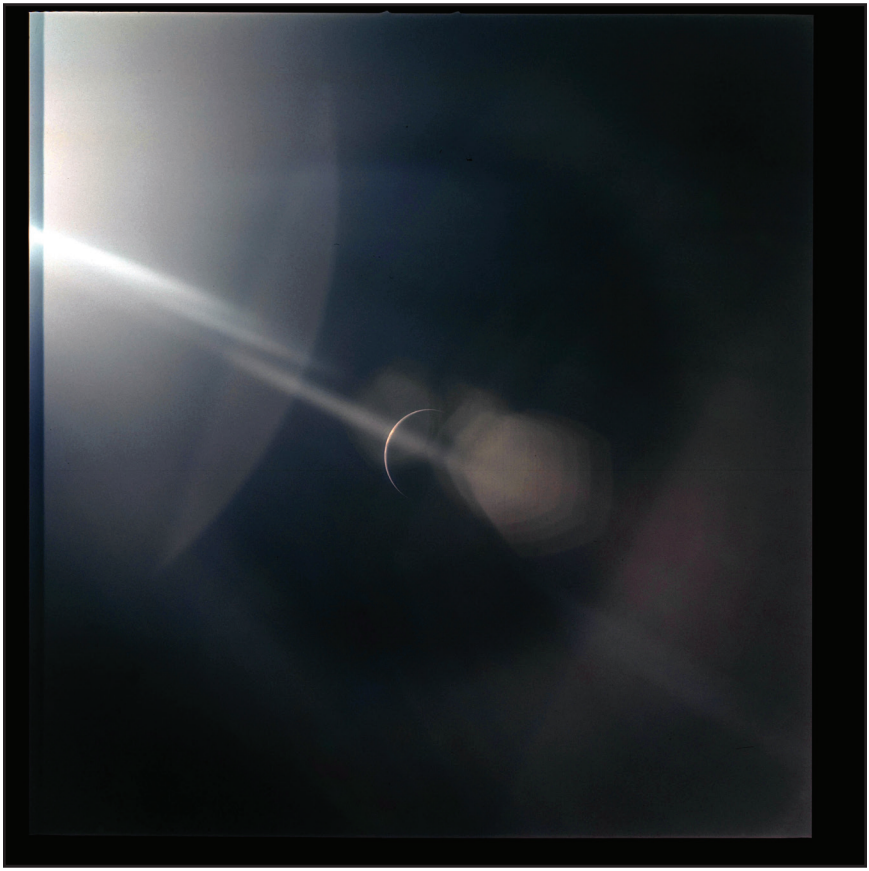
THE OVERVIEW EFFFECT / REDCAT
STAGED WIP

JULY 25 & 26 2026

the overview effect



DIR. NEIL ZUMWALDE
WRI. ZUMWALDE / HOLMES / MACKERT

The Overview Effect

written by Neil Zumwalde, Ethan Holmes, & Micah Mackert

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Astronauts experience a psychological shift when they see Earth from orbit. Seeing our planet as a small, borderless sphere suspended in the vastness of space, they return with awe, humility, and a stronger sense of responsibility to our shared home.

20ish years ago, I found myself fumbling but captivated by space as a metaphor for hope in the face of desolation. The snow covered hills, steel-gray skies and skeletal, naked hardwoods of rural Minnesota were home. In the winter, the lascivious promise of a verdant summer always seemed like a fairy tale. Transforming that backdrop became a personal vocation.

Micah was a constant contributor to that quest, but in classic gassing-up of each other's youthful whims, our primary tools were irony and levity. We cooked up Britney Spears cover-bands, albums about sexy space-casinos, and on-stage faux cult healings, hinting at earnest themes, but holding the whole DIY punk venue at arms length.

Sometimes, however, something expressive and heartfelt (while still about space, of course) would emerge. The '00s brought several songs you'll hear tonight out of me, but at the time, they were too personal and too revealing to find a home in my existing circus. So they sat, contextless on a hard drive, awaiting a nuance I hadn't, and possibly still haven't earned.

In Ethan, I found a sympathetic ear, someone who saw my enchantment with desolation as something to rhyme with. Between us, a patchwork of dozens more songs took shape around a single thematic thread: space. His crunchy harmonies met my pop-sensibility and Micah's laser focused wit, and a story emerged. It was inevitable.

In April, after some recent encouragement and almost a decade of rewrites, I decided to put this show on. Since then, dozens of people worked tirelessly; laboriously poring over every detail. I funded this project literally paycheck to paycheck, so I had little to offer the cast and crew other than shared passion, but they graciously shared theirs. I am humbled by their dedication, especially from Tess and Brydi, who were unflinching in their support, relentless in their dedication, and who showed me grace at my most petulant. Nothing I can say will express the gratitude for the love, care, and labor that they and the rest of the cast and crew poured into this.

It is profound to be believed in, and you believed in me.

The Overview Effect is a story about the relentlessness of the human spirit against the backdrop of corporate accumulation. It's about the courage it takes to explore and to fail, the quiet stubbornness of looking up, and the freedom in the realization that no matter what you do, the galaxy continues to turn.

I hope you hope like I do for something better, somewhere just beyond the stars...

- Neil Zumwalde
July 19th, 2026

CAST

PRINCIPALS (in order of appearance)

Bryan Mittelstadt ..... Maj. Michael Walker
Tawny Newsome ..... Cmdr. Elle Aarons
Jasper Boykin III ..... Simon Lawrence
Matthew Baker ..... James Macondo
Jake Delaney ..... Tim Macondo
Tessa Claire Hersh ..... Hannah Webb M.D.
Sasheer Zamata ..... Dr. Lena Coleman

ENSEMBLE

Janelle Cruz ..... Lena's Shadow / Carol
Paislee Estrada ..... Simon's Shadow
Willis Hao ..... Michael's Shadow
Nia Johnson ..... Hannah's Shadow / Colleen
Jan Redondo ..... Curney
Jimmy Thorton ..... Tim's Shadow / Assistant

Video Newscasters ..... **Nicole Byer, Graham Cameron, Brydi Frances, Bianca Santos, Tess Sorensen, Neil Zumwalde**

BAND

Momin Ahmad ..... Bass / Synth / Vocals
Aaron Baum ..... Keyboards / Electronics
Erick Barrientos ..... Guitar / Vocals
Laura Cantwell ..... Vocals
Jared Isabella ..... Drums / Electronics
Leo Vondracek ..... Synth / Vocals

SONGS

Act 1 ..... See, Outer Space, XPDNC, What it Takes (To be an Astronaut)
Beyond, Up in the Clouds, For Good, Up in the Clouds (Reprise)
What it takes (Reprise), Misread the Stars, The Cold Gets In, Ghosts
All My Life, Beyond (Reprise), Astronauts

Act 2 ..... See (Reprise), Brave Face, Just Beyond the Stars
One Small Step, What it Takes (Second Reprise), Higher
Woman's World, Stay, The Sky is the Sea, Finale

WARNING: This production features bright flashing lights and patterns that may affect photosensitive individuals. Viewer discretion advised.



Sasheer Zamata

Dr. Lena Coleman

Sasheer is an actress, comedian, and writer best known for "*Saturday Night Live*" (2014–2017) and starring roles in "*Woke*", "*Home Economics*", and "*Agatha All Along*". She has released two acclaimed stand-up specials and is UCB-trained.
@thesheertruth

Tawny Newsome

Cmdr. Elle Aarons

Tawny is an actress, comedian, writer, and musician known for voicing Beckett Mariner in *"Star Trek: Lower Decks"*, playing Angela Ali in Netflix's *"Space Force"*, and Chelsea Leight-Leigh in *"Bajillion Dollar Propertie$"*. She co-hosts the official Star Trek podcast *"The Pod Directive"* and trained at Chicago's Second City.
@trondynewman tawnynewsome.com





Tessa Claire Hersh

Hannah Webb M.D.

