

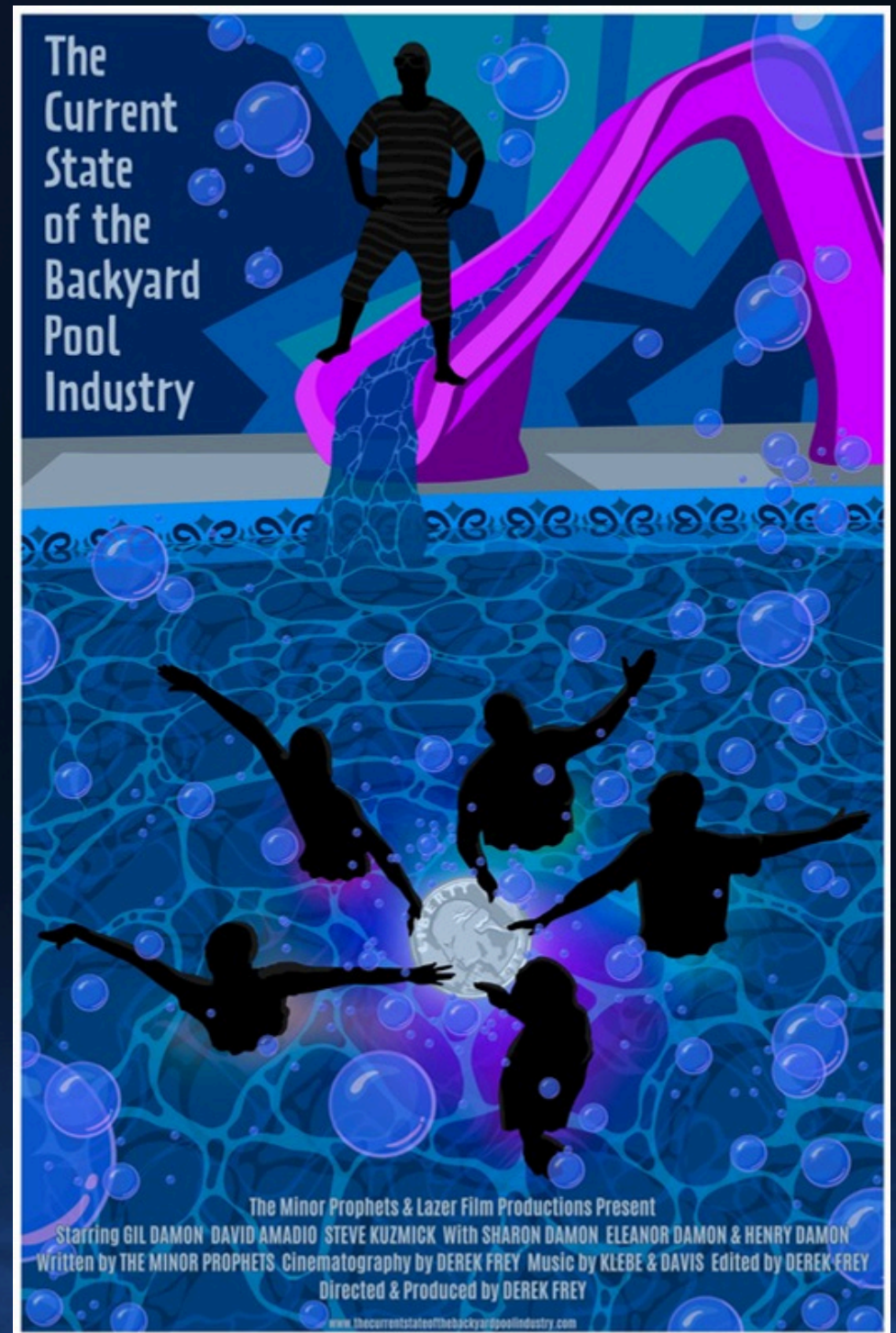
The Current State of the Backyard Pool Industry: Short Film Holds Up a Mirror

The film that asks the question...

is family togetherness worth the price of summer's most expensive luxury?

Article by Joe Trusty for Pool Magazine

At first glance, *The Current State of the Backyard Pool Industry* sounds less like a short film and more like something you'd see on the agenda at an industry summit. It reads like a white paper. A market report. An economic forecast delivered in a ballroom with bad coffee and PowerPoint slides. That's intentional. Because the film isn't just about a backyard pool. It's about everything surrounding it right now – inflation, supply chain issues, pricing anxiety, dwindling usage, and the uneasy dance between homeowners and contractors trying to justify what something costs these days.



Film Title **Anything But a Misnomer**

The short film from Derek Frey, David Amadio, Gil Damon, and Steve Kuzmick opens in territory that ought to immediately feel familiar to anyone working in the pool industry: a dated backyard pool. The liner is aging. The water looks neglected. The chemistry is questionable. And the homeowner is staring at a renovation estimate he isn't sure he can justify — financially or emotionally.



