

# ONE ROAD TO QUARTZSITE

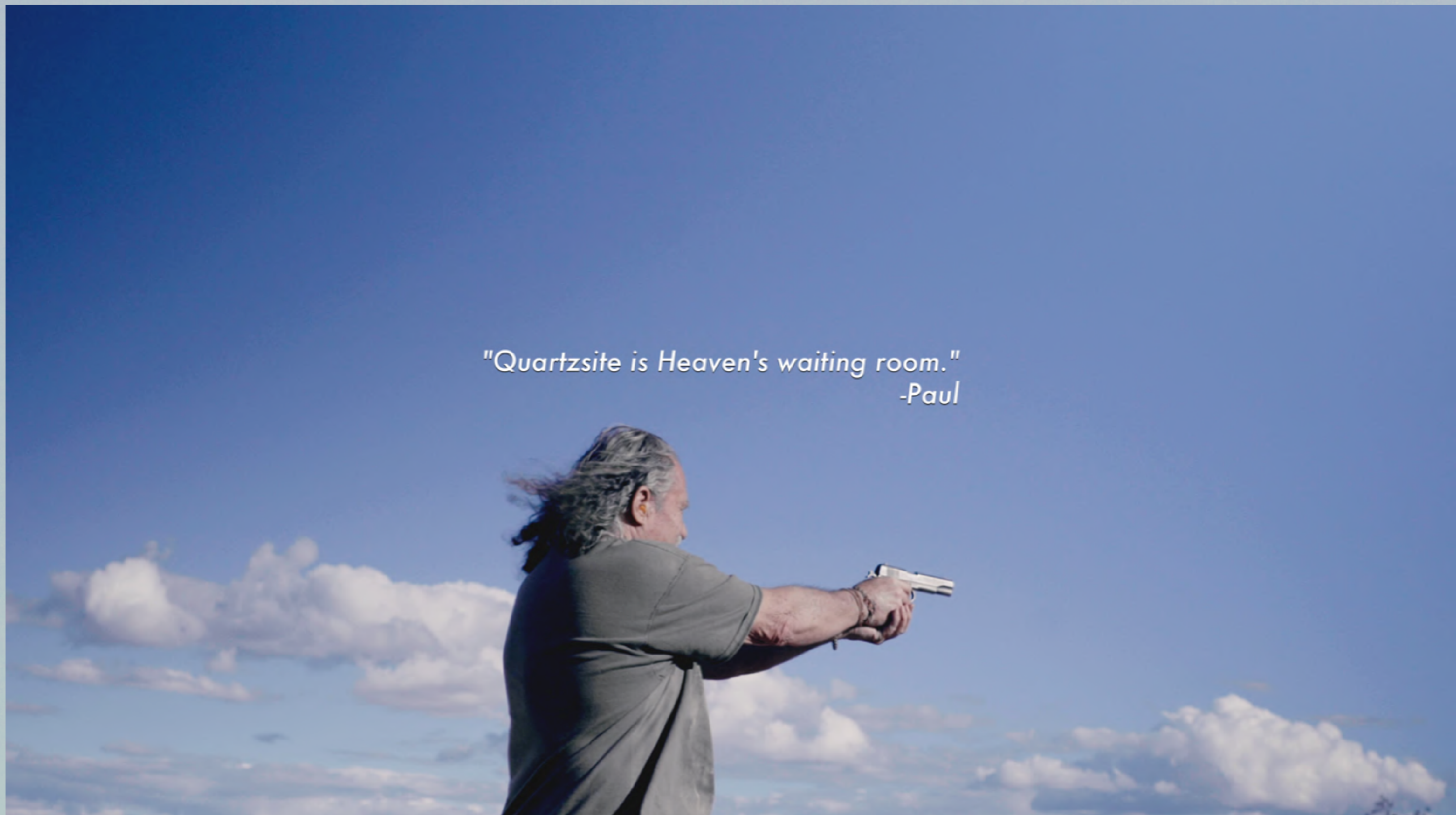
FREEDOM IS A FREEWAY EXIT



**CONTACT**

Alli Lank | [Alli@WatchThisReady.com](mailto:Alli@WatchThisReady.com)





## OVERVIEW

---

Exit to Quartzsite for cheap gas, there's not a whole lot else. But every winter its population swells from 600 to over a million - as an unlikely cross section of snowbirds, crustpunks and libertarians make their annual pilgrimage to live in this "giant parking lot." Some bought into the American Dream and lost everything; others dropped out long ago. Now they're all neighbors on the same piece of dirt - all trying to live free and not die. ONE ROAD TO QUARTZSITE is an observational portrait of people trying to live outside of the constraints of American society, or to simply escape the winter.



## DISTRIBUTION

**United States** - Gravitass Ventures  
**United Kingdom** - Kaleidoscope  
**Canada** - KinoSmith  
**Spain** - La Aventura Audiovisual  
**Scandinavia** - Smile Entertainment

## RECOGNITION

**Grand Jury Best Feature Doc** // Big Sky Documentary Film Festival 2022  
**Best Veritè Doc** // Arizona International Film Festival 2022  
**Best Documentary** // Chattanooga Film Festival 2022  
**Best Documentary Feature** // Calgary Underground 2023



# SYNOPSIS

---



It's late fall in a sleepy desert town in Arizona. Over the course of a few weeks, hundreds of thousands of snowbirds, trumpheads, rockhounds, retirees, crustpunks, homeschoolers, widows, loners & fugitives all descend upon **Quartzsite, Arizona**. They set up camps, intermingle, and an unlikely community is formed.

Some of them bought into the dream and lost everything in the Great Recession. Others dropped out long ago. **Now they're all neighbors on the same piece of dirt.**

Somewhere between the death and pinnacle of the American Dream.

The **cinéma vérité** doc feels like a single winter season, from the influx of campers in November to everyone scattering by March. In between, a crust punk will relapse... a trans woman heals... a wife is widowed & must pick up the pieces... a pair of home-schooled pre-teens fall in love... a Trumper takes an enlightening trip to Mexico.

Just another season in **All-American purgatory.**





# DIRECTOR / CINEMATOGRAPHER / PRODUCER / EDITOR

---



**Ryan Maxey** has a fondness for ordinary people and unapologetic heroes in his documentaries — which express themes of loneliness, moral conundrum, and upheaval of the status quo. *One Road to Quartzsite* is his debut feature length film.

As director, six of his short films have been selected as Vimeo Staff Picks — and have been featured by SXSW, Hot Docs, True/False, AFI Docs, Outfest, The Guardian, The Atlantic, and Dazed and Confused Magazine. His 2019 short, *How to Make a Rainbow* received the Audience Award at Outfest that same year.





# CREATIVE TEAM

---



**Josh Polon (Producer, Co-Writer)** is an Oscar-shortlisted producer and director based in Los Angeles. His work has premiered at festivals like Sundance, SXSW, TIFF, True/False, DOC NYC and Hot Docs, and been featured by The New York Times, XTR, PBS, MSNBC, Wholphin, and Dazed & Confused Magazine.

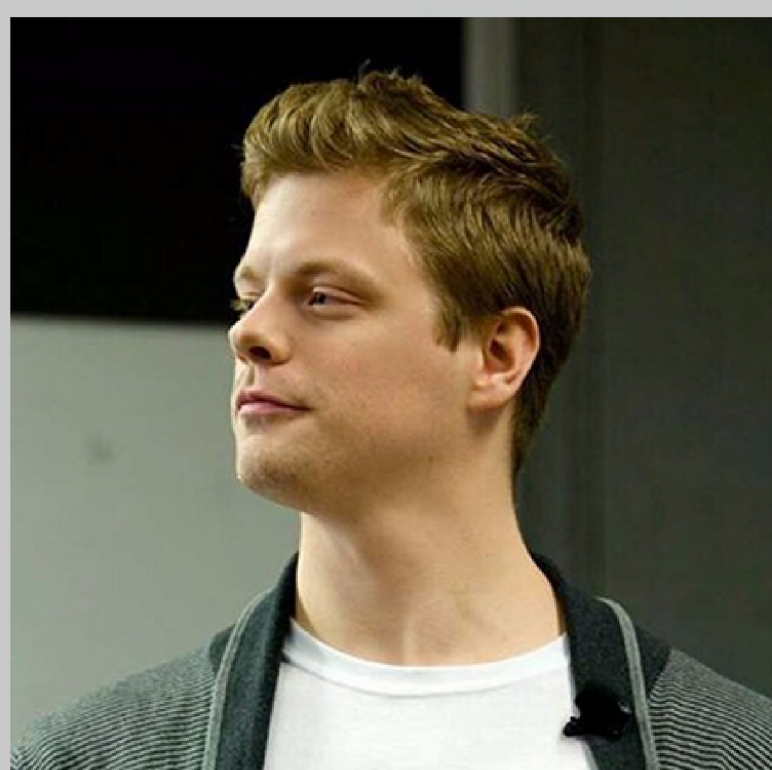
He produced the NYTimes Op-Doc and SXSW Grand Jury Prize winner, *My Dead Dad's Porno Tapes*; the coming-of-age feature doc *Only the Young*, which won at AFI Fest and Cinema Eye Honors and sold to Oscilloscope Laboratories; *Manson Family Vacation* which premiered at SXSW and sold to Netflix; and was lead producer on the Duplass Brothers' animated series *Animals.*, which premiered at Sundance and sold for 2 seasons to HBO.



**Watch This Ready (WTR) (Executive Producers)** is a production company founded by **Michael Covino and Kyle Marvin** in 2019. The company's first film, *THE CLIMB*, **premiered at Cannes receiving the Coup de Coeur Award** and later played TIFF, Telluride, Sundance, and Deauville where it received the Jury Prize. It was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics and released theatrically in the fall of 2020. Emily Korteweg oversees development and production for WTR which includes projects with Topic Studios, Fifth Season, Paramount, Phantascope, Media Rights Capital, Apatow Productions, 3311 and more.

On the unscripted side, they are currently in production on a feature documentary about the famed Ferrari GTO/1960s Italian car era with Sundance Grand Jury Prize Winner Steve Hoover, a feature documentary with Oscar nominee Kief Davidson and MRC, and a two-parter about a famous NFL football player.

On the narrative side, the company completed the narrative feature *80 FOR BRADY*, starring Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Sally Field, Rita Moreno, and Tom Brady, which was released by Paramount in February of 2023, and *GOD'S TIME*, which IFC released in February 2023.



**Noah Lang (Executive Producer)** is an independent producer based in Los Angeles and New York. He got his start at Cinetic Media working in finance and consulting for independent film. As a freelance producer, Noah has produced films that have been distributed and broadcast worldwide with partners such as DirecTV, Netflix, Hulu, Universal, and Sony. Festival screenings include Sundance, Cannes, Telluride, TIFF, Deauville, SXSW, Tribeca, and numerous others.

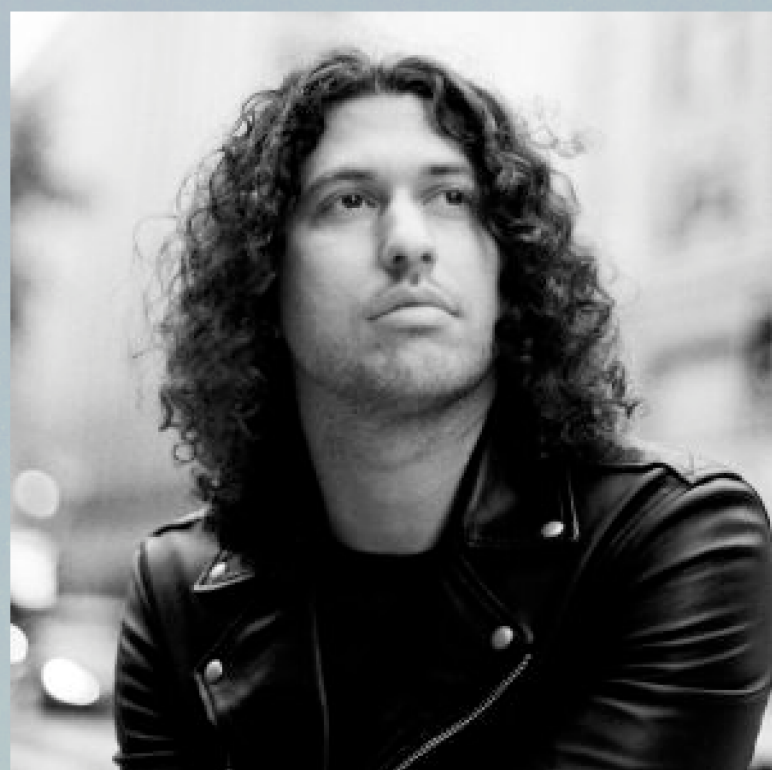
His films include *The Strange Ones* (SXSW - Jury Prize), *Here Alone* (Tribeca - Audience Award), *Diverge* (Lund Int'l - Siren Prize), *Band of Robbers* (LAFF - Zeitgeist Nominee), *Minor Premise* (Film Threat Award This Prize - Best Sci-Fi Film), *Sun Belt Express* (US in Progress - Top Prize), and *Red, White & Wasted* (Tribeca - Viewpoints).

In 2019 he premiered *The Climb* at Cannes where it won the Coup de Coeur Prize and was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics. He will next produce *All the Names We Buried* with Bad Theology Pictures and *Dead Don't Speak* with Particular Crowd.



# CREATIVE TEAM

---



**Ilan Rubin (Composer)** is the youngest person to ever be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Ilan has been the drummer in **Nine Inch Nails** since 2009. He's also a member of Angels and Airwaves (AVA), the successful alternative band started by blink-182's Tom DeLonge. In AVA, he plays drums live but records multiple instruments and co-writes everything. Additionally, Ilan writes and produces every song for his own band The New Regime, as well as his self-titled solo project, which he's preparing to debut in 2021. As a session musician, he's collaborated with a wide variety of acts including Paramore, Beck, Phantogram, and M83. Ilan has performed on a handful of major film scores — 2013's **Oblivion**, 2015's **The Divergent Series: Insurgent**, and 2018's **Robin Hood** — as well as highly anticipated video game **Cyberpunk 2077**. He's well versed in baroque and romantic-era classical orchestration, big-band jazz drumming, bass-driven funk, blues guitar, and synth-heavy alternative rock music. For the past 12 years, Ilan has been consistently touring. Covid-19 provided an unforeseen break that has given him time to dive deeper into his long-held passion for composing. Ilan is based in Los Angeles and works out of his home studio.



**Ryland Aldrich (Consulting Producer)** is an independent film producer and founder of Point+Drop Productions. His numerous feature films, both narrative and documentary, have premiered at such notable film festivals as Sundance, SXSW and Tribeca, and have been released both theatrically and on major streaming networks.

Ryland has enjoyed serving on numerous film festival juries, panels and advisory boards, and is a long-time contributor and editor for the popular film website Screen Anarchy.

A DOCUMENTARY BY **RYAN MAXEY**

PRODUCED BY **RYAN MAXEY** AND **JOSH POLON** IN ASSOCIATION WITH **WATCH THIS READY**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **KYLE MARVIN** **MICHAEL COVINO** **NOAH LANG** **EMILY KORTEWEG** **SCOTT VELTRI**  
CONSULTING PRODUCER **RYLAND ALDRICH** COLORIST **LOREN WHITE**  
SOUND DESIGN **WILLIAM TABANOU** AND **RYAN MAXEY** MUSIC BY **ILAN RUBIN**  
WRITTEN BY **RYAN MAXEY** **JOSH POLON** **SOPHIE HARDEMAN** DIRECTED BY **RYAN MAXEY**



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

---



For much of the last decade, while making videos supporting the National Parks Service, I have spent time living out of a blue 90's school bus. If one spends enough time sleeping in a vehicle, one eventually lands in Quartzsite. I first set foot there in 2016, and have since been in and out, while working on the road. I eventually became 'Quartzitian' — for 3 winters I found community, loved and despised my neighbors, mourned the loss of my friends. It was the second winter when I brought my camera, looking to capture scenes in this enigmatic community, and explore the way line between ideological difference and common humanity.

Quartzsite is, in one freeway exit, an embodiment of Americana. It is blue collar, it is meat'n potatoes and corn casserole. It is Trump lovin', gun totin' good ole boys and girls looking for a way to live out their last days. Politically, I was at odds with many of the folks surrounding me. I lean way left, and the folks in Quartzsite tend to be far on the right. Much of the time I was frustrated with the place, confronted with representations of so many toxic American values. And other times I was thriving – making deep connections and belting out classic country tunes on karaoke nights with a newfound family of gray-haired nanas and pappies. How's that so? Some say that there is a horseshoe effect – the further one's politics head to the left or the right, they eventually curve around and find themselves closer to one another than they might expect. My fascination with the place began with that wondering – how could I feel a connection to a place and its people, while simultaneously being in contention with the policies and ideologies many of them stand for (literally... every night at the bar the band plays "Proud to be an American" as the crowd stands with their hands on their hearts)? Was it this horseshoe phenomenon? A relentless search for personal freedom? Was it the loner in me? The romanticization of cowboy/good-ole-boy culture by the millennial left? All that to say, I was a white male in a very white, heavily patriarchal culture. Someone who doesn't check those boxes would certainly feel less at ease – so this is also an examination of my personal privilege.

I set out to explore these questions, to paint a curious picture – and not to provide answers. As it turns out, I think what came to be is something more broadly human. What started as an ideological wondering, ended up a meditation on mortality, spirituality and individualism. Perhaps that says something about where to dig when trying to find answers in a desert of deep divisiveness.

— Ryan Maxey



## LOOK AND FEEL

---



The 89-minute documentary unravels a uniquely American phenomenon through a cinema vérité approach. The camera is **a fly in the dirt**, living within intimate exchanges. We also dive into the worlds of a clan of homeschooled pre-teens through the **lens of the handycam** that they've been using to capture their philosophizing and budding romances.

Without any sit-down interviews, and by quietly spending time with these characters, one bumps into the next, bumps into the next, and everyone's backstory (and present-story) are revealed through authentic desert chitter-chatter.

If you've thrived in the worlds of *Rich Hill*, *Hale County This Morning, This Evening*, or *Vernon, Florida*, you'll feel right at home.

Imagine **Frederick Wiseman & Harmony Korine** go on a road trip, but end up broke down behind a gas station for 2 years.





# LOOK AND FEEL

---





# TALKING POINTS



- Quartzsite is often described as “the world’s largest parking lot” or “Burning Man for old people.” In the summer, when temperatures are consistently in the 110’s, there are only about 600 people residing there. In the winter, the population swells to hundreds of thousands – some say over a million at times.
- Anyone can pay \$180 and stay in the BLM deserts surrounding Quartzsite for up to 6 months. Folks live out of RVs, vans, limos, tents, pallet and tarp structures, even Priuses.
- Ryan spent 3 winters researching, and filming in Quartzsite. He didn’t take out a camera until halfway through the second winter, after months of befriending folks and gaining trust in the community. He volunteered at the book store, helping Joanne while Paul was sick. He also volunteered at the community food bank. The result is a patient and natural comfortability.
- In a divisive world, the film lives in the ideological conflicts of a frontier of vehicle dwellers. At the same time finding relief, and humor, spontaneous moments of common humanity. They are all living their own version of the American West dream, shouting “you can just leave this long haired country boy alone!” Togetherness on their own terms.
- The film is blissed out in the golden years of blue-collar American life, with colors bleached in the desert sun. It is melancholy if not celebratory, staring the realities of a hardened life straight in the eye — and doing so with a sly smile.
- We’re living in a time where housing is scarce, and the mirage of retirement appears more and more distant on the horizon. Quartzsite is some kind of plan C, a place to put your home on wheels for next-to-nothing. It’s a grand ole’ backup plan being embraced by hundreds of thousands of Americans every winter.
- Ryan heard tell of another film being shot about Quartzsite, out in the desert. And lost many nights of sleep worrying someone was making a better doc. That film turned out to be NOMADLAND.
- Ryan was a one man shooting crew. He found it the best way to observe intimate scenes. He shot with a Sony DSLR, an onboard mic, and 2 lavaliers. 90% of the film was shot with a 35mm prime lens.
- Ryan worked with Ilan Rubin on the original score. Ilan has been the drummer in Nine Inch Nails since 2009. Much of the original score was composed using found sounds such as freeway traffic and washing machines.



