





BYU Public Domain Film Festival Launch Event

February 4, 2026

Dates and Times

Wednesday, February 4th at 4:00 PM MT: Competition begins at the conclusion of the Launch Event

Wednesday, February 18th at 5:00 PM MT: Submissions are due

Thursday, March 26th from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM & 3:00 PM-5:00 PM MT: Non-finalists films will be screened in the Varsity Theater

Friday, March 27th at 7:00 PM MT: Public film festival screening and awards ceremony in the Varsity Theater* with an after-party reception to follow in the Garden Court

*Please arrive 15-20 minutes early.

Rules

- ❑ Each team will need a Team Captain. The Team Captain will be responsible for responding to communications from the contest organizers to ensure the team is fully compliant and qualified before the beginning of the contest.
- ❑ Teams may have as many members as they desire, so long as all crew members are current BYU, BYU-Idaho, or BYU-Hawaii students. Teams may use actors or musicians that are not BYU, BYU-Idaho, or BYU-Hawaii students in their films. All actors will be eligible to receive the prize award for Best Acting Performance, so long as they are nominated at submission.
- ❑ No student may be registered as a producer, director, screenwriter, or composer on more than one team. However, students may participate as actors or musical performers for more than one team, even if they're registered in one of the four primary team roles on a different team.

- ❑ All films must be no more than five minutes long.
- ❑ All films must be limited to original footage recorded during the festival's time window. Films cannot include any third-party video or previously recorded video other than footage from their selected public domain film.
- ❑ All music used in the film must be arranged or composed by the team's composer and recorded during the festival's time window. No other music may be used regardless of copyright status, ownership, or permission.
- ❑ Each team must upload their video entry by 5:00 PM MT on February 18, 2026, either in person at the Copyright Licensing Office in the Harold B. Lee Library or digitally at the available upload link. The door to the Copyright Licensing Office automatically locks at 5:00 PM and the upload link will be set to expire at the same time. Please be aware of rendering, export, and upload times and don't miss your deadline!

- ❑ At least one member of each team must complete the Student Filmmaker Copyright training provided by the Copyright Licensing Office.
- ❑ Training must be completed prior to submitting your film.



Use of AI

- ❑ Generative AI - Any use of AI to substitute original content creation or production work for the purposes of this festival are prohibited. All scripts, filming, photography, and music must be created by individual festival participants.
- ❑ AI Editing and Refining Tools - Tools that exist within existing editing software that refine participant-made content, or merely speeds up technical processes, are permitted.

Use of AI continued

This non-exhaustive list may help you further understand permitted uses and unpermitted uses.

Unpermitted Uses	Permitted Uses
Using AI to write any portion of your script	Using AI to spell check scripts or check scripts for cliches and bad language
Using AI to generate CGI characters or graphics that are essential for the story	Using AI for color grading
Using AI to generate images to be used as backgrounds or in compositing for video	Using AI tools to help with audio mixing
Using AI to write music or produce a musical recording	

Dangerous Filming Practices

The BYU Copyright Licensing Office does not condone any film practice that is inherently dangerous and puts crew or performers at risk of spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical injury. We expect film festival participants to adhere to industry best practices in safety standards, and expect that the limited scope of the 14-day production will limit practices that might be possible for productions with more resources.

Dangerous Filming Practices

- ❑ Stunts without qualified coordinators
- ❑ Real firearms or combat-ready weapons
- ❑ Any form of sexual harassment
- ❑ Manipulation or discrimination of protected categories
- ❑ Trespassing
- ❑ Involving strangers without consent
- ❑ Unsafe vehicle practices
- ❑ Preventing access to necessary facilities for prolonged periods

- ❑ All submissions should adhere to the BYU Honor Code; submissions with explicit language or content will be disqualified.
- ❑ All submissions will be covered under a CC BY-NC 4.0 license.
- ❑ Current Copyright Licensing Office employees and immediate family members are not eligible to collaborate with any team or participate in any project.
- ❑ The contest organizers reserve the right to deduct points for failure to comply with the rules of the competition.

Submissions

- ❑ Teams are free to use as much or as little material from their drafted public domain works as they desire. Each team will be judged on how well they adapt the public domain works selected at the Launch Event.
- ❑ We expect and encourage teams to supplement the public domain material with their own original content (e.g., dialog, music, characters, settings, etc.).
- ❑ Aside from material in your selected public domain works, your film should NOT include recognizable elements from other works (e.g., Batman, Hogwarts, light sabers, etc.).
- ❑ The judges will be informed which works were selected by each team at the Launch Event, and everyone will be judged on how well they adapt their selected works. You should not assume the judges are familiar with the public domain materials you worked with.

- ❑ In addition to the five-minute film, teams will be required to submit videos of their crew answering the following two prompts. Limit your responses to 90 seconds per prompt. This is a required part of each team's entry and will be sent to the judges to help them deliberate during scoring.
 - ❑ Please describe how your public domain works influenced your film.
 - ❑ Please describe how your public domain works influenced your musical score.

- ❑ At submission, teams will also nominate eligible actors from their film for the Best Acting Performance award.

