



**"It's a winner!"**

- Randy Myers, San Jose Mercury News

**"Nothing short of inspirational!"**

- No Rest For The Weekend



# ZERO GRAVITY

THE JOURNEY TO SPACE IS JUST A CODE AWAY

A SKYLIGHT CINEMA PRODUCTION - IN ASSOCIATION WITH 20TH DIGITAL STUDIO - A FILM BY THOMAS VERRETTE "ZERO GRAVITY" FEATURING TANNER MARCIDA CAROL GONZALEZ ADRIEN ENGELDER  
ADVIK GONUGUNTA WITH ASTRONAUTS STEVE SMITH JACK FISCHER AND CADY COLEMAN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CARLOS MARULANDA EDITED BY THOMAS VERRETTE ORIGINAL MUSIC BY PENKA KOINEVA  
FEATURING THE SONG "ZERO GRAVITY" WRITTEN BY JOHN CINEBELL AND DAVID FORZATO PERFORMED BY WILLOWSTEPHENS SOUND BY JONATHAN COMES AND WILL MITCHELL VISUAL EFFECTS BY TRAVIS GORMAN  
CO-PRODUCERS JACK FISCHER CADY COLEMAN STEVE SMITH CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KATIE MAGRANE ALVAR SAENZ-OTERO DANIELLE WOOD EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID WORTHEN BROOKS JOEY DIFRANCO  
PRODUCED BY THOMAS VERRETTE AND HALLER RICE DIRECTED BY THOMAS VERRETTE

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# ZERO GRAVITY

## PRESS KIT

*Documentary, Unites States, 2021.*

*75 min (Feature) + 52 min (Broadcast)*

Vimeo Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/479180379>

Youtube Trailer: <https://youtu.be/z45ojMdOWhl>

Website: [www.zerogravitydoc.com](http://www.zerogravitydoc.com)

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Hashtags: #ZeroGravityDoc #NothingToSPHERE #SkylsNotTheLimit

Publicity Folder: [Zero Gravity Publicity Google Drive Folder](#)

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**"It's a winner!"**

- Randy, Myers, *San Jose Mercury News*

**"Zero Gravity is a triumph."**

- *New Jersey Stage*

**"Entirely engaging and enthusiastic,  
even thrilling at moments..."**

- *NPR Wichita*

**"If you adore documentaries such as  
"Spellbound" and "Science Fair,"  
this is your ticket."**

- *Local News Matters*

**"5 out of 5 stars and recommended  
for ages 10 to 18 to adults."**

- *Kids! First*

**"Nothing short of inspirational...  
well worth seeing."**

- *No Rest For The Weekend*

**"A fantastical journey to space!"**

- *The Knockturnal*

**"Wholesome and family friendly."**

- *OC Movie Reviews*

**"Zero Gravity is an uplifting work  
guaranteed to inspire young viewers with  
an interest in science and technology."**

- *Video Librarian*

**"Great fun and highly recommended."**

- *Unseen Films*

**"Zero Gravity wins as a film because it beautifully involves us with these bright and appealing kids, their families, and their teacher, and with how reaching toward space affects them. It also wins by subtly showing the power of teamwork, and the benefits of diversity within a team."**

- *Sloan Science and Film*



## LOGLINE

A diverse group of middle-school students go on the journey of a lifetime when they compete in a NASA tournament to code satellites aboard the International Space Station.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

***Zero Gravity*** intimately follows a diverse group of middle-school students from San Jose, CA, who compete in a nationwide tournament to code satellites aboard the International Space Station.

Seen primarily through the wondrous eyes of three young innovators and their first-time coach, they each take an intimate and personal journey to space as their team grows from amateur coders to representing California in the ISS Finals Tournament -- the culmination of a summer-long adventure that sees their incredible accomplishment performed by astronauts in orbit.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

While it's true today's 11-year-olds will one day run the world, middle-schoolers in San Jose, CA are taking their summer break to get a head start. Immersed in their own space race, a diverse group of ambitious students enter the Zero Robotics ISS (International Space Station) Competition.

Their mission: compete with teams across the country to write the most strategic code for surveying satellites, known as SPHERES. These satellites will help map out a GPS system to successfully orbit Mars in the future, opening the door to infinite opportunities and exploration on the Red Planet.

Coached by first-time instructor Tanner Marcoida, three of his engaging young students, Adrien Engelder, Advik Gonugunta, and Carol Gonzalez, lead the charge. Each coder-in-the-making brings their own strengths, unique perspectives, and boundless curiosity to their team, together embarking on an out-of-this-world STEM quest that celebrates space, teamwork, and the triumph of the human spirit.

Featuring astronauts Steve Smith, Cady Coleman, and ISS resident Jack Fischer -- who performs the students' incredible achievements in orbit 250 miles above the Earth's surface -- Thomas Verrette's inspiring documentary highlights the importance of empowering the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators who will fearlessly lead us into the future -- and even the unknown...

## BACKGROUND

Thousands of students annually participate in the Zero Robotics ISS Competition, which is run by the MIT Space Systems Laboratory in collaboration with NASA and CASIS. This amazing tournament is at the foundation of ***Zero Gravity***, which follows the endearing journey of San Jose's Campbell Middle School team through the perspectives of their first-time teacher, Tanner Marcoida, and three of his engaging students, Adrien Engelder, Advik Gonugunta, and Carol Gonzalez. Their mission is to build a GPS system around Mars to aid future exploration of the red planet by programming satellites in the space station known as SPHERES, which were inspired by Luke Skywalker's training droid in *Star Wars: A New Hope*.

At the core of this fascinating story is the emotional bond Tanner and his students immediately form with each other, and as their coding skills gradually evolve from an amateur level to representing California in the ISS Finals, their victories feel like ours too. The incredibly evident and moving on-screen intimacy is reflective of the thoughtful and collaborative filmmaking process that director Thomas Verrette cultivated with Tanner, the students, and their families. *Zero Gravity* empowers these gifted children to use their unique voices throughout, speaking on issues ranging from global warming, racism, and bullying, and encourages them to realize their own dreams through education, collaboration, and reaching for the stars. Their inspiring journey takes us everywhere, from intimate moments with their families at home to the 4th planet from our sun, all seamlessly interwoven with supporting astronauts Cady Coleman, Steve Smith, and ISS resident Jack Fisher, who performs the students' incredible achievements in orbit 250 miles above the Earth's surface.

