

Vail Daily



- Special to the Daily

Vail Film Festival returns to its roots

The 8th annual Vail Film Festival kicks off Thursday; we take a look at what festival goers can expect this year

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Fans of independent film rejoice! The Vail Film Festival kicks off today and continues through Sunday and once again the organizers are shaking things up a bit. Along with all the usual attractions (i.e. the films of course) this year's event will include a few new things like the return of the 48 Hour Film Contest, a yoga component and short film screenings inside Cadillac vehicles.

But the big change this year is that Vail Film Festival founders Sean and Scott Cross are trying to take the event back to its indie roots. There are only 67 films being screened this year and the vast majority are "true independent films that are low budget, (and) not star-studded," Sean said.

"We're very proud of the fact that we can find these amazing films that are made by independent film makers," he continued.

There are some big-name stars in a few of the films being screened this year, but Sean is quick to note, "for the most part the majority of the films are truly independent."

If you go ...

What: The Vail Film Festival.

Where: The opening night films will show at Vail Mountain School. Films will be screened at Cinebistro and The Sebastian in Vail.

When: Films will begin screening at noon Thursday and continue through Sunday evening.

Cost: Passes start at \$120. Online pass sales are closed. Passes are available for purchase at will call, located in Solaris in Vail. The festival will donate 5 percent of all pass sale proceeds to support relief efforts in Japan.

More information: Visit www.vailfilmfestival.com.

"That's a big part of the film festival is to promote these up and coming independent filmmakers and we're excited about that," said Sean.

Last year's film festival partnered with Beaver Creek in an attempt to broaden its scope and get a larger share of the valley as an audience. This year, all 67 films will be shown in Vail, either at Cinebistro, The Sebastian or Vail Mountain School. And, as Sean put it, this will "probably be the most indie year yet" for the festival.

Festival energy

It's not exactly new but in keeping with the Vail Film Festival independent filmmaker theme, 2011 will see the return of the 48 Hour Film Contest, which didn't take place at last year's festival.

"It kind of embodies the spirit of the film festival," Scott said. "You got all these indie filmmakers under a lot of pressure, with a limited budget, that have to make a film in two days and I think that's a really great thing not only for the filmmakers, but for the energy of the festival, having all these people running around shooting, which obviously that's what the festival is about — filmmaking."

The big difference between the contest in 2009 and this year, according to Sean, is there's no comprehensive list of rules participants have to follow. Instead, the main criteria for each film will be that they must be shot in Vail Village within 48 hours.

Olympus is sponsoring the event this year. Each of the 20 teams will receive an Olympus PEN E-PL2 camera to shoot with, which 48 Hour Film Contest organizer Tony Castle said should level the playing field a little bit.

“Being that they have to shoot on these cameras and it had to be shot in the Vail Valley we can open it up for them to script and pre-plan what they’re going to shoot to try to get a better production value, let them be a little more creative but still really restricted to making the film in 48 hours,” Castle said.

This year there are 20 teams and each team can begin shooting Thursday at 11 a.m. They must submit their films on Saturday by 11 a.m. after which the films will be viewed by audiences and judged by a jury panel that evening at Cinebistro in Vail.

“When you have festivals like this, you have people from all over the country, all over the world, coming in to show their films and it kind of gives the local community a chance to make their films and showcase their work,” Castle said.

A new venue and film premieres

Something else new to this year’s festival is the venue. Many of the films will screen at Vail’s new movie theater, Cinebistro.

“It’s something we’ve been wanting for years,” said Sean about the new state-of-the-art theater. “We’re really excited to show films there.”

Also this year will feature more film premieres than any other Vail Film Festival so far. The screening of “Red Dog,” starring Josh Lucas (who will be in attendance at the festival to receive the Vanguard Award) will be the film’s North American premiere, while another film starring Lucas, “Daydream Nation,” will be the film’s U.S. premiere. “The Wedding Party” and “The Inner Room” are two world premieres screening at the festival this year while “Super,” a film starring Kevin Bacon, Liv Tyler and Ellen Page, will be screened for the first time in Colorado.

People in part attend film festivals in order to see films that very few people have had a chance to see before.

“The goal of any film festival, I think, is to try and get as many world premieres and North American premieres as possible,” Sean said.

Cadillac screenings and custom schedules

For those who want the full-body and mind experience at the festival this year, Yoga classes are being offered to attendees at the beginning of each day thanks to sponsor Kulaa.

“Part of the experience is to come and have a fun weekend so we thought yoga would be a good way to start the day,” Sean said. “We’ll see how many people are willing to get up that early.”

The Vail Film Festival teamed up with Cadillac this year to bring a new feature to the event, Cadillac screenings.

“People can get in and watch some short films sitting inside of the Cadillacs, which is a pretty cool thing,” Sean said.

It’s a unique, untraditional experience open to the public at the Solaris plaza in Vail, and it’s free, which could get some people excited about the film festival who normally wouldn’t be.

This year is also the first time that festival goers can custom build their own schedule to see the movies they want to see at the times they want to see them, thanks in part to Festival Genius, a new software program which can be accessed at www.vailfilmfest.com.

“It’s more user friendly and it’s really been great for us in terms of being able to post the schedule and it’s great for attendees to go on and sort by different methods and build their own schedule,” Sean said.

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