

MOVIES

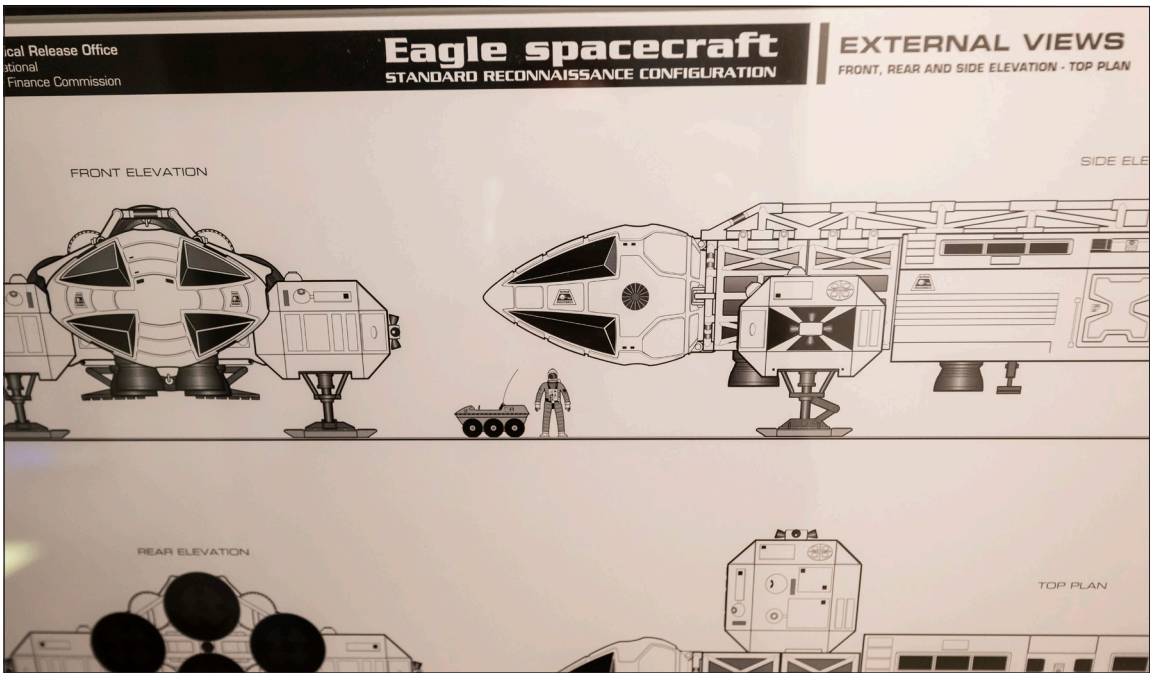


JOHN AUTHEY — PIONEER PRESS

Writer, filmmaker and lifelong science-fiction enthusiast Jeffrey Morris holds a small model of the Eagle spacecraft from the TV show “Space: 1999” in his Stillwater home in May.



“Space: 1999” star Barbara Bain, left, has lunch with filmmaker Jeffrey Morris and Ph.D. educator and software expert Anna Barab in a scene from the documentary “The Eagle Obsession.”



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Schmatics of the Eagle spacecraft from the TV show “Space: 1999” in the studio of writer, filmmaker and lifelong science-fiction enthusiast Jeffrey Morris in his Stillwater home.

LIFTOFF

Stillwater filmmaker explores his lifelong enthusiasm for space travel — and a 1970s TV show

By **Julio Ojeda-Zapata**  
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Sci-fi geeks have long worshipped an obscure TV show about a futuristic Moon-base Alpha and its spacecraft fleet of Eagles.

Now, about a half-century in, those

“Space: 1999” superfans are about to get the homage they deserve, courtesy of a Stillwater filmmaker and Eagle devotee who recently completed and is preparing to release a semi-autobiographical documentary, “The Eagle Obsession.”

Jeffrey Morris calls his doc an exercise in “future nostalgia.”

On a basic level, it’s a tribute to the Eagle, which bears a strong resemblance to the lunar module used in America’s real-life lunar missions during the 1960s and 1970s.

Morris was only 4 when he fell in love with the lunar module, which ferried astronauts from a command module in lu-

nar orbit to the surface.

Morris was crestfallen when the U.S. government pulled the plug on the Apollo program in 1972 — he had assumed he and countless others would go to space, eventually — but the Eagle stole his heart in 1975.