*Zero Gravity* is a testament to the impact of scientists, engineers, and educators on the lives of the next generation, and is an impressive showcase of inclusion, innovation, and opportunity in action. A new space race is upon us, and with NASA and the corporate space industry readying new missions to the moon, Mars and beyond, our future lies with the next generation of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) qualified individuals. Leading the the long-awaited return of the Zero Robotics competition next year, *Zero Gravity* not only tells an uplifting and universal story for all ages, but aims to be catalyst for the next generation of future STEM leaders through masterful storytelling, empathy, and the triumph of the human spirit.

## REVIEWS & PRESS

### Science and Film: Climbing High With Zero Gravity (DOC NYC Review) - [Full Article](#)

“Even before its title appears onscreen, director Thomas Verette's ZERO GRAVITY sets the scene with views of Earth and of an astronaut spacewalking near ISS, as he says over the communications channel “My God, this is beautiful”...One of the film's best, most telling scenes shows bilingual Carol carefully explaining Zero Robotics to her mother in Spanish...”

### Mercury News: Top 12 Films To See At Cinequest (Cinequest Review) - [Full Article](#)

“...Verette's mission isn't limited to outer-space pursuits, and he carves out time to meet the parents and to reflect on the Bay Area's diversity and the challenges that immigrants trying to make a living encounter here. It's a winner.”

### The Knockturnal: Zero Gravity is a Fantastical Journey To Space (DWF Review) - [Full Article](#)

“...Several real-life astronauts — Jack D. Fischer, Cady Coleman, and Steve Smith — added to the educational element of this breathtaking emotional journey and lent their experience and expertise to this fascinating documentary... If you are looking for a touching, heartfelt, good feels but immersive educational documentary, *Zero Gravity* would be a fabulous choice.”

### No Rest For The Weekend: Zero Gravity Cracks The Code (DWF Review) - [Full Article](#)

“It's easy to get depressed about the state of the world, but see *Zero Gravity* and you'll feel a good deal more optimistic...The stories of children creating code that could one day guide satellites to Mars is compelling, but *Zero Gravity* also benefits from its beautiful cinematography and skillful editing. The film also employs footage from NASA to capture the beauty of Earth and Mars as well as footage of the astronauts and scientists who work with the students. The result is an inspirational documentary well worth seeing.”

### New Jersey Stage: Thomas Verette's Zero Gravity (NJFF Review) - [Full Article](#)

“...*Zero Gravity* is also a triumph because it doesn't merely support Zero Robotics and their strides towards inclusivity from the sidelines-- rather, it celebrates it wholeheartedly. Advik and Carol are Indian-American and Mexican-American, respectively, and never is their background presented as something that serves as a barrier to their future success in any way... it's evident that the next generation of STEM students will be a melting pot of talented individuals from various cultures.”

### NPR/KMUW Wichita: Tallgrass Film Festival - Zero Gravity (Tallgrass Review) - [Full Article](#)

“Hard to go wrong with kids and astronauts! Fortunately, director Thomas Verette seems to recognize that, and doesn't do anything to get in the way of a good thing... It's entirely engaging and enthusiastic, and even thrilling at moments, especially as the kids are racing against the clock to finish their project and upload it at the last second (Verette does a dandy bit of editing here). This is the sort of thing where you can't help but root for what you're seeing, and really who needs much more than that?”

**Video Librarian: *Zero Gravity* Educational Review: 3.5/4 Stars — [Full Article](#)**

"In the end, the feel-good message of hope for the future certainly dominates the documentary's tone throughout. But the average viewer might be inclined to wonder: if the future of the planet is in the hands of code writing robotics students who aspire to colonize Mars, one would hope there are enough young geniuses left on Earth to eventually help eradicate nagging little terrestrial problems like COVID, cancer, and climate change. *Zero Gravity* is an uplifting work guaranteed to inspire young viewers with an interest in science and technology. Recommended for documentary collections and science classrooms."

**Breaking It Down With Steve McKay: "Astronaut Steve Smith on the documentary *Zero Gravity*" - [Listen Here](#)**

"When you work with these kids and when your listeners watch this film, *Zero Gravity*, it's STUNNING. Absolutely stunning, that when you teach someone who is as young as 10 or 12 years of age and you think oh this is above them and it's not. It's stunning. We always underestimate what we can do," said former Astronaut Steve Smith, who is featured in the documentary...

**Medium: "MIT host Boston Film Festival premiere of *Zero Gravity*" - [Full Article](#)**

"...As part of the Boston Film Festival, the documentary *Zero Gravity* will have its Boston premiere in a screening at the MIT Media Lab... Dr. Danielle Wood, who has been named as the new principal investigator (PI) for the Zero Robotics program at the request of Prof. David Miller and Dr. Alvar Saenz-Otero (program founders), will move forward with the NASA Astrobee robotic system as the program's new in-space robotic platform..."

**Local News Matters: U.N. Association Film Festival returns with films on human-rights issues far and near - [Full Article](#)**

"Already popular on the Bay Area film festival circuit and beyond — for good reason — Thomas Verrette's "*Zero Gravity*" orbits the Campbell Middle School's Zero Robotics after-school program and the South Bay students who participate in it..."

**Mercury News: Campbell Students' space shot featured in documentary - [Full Article](#)**

"In 2017, a group of middle school students from Campbell Union School District's Zero Robotics program worked in a nationwide contest to beam code to satellites onboard the International Space Station. Four years later, their story is being told in "*Zero Gravity*," one of more than 100 films making its U.S. or world premiere at Cinequest..."

**ABC7 News: Campbell students star in documentary about summer coding camp, space station experiment - [Full Article](#)**

"I just was curious what the world looks like, from a student that's 10 or 11, who's coding satellites in space," says Verrette. "It's just of kind an amazing idea really.' What the filmmaker captured in that Campbell classroom most prominently was curiosity, determination and teamwork."

### **Telemundo: “Hispanic Student Shines in Documentary Zero Gravity” - Broadcast Interview**

Carol Gonzalez shines a light on her experiences making the film, coding satellites that were performed aboard the International Space Station, and reflects on how her success can inspire others to get involved in STEM. This story aired during the Cinequest World Premiere, and was recorded in Spanish exclusively for Telemundo's audience. The story also covers the upcoming Perseverance Rover landing on Mars, and what it means for the next generation of explorers.

### **KRON4: “An after-school program that’s literally out of this world! - Broadcast Interview**

KRON4 featured a live interviews with director Thomas Verrette and film subject Tanner Marcoida, who discuss the power of the film has had on audiences and reflect on their experiences with the program. This interview was broadcast during Zero Gravity's World Premiere at Cinequest.

