

VICTORIA MORALES JULIO MACIAS ISABELLA FELICIANA EDGAR DE SANTIAGO AND CHRIS ORTEGA

T H E

MIDDLE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SYLVIA RAY





LOGLINE

A desert teen tries to escape the consequences of a pivotal night and has to decide between telling the truth and protecting her family.



SYNOPSIS

The Middle follows Joanna Baca as she works at a local fast-food restaurant while trying to avoid the reality of the tragic event that happened the night before. She's pushed and pulled in many directions and ultimately is left to face the facts and make a choice. Life is full of choices and they can affect the trajectory of our lives and at 15, it can feel like life or death.

I want to explore these uncomfortable feelings all while showing the lifestyle, beauty, and dysfunction of a small desert town which isn't often portrayed properly in film. This short film is a teaser for a feature film that explores Joanna's adolescent life while she goes off the deep end with the "wrong crowd".

WRITER/DIRECTOR BIO

Sylvia Ray is an award-winning Chicana/Korean-American director and a Satellite Collective Fellow. Born and raised in Barstow, CA, Sylvia's passion for storytelling was nurtured by her parents, who watched Star Trek and bootleg Korean dramas in separate rooms.

Sylvia's work emanates a fun and feminine energy, intertwining themes of empowerment, identity, and navigating through grief. Her dark comedy, **PREGGERS**, garnered acclaim, earning the **Best Comedy Short** award at the **Arizona International Film Festival** and a screening at The Academy through the **LatinX InFocus** program at **New Filmmakers LA**. Sylvia was chosen for **HBO's Tomorrow's Filmmaker's Today** program, where her film **LEN(NY)** streamed to audiences on **Pantaya** and **DISH! Latino**.

Based in Los Angeles, Sylvia draws inspiration from her upbringing in a desert town, her international travels, and her experience in fashion. Sylvia is driven to create a positive impact in BIPOC representation both in front of and behind the camera.



DIRECTORS STATEMENT

The Middle follows Joanna Baca who is pushed and pulled in many directions and ultimately is left to face the facts and make a choice. Life is full of choices and they can effect the trajectory of our lives and at 15, it can feel like life or death.

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As the writer and director, my inspiration stems from personal experiences growing up, mostly unsupervised, in Barstow, CA. Vibes from Gus Van Sant's *PARANOID PARK* and the raw intensity of Catherine Hardwicke's *THIRTEEN* among other coming-of-age films are references for me. However, *THE MIDDLE* seeks to portray teen life through an American Latine lens, resonating with audiences across communities. The goal is a portrayal that hits you in the gut, with performances not just seen but felt, capturing the pulse of a small desert town.

Diverse narratives reflecting the complexity of the human experience are crucial. BIPOC teens in small towns may feel their stories and dreams are overlooked. *THE MIDDLE* challenges this notion, embarking on a journey into the shadows of grief, providing a timely reflection on morality and personal responsibility. It serves as a rallying cry for those who feel unseen, demonstrating through Joanna's resilience that their stories do matter and that grief is universal. Despite the tragic elements, this story remains a beacon of hope, illustrating that even in the darkest of times, we can overcome adversity and start again.



KEY CREW - PRODUCERS



RODRY SOZA



LEXX TRUSS



VICTORIA MOROLES



PETER ZHU



SYLVIA RAY

KEY CREW



DP - MARISCELA BEATRÍZ MÉNDEZ

Mariscela Beatríz Méndez is a Chicana Director of Photography from San Antonio, Texas. Her clients include **Vanity Fair**, **Google**, **Slamdance**, and **Netflix**. Mariscela was selected to participate in the Women in Film INSIGHT Fellowship, Film Independent's Project Involve, The Hola Mexico Tomorrow's Filmmakers Today Fellowship, and The American Society of Cinematographer's Vision Mentor Program. She is also the recipient of The Peregrine Collective 2022 Grant. Mariscela has a deep connection to her Mexican-American roots and often works on projects involving LatinX identity, female driven films, and magical realism. Ms. Méndez is a member of ICG Local 600 based in Los Angeles and works worldwide.

