NO ONE WALKS THE TRAIL ALONE

BRIDGE AND ACORN ENTERTAINMENT AND LAMA ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH SADIE CATCH PRODUCTIONS PRESENT A LAMA ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION "THE KEEPER"

ANGUS BENFIELD MICHAEL MACLANE NICHOLAS ASAD HALEY BABULA ANDREW FERGUSON KAMERON WHITAKER LANCE BONZA MUSIC EDEN MULHOLLAND EDITED LEX BENEDICT & GREG CRUSER PRODUCTION SHANNA FRANCESCHINI PROTOGRAPHY RICHARD GALLI PRODUCED ANGUS BENFIELD RUTH BENFIELD KENDALL BRYANT JR. STEVEN LAFFERTY PRODUCER SIMONE BONSER DIRECTED ANGUS BENFIELD & KENDALL BRYANT JR.



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"The Keeper" Trailer and Promo links





"No one walks the trail alone"

"The Keeper" is based on an inspiring true story of one Army Veteran, challenged by his own demons and searching for hope and answers while hiking from Maine to Georgia on the Appalachian Trail.

(*Based on a true story*) Heavily impacted by his fellow veteran's suicides, George Eshleman (*Angus Benfield*), an Army Veteran, decides to help raise awareness for military member suicides by hiking the entire nearly 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia. On the trek, he carries 363 name tapes from the uniforms of military members who committed suicide, given to him by their families.

Along the way he is given the trail name of "The Keeper" (of the names) and finds support and comfort from fellow hikers, civilians, and military Veterans alike, in the "Hiker Universe." This adventurous subculture forms a network of hikers that revel in their common purpose and an unspoken meaning of life that drives them down the trail and over the next peak.

From the beginning, George meets four unique, military Veteran hikers who shadow his hike, motivate his efforts, and seem to keep tabs on him from beginning to end. Despite the support of fellow hikers and Veterans for his noble mission, his own depression threatens to overtake his judgement as he plots his own suicide along the trail. With his darkness only a few paces from his mind, George fights a daily battle along the trail as he struggles to prove his mettle, conquer his depression, and focus on the mission of finishing the trail.

"The Keeper," is based on the life story of George Eshleman, directed by **Angus Benfield** and **Kendall Bryant Jr.** screenplay by **Todd Tavolazzi** and story by **George Eshleman**.



KEY CAST



ANGUS BENFIELD Inventing Anna NCIS: Los Angeles The Post The Great Turkey Town Miracle



HALEY BABULA A Journey Through Pines If Only My Crazy Ex



MICHAEL MACLANE Teardrop The Young and The Restless Yellow Bird Heaven



NICHOLAS ASAD Wu-Tang: An American Saga Chase the Ace Power

KEY CREW



ANDREW FERGUSON Sugar, Silence and Everyday Violence The Faces We See Gridlock



KAMERON WHITAKER Momma Bird Out With The Old Altum



LANCE BONZA Smallville Strongmen The Doubles Chasing Comets



ANGUS BENFIELD Director / Producer Director / Producer The Great Turkey Town The Deprogrammer Miracle, The Post, Yellow Bird Yellow Bird, Heaven, Trust The Great Turkey Town Miracle



KENDALL BRYANT Jr. STEVEN LAFFERTY Producer Fosse Verdon The Adjustment Bureau Tower Heist Transformers



Cinematographer The Avengers Catching Faith Legacy

TODD TAVOLAZZI Writer (Screenplay by) Co-Producer T Warrior The Shattered Sky



Heaven

GEORGE ESHLEMAN SIMONE BONSER Military and Appalachian Trail Technical Consultant, Miracle Co-Producer, Writer (Story by)

Line Producer The Great Turkey Town The Post Purgatory Station

RUTH BENFIELD Producer / Music Supervisor / Marketing Coordinator / Post-Production Producer The Great Turkey Town Miracle Yellow Bird

DANIEL HEGEL Executive Producer/ CEO Sadie Catch Prod. The Great Turkey Town Miracle Purgatory Station



EDEN MULHOLLAND LEX BENEDICT Composer Editor 2023 Fifa Womens World Hell's Kitchen Cup Opening Ceremony Identity Crisis 2023 World of WearableArt: The Greatest Inheritence BEYOND Soundtrack



