

## UP IN THE AIR

“Blast!” is about a bunch of nerds in Sweden mucking about with an unfathomable contraption attached to a hot air balloon. Destined for a flight to Northern Canada, the thingamajig does eventually become airborne but doesn’t quite work and ends up landing a few hundred miles off course, necessitating a complicated retrieval operation in the company of an armed Inuit to make sure that the group isn’t eaten by polar bears.

These nerds, it should be said, are brilliant astrophysicists, and the thing they’re working on — the Balloon-borne, Large Aperture, Sub-millimeter Telescope — has the capacity, they believe, to blast open our understanding of the physical structure of the universe.

Directed by Paul Devlin, this absorbing documentary flirts with metaphysics — one of the scientists, a Christian, muses on God’s participation in both the Blast project and the nature of the universe — but mostly it keeps an amused eye on the effort of these driven brainiacs to set aloft an extremely sophisticated and fragile recording device.

The fate of a second launch, based in Antarctica, leads to some unexpected twists and turns and comedic hand-wringing about who decided to paint the most valuable part of the satellite white, given its planned touchdown on the whitest place on earth.

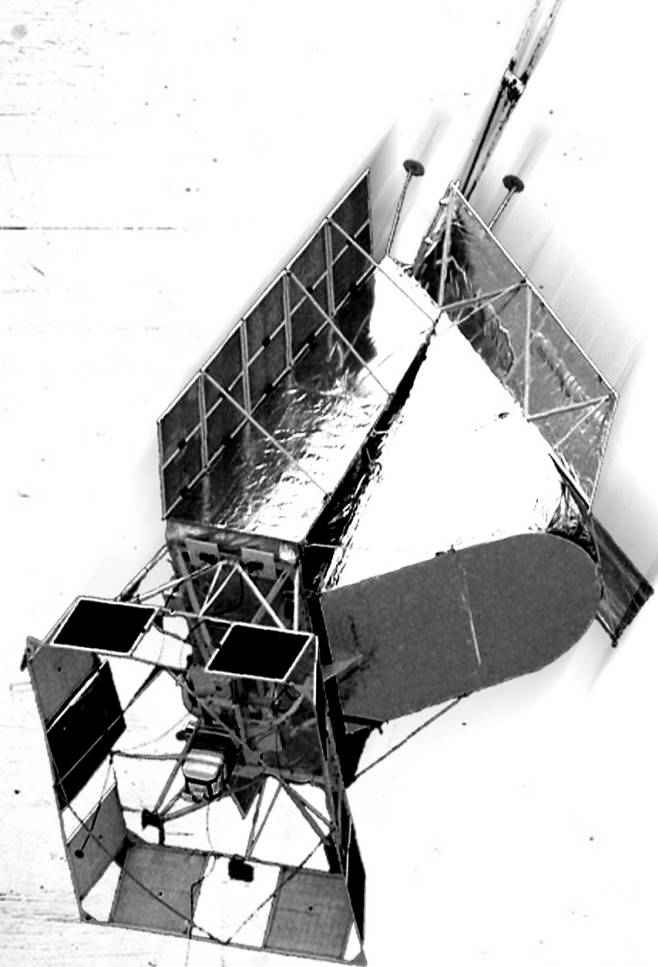
A REVOLUTIONARY TELESCOPE MAY UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE...  
DANGLING AT THE BOTTOM OF A BALLOON.

WELCOME TO ASTROPHYSICS INDIANA JONES STYLE!

THIS ABSORBING DOCUMENTARY LEADS TO SOME UNEXPECTED TWISTS AND TURNS AND COMEDIC HAND-WRINGING. -- NEW YORK TIMES

A FILM BY PAUL DEVLIN  
**BLAST!**

BALLOON-BORNE LARGE APERTURE  
SUBMILLIMETER TELESCOPE



“THE MAGIC FORMULA FOR A SUCCESSFUL MAINSTREAM SCIENCE MOVIE. YOU’LL LAUGH, YOU’LL CRY, YOU’LL WALK AWAY ASTONDED.”  
--DISCOVERY SPACE

PAUL DEVLIN PRODUCTIONS in association with BBC STORYVILLE DISCOVERY CHANNEL CANADA SVT SWEDEN and YLE/FST FINLAND presents  
“BLAST!” starring MARK DEVLIN BARTH NETTERFIELD and VICTOR DAVISON with EMILY KAGAN and RICHARD MARTINEZ and AMBER YODER HILLARY KOLOS  
PRODUCED BY ROBERT HAWK JULIE ANDERSON CO-PRODUCED BY LOUISE ROSEN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRISTOPHER SEMISCH MATTHEW TRUCH GAELAN MARSDEN  
PRESENTED AT HOT DOCS  
TOFOTOODOCUMENTARYFORUM CO-PRODUCED BY LAURA MINNEAR PRODUCED BY NICK FRASER PRODUCED BY CLAIRE MISSANELLI DIRECTED BY PAUL DEVLIN  
Made possible by a grant from THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS ESRRANCE SPACE CENTER www.blastthemovie.com

“THIS ADVENTURESOME SPIN ON BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SHOULD WOW ‘EM!”

The disastrous launch of a balloon toting an innovative sub-millimeter telescope sends “Blast!” director Paul Devlin to Sweden, then to Antarctica, on the trail of his scientist brother Mark — who, together with Toronto physicist Barth Netterfield, is heading this seat-of-the-pants operation. Though it touches on astrophysical principles, illustrated with spectacular, NASA-generated mock-ups of deep space, the docu’s dramatic payload revolves more around earthbound challenges posed by the launch. Despite the gratuitous insertion of a religious-vs.-agnostic debate, this adventuresome spin on breakthrough science should wow ‘em in targeted educational venues.

Helmer Devlin (“Power Trip,” “Slam Nation”) captures the essence of hands-on scientific research: Far removed from the usual sterile NASA protocol, the telescope is largely assembled and calibrated by the head astrophysicists’ graduate students, collectively roughing it miles from home. Crossing the same Antarctic terrain as Werner Herzog’s “Encounters at the End of the World,” the pic climaxes in absurdism worthy of Herzog’s doomed mad geniuses: the desperate hunt for a small white cylinder packed with incalculably valuable data, now invisible against vast stretches of ice and snow.