### **Engineering Gals Podcast: “Opportunities for High School Students Interested in Career in STEM with Carol Gonzalez” — [Listen Here](#)**

Carol Gonzalez is a bright, energetic, and compassionate Mexican-American high school student with dreams to pursue a college career in the STEM field. When she was in middle school, Carol participated in the Zero Robotics challenge to help solve complex problems taking part at the International Space Station. Carol shared her experience in the *Zero Gravity* film and is here to tell us her story.

### **Nerd-O-Rama Podcast/iHeart Radio: “Mo’Kelly Interviews Zero Gravity Director” - [Listen Here](#)**

“Thomas, thank you for what you’re doing, not only have you inspired a generation of young people right now you’re inspiring ME right now in the sense of what the future may hold. I am sure one of these genius’s which will forever change our future and thank you for what you’ve done.”

### **Latin Review Media: “Thomas Verrette Talks Zero Robotics Competition” - [Full Article](#)**

“Space is the final frontier or rather the new frontier for many young explorers. With Mars in the plans for space exploration, the International Space Station (ISS) made a call to middle school and high school students around the globe to participate in its robotics programming competition called Zero Robotics...”

### **Hollywood Times: “The Journey To Space Is Just A Code Away” - [Full Article](#)**

“Fifty-two years ago, Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to walk on the moon in what is considered one of the most incredible achievements of all time...”

### **The Almanac: “United Nations Association Film Festival brings audiences back to the theater” - [Full Article](#)**

In celebration of United Nations Day on Oct. 24, the festival hosts a screening for young audiences of Thomas Verrette's film "Zero Gravity," which follows San Jose middle school students as they compete in a nationwide tournament to code satellites aboard the International Space Station.



## STUDENT REVIEWS

**"I had no idea what coding even was before watching. Now I want to try!"**

— *Student, Age 12*

**"I like that the film talked about the wonders of space without giving up on Earth. Helping heal our own planet was just as important as winning the competition."**

— *Student, Age 11*

**"'Zero Gravity' was an amazing film. I liked how it included details from the students' life. It really helped me understand their passion for coding and really shows how students pour their efforts into something they like to do."**

— *Student, Age 11*

**"Zero Gravity is a very inspiring movie which told me to follow my dreams and there's always a path for everybody in life. I really enjoyed watching this film and I kind of want to learn more skills in coding now that I know the power of coding and computer programming."**

— *Student, Age 12*

**"I really enjoyed how the characters could freely speak their mind. As children are not notably given a voice in society, I really want to oppose that. I think that children can make very rational and understandable decisions in the real world. Overall, this film was incredible and very heartening to me. I hope many others feel the same."**

— *Student, Age 12*

## TEACHER REVIEWS

***"What a wonderful movie that connects kids with STEAM in such a real world and impressive setting as NASA. I loved the diversity of the participants' genders and backgrounds and the length was just long enough for a science-type documentary as well. Many kids will be talking about this film with their Robotics teachers."***

— *School Teacher, Providence, RI*

***"My kids really enjoyed this film. I think the structure of the stories, focusing on three of the kids and the teacher personalized the film for them. The message that kids will inherit the future, and generate the solutions to our greatest problems was made more powerful by showing they had the capacity to start working on these problems even at age 10."***

— *School Teacher, St. Louis, MO*

***"I really would like to see this film be available for teachers to share this experience with their classes for years to come. The diversity of all the students was incredible, and I really enjoyed how they shared their life stories and families outside of the competition, so we as the audience can really get to know each one of them on a personal level."***

— *School Teacher, San Jose, CA*

## QUOTES

***“The true value of exploration? Igniting a curiosity that fires the soul to learn, grow and improve our future. ‘Zero Gravity’ captures this magic and shows how the SPHERES program inspired a world of children.”***

***— Jack Fischer, NASA Astronaut***

***“It was such a pleasure to be involved in ‘Zero Gravity’ and to showcase the stories of students coding satellites aboard the ISS. Zero Robotics is an incredible opportunity for students and I love how this film puts a spotlight on three middle-schoolers on their own journey to space!”***

***— Cady Coleman, NASA Astronaut***

***“When you work with these kids and watch this film, ‘Zero Gravity’, it’s stunning. Absolutely stunning. When you teach someone who is as young as 10 or 12 years of age and you think, ‘Oh, this is above them’ and it’s not. We always underestimate what we can do.”***

***— Steve Smith, NASA Astronaut***

***“Zero Gravity is a breath of fresh air, reminding us of the power of collaboration and creativity. In the film, one young innovator says: ‘When people says the sky’s the limit...they’re wrong. There’s much more ahead of them...’ We hope Zero Gravity soars beyond its highly successful premiere at Cinequest.”***

***— H Hussey, Co-Founder & CEO Cinequest & Creatics Enterprises***

***“It was so exciting and inspiring to see our students featured in this film. We intentionally focus on the future-ready competencies of Critical Thinker, Self-Directed, Innovative, Collaborative and Empathetic, and the Zero Gravity project requires students to tap into each of these. We also know that students are more engaged in learning when they can see how it relates to their own lives. This project motivated our students because they saw the relevance in science, in space, and in continued learning. Now, many of them can see themselves working for NASA who might have never before thought it possible.”***

***— Dr. Shelly Viramontez, Superintendent, Campbell Union School District***

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **TANNER MARCOIDA**

Tanner is the after-school instructor of Campbell Middle School, director of it's summer camp, and a first-time teacher of Zero Robotics. His knowledge of coding is limited, but his passion for space runs deep, and his desire to help the kids reach their dreams is undeniable. His inspiration comes from his grandfather, who emigrated from Mexico and eventually worked for NASA to help build parts for the International Space Station and the Hubble Telescope, making Tanner's mission to space through his class all the more personal. And rewarding.



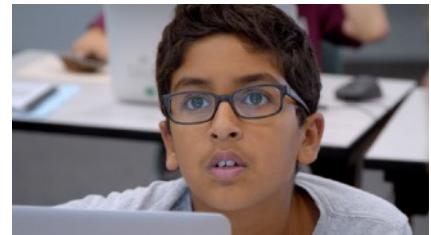
### **CAROL GONZALEZ**

Carol is a bright, energetic, and compassionate 11-year old Mexican-American with dreams of one day becoming a robotics engineer. She has a little sister, Estrella, who looks up to Carol, and she takes that responsibility to heart. Her parents are both from Mexico, and work multiple jobs to provide for their family and give them the best opportunities they can. Carol continues to excel in math and technology, and naturally becomes the team leader because of her passion and strengths.



### **ADVIK GONUGUNTA**

Advik is a 10-year old Indian-American student with a knack for coding and a fascination for all things tech. His parents both work in Silicon Valley and their success is a reminder of the need to have coding skills to stay in one of the most expensive real-estate markets in the country. Advik doesn't know what he wants to do as a career, but is fascinated by space, and also has a love for hiking and exploring with his encouraging father.