GREG CRUSER Editor American Ninja Warrior The Titan Games Ellen's Next Great DesignerThe Doubles

LANCE BONZA Production Coordinator Smallville Strongmen

Chasing Comets

CATHERINE DEPTUCH 2nd AD Rebel Moon Succession Barry

EMILY BINNS Production Assistant Rahab The Deporogrammer Stan The Man



SHANNA FRANCESCHINI Production Designer Stan The Man The Deprogrammer Yellow Bird



ALBERTO GARCIA Sound Mixer Murder by Association Deadly Endings Stan The Man The Deprogrammer

MATT JACOBS 1st AC Rebel Moon Breakout Family Tradition





ANGUS BENFIELD: DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



"My vision for **THE KEEPER** was to retain the authenticity of the story and its environment and to not over stylize or sanitize the substance of the story or the setting of its world. Tackling the dual worlds of the military and the hiking community was core to telling this story, showing the real Appalachian Trail was paramount, along with its actual locations, hostels, and real people along the way, mixed with true military veterans in our cast and crew.

This is not a big over-bloated Hollywood telling of George's story, this is intimate and personal and made with a small crew to reduce the footprint of the film on the trail, made with real veterans and hikers as consultants, casting unknown actors for their skill and ability and heart for the project, rather than bringing in a 'name'.

Films that inspired me in how to approach this story in such a way that embraced the naturalistic, expressionistic and cinema verité style that I am drawn to, include "Into the Wild", "Nomad Land" and "Sound of Metal" along with films that embodied the heart of Veterans post-war, "American Sniper" and "Born on the 4th of July".

In Truth, traveling the journey of making this film quickly became less about influences of other films and their style and tone, and more about just embracing the trail and story that then bled out into reality.

As we filmed we met many people along the trail who were Veterans, who had tears in their eyes as they shared with us personal stories of the pain they themselves have gone through – this story made them want to share their stories, and it was why we were there on the Appalachian Trail, and why we are here...to tell George's story, and the story of the 363, and the story of the 22 every day, and the story of the countless number connected in someway to all those who have lost their lives and those who are losing the battle of a war that never seems to end."

WHY TWO DIRECTORS? "Firstly, I started out with a vision to direct this film solely but immediately saw that the importance of having a veteran co-director's perspective on this film was critical. Kenny is a Marine and we have worked together before on multiple projects, we have a great synergy, he was already a producer on this project, and our vision for this film coaligned, so he was the perfect person to bring on to co-direct. Secondly, playing George was filled with very intense and emotional moments, so having Kenny there to direct those, meant that I was able to lay down my director's cap in those moments to focus 100% on the heart of the character."

KENDALL BRYANT JR. DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In helming the directorial duties for "The Keeper," I bring a distinctive perspective shaped by my background as a Marine Corps Desert Storm Combat Veteran. This lens affords me a nuanced understanding of the challenges that confront combat veterans, both in the crucible of battle and upon their return to civilian life. My personal journey through PTSD has provided me with a firsthand awareness of the profound struggles individuals face, particularly in grappling with the impact of suicide. Active involvement in various Facebook groups and collaboration with organizations dedicated to supporting veterans in crisis further underscore my commitment to addressing these critical issues.

At the heart of my directorial vision for "The Keeper" was a dedication to honoring the narrative of George Eshleman. Delving into his personal encounter with suicide, my aim was to explore its broader implications, shedding light on the ripple effects experienced by friends and fellow military veterans.

In directing the actors, my focal point was sincerity and authenticity—essential elements in portraying the journey of a veteran navigating the Appalachian Trail in solitude, facing inner demons head-on. The film aspired to accurately represent the military and veterans, delving beyond battlefield experiences to encompass the challenges encountered in the broader landscape of post-war life. A key emphasis was placed on authentically depicting relationships, from the camaraderie and banter within the military to the profound bonds shared among members of different branches in the brotherhood and sisterhood of the armed forces.

