

SUNBELT EXPRESS



DIRECTED BY EVAN BUXBAUM PRODUCED BY IYABO BOYD



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INTRODUCTION

SUN BELT EXPRESS is an indie comedy about undocumented immigration, set on a hilariously catastrophic and unconventional family road trip across the Mexican border.

The film takes audiences into a part of the country that people rarely get to see on screen – the Arizona borderland. Undocumented immigration is a major hot-button issue in our culture, and **SUN BELT EXPRESS** renders this world instantly relatable by interpreting it through the lens of family and humor. The film humanizes the struggle of migration by highlighting our unending potential for laughter and hope – even in the most trying of circumstances.

SUN BELT EXPRESS' unique perspective combines political dysfunction, humor, family, and adventure. With an independent spirit at heart, and infusing a traditionally dramatic topic with irreverent comedy, the film has a unique opportunity to explore unexpected commonality and shared experience within its characters' struggles and triumphs in the face of the barriers that constrain them, giving us space to look back and laugh together.

Indiewire
Project of the Week

KICKSTARTER
Featured Staff Pick


Cine
Qua
Non
Lab
Participant



THE STORY

Set to the south of Tucson, Arizona, in the Sonoran Desert, **SUN BELT EXPRESS** follows Allen King, an offbeat ethics professor who ends up on a disastrous – and often hilarious – run across the Mexican border with his conservative teenage daughter in tow, and four illegal immigrants in the trunk.

As the film opens, Allen is juggling two separate lives on different sides of the border. In Arizona, he's in the middle of a divorce from his conservative State Senator wife Margaret, and is struggling to come to terms with his precocious teenage daughter Emily, as she follows more and more in her mother's footsteps. For work, he cross-commutes into Mexico, where he's an ethics professor at a university and has, against his better judgment, fallen head-over-heels for his student, Ana, who is 8-months pregnant with his kid.

And when he's not teaching, Allen smuggles undocumented immigrants across the border in the trunk of his car. It's not long before his delicately balanced life begins coming apart at the seams. What starts as a typical Saturday afternoon rapidly deteriorates into a catastrophic, hilarious, and unusual cross-border family road trip, as both Ana and Emily land in his car during an immigration run. Before long, the wheels come off, worlds collide, and anything that can go wrong, inevitably does, forcing Allen to re-evaluate his beliefs, his actions, and his closest relationships.

Through it all, Allen is able to steer the group ever closer to the border. Yet every inch they travel northward also brings them closer to Margaret, to his other life, and to the inevitable confrontation he has been successfully avoiding for years. Until now. By the end, every one of the characters has been forced to face their prejudices and shortcomings head-on, in this challenging and irreverent comedy about family and political dysfunction in the great American Sun Belt.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I started work on SUN BELT EXPRESS, I was asked one question more than any other: How had a white kid from the not-so-mean-streets of the Upper West Side ended up making a film about illegal immigration? The truth is really – it found me.

For the last five years, I worked at a bar in New York and most of my co-workers were immigrants. I heard the wildest stories. Perhaps most shocking of all, was the fact that so many of them were, against all odds, funny. It's a remarkable, transformative sort of comedy, about the triumph of humor in the most difficult of situations, and I couldn't help but think: there's a story in there that needs to be told.

As a first generation natural-born citizen, I have always been interested in exploring the immigrant experience in America. My family came largely from Eastern Europe, but the parallels are striking. Through my friends and co-workers at the bar, I was able to gain unprecedented access to the current world of undocumented migration. I spent a year gathering as many stories as I could, traveling to southern Arizona, immersing myself in immigrant communities throughout the Sonoran Desert as well as in NY. Some of the accounts I heard were very difficult. But again, I was surprised by one dominant theme – the presence of comedy and laughter, even in the face of such great human struggle and hardship.

