

Cultivate Cinema Circle presents:

# AD ASTRA [2019]

Directed by James Gray

JULY 16TH, 2022 - 1:00PM



Original Theatrical Poster

## SHORT CUTS

“In *Ad Astra*, Gray travels far afield to reach far within himself; the movie is something like his own refraction of a Terrence Malick film, a conjuring of deep subjectivity in deep space. In some essential ways, Gray, escaping from the confines of familiar earthbound realism, goes aesthetically further than he has ever gone before. A basic problem for filmmakers to overcome in space movies is the demand of exposition. The required world-building of a movie about hypothetical lives in the imaginary future would seem to work at cross purposes to Gray’s usual method, which is to take the recognizable and infuse it, from the start, with a personal and distinctive tone. It turns out, though, that *Ad Astra* stands the world-building on its head, with ingenious touches that render the strange familiar and the implausible obvious—only to then frac-

ture those instant new commonplaces with psychological turmoil. The canniness of Gray’s procedure is matched by the boldness, even the recklessness, of the extremes to which he pushes it—along with his characters, his story, his emotions, and his techniques. The result is to turn *Ad Astra* into an instant classic of intimate cinema—one that requires massive machinery and complex methods to create a cinematic simplicity that, for all the greatness of his earlier films, had eluded him until now.”  
– Richard Brody, *The New Yorker* [2019]

“As science fiction, *Ad Astra* is less *Gravity*, more gravitas, freighted down with furrowed-brow earnestness. The title comes from the Latin phrase ‘Per ardua ad astra’, ‘Through struggle to the stars’, and there’s no shortage of ardua here, for hero or viewer. This crazily ambitious film, sometimes successful but never less than mesmerically odd,

seems an unlikely departure for the usually pragmatic, earthbound American director of *The Yards*, *Two Lovers*, and *The Immigrant*—although one might have said the same for Gray’s daringly old-fashioned jungle exploration yarn *The Lost City of Z* ... This is the ultimate drama of male angst, in the lineage of all those Hollywood movies, inescapable in the ‘80s and ‘90s, about boys growing up troubled because Dad missed their big ball

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:



[cultivatecinemacircle.com](http://cultivatecinemacircle.com)

game. As for Roy’s mother, we learn she fell ill because of her husband’s absence but we don’t even glimpse her or learn her name. And as the son repeats the flaws of the father, Roy’s wife Eve (Liv Tyler)—seen only as a phantasmal memory and as a face on a phone screen—reproaches him for his absence. Tyler’s occasional hazy floatings in and out of sight makes it clear how much Gray also owes to *Solaris*—not Tarkovsky’s, but the underrated Steven Soderbergh version.”  
 – Jonathan Romney, *Film Comment* [2019]

“In some ways, *Ad Astra* does continue Gray’s upward trajectory. There’s the celestial grandeur of Max Richter’s irreplaceable score – music that somehow sounds like the motion of planets in orbit, or the singing of stars across the lens-flared light years of Hoyte van Hoytema’s majestic cinematography. There are single shots in which the sheer spectacle of sound and image is breathtaking, like an opening hatch reflected in two helmet visors that look like a pair of eyes in which the pupils are dilating in wonder. There is a consistent, voluptuous elegance to the filmmaking here that surpasses anything Gray, never an inelegant director, has achieved before. But if the expansion of the setting – the story, co-written by Gray and Ethan Gross, takes place on Earth, the moon, Mars, Neptune and in a series of spacecraft and stations in