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MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

Free fun today at the Fair

Here’s are a few items from our guide to free Fair fun — see the full guide at [TwinCities.com](#).

**BAAA-LOWEEN** » Teams of four people in themed costumes race to dress up a sheep in a matching outfit, and the audience votes for their favorite group. 9 a.m. at Sheep & Poultry Barn

**SLITHER** » Come hang out with friends from the Minnesota Herpetological Society, both human and reptile. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at DNR Garden Stage (and same time Aug. 31)

**GALLOP** » Massive, muscular draft

horses are not commonly ridden — they’re workhorses, literally — but Draft Horse Barrel Racing sees talented equestrians ride them at high speeds around obstacles. 3 p.m. at Lee & Rose Warner Coliseum

**FREE SHOW OF THE DAY** » Arrested Development, the Grammy-winning hip hop group that’s been performing and championing social causes for more than three decades, takes the stage. 8:30 p.m. at the Bandshell (and same time on Aug. 23).

— *Jared Kaufman*

MOVIE REVIEW

‘Honey Don’t!’ another uneven entry in B-movie trilogy

By **Katie Walsh**  
*Tribune News Service*

In 2024, married filmmakers Ethan Coen and Tricia Cooke posed a cheeky question with their screwball caper “Drive-Away Dolls” — what if crime comedies could be way less masculine, and way more sapphic? Working in

a style and tone that could only be described as “late ‘90s Tarantino rip-off,” the two essentially “queered” that particular subgenre with a wild, wacky and sexually uninhibited sensibility.

That film was the kickoff of their lesbian B-movie trilogy starring Margaret Qualley, which Coen directs, Cooke ed-

its and they both write. The second installment, the Bakersfield, California-set neo-noir “Honey Don’t!,” continues this project, which is both personal for the pair (Cooke is a lesbian; they have an open marriage), and an opportunity to just have a little fun, riffing on tropes and stereotypes

HONEY DON’T » PAGE 6

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A model of the USS Enterprise from the movies hangs in the studio of writer, filmmaker and lifelong science-fiction enthusiast Jeffrey Morris at his Stillwater home.

## Space

FROM PAGE 1

“I fell in love with the Eagle immediately, because those were the kinds of spaceships we were going to fly on the future moon, when there are people living up there, and I wanted to be one of those people living up there,” he said.

Two years later, “Space: 1999” died, to Morris’ chagrin.

This is “The Eagle Obsession” on a deeper level. It’s a lament that America never fulfilled its planetary potential in space.

“It’s about a future that didn’t happen,” Morris says at one point in the documentary. “There’s a future that I thought was coming and that I believed was out there.

“For a lot of us, we also thought it was just going to be a better world, smarter people, kinder people,” he said.

Morris in his documentary only hints at the far-fetched premise of “Space: 1999” — that explosions on the moon cause it to break free from Earth’s orbit and fling it into deep space. Fans seeking plot and character minutiae will be disappointed.

In fact, some of “The Eagle Obsession” isn’t about “Space: 1999” or the Eagles, at all. Morris interviews Apollo 16 astronaut Charles Duke at Cape Kennedy, and he meets “Star Trek” star William Shatner within a faithful recreation of the Starship Enterprise bridge in upstate New York.

But, true to its name, the documentary largely obsesses about the Eagle.

Morris interviews its creator. He meets the actor who played an Eagle pilot on “Space: 1999” and invites him to participate in an Eagle cockpit rebuild. He coaches fifth-graders at a Blaine aerospace magnet school in an Eagle-redesign exercise. He travels to Denmark to meet the constructor of a near-life-size Eagle.

Along the way, he talks to novelists, visual effects experts, historians and others.

“My summary is that I wanted to tell a big story about my life and wanted to include examples of my influences,” Morris said.

### Moon House

When Morris was growing up in Tempe, Ariz., he and his friends played space-related make-believe episodes during school recess. A schoolyard centerpiece was what they called the “moon house,” a climbing structure that looked vaguely like a sci-fi movie building or ship.

Anna Barab, a Ph.D. educator and software expert, recalls how those play sessions helped change the course of her life.

She was a traditional girl in many ways. “You know,

### HOW TO WATCH

“The Eagle Obsession” is being screened publicly and privately across North America, including at the Toronto International Film Festival in September. Twin Citians’ best upcoming shot at catching the film is at 7 p.m. Oct 18 at the Twin Cities Film Fest ([twincitiesfilmfest.org](http://twincitiesfilmfest.org)).

