

REEL ROCK 14 – Costa Mesa 2019

Every year in Orange County, climbers from all crags of life assemble for a night of laughter, good beer, and the most innovative climbing films in the industry. With prize giveaways, non-profit fundraising, and vendor booths from the biggest names in mountaineering, [Reel Rock](#) has become a mecca for those who bust their hands on sharp stone. But it isn't just the stickers and free chalk that make this event so special (although you *will* walk out of Reel Rock with enough free swag to start your own shop). It's the family. The never-shy, sometimes-scraggly, always-smiling family that flocks from the walls they cling to the friends that share the same love. Trading calloused handshakes and epic stories, the climbing community is truly the heart of Reel Rock.

Since 2005, Reel Rock has allowed pioneering filmmakers to share the fearless stories of some of the most inspiring humans on the planet. They are stories born of struggle, rebellion, physical hell, and emotional euphoria. Climbing is a proud but often misunderstood culture. Whether a seasoned vet or aspiring scrambler, these films embody what it means to be a climber.

This year, the collection of stories is no different. Hosted by [Gear Co-op in Costa Mesa](#), these three films took center stage.

The High Road

Traditional boulderers do their flexing close to the ground. Nina Williams has loftier goals. As one of the only women to start tackling 40+ foot boulders without a rope, she is a rising star in climbing and one rising to nerve-melting heights at that. Nina discusses climbing for difficulty vs. climbing for aesthetic, her journey learning to fall, and the perils of conquering extreme highball problems *Too Big to Flail* and *Ambrosia*.

United States of Joe's

When a group of dirtbagging climbers migrate to a conservative, religious community in rural Utah, you can expect a culture clash. In the face of antagonism, prejudice, and deep misunderstanding, these two communities learn to not only coexist but mutually love one another and help build a better future for everyone.

The Nose Speed Record

Every. Second. Counts. Superstar Alex Honnold (of *Free Solo* fame) and climbing legend Tommy Caldwell (Whose *Dawn Wall* was previously featured on the Reel Rock circuit) are no strangers to the 3,000 foot El Capitan in Yosemite. In a race against a ticking clock, the physical limitations of the human body, and perfection itself, Honnold and Caldwell attempt to change the definition of the word "impossible."

Films featured at Reel Rock have gone on to win festival awards and Emmys, however that is merely an extra perk of why these storytellers do what they do and why we come together to see them. We come for the stories. Pushing through pain, finding humor in the face of danger, the meditative harmony that comes from putting 100% of our soul into the task at hand. The physical climbs are often merely a

vehicle to learn something new about ourselves. Reel Rock is about the larger-than-life stories of the people who are humbled to feel so small.

Climbing is inherently optimistic. You are constantly ascending, making progress, forging a path *upward*. It is a puzzle in which you literally pull yourself through on your own; the epitome of independence. So why do we bother coming together? Why do we insist on gathering to share gear, beer, and stories from the wall? While no one has the exact answer, thank God Reel Rock gives us an excuse to do so.