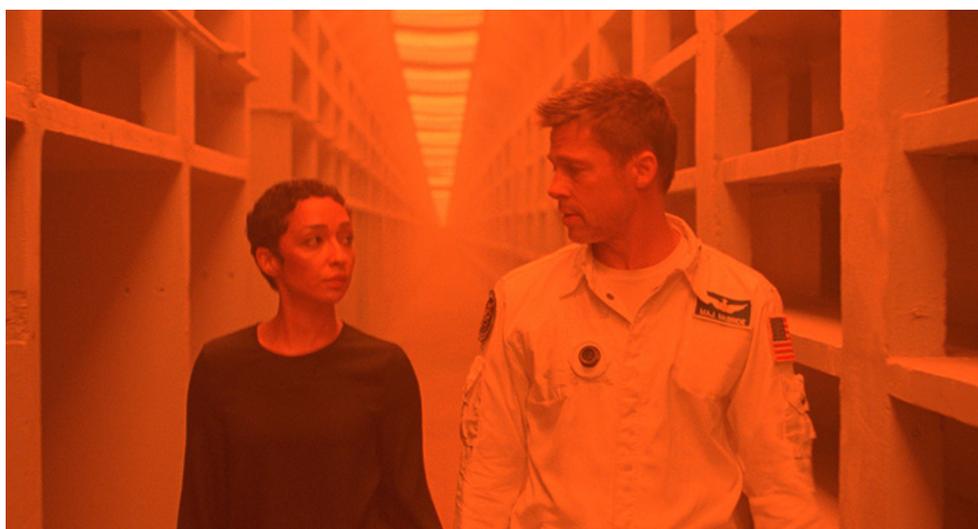
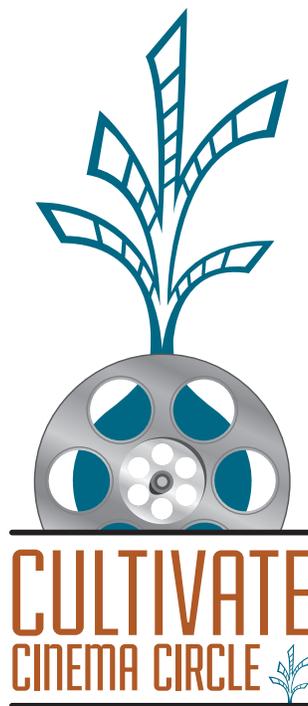
between – might have been hoped to prompt an expansion of his beautiful last film’s philosophies, there it stumbles. The gracefulness of the craft throws into relief the clumsiness of the dialogue, and the silkiness of the sensorial experience sits tonally at odds with the sometimes deranged side quests and adventures into which this otherwise very serious-minded film occasionally, alarmingly diverts.”  
 – Jessica Kiang, *Sight & Sound* [2019]

**CAST & CREW**

Director.....James Gray  
 Screenplay.....James Gray & Ethan Gross  
 Brad Pitt..... Roy McBride  
 Tommy Lee Jones.....H. Clifford McBride  
 Ruth Negga..... Helen Lantos  
 Donald Sutherland ..... Thomas Pruitt  
 Kimberly Elise..... Lorraine Deavers  
 Loren Dean ..... Donald Stanford  
 Donnie Keshawarz... Captain Lawrence Tanner  
 Sean Blakemore..... Willie Levant  
 Bobby Nish .....Franklin Yoshida  
 LisaGay Hamilton.....Adjutant General Vogel  
 John Finn ..... Brigadier General Stroud  
 John Ortiz ..... Lieutenant General Rivas  
 Freda Foh Shen ..... Captain Lu  
 Kayla Adams ..... Female Flight Attendant  
 Ravi Kapoor..... Arjun Dhariwal  
 Liv Tyler ..... Eve

**DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY**

- Ad Astra (2019)
- The Lost City of Z (2016)
- The Immigrant (2013)
- Two Lovers (2008)
- We Own the Night (2007)
- The Yards (1999)
- Little Odessa (1994)
- Cowboys and Angels (1993)



**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:**



**UPCOMING SCHEDULE:**  
**HIDDEN FIGURES [2016]**  
 Sat, July 30th, 2022 | 1:00pm  
**GRAVITY [2013]**  
 Sat, August 13th, 2022 | 1:00pm  
**THE MARTIAN [2015]**  
 Sat, August 27th, 2022 | 1:00pm  
**APOLLO 11 [2019]**  
 Sat, September 10th, 2022 | 1:00pm

Please support us on **PATREON** |  
 @cultivatecinemacircle