- ❑ Teams can only submit .mp4 and .mov files
- ❑ Files must be 1 GB or less

Film entries must be submitted by 5:00 PM MT on Wednesday, February 18th

- ❑ Drop off a flash drive with your film entry to the Copyright Licensing Office at 3760 Harold B. Lee Library (HBLL) OR
- ❑ Upload your film entry at pdff.byu.edu/submission

Best Documentary

- ❑ This year we are introducing a new category for Best Documentary.
- ❑ Teams select at registration if they want to compete in the fiction category or the documentary category.
- ❑ Non-fiction teams will select the subject of their documentary, either a literary work or film, from the works chosen during the Fiction Draft
- ❑ Non-fiction teams will also select a musical work during the draft
- ❑ The award for Best Documentary will be determined by an independent panel of judges according to the Best Documentary Judging Rubric.
- ❑ First place: \$500 | Runner-Up: \$150

Rubric

Award	Criteria and Weight	Award	Criteria and Weight
Best Picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flow and Coherency: 13% Creativity: 13% Technical Merit Video: 13% Technical Merit Audio: 13% Overall Impact: 13% Use of Public Domain Material: 35% 	Best Acting Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character Development: 20% Vocal Quality: 20% Movement Quality: 20% Interpretation/Preparation: 20% Presence on Camera: 20%
Best Musical Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composition: 20% Musicality: 20% Creativity: 20% Use of Public Domain Material: 40% 	<p>Best Sound Design</p> <p>*Musical composition is a separate award, but music may be considered in the Best Sound Design award when considering appropriate audio levels and synching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Set Recording: 25% Sound Clarity: 25% Sound Leveling: 25% Use of Sound to Enhance Storytelling: 25%
Best Screenplay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept: 13% Structure/Plot: 13% Pacing: 13% Characters: 13% Dialogue: 13% Use of Public Domain Material: 35% 	Best Production Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set Design: 20% Costuming: 20% Lighting: 20% Scope of Design Appropriate for Story: 20% Design Communicates Themes of Story: 20%
Best Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of Visual Storytelling: 20% Cinematography: 20% Sound Design: 20% Film Editing: 20% Originality: 20% 	Best Documentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall Impact: 15% Flow and Coherency: 10% Research and Information: 10% Editorial/Script: 10% Technical Merit (Audio/Visual): 10% Creativity: 15% Use of Public Domain Materials: 30%

Non-Finalists Screening

- ❑ To celebrate all of the films submitted during the festival, we will hold two screenings on Thursday March 26th in the Varsity Theater.
 - ❑ First screening: 11AM-1PM MDT
 - ❑ Second screening: 3PM-5PM MDT
- ❑ All non-finalists films will be played during each screening. Please come and support your fellow filmmakers!

Screening

- ❑ A list of finalists will be published before the Public Screening on March 27th at 7:00 PM MT in the Varsity Theater.
- ❑ Only the announced finalists' films will be shown on the March 27th Screening.
- ❑ Audience Choice Award will be decided the night of the screening by the live audience after all ten finalist entries have been shown. Invite your family and friends. The Public Screening will be live streamed.
- ❑ After the screening, all attendees are invited to celebrate with live music and refreshments at our after-party in the Garden Court, with Marvellous Catering.
- ❑ We encourage teams and attendees to dress up in their best 1930s attire or Dressy Casual. There will be a 1930s costume contest and photographers standing by.

- ❑ The March 27th Screening will be a free ticketed event.
- ❑ All teams that **submit a film** will receive 7 free tickets. Each team captain will be emailed a link to those tickets by February 20th.
- ❑ Friends and family can reserve General Admission tickets at pdff.byu.edu after February 20th.
- ❑ All participants in the Public Domain Film Festival are welcome to attend the after party at 8:30 PM on March 27th in the Garden Court.

Prizes

Best Picture: \$1000

Runner Up: \$350

Audience Choice: \$500

Runner Up: \$150

Best Musical Score: \$300

Runner Up: \$100

Best Screenplay: \$300

Runner Up: \$100

Best Director: \$250

Runner Up: \$100

Best Acting Performance:

\$250

Runner Up: \$100

Best Production Design:

\$250

Runner Up: \$100

Best Sound Design: \$250

Runner Up: \$100

Best Documentary: \$500

Runner Up: \$150

Cash prizes for award winners will be distributed to a single team representative. It is up to each individual team to decide how to split any prize money awarded.

Best Picture: Producer

Audience Choice: Producer

Best Musical Score: Composer

Best Screenplay: Screenwriter

Best Director: Director

Best Acting Performance: Actor

Best Production Design: Producer

Best Sound Design: Producer

Best Documentary: Producer

Further Information

- ❑ If you have any behind-the-scenes footage that you would like to send to our office, we would love to use it for the promotion of our next film festival!
- ❑ A representative from the Copyright Licensing Office may reach out to you to film behind-the-scenes promotional material.

The Fiction Draft

- ❑ Each fiction team will select three public domain works
 - ❑ Teams can select any combination of musical works, literary works, and/or film works
 - ❑ Teams are not required to use all three works
 - ❑ Teams can only use the public domain works that they selected
 - ❑ Teams can select the works in the order of their choosing
- ❑ Non-fiction teams will select one musical work during round one of the Fiction Draft then select one literary work OR one film after the Fiction Draft from the pool of works that were chosen

- ❑ Team Captains or a team representative will take turns selecting the public domain works they would like to use in their films
- ❑ Works will be selected in a random order each round
- ❑ Teams have 30 seconds to select their work
- ❑ Each work can be chosen two times
- ❑ Keep track of available works at pdf. BYU.edu/draft



The Non-Fiction Draft

- ❑ Non-fiction teams will choose one literary work OR one film work for the subject of their documentary
- ❑ Non-fiction draft pick will be chosen from the pool of works that were chosen during the Fiction Draft
- ❑ Keep track of available works at pdff.byu.edu/non-fiction-draft



The clock starts now!

Questions?

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