

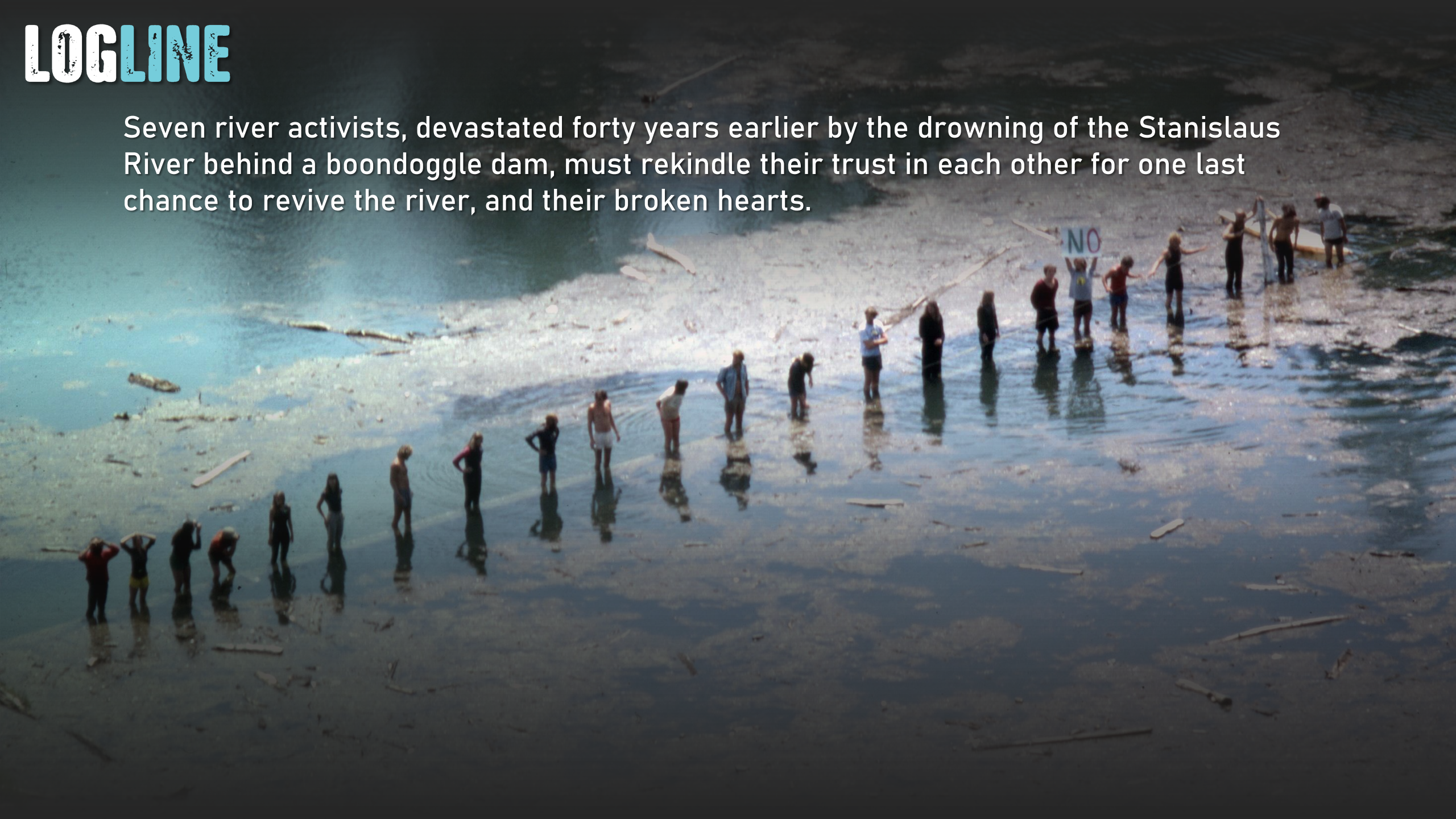


RECLAIMING ESTANISLAO

A narrative feature drama based on the true struggle to save a river.