Tessa Claire Hersh is an actor, writer, and performer. An alum of the ABC Diversity Showcase and a UCB-trained performer, her television credits include "*Grey's Anatomy*", "*Younger*", and "*Desus & Mero*". Her work has been recognized with Best Pilot at Just For Laughs, and she has received Best Actress honors at Slamdance and the New York Film & Television Festival. On stage, she has appeared in "*Blank! The Musical*" at New World Stages and performed at National Sawdust. When not performing, Tessa facilitates circles and ceremonies for life's major transitions, including marriage, birth, grief, and death.
@tessandra tessahersh.com



Jasper Boykin III

Simon Lawrence

Jasper Boykin III is originally from Charlotte, NC where he got his degree in Theatre Performance & Tech from UNC Charlotte in 2017. Having worked in numerous commercial campaigns, being on multiple billboard ads and receiving the "Best Actor" Award in the 2024 Los Angeles 48 HR Film Festival, it's safe to say Jasper is living his best life.
@jasperboykin

Bryan Mittelstadt

Maj. Michael Walker



This Texas-born heartthrob trained operatically in New York, and recently won Best Actor at the 21st Durango Film Festival for "*Quiet After Supper*". His projects include "*Julius*" at the Torino Film Festival, Pan Luo's "*Arabesque*" as Van Gogh, and Jeff Lipsky's "*Goldilocks and the Two Bears*". Bryan appeared on stage as Jamie in "The Last Five Years" and Jasper in "*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*".
@bryanpatrickm bryanmittelstadt.com



Jake Delaney

Tim Macondo

Jake uses his impeccable comedic timing as a writer, actor, and director. Previously, you may have seen him star as Daddy in "*Mommy*" which premiered as a part of REDCAT's 2025 NOWfest, Tali in "*The Real Housewives Parody Musical*", or as Roscoe in "*A Finger Pointing at The Moon*". His directorial debut short film, "*Matches*", which he co-wrote and stars in kicked off its festival run this summer. You can see him perform regularly on Upright Citizens Brigade house team, The Family Business.
@jakeakadelaney

Matthew Baker - James Macondo
Endlessly tasteful and wildly witty, The Overview Effect is Matthew's return to the stage after being a Los Angeles-based public defender and member of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA).
@thentheresthat

Jan Redondo - Curney
A Filipino-American dancer, singer, and actor. He grew up performing Traditional Filipino Folk Dance and musical theatre, and trained with Sodium Dance Project. He currently performs with the Gay Men's Chorus of LA, with theatre credits including "*Dark Library: Edgar Allan Poe*" (After Hours Theatre Company), "*Supportive White Parents*" (Outside In Theatre), and "*StanD*" (OC Mental Health Summits).
@jan.redondo

Willis Hao - Michael's Shadow
Willis hails from Atlanta, Georgia, with credits including "*A Chorus Line*" and "*West Side Story*" (City Springs), "*Heathers*" (Actor's Express), and "*Children of Eden*" (Aurora Theater). He is joining the next MFA cohort at SDSU for Musical Theater.
@willlis_hao

Nia Johnson - Hannah's Shadow / Colleen
Nia is a Los Angeles native whose work spans acting, dancing, stage managing, and background casting. Her immersive theater credits include "*Dark Library: Paris 1925*", "*Edgar Allen Poe*", and "*Time Machine*", all with After Hours Theatre.
@niapjohnson

Jimmy Thornton - Tim's Shadow / Assistant
Jimmy is a Los Angeles-based actor and dancer who left Stanford to follow his heart. He writes and performs original sketches and characters, co-founded the Carnival Barker sketch comedy team at The Pack, and is a featured dancer and vocal soloist with GMCLA, most recently seen on ABC's "*The Golden Bachelorette*".
@jimmysthornton

