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Top reviewers
Top contributors

- By genre
Action (14042)
Adventure (10608)
Animation (3243)
Anime (1240)
Biography (1414)
Comedy (11203)
Comic book (1092)
Crime (7516)
Dark humor (1076)
Documentary (2507)
Drama (17664)
Erotic (238)
Family (5065)
Fantasy (6029)
Film-Noir (160)
Foreign (681)
History (2228)
Horror (5297)
Imaginary (413)
Martial arts (724)
Music (4179)
Musical (1416)
Mystery (4328)
Nature (975)
Other (531)
Psychological thriller (707)
Romance (6352)
Sci-Fi (6279)
Short (171)
Sport (1283)
Supernatural (831)
Teen (935)
Thriller (13251)
War (2325)
Western (862)

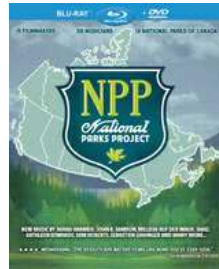
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About

National Parks Project Blu-ray

Blu-ray + DVD

Video Service Corp. | 2011 | 127 min | Unrated | May 22, 2012



Large: Front
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Video
Video codec: MPEG-4 AVC
Video resolution: 1080p
Aspect ratio: 1.78:1
Original aspect ratio: 1.78:1

Audio
English: Dolby Digital 5.1
English: Dolby Digital 2.0

Subtitles
None

Discs
25GB Blu-ray Disc
Two-disc set (1 BD, 1 DVD)
DVD copy

Packaging
Slipcover in original pressing

Playback
Region A (B, C untested)

Price
List price: \$29.98
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Movie rating
0 / 10

Blu-ray review
Movie 4.5
Video 4.0
Audio 3.5
Extras 3.5
Overall 4.0

Movie appeal
Documentary 100%

0% popularity, 1 collection, 0 fans

- Overview Blu-ray review Screenshots (10) User reviews Region coding News Forum

National Parks Project Blu-ray Review
Planet Earth, eh?

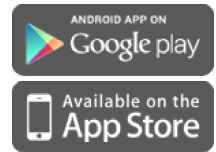
Reviewed by Jeffrey Kauffman, June 20, 2012

Has the nature video finally come of age? If it can be at least plausibly argued that nature videos like Planet Earth and Life helped jump start the high definition era in home entertainment, to paraphrase a famous quote, what have nature videos done for us lately? In one camp we have the quasi-Planet Earth approach, nature documentaries that seek to educate as well as awe with a combination of incredible cinematography, sonorous music and sometimes pretentiously weighty narration. On the other hand, a whole slew of what I have termed "ambient television" releases has also cropped up, things like Living Landscapes: World's Most Beautiful Places and its kin, which feature little other than long, languorous shots of various environments, often with only ambient environmental sounds or at times with New Age-y music accompanying the scenic vistas. Occasionally a release will come along that seeks to at least slightly stretch the boundaries of what might at this point be loosely termed the nature video. Two releases from 2010 fall into that category, the excellent Topics Entertainment products HD Moods Rise and HD Moods Rebel, both of which combined a sort of Koyaanisqatsi-esque approach within the general confines of this burgeoning idiom. Now comes National Parks Project, an unusual collaboration sponsored by Parks Canada which brought together a coterie of filmmakers and musicians to help celebrate Canada's National Parks system's centennial. In the words of the project:

In 1911, Parks Canada was founded, becoming the first National Parks Service in the world. On the eve of its centennial, Canada's finest artists embarked on a historic expedition to capture the majesty of the landscape in music and film. Thirteen filmmakers, thirty nine musicians, thirteen National Parks of Canada.



National Parks Project falls more toward the entertainment end of the spectrum than it serves any



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National Parks Project Blu-ray

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educational purpose, though I suppose one could argue that even being introduced to these wonderful National Parks is a sort of education, especially for American audiences who may not even know some (or all) of them exist. The thirteen short films here run a rather wide gamut of styles and content, though they all of course feature their subject parks in one shape or form. Some of these take a fairly straightforward approach, simply letting the camera drift through various areas while an equally wide variety of music plays. Others take a more whimsical approach, as in one short where a hiker simply disappears magically when he walks behind a tree, or another which seems to be of a Buddhist Monk meditating intercut with scenes of the ocean. This may not exactly be the "mind bending" experience the press sheet accompanying this release promises, but it's often fun and is almost invariably incredibly scenic.

The music here is as wide ranging as the vistas themselves, and includes everything from jangly folk to alternative to synth washes that approach ambient levels. Scattered among the musicians are some fairly well known names including people like the Smashing Pumpkins' bassist Melissa Auf Der Maur. Despite what might be a natural assumption that some of the musician names are pseudonyms, it turns out that this project hosts some *extremely* peculiarly named artists (the complete list of collaborators is included below).