A fundamental aspect of my directorial approach was paying homage to the fallen and presenting their stories with utmost respect. The film aimed to authentically depict the multifaceted issues at hand, ensuring a genuine representation that not only upheld military codes and customs but also reflected a deep reverence for those who made the ultimate sacrifice. "The Keeper" aspired to be a testament to these values, resonating with authenticity and honoring the enduring legacy of those who have served.



Angus Benfield & Kendall Bryant Jr. directing "The Keeper"

GEORGE ESHLEMAN: WRITER - STORY BY

You're never alone. I have heard this phrase from so many people who I believed couldn't understand how difficult it is to pick what dreams you have, or what memories you cannot shake. Even the name tapes I carried didn't seem at that time to be more than companions along for the ride.

It wasn't until I sat behind a large, beautiful tree just off the Appalachian Trail in Maine. All those memories and walls I couldn't seem to break through were about to come to a head. Pistol in hand and relinquishing the fight I figured I could never win; I was ready. As I was petting the name tapes as if they were a pet I was getting comfort from; emotions rushed in. "What are you doing?" was a simple question and the reason I am still here.

"You're never alone" now has a new meaning for me, and I tell that to every veteran and civilian I talk to who feels like I did behind that tree. My wife would tell me, "All you have to do is come home". She made sure I knew that I wasn't alone even on the trail. Every day I woke up and began walking to Georgia I started to notice things that simple in nature, were profound in my day. Small animals, flowers, flowing creeks that had sounds that were hypnotic. Other people that I would normally isolate from became impromptu hiking partners even if just for a few hours. "You're never alone".

The name tapes: my brothers and sisters and their families, were now more important to me than I could ever imagine. Sadly, they were not able to overcome what they helped me to defeat. They were not just memories or traveling companions, they were now a sort of security blanket that would be with me till Georgia and many places beyond. I still have these name tapes close to me to this day. They didn't fail me that day, and I won't fail them in this continuing journey to tell people "You're never alone". - Keeper

TODD TAVOLAZZI: WRITER - SCREENPLAY BY

I had been writing novels and screenplays for several years when I came across George's post on a freelance writer website where writers can find people who are looking for writers to help them with their projects. I read a synopsis of his story and knew immediately I wanted to help get his story told as a film.

After many emails and phone calls with George over the course of two years, I learned about George's personal struggle with depression and PTSD and felt his sincerity in wanting to help all veterans and their families who are suffering. We worked on many drafts of the script to get the specifics of not only the through-hike experience on the Appalachian Trail (AT) correct on the page but also the veteran's personalities (all based on real people).

After hearing his experience about hiking the AT and his dedication to honoring not only veteran vicitms of suicide but also the loved ones who are left behind to grieve, it became my mission as an active duty Navy pilot (with 32 years of service - and counting) and screenwriter to get George's story out to as wide of an audience as possible.

Once George and I were happy with the script, I was extremely lucky to have Angus Benfield at Bridge and Acorn Productions find the script, read it, and want to be a part of sharing George's personal struggles and experience in overcoming them. From the first phone call with Angus, he was onboard to tell George's story as authentically as possible to portray the hikers and veterans as they are in real life, a supportive and strong community.

I'm so grateful to both Angus Benfield and Kendall Bryant (co-directors) and the talented cast and crew they were able to put together to tell George's story. I'm humbled and elated to help bring this story to moviegoers and help shine a light on the scourge of suicide that plagues our country across all demographics with a message of hope and healing. I was drawn to the story by the simple and inspiring fact that... no one walks the trail alone.

I hope everyone who watches it will be reminded of this fact and remember that we must all be ready and willing to help one another get farther down the path together as veterans, colleagues, families, and loved ones. We had a fantastic time making this film and hope it helps many people tackle the daily challenges on our daily trek through life's ups and downs.

Todd Tavolazzi Screenwriter, Naval Aviator



George Eshleman & Todd Tavolazzi, writers of "The Keeper"

LOGLINE / SYNOPSIS

Logline 1: *"No one walks the trail alone."* **Logline 2:** *"Challenge, hope, and inspiration...the trail will provide."*

Synopsis 1: "The Keeper" is based on an inspiring true story of one Army Veteran, challenged by his own demons and searching for hope and answers while hiking from Maine to Georgia on the Appalachian Trail.