From that setup, the film does something clever. It takes the headlines we've been writing about here at Pool Magazine — rising costs, logistical breakdowns, economic pressures — and drops them into an everyday backyard conversation. Then it asks a harder question: When the cost of maintaining the pool goes up... what happens to the meaning of it?

Film Shows The Realities of Rising Costs

In the opening scene, a homeowner, Henry (played by Gil Damon), asks his pool guy, Rick (played by Steve Kuzmick), why his pool liner replacement now carries a five-figure price tag. The character Rick cites inflation. Supply chain instability. A late winter freeze in Texas. Petrochemical plant shutdowns. Limited liner availability.

If you've read Pool Magazine over the past few years, you'd already know that at least a few of those stories have already been validated in print. They're real. They happened. They created issues that affected contractors nationwide.

That's what makes the scene land. Because Rick isn't inventing stories. He's pulling from real-life industry issues. But the way he delivers his points — confidently, rapidly, with the cadence of someone who has well rehearsed his rebuttal — creates more than a sliver of doubt.



Is he educating the homeowner? Or is he stacking headlines into a persuasive narrative that smacks with the slick gold chain energy of a used car salesman?

“The whole Texas freeze thing came from research,” David Amadio explains. “We were trying to connect the plight of this one contractor to a larger industry issue. The audience doesn't know if it's real. They don't know if it's legit. It could just be a ruse.”

That ambiguity is the point. The film doesn't accuse the industry of exaggeration. It simply shows how real economic forces can easily blur into sales language.

The inflation and Texas freeze references aren't throwaway lines. They were well researched.



Art Sometimes Imitates Life

“When you first reached out to us for an interview, I went on the Pool Magazine website, and one of the top headlines was about another Texas freeze,” director Derek Frey says. “I was like, wow. I don’t know if that’s art imitating life or not, but that was particularly intentional in our crafting of this story.”

That realness doesn’t just live in the headlines, pool guy Rick cites — it lives in how he carries himself. Kuzmick’s performance isn’t built only on what he says but on the physicality of how he delivers his lines. After making his case for why Henry’s liner replacement will be more expensive, he wraps the conversation with a firm slap on his customer’s back and a casual, “Talk it over with the family and let me know.” Then he walks.

He doesn’t linger, and he sure doesn’t soften the number. The message is subtle but unmistakable: I’ve got other jobs. I’m busy, and you need me more than I need you.



Fighting a Losing Battle Against Devices & Indifference

Henry tries to make his case by appealing to what the pool used to represent — long summers, family time, shared memories. But when he looks to his kids for reinforcement to help him make the case, he's met with indifference. Phones in hand, half-hearted answers, distracted nods. The pool that once anchored family life now competes against their screen time.



“It’s like a fantasy of middle-class American fatherhood,” David Amadio says. “All of us are watching our kids grow older by the day. All these pastimes we loved are falling by the wayside. This movie was our attempt to try to hold onto those things for a little bit longer.”

Gil Damon, who plays Henry — and who actually owns the pool used in the movie — brings an authenticity to that quiet frustration.

The Film Introduces a Thought Provoking Question

“Whether the kids swim in it or not, you still have to maintain it,” Damon says. “If you don’t maintain it, something goes terribly wrong. And there’s still something kind of joyous in maintaining it. Even just skimming the leaves. But at some point you’re like, wait, what am I doing all this for?” That question lingers in the film. What are we maintaining?

The pool becomes a metaphor for something bigger — for rituals that once felt permanent but now feel optional. For investments that once made obvious sense but now require defense. For a version of family life that doesn’t compete well with Wi-Fi.

Competing Against Technology

“Technology is king,” Amadio says. “There are so many casualties in the culture of technology. The pool’s like a little antidote to that. It’s an analog getaway from the digital maelstrom in which we all live.” In that context, the liner replacement isn’t just a repair. It’s a referendum. Not just on budget, but on whether the pool still holds meaning inside the household. Henry’s wife finally says she would just as soon as like to fill in the pool and be done with it altogether.

And it’s right when Henry seems ready to give up — when he shuts off the timer and retreats inside — that the film introduces its wild card.



Reigniting That First Spark

Henry awakens to the sound of splashing. The pool lights are on. The water, which hours earlier looked neglected and uninspiring, now appears clean, inviting, almost cinematic. Floating across the surface is a stranger in goggles, a swim cap, and striped bathing suit, casually doing the backstroke.

He introduces himself as Willy Chamieux — played by writer David Amadio — and calmly explains that he is “the manifestation of why pools are cool.”



Henry, understandably alarmed, tells him the pool is in no condition to swim in (even though it's clearly been transformed) and orders him out, a command which Willy ignores.

Instead, he dives beneath the surface to “inspect” the torn liner Henry was complaining about. When he resurfaces, it's face down in a dead man's float. Henry panics and jumps in to save him — only to discover he's been played.

