

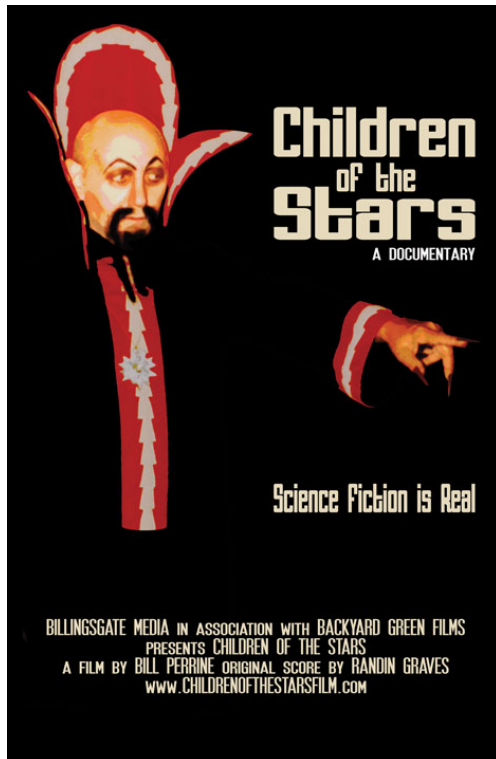
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Children of the Stars



Contact: Bill Perrine, Billingsgate Media, bill@billingsgate.org, 858-366-5916

Film website: <http://www.childrenofthestarsfilm.com>

Facebook fan page: <http://www.facebook.com/childrenofthestarsfilm>

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Form: Documentary

Genres: Alternative, Comedy, Sci-Fi, Cult, Surreal, Supernatural, Spiritual

Title: Children of the Stars

Directed and edited by: Bill Perrine

Produced by: Rick Bowman & Bill Perrine

Original music by: Randin Graves

Length: 77 minutes

Release date: 2012

Unrated

Studio: Billingsgate Media

Short Synopsis

Children of the Stars tells the strange but true story of a UFO contactee group who relive their past lives on other planets by making their own science fiction films.

Long Synopsis

In 1973, Ruth Norman, a 73 year old widow and self described cosmic visionary purchased 67 acres of land in the mountains east of San Diego, California as a landing site for the Space Brothers, emissaries from the Intergalactic Confederation. Nearly 40 years later, a group of dedicated followers still await their arrival.

At the Unarius Academy of Science death does not exist, Nicola Tesla was a Space Brother, Satan drove a Cadillac and science fiction is real. To relive their pasts the students film their own sci-fi extravaganzas with the increasingly extravagant Ruth Norman as the star and the lines between fantasy and reality dissolve.

Using spectacular footage from original Unarius films and Hollywood Sci-Fi flicks to illustrate, comment upon, and subvert interviews with the remaining Unarius students, "Children of the Stars" covers millions of years, hundreds of galaxies and dozens of B movies to present a sympathetic look at faith and how people justify it in different ways.

Children of the Stars: Q&A with director
Bill Perrine (www.dustyonmovies.com, 9/22/12)



I'm honored to feature this Q&A with the writer and producer of "Children of The Stars", Bill Perrine. I found Bill online after I learned there would be an exclusive screening of his film in Buchanan, VA which isn't far from my home. He was nice enough to send me a DVD and answer some questions. The context he provides here may have altered my review had I read it beforehand. I love his answer about including skeptics in the documentary even though I myself am a hardline skeptic. I also didn't detect the resemblance to "[Gates of Heaven](#)", but now that he's mentioned it, it seems obvious. Really, all of Errol Morris' documentaries have the same unobtrusive quality as opposed to a Werner Herzog documentary that features his voice and thoughts in every scene.

Enough from me, let's hear from the man himself.

Thanks for taking the time to answer some questions. Unarius is something I had never heard of until "Children of the Stars". What was your first encounter with the group?

The Unarius films and programs were a fixture of public access TV when I was growing up. Now and then reporters both local and international would pay a visit for a "human interest" story. They seemed to pop up everywhere.



Do you consider Unarius to be a religion or a cult? Or is it something completely different?

They would state unequivocally that they're a branch of science but they do have all the attributes of a religion, complete with angels and demons. So if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck... If you want to call them a cult though you might have to extend that term to any number of mainstream religions that follow a charismatic leader's teachings. Diana Tumminia, the

sociologist interviewed in my film, calls them a 'contactee religion'.

When you first approached your subjects, were they open to the idea of a documentary? Did they have any conditions to be met about their on-screen portrayal?

