

## Little foxes

By Joshua Tanzer

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***"Coyote" is a hyperreal and perhaps ill-advised tour of the Mexican border-crossing business by two regular guys who decide it can't be that hard.***



You know what makes America great? I'll tell you what. It's the entrepreneurial spirit, that's what.

So let's say you're a red-blooded, can-do American, and one of your friends gets deported, and that's when you notice that your government has spent billions of tax dollars trying to keep Mexicans out of your country, and yet they keep lining up to come here anyway. What do you do? You make a business plan.

I mean, why not? Yes, being a "coyote" is a felony, retired business whiz Steve explains to his fiancée Katie and his Spanish-speaking friend J., but it isn't actually, you know, wrong.

"People-smuggling is a multibillion-dollar industry," he notes. "And right now it's being run by ruthless banditos who rob their clients and leave them in the desert to die. There are no companies out there that the people can trust. Until now! We're going to be that company!"



So for around \$1,500 a head, Steve and J.'s company offer you three levels of servicio — bronze, silver and gold. They even print brochures and market their product on the streets of Nogales, assuring the locals that life in the U.S. will be "bueno."

Clients get a smooth trip across the border, a van ride to Steve's house, an Arizona pool party, and a welcome basket including fruit and Spanish-English dictionaries. Everyone's happy.

Everyone except, of course, U.S. authorities and Mexican gangsters.

It's almost a cliché to say a fiction film is made "documentary-style" these days, but in this case it's entirely true — and in the best possible sense. That is to say, this is a movie intended to teach you something, but it never feels like anything other than a story. There's all kinds of interesting stuff to know about how people get across the border — from just walking around the fence at the ocean (easy but remote) to plunging into the Rio Grande (unguarded but deadly). There are secrets to innocently slipping through border control, and reasons why they might catch you.

All this information-rich thinky stuff goes down as effortlessly as a bottle of water on a trip across the arid desert, and the biggest reason is the performances of co-writers and lead actors Brian Petersen and Brett Spackman. (Petersen also directed and Spackman edited.) They don't even perform their characters — they simply are their characters. There's hardly a moment when you would recognize them as actors, rather than two guys you might know from high school who still call each other "dude." So it's documentary-style in this sense too — that you believe you're just watching something that really happened happen.



"Coyote" is low-budget and high-impact — clever, serious and fun, full of head, heart and soul.

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