Getting Memory to Break Down The Barriers

And that's the turning point. The moment Henry slips into the water, all of the tension drains from him. The defensiveness, the budgeting, the quiet resentment we saw earlier — it all fades. There's something about being back in his pool — not as a project, not as an expense, but as he always imagined it — that softens him. You can see it on his face. He's not calculating anymore. He's remembering. Willy challenges him to a game. They dive for quarters. They laugh — the kind of unguarded laughter that hasn't been heard in that backyard in a while.



Soon, the rest of the family drifts outside. They're tackled into the pool by Willy and quickly fall under the same spell as Henry, experiencing the renovated condition and joy of once more being in their own pool. The tone of the film shifts again. Visually, the sequence leans into classic aquatic spectacle. "That was the main reference," Derek Frey says. "Those 1930s films choreographed by *Busby Berkeley* — *Footlight Parade* — and Olympic synchronized swimming. We storyboarded the movement based on many of those references."

The overhead shots evoke old Hollywood water ballets. The pool center stage again once more in the lives of Henry and his family.

Analysis of Willy Chamieux

The character of Willy carries an apparition-like quality throughout that the film never explains outright. “We don’t know if he’s a water sprite or an actual person,” David Amadio adds playfully. “He kind of straddles the line.” That ambiguity is deliberate.

Willy clearly isn’t there to fix the pool; the illusion disappears the moment he does. Rick will still need to be called if that dream is ever to become a reality. No, Willy is merely there to remind. To remind Henry what the pool once felt like, reconnecting the emotion to the investment. To remind the family of what enjoying the pool together once meant.



There’s something unmistakably Dickensian about the structure. Willy feels like a warm-weather variation of *A Christmas Carol* — less chains and underdone potato, more chlorine and cannonballs. If Scrooge needed the Ghost of Christmas Past to remember who he once was, Henry needs something similar.

Willy may very well be the Ghost of Summers Past

The film never spells it out, but the parallels are there, and we pointed some of them out to the filmmakers. The character Henry represents a man on the brink of abandoning something meaningful. A supernatural visitation. A night that changes perspective before it's too late.



“We hadn’t thought about Dickens specifically,” David Amadio admits, “but it’s definitely there.” Whether spirit, trickster, or simply shared DNA, Willy’s function is clear: he forces Henry to re-experience joy before he walks away from it.

And then comes the final turn.

Coming Full Circle

Henry wakes the following morning, not on the couch where he had resigned himself to defeat, but in bed – surrounded by his family. The energy is different. The tension is gone. His wife looks at him and gives a quiet, approving nod. No speech is necessary. No debate. They both know what comes next.

His first order of business will be to call Rick and approve the liner replacement. The film doesn't frame that moment as one of defeat or capitulation, but one of clarity. Only then does the final reveal land.

As day breaks, Rick pulls up in a truck and Willy climbs in. They head off toward another address – another backyard, another hesitant homeowner, another family on the fence. The magic wasn't random but part of the process.



There's a faint echo here of *The Swimmer* – one almost immediately draws the comparison of Burt Lancaster moving from pool to pool. Only this time, the journey is one of restoration. Willy isn't drifting through suburbia trying to outrun a sad reality. He's moving through it, reminding families what once made their backyards matter. It's a subtle but meaningful reframing.

Rather than positioning Rick as a manipulator, the filmmakers present something more layered and nuanced. Rick understands that homeowners don't just need pricing estimates. They need perspective.

"I think they're ultimately doing good for people," Derek Frey says. "Rick is pure business. He's about the sale. Willy is doing it for the reasons he outlined. Everybody kind of comes out a winner." Together, they're not just repairing pools — they're restoring connection.

And that's where the film's theme settles. *The Current State of the Backyard Pool Industry* isn't simply about tariffs, inflation, or any of the other litany of issues impacting the industry. It's about relevance and reminding consumers why they opted to build a pool in the first place.



Screening The Current State of the Backyard Pool Industry

For pool professionals, the takeaway isn't that they need a gimmick. It's remembering what it is that they're really selling. The film doesn't pretend that the economics aren't real. The cost increases are real. The supply chain strain was real. The sticker shock homeowners feel is real. Those conversations happen every day in the backyard.

But so does the other part — the part that's harder to quantify.

~The first cannonball of the season.

~The late-night sessions of Marco Polo.

~The laughter that carries from backyard to backyard all summer long.

~Rick understands the business of that, but Willy understands the magic.

~And that's why the film resonates.



Screening this film could be a useful exercise for pool professionals across the industry — not as satire, not as critique, but as perspective. It invites a simple question: Are we leading with cost, or are we leading with value?

We may not all have a magical spirit like Willy to bring along on every job to convince the customer. Which means the magic has to come through us. Because if we don't remind them why it matters, no one else will.

Ready to take a deeper dive?

Listen to our entire interview with the filmmakers *on the Pool Magazine Podcast*:

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1253243/episodes/18733029>