LOGLINE

Seven river activists, devastated forty years earlier by the drowning of the Stanislaus River behind a boondoggle dam, must rekindle their trust in each other for one last chance to revive the river, and their broken hearts.





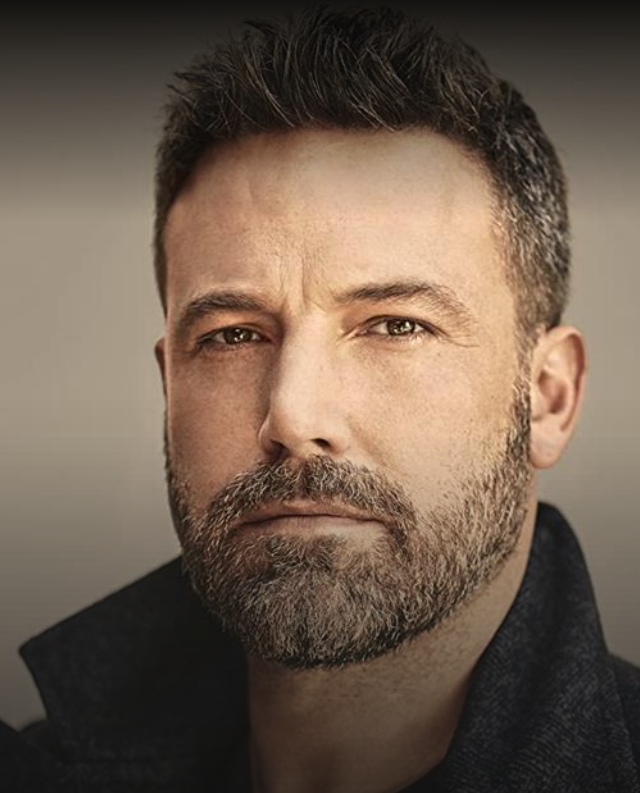
THE STANISLAUS RIVER

The Stanislaus River flows west out of the Sierras just north of Yosemite. The thirteen-mile stretch ravaged by the New Melones Dam was one of the most popular whitewater runs, flowing through the deepest limestone canyon in the western United States.

The original campaign to save the Stanislaus was driven by tens of thousands of volunteers between 1969 and 1982. In 1982, the dam was completed and the reservoir filled for the first time. The dam has only been filled to capacity five times, generally sitting below halfway and is often referred to as an example of fraudulent pork-barrel spending.

In early 2022, a handful of activists from the original campaign reunited in order to make this film come true.

CHARACTERS



MARK

Towering and prominent, yet thoughtful and humble, Mark is the reluctant leader. The Stanislaus gave him meaning for his life, which is why he risked that life to save it. Now, as an international environmental activist, he is driven by the heartbreak of the Stanislaus.



MELINDA

Melinda is the resourceful local leader with a seething rage toward the dam. Her expertise and the respect she earned helped her rally activists and locals for the river. Now the chance to avenge the river has brought her back to the challenge.



KEVIN

Kevin embodies hope, sparked by impatience and the drive to do anything to bring down the dam. Though he went on to lead other environmental initiatives, he has never stopped pushing for the dam's demise. Will his reckless passion jeopardize this last chance for hope?



SHORTCUTT

A political expert and the linchpin of the group, Shortcutt buries her emotions behind strategy. She navigated the original, heart-wrenching campaign by focusing on the next move. When the river was drowned, she discarded its files to forget, but the pain remained buried in her heart.



ALEXANDER

Swashbuckling and dashing in the past, Alexander now embodies embitterment. He found his soul as a Stanislaus River guide and gave his all to save the river. To once more bare his soul for the river will take every ounce of courage he can muster.



