

A film by Ethan Felizzari-Castillo & Nancy Irene Kelly

BACKYARD / DESERT

Based on the play BACKYARD/DESERT by Nancy Irene Kelly

Directed by Ethan Felizzari-Castillo





FILM SUMMARY

When a female border patrol agent, Pammy, finds a young migrant in the Yuma Desert, the foundation on which her life has been built slowly begins to erode. The haunting encounter forces her to question her choices, career and relationships. Torn between the comfort of her unexamined values and a growing awareness of the human ties that transcend all borders, she must make a wrenching decision in order to follow her truth.

FILM TONE

Backyard / Desert balances intensity and suspense with deep thoughtfulness. Writers Kelly and Felizzari-Castillo blend gripping, suspenseful storytelling with intricate character studies and explorations of moral complexities. Rooted in true reality, the film flows with the ups and downs of the human experience- With heart-wrenching moments of grief and fear quickly followed by moments of comedic relief; as they come in life. Audiences will feel like a fly on the wall witnessing pivotal moments in our characters' development.



FILM COMPARISONS

LOOK

- No Country for Old Men (2007)
- The Zone of Interest (2023)
- Past Lives (2023)
- Better Caul Saul (2015-2022)
- Roma (2018)
- Breaking Bad (2008-2013)

TONE

- Better Caul Saul (2015-2022)
- Roma (2018)
- Icebox (2018)
- No Country for Old Men (2007)
- 3:10 to Yuma (1957)
- Desierto (2015)



VISUAL REFERENCES





THEMES

Backyard / Desert encompasses themes of empathy, justice, and the search for common humanity in a world rife with barriers—both physical and ideological. It challenges audiences to consider the personal cost of political conflicts and the possibility of choosing compassion in the face of entrenched beliefs.

A WOMAN'S STORY

Central to ***Backyard / Desert*** is its portrayal of complex, resilient women. This strong female representation is a testament to our commitment to elevating all voices and stories; providing audiences with relatable, empowering main characters. The depth and agency of the women portrayed reflect the film team's dedication to nuanced storytelling that challenges stereotypes and typical, limited female arcs.

COLOR & TONE



Muted vibrancy will make this “desert” film stand out.

Rather than create a default yellow/orange warmth on screen (typical of films set in the desert), we will highlight the vibrancy of life in Yuma. This rich coloring paired with a muted tone will parallel the contrast between dreariness and hope that our protagonist experiences throughout the film.

As we near the end of Pammy’s journey, the colors will become less & less muted, to signify her growth & newfound clarity.

COMPOSITION



Wide angles complimented by uniformed shot composition --
*think **Roma (2018)** or **The Zone of Interest (2023)*** --
will help create tension on screen and further the isolation and anxiety of our protagonist.

LOCATION

The vast, empty desert will serve as a backdrop of great beauty and significance.

The Yuma desert's void-like nature will serve as a symbol of the emptiness and uncertainty our two protagonists, Pammy & Jose Luis, feel in their hearts.

From its giant rock structures, to the Imperial Sand Dunes, the desert come to feel like a looming, integral character in our story.





A film about the human ties
that transcend all borders.



PAMMY

PLAYED BY ROSIE DEAN

A young border patrol agent in her late 20s.

After finding a 16-year old Mexican migrant in the Yuma Desert, she is forced to examine her views and her life in law enforcement.



JOSE LUIS

PLAYED BY JUANES MONTOYA

A 16 year old Mexican migrant.

A determined and hopeful young migrant, whose aspirations and struggles challenge Pammy's perceptions of right and wrong.

BOB

PLAYED BY PETER-WILLIAM JAMIESON

Pammy's husband, also in the CBP (Customs & Border Patrol). Early 30s.

Bob is a guy's guy whose unwavering belief in his duty is tested by Pammy's shifting convictions. A loving husband, veteran and hopeful father-to-be.