EDITOR - PATRICK LAWRENCE

Patrick Lawrence is a Los Angeles-based Editor and Director, originally from St. Louis, Missouri. He has edited 16 Feature Films since 2014, including *"Scare Me"* (Shudder/AMC) and *"Clara's Ghost"* (MGM/Orion), both of which world premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. In addition to having 7 films premiere at Sundance, projects that Patrick has edited have screened worldwide at SXSW, Tribeca, Cannes, Fantastic Fest, Outfest, Beyond Fest, and more! Outside of theatrical, Patrick is also an accomplished Episodic editor, recently serving as Lead Editor on the short-form Netflix series *"Bonding"* for two seasons, as well as the second season of *"This Close"* for AMC/SundanceTV. Patrick is endorsed by Adobe for his use of Premiere Pro and the Creative Cloud suite.



COMPOSER - JIMMY LAVALLE

Jimmy LaValle and his musical project *The Album Leaf*, is best known for his distinctive, dreamy, cinematic soundscapes that have been featured in film, television, commercials, and numerous album, EP and Single releases. *The Album Leaf* has toured both nationally and internationally. Performances have included Red Rocks Amphitheater in Denver, Colorado; The Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, California; Primavera Sound Festival in Barcelona, Spain; All Tomorrows Parties "I'll Be Your Mirror" Festival, curated by Portishead; Metamorphose Festival in Tokyo, Japan; and national tours of the United States, Mexico, Canada, Europe, China, Singapore, Taiwan, and Malaysia. LaValle performed a critically acclaimed live score to the 1927 silent film *SUNRISE: A SONG OF TWO HUMANS*, at the 2008 Seattle International Film Festival.



PRODUCTION DESIGNER - ROSE WESTERMAN

Rose Westerman left engineering at MIT to pursue film with a full ride to Fitchburg State University. After graduating with honors she has worked on features and episodic television with companies including (but not limited to) HBO Max, Sony Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox, Netflix, Hulu, NBCUniversal, Paramount Pictures, and Columbia Pictures. Her skills range from design, previsualization, and fabrication to budgeting, communication, and coordination. She is a member of the Art Directors Guild holding a dual craft designation for Art Direction and Graphic Design. Now that she's made the jump to producing, her extensive art department background makes her a great asset in the pre-production and production process. Rose is a creative problem solver and enjoys working at all budget tiers. The collaborative process of filmmaking and working alongside multiple departments to tell a story is what makes her heart sing.



KEY CAST

JOANNA BACA - VICTORIA MORELES

Victoria Moroles is a Mexican-American actor/producer who can be seen in the latest season of Netflix's NEVER HAVE I EVER as well as Hulu's coming of age comedy feature, PLAN B. She also recently starred in and associate produced Shudder's father-daughter horror comedy BLOOD RELATIVES.

Born in Corpus Christi, TX, she currently resides in Los Angeles with her ever growing plant collection. In her spare time she is a mentor/coach working with young actors/artists and is also dedicated to philanthropic pursuits, partnering with Planned Parenthood Greater Texas and other organizations.



KEY CAST

RICARDO "RICKY" BACA - JULIO MACIAS

Julio Macias is a multi-talented actor and producer and starred in the critically-acclaimed, Award-winning Netflix original series ON MY BLOCK. Julio also co-starred in the Netflix original production, SELENA: THE SERIES as the role of Pete Astudillo, a charming singer and member of a two-man band known as "Los Bad Boys". Julio can be seen as a recurring character on THE ROOKIE and is also starring in the upcoming feature from Jolene Rodriguez, ATYPICAL PIRATE which will be released later this year.

Julio is bi-lingual and an animal lover, with his own rescue dog. As he continues his mission to create meaningful projects and take on challenging and unique roles, Julio also supports various local and national charities and is involved in many Hispanic philanthropic initiatives.



KEY CAST

ADRIANA - ISABELLA FELICIANA

Isabella Feliciano is a born and raised Long beach native. She stars in the feature film 'Maya' which premiered at Raindance Film Festival. She is also a proud IAMA theatre ensemble member, having made her debut in their world premiere play 'Smile'. She graduated summa cum laude from Loyola Marymount University with degrees in English and Theatre Arts; and also trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in the Foundations of Classical Acting. While at Loyola Marymount she received the sustained achievement in acting award and the Virginia Barnelle Acting scholarship



KEY CAST

ANGELO - EDGAR DE SANTIAGO

Edgar de Santiago is a first-generation Mexican-American, born and raised in Indiana with five siblings. Edgar trained at a four year BFA program with a concentration in Acting, having worked on classical and contemporary plays. Edgar has since been working professionally in commercials, modeling, and stories that focus on the Latinx experience. Now based in Los Angeles, his most recent bookings include S.W.A.T. (TV), RZR (TV), the feature film, Last Dollar, and Jesus Hopped the A-Train.