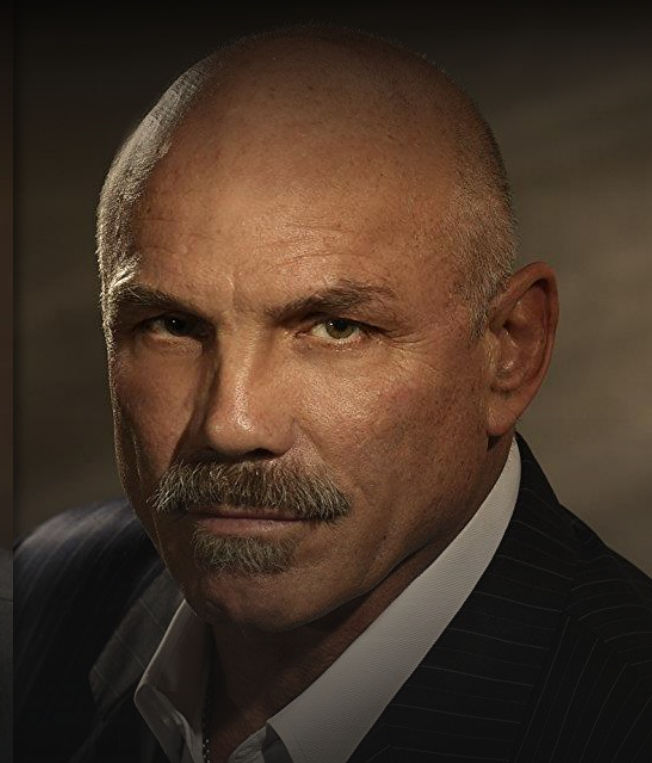
CATHERINE

Catherine is the calming force. Even as a young Stanislaus activist, her professionalism kept the campaign on track. She went on to lead several other environmental nonprofits. Her calm and reason are the forces that will rebuild and maintain the group for this final push.



SEAN

Just a child during the original campaign, Sean now discovers the means for bringing down the dam. The corruption he encountered during the campaign, led him to become a professor and international diplomat. But he never forgot the river. His discovery sets the stage for the showdown.



GALARDI

A politician of the worst kind, Galardi is driven by personal gain and power. A puppet for shadowy industrial lobbyists, he sees the activists as a threat to his aspirations. He defeated them once before. Now he aims to crush them once and for all.

SYNOPSIS

Forty years after the drowning of their beloved Stanislaus River behind a boondoggle dam, MARK has assembled a group of activists for the anniversary at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Only KEVIN sees the opportunity, far beyond what Mark had intended. It's time, he says, for the dam's demise. Kevin's audacity and ALEXANDER's embittered rebuff thrusts Mark back in time where we meet THE RIVER.

Back in the present, Kevin reaches out to others and finds that SEAN, now a professor, has compiled the evidence to bring down the dam. Kevin and MELINDA find that attitudes have changed and even the bureaucrats who control the dam are open to their proposal. But CATHERINE and Alexander are not convinced. Without them, SHORTCUTT, their political expert, won't be bothered. Act I ends with Catherine discovering that Kevin is actually on to something. She's even convinced Alexander to help, though he is the most shattered of them all.