Synopsis 2: The true story of a special group of military veteran hikers who help "The Keeper", an Army veteran battling depression, PTSD, and suicidal tendencies, as he attempts to hike the Appalachian Trail while carrying 363 military name tapes on a mission to prevent Veteran suicide.

Synopsis 3: "The Keeper" follows the true story of an Army Veteran battling depression, PTSD, and suicidal tendencies, attempting to hike the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia with the unexpected help of a special group of fellow Veterans.

Synopsis 4: (Based on a true story) Heavily impacted by his fellow veteran's suicides, George Eshleman *(Angus Benfield)*, an Army Veteran, decides to help raise awareness for military member suicides by hiking the full Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia while carrying 363 name tapes from the uniforms of military members who committed suicide.

He is given the trail name of "The Keeper" (of the names) by a special group of Veterans he meets along the way, and finds support and comfort from fellow hikers, civilians, and other military Veterans alike, in the "Hiker Universe." Despite the support of both civilian and Veteran hikers for his noble mission, his depression threatens to overtake his judgement as he plots his own suicide along the trail. With his darkness only a few paces from his mind as he travels the trail each day, George struggles to prove his mettle, conquer his depression, and focus on the mission of finishing the trail.

Synopsis 5: (Based on a true story) Heavily impacted by his fellow veteran's suicides, George Eshleman *(Angus Benfield)*, an Army Veteran, decides to help raise awareness for military member suicides by hiking the entire nearly 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia. On the trek, he carries 363 name tapes from the uniforms of military members who committed suicide, given to him by their families.

Along the way he is given the trail name of "The Keeper" (of the names) and finds support and comfort from fellow hikers, civilians, and military Veterans alike, in the "Hiker Universe." This adventurous subculture forms a network of hikers that revel in their common purpose and an unspoken meaning of life that drives them down the trail and over the next peak.

From the beginning, George meets four unique, military Veteran hikers who shadow his hike, motivate his efforts, and seem to keep tabs on him from beginning to end. Despite the support of fellow hikers and Veterans for his noble mission, his own depression threatens to overtake his judgement as he plots his own suicide along the trail. With his darkness only a few paces from his mind, George fights a daily battle along the trail as he struggles to prove his mettle, conquer his depression, and focus on the mission of finishing the trail.









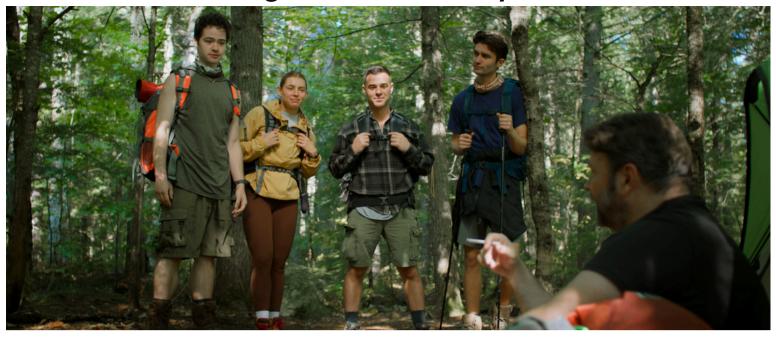
















CREDITS

BRIDGE AND ACORN ENTERTAINMENT & LAMA ENTERTAINMENT In association with SADIE CATCH PRODUCTIONS

Present

А

LAMA ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION

"THE KEEPER"

Directed by ANGUS BENFIELD and KENDALL BRYANT JR.

Produced by ANGUS BENFIELD "Keeper II" RUTH BENFIELD KENDALL BRYANT JR. "Squishy" U.S. Marine Corps STEVEN LAFFERTY "Ring Master"

Co-Produced by GEORGE ESHLEMAN "Keeper" U.S. Army TODD TAVOLAZZI "Tourettes" U.S. Navy

> Story by GEORGE ESHLEMAN

Screenplay by TODD TAVOLAZZI

Line Producer/ Unit Production Manager SIMONE BONSER

> Executive Producers DANIEL HEGEL DANIEL KNIGHT

Composer EDEN MULHOLLAND

Music Supervisor RUTH BENFIELD



Director of Photography/ Colorist RICHARD GALLI

Edited by LEX BENEDICT and GREG CRUSER

Production Designer - East Coast/ Wardrobe SHANNA FRANCESCHINI "EAGLE EYE"