I told them that I would take their beliefs as seriously as I would any other group's. There were no conditions and I felt that they were as open and hospitable as they could be.

The people of Unarius seem to take their beliefs very seriously. The film, however, felt more like a comedy to me. It didn't seem malicious though. Have you had any feedback from Unarius believers who have seen the film?

What you see as comedy the Unarians might see very differently indeed. What makes you laugh may to a Unarian be the recognition of an essential truth. The lines are blurrier than you might think. In any case, the Unarians have a surprisingly delightful sense of humor and I think they can differentiate affectionate laughter from something crueler. We'll find out soon enough. As we speak, the film has only been officially out for about an hour so they haven't seen it yet. I hope they'll like it.

Uriel's teachings seemed to be followed with a blind faith. Other groups with that sort of loyalty to a leader have shown the potential for violence or hate. Fred Phelps, Jim Jones, and David Koresh are a few examples. Did you find any potentially dangerous philosophy within the Unarius world?

The sects you mentioned above have very different belief systems based on withdrawal from and contempt for the world. The Unarians mostly have 9-5 jobs, hobbies, and all that stuff. They are also very tolerant of other faiths and lifestyles. Besides, after the death of Uriel there really is no leader per se so there's no one to follow into the darkness. I didn't see any signs of cult behavior and neither did the sociologist Diana Tumminia who studied and lived among them for years.

Most documentaries feature scholars and experts offering dissenting opinions from the film's subject. Your approach allowed the subjects to tell their story without argument or interruption. Was this a conscious decision? Did you ever enter debate with your subjects off camera?

I would argue that the scholars and experts you cite are endemic to a certain *type* of documentary and, with some very notable exceptions, their use often represents a paucity of imagination in the filmmaker and a subsequent laziness in the viewer. It's quite easy for everyone involved to have an expert tell you what to think, especially when the subject is one as easily dismissed as this.

The juxtapositions created in editing are to me a more effective and more subtle counterpoint to a subject's own words. I'll admit to shamelessly following the template of Errol Morris' great "Gates of Heaven" in this regard. I did interview the wonderful and insightful Diana Tumminia because her work as a sociologist allowed her to provide some needed context and a skeptic's viewpoint but I told her from the beginning that I wanted to concentrate on entering the Unarius world with minimal mediation. As for debate, often the interview subjects are indeed responding to challenges I posed during questioning. It's an illusion that they're just talking off the top of their heads. I guided the conversations to the areas that interested me and engaged them in areas they may not have considered. I just cut my questions out of the film.

Did you ever participate in any of the Unarius services such as past-life therapy?

Nope, but by the end of filming they were remembering past lives I had supposedly lived with them thousands of years ago. I still don't recall those!

As a filmmaker, what was your take on the films produced by Unarius?

They're wonderfully ambitious and loads of fun. The effects are pretty amazing for their time and budget.

Your IMDB credits say this is your debut as a director of feature films. This is certainly a strange and ambitious project to start off with. What goals do you have in mind for the film?

Logistically it was about the easiest thing I could have done. Thematically it was ambitious but I'd rather try something audacious and fail than just do more of the same old same old. As for goals, like most filmmakers I'd just like it to get seen. If people are unnerved by the film I'm fine with that. If they enjoy it on any level that's fine too.

Are documentaries your main interest as a director? Any subjects in mind for the future?

I'm working on a documentary about the San Diego music scene in the 90s when the record industry was convinced it would be "the next Seattle". Among other things I'd like to do a film about the great writer/adventurer William T. Vollmann but he's going to need some convincing. I work as an editor primarily on docs but I'm helping a writer/director produce a narrative film that we will hopefully begin shooting early next year.

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Director Bill Perrine

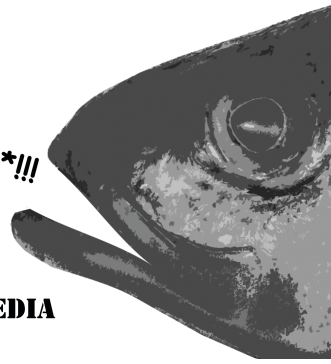


Bill Perrine is the director, editor and producer of “Children of the Stars”, a documentary about a flying saucer group’s attempts to relive its past lives by making science fiction films. His recent projects include serving as Director of Photography and editor of director Sheldon Kaplan’s “Suds County USA”, a documentary about the history and DIY culture of craft beer

brewing in San Diego; editing and producing director Rick Bowman’s “Hillsville 1912”, about a blood feud in turn of the century Appalachia which culminated in a massive courthouse gun battle and front page coverage in the New York Times; and filming the documentary “Gustavo Romero: Portrait in Piano” for director Jonathan Bewley. Forthcoming projects include editing Rick Bowman’s “Mandolin in B” about Bluegrass legend Herschel Sizemore and developing Garnell Fitz-Henley’s directorial feature debut “Bliss”, in which a struggling artist and a volatile flamenco dancer discover that their last chance at a future together hinges on the fate of a soon to be demolished Craftsman cottage. His next effort as a director is a documentary about San Diego’s alternative music scene in the 90s, when the area was designated ‘the next Seattle’ by a ravenous music industry.

