



# Timing is everything at the Shoot Out Boulder 24-hour filmmaking festival

By Jeanine Fritz  
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## IF YOU GO

**The fourth annual** Shoot Out Boulder kicks off at 9 tonight at the Boulder County Courthouse, 1300 Pearl St. Deadline for filmmaker entries is 6 p.m. today; cost to participate varies depending on number of team members.

**A screening** of the top 10 films is at 7 p.m. Sunday at the Boulder Theater, 2032 14th St.; tickets are \$12.75, call 303-786-7030 or visit [www.bouldertheater.com](http://www.bouldertheater.com).

**A second screening**, which includes every finished film, starts at 11 a.m. Oct. 20 at the Boulder Public Library. Admission is free.

**For more information**, call 303-449-1515 or visit [www.theshootoutboulder.com](http://www.theshootoutboulder.com).

There's a reason the Shoot Out Boulder's "Do You Dare?" marketing campaign is so apt. Creating a seven-minute film in the span of 24 hours is tough enough, but toss in the hurdles of in-camera editing and navigating the festival's list of locations, lines and props in a contest against 50 or so other participating teams and it's no longer a challenge — it's a double-dog dare.

The fourth annual Shoot Out Boulder takes place this weekend, kicking off today with the start of the filmmaking challenge and culminating in a screening of the top 10 films with an awards ceremony Sunday night at the Boulder Theater.

Festival director Michael Conti is only mildly sympathetic to folks (such as this writer) filled with excuses for not entering the contest, since the biggest prize doesn't involve money to make another film, or industry connections or even a little local fame. For Conti, the festival's biggest selling point is the experience. Finishing the race in the allotted time is, in and of itself, rewarding, but to do it well is a point of pride.

"It's experiential," Conti says. "You can't really be over-prepared for it, sure, but just ... do it and have fun. The films that always get into the top 10 (were made by) the filmmakers that had the most fun. I never talk to a filmmaking team who says, 'That was the hardest, worst thing we ever did and we'll never work together again.' Those guys are the ones who don't show up at 9 o'clock when the films have to be turned in."

For the brave ones willing to take up the gauntlet, the deadline for filmmaking teams to sign up is 6 p.m. today at the Boulder County Courthouse, 1300 Pearl St. Three hours later, "The Brief" will be distributed, delineating 11 props, locations or lines of dialogue, five of which must get worked into

every film. "The Brief" is closely guarded, but generally revolves around a theme; last year, "Sustainability" was the theme du jour. Items from last year's list included the Farmers' Market and Tonic Oxygen Bar as locations and the phrase "I love you" as dialogue, along with eight other requirements.

Because "The Brief" keeps filmmakers in Boulder, Conti feels strongly that local interest is built into the programming.

"The Shoot Out is about the community and what we can do as artists in a short amount of time. Unlike a lot of film festivals where the audience sees what someone else has selected for us ... what we do is create — we give (filmmakers) a list of items that really tell a story about Boulder."

At precisely 9 tonight, "The Brief" in hand, somewhere between 50 and 70 teams will begin their sprint around Boulder, shooting the best seven-minute film they can muster. Exactly 24 hours later, Conti will lock the doors of the Boulder Theater and a secret panel of judges will begin digging through the entries to program the Top 10 Films Gala Screening on Sunday. Awards handed out that evening include Best Film, Best 17 and Under Film, Best Sound, and Best Cinematography and In-Camera Editing. On Oct. 20, every finished film will be screened at the Boulder Public Library. The free event is open to the public.

For some, making a seven-minute film might sound easy. But anyone who's tried knows better than to take it lightly.

"Somebody who doesn't quite know what they're doing, it's tough to carry off a story for seven minutes," says Conti, a local filmmaker and videography teacher at Front Range Community College. "When I work with my students I always try to say, 'Shorter is better.' One of my favorite films that I ever made was a minute long. It had a beginning, middle and end and it worked. It's not really about the length, it's about what you do with it."

For those unfamiliar with in-camera editing, it should be pointed out that it's about as old-school as you can get. With computer editing programs now being taught in high school and physically splicing film quickly becoming a lost art, in-camera editing (shooting a film in the exact order it will be shown, rather than block shooting and editing that footage in as needed throughout the narrative) is second only to the short production time in the list of what makes the Shoot Out Boulder so challenging.

"In-camera editing really levels the playing field," says Robin Beeck, a local filmmaker and executive director of the Boulder International Film Festival. When shooting her first film, "Dead Last," Beeck discovered the importance of planning ahead — a technique crucial to successful in-camera editing.

"Your first instinct is often the best," she says. "(In-camera editing) is really challenging, but it helps a fiery young filmmaker and those who have been around a long time to find that great story and really focus."

For the filmmakers, the challenge of walking away from a take that can't be corrected later can be incredibly difficult. (A tip: be sure to yell "Action!" or "Cut!" while the camera isn't rolling, since you can't cut that out later.) Some teams will shoot the same take over and over again until it's right, while others follow in Clint Eastwood's boots and shoot once before moving on. Planning beforehand and solid communications between teams will make all the difference.

Kara Kieffer, who, along with Angie Boysen and Lisi Keuster, won the People's Choice Award last year

in the 17 and Under category, has learned from last year's experience, and instead of spending the first chunk of the allotted 24 hours scripting a film, has hashed out a script beforehand.

"I'm mostly nervous about time," Kieffer said via e-mail. "I am hoping to get some animation with clay figures in at the end of my film and I don't want to run out of time. I'm contacting and organizing actors before the festival starts, something I only did loosely last time."

Started in Newcastle, Australia, in 1999, the festival down under swelled, sporting hundreds of teams, thousands of spectators and offshoots in Geelong and Toowoomba, Australia, and Hamilton, New Zealand. Conti contacted one of the festival's founding members, Kristi Street, about bringing the Shoot Out stateside in 2002. Just two years later, the Shoot Out Boulder exploded onto Pearl Street, shaking up the festival scene and throwing down the gauntlet to both new and seasoned local filmmakers.

While your standard film festival typically kicks off with the programming already finished, and a general idea of who will take the top prizes, the Shoot Out doesn't even have finished films by the time it starts. In one of the most raucous film festivals in the world, filmmakers enter the contest knowing full well they have 24 hours to shoot a seven-minute film.

The first hurdle will be just finishing a film in the allotted time. For a lucky few, their films will garner trophies during a public screening and one lucky team will take home the top prize, including cash and a new lighting kit from Chimera Lighting. But for folks like the chicken writing this story, the biggest hurdle will be taking the double-dog dare and signing up in the first place.



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