

Dancing With Gaia

quick facts

DANCING WITH GAIA is a DV mockumentary that follows the adventures of Zoe Hendrix and her swing dance troupe from mishap filled auditions to their “inspired” debut at the “Dance Your Pants Off” festival.

Director: Matt Stratton

Producers: Matt Stratton and Dallas Trinkle

Story by: Matt Stratton and Dallas Trinkle

Director of Photography: Ben Gonzales

Composer: Brian Crane

Editor: Andrew Merczak

Genre: Comedy

Original Format: MiniDV

Screening Format: DigiBeta, DVD, VHS

Total Running Time: 57 minutes

URL: <http://www.dancingwithgaia.com>



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Dancing with Gaia

a gravy train films production

Zoe is a modern dance instructor/hippie-of-all-trades who finds her mission in a vision: bring the spirit of the earth-goddess to the people through a swing dancing performance. She manages to assemble a group who try their best to understand her without ripping out each other's throats. What she ends up with is collection of Mormons, security guards, bad stand-up comics, and an Eminem-wannabe named Trevor. This motely crew must navigate a world filled with crazy hippies being shaken, pregnant bartenders, and sociopathic dance performance organizers. Can the troupe stay together? Can they manage to dance well enough to avoid the wrath of Gaia? Can a reasonable analogy be drawn between societal cohesiveness and potato salad? This mockumentary answers these questions and more.



about the production

Dancing With Gaia is based upon an original idea by Matt Stratton and Matt Andersen. One night, whilst drinking many beers, the two were discussing the fact that a mockumentary about swing dancing would be “a real hoot”. Most drunken ideas never make it past that stage, but a different fate was in store for this one.

Stratton went on to share this idea with Dallas Trinkle, physics grad student and accomplished misanthrope. While smoking cigarettes on Stratton’s back porch, the two decided to try to make the movie, figuring “it can’t be that hard”. They were in for a surprise.

Over the next several months, Stratton and Trinkle created several drafts of the project, originally titled *Savoy Smooth*. Casting occurred in February of 2002, just in time for the original DP and producer to both quit the production. Luckily, fate smiled upon the two fledgling filmmakers and brought them Ben Gonzales, an accomplished cinematographer who was willing to attach to the project.

“Since it was an improvised movie, a lot of rehearsal was needed,” says Assistant Director Tracy Hogan. “Most of the cast was not trained in improvisation, so the two months of workshopping and rehearsal really made a difference.”

Once the workshop period was complete, principal photography began. *Dancing With Gaia* was shot over five weeks, shooting on weekends only.

Improvisation was key in the shoot, according to actor Fuzzy Gerdes, who played “Mike Wellington”, a dance festival organizer.

“Matt let me run wild with my threats and I did a different outlandish threat every take,” Gerdes says. “It didn’t make it into the film, but my personal favorite was when I threatened to burn down [Zoe’s] house if the performance did not go well.”

The editing process was a long road. Thanks to the graciousness of Superior Street Post, editor Andrew Merczak and Stratton completed editing the film almost one year later.

Due to the improvised nature of the shoot, Stratton and Merczak faced some unique challenges. “You think the movie is about one thing when you write it,” Stratton says. “But then you get into the editing suite, and you have to ‘find’ the story. It’s tough, but you really get to flex your creative muscles. Especially when you’re on microbudget and can’t go back and shoot new stuff.”

Gerdes looks back on his experience with Gravy Train Films fondly. “*Dancing With Gaia* was the first feature-length film I had been involved with. Since then I’ve been cast and crew for a variety of film shoots and I often look back with nostalgia on my *Dancing With Gaia* shoots as examples of how friendly and comfortable a shoot can be.”

Dancing With Gaia

biographies



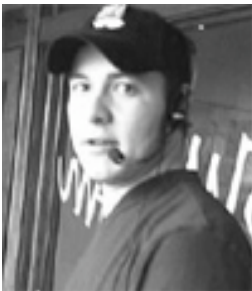
Matt Stratton – Director/Producer/Writer

Matt has an extensive background in directing for the stage, and was eager to make the transition to the world of film and video. His work with the Players Workshop of the Second City is a key element in his approach to comedy, which is to "live truthfully in an imaginary world". *Dancing With Gaia* is his first film. Matt has also directed the well-received short film *Inventing: Music*, and produced and wrote another short for Gravy Train Films, *Inventing: Stephen*. Matt Stratton lives in Chicago with no pets but hopes to one day own a ferret.



Dallas Trinkle – Producer/Writer/"Trevor Dannenberg"

Dallas Trinkle's training to write came from finally completing his PhD dissertation in 2003 -- an accomplishment only delayed by forays into filmmaking. He's often commented that this experience helped him understand how nouns and verbs work. Dallas also wrote the short films *Inventing: Music* and *Inventing: Stephen*, and directed *Inventing: Stephen*. Dallas Trinkle currently resides in Columbus, Ohio.



Ben Gonzales – Director of Photography

Ben Gonzales graduated with a degree in Cinema and Photography from Southern Illinois University. Since his graduation, Ben has worked in various areas of motion picture production including DP, Art Department, PA, pre-production and finance. He is currently an associate producer with Strata Productions, a Chicago based feature film company. Ben is also a freelance photographer and writer. He is awaiting his chance to compromise his morals and sell out to THE MAN.



Brian Crane – Composer

Brian Crane is a nationally recognized music composer for commercials and films. He has worked on hundreds of national TV and radio spots. Mr. Crane is the president of a music and sound design company, BRAINCASE, Inc.



Andrew Merczak – Editor/Production Sound Mixer

Andrew's film experience includes multiple productions at Southern Illinois University (98-00), including co-directing/editing the well-received documentary "Zachary." As part of an internship with Weller-Grossman Production in Los Angeles, he wrote pitches, scouted and even once performed for HGTV's "Awesome Interiors". Andrew is currently in pre-production on a short animated film.

Dancing With Gala

principal cast and crew

cast

Jennifer Fouts	"Beth Schultz"
Evin Galang	"Zoe Hendrix"
Andrew Todaro	"Jason Rudin"
Dallas Trinkle	"Trevor Dannenberg"
Jennifer Wilding	"Christine Jensen"
Kitty Mortland	"Emily Laird"
Justin Marchert	"John Hatch"
Marla Hudnall	"Mary Hatch"
Ryan Peterson	"Jeff Wykowski"
Kelly Belmont	"Samantha Wykowski"
Fuzzy Gerdes	"Mike Wellington"

crew

Matt Stratton	Director, Producer, Writer
Dallas Trinkle	Producer, Writer
Ben Gonzales	Director of Photography
Andrew Merczak	Editor, Production Sound Mixer
Tracy Hogan	Assistant Director
Nicolle Wood	Production Designer
Dave Rentauskas	Assistant DP
Evin Galang	Choreographer
Jason Balutan	Choreographer, Production Assistant