### **ADRIEN ENGELDER**

Adrien is an indefinitely curious 11-year old with a love for the ocean, and dreams of becoming a marine biologist one day. While unfortunate circumstances led to Adrien and his two sisters to moving in with their grandparents, Adrien's upbringing has given him the opportunity to be a part of the Zero Robotics challenge, meet new friends, and love working together as a team.



## **ABOUT THE ASTRONAUTS**

### **JACK FISCHER**

Jack D. Fischer (Colonel, U.S. Air Force) served as a Flight Engineer aboard the International Space Station of the Expedition 51/52. During his 2017 mission, he logged 136 days in space with two spacewalks. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Astronautical Engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy, and a Master of Science in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Colonel Fischer is an Air Force Command pilot with over 3,000 flight hours in more than 45 types of aircraft.



### **CADY COLEMAN**

Cady is a research chemist, a former NASA astronaut and a retired U.S. Air Force colonel with more than 180 days in space, accumulated during two space shuttle missions and a six-month expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), where she acted as the Lead Robotics and Lead Science officer. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing and U.S. astronauts of Irish ancestry, Coleman is one of four astronauts featured on Euro stamps, along with Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Eileen Collins.



### **STEVE SMITH**

Steve is an American technology executive and former NASA astronaut. Steve traveled 16 million miles in space, flew on 4 space shuttle missions and performed 7 spacewalks, including 5 to repair the Hubble Space Telescope. Smith's spacewalk time places him in the top ten on the all-time American and World spacewalk duration lists. Smith served as the NASA International Space Station (ISS) Program Liaison to the European Space Agency until mid-2015, after which he went to serve as the Associate Director for ISS, Science Directorate, at the NASA Ames Research Center in Silicon Valley.





## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Director, Producer, Editor - THOMAS VERRETTE**

Thomas Verrette is an award-winning director, producer, and editor. A 14-year veteran of the film industry, Verrette is a former Fox and Disney creative and post-production executive, and is most known for producing the 20-episode World Cup docu-series, *Phenoms*, for Fox Sports. Verrette also edited the *Goalkeepers* episode, which premiered the series at the Tribeca Film Festival. He also executive produced the documentary feature *Ordinary Gods*, co-produced the short-comedy series *Small Shots*, and edited the sci-fi feature *Parallels*.



Verrette began his career upon graduating from the Savannah College of Art and Design, when his senior thesis film, *Implanted*, premiered at the Atlanta Film Festival, and secured limited-theatrical, international, DVD, and streaming distribution in 2012. *Zero Gravity* is his first feature documentary as a director, and he is currently developing a sequel *Zero Gravity* series centered around the global high-school ISS competition. Additionally, he is also scripting his next narrative feature, a sci-fi thriller titled *Dark Matter*, and hopes to go into production at the end of 2022.

### **Director of Photography - CARLOS MARULANDA**

Carlos Alejandro Marulanda is an award-winning writer-director based out of San Francisco California. Born in Colombia, he made his way to California to dive head first into the world of filmmaking. Carlos is a graduate of UCLA's Screenwriting Program and has an MFA from SFSU in Directing and Cinematography.

His feature screenplay *Cancuncito* was a semi-finalist in the Academy Nicholl competition and included in their list of "Top 50 Screenplays", it won the Advanced Screenplay Award at UCLA, was awarded Second Place in the feature section of the Slamdance Screenplay Competition and was selected as one of the ten finalists in the American Zoetrope Screenplay Contest. His feature length screenplay *Skin* was awarded the Nate Wilson Joie de Vivre Award at UCLA.

### **Music Composer - PENKA KOUNEVA**

Penka Kouneva has composed on iconic video games such as *League of Legends*, *Prince of Persia*, *The Mummy*, a NASA theme park at the Kennedy Space Center, and numerous feature films, including the Oscar contender *Aga*, Sony Pictures' *Encounter* and *Devil's Whisper*, and *Zero Gravity*. Her music has received national press as "fantastic, luminous and breath-taking" (Billboard, NPR and Forbes). As one of the industry's most accomplished women composers, in 2019 she was invited by showrunner Mark A. Altman and composer Joe Kraemer to co-compose the CW primetime TV show, *Pandora*.

Kouneva is a Sundance Fellow, Duke University Distinguished Alumna and has received the Game Audio Network Guild Recognition Award. Two-time Oscar-winning composer Alexandre Desplat called her music "stunning." In 2019 Penka was commissioned and performed by Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl in front of an audience of 18,000 ("America in Space").

### **Executive Producer - DAVID WORTHEN BROOKS**

David Worthen Brooks began his career as an award-winning editor and screenwriter, whose early work was with directors Tony Kaye, Ridley Scott, Spike Jonze, Paul Hunter, Leslie Dektor and Baz Luhrmann. Brooks has been recognized for his creative work by entities including D&AD, Sundance Film Festival, London International Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival, One Show, and the Clios.

Most recently, Brooks received the 2018 Creative Media Award for branded entertainment with advertiser Mars, for his work as an Executive Producer on *Bite Size Horror*, a series of short form content for broadcast. Other previous highlights include *Phenoms*, *Parallels*, *Suit Up*, and *Small Shots*. Now, Brooks oversees 20th Digital Studio as the EVP and Senior Executive Creative Director. 20th Digital Studio is a division of Walt Disney Television, dedicated to developing, producing, and distributing content, both original and derivative.

### **Executive Producer - JOEY DIFRANCO**

Joey DiFranco is a creative and media strategist, having driven growth and innovation for a variety of global brands including Nike, Google, Allstate, Fuji and more. His continued passion for film and television combined with his desire to disrupt and streamline a complicated industry led him to create 1913 Media Group with Seth Hummel and Katey Selix.

### **Co-Executive Producer - KATIE MAGRANE**

Katie Magrane is the President and Executive Director of the Massachusetts Innovation Learning Center, and is the Program Manager of the middle-school and high-school Zero Robotics ISS Challenge. She is a non-profit leader and community advocate with extensive experience creating and managing social service, academic and youth development programs.

### **Co-Executive Producer - ALVAR SAENZ-OTERO**

Dr. Saenz-Otero is the Director of the MIT Space Systems Laboratory at the MIT Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics. He directly manages the SPHERES program research activities aboard the International Space Station and in ground facilities, as well as working with NASA Ames Research Center. In addition he oversees the other projects of the SSL, and runs the only student competition which annually concludes in space: Zero Robotics. This outreach program allows both Middle-and High-school students to write programs for the SPHERES satellites aboard the ISS.

