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It was 1970 when Gary Fritz, then age 17, became a co-organizer for Piedra Roja.

"Chile was already struggling with being on the verge of civil war. The left and the right used the festival to attack each other."

EIU professor debuts ‘Piedra Roja’ at international film fest

BY SARAH MILLER

CHARLESTON — Held up by a wrinkled passport, Gary Fritz, professor in the biological sciences department at Eastern Illinois University, was late to his own inauguration.

He was traveling to Santiago, Chile, for the IN-EDIT International Film and Music Documentary Festival earlier this month to introduce the inaugural film, "Piedra Roja" — his first feature film.

Fortunately, by a stroke of luck that few people manage, Fritz was able to secure a new passport the next day, but still missed the chance to introduce his film.

Instead, Jorge Gomez, the main organizer of the rock festival that inspired the documentary, did the honors for Fritz.

"It was the best thing that could have happened in terms of ambiance," Fritz said. "The guy that made it all happen was up on stage. He was the most appropriate person to represent the film."

Fritz arrived at IN-EDIT to see the second showing and talk with audience members and media about the documentary that examines the ramifications of Chile's first free rock festival, a South American Woodstock, during a time of social and political upheaval, including the inception of Salvador Allende's socialist government and the subsequent military coup d'etat.

The festival, also named Piedra Roja, turned out to be a successful event, with Fritz's film receiving critical acclaim.

An invitation to a reception for Fritz's documentary and programs from the IN-EDIT Festival are shown at his home in Charleston.
Audience members who attended Chile's first free rock concert in 1970 stand after the inaugural showing of the film 'Piedra Roja' at the IN-EDIT International Film and Music Documentary Festival.
It was a part of my life and I was intrigued by the status it had achieved. Fritz said. "It was the right time to do it, but then it just sort of evolved."

"Piedra Roja" was chosen over Martin Scorsese’s film on the Beatles as the inaugural film at the IN-EDIT International Film Festival in December and won honorable mention in the national film documentary category. Although he missed the inauguration and an interview with CNN due to the delay with this passport, Fritz was able to see the second showing of his film in the same theater where he and many of the "Piedra Roja" organizers had once listened to some of the musicians who headlined the festival, he said. In addition to the IN-EDIT film festival, "Piedra Roja" is scheduled for the Festival of the Arts in Valparaiso, Chile, this month. The film is not yet available to the general public, as Fritz plans to first run it available to the general public, as Fritz plans to first run it.