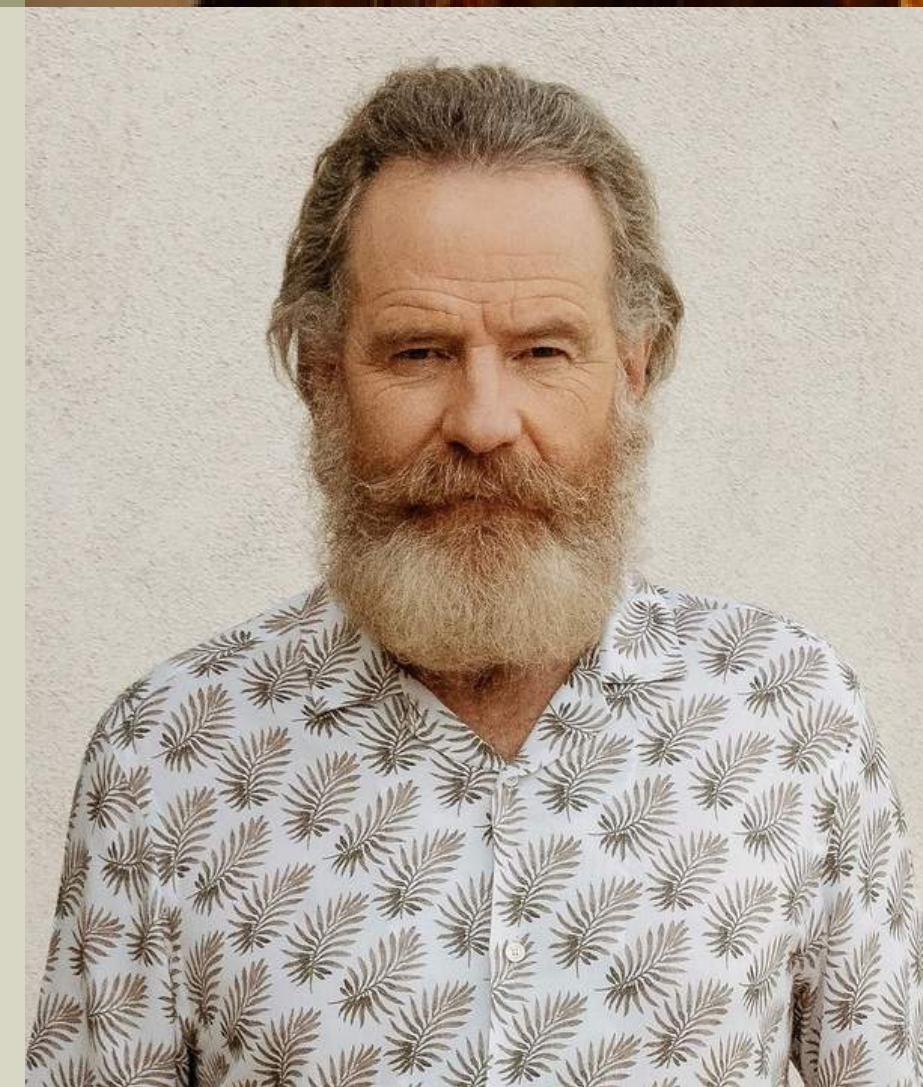


RUSS

PREPARED TO OFFER TO BRYAN CRANSTON

Pammy's Partner in the CBP. Late 50s/Early 60s.

A seasoned border patrol agent who offers wisdom and a touch of humor. Serves as a moral compass amidst the drama.





SALLY

PREPARED TO OFFER TO JULIANNE MOORE

Russ' wife. Mid-late 50s.

A gossip-loving housewife with good intentions, but the inability to respect other people's boundaries.



JESSICA

PLAYED BY STEFANIE COLÓN

A local café owner. Late 30s.

A new friend to Pammy. Provides outside perspective and becomes a confidant for Pammy as she navigates her turmoil.

CREATIVE TEAM



ETHAN FELIZZARI-CASTILLO

Director / Co-Writer / Producer

Ethan Felizzari-Castillo is a multifaceted film and theater producer, director, and writer, as well as the visionary founder of independent production company CK Productions Inc. and its branches CK Films, CK Theatricals, CK Visuals & CK Records. Felizzari-Castillo, a creative of Salvadoran descent, prides himself in keeping his projects entirely independent and working against all odds to get them made.

He studied at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts and has been working professionally in the industry since 2013. Since the start of CK, Ethan has produced over 100 theatrical productions, over 85 music videos, several award-winning short films and works with recording artists on a daily basis. Beyond CK Productions, Ethan also worked as the marketing & distribution coordinator on the BAFTA-nominated and Oscar-shortlisted Sundance winning documentary, *Beyond Utopia*. His directing credits include “Cosquillas” (Short, starring Gil Perez-Abraham), *Turkeys Go on Strike* (Musical, Theater for the New City Off-Broadway), *Night Drive* (Short, CK Films), and *Backyard/Desert* (Play version and upcoming Feature Film), among many others.

