

Fin and Fur Films and
Gravitas Ventures

Present

THE RIVER — AND — THE WALL

A Feature Documentary
Directed by Ben Masters
Produced by Hillary Pierce

100 minutes | USA | 2019

www.theriverandthewall.com

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TAGLINE

It's a river before it's a border.

LOGLINE

Five friends venture into the unknown wilds of the Texas borderlands to document the Rio Grande before a wall is built. As they leave the wilderness behind, they enter uncharted emotional waters.

SHORT SUMMARY

The River and the Wall follows five friends as they venture into the unknown wilds of the Texas borderlands and travel 1200 miles along the Rio Grande. On horses, mountain bikes, and canoes, they set out to document the wildlife and landscapes and to explore the potential impacts of a wall on the natural environment, but as the wilderness gives way to the more populated and heavily trafficked Lower Rio Grande Valley, they come face-to-face with the human side of the immigration debate and enter uncharted emotional waters.

SYNOPSIS

The River and the Wall follows five friends on an immersive adventure through the unknown wilds of the Texas borderlands as they travel 1200 miles from El Paso to the Gulf of Mexico on horses, mountain bikes, and canoes. Conservation filmmaker Ben Masters realizes the urgency of documenting the last remaining wilderness in Texas as the threat of new border wall construction looms ahead. Masters recruits NatGeo Explorer Filipe DeAndrade, ornithologist Heather Mackey, river guide Austin Alvarado, and conservationist Jay Kleberg to join him on the two-and-a-half-month journey down 1,200 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border. They set out to document the borderlands and explore the potential impacts of a wall on the natural environment, but as the wilderness gives way to the more populated and heavily trafficked Lower Rio Grande Valley, they come face-to-face with the human side of the immigration debate and enter uncharted emotional waters.

THE TEAM

BEN MASTERS | Director & Character

Ben Masters grew up in West Texas, studied wildlife biology at Texas A&M University, and spent four years working on a border ranch near Laredo. Masters is best known for UNBRANDED, a feature documentary on Netflix, in which he and three friends adopted 16 wild mustangs, trained them, and rode 3,000 miles from Mexico to Canada to inspire wild horse adoptions. He is a published author, a National Geographic photographer, cinematographer, and writer, and his work has received dozens of domestic and international awards including the Audience Award at Hot Docs International Film Festival, the People's Choice Award at Banff Film Festival, and the Audience Award at Telluride Mountainfilm. Masters represents the interests of wildlife on 31.2 Million acres of federal public land as the Wildlife Management Chair of the BLM's volunteer Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board.

HILLARY PIERCE | Producer

Hillary Pierce is an Emmy Award-winning documentary producer based in Austin, Texas. She is a part of the producing team behind Keith Maitland's dual 2016 documentaries TOWER and A SONG FOR YOU: THE AUSTIN CITY LIMITS STORY. Hillary began her documentary career at Maysles Films under the tutelage of Direct Cinema pioneer Albert Maysles and earned an MFA in Documentary Film at Wake Forest University. Her film THE ONE WHO BUILDS tells the story of the Muslim director of a refugee resettlement agency in the American South. TOWER won the Grand Jury Documentary Prize and Audience Award at SXSW in 2016, broadcast nationally on PBS' Independent Lens in February 2017, was shortlisted for an Academy Award and won the 2018 Emmy for Outstanding Historical Documentary.

JOHN ALDRICH | Cinematographer/Editor

John Aldrich grew up in Florida, but was raised by Texans and got here as fast as he could, studying Film and Government at the University of Texas ('94). He received his Master's in Documentary Filmmaking from the Documentary Institute at the University of Florida ('00) and lived and worked in the Washington, D.C. area for the next ten years (seven of them as a producer/editor for National Geographic Television) before returning to Texas. Since then, his work includes producing, editing and shooting the feature docs AN UNREAL DREAM: THE MICHAEL MORTON STORY (CNN, December 2013, SXSW Audience Award) and AUDUBON (PBS, April 2017) as well as shorts for GQ, The New Yorker, National Geographic, Yeti, Natalie Merchant and Bob Schneider.

JAY KLEBERG | Associate Producer & Character

Jay Kleberg is the Associate Director for Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. He is part of a team that conserves Texas' most pristine lands to benefit wildlife and provide recreational opportunities to the public. He is a sixth generation Texan, born and raised on a working cattle ranch in South Texas. He is co-founder of a Brazilian-based Amazonian adventure travel company and conservation organization. Jay lived in El Paso for eight years working in cities along both sides of the US-Mexico border. He has experience with multi-day expeditions, having piloted a single-engine Cessna 5,500 miles from the Amazon to Texas in 2003, rode a mountain bike 2,700 miles along the Continental Divide Trail from the US- Mexico Border to Banff and paddled 264 miles of the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers as part of the Texas Water Safari. Jay lives in Austin with his wife and three daughters.

AUSTIN ALVARADO | Character

Austin was born in Austin, TX. He is a 1st generation Guatemalan American and spent his childhood going back and forth between Austin, TX and Guatemala. He chose to go to Texas A&M and while earning his B.S. in Recreation, Parks and Tourism Science, he spent summers working on cruise ships in the Mediterranean and river guiding on the Rio Grande in the Big Bend. Austin has paddled a number of rivers around the world but he continues to call the Rio Grande his home. He now is the Activities and River manager for the leading outfitter in Big Bend, Far Flung Outdoor Center. Austin has spent the past 5 years leading commercial trips down the Rio Grande, with the last 3 years as a permanent resident of the Big Bend area. Collectively, he has paddled over 200 miles of the Rio Grande in the Big Bend area.

HEATHER MACKEY | Character

Heather grew up in upstate New York near the Adirondack Mountains. After completing a BS in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University, she spent the next five years work as a field biologist. She has conducted conservation research in a variety of remote locations including Kodiak Island, Alaska where she led a two-month expedition to research the nesting ecology of the enigmatic Kittlitz's Murrelet. She's also worked in the Galapagos Islands, where she was part of a team studying Waved Albatross and Nazca Boobies as well as the Australian rainforest where she contributed to research on the behavior of the Satin Bowerbird. It wasn't until she began her MS research at California State University Los Angeles that she discovered the wonderment of West Texas. She committed to field research in the hottest part of Big Bend National Park, during peak temperatures (100+ degrees), site unseen. Through her two seasons on the Rio Grande researching the impact of riparian restoration on the bird and butterfly communities she's developed a deep appreciation for the wildlife and the people of West Texas.

FILIFE DEANDRADE | Character

Filipe DeAndrade was born in Brazil, immigrated to the United States at age six, and grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. When he's not in the field, he's living in Florida out of a film production truck converted from a retired ambulance. Filipe is a Director for the Comfort Theory production company; the host for NatGeo Wild's UNTAMED web series, and his love for wildlife is only equaled by his passion to tell their stories. Filipe is an Emmy nominated Associate Producer, has been nominated for 19 NY EMMYs, and has freelanced across the world as a Director of Photography.

LINKS

<http://www.theriverandthewall.com>

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STILLS

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hi1s1xkix2lvpfk/AACHx4nHvUTQTRstwHUQLUhOa?dl=0>

KEY ART

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Master%20Archive/EPK/EPK%20Key%20Art/Poster>

CREDITS

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