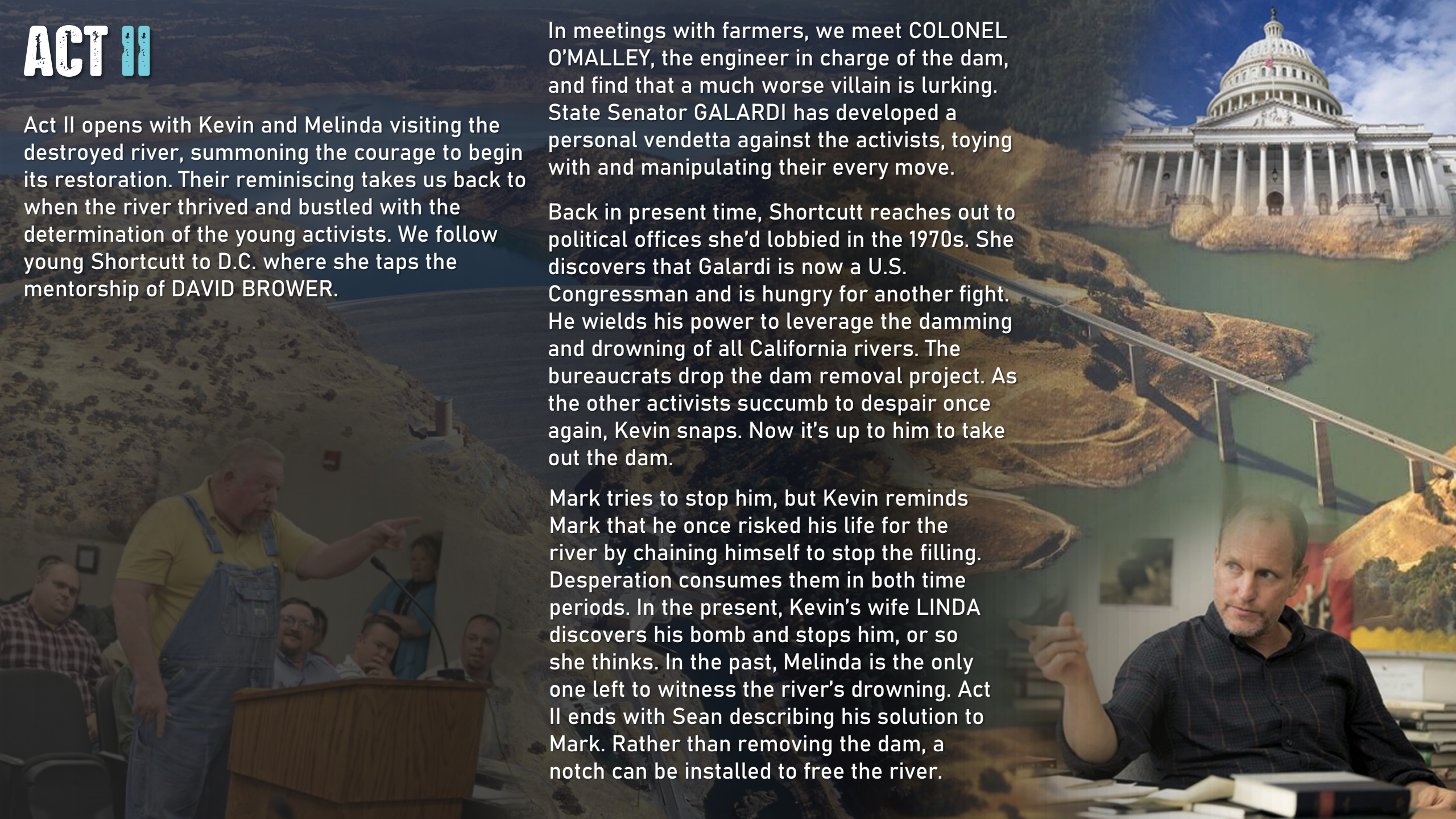
ACT II

Act II opens with Kevin and Melinda visiting the destroyed river, summoning the courage to begin its restoration. Their reminiscing takes us back to when the river thrived and bustled with the determination of the young activists. We follow young Shortcutt to D.C. where she taps the mentorship of DAVID BROWER.

In meetings with farmers, we meet COLONEL O'MALLEY, the engineer in charge of the dam, and find that a much worse villain is lurking. State Senator GALARDI has developed a personal vendetta against the activists, toying with and manipulating their every move.

Back in present time, Shortcutt reaches out to political offices she'd lobbied in the 1970s. She discovers that Galardi is now a U.S. Congressman and is hungry for another fight. He wields his power to leverage the damming and drowning of all California rivers. The bureaucrats drop the dam removal project. As the other activists succumb to despair once again, Kevin snaps. Now it's up to him to take out the dam.