### **Co-Executive Producer - DANIELLE WOOD**

Dr. Danielle Wood serves as an Assistant Professor in the Program in Media Arts & Sciences and holds a joint appointment in the Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Within the Media Lab, Dr. Wood leads the Space Enabled Research Group which seeks to advance justice in Earth's complex systems using designs enabled by space. Additionally, she is also leads the new Zero Robotics program debuting in 2022 utilizing the upgraded satellites known as ASTROBEE. In her research, Dr. Wood designs innovative systems that harness space technology to address development challenges around the world. She has held positions at NASA Headquarters, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Aerospace Corporation, Johns Hopkins University, and the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs.

## ABOUT THE COMPETITION

Zero Robotics is a programming and robotics challenge that takes place in space aboard the International Space Station, utilizing satellites known as SPHERES in an experiment that is designed to benefit ongoing scientific research with real world application. The SPHERES were originally developed by MIT's Space Systems Laboratory for NASA and the US Military to test and develop algorithms and ideas in a zero gravity environment that could be later utilized for larger spacecraft and other types of future space missions.

The initial development of SPHERES started in 1999, by a team of students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The concept of the satellite was conceived when Professor David Miller challenged the students to develop a device similar to the combat training remote seen in the 1977 movie Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope.

Every year through Zero Robotics, thousands of students across the world compete in the ISS Finals Tournament, which sees the best codes of regions, states, and countries go head to head in a live-match up performed by the astronauts in orbit. Their mission (and ours) is to inspire the next generation of great minds by giving them unprecedented access to space at the middle school and high school levels.

Making the benefits and resources of the space program tangible to students is crucial for the development of the next generation — it helps prepare them for the future and develop essential science, technology, engineering and math skills at an early age through healthy, immersive, collaborative competition.

The *Zero Gravity* team is very proud of our collaboration with Zero Robotics. Our film is just one inspirational story out of a program that has continued to provide incredible opportunities for thousands of students across the world, beginning in 2011. We absolutely encourage students, parents and teachers to engage with the Zero Robotics program. Visit the [Zero Robotics](#) website for more information on the competition and updates on its return in 2022.

## **A W A R D S**

**Audience Choice Award** - Friday Harbor Film Festival

**Critics Choice Award** - Iowa Independent Film Festival

**Best Feature Documentary** - Desertscape International Film Festival

**Best Feature Documentary** - Only The Best International Film Awards

**Award of Excellence Special Mention** - IndieFest Film Awards

**Gold Remi Award, Feature Documentary** - Worldfest Houston International Film Festival

**Honorable Mention, Feature Documentary** - New Jersey Film Festival

**Outstanding Excellence Award** - Docs Without Borders Film Festival

**Award of Excellence Special Mention** - Accolade Film Competition

**Best Sound Editing** - Thin Line Film Festival

**Best of the Month (May)** - Vegas Movie Awards

**Award of Excellence - Best Documentary Feature** - Vegas Movie Awards

**Award of Excellence - Best Inspirational Film** - Vegas Movie Awards

**Award of Excellence - Best 1st Time Director / Feature** - Vegas Movie Awards

**Award of Excellence - Best Editing** - Vegas Movie Awards

**Award of Excellence - Best Trailer** - Vegas Movie Awards



## FESTIVALS & SCREENINGS

Cinequest Film and VR Festival (World Premiere)	Mar 20 - 30, 2021	San Jose, CA
Annapolis Film Festival	April 12 - 20, 2021	Annapolis, MD
Worldfest Houston International Film Festival	April 23 - 27, 2021	Houston, TX
Desertscape International Film Festival	June 23 - 26, 2021	St. George, UT
Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival	Aug 6 - 12, 2021	Providence, RI
Dances With Films	Aug 26 - Sep 12, 2021	Los Angeles, CA
Iowa Independent Film Festival	Sept 9 - 11	Cedar City, IA
Bozeman Film Celebration	Sept 9 - 12	Bozeman, MT
New Jersey Film Festival	Sept 10 - Oct 10	New Brunswick, NJ
Albuquerque Film and Music Experience (AFMX)	Sep 20 - 26, 2021	Albuquerque, NM
Boston Film Festival	Sep 23 - 26, 2021	Boston, MA
Heartland International Film Festival	Oct 7 - 17, 2021	Indianapolis, ID
Alexander Trauner ART/Film Festival	Oct 12 - 17, 2021	Szolnok, Hungary
Friday Harbor Film Festival	Oct 15 - 24, 2021	Friday Harbor, WA
Tallgrass Film Festival	Oct 20 - 24 , 2021	Wichita, KS
United Nations Association Film Festival	Oct 21 - 31, 2021	Palo Alto, CA
SCAD Savannah Film Festival	Oct 23 - 30 , 2021	Savannah, GA
Cinequest Film Festival - Fall	Nov 4 - 14, 2021	San Jose, CA
St. Louis International Film Festival	Nov 4 - 21, 2021	St. Louis, MO
Chicago International Children's Film Festival	Nov 5 - 14, 2021	Chicago, IL
Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival	Nov 6 - 21, 2021	Fort Lauderdale, FL
River's Edge International Film Festival	Nov 11 - 14, 2021	Paducah, KY
DOC NYC	Nov 12 - 20, 2021	New York, NY
Rome Independent Film Festival - RIFF Awards	Nov 24 - Dec 3, 2021	Rome, Italy
International Science Festival "World of Knowledge"	Dec 1 - 6, 2021	St. Petersburg, Russia
Capricorn Film Festival	Jan 12 - 16, 2022	Yeppon, Australia

