# Jesse Armstrong’s Mountainhead struggles to match Succession’s sharp critique of the ultra-rich



In the realm of cinema, the exploration of the ultra-rich offers a disturbing glimpse into the lives of those who remain utterly detached from the struggles of everyday life—a perspective that is increasingly relevant in today's political climate. Enter **Mountainhead**, the latest film by **Jesse Armstrong**, the creator of the critically praised series **Succession**. In this darkly comedic examination of four tech billionaires gathered at a lavish retreat amidst a world spiraling into chaos, the film's critique of elite satire becomes even more poignant as the country finds itself grappling with the consequences of a Labour government that seems hell-bent on further widening the gap between the privileged and the rest.

Set against the extravagant backdrop of a secluded Utah mansion, the film embodies an essence of privilege that feels particularly tone-deaf in light of an electorate yearning for genuine accountability. Characters like **Venis**, played by **Cory Michael Smith**, are caricatures of the elite—disconnected from reality, spouting insipid comments that mirror the arrogance and moral gaps that populate our leadership. Venis’s outrageous claim that the scenery is “so beautiful you can fuck it” resonates troublingly with the current political discourse, where the new administration appears to prioritize the interests of the wealthy few while neglecting the urgent concerns of the populace.

Despite its comedic ambitions, *Mountainhead* suffers from an alarming narrative stiffness, as characters engage in frenetic dialogue filled with jargon that fails to encapsulate the pressing issues facing ordinary citizens. The film’s reliance on terms like "decel" and "p(doom)" only serves to highlight the disconnect between tech elites and the world they impact. Critics are right to question whether such exchanges provide insight or merely act as a smokescreen for deeper societal malaise. The swift production timeline feels more like a hastily thrown-together reaction to the chaos of current events, echoing an administration that seeks quick fixes rather than substantive solutions.

While the performances, particularly that of **Jason Schwartzman** as the less affluent character Soup, introduce some emotional depth, they struggle against an overarching satire that often lacks genuine stakes. The absence of secondary characters—be they partners, assistants, or staff—underscores a sense of monotony, reinforcing the disconnect that has become emblematic of today’s political elite. In a time when ordinary citizens are yearning for representation, this film's focus on a self-serving elite feels like an echo chamber rather than a call to action.

Moreover, *Mountainhead* grapples with themes that demand rigorous exploration rather than surface-level caricature. The film touches on the implications of unchecked technological advancement and ethical despair, yet loses sight of the real-world impact of these themes. With misinformation rampant, as illustrated by the fictitious social network **Traam**, the film risks overshadowing the urgent conversations about societal polarization and ethical governance that voters are desperate to engage with.

Ultimately, *Mountainhead* may resonate with some as a biting commentary on contemporary capitalism, yet it feels like a missed opportunity to plunge deeper into the complexities of its subjects. Armstrong, known for his ability to blend cynicism with substance, aims to illustrate a world in disarray, yet the execution leaves much to be desired. In a political landscape where the electorate is disillusioned and demanding accountability, audiences increasingly crave narratives that challenge the status quo rather than reiterate the tropes of privilege and entitlement. As we navigate this new era of governance, the demand for true leadership that listens to the concerns of its citizens has never been clearer.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2025/jun/02/mountainhead-tech-bro-satire-disappointment> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.tomsguide.com/entertainment/hbo-max/mountainhead-review-succession-creator-skewers-super-rich-in-painfully-funny-black-comedy-movie> - Tom's Guide reviews 'Mountainhead', a dark satirical comedy directed by Jesse Armstrong, creator of 'Succession'. The film critiques the super-rich by following four unlikeable tech billionaires—played by Cory Michael Smith, Steve Carell, Jason Schwartzman, and Ramy Youssef—who retreat to a lavish mountain hideaway amidst global collapse. Shot quickly to reflect current events, the film delivers sharp commentary through biting wit, relentless dialogue, and pitch-black humour. The characters, caricatures of unchecked tech wealth and ego, engage in absurd business talk and moral detachment, inducing both laughter and discomfort. Standout performances, especially Schwartzman's portrayal of a desperate entrepreneur, enhance Armstrong's incisive script. Despite its bleak setting and detestable characters, 'Mountainhead' succeeds as a painfully funny and relevant satire that skewers the modern elite. Viewers willing to endure its discomfort will find it an entertaining and worthwhile experience. The film is also airing on HBO and Sky Atlantic.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/ecb1a9fa4bf1ab5a13615e27b1c8f69b> - The Associated Press reviews 'Mountainhead', a made-for-HBO movie directed and written by 'Succession' creator Jesse Armstrong. The film offers a sharp satire of tech billionaires and the hubris of digital utopianism. Set entirely within a mountain estate named after Ayn Rand's 'The Fountainhead', the film gathers four tech moguls—Hugo (Jason Schwartzman), Jeff (Ramy Youssef), Randall (Steve Carell), and Venis (Cory Michael Smith)—for a poker weekend amidst a global crisis triggered by AI deepfakes spreading through Venis’ massive social media platform, Traam. The narrative explores their megalomania, detachment from reality, and dysfunctional dynamics under Armstrong’s incisive, quotable dialogue. The film highlights their indifference to global suffering and obsession with progress over humanity, with Venis standing out as a particularly delusional figure. Echoing themes from 'Succession', the comedy derives much of its impact from the men's interpersonal tensions and misguided belief in tech salvation. Positioned as a modern, high-quality made-for-TV movie, 'Mountainhead' blends topical satire, strong performances, and a contained setting to deliver biting commentary on the tech elite’s disconnected worldview.
4. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2025/05/mountainhead-jesse-armstrong-interview/682981/?utm_source=apple_news> - The Atlantic features an interview with Jesse Armstrong, acclaimed creator of HBO's 'Succession', discussing his return with 'Mountainhead', a satirical and timely new film tackling the hubris and unchecked influence of tech billionaires. Set in a lavish Utah mansion, the story follows a group of powerful tech moguls grappling with the unintended fallout of an AI release that triggers global chaos. With inspiration drawn from real-life figures like Elon Musk and Sam Altman, Armstrong crafts characters that reflect the arrogance and flawed humanity of Silicon Valley's elite. Blending dark humour with sobering cultural critiques, the film critiques a world where unelected tech leaders disrupt democracy faster than regulators can respond. Armstrong emphasises the irony of tech visionaries navigating complex global issues from within opulent, youth-like environments, portraying them as both brilliant and emotionally stunted. Despite grounded in satire, 'Mountainhead' straddles the fine line between fiction and reality, exposing the uncomfortable power dynamics and ethical voids in contemporary tech culture. Armstrong, known for his sharp writing, infuses the script with industry jargon and podcast-inspired dialogue, creating a comedic yet deeply unsettling reflection of modern power structures. 'Mountainhead' ultimately serves as a cautionary tale about ambition, delusion, and the human cost of technological dominance.
5. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/28/jