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## Film tour stops in Helena

By **MARTIN J. KIDSTON Independent Record** | Posted: Thursday, June 3, 2010 12:00 am

It began in 2008 when Mike Dion set off on the 2,745-mile Tour Divide Mountain Bike Race along the Continental Divide from Banff, Canada, to the Mexican border.

Nearly a month later, he and his crew had shot more than 200 hours of video, covering the longest off-pavement bike race in the world. In the end, he boiled it down to an 80 minute documentary dubbed "Ride the Divide."

"As a cyclist, I knew I was going to do the race and document it with a small HD camera," Dion said Wednesday.

"But some serendipitous things came into play," he continued. "Instead of being a home movie shot from my perspective, I put together a crew and we created a documentary."

Shortly before the race was set to begin in Banff, Dion teamed up with film director Hunter Weeks, a fellow Denver resident who shot "10 Miles per Hour," a documentary about a road trip from Seattle to Boston on a Segway scooter.

Logistically, covering a bike race over 30 days and 3,000 miles — biking, Jeeping and hiking through the rugged Rockies from Canada to Mexico to film the action — wouldn't be easy.

But Dion, an avid mountain biker familiar with the Rockies, knew that going in.

"There's no helicopter, no Tour de France motorcycle riders," he said. "This isn't that kind of event, and rightfully so."

As Dion explains it, the film follows three people as they attempt to pedal from Banff to a small, dusty crossing on the Mexican border.

There's Mike, a 40-year-old family man who uses the challenge to chart a new course in life, and Matthew, a leader in extreme endurance racing who's competing for the fifth time. There's also Mary, the first woman to race the course.

"They'll experience mental breakdowns, treacherous snow, hellacious blisters and total fatigue," the trailer says. "Above all, they'll race with no support — at times in total isolation."

Dion grew up in Great Falls and lived for a time in Helena. In fact, he says, while bartending at Bert and Ernie's and mountain biking up Grizzly Gulch, he met his wife.

A Montana State University film school graduate, Dion believes he has a winner in "Ride the Divide."

The film scored the best adventure film at the Vail Film Festival. It sold out two days at the Stars Film Center in Denver and drew a crowd of 500 at a Boulder, Colo., theater.

"I'm kind of biased of the Montana section of the course, having grown up there," Dion said of the Tour Divide race.

"But I would have to say that New Mexico surprised me," he added. "I thought it was all adobe and Santa Fe. "You would honestly think you're in Montana, with the forests and rugged characteristics of the area."

Dion will screen "Ride the Divide" at the Myrna Loy Center on June 14 at 7 p.m. The film also screens in Whitefish, Missoula and Bozeman.

The screenings will include music by those who helped compose the movie's score.

"They'll have to watch the film to see if I make it to the finish line," Dion said.

To find out more, log on to [www.ridethedividemovie.com](http://www.ridethedividemovie.com)

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