# DOCUMENTARY SUBJECTS

---



**Paul Range** is the most divisive character in town.

Originally from Texas, he's a hard-lined constitutionalist and gun rights advocate. In Quartzsite, he spends all his time rolling around the desert in his 1948 military jeep providing free food and water to **the "Dirty Kids"** — the train hoppers & raucous gutter-punks who set up villages south of town.

The townies hate how he's "enabling the riff raff," and tell him to his face at town hall meetings. But Paul could give a shit. **He was shot 22 times in Vietnam** — he's gonna do what he's gonna do.



Ate some acid and got lost in the dark desert? **Care Bear's campfire** is where you want to land.

She's a recovering meth addict who lost everything in the housing crisis. Now, she's a gentle desert mama who'll help you through your trip, just leave the meth and heroin behind.

We'll watch as she bonds with a charismatic young newcomer named **Brandon**, and then decides to kick him out when he relapses — struggling with her own sobriety all the while.

Eventually they will reconcile and Brandon will rejoin the campfire.



**Teri** is the antithesis of Quartzsite's particular brand of Middle-American normalcy.

She broke down there a year ago, dreams of getting back to San Francisco, but just cannot seem to leave. We'll be with her as she puts on a brave face and struts around town, her trusty yellow balloon in tow, seemingly unfazed by the occasional transphobic cat call. We'll also be with her as she gets back home and crumples — secretly processing the loneliness, boredom and persecution of this place that provides no safety or comfort.

She builds her own kinship within her elaborate camper world of lush fabrics & stuffed bunnies and pigs. But she knows she's got to get out of Dodge. **How does anyone get unstuck?**



## DOCUMENTARY SUBJECTS

---



At 62 years old, **Jenny** and her husband retired, sold their home in [what city?], and embarked on their dream Camper Life in November 2019. Two weeks into the trip he died of a massive heart attack. Cast out on her own, Jenny lands in Quartzsite in search of direction and friendship. She also needs emergency dental work, and has just lost her medical insurance.

Enter **Karon**, Jenny's new fast friend. Karon supports her on a dental trip to Mexico (did we mention Jenny's a huge fan of Building The Wall?). Teeth fixed, she invites Jenny to her first meeting of **The Desert Singles** — where elder folk go to reinvent a little romantic love into their lives.



A gang of **homeschooled pre-teens** are creating their own religion, falling in love and capturing it all on their old-school handycam. Their footage is curious and contemplative, light and dark.

The **lo-fi, dreamy footage** guides us through similar themes of love and mortality -- from the perspective of those in the beginning chapters of life.



Spend enough time wandering around Quartzsite and you'll come across flags and t-shirts adorning sentiments like "Black Guns Matter." **Hurbert Whittaker** is a purveyor of gems, minerals and **"Fordite"** (petrified paint from the racks and rails of Michigan automobile plants). He's one of the most vibrant and loved personalities in town. He is also a black man in a sea of Quartzsite white.

We follow Hurbert as he navigates life in a divided America. And when his life is suddenly and tragically cut short, we're with his wife Kim as she picks up the pieces of their life on the road.



## QUOTES FROM THE FILM

---





# CONTACT

---

## SALES INQUIRIES

Alli@WatchThisReady.com

## FESTIVAL + OTHER

ryan.a.maxey@gmail.com

jpolon@gmail.com

## OFFICIAL SITE

www.QuartzsiteFilm.com

## SOCIAL

INSTAGRAM - @QuartzsiteFilm

# DETAILS + TECHNICAL SPECS

---

Runtime: 89 Minutes

Trailer: [vimeo.com/maxeyfish/ORTQ](https://vimeo.com/maxeyfish/ORTQ)

Aspect Ratio: 1.77:1

Sound: 5.1 surround sound

Country of Origin: USA

Year: 2023

Exhibition Format: File / DCP

