth foundation. The film has been accepted by the Cannes film festival.

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The Slovenian government, along with ordinary citizens living near Mt. Mangart, provided an incredible amount of help, Anthony said, detailing how citizens of the city of Bovec cleared avalanche debris by hand on a road en route to an important location.

Before Slovenia's involvement, Anthony said he was still in the exploratory phase of the project, deciding if it would be worth pursuing fully to the end.

"The U.S. ambassador to Slovenia got behind the project, along with the president of Slovenia, the Parliament, NATO and the Slovenian Mountain Division," Anthony said. "They got helicopters and flew me around, and opened up their national park to help us recreate the ski race."

After visiting Mt. Mangart and re-creating what the 10th Mountain Division's race might have felt like, "I knew I had to finish it," Anthony said.



**A laurel Chris Anthony received for his film "Mission Mt. Mangart." The film is a semi-finalist in the categories of history and biography.**

*Special to the Daily*

When Anthony received an email last week with the graphic of a Cannes laurel (a film festival laurel usually is recognizable for the wreath-like parenthesis from which the term laurel is derived), he said he was nearly convinced that his film might have been accepted. But even the official nature of the laurel could not make him believe that this phase – the getting accepted to a major film festival phase – of his work was complete.

"They gave me a code to access their site, and then I thought 'Holy smokes, this is real,'" he said on Wednesday. "And then last night, I received an email saying I moved up to the semifinalist level."

Amid all the official news, though, Anthony said he's still in a bit of disbelief.

"All I keep thinking is wow, this really is something," he said.

Anthony said a local debut of "Mission Mt. Mangart" has been scheduled for the Vilar Performing Arts Center at Beaver Creek for Dec. 1.

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