Frozen River Film Festival	Feb 9 - 13, 2022	Winona, MN
Seattle Children's Film Festival	Feb 11 - 20 , 2022	Seattle, WA
POFF: Kino Sorpus	Feb 14 - 25, 2022	Talinn, Estonia
Belgrade Documentary Film Festival	Feb 17 - 20	Belgrade, Serbia
Providence Children's Film Festival	Feb 18 - 27, 2022	Providence, RI
Friday Harbor FF: Best of Fest	Feb 19 - 26, 2022	Friday Harbor, WA
New York International Children's Festival	Mar 4 - 13, 2022	New York, NY
Washington DC Environmental Film Festival	Mar 17 - 27, 2022	Washington, DC
Thin Line Film Festival	Mar 23 - 27, 2022	Denton, TX
Cleveland International Film Festival	Mar 30 - Apr 9, 2022	Cleveland, OH
Earth Focus Environmental Film Festival	Apr 24 - 30, 2022	Los Angeles, CA
San Francisco International Film Festival	Apr 21 - May 1, 2022	San Francisco, CA
Milwaukee Film Festival	Apr 21 - May 6, 2022	Milwaukee, WI
Port Jefferson Doc Series	May 2, 2022	Port Jefferson, NY
Earth X Film Festival	May 12 - 15, 2022	Dallas, TX
Tumbleweeds Film Festival	May 20 - 29, 2022	Salt Lake City, UT
Berkshire International Film Festival	June 2 - 6, 2022	Berkshire, MA
Vero Beach Film Festival	June 9 - 15, 2022	Vero Beach, FL
Southern Fried Film Festival	June 12 - 15, 2022	Huntsville, AL
Imagine Science LIVE Series	July 25 - 28, 2022	New York, NY
ISS R&D Conference	July 25 - 28, 2022	Washington, DC
Woods Hole Film Festival	July 30 - Aug 6, 2022	Woods Hole, MA
AndKids World Film Festival	Aug 3, 2022	Notre Dame, ID
Ierapetra International Film Festival	June 6 - 20, 2022	Crete, Greece
Indus Valley International Film Festival	Sept 26 - Oct 2, 2022	Chandigarh, India
Guam International Film Festival	Oct 7 - 9, 2022	Hagåtña, Guam
Docs[MX]	Oct 13 - 23, 2022	Mexico City, Mexico

**DIRECTOR STATEMENT**

The marriage of art and science has always been fascinating to me, and *Zero Gravity* really originates from my own childhood dream to one day make a space film. I always thought that if I never found my passion for filmmaking and the arts at an early age, I probably would have gone into a STEM field, so when I was introduced to the Zero Robotics program, I was immediately hooked on the concept alone. I simply had to see how middle school students could possibly program satellites in space — it just seemed like pure fantasy to me — and what transpired in the classroom was an emotional journey to the heavens that left me with a profound sense of hope for the future.

*Zero Gravity* takes it lead from three bright and energetic young students of different ethnicities and backgrounds who discover their own interests, hopes, and dreams as they each embark on a personal STEM-quest to space. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to ground the film with their voices and allow the audience to see the world, and beyond, from their perspectives. I also knew that the educator's story would provide the spine, effectively as the team's coach, but it was his grandfather's connection to the ISS and NASA that completely transformed the shape of the story thematically, and gave it the weight it really needed. As is common with documentaries, the story often takes a life of its own, and *Zero Gravity* became a story not just about children taking part in a programming challenge, but about inspiration — about where we get it from, how we pass it down from one generation to the next, and how it can unite us to achieve the impossible.

That sentiment is echoed throughout *Zero Gravity*, from the personal histories of each of the students' and their families, to the amazing achievements of the Apollo moon landings and the retirement of the Space Shuttle program. It is imperative to understand where we come from to know how best to move forward into the future, and to also recognize the events and sacrifices which have been made to not only have an orbiting space station for over twenty years, but for it to be utilized in a worldwide STEM competition to engage and inspire the next generation forward. These grand ideas are tied together and interwoven with the personal narratives of the film's subjects throughout, because their own education and understanding of the world around them is paramount to the success of their mission — and to achieve liftoff.

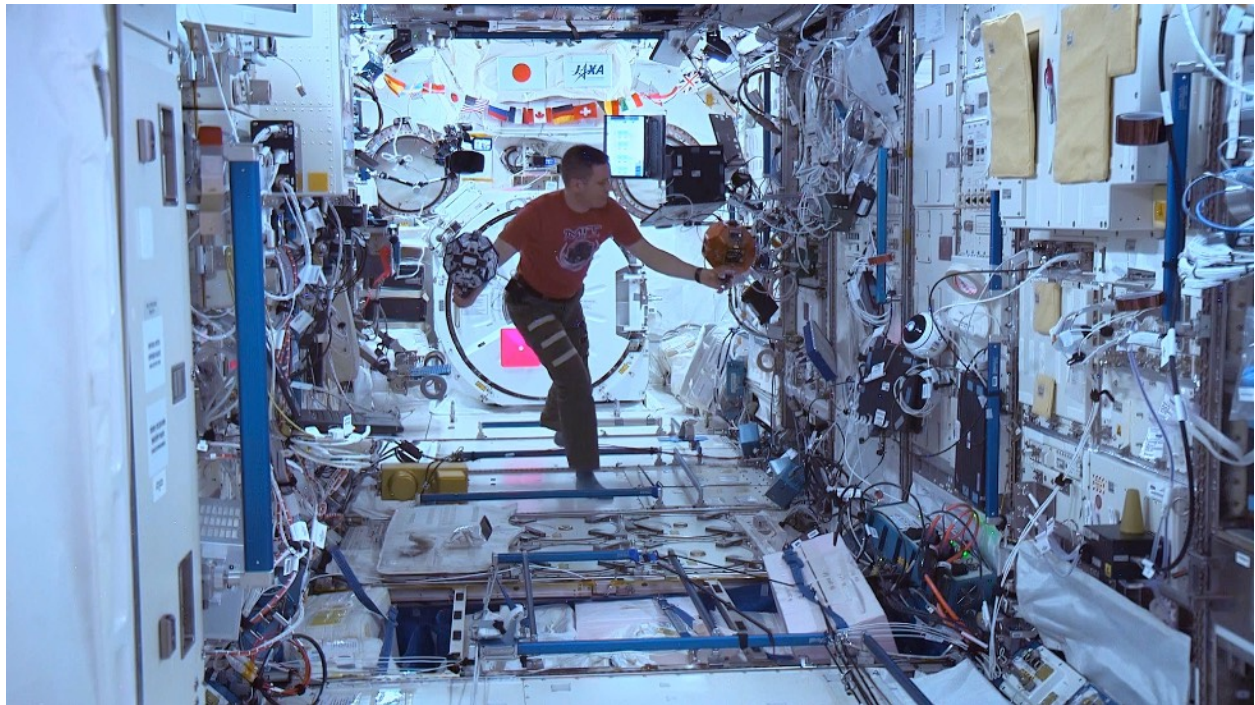
It is human nature to expand and grow, and to learn and discover. The zero gravity environment in the ISS Finals is of course the final physical goal for the students and their team, but it also represents a more universal metaphor — the pursuit of one's own dreams. Symbolically, we don't need to launch to space to experience weightlessness, but to solve the immense social, political, and environmental challenges of today and the near future, we have to respect and understand one another. The students throughout this program embody this mantra and mission, and the results of their hard work, determination, and teamwork are a remarkable showcase of what is possible. In the end, they have defied gravity and are ready to make a difference. This is the generation that will take the next giant leap for mankind. At 11 years old, they've already touched space, and I can only imagine where they might take us next.