That's what I find to be so powerful and unique about this film. It has the chance to bring audiences into the world of undocumented immigration through the lens of humor. I plan to heighten that experience by shooting in a close, boots-on-the-ground type style. I don't believe comedy has to be visually clean, and this one won't be. I'll keep the camera moving to pull audiences into the action, and we'll shoot with a slightly faded color palette to parallel both the scorched desert setting, and the characters' muted emotional lives, changing alongside both. The visuals will be intimate, unpolished, and surprising, just like the trip that the characters are undertaking.

Sun Belt Express is built on the simple idea that people from completely different backgrounds, from different worlds, can for a short time, peek into the world across the line, and through a moment of shared comedy develop an emotional connection. That's rare. I find it powerfully uplifting, and it continues to fuel my passion to share this project with audiences.

STYLE, LOCATION, AND CHARACTER REFERENCES







INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

Our goal is to attract between two and five private equity sources to invest in the film. SUN BELT EXPRESS is leanly budgeted at just over \$600,000, making investor recoupment and revenue on the backend very achievable, while still providing all of the production resources and acumen necessary to make a great film. We currently have over \$200,000 in private equity committed to the project.

We are offering a standard 20% premium on investment, as well as a pro rata percentage of the 50% of the backend revenue shares. With that being said, there is some flexibility in what we can offer investors, depending on the level of interest and received equity proposals.

Academy Award nominated actor THOMAS HADEN CHURCH is currently attached in the lead role of “Allen”, and Independent Spirit Award nominated actress RACHEL HARRIS has signed on the play Allen’s wife “Margaret.” The involvement of these known ‘name’ actors raises the film’s potential for distribution and profitability, and we continue to work with our casting directors Sig De Miguel and Stephen Vincent to fill out the rest of the cast with top notch talent. (See Casting page for more info.)

Additionally, we will be shooting and edit in New Mexico, which offers a very generous 25% tax credit at completion of production. In addition, we intend to utilize the FCAP program for select crew positions which subsidizes 50% of wages to further offset production expenditures.

HYPOTHETICAL INVESTMENT RETURN:

Equity Participant A invests \$200K into the film, granting them the 20% premium on their investment to recoup pari passu alongside all other equity participants. Plus a pro rata percentage of backend participation points, 16.5 for this example.

- The first payout from film revenues received by SUN BELT EXPRESS, INC goes directly to investors until 120% of investment is recouped.
- Following 120% recoupment, the net profits (as determined in accordance with generally-accepted accounting principles and with the participation of the engaged distributor and sales agent) are split 50/50 between the investors and SUN BELT EXPRESS, INC, in perpetuity.
- Equity Participant A's investment is a reflection of the percentage of the film they own. In this example, they have secured 16.5 percentage points. Once your percentage points are established, they cannot decrease or be further diluted.

COMPARABLES

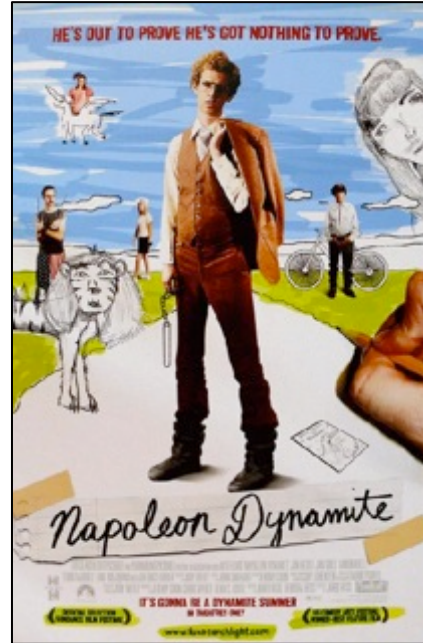
SIMILAR NARRATIVE ELEMENTS



NARRATIVE THEMES

QUIRKY FAMILY ROAD TRIP
DISASTROUS ADVENTURE
FINDING HOME
CROSSING CULTURES
HOPE THROUGH PAIN
PERSONAL DISCOVERY
BORDER ISSUES
BONDING VIA SHARED EXPERIENCE
COMEDY IN DRAMATIC THEME
ROMANCE; HEART
FATHER/DAUGHTER CONNECTION
WANTING A BETTER LIFE

