



Why Not Now is a short film about Vivian Stancil, who is blind and learned to swim at age 48. COURTESY/WHY NOT NOW

Snow daze

February film festivals

Tahoe-area ski resorts reported snowfall between two and three feet last weekend, and forecasters are calling for more this weekend. Normally, this kind of news splits RN&R readers into opposite camps. Some are eager to get out and play in the powder. Others want to curl up in a warm house until it all thaws. But this month, both groups have a chance to see eye to eye. Two groups are gearing up for their annual film festivals, and both offer a glimpse of outdoor culture—snow-covered or not—from the comfort of the indoors.

Mountainfilm and Mountain Festival are not the same thing, explained Brendan Madigan, owner of Alpenglowsports in Tahoe City, California. Mountain Festival is a nine-day celebration of sports such as back-country skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and splitboarding. (For the uninitiated, that's traveling on a type of snowboard that splits in half and becomes high-traction skis, so you can ski uphill, then board down.)

Mountainfilm, on the other hand, is Mountain Festival's kickoff event. The main Mountainfilm is a four-day, 100-film festival in Telluride, Colorado. A condensed, evening-long version travels to places like Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and around the U.S., including a stop on Feb. 16 at Squaw Valley's Olympic Village Lodge.

The organizers in Colorado don't tend to release a lot of detailed information about the films. "They keep them under wraps," Madigan said. But this will be the third year he's hosted the films, and he's already expecting to be moved by them. He summarized the gist of the festival this way: "The films are really inspirational and beautiful. ... What we tell people is they use the power of film and ideas for bettering the world. ... They're not just the traditional ski/climb

films glamorizing the adventure aspect of it. They have a message, whether it's environmental, social, cultural."

Mountainfilm's web site touts "documentaries on environmental issues, epic adventures, eye-opening politics and humanitarian causes ... short gems and rare films." This year's lineup includes a two-minute snapshot of a skateboarder in Havana, Cuba, a three-minute piece about a blind woman who conquered her fear of swimming at age 48, and a 3D film addressing the high amount of wasted seafood in the fishing industry.

Another group in the region is hosting a February film festival, too. Meghan Robin is a rep from Tahoe XC, a cross-country ski area in Tahoe City, where a day pass is around \$30 and rentals are another \$20-30. She acknowledges that not every Truckee and Tahoe resident has a winter sports budget, so she and her colleagues look for ways to offer locals access to their groomed trails for free or cheap. They run programs that provide discounted after-school access for students and free skiing for school groups. To fund these programs, they use proceeds from the Winter Wildlands Backcountry Film Festival.

This festival originates in Boise, Idaho, and makes about 100 stops each year, including one at North Tahoe High School on Feb. 27. This year's program should appeal to hardcore adventurers. The lineup introduces a Latinx mountain climber named Yesenia, a teacher on a quest to climb a frozen waterfall in China, and "Surfer Dan," a man whose surfing expeditions are not thwarted by large chunks of ice.

"It's a way for us help kids who live in the area but can't afford to get on the snow to get a nice ski day," said Robins. □

Mountainfilm on Tour takes place at Squaw Valley's Olympic Village Lodge, 1901 Chamonix Place, Olympic Valley, California, 5:45-9 p.m. Feb. 16. Tickets are \$12 and up. Visit www.alpenglowsports.com. The Winter Wildlands Backcountry Film Festival takes place from 6-8:30 p.m. Feb. 27 at North Tahoe High School, 2945 Polaris Road, Tahoe City, California. Tickets are available at the door for \$10.

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