Mark tries to stop him, but Kevin reminds Mark that he once risked his life for the river by chaining himself to stop the filling. Desperation consumes them in both time periods. In the present, Kevin's wife LINDA discovers his bomb and stops him, or so she thinks. In the past, Melinda is the only one left to witness the river's drowning. Act II ends with Sean describing his solution to Mark. Rather than removing the dam, a notch can be installed to free the river.



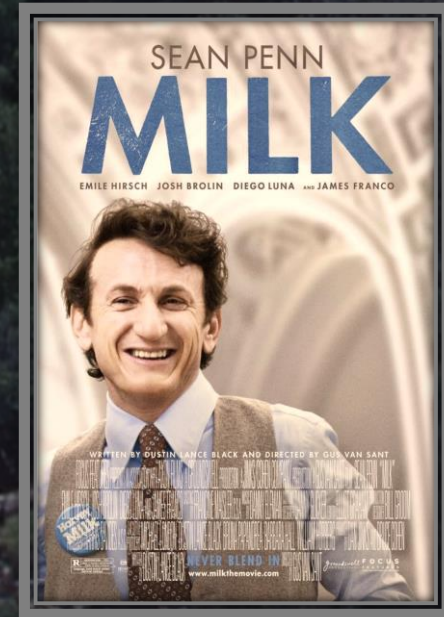
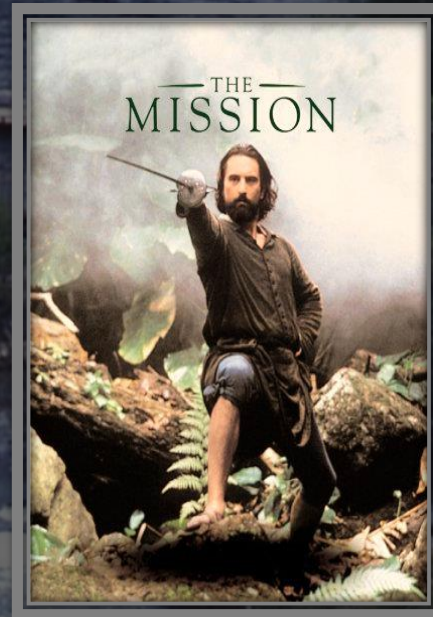
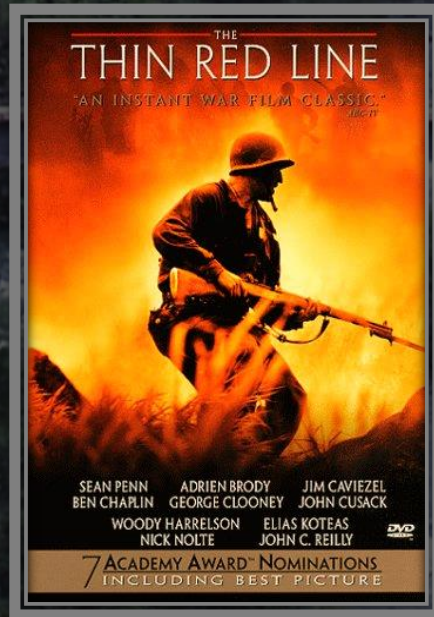
ACT III

Act III opens with three new bureaucrats, JULIE, ERIC, and TOM, starting their assignment for the dam's redesign. As they work with the activists, Kevin has had enough. He's sure they will never do it and Galardi's scheme will win. He disappears along with his bomb. As the bureaucrats and activists work together with locals at the river, Mark confronts Kevin. He has placed the bomb at the dam as their backup and shows Mark the remote control.

The activists and bureaucrats raft the river to map the restoration plan, ending at the dam where Shortcutt announces that Galardi's scheme has failed. Kevin challenges them to climb the dam. On top, a mix of frustration and joy fuels each character as they tear into the dam and throw its rocks downstream with cries to honor Estanislao as the original activist and namesake for their river. Soon they've created a large hole. This visual shows each, in their own way, that they have succeeded. Kevin throws the remote into the reservoir. Alexander collapses with the realization of success.