A native of San Diego, Bill has worked extensively with the Media Arts Center San Diego, a non-profit that brings multimedia arts access to the community. As a former art dealer, Bill is an expert on early California painting and the San Diego Mid-Century Moderns. He is on the advisory board of the Snapshots Music and Arts Foundation as well as the board of the La Jolla Cultural Society.

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Producer Rick Bowman



Rick Bowman is a writer, director, and producer, and has been based in Southern California for the past 20 years. He owns a recording studio, Lethal Sounds, Inc., and has earned Cindy, Telly, and Omni awards for sound design.

For the love of documentary filmmaking, he started Backyard Green Films, a production company. He recently finished producing and directing the feature documentary "Hillsville 1912: A Shooting in the Court," which won an IndieFest award, and is currently working on "Mandolin in B," a bluegrass documentary on Herschel Sizemore. His credits include "Children of the Stars," with Bill Perrine, Ibhayi Media's "Suds County, USA," about the San Diego craft brewing industry, "Return to Dwight and Nile," about the 1978 PSA crash, "Storyhill: Parallel Lives," by Yellow Skip films, and numerous other documentary topics.

He also has feature film credits for his sound work for "On Bloody Sunday," "Shoot the Hero," "Delirium," "The Custodial Code," and others.

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Composer Randin Graves



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Randin Graves is a full time, award-winning film composer and Fulbright fellow with diverse influences and skills, delivering popular (and very unusual) genres of film and television music from his professional home studio. Equally at home in classical and pop music worlds, he holds a B.A. cum laude in music composition from the well-regarded new music program at the University of California at San Diego, and has played in rock, electronica, folk, reggae, funk, jazz and world fusion bands. He plays guitar, keyboards, the Japanese koto, and is world renowned as an expert on the Australian didgeridoo, having sold CDs and influenced players on every continent - including Antarctica.

His work has appeared on countless CDs & film scores, a video game, theatre and dance performances and a children's education website. He currently works primarily on films but is open to any creative projects.

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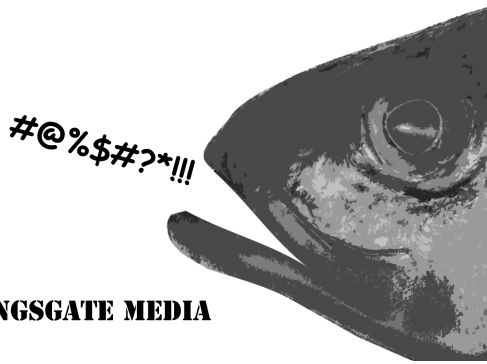
Director's statement



As an overprotected suburban child my evenings in the 1980s were devoted to television and the reassuring Reaganesque portrait of life it provided. In the laugh tracked sitcoms of the era I found comfort in the bland domestic rhythms of the Huxtables and the Keatons and a sense of the continuity of history from the Bradys and Kramdens, those slightly faded avatars of sitcoms past. But on occasion I would bore of my old friends and find myself turning the dial to the wild side of the UHF spectrum, the home of cable access television, where the 'other half' paraded, enacting their own skewed pageants away from the glamorous spotlights of prime time. This was another America, seemingly as far removed from the Huxtables as Earth from Venus, and this was where I first saw Archangel Uriel.

Uriel and her Unarius Academy of Science were minor San Diego celebrities, their films and presentations constantly broadcast on public access, the Space Cadillac a recurring presence in various parades, their yearly Conclave of Light a boon to the spectacle starved local media. To me and most everyone else they were a joke, a welcome blast of harmless lunacy from the fringes, a reaction that seemed to bother the Unarians not one bit. They talked of Space Brothers and past lives and we sniggered smugly. After the charismatic Uriel died a tawdry 'expose' sourced from a bitter former student dealt a minor blow to this uneasy love affair, then the suicides of the nearby Heaven's Gate cult seemed to dampen everyone's enthusiasm for other worlds and lives. Unarius quietly withdrew from the spotlight.

