

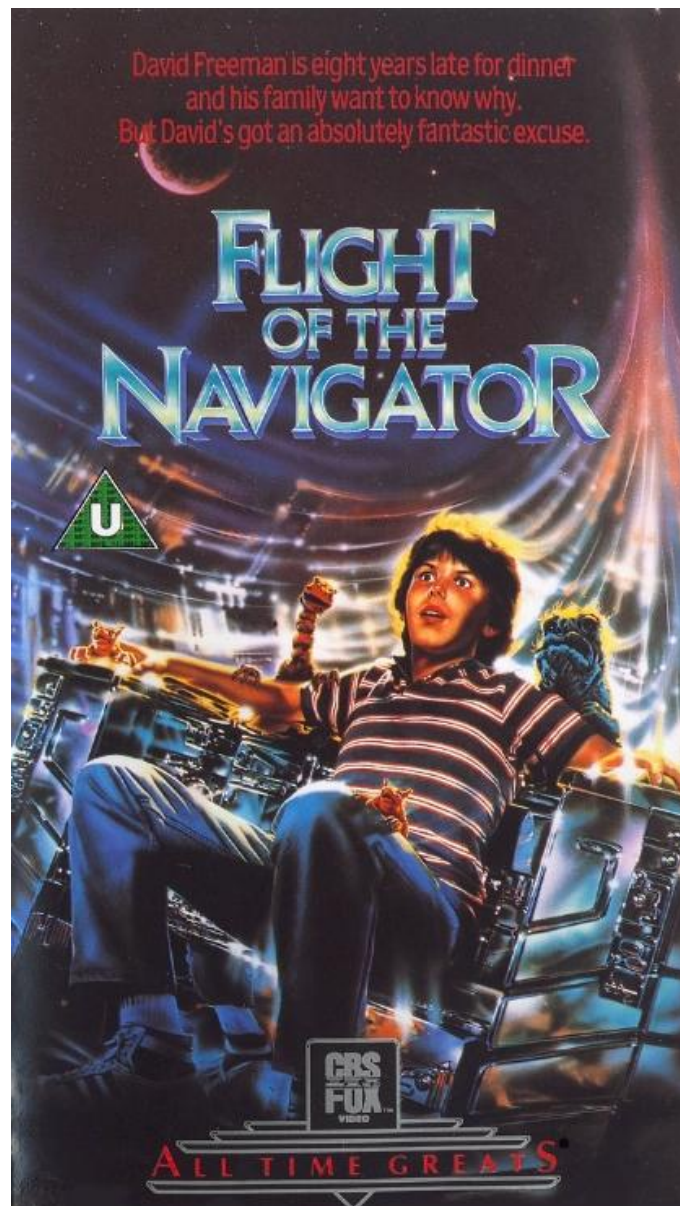
Flight of the Navigator

US : 1986 : dir. Randal Kleiser : PSO / Viking / New Star : 90 min
 prod: Bobby Wald & Dimitri Villard : scr: Michael Burton & Matt MacManus
 : dir.ph.: James Glennon

Joey Cramer; Albie Whitaker
 Veronica Cartwright; Cliff De Young; Sarah Jessica Parker; Matt Adler; Howard Hesseman;
 Paul Mall (Pee-wee Herman)

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5623	5½	9	6	2,149	3 7 7 7 7	Yes	Dec 2001

**David Freeman is eight years late for dinner
 and his family want to know why.
 But David's got an absolutely fantastic excuse.**





The good news is – he's lasted eight years without McDonalds or pizza. The bad news is – Ronald Reagan's in the White House. Time travel can be a mixed blessing.

Source: indeterminate website

**Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
2001 review:**

"12-year old boy is whisked away by an alien spaceship and returns home eight years later – still a 12-year old boy. That's when the adventure really begins. Yet another film featuring a youthful hero and a cute robot; adequate entertainment for kids. The voice of the robot, billed as Paul Mall, is actually Paul Reubens, a.k.a. Pee-wee Herman. **1½ "

**Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:**

"A fine mix of special effects and Disney drama as a young boy tries to find the link between a flying saucer and his disappearance for eight years (although he hasn't aged one day). Things really pick up once the spaceship starts to talk and takes the kid on the ride of his life. *** "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"One dark night, 12-year old David goes looking for his younger brother Jeff. Falling into a ditch, he knocks himself out. Moments later he awakens and walks home, only to find that his family have moved. Not only that, for the past eight years he's been missing, presumed dead. It's a pity the film can't quite live up to the promise of this opening: the boy's confusion is nicely handled, and the reaction on his face when he discovers that the revolting Jeff is now four years older than he and twice his size is one of the high spots of the movie. But as the answer to this strange little riddle unfolds, with NASA scientists discovering that his head is full of space charts and that he can communicate with computers, we're back on familiar Hollywood hi-tech territory. One for the none too discerning youngster."