COMPARABLE FILMS



VISUAL REFERENCES - PAST



VISUAL REFERENCES - PRESENT





SUE KNAUP

Executive Producer and Screenwriter

Sue Knaup was 15 in 1979 when she joined the campaign. The loss of the Stanislaus shaped her into the activist she is today. She is the founder and executive director of One Street, an international nonprofit serving leaders of bicycle, community, and environmental organizations. Her specialty is coaching activists on effective campaign planning, often tapping the lessons she learned during the Stanislaus campaign.

For more than 40 years, Sue has led nonprofits in the fields of animal rights, environment, special populations, and bicycle advocacy. During that time, she also worked as a river guide, owned a bicycle shop, and taught a university course on social change with bicycles. Sue is the author of four published books and now a screenplay.



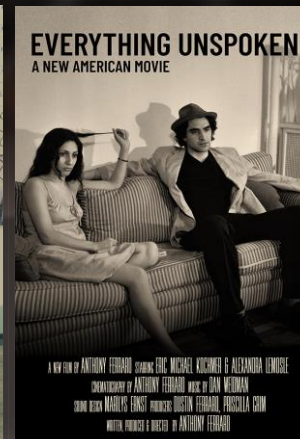
ERIC MICHAEL KOCHMER

Producer

Eric Michael Kochmer has been with the film collective and production company We Make Movies (WMM) since 2010. WMM is active in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City. In his role as VP of Content, Eric regularly consults on films, series, internet projects, and branded content.

As a producer, line producer, and associate producer, Eric has worked on over 70 short films, numerous television episodes, and a handful of feature films. He made his directorial debut in 2014 with the feature film *Way Down In Chinatown* and has since directed three more features, four series, and a variety of short films.

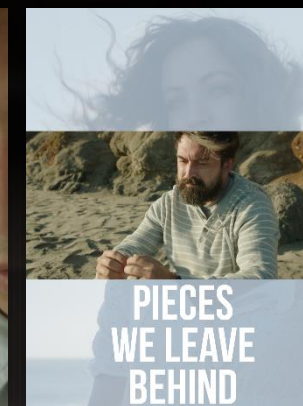
TEAM BIO



ART ARUTYUNYAN

Director

Art Arutyunyan is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker specializing in meaningful films. Born in Uzbekistan, he was originally trained as a fashion designer. After moving to LA in the late nineties, Art transitioned to film production as writer, director, and producer. Art's films have placed as finalists in multiple film festivals worldwide. Several have been distributed worldwide on VOD, cable, DVD/Blu-Ray, and streaming apps. Art's film *Funeral* is part of the Film Fund's auteur collection. His scripts have won the London International Screenwriting Competition, placed quarterfinalist at ScreenCraft, and landed in the top 10% at the Academy Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting, several going on to be optioned and produced. Currently, Art is developing various TV pilots, series, and feature film projects, including *Reclaiming Estanislao*.



