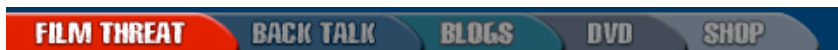


"I will purge the kingdom of our spiritual Babylon!" - You're Not Elected, Charlie Brown (1972)

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THE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT (DVD)

by Ron Wells
(2005-02-22)
2001, Un-rated, 91 minutes
Artistic License Films



Words may not do this film justice, but that's not going to stop me from trying. Ever see any films that felt less like coherent narratives than doorways into someone's mind? Now, normally I dismiss the "auteur" theory of sole authorship as a load of shit perpetrated by a bunch of snotty French film critics too full of youth and self-importance (at the time) to know better. [Filmmaking](#) is by necessity a team sport too big for one man to play. An exception, though, would be those works that feel like an invitation into a person's inner world, a place operating on its own (consistent) set of rules and internal logic. Nearly all of [Jodorowsky's](#) movies feel like that. About half of [David Lynch's](#) films do too. Now with a film that looks more than a little like "Eraserhead," this list expands to include the name of Cory McAbee, the writer/director/performer/star of the expressionistic, sci-fi/fantasy MUSICAL comedy "The American Astronaut."

...and what a strange world it is. McAbee's alter-ego in this universe is Samuel Curtis. Long an astronaut for hire, his lonely existence seems to consist of little more than delivering questionable "parcels" from one godforsaken planet to another. Of course it's only when he lingers in one place too long that his past has time to catch up with him. The audience catches up with him upon his arrival on the dusty planetary equivalent of some California ghost town on the old Route 66. Hoping to kill some time boozing, Curtis wanders into the least friendly tavern in the galaxy. His only drinking companions would appear to be the contempt and suspicion of the regulars until a pair of thugs angrily confront the astronaut with a... mean-spirited song-and-dance routine. Yep, a musical number. The [soundtrack](#) is just getting started though, as our hero realizes the goons were just a warm-up for their boss, Curtis' old "pal" the Blueberry Pirate (Joshua Taylor). After strong-arming the astronaut into joining him in a dance contest, the Pirate presents his old friend with a plan for a multi-planet package swap that will earn them both a lot of money. Too complicated and unnecessary to explain, it involves several more musical numbers, the "Boy Who Once Saw a Woman's Breast," and journeys to several worlds that look like bad neighborhoods. The real danger though lies in Curtis' old nemesis Professor Hess (Rocco Sisto), a mad scientist [hellbent](#) on killing everyone the astronaut comes in contact with as he closes in on his prey. You know what ensues? MADNEss. MADNEss ensues.

At this point I know I haven't come close to conveying the extremely

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[THEN SHE FOUND ME](#)

Box Office
Weekend of August 29 - 31

1/1	Tropic Thunder	11.5/83.8
2/0	Babylon A.D.	9.7/9.7
3/4	The Dark Knight	8.8/9.7
4/2	The House Bunny	8.8/502.4
5/0	Traitor	8.3/8.3
6/3	Death Race	7.9/27.9
7/0	Disaster Movie	7.9/9.4
8/8	Mamma Mia!	6.2/23.1
9/6	Pineapple Express	6.2/6.2
10/11	Vicky Cristina Barcelona	4.4/131.5

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[THE LONGSHOTS](#)
[VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA](#)
[MARIA BETHANIA: MÚSICA É PERFUME](#)
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weird charm of this opus. How do you do that with just words? The [songs](#) are quite catchy. They can range from classic show-tune in style (with decidedly off-kilter content) to garage-band rock n' roll in nature. If you're familiar with McAbee's primary artistic outlet you probably know what I'm talking about. He has long been the front-man and force behind the San Francisco-based (now New York) experimental rock band called "The Billy Nayer Show." McAbee has long experimented in film as well. All of his creative endeavors to date seem to have built toward this one project.

Can McAbee really claim lone authorship of this film? Eh, probably not. The movie contains contributions by many of his longtime collaborators. Chief among them is Billy Nayer-vet Bobby Lurie, here credited as both musical director and co-producer. McAbee also worked on this project in labs at the Sundance Institute, which coincidentally premiered the film during that little shindig it has each year on top of that mountain in Utah in the middle of January.

Still, this musical epic is unlike anything I (or anyone I know) have ever laid eyes on. That indicates some kind of unique artistic vision. Too bad the ending fails to live up the levels established by the rest of the picture, but I don't exactly have any ideas how to wrap up the show in a manner that would satisfy anybody. Got to give kudos for the effort; it was a fun ride while it lasted. It's stayed with me, too. Any movie capable of opening doors in my head must have something major going for it. That reminds me. Actually, [Lynch](#) and [Jodorowsky](#) are good benchmarks by which to judge what you could expect here. If for no other similarity than this: You may not know whether drugs were involved in making the movie, but they certainly couldn't hurt the experience of actually watching it. Now that's entertainment!



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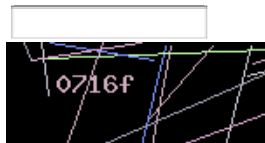
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Film Threat Poll

"Disaster Movie" accounted for about 9% of the weekend's box office. What does this percentage mean?

- 1) 91% of moviegoers aren't actually morons after all.
- 2) 9% of moviegoers never got the memo that anything by Friedberg and Seltzer sucks.
- 3) 9% of moviegoers are illiterate, degenerate sub-primal ape-like creatures.
- 4) Friedberg and Seltzer's friends and family are good for about \$6 million.

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