Janelle Cruz - Lena's Shadow
Janelle Cruz comes to us from Guam. She enjoys teaching her Pilates clients at Back to Wellness and Pilates Fitness Encino. She has performed for Mulan's Lunar New Year Procession, and Glowfest, both at Disney's CA Adventure Park.
@neninelle

Paislee Estrada - Simon's Shadow
Paislee Tanoura-Estrada is a performer based in Los Angeles who has been dancing and performing since the age of 8. Previous credits include "*A Chorus Line*" (Conejo Players Theatre), "*Footloose*" (High Street Arts Center), and "*Joseph TATDC*" (High Street Arts Center).
@paislee.estrada

Laura Cantwell - Understudy Elle, Lena / Background Vocals
Laura is a Los Angeles based actor, writer, producer, and vocalist whose work spans film, animation, and original storytelling. She is the voice of Venus and Marsha Starfighter in "*Lanterman and Friends*", starring Mark Hamill, and costars in the award winning feature "*Quiet After Supper*".
@laura.cantwell

Brydi Frances

Brydi is thrilled to be working with the team at The Overview Effect Musical. She most recently produced and starred in Crooked Pixie's production of "*Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*" at West Hollywood's Marilyn Monroe Theatre. Brydi has written, directed, and produced the short films "*Night Shift*", "*When I Grow Up*", "*To Procrastinate*", and "*Sunflowers*". She has also worked in the assistant director's department on productions such as Apple TV's "*Shantaram*", Netflix's "*Surviving Summer*", and AMC's "*New Gold Mountain*". Short Film work includes "*The Trebek Technique*" and the award-winning "*Salt in Wounds*", as well as as Constable Matilda Jackson on the Australian "*Neighbours*". Acting credits include Mrs. Lovett in "*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*" (Eldon Hogan Theater), Stephano in "*The Tempest*" (Madeleine Centre for Performing Arts), and Dhelward in the feature film "*A Little Resistance*".
@brydifrances brydifrances.co

Tess Sorensen

Dr. Tess is a Los Angeles-based performer, UCB-trained improviser, and Doctor of Occupational Therapy. She dances with Thick Strip, LA's original size-inclusive strip show, and her performance background spans the worlds of classic theatre, long-form improv, variety showcases, and the local drag scene.

PRODUCTION

Neil Zumwalde ..... Producer / Director
Tess Sorensen ..... Assistant Director / Co-Producer / Company Manager
Brydi Frances ..... Assistant Director / Co-Producer / Stage Manager
Jan Redondo ..... Choreographer
Aaron Baum & Ethan Holmes ..... Music Direction
Willis Hao ..... Dance Captain
Bryan Mittelstadt ..... Vocal Captain
Jared Isabella ..... Band Leader
Holt Dunlap & Millicent Starr ..... Production Assistance

Written by Neil Zumwalde, Ethan Holmes, Micah Mackert
Additional Video Production by Sele Leota, Bryan Mittelstadt, Matt Hanchey
Additional Direction by Tessa Claire Hersh

REDCAT PRODUCTION TEAM

Director of Production / Technical Director ..... **Adam Matthew-McMillen**
Lighting Designer ..... **Chu-Hsuan Chang**
Associate Technical Director, Audio & Video ..... **Lucio Maramba**
Master Electrician ..... **Jennifer Gonzalez**
Lighting Technician ..... **Jerrel Milan**
Lead Audio Engineer ..... **Shiv Desai**
Audio Assistant ..... **Matt Kamimura**
Audio Playback / QLab ..... **Ed Carlo Arafiles**
Stage Crew ..... **Ladini Wallace**

Full production bios at theoverviewеffectmusical.com

A deep thank you to:

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Onyx Record Press
The Stu Los Angeles

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Image courtesy of the NASA Johnson Space Center (Photo ID: AS15-96-13104)