National Parks Project is a really interesting idea that has been realized very successfully. It's a fantastic introduction into Canada's amazing National Parks system, and it also offers the chance for some creative filmmakers and musicians to collaborate under extremely unique circumstances. If this is the future of nature videos, I for one couldn't be happier about it. The complete list of Park locales as well as the tunes and collaborators are as follows:

1. "Looking Around Without Blinking"
Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve & Haida Heritage Site – British Columbia
Directed by Scott Smith
Music by Jim Guthrie, Sarah Harmer, Bry Webb
2. "Night Vision"
Prince Albert National Park - Saskatchewan
Directed by Stephane Lafleur
Music by Mathieu Charbonneau, Andre Ethier, Rebecca Foon
3. "Paahtomahksikimii (The Place Where Lakes Go Into the Mountain)"
Waterton Lakes National Park – Alberta
Directed by Peter Lynch
Music by Laura Barrett, Cadence Weapon, Mark Hamilton
4. "Sirmilik"
Sirmilik National Park – Nunavut
Directed by Zacharias Kunuk
Music by Dean Stone, Tanya Tagaq, Andrew Whiteman
5. "Material"
Bruce Peninsula National Park – Ontario
Directed by Daniel Cockburn
Music by Christine Fellows, Sandro Perri, John K. Samson
6. "The Stars & The Waves"
Prince Edward Island National Park – Prince Edward Island
Directed by John Walker
Music by Dale Morningstar, Chad Ross, Sophie Trudeau
7. "Cape Breton"
Cape Breton Highlands National Park – Nova Scotia
Directed by Keith Behrman
Music by Tony Dekker, Daniela Gesundheit, Old Man Luedecke
8. "Kluane"
Kluane National Park and Reserve – Yukon
Directed by Louise Archambault
Music by Ian D'Sa, Mishka Stein, Graham Van Pelt
9. "Wapusk"
Wapusk National Park – Manitoba
Directed by Hubert Davis
Music by Kathleen Edwards, Matt Mays, Sam Roberts
10. "Gros Morne"
Gros Morne National Park – Newfoundland
Directed by Sturla Gunnarsson
Music by Melissa Auf Der Maur, Jamie Fleming, Sam Shalabi
11. "Quand J'Aurai Vu Les Îles"
Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve – Quebec
Directed by Catherine Martin
Music by Jennifer Castle, Sebastien Grainger, Dan Werb
12. "Mystic Morning"
Nouchibouguac National Park – New Brunswick
Directed by Jamie Travis
Music by Ohad Benchetrit, Don Kerr, Casey Media
13. "Standing Wave"
Nahanni National Park Reserve – Northwest Territories
Directed by Kevin McMahon
Music by Olga Goreas, Shadrach Kabango, Jace Lasek

National Parks Project Blu-ray, Video Quality **B B B B B**



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The American



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1. [The Man with No Name Trilogy](#)
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National Parks Project is presented on Blu-ray courtesy of Video Service Corporation with an AVC encoded 1080p transfer in 1.78:1 (for the most part). The styles of the videos included here differ markedly and some seem to have had some significant tweaking in post, so there is a rather wide disparity in sharpness and color saturation throughout the thirteen offerings. Generally, though, this is an incredibly nice looking high definition presentation that offers some gorgeous locales presented in an often times *verité* style that sees cameras darting to and fro and even venturing under water a time or two. Fine object detail is quite pleasing throughout this film and though contrast has been played with over the course of the thirteen offerings, generally it's very solid given appropriate expectations.

National Parks Project Blu-ray, Audio Quality **B B B B B**



Unfortunately *National Parks Project* only offers standard Dolby Digital audio options, in both 5.1 and 2.0. It's especially sad in that the 5.1 mix here is quite substantially immersive, including both ambient sounds and the fantastic assortment of music, but it would have sounded so much better in a lossless environment. That said, what's here is generally quite solid, with an especially full midrange. The low end suffers a bit from its Dolby setting, but overall this is a clear and decent set of audio options, albeit not as wonderful as might have been hoped for given this project's emphasis on music.

National Parks Project Blu-ray, Special Features and Extras **B B B B B**



- **Producer Commentary** features producers and creators Joel McConvey, Ryan Noth and Geoff Morrison, along with Ian McGettigan and Paul Aucoin, the recording engineers and mixers on the project. This is a really interesting commentary that gets into the background of the project as well as some of the technical challenges posed by the shoot and recording conditions.
- **Park Music Videos** offer some ancillary footage as well as shots of the music being created for the following songs:

Cape Breton Highlands: "Welcome to the Dark" (HD; 4:22)
 Waterton Lakes: "The Humble Fawn" (HD; 4:08)
 Kluane: "Icefields" (HD; 6:08)
 Kouchibouguac: "Mystic Jamming" (HD; 5:25)
 Nahanni, NT: "First Canyon Rock Jam" (HD; 4:44)
 Wapusk: "Wapusk" (HD; 5:25)
 Bruce Peninsula: "Bruce Beckons" (HD; 3:35)
 Gwaii Haanas: "Longhouse" (HD; 3:52)
 Mingan: "To the Lighthouse" (HD; 6:24)
 Prince Edward Island: "Greenwich Beach 2" (HD; 3:42)

National Parks Project Blu-ray

Prince Edward Island: "Greenwich Beach" (HD; 3:43)
Prince Albert: "Height of Land" (HD; 2:23)
Sirmilik: "Hoodoo Voodoo/Skin & Bones" (HD; 3:37)
Gros Morne: "Green Gardens" (HD; 5:05)

- **Live Concert Videos** (HD; 17:02) were recorded at the National Parks Project Centennial Live Concert at the Royal Cinema, on Parks Canada's 100th birthday. The selections include:

Mystic Morning
Skin & Bones
Simple Things

- **NPP Trailer** (HD; 2:55)

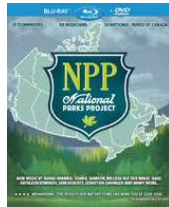
National Parks Project Blu-ray, Overall Score and Recommendation **B B B B B**



National Parks Project is one of the more intriguing nature based videos that's landed on my reviewing plate and its unusual genesis and realization make it a very compelling offering for those who like to wander vicariously through the woods while a really beautiful variety of music plays over the imagery. This Blu-ray features excellent video and acceptably sharp audio given its lossy Dolby presentation, and it also comes with some very appealing supplements.

Recommended.

Did you find this review helpful?



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