

**Ad Astra** is a 2019 science fiction film, directed by James Gray and written by Gray and Ethan Gross. Starring Brad Pitt, Tommy Lee Jones, Ruth Negga, Liv Tyler, and Donald Sutherland, it follows an astronaut who ventures into space in search of his lost father, whose obsessive quest to discover intelligent alien life at all costs threatens the Solar System and all life on Earth.

The project was announced in early 2016, with Gray stating he wanted to feature "the most realistic depiction of space travel that's been put in a movie". Pitt signed on to star in August 2016 and the rest of the cast, save Tyler, joined the next year. Filming began around Los Angeles that August, lasting through October. Tyler was added to the cast in 2018 after unsatisfactory test screenings mandated a love interest for Pitt's character.

*Ad Astra* premiered at the Venice Film Festival on August 29, 2019, and was theatrically released in the United States on September 20, by 20th Century Fox. The film received generally positive reviews from critics, with particular praise for Pitt's performance.<sup>[5]</sup> It underperformed at the box office, grossing \$135.2 million against an \$80–100 million budget. At the 92nd Academy Awards, it was nominated for Best Sound Mixing.

## Plot

In the early 22nd century, mysterious cosmic ray-bursts emanating from Neptune cause power surges which threaten to destroy all life in the Solar System. Major Roy McBride is informed that the surge is antimatter in origin and may be connected to the "Lima Project", a space station in orbit around Neptune, sent twenty-nine years earlier to search for intelligent life and fuelled by antimatter. Roy's father, Clifford McBride, was the project's leader, a man considered a hero in SpaceCom history. Contact was lost sixteen years into its mission. Roy agrees to travel to Mars to use the last active long range communications station unaffected by the bursts in an effort to contact Clifford aboard the "Lima".

At the Moon SpaceCom base, Roy is told in secret by Colonel Pruitt that should he fail to make contact with the "Lima Project", the station will have to be destroyed. Roy obtains passage to Mars on the SpaceCom cruiser *Cepheus*.

On the way to Mars the *Cepheus* attend a distress call from a research station. During the investigation the captain is killed, the ship continues to Mars but is hit by a surge as it attempts to land. Roy assumes command from the overwhelmed (now in charge) first officer and calmly lands the ship. After securing himself in the underground SpaceCom complex, Roy begins recording officially pre-written voice messages and transmitting them to the Lima Project in hopes that his father, Clifford, will respond. After an attempt,

Roy ignores the official message and sends a personal message to his father, in the hope he will see him one day. Roy is then told he will be returning to Earth, his 'personal connection' making him unsuitable for further service.

Roy is visited by facility director Helen Lantos, who reveals that her parents were Lima Project team members. She shows him classified footage revealing that Clifford's team mutinied and attempted to return to Earth, causing him to shut off their life-support systems; her parents were among those killed and that the 'hero' story was created to hide the truth. She also admits that the *Cepheus* is carrying a [nuclear weapon](#) and has now been requisitioned for a secret 'seek and destroy' mission without Roy. Roy decides that he should deal with his father. Lantos facilitates Roy getting to the party's rocket as it prepares to depart.

Roy climbs aboard as the rocket takes off and is immediately discovered by the crew, who are unintentionally killed in the confrontation. During the 79-day journey to Neptune, a solitary Roy reflects on his relationship with his father and with his estranged wife, Eve. He finally arrives at the station and plants the nuclear bomb before encountering Clifford, the sole survivor of the Lima Project. Clifford explains that the surges are coming from an antimatter [meltdown](#) caused by the mutiny. He also admits to Roy that he never really cared about his family and does not consider Earth his home.

Roy copies data gathered about numerous planets by the Lima Project team and persuades Clifford to accompany him back to Earth. He arms the bomb and they climb out on the station's outer hull to return to the *Cepheus*. Clifford suddenly launches them into space using his spacesuit's thrusters. The old man pleads for Roy to untether and leave him; Roy reluctantly does so and watches his father drift away into space. He propels himself back to the *Cepheus* using his own spacesuit. Roy sends a message back to SpaceCom to ensure that if his return journey should fail that SpaceCom makes all effort to retrieve the data from the Lima Project he has recovered. Roy uses the shock wave from the nuclear explosion from the station as his primary propellant to propel the *Cepheus* back towards Earth.

The data retrieved from the Lima Project base found no other life in the [knowable universe](#), yet it contains a [treasure trove](#) of information on many 'magnificent' [worlds](#). Roy is entranced by their beauty and wonder, something that was lost on his father. He returns to Earth with a newfound optimism he was previously lacking, meeting with his estranged wife again.