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"An engaging, if minor chunk of science-fantasy from the Disney studio. Despite a promising beginning, with a boy recovering from an accident to find strangers living at his home (could be anything, but in fact he's lost eight years from his life without himself ageing), the film simply can't follow through with enough incident. The boy has been (in 1978) on a mission to a distant planet, one of whose ships now (in 1986) needs his help. This leads the film into a brief section of its greatest charm, as the boy examines the specimens of alien life the spaceship has gathered from various planets, including a moving sludge of mud (with a cold) that eats anything. Parents of teenies *[sic]* should be aware that, despite the original "U" certificate, the film does contain a sprinkling of mild bad language. More to the point, they may wonder about people (in the film) who let children of eight and 12 wander home through woods in the dark. Max the alien, for those struggling to recognise the voice, is played by Paul Reubens (alias Pee-wee Herman), here acting under the pseudonym of Paul Mall. *** "

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"This all-ages Disney delight concerns a youngster (Joey Kramer) *[sic]* who has the ability to communicate with machines and uses this to help a UFO find its way home. **"FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR"** has something for everyone. Kids will love its crazy creatures, special effects, and action-packed conclusion,

while parents will appreciate its nice balance of sense and nonsense. Rated "PG" for mild cussing¹. ***"

CBS Fox All-Time Greats - VHS 3725 - videocassette sleeve notes:

"Get ready for an adventure that's out of this world!!! When you're 12 years old, every day's a new discovery. But **NOTHING** could prepare David for the adventure which lay ahead. For a start, imagine waking up one day to discover you'd lost eight years of your life! Everything - his mum, his dad, even his dog - had changed. Everything - except him. And that's not the only thing that's weird. Why's David's brain sending out strange signals even he can't explain? And why do a group of top-secret government scientists want to lock him up and study him as a national security risk? The truth is even stranger. Because even though David's just a kid *[sic]*, his mind's the key to the most amazing discovery on Earth: a visitor from another part of the universe. It's time for a risky trip through time and space, with David at the controls - because **HE'S** the Navigator."

Full Cast & Credits:

David FreemanJOEY CRAMER
Helen Freeman
VERONICA CARTWRIGHT
Bill FreemanCLIFF DE YOUNG
Carolyn McAdams
SARAH JESSICA PARKER
Jeff (16 years)MATT ADLER
Dr. FaradayHOWARD HESSEMAN
Voice of MaxPAUL MALL
TroyROBERT SMALL
Jeff (8 years)ALBIE WHITAKER
Dr. CarrJONATHAN SANGER
Mrs. HowardIRIS ACKER
Mr. HowardRICHARD LIBERTY
Detective Banks ...RAYMOND FORCHION
Woman OfficerCYNTHIA CA(IUELIN
Night Guard BraytonTED BARTSCH
Female TechnicianGIZELLE ELLIOT
Technician #2BRIGID CLEARY
Technician #3MICHAEL STRANO
Scientist #1PARRIS BUCKNER
Scientist #2ROBYN PETERSON
Observation GuardTONY TRACY
NASA OfficerPHILIP HOELCHER

¹ They gave the film a higher censorship rating because the hero calls his kid brother "butt-face"?

From a story by Mark H Barker. The production credits above the title read: "PSO and Viking Films presents a New Star Entertainment production a Producers Sales Organisation picture a Randal Kleiser film", and it was released on the CBS-Fox video label, so I can't account for why so many reviewers credit this as a Disney title. If it were Disney, it would be one of their better ones. True, it comes riding on the coat-tails of "**E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL**", and cribs some of its weaker ideas direct from "**STAR WARS**", but it also has merits of its own.

The opening shot has a sleek silvery flying saucer cruising across an eerily silent cityscape, only to be snapped up in the jaws of a leaping dog. It's a dog frisbee tournament, if you can credit such nonsense. The titles over, as the crowd disperses a huge shadow moves across the sky. People fall silent, staring upwards, but it's only a dirigible. Later, when young David is sent to bring his brother home from a friend's house, he glances about uneasily as he threads through the woods, and a silver dome comes into view above the treetops, but it's only a water tower. Such insistent audience teasing is a familiar Spielberg trick (witness the opening shots of "**JURASSIC PARK**") and announces a director who is prepared to play with the genre. A prosaic family SF adventure would be trying to grab our attention with more conventional devices.

Our interest ratchets up a notch when David pitches into the ditch, then wanders home to find an old couple living in his house, and no sign of his family or possessions. The police are called, and root up a missing persons report bearing his exact description, but dated eight years previously. David has been declared officially dead for some while. His anxiety and confusion mounting, he is driven to a strange house across town where a man answers the door. It is his father, but looking much older, and his mother has turned grey. An opening worthy of a better "**Twilight Zone**" episode, and Joey Cramer conveys the boy's fright and disorientation very credibly. We settle down in expectation of something rather special.

But sadly, the best part of the film is already over, and formulaic plotting takes the helm. Not far from the site of David's fall, a dormant spacecraft has been discovered by the authorities, hovering among downed power lines, but giving no sign that its occupants are still living. The craft is hauled back to a NASA hangar, where scientists are unable to crack it open. David meanwhile has been wheeled into a hospital theatre for unspecified "tests" (missing children usually have to undergo that, though never in "family" movies) and it transpires that his brain is emitting high frequency alpha wave signals that hook into computer equipment and produce a vector graphic of the discovered spacecraft. NASA is alerted, and the protesting boy is bundled off to government labs for top secret debriefing.

With the aid of a friendly technician, and a box on wheels which bears the absurd acronym of R.A.L.F. (Robotic Assistant Labour Facilitator, if you please), he escapes to the captured spacecraft, which immediately opens its portal for him. The craft comes to life and breaks free of its moorings, taking David on a round trip of the planet while the mysteries of the opening section are unpicked one by one. The NASA scientists grow frantic trying to track him, his family grow distraught, and the ship's computer learns to talk in a zany "human" way that is meant to be appealing to the kids in the audience, but is revolting to everyone else. Some dignity is salvaged at the end, but only just. The third act is badly misjudged, tacking a madcap spree onto what was an intriguing twist on the "alien abduction" theme (note how none of the reviews chose to describe it as such, though plainly that's what it is).

D.A.R.Y.L., EXPLORERS

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.