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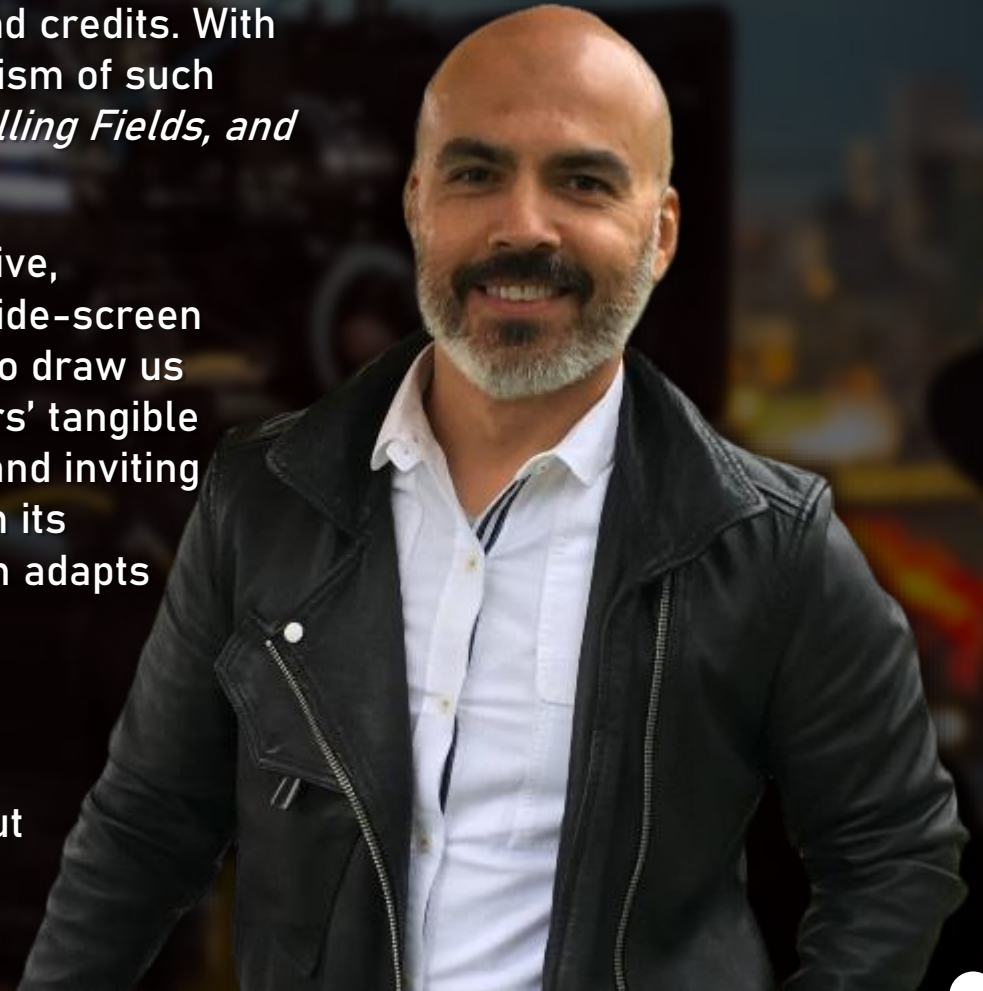
DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Films with impact leave a lasting impression long after the end credits. With *Reclaiming Estanislao*, our goal is to achieve the grit and realism of such poignant films as *Milk*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *The Killing Fields*, and *The Kings of Summer*.

In its visual language, our film is equally grounded and inventive, reflecting our protagonists as activists who dare to dream. Wide-screen aspect ratio envelopes the environment, allowing for nature to draw us in. The close-ups are often disarming, narrating the characters' tangible struggle. We employ motivated camera movements, smooth and inviting in quieter moments, sharp and agile in action sequences. With its pacing and long takes, the film is never too precious and often adapts a documentary style, contributing to the constant tension.

The characters are the center of this story and we remain committed to the universal themes they carry: friendship, justice, and sacrifice. Above all, *Reclaiming Estanislao* is about reinventing hope when faced with the impossible.

- Art Arutyunyan, January 2024



WHAT WE'VE DONE



Development so far:

- Script is completed
- Budget is baselined at \$1.2 million
- Interviews for key crew
- Researchers engaged
- Sponsors engaged
- Grant applications submitted
- Fundraising platforms posted to film website
- Co-production outreach
- Film incentives/locations investigation
- Fiscal sponsor for tax-deductions for our donors
- Tax incentives for our investors

WHAT WE NEED

As we build our team:

- Production partners
- Funders and investors to help us reach our production goal of \$960,000

We will invite major contributors to take part in the production of the film and will acknowledge your vital role in the film credits.



A film crew is shown operating a professional camera on a set. The scene is dimly lit, with a large white umbrella providing overhead lighting. The crew members are wearing dark clothing and caps. The camera is a RED brand, and the word 'RED' is visible on its side. The background is out of focus, showing a white car and a building.

THANK YOU

To learn more and offer assistance, please contact us at:

www.ReclaimingEstanislaotheFilm.com

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