

FILM

The reel deal in Colorado

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Blame Kathy and Robin Beeck - or any of Colorado's other reel believers - for the fact that between now and Memorial Day there are at least 18 film festivals and special series slated for Colorado, many in Denver or a quick drive from here.

The Beeck sisters and the Boulder International Film Festival are the hungry newcomers to Colorado's movable feast of film.

"We decided Boulder was the perfect place for an international film festival of this stature," said Robin Beeck.

"There's a big population along the Front Range that we can draw from," added Kathy. "I think with that population, with the university, with the good film school, we thought Boulder needed a fest like this."

Here's a brief guide to help film buffs plan for Colorado's most fest-intensive season. (A note: Some worthy events are missing, including the Durango Film Festival, the 7th Xicanindie Film Fest: Latino World Cinema, and the Starz Pan African Film Festival among them.)

Most of these festival schedules are still being locked in. As they near, consult individual websites for fresh updates.

The Boulder International Film Festival, Thursday-Feb. 20.

History: Two moviemaking sisters who love film festivals decide to put on a show. The result: 650 filmmakers respond. This week, the 55 features and shorts that made the cut will screen at the inaugural event, which opens Thursday with "Trainspotting" director Danny Boyle's "Millions."

Highlights: Drive, walk, run - but however you do it, be sure to see Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky and Lisa Sleeth's "Seoul Train," a wrenching documentary about North Korean refugees (www.biff1.com.)

The Third Annual Golden Film Festival, Feb. 24-27.

History: Started by the Golden Resource for Education, Arts and Theater, this festival was part of a attempt to save Golden's historic Gem Theatre. The movie

palace didn't make it, but the festival moves into a new phase under the direction of Laurel Hunter. The Boulder-based filmmaker plans to exhibit "film as an art medium, rather than an entertainment medium."

Highlight: When Hunter screened the short "Cast in Gray," she wrote in her notes "even the dog can act"

(www.goldengreat.org).

Vail Film Festival, March 30-April 3

History: Movies (indies), moguls (snow- covered ones) and music are the order of the day and night at this indie-spirited fest.

Highlights: Some featured features - "Kings and Queen," with Catherine Deneuve, and Todd Solondz's "Palindromes (www.vailfilmfestival.org).

The Art of Silent Film, Tuesdays, April 5-May 17; Starz FilmCenter.

History: Tom Delapa curates the Denver Art Museum's film series. This spring celebrates the power of silents.

Highlights: To quote Norma Desmond, "We didn't need dialogue. We had faces." Wonderful faces and astonishing camera movement are featured in such program highlights as "The Crowd," "Last Laugh," "Strike" and "Modern Times." If you detect a theme - modern versus 19th-century life - you've cracked the code. Go-to site: www.denverartmuseum.org , then click on "events."

Aspen Shortsfest, April 6-10.

History: This festival of astounding short flicks is one of the nation's best. Period.

Highlights: Jim Taylor, co-writer of the Oscar-nominated "Sideways," brings his short, "The Lost Cause" (www.aspenfilm.org).

Fifth Annual Starz First Look Student Film Festival, April 21-23; Starz FilmCenter.

History: Colorado Film School alum Wade Gardner and Josh Weinberg created this exciting festival of shorts from undergrad, graduate level and recently graduated filmmakers.

Highlights: More films are from international students. Expect a late-night screening of the fest's edgier fare

(www.firstlookfest.com).

Denver Academy Film Festival for Youth (DAFFY), May 7. Auraria campus.
History: One of the first and longest-running film festivals for kids and by kids is celebrating its fifth year.

Highlights: DAFFY is set to "break 800 kids." That's how many children are involved as cast, crew, creators. The overall winner's film gets screened at the Denver International Film Festival (303-777-5161).

Moondance International Film Festival, May 12-16; Boulder.
History: Elizabeth English thought this would be a one-time gig to rattle the cages of executives in La-La Land. That was six years ago.

Highlights: The lunar tug of the fest comes from "workshops and seminars on filmmaking and screenwriting, all day long," says English. "At night we have screenings. And all night long, there are networking parties" (www.moondancefilmfestival.com).

MountainFilm in Telluride, May 27-30.
History: Twenty-seven years ago this fest - which includes the one-day Moving Mountains Symposium - started as a gathering of mountaineers.

Highlights: This year's symposium theme - sustainability - treks throughout the weekend of films, programs and panels (www.mountainfilm.org).

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