SIMILAR BUDGET LEVEL



THE STATION AGENT (2003)

BUDGET \$500K; REVENUE \$8.6M WORLDWIDE
CAST – PETER DINKLAGE, PATRICIA CLARKSON
WINNER OF TWO INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

BRICK (2005)

BUDGET \$450K; REVENUE \$3.9M WORLDWIDE
CAST – JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT
WINNER SPECIAL JURY PRIZE SUNDANCE FILM FEST

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE (2004)

BUDGET \$400K; REVENUE \$46M WORLDWIDE
CAST – JON HEDER
PICKED UP BY FOX SEARCHLIGHT; CULT CLASSIC

FROZEN RIVER (2008)

BUDGET \$1M; REVENUE \$5.4M WORLDWIDE
CAST – MELISSA LEO
NOMINATED FOR TWO ACADEMY AWARDS

CASTING

CURRENTLY ATTACHED:



THOMAS HADEN CHURCH
SIDEWAYS, WE BOUGHT A ZOO, EASY A, BROKEN TRAIL

AWARDS
WINNER – INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARD (SIDEWAYS)
NOMINEE – ACADEMY AWARD (SIDEWAYS)
NOMINEE – GOLDEN GLOBE (BROKEN TRAIL)



RACHEL HARRIS
THE HANGOVER, DIARY OF A WIMPY KID, NATURAL SELECTION

AWARDS
WINNER – SXSW BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE(NATURAL SELECTION)
NOMINEE – INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARD (NATURAL SELECTION)

OTHER ROLES:

In addition to the talent currently attached, we plan to cast an established Latina actress as “Ana,” Allen’s fierce Mexican girlfriend, likely someone looking to break into the American market and who will strengthen the project’s appeal abroad. The role of his daughter “Emily,” will be filled by an up-and-coming young actress with both comedic and dramatic strengths, bringing in the youth and family demographics.

CASTING TEAM:

Casting directors **SIG DE MIGUEL** and **STEPHEN VINCENT**’s credits include:

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (Matt Damon, Robert De Niro, Angelina Jolie)

RABBIT HOLE (Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhardt, Dianne West)

HOLY ROLLERS (Jesse Eisenberg, Justin Bartha)

FOR ELLEN (Paul Dano, Jon Heder)

FAME (Kelsey Grammer, Megan Mullally)

ADAM (Hugh Dancy, Rose Byrne)

IN THE LAND OF WOMEN (Kristen Stewart, Meg Ryan, Olympia Dukakis)

Their other projects have included such talent as Anna Paquin, John Hawkes, Meg Ryan, Harvey Keitel, Melissa Leo, John Leguizamo, Sandra Oh, John Hurt, Isiah Whitlock Jr., Kristen Stewart, Vincent D’Onofrio, Bily Crudup, Rosie Perez, among many others.

PROJECT TIMELINE

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2012	PRE-PRODUCTION, FUNDRAISING, CASTING
JANUARY – MAY 2013	LOCK LOCATIONS, HIRE CREW, PLAN SHOOT
MAY – JUNE 2013	REHEARSALS, PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY
JUNE – JULY 2013	BEGIN EDITING, HOST FEEDBACK SCREENINGS
JULY – AUGUST 2013	REACH FINAL CUT, SOUND DESIGN, WRITE THE SCORE
SEPTEMBER 2013	BEGIN APPLYING TO FESTIVALS
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2013	COLOR CORRECT, FINAL SOUND MIX, PICTURE LOCK
JANUARY – JUNE 2014	FESTIVAL RUN (SUNDANCE, SXSW, LOS ANGELES, ETC.)
JUNE 2014	POTENTIAL SALE OF FILM TO DISTRIBUTORS
AUGUST 2014	POTENTIAL THEATRICAL RELEASE

