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## MOVIE REVIEW

# 'The American Astronaut'

By John Anderson  
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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.

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 anthemic rock that carries "The American Astronaut" through its very special space. \*

Unrated. Times guidelines: adult language and situations.

'The American Astronaut'

Cory McAbee: Samuel Curtis

Rocco Sisto: Professor Hess

Gregory Russell Cook: The Boy

Annie Golden: Cloris

Artistic License Films presents a BNS production, released by Artistic License. Writer-director Cory McAbee. Producers William Perkins, Joshua Taylor, Bobby Lurie. Cinematographer W. Mott Hupfel III. Editor Pete Beaudreau. Costume designer Dawn Weisberg. Music the Billy Naylor Show.

Production designer Geoff Tuttle. Sound designer Doug McKean. Running time: 1 hour, 32 minutes.

\*

Exclusively at the Laemmle Fairfax Cinemas, 7907 Beverly Blvd., L.A., (323) 655-4010, and the Edwards University Cinemas, 4245 Campus Drive, Irvine, (949) 854-8811.

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