When I began making films it seemed natural to track down these lost specters from my youth, for as reporters around the world had already discovered Unarians love a camera. I found them immediately approachable, very kind, and



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not at all the lunatics some would make them out to be. However, it was hard to break the habits ingrained from the years of media attention and when the cameras rolled the students brought out the same canned presentations they had been trotting out for decades to bemused but usually uninvolved observers. Then, as I listened, questioned and gently interrogated the barriers began to fall and they opened up in ways I had not anticipated. To my great surprise I discovered in the world of Unarius a veritable zoo of my favorite hobby horses: the permeable boundaries between reality and fantasy, the power of film to create and shape those fantasies, the do it yourself ethos of art production, the power of self-reinvention through community. Unhappy with the world in which they had been born the students of Unarius simply created their own, complete with an ever evolving cosmology and history that read like a greatest hits collection of 20th century alternative thought. Yes, there was a delirious absurdity to the whole enterprise and more than a little humor, but their sincerity and enthusiasm were undeniable. I realized that any film about them must pay respect to that and so I set out to treat them with the same mixture of deference, skepticism and wry humor I'd give to any system that claims to have comprehensive answers to the enigma of our existence. What matters finally is that these are people trying to work through life in their own unique way and for them it seems to work. This is their reality, not mine. My take on their beliefs may be obvious to anyone who watches Children of the Stars, but I hope it doesn't get in the way of these people's remarkable stories.

Am I, as they have suggested, a Unarian? By making this film am I attempting to right the wrongs done to them in past lives over the course of millions of years? I don't think so, but who knows? We've all been wrong before.

Children of the Stars - Stills



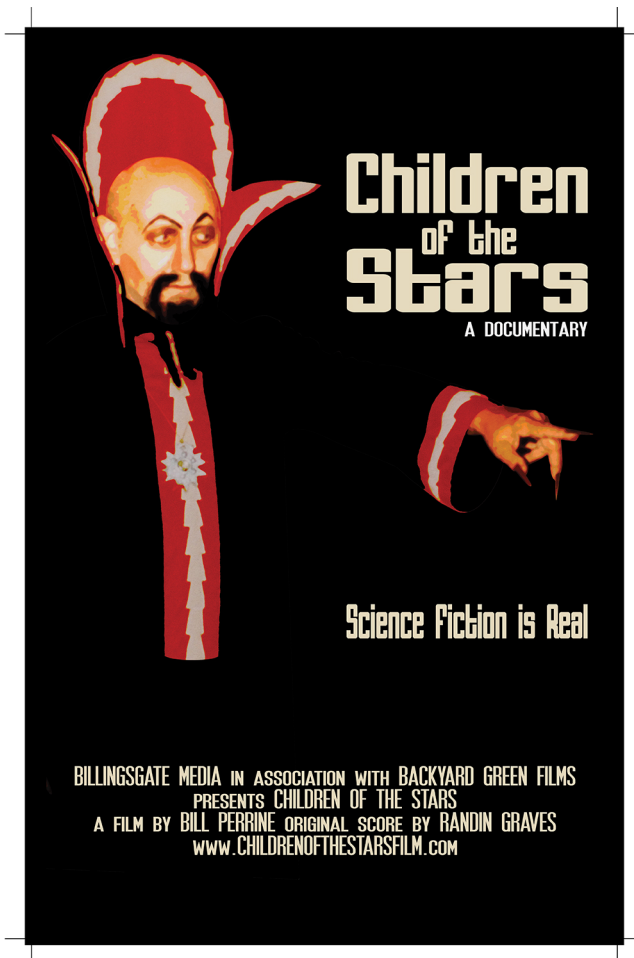
A still from the Unarius film The Arrival



A Unarius student waits at the landing site



Camera man Robert Knauf with producer Rick Bowman



Children of the Stars poster

Children of the Stars - Stills



Director Bill Perrine & Producer Rick Bowman



Director Bill Perrine



Interviewing Unarius student Kevin Kennedy



Ruth & Ernest Norman, founders of Unarius

Children of the Stars - Stills



Ruth Norman aka Uriel and some of her students



The Awakening, a painting by Unarius student Billie McKintyre



Unarius model of the city of the future



Unarius student Charles Spiegel reliving his past life as Tyrantus

Children of the Stars - Stills



Unarius student poses with some of the students' paintings



Unarius students relive their past life roles in the crucifixion



Unarius students William Proctor & Lani Calvert with the Space Cad



Uriel awaiting the Space Brothers at the Unarius landing site in Jamul, Ca