Production Designer - West Coast Post-Production Producer/ Marketing Coordinator **RUTH BENFIELD**

> Second Assistant Director CATHERINE DEPTUCH "Trail Ninja"

> > Set Supervisor STEVEN LAFFERTY

Production Coordinator LANCE BONZA "Bloody Legend"

Sound Mixer - East Coast ALBERTO GARCIA "Chilly Fingers"

> Sound Mixer - West Coast DENNIS GRZESIK

First Assistant Camera MATT JACOBS

Casting Associate **DANIEL KNIGHT**

Production Assistant EMILY BINNS "Smokey Bear"

Military and Appalachian Trail Technical Consultant GEORGE ESHLEMAN

Transportation / Set Safety Supervisor: Maine Location **DANIEL KNIGHT**

EMILY LEONARD "Black Bear"

Trail Consultant

DAVID BLARE "Lone Wolf" U.S. Marine Trail Consultant

> BRUCE LEONARD "Batman" Trail Consultant Assistant

PAUL LIZOTTE U.S. Army RV Operator

BRIAN CLUNIE U.S. Army Drone Operator

"KEEP ON" WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY RUTH BENFIELD AND SCOTT OATLEY PRODUCED BY SCOTT OATLEY © 2024 VAN SCOTT VARIATIONS & LAMA ENTERTAINMENT

Starring

ANGUS BENFIELD "Keeper II" as George Eshleman "Keeper"

MICHAEL MACLANE "Mini Me II" as Michael Blanco "Mini Me"

HALEY BABULA "Peanut II" as SGT Sophie Champoux "Peanut"

ANDREW FERGUSON "Taz II" as Anthony Barton "Taz"

NICHOLAS ASAD "Bacon II" as Wade Baker "Bacon"

KAMERON WHITAKER "Skillet II" U.S. Marine Corps as Vincent Taffee "Skillet"



LANCE BONZA "Bloody Legend" as Long Step

GEORGE ESHLEMAN "Keeper" U.S. Army as Reaper 64

TODD TAVOLAZZI "Tourettes" U.S. Navy as Roadrunner 17 VO

as Roadrunner 17 VC

as Honey Badger

DANIEL KNIGHT as Ole Man

RACHEL HRONCICH "Rae Rae" as Dr. Brown

VINCE EISENSON as Helpful Hiker

SHANNA FRANCESCHINI "Eagle Eye" as Rhonda

CHRIS KORKALO as Howler

as Cashier

MARC SOPER "U.S. Airforce" as Local

RUTH BENFIELD

as Nurse/ Erika VO

ANDY MCCARTY

as Tender Foot

EMILY BINNS "Pop Rocket"

as Jennifer Anne Gowen

JOSEPH PEREZ

as Random Hiker

MR MONKEY as Himself

JUDAH BONZA "Bug II" as Bug

PAUL LIZOTTE "U.S.Army" as Tessell

KENDALL BRYANT JR. "Squishy" U.S. Marine Corps as Ryan Baker

> P DAVID MILLER U.S. Marine Corps as Hostel Owner

BAILEY MCCANN

as Hiker #1

ERIKA MAZ

as Hiker #2

LINDSAY WEISBERG as "Morsel"

HENRY THE DOG

as "Mister" the dog

JOHN-PETER CRUZ "U.S.Army"

as Chris

ERIC BARKER

as Unhelpful Hiker

FRED ROBBINS

as Steve (Vietnam Veteran Hiker)

RICK DUMONT as Troll

DAVID MONTALVO as Snooze

POET

as himself

LUMPY

as himself

TREEHOUSE as himself

ANGUS BENFIELD: *DIRECTOR, ACTOR, PRODUCER* CEO: LAMA ENTERTAINMENT

Angus Benfield is an Australian-born, multi-award-winning director, producer, actor and writer and is the Founder and CEO of LA based film production and distribution company LAMA ENTERTAINMENT and production company BRIDGE and ACORN ENTERTAINMENT.