## MARKETING STILLS

Please visit our [Publicity Folder](#) for full resolution images, posters, key art, and other assets.



Advik Gonugunta, Adrien Engelder, and Carol Gonzalez pose in front of the SPHERES mission patch at NASA AMES Research Facility during the Zero Robotics ISS Finals Tournament.



Astronaut Jack Fischer performs the student experiments aboard the International Space Station using the SPHERES satellites during the Zero Robotics ISS Finals Tournament.





Carol Gonzalez shares her experiences coding satellites in space with her family at home.



Educator Tanner Marcoida leads his Campbell Middle School robotics team as they work on their code for the Zero Robotics ISS competition.



Adrien Engelder sits in the flight simulator cockpit at NASA AMES Research Facility during a field trip.



Advik Gonugunta and his mother Smitha perform a traditional Hindu prayer.





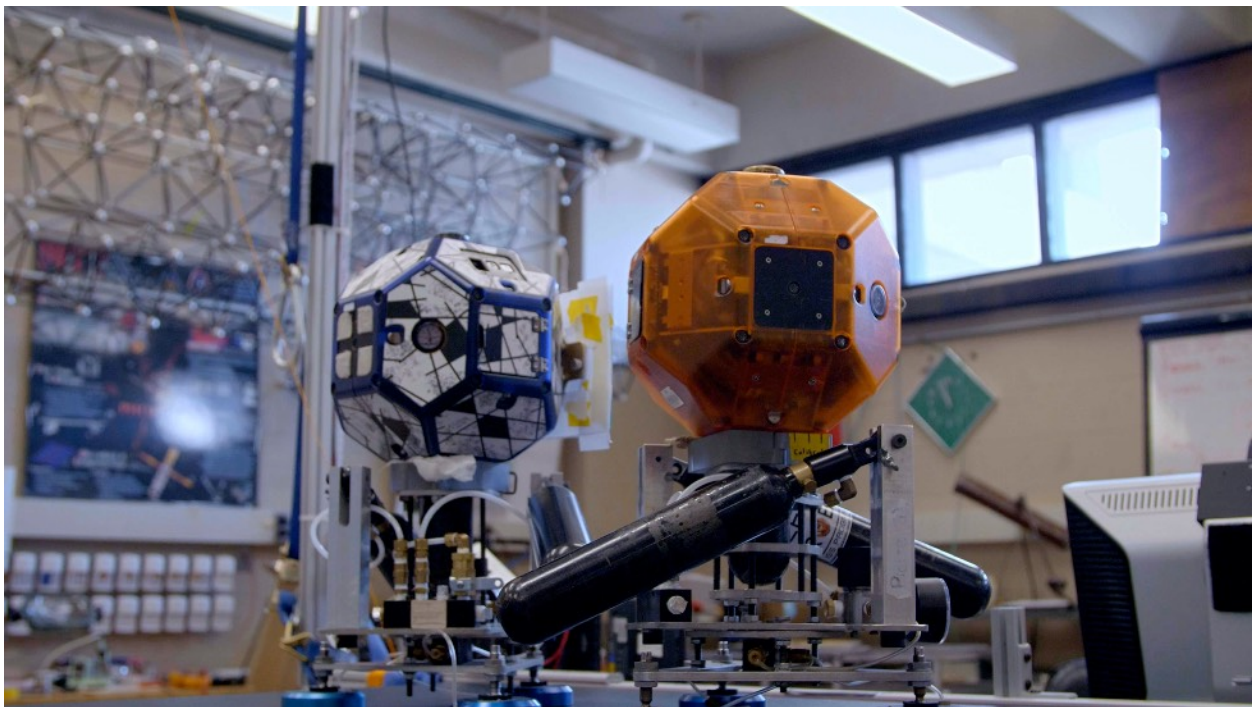
The Zero Robotics ISS Finals Tournament at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with Astronaut Jack Fischer performing the student experiments live aboard the space station.



Campbell Middle School robotics team pose with Astronaut Steve Smith, representing California in the ISS Finals Tournament at NASA AMES Research Center.



Astronaut Jack Fischer performs a spacewalk aboard the International Space Station.



The SPHERES satellites at MIT Space Systems Laboratory, which are also used aboard the International Space Station for the student experiments during the ISS Finals Tournament.



## FILM CREDITS

ESPRESSO MEDIA INTERNATIONAL Presents

A SKYLIGHT CINEMA Production

In Association With 20TH DIGITAL STUDIO

A Film By THOMAS VERRETTE

### **ZERO GRAVITY**

Directed By	THOMAS VERRETTE
Produced By	THOMAS VERRETTE HALLER RICE
Executive Producers	DAVID WORTHEN BROOKS JOEY DiFRANCO
Co-Executive Producers	KATIE MAGRANE ALVAR SAENZ-OTERO DANIELLE WOOD
Co-producers	JACK FISCHER CADY COLEMAN STEVE SMITH
Cinematographer	CARLOS MARULANDA
Edited By	THOMAS VERRETTE
Music Composed By	PENKA KOUNEVA
Consulting Producer	STACEY PARKS
Impact Producer	ERIN SORENSON
Unit Production Manager	SHARON KIKINIS
Camera Operators	CARLOS MARULANDA THOMAS VERRETTE
Production Sound Recordist	WILL MITCHELL
Post Production Coordinator	JOSHUA GARDNER

**FEATURING THE CAMPBELL MIDDLE SCHOOL ROBOTICS TEAM  
“BEYOND EXPECTATION”**

TANNER MARCOIDA	ADVIK GONUGUNTA
CAROL GONZALEZ	ADRIEN ENGELDER
AMIR NOBLE	SHAMAR NOBLE
CARLOS JIMENEZ	MAIAH FLORES
EZEKIEL JOHNSON	MIA FLORES
ALEJANDRA SALINAS	AMELIA BRITTENDAHN
DEVA TRAN	TAMBA BANGARAH
TRISTAN FRIEDMAN	LOGAN FRIEDMAN

**ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION UNITS**

MIT Camera Operator	BENJAMIN CAPANO
	GRACE CAPANO
MIT Additional Camera	FRANCISCO SANTOS
MIT Sound Recordist	SEAN SLAUGHTER
JSC Camera Operator	RICARDO DUVAL
KSC Camera Operator	CLOVER CARROLL
Additional Sound Recordist	RAYMOND C. DAY
Additional Camera Operator	BARRY STONE