I was playing Barbies,” she said.

But she also watched “Star Trek” and, later, at Morris’ urging, “Space: 1999.” That’s how she became acquainted with Dr. Helena Russell, the show co-star played by Barbara Bain alongside Martin Landau.

“Helena Russell is a character defined by her professionalism, intelligence, and quiet emotional strength,” Morris said. “As chief medical officer aboard Moonbase Alpha, she serves not only as the base’s top physician but also as a moral compass and stabilizing presence within an often-chaotic environment. She’s the rock of ‘Space:1999.’”

Bain proved to be a stabilizing influence in Barab’ life, too.

“It wasn’t typically seen on TV at the time that you could be beautiful and smart and have a career and a family,” Barab said in a documentary chat with Morris. “I remember thinking, like, oh my gosh, I need to make a choice on this.

“And then I see something like Dr. Russell, Barbara Bain’s character, who is beautiful, blond, super smart, a doctor, and it made me realize, I can be anything,” she said.

“This is really powerful. I think there was a real message for young people like us watching a show like that, that this is a world that not only could be but should be.”

She added to Morris, “And kudos to you for including me in your space episodes.”

“Oh, well, you had to be there,” he replied. “You were one of my cool friends.”

Shortly afterward, in one of the documentary’s climactic sequences, Barab got to meet Bain and tell her how much her influence had meant to her at a time when her own mother was fighting for equality.

“And so as a young girl figuring out my potential was, and what my possibilities could be, I realized that’s my future,” Barab told Bain over lunch.

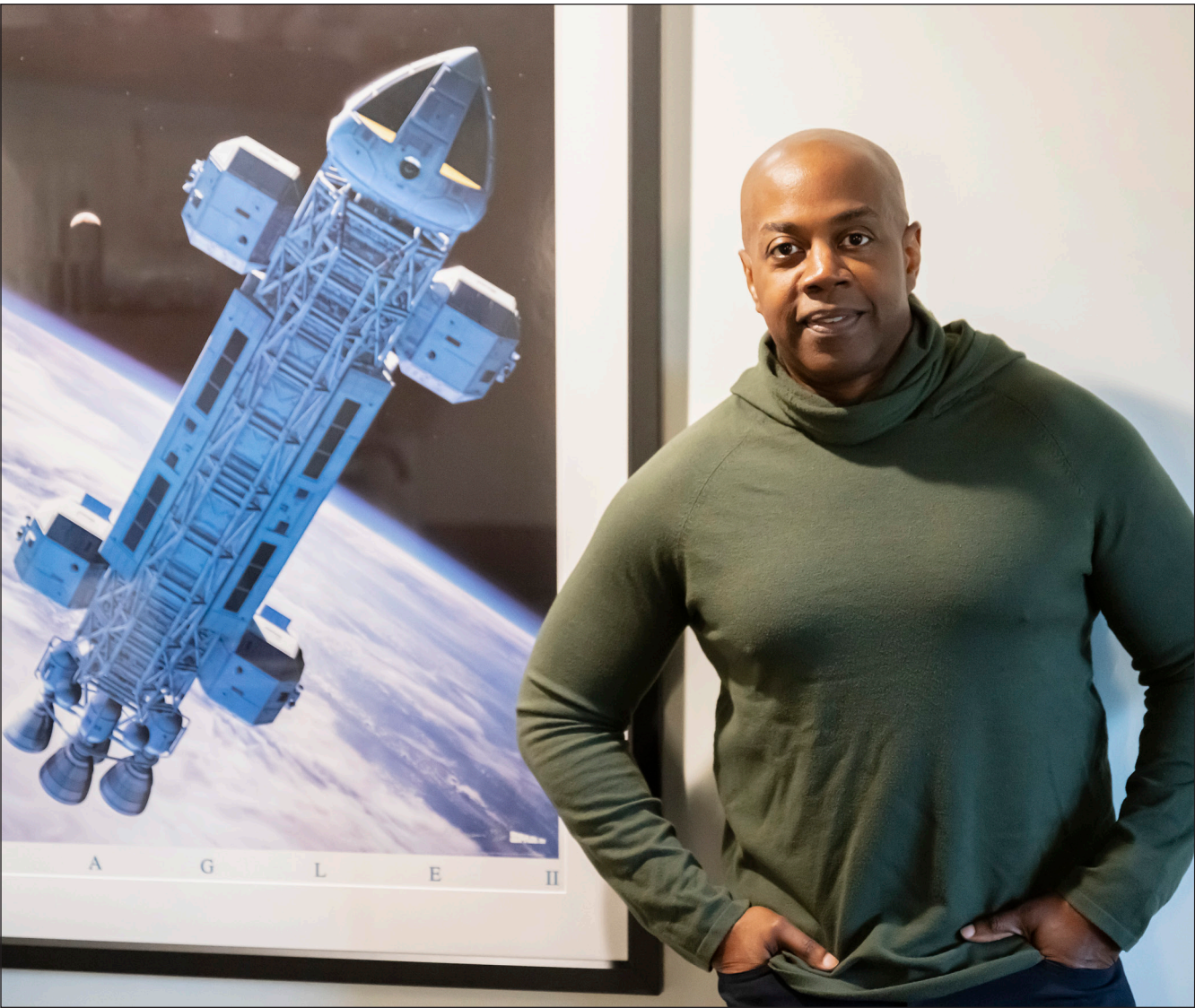
“It’s amazing, it’s amazing,” Bain replied.

