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November 9, 2001

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MOVIE REVIEW

'The American Astronaut'

By John Anderson, Newsday

Rooted firmly in the tradition of such major film eccentrics as Guy Maddin, Aki Kaurismaki and Darren Aronofsky of "Pi," Cory McAbee's "The American Astronaut" crosses Jean-Luc Godard's "Alphaville" with the "Star Wars" bar and "Twin Peaks." It has been a hit at film festivals and has been described as a "midnight-style musical." And perhaps it should be seen that way, with a crowd of kindred knuckleheads and some moshing in the aisles.

So get your mother and go see it. In an indeterminate future, interplanetary trader Samuel Curtis (McAbee) pops into an all-male culture of dance contests, sexual obsession and the occasional disintegration. The women of Venus, meanwhile, are looking for their singular male; Curtis wants the job. A demented killer wants him.

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Shot in glorious black and white, "The American Astronaut" is a true independent--independent of narrative convention as well as any particular need for continuity. It also bears a distinctly improvisatory ingenuity--from the sets, which may have been budgeted by whatever tightwad did the original "Star Trek," to the music of the Billy Nayer Show, McAbee's cult band, which supplies much of the alternately eerie or headbanging or anti-carries "The American Astronaut" through space. *

Unrated. Times guidelines: adult language

'The American Astronaut'

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ed by Artistic License. Writer-director Cory
Cinematographer W. Mott Hupfel III. Edito
r Show. Production designer Geoff Tuttle.

ly Blvd., L.A., (323) 655-4010, and the Ec
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