**POST PRODUCTION**

Visual Effects Supervisor	TRAVIS GORMAN
Additional Visual Effects	DREW LEWIS
SPHERES and ISS Animation	TRAVIS GORMAN
Re-Recording Mixer	JONATHAN COOMES
Dialogue Editor	ALEXANDER L. EPHRAIM
Sound Design and Editing	JONATHAN COOMES
Colorist	ARA THOMASSIAN

Clearance Council	DALE NELSON, DONALDSON + CALLIF
Archive Consultant	MATT MACDONALD
Song Clearance Consultant	BRYAN RAY TURCOTTE
Assistant Editors	BARRY MOTTIER DANIEL GROVE SEBASTIAN MORENO CARLA RODA ALEC GIBBONS BEN SHERMAN
Production Accountant	LAUREN GILBERT
Post Production Assistants	TANI SHUKLA RAMONE FARRIER

## MUSIC

Score Producer, Arranger, and Synth Programmer	PENKA KOUNEVA
Additional Cues	CHARLIE LIN
Additional Music Mixing	JOHN RODD CHARLIE LIN
Vocals	BONNIE LAVINE
Cello	LAURA METZLER
Flute Soloist	SARA ANDON

"FLY ME TO THE MOON"  
 Written by BART HOWARD  
 Performed by FRANK SINATRA  
 Published by TRO - PALM VALLEY MUSIC, LLC  
 Courtesy of CAPITOL RECORDS under license from UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENTERPRISES

"ZERO GRAVITY"  
 Written by John Clinebell and Dario Forzato  
 Performed by WILLOW STEPHENS  
 Published by TOP FLOPS PUBLISHING and 101 THOUSAND MUSIC

Courtesy of BACON SHAKE and EVOQ MUSIC

**"MARS"**

Written by GUSTAV HOLST

Performed by the USAF HERITAGE OF AMERICA BAND

**"THE FINAL COUNTDOWN"**

Written by JOEY TEMPEST

Orchestrated and Programmed by PENKA KOUNEVA

Courtesy of EMI MUSIC PUBLISHING

**"SUN"**

Written by RYAN O'NEAL

Performed by SLEEPING AT LAST

Courtesy of ASTEROID B-612

By Arrangement with MUSIC ALTERNATIVES, LLC

**ISS, SPHERES, EARTH, AND MARS VIDEO AND  
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NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER  
EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

NASA KENNEDY SPACE CENTER  
NASA MARSHALL FLIGHT CENTER  
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE  
ROSCOSMOS  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO EARTH SCIENCE AND REMOTE SENSING UNIT (JSC)  
AND ALL THE ASTRONAUTS WHO HAVE CAPTURED VIDEO AND STILLS ABOARD THE ISS

**ADDITIONAL NASA VIDEO AND IMAGE EDITING BY**

ISS Timelapses and

Progress M-10 Launch from Space

Curiosity Landing and Mosaic

Curiosity Rover 1 Year Timelapse

ISS Timelapses, Earth Imaging Views

Mars HiRise Orbiter /Curiosity Mosaic

Mars Full Renderings

RICCARDO ROSSI (ISAA)

DANIEL LUKE FITCH (Altitude FX)

MAXIM (Curiosityandbeyond)

THOMAS VERRETTE

THOMAS VERRETTE

KEVIN GIL

**ADDITIONAL FOOTAGE PROVIDED BY**

Glacier Collapse

CHASING ICE

2017 Eclipse From Balloon	JACOB VAUGHT
	BEAU HARTWEG (Project Stratoclipse)
Antartica Wildlife	LUKE BELL (Eyos Expeditions)
Columbia Re-entry	DAN MCNEW (Just The Facts)
Final Flight of Endeavour over AMES	TED MAX JORGENSEN
Final Flight of Endeavour Aerial View	BRANDON TSENG (SpeedbirdHD)
T-38 Formation Flight	DAVID DEHOYOS
ZR Championship Celebration	HARVICK TANG

#### **STOCK FOOTAGE PROVIDED BY**

AXIOM IMAGES	ISTOCKVIDEO
MOTION ARRAY	DISSOLVE
ARTGRID	ENVATO ELEMENTS / VIDEOHIVE

#### **ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY**

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WALT DISNEY STUDIOS	CHANNEL 3000 / NEWS 3 NOW
CBS	RAMON FOUNDATION
RT AMERICA	TMJ4 NEWS
TED TALKS	NEXT 9 NEWS
CBS/DFW	

#### **THE PRODUCERS WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT**

NASA HEADQUARTERS	DARPA
ISS NATIONAL LABORATORY	CASIS
INNOVATION LEARNING CENTER	CAMPBELL UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
GALLANT ACADEMY	NORTHROP GRUMMAN FOUNDATION
MIT AERO ASTRO DEPARTMENT	BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF MORGAN HILL
MONTERAY BAY AQUARIUM	AURORA FLIGHT SCIENCES, A BOEING COMPANY

#### **SPECIAL THANKS**

JAKE KATZ	GREG CHAMITOFF
SWATI MOHAN	DAVID MILLER
KATHLEEN COLLINS	GREGORY H. JOHNSON
RICK MASTRACCIO	BUZZ ALDRIN
WENDY FEENSTRA	JOHN PIERRE-HARRISON
ARIC KATTERHAGEN	JOSE BENAVIDES
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MAXINE BEEMAN	PETER RICE



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AUSTIN PARKER  
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JOSEPHINE DANZIGER  
JESSICA HOBBS  
SARAH SMITH  
SHAWNA GRISMER  
VIRGINIA LEI  
KATHIE DUGAN  
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PASCUI RIVAS  
KELSEY MCCORMICK  
PAUL SALAMOFF  
BEN EPSTEIN  
JEFFREY MCHALE  
TARA JEAN VERRETTE  
DAN & DILLON DUGAN

### **ABOUT ZERO ROBOTICS**

The Zero Robotics program was inspired by retired astronaut Greg Chamitoff and implemented by the MIT SPHERES Team, under the leadership of Alvar Saenz-Otero, with critical contributors Jacob Katz & Swati Mohan.

The Middle School Program featured in this film was sponsored by the Northrop Grumman Foundation. SPHERES ISS operations were managed by NASA Ames Research Center.

For more information on Zero Robotics ISS Challenge, please visit [www.zerorobotics.mit.edu](http://www.zerorobotics.mit.edu)

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

DARRYL LEVASSEUR (1975-2017)  
SPHERES Scientist

LYNN WILSON (1948-2020)  
School Bus Driver

JUAN MARCOIDA (1925-2021)  
Master Machinist and Community Organizer

MICHAEL COLLINS (1930-2021)  
Apollo 11 Astronaut

**AND ALL THOSE WHO HAVE INSPIRED US**

**C O N T A C T**

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