### Seeking support

Morris’ high school physics teacher was aghast.

He had just learned that his star pupil intended to pursue a career in filmmaking and not physics.

“When he found out, he contacted my parents and said, ‘Don’t let him do this,’” Morris said. “He has a brilliant mind for physics and science.”



JOHN AUTEY — PIONEER PRESS

Jeffrey Morris stands next to poster art of the Eagle spaceship from the TV show “Space: 1999” in his Stillwater home.

Turns out, “my parents (also) were very challenged by the idea that I wanted to be a filmmaker,” he said.

But Morris had made his life call much earlier.

“I really sensed that the space program wasn’t going to go where I hoped it would,” he said. “And I made the decision by the time I was, like, 11, 12 years old that I wanted to make movies about the world that I wanted to grow up to live in. Because I figured it’s not going to actually happen, so we have to motivate people. Media can motivate people.

“It was much to my parents’ dismay that I went down that path, and it took them a few years to get their heads around it,” he said.

“I think in the early 1990s, when I started my first video production company, that my father saw what I was doing and he was blown away.”

Morris founded a new company, Morris Future Works, at the end of 2010, and has since spun out a couple of acclaimed short science-fiction films. Each has millions of views on YouTube.

In one of these, “Oceanus,” a marine biologist and her aquatic engineer husband fight to survive after a global cataclysm strikes, separating them from their spectacular underwater habitat.

In the other, “Parallel Man,” a rogue agent from a totalitarian regime has stolen a top-secret assault vehicle and plunged into the multiverse to prevent our Earth from being enslaved.

Morris is proud of these and other moderate-sized projects he’s developed but acknowledges that they fall short of his ultimate goal — producing a full-length feature film.

“The biggest challenge is pulling together the money” to make such a film, Morris said. And “you really shouldn’t try to make a science fiction feature film for under, say, \$15 million.”

“The Eagle Obsession” was a change in strategy, he said, because documentaries tend to be much less expensive to make. The Eagle doc was produced for the low end of seven figures. It was easier to make, too, because it could be financed in chunks whereas features typically require full financing up front.

Two and a half years after he first had the idea, Morris finally had his feature film.

He celebrated by honoring his dearly departed parents in a quiet yet flashy way. He rounded up family photos and handed them to local illustrator and animator Kelly Brown, who added them to the film: Jeffrey opening an Eagle at Christmas, Jeffrey playing “Star Trek” and looking through a telescope with his father.

“And so I got the chance to honor them with this movie and to show the world there are people like them,” said Morris, referring to their race. His adoptive parents were black, as is he. “There are success stories. My father was an aerospace engineer and my mother was a librarian.”



COURTESY OF KELLY BROWN

“The Eagle Obsession” documentary immortalizes Jeffrey Morris’ nerdy childhood, including the time his parents gave him a scale model of an Eagle.

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Photo of Reed Sigmund by Kaitlin Randolph

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With a photo of famed astronomer Carl Sagan looking over his shoulder, writer, filmmaker and lifelong science-fiction enthusiast Jeffrey Morris talks about his love of science and spaceships in his Stillwater home.