Movies have been a lifelong passion for Angus, starting in the industry as a production runner at 14, he later went on to train as an actor at The Actor's Centre at 20 and landed the lead role in Australian feature film Lex and Rory straight out of acting school.

Angus has since worked in all major departments of the film industry, as an actor, screenwriter, producer, director and distributor (theatrical & non-theatrical), as well as in financing. Angus has successfully managed multiple film production companies in the US, Australia and New Zealand along with working as a head of department at the New York Film Academy.

Angus began Bridge and Acorn Entertainment on moving to Los Angeles, specializing in independent distribution and production, uniquely creating content from script to screen and producing noteworthy films with impacting messages that inspire and entertain. Producing films that have won multiple awards including Best Comedy Film, Best Feature, Best Drama, Best Gospel Feature, Best Narrative, Best Ensemble, Best Actor, Best Producer, Best Director, Best Editing and Best Original Score.

Bridge and Acorn Entertainment and LAMA Entertainment's films have been released theatrically and can be found on Amazon, AppleTV, Prime, YouTube, Tubi, Vimeo, Roku, PureFlix and many other digital platforms, with feature Trust having been viewed over 4.4 million times worldwide.

Angus was awarded Best Director at the Canadian International Film Festival and at the Hollywood Gold Awards in 2020 and has also directed feature films, The Great Turkey Town Miracle (2023), Yellow Bird (Brian Doyle-Murray, Kathy Garver, 2023), Trust (2018), Wait Up Harriet (2006) and The Keeper (2023) due for release Memorial Day 2024.

Angus was awarded Best Producer at the Carpe Diem Awards in 2023 and the EEI Movie Awards in 2021 and has produced films The Weight of Darkness (2024), The Keeper (2023), The Deprogrammer (2023), The Great Turkey Town Miracle (Cameron Arnett, 2023), The Post (2023), Purgatory Station (Bob Gunton, Sean O'Bryan, 2023), Yellow Bird (Brian Doyle-Murray, Kathy Garver, 2023), and written and produced films Motorvation (Judy Norton, 2022), Heaven (Eric Roberts, 2020), High Rollers (2019) Trust (2018), and The Holy Roller (Mark Hadlow, 2010), as well as producing Meet Me in Miami (Carlos Ponce, Eduardo Verastegui, 2005).

Angus is also an accomplished, multiple award-winning and incredibly versatile actor, having acted alongside some of the biggest names in Hollywood including, Chevy Chase, Randy Quaid, Eric Roberts, Julia Garner, Bob Gunton, Brian Doyle-Murray, Angus Macfadyen, Doug Jones, Corbin Bernsen, Jamie King, Brian Posehn, Kris Poloha, Cate Blanchett, Anna Chlumsky, Kathy Garver, Judy Norton, LL Cool J, Eric Christian Olsen and Chris O'Donnell.





LAMA DISTRIBUTION was formed in 2020 as a distribution branch of BRIDGE & ACORN ENTERTAINMENT to serve their ongoing needs of theatrical distribution, and was originally compiled of a film distribution team residing in LA and Massachusetts - LA / MA.

In October 2020 - March 2021, LAMA DISTRIBUTION managed a successful theatrical release of their first project HEAVEN on 500 + cinema screens throughout the US and South America, when big studios backed out on cinemas, LAMA DISTRIBUTION supported them, even in the height of the pandemic and despite many cinemas being closed. LAMA ENTERTAINMENT was born soon after as a production branch.

Founder Angus Benfield merged these 2 companies, and has worked on multiple projects encapsulating over 30 years of award winning producing, writing and directing along with distribution and film investment and is professionally associated with projects in Australia, New Zealand, China and the US. Benfield also has the advantage of having worked in front of the camera as a prominent and award winning actor globally for many generations in film, television, commercials, non-broadcast and new media.

With over 30 years of experience and a think-outside-of-the-box attitude, now LAMA ENTERTAINMENT & BRIDGE AND ACORN ENTERTAINMENT are creating a new model of motion picture production, with an outlook for lower-risk, higher-return-of-investment films, with shorter production schedules, lower budgets and a back-to-back slate, resulting in increased content, less risk and lower investment whilst producing high-end, premium motion picture films for the domestic and global foreign market, on all distribution platforms from theatrical to online.



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