

# Catalyst brings TV-minded storytellers to Duluth for 4-day fest

The Content Festival runs Sept. 29-Oct. 5 at Duluth venues and includes screenings, script-readings, workshops and networking opportunities for those interested in the television industry.

Written By: [Christa Lawler](#) | 5:17 pm, Sep. 27, 2021



Catalyst Content Festival director Philip Gilpin Jr., in 2019, welcomed festival-goers to Duluth for the first time. This year's events start Wednesday, Sept. 29. Clint Austin / 2019 file / Duluth News Tribune

Horror aficionado authors-slash-podcasters Kelly Florence and Meg Hafdahl will show their scare-skills this weekend in another medium during Catalyst's Content Festival: a television script.

The duo, who are simultaneously releasing the book “The Science of Serial Killers,” with events ranging from spooky storytelling tutorials, to horror movie screenings, will get a live reading of “Horror Rewind,” which turns found footage and video rental into an anthology-style show. “We’re excited to hear it out loud,” Florence said. “We’ve been writing together now for many years. We have our nonfiction books, but our fictional TV scripts are a dream for us to pursue.”

The Content Festival, which runs Sept. 29-Oct. 2 at downtown Duluth venues, offers screenings, readings, developmental workshops and networking for artists interested in work in the television industry. For local non-Hollywood hopefuls simply interested in a first look at shows that might eventually stream on a home screen, there are dozens of viewing options during the four-day fest, ranging from the Florence-Hafdahl script reading, to a sample of the North Shore documentary series “Freshwater,” which shows off Lake Superior’s surf scene, to drama “The Life of Claire,” by Bohdi Warner, which considers his mother Clare Cooley’s memoir.

Catalyst's executive director, Philip Gilpin Jr., estimated that hundreds of people will be in town for events and likened the fest to a “graduation party” for the creators who are part of Storiroad, or Catalyst Story Institute, which has year-round offerings of seminars, meetings and mentorship. The event, he said, is just a small part of what happens throughout the year. Still, “We get to see everybody coming up from around the world,” he said.

Gilpin said there are 200 students from up to 11 countries working with the institute to develop scripts, network, learn about direction and financing.

“We help you fill in the knowledge gaps,” Gilpin said, “when you come to Duluth, you’re fully prepared to talk about your show.”

Florence said she and Hafdahl are working with the institute, and attended in-person events until the pandemic pushed events online. "It's been a great way to connect with people locally," Florence said.

The festival started in Los Angeles in 2006 as a way to pass tips from Hollywood insiders to those new to show biz. The 2013 festival shifted to Manchester, Vermont, and then Duluth in 2018. Back then, it was billed as the Independent Television Festival. Gilpin said he was looking for a long-term location that could come to be defined as "the home of independent television."

And as that indie home, Gilpin wants visiting creators to look around and consider state and regional production rebates available in this part of Minnesota.

Every time another producer falls in love with Duluth, he said, there is more money in the economy. Storytelling takes more than a script, it needs carpenters, electricians, caterers and other local workers. "The heart of this industry couldn't be more Duluth in nature," Gilpin said. "People trying to change the world with stories."