

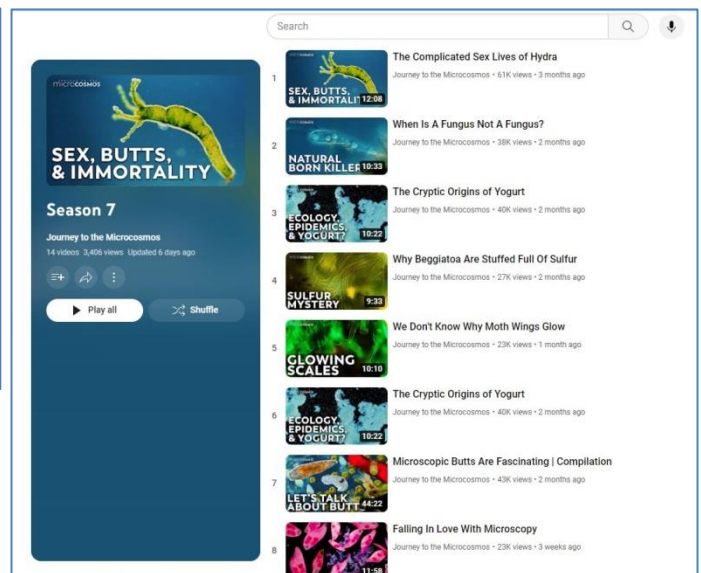
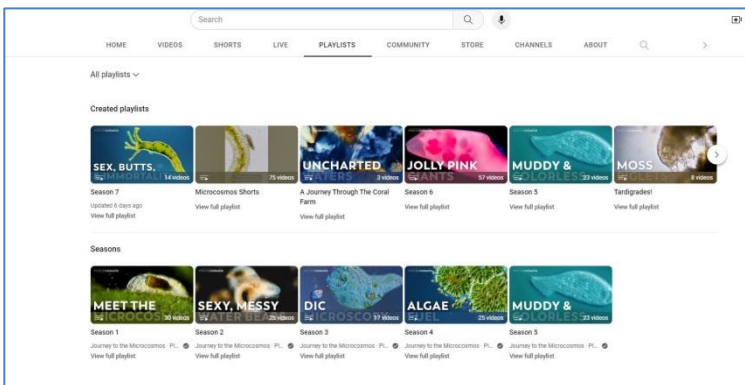
TV TIME...

When you set yourself the task of writing an article every month on a specific subject, like microscopy, there comes a time when you may run out of inspiration... This is one of those days...

I have several centers of interests in my life. One happens to be microscopy. Another one is astronomy, and right now I must admit that the telescope has moved to the forefront, with several projects that take a lot of my time. On top of it, I had to do some minor work on the house, and I finished a book on macrophotography that I was working on, so there goes a few more hours of my week...

So, as a way to jump-start my aging brain, I tried to find some documentaries that could give me fresh ideas for things to look at or anything else that could generate some thoughts for my monthly column. As it turns out, most network TV channels seem more interested in sleepy lions, breaching whales, and cute birds than in microorganisms found in green slime... Go figure. Then I came on a forum that suggested a YouTube channel, which proposes a series of short videos, very professional, well edited, with good comments. Most run under 15 minutes, with a few that go beyond 30 minutes. I have been hooked ever since.

Chances are that many of you have already heard of *Journey to the Microcosmos*, but if you don't, you MUST go take a look. Now, that is, right after you finished reading this article...



The filming is done by James Weiss, a young and passionate researcher in microbiology at Bournemouth University, on the southern coast of England. Looking at his footage, you might think that he works with microscopes that cost as much as an Italian sports car, but in one episode (What Microscope Do We Use? (And

Other Frequently Asked Questions), the cat is out of the bag: Weiss started his road to microscopy stardom with a microscope clobbered together from odd parts and ends and at a cost of about \$200... His next microscope was a Motic BA310, a brand I had never heard of before. Checking on the internet, I found its price to be around \$2000... So it's not the instruments, but the talent of the man using it that makes the difference. But eventually, he managed to get some social financing and get himself a \$20 000 DIC microscope...

Weiss is backed by a whole crew, starting with Hank Green, an American vlogger and science communicator who is also a musician, internet producer, entrepreneur, and science-fiction author. Let's just say that he keeps busy... He is the one who first discovered Weiss talent and decided to give him a big built up. By his own account in "Meet the Microcosmos", Green makes educational YouTube channels, including *Crash Course*, *SciShow* and *Bizarre Beasts*. He started *Microcosmos* in 2019 and is currently producing its seventh season, each with between 17 and 57 episodes! At the time of this writing, it's a total of 281 videos!

Among some of these stories are favorites of any microscopist, like tardigrades, rotifers, diatoms, and what lives in puddles. But there are also some more exotic subjects, such as algae to fuel our cars, bacteria that eat plastic, or questions like "How do microorganisms pee?"... The BBC may not have too many documentaries of interest to microscopists, but this YouTube channel fill the vacuum in a very impressive way. You can literally spend many fascinating hours in front of the screen; especially if you view it on a big TV screen as I do! I have barely scratched the surface of this YouTube channel, but I am now addicted...

Continuing my research on James Weiss, I also found out that he published a book, "The Hidden Beauty of the Microscopic World"; I found it on Amazon, and after reading a few of the reviews, I just received it... Amazing...

The only drawback to seeing all those videos and pictures is how inadequate it may make you feel when you see the quality of the work produced by Weiss. Let's be honest, I am jealous, and no doubt many of you will be as well. But considering the equipment that he started with, it gives me solace and encourages me to continue working and learning more about microscopy and try to get the most out of my old Zeiss and Wild phase contrast... until I can get my hands on my own DIC...



<https://www.youtube.com/@journeymicro/playlists>

James Weiss also has a Twitter/X account:

https://twitter.com/jam_and_germs?lang=en

All photos were taken from "Meet the Microcosmos" site. I am sure that they won't mind the publicity...

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