**EVAN
BUXBAUM**
DIRECTOR

**IYABO
BOYD**
PRODUCER

**NOAH
LANG**
EXECUTIVE
PRODUCER

**BILLY
MULLIGAN**
LINE
PRODUCER

TEAM

EVAN is a writer/director based in New York. His films have screened at numerous festivals across the country from Aspen, to HBO Latino, to the Nantucket International Film Festival, and have featured notable actors such as Peter Boyle, Jerry Stiller, and Tovah Feldshuh. His previous accolades include the Audience Choice Award at DC Shorts, Finalist at the USA Film Festival, Certificate of Merit at the Williamsburg International Film Festival, the Silver Medal at the Park City Film Music Festival, and inclusion in both the SAG short film screening series and the Asbury Shorts' Best of The Last 30 Years traveling screenings. He was recently invited to participate in the Cine Que Non writing lab in Mexico with SUN BELT EXPRESS, and in the last six months has been featured by Film Independent, indieWIRE, Zoomtilt, LATINAish, Filmwax and at the IFP Script to Screen Pitch workshop, among others.

IYABO is a producer based in Brooklyn, NY. She is an alumna of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Film & Television where she focused on producing, and also co-founded and directed the female filmmaker focused Fusion Film Festival. Iyabo has since worked for many festivals and institutions as a program manager and events producer, including the Tribeca Film Institute, Sundance Film Festival, and the Independent Feature Project (IFP). She also has a fundraising and development background, working for many youth and community focused non-profits in Denver and New York. Iyabo currently serves as the Manager of Operations and Programming at Chicken & Egg Pictures, a fund for women documentary filmmakers.

NOAH is a producer and writer based out of Brooklyn, NY. He recently worked in talent management, single picture finance, and advisory services at Cinetic Media. While at Cinetic, Noah closed the finance on Will Slocombe's PASADENA, worked with the finance team on John Turturro's FADING GIGOLO starring Woody Allen, and on the packaging of Carlo Ledesma's upcoming HINTERLAND alongside Dobre Films and Mediabiz, among several other upcoming films. As a consultant, he worked with companies such as celebrated production and finance firm Big Beach Films, as well as No Mystery Studios on their burgeoning film initiative. He also facilitated the signing of several titles for FilmBuff - Cinetic's sister digital distribution company – including the iTunes hit OCCUPATION: FIGHTER and THE NAKED BRAND. Noah has a BA in Film and Media from Swarthmore College and has done additional coursework through the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand where he did a work study program with Peter Jackson's Weta Digital. He recently co-produced a modern adaptation of W.W. Jacobs' THE MONKEY'S PAW and is working on several other documentary and narrative projects.

BILLY spent the first seven years of his career managing development and production for veteran film and television producer, Jane Startz. During that time, he worked on Miramax's ELLA ENCHANTED starring Anne Hathaway, and Disney's TUCK EVERLASTING, starring Sissy Spacek and Ben Kingsley. Since 2007, he has been a freelance Producer, UPM and line producer on feature films (the upcoming "1982", starring Hill Harper and Ruby Dee), TV series (F/X's "Louie"), and commercials. Billy produced the accomplished feature film YELLING TO THE SKY, which had its World Premiere in Competition at the Berlin Film Festival in 2011. The film marks the debut of writer/director Victoria Mahoney, and stars Zoe Kravitz, Jason Clarke, Tim Blake Nelson and Best Actress Oscar nominee, Gabourey Sidibe. The film will be theatrically released in December 2012.

CONTACT INFO

NOAH LANG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
NOAH@THEKAROLERS.COM
914-815-0105

IYABO BOYD
PRODUCER
IYABOBOYD@GMAIL.COM
720-933-6130