KEY CAST

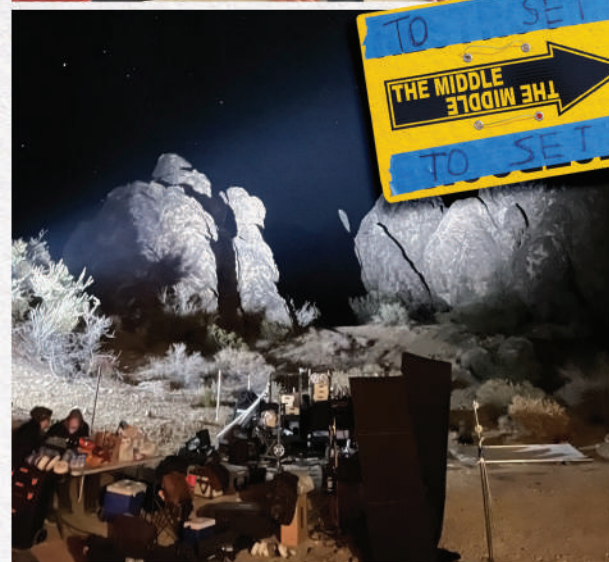
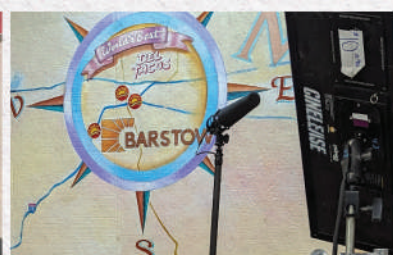
TYLER - CHRIS ORTEGA

Chris Ortega was born in Los Angeles, California. He was raised in a competitive mixed martial arts environment, having trained with some of the world's top mixed martial artists since he was a young child thanks to his family and brother, Brian Ortega, a contender for the UFC featherweight belt. Many expected him to follow in his brother's footsteps, despite the fact that he has trained in jiu-jitsu, kickboxing, and boxing throughout his life and has competed in amateur competitions.

However, at the age of 12, after watching a number of films that piqued his interest in the field, he discovered his own passion for acting and enrolled in an acting studio. At the age of 18, *THE MIDDLE* is Chris' debut film!

BEHIND THE SCENES





THE
MIDDLE

WRITER / DIRECTOR - SYLVIA RAY

PRODUCERS - SYLVIA RAY, RODRY SOZA, LEXX TRUSS,
EPISTEME COLLECTIVE, VICTORIA MOROLES, AND PETER ZHU

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - MARISCELA MENDEZ

EDITOR - PATRICK LAWRENCE

COMPOSER - JIMMY LAVALLE

PRODUCTION DESIGNER - ROSE WESTERMAN

CASTING DIRECTOR - JASMINE GUTIERREZ

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - LUISA NOVO

STUNT COORDINATOR - ROWBIE ORSATTI

1ST AC - SOFIA GONZALEZ

2ND AC - VANESSA MORENO

STEADICAM OPERATOR - ALINE BALLESTERO

GAFFER - ROB GROWER

KEY GRIP - JOHN BASKY

SWING - OLIVIA RIPORELLA

SWING - ERIC CORTEZ

G&E PA - ADRIAN CONTRERAS

PRODUCTION SOUND - NATHANIEL POPE

PROP MASTER - JOSEF MAXWELL

MAKEUP AND HAIR - ALYSSA HUDSON

HMU PA (HAIR) - FAITH NELSON

DIT - PETER ZHU

PA - ARIAN CRUZ

PA - LEO RITUALO

ASSISTANT EDITOR - MONIC GONZALEZ

SOUND MIX - SOURCE SOUND VR

COLORIST - ROY SUN

PREVIS SUP - KALAN RAY

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THE
MIDDLE



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ACCOMPLISHMENTS / INTERESTING FACTS

All Women Camera Crew

Over 60% POC Cast and Crew

Filmed in one of the Original Del Taco's in Barstow, CA

Hired background and supporting actors locally.

CONTACTS

Sylvia Ray

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(screener available upon request)