CREATIVE TEAM



NANCY IRENE KELLY

Co-writer/Original Play by

Backyard/Desert (Off-Off Broadway)
Dramatists Guild member



VALENTINA CANIGLIA

Director of Photography

The Captain (ESPN, Exec. Prod. by Spike Lee),
Gypsy (Netflix, starring Naomi Watts)

CREATIVE TEAM

ALESSANDRA MANIAS

Co-Producer & Production Designer

Italian for Travelers

The Runner

Mandela's Fear

ETHAN ANDERSON

LINE PRODUCER

The Persian Version (Sundance Audience Award)

Law and Order: Special Victims Unit (NBC)

The Other Guys (Columbia/Sony)

STEFANIE COLÓN

Producer

CK Films

ADAM DEL VALLE

Producer

FLESH Films

DIVERSE CREW & LEADERSHIP

Backyard / Desert's production stands out in its commitment to diversity and inclusion- with an anticipated production team of 75% women and minorities. This dedication is reflected not only in our broader crew composition, but significantly at the leadership level- where the majority of current department heads are women. Our approach ensures the presence of varying perspectives, all of which will enrich the creative process and bring authenticity to our storytelling, aligning with our desire to set a precedent and inspire a more inclusive film industry.



SOCIAL IMPACT

Not only will we be addressing the issues at the border via our film's plot, but we'll dive in deeper with real-world, actionable steps.

Our project's mission is to raise awareness and provide support for those suffering due to the ongoing crisis at the border. We will do so with the help of various nonprofit impact partners.

We will directly donate a portion of all profits made to our network of nonprofit partners, to *be* the change we hope to inspire in others.

We are putting our money where our mouth is.

PARTNERSHIPS

CK Films & the ***Backyard/Desert*** team are partnering with various organizations to bring our story to life.



An award-winning Production company based in Italy, Arte Video (owned by ILBE - one of Italy's largest, global production companies), has pledged a total of \$75,000 worth of Production & Post-Production services- including dailies support, an entire cloud server for editing, color grading, DCP creation & more.

Arte Video joins ***Backyard/Desert*** as a producing entity. Arte Video's CEO, Giuseppe Tissino, serves as an Executive Producer.

PARTNERSHIPS



Under the Direction of Matthew Earl Jones, Arizona Film & Digital Media (under the Arizona Commerce Authority) has agreed to partner with ***Backyard/Desert*** to help tell this timely story that reflects the life of Yuma, Arizona natives & migrants alike. Arizona Film & Digital Media has recognized the film as an official project of the Arizona Commerce Authority & of their Reel Savings Program. Through the Reel Savings Program, Arizona Film & Digital Media has agreed to assist in helping the film obtain free permits (including near the border wall, on public roads and in the desert) along with thousands of dollars worth of in-kind services.



VisitYuma is one of the nonprofit impact partners of ***Backyard/Desert***. Serving as the tourism department of Yuma, Arizona, the 501(c)3 has pledged to assist with all aspects of the film- including providing additional background actors, crews, locations, waived permits and assistance with housing for our team when filming begins in Yuma.

VisitYuma has already provided an invaluable amount of information and resources to help our film's pre-production process be well under way.

PARTNERSHIPS



A nonprofit beneficiary of the film, Humane Borders, will act as our 'Call to Action.'

We will encourage our audiences to not only donate to Humane Borders' mission, but to actively follow their journey online and make a difference in the lives of U.S. migrants.

The organization has preemptively agreed to be a part of the film's end credits, in addition to providing potential promotion for the film's eventual nonprofit donation page on our website.



One of Los Angeles' premier custom furniture companies, SIGLA Furniture, has agreed to be the furniture sponsor for the film.

