



Presents

From the makers of BUCK

UNBRANDED



A Film by Phillip Baribeau

105' | USA | 2015 | HD

OFFICIAL SELECTION
hotdocs
2015 OUTSPOKEN. OUTSTANDING.

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LOGLINE

3,000 Miles, 16 Wild Horses, 5 States, 4 Men, 1 Goal: Ride from Mexico to Canada through the wildest terrain in the American West to inspire adoptions of the 50,000 wild horses and burros living in holding pens.

SYNOPSIS

Four friends embark on a sublime, life-changing adventure. They are to travel on wild mustangs across the American West, from the Mexican to Canadian border through the majestic Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Glacier National Park.

On an unprecedented 3,000-mile journey through the most pristine backcountry of the American West, four friends rode horseback across an almost continuous stretch of public lands, border to border, from Mexico to Canada.

For their trail horses, they adopted wild mustangs from the US Bureau of Land Management, which were perfectly adapted to the rocky terrain and harsh conditions of desert and mountain travel. Chosen to inspire adoptions from the 50,000 mustangs and burros in holding facilities across the United States and to call attention to the importance of rangeland management, these animals became their riders' transport, nemeses, and eventual trusted companions as men and mustangs traversed the immense landscapes of Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. A meticulously planned but unpredictable route brought them face to face with snowpack, downpours, and wildfire; unrelenting heat, raging rivers, and sheer cliffs; jumping cactus, rattlesnakes, and charging moose; sickness, injury, and death. But they also experienced a special camaraderie with each other and with the mustangs, the magnificent natural scenery of the nation's enduring wilderness, and the not so romantic lifestyle of a romanticized bygone era.



DIRECTORS STATEMENT – Phillip Baribeau

The adventure started in the Fall of 2012 when Ben Masters called looking for someone to film him and three fellow Texans as they travelled by horseback over 3,000 miles across the American West. As a filmmaker passionate about documenting adventures in the outdoors, this sounded like an incredible project...only I didn't know how to ride a horse! Ben wasn't concerned, and said he'd teach me himself. Saddle sores aside, I knew this was a chance of a lifetime and something I couldn't pass up. Later that Fall, Ben came to Montana where we connected and took the first steps in turning his vision into a reality. Pulling together footage on the mustang situation, conservation in the West, and why four young men were out to ride across America to prove the worth of these wild horses, we created our Kickstarter trailer to raise funds to film their journey. The Kickstarter was a great success, not only did it exceed our goal, but it also attracted the attention of Cindy Meehl, director of the award winning film Buck. Cindy joined the team as Executive Producer, and the project really took off.

With everything moving forward, I felt both excited and terrified, wondering how we were going to pull off filming a documentary of this scale...on the back of a horse. Almost all of my work is done in the outdoors, but adding horses brought a whole new dimension to this project. Two weeks before the trip, I headed to the San Pedro ranch in southern Texas, home of one of Ben's fellow riders, Jonny, to figure out how to ride a horse and rig all of the gear. Our main camera needed to have a cinematic look that would capture the vast landscapes as we journeyed through some of the most scenic parts of the West. We chose the Canon C-500, nicknamed the "Princess," which we rigged on top of the hard panniers on one of the horses. We also rigged a smaller Canon DSLR to the saddle horn for quick shooting from on the horse. One of the biggest obstacles was rigging the four guys with wireless mics. An external audio recorder to pick up the guys was carried in a saddlebag by Luke, who we coined the "audio horse." You can see Luke, who I rode most of the trip, in many of the shots trailing behind the pack string with an empty saddle doing his job of picking up the audio. We also used GoPro cameras, a Panasonic camera set on full auto for the guys to shoot with when we weren't documenting them and some aerial videography with a drone. The first month was hard, breaking ourselves into the ride and figuring out the production of shooting a backcountry pack trip. We learned quickly, and, fortunately, knew early on that we were going to capture an amazing story.



Building a team to support the film off the trail was essential to our success on the trail. I went to film school at Montana State University in Bozeman and was able to put together a great team using my connections there. My former professor, Dennis Aig, came on as Producer, and MSU alums (Scott Chestnut), Korey Kaczmarek (Director of Photography), Paul Quigley (Assistant Editor), Katie Roberts (Assistant Editor), Vanessa Naive (Production Coordinator) and Matt Wheat (Production Assistant) also joined the team.

Besides documenting the adventure of traveling over 3,000 miles by horseback, we also wanted to weave in the mustang story. We wanted to promote adoption of these wild horses by showing what amazing animals they are when trained properly. I started this project without any real knowledge of wild horses except for seeing them around various parts of Montana. Traveling around the West to round-ups, mustang rallies and conventions, we quickly realized how complex the situation really was with the mustangs, advocates, ranchers, BLM, wildlife and our public lands. Instead of taking a side, our main goal was to show all sides of the issue to educate the audience and bring awareness to the mustang situation. Without a clear solution, the only conclusion is that we all need to come together to protect our land, wildlife and these wild horses.

As I look back on the trip, I would do it all over again. It really was the trip of a lifetime. I had seen many of the places we rode through before, but traveling through at three miles per hour gives you a greater appreciation for what we have. The project was a huge challenge, but the highlight of my career thus far. What an opportunity to spend five months in the woods, documenting such an unforgettable adventure. If I could do it again I wouldn't change a thing, except maybe the brutal kick from Tamale five days into the trip. The trip was a wonderful adventure, and I came off the trail with so many great memories, and lifelong friendships with a bunch of crazy Texans!

DIRECTORS BIO:

Phillip earned a degree in Media and Theatre Arts from Montana State University in 2003. Following his passion for film, storytelling and adventure, he went to work in television and documentary filmmaking. Here he learned what it takes to produce a story while capturing engaging cinematic images. His most credited broadcast series are "Destination Extreme" on National Geographic (field producer/DP/editor), "Ax Men" on the History Channel (field producer/camera operator), "MeatEater" on the Sportsman Channel (DP) and "Mountain Men" on the History Channel (camera operator). In 2008, Phillip founded Implement Productions, based in Bozeman, MT. Within Implement, he has worked on a wide range of films, television, web advertisement, events and commercials. His commercial clients include Teva Footwear, Black Diamond, Federal Ammunition and Sportsman's Warehouse. In 2013, Phillip won Best Overall Film at the Baku film festival in Azerbaijan for the short film "Land of Fire." Unbranded is his first director credit for a feature length film.

DIRECTORS FILMOGRAPHY:

2015 - UNBRANDED

Press:

[Toronto Star](#) - Feature, What to see at Hot Docs 2015

[Twitch Film](#) - "Spectacular Cinematography."

CREDITS

DIRECTOR

Phillip Baribeau

PRODUCERS

Dennis Aig
Phillip Baribeau
Ben Masters

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Cindy Meehl
Cami & John C. Goff
Terry & Margaret Hodge
Doug & Anne Marie Bratton

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Phillip Baribeau
Korey Kaczmarek

MUSIC SUPERVISER

John Bissell

EDITED BY

Scott Chestnut

MUSIC BY

Noah Sorota

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Paul Quigley

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