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SXSW 2014: Audience awards go to Before I Disappear and César Chávez biopic

Drama about a suicidal man's faltering relationship with his niece wins award voted for by audience, alongside a film about the 1970s labour activist

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Before I Disappear, a drama about a suicidal man who is asked to babysit his niece for a night, has won the audience award for best narrative feature at the SXSW film festival.

Based on the Oscar-winning short film Curfew, director Shawn Christensen's New York-set film sees Ritchie (Christensen), a depressive on the verge of killing himself, develop a faltering relationship with prim 11-year-old Sophia (Fatima Ptacek). The film, which had its world premiere in Austin earlier this week, was well-regarded by critics. [Screen International](#) writer [Mark Adams](#) described it as "stylish and beautifully shot, [if] perhaps lacking an expanded story to suit its feature length"

Best documentary went to Vessel, about Dr Rebecca Gomperts's fight to take the right to choos worldwide by travelling the globe in ship set up as an abortion clinic. Diana Whitten's debut film also [received an award from the SXSW jury earlier this week](#).

The two other main audience awards – the documentary spotlight and narrative spotlight prizes – went to DamNation and César Chávez. DamNation is an environmental documentary that studies how removing obsolete dams restores areas of the American countryside. César Chávez, directed by Diego Luna, is a biopic that stars Michael Peña as



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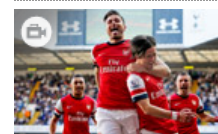
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the activist, who crusaded for farm workers' rights in the 1970s.

Further prizes went to Yakona (a documentary about the life of a river in San Marcos), Exists (a Bigfoot-style monster movie, directed by The Blair Witch Project's Eduardo Sanchez) and The Special Need, a light-hearted drama about an autistic Italian's attempts to lose his virginity.

The awards were announced as the 2014 SXSW festival enters its final day. The award for the best film in 24 Beats Per Second strand, which promotes music-based stories, will be announced on Monday.



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