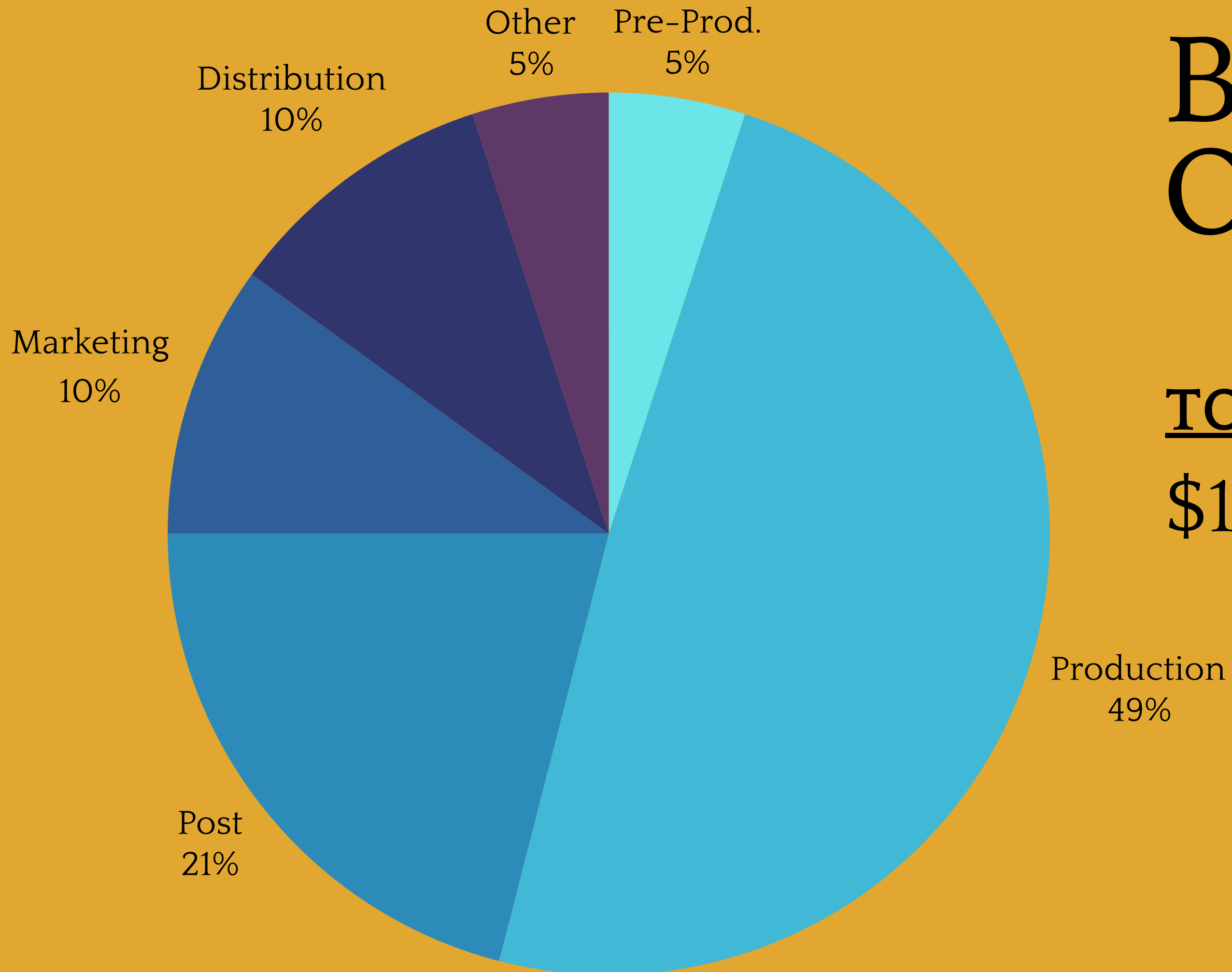
Backyard/Desert will feature over one hundred thousand dollars worth of custom furniture throughout the film, saving us thousands in Production Design dollars and providing the film with a stylized, customized look.

Ben Bakian, CEO of SIGLA, not only believes in the film, but is confident in its success and the potential for the project to draw attention to his already well-established business.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

TOTAL ASKING BUDGET

\$1.48 Million



TIMELINE

PRE-PRODUCTION & TESTS

- Finalizing Locations
- Casting & Crew Hires
- Rehearsals + Prep
- Full Production Budget Raised

July-Mid-October 2024

POST-PRODUCTION

- Entire budget raised
- Editing
- Color Grading
- Sound Editing & Mixing

December 24'-July 25'

January - July 2024

FUNDING & PRE-PRODUCTION

- Fundraising
- Hiring Dept. Heads
- Location Scouting
- Casting Offers

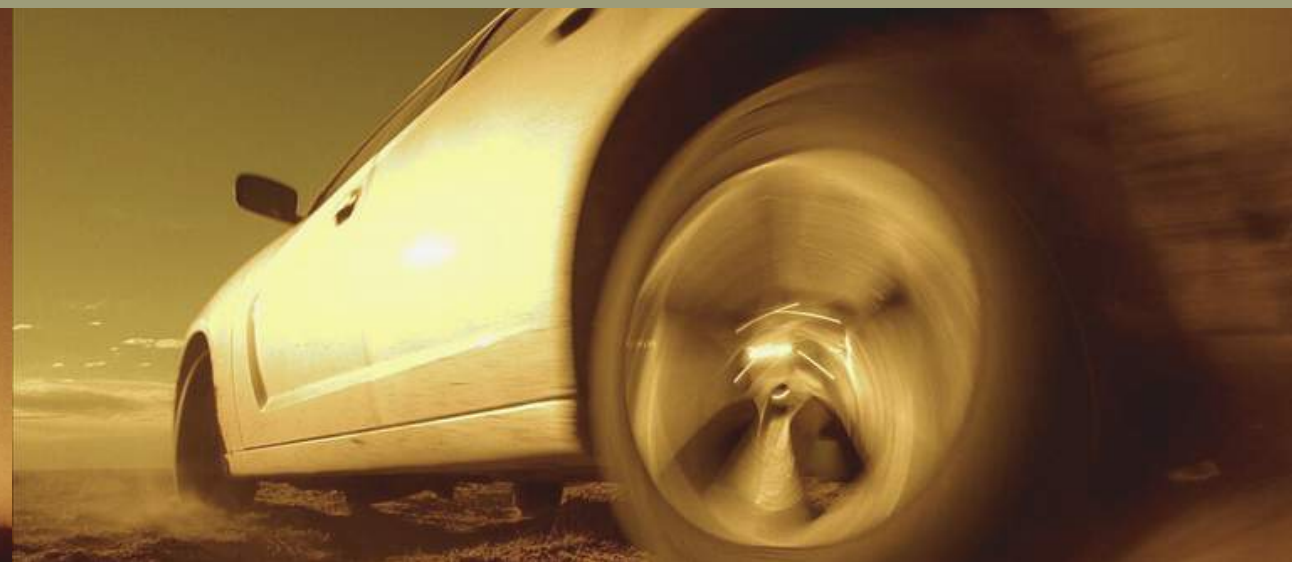
Mid-October-November 2024

IN PRODUCTION

2025-2026

DISTRIBUTION

- Festival Release
- Theatrical Release
- Streaming & VOD Release-



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"I got involved with *Backyard/Desert* at a crucial point in my life back in 2018 when it only existed as a play. As a Latino creative, I found myself longing to find a theatrical piece that spoke to the issue of immigration the way this piece does.

So why THIS film & why NOW?

Backyard / Desert highlights the ongoing border crisis from a unique standpoint. At its core, this film is a series of complex conversations among the individuals at the root of the problem: the people who enforce the biased, outdated laws. Rather than seeing Hispanic people have conversations about the flawed systems, Nancy Irene Kelly has done wonders by writing about the people... excuse me... the WHITE people... who have fallen into a terrible cycle of false patriotism and belief in a country that has turned its back on so many.

This piece is so unbelievably important as it helps highlight many issues, but from a perspective that I believe can be extremely impactful for people who may have similar views to our characters. Getting the opportunity to adapt it for the screen with Nancy has been a joy and we cannot wait to see this film come to fruition."

-Ethan Felizzari-Castillo (Director, Writer & Producer)

ABOUT CK FILMS

CK Films is the primary producing company for ***Backyard/Desert***.

Established in 2015, CK Films is an independent production company & branch of multimedia creative house, CK Productions Inc. With several Award-winning shorts & over 85 music videos produced, CK Films is currently forging a new path into the world of Feature Films with our debut project, ***Backyard / Desert***, set to film in Arizona in late 2024. We hope to inspire a whole new generation of artists who consider themselves cause-based creatives; inspiring change in the communities they inhabit.

Learn more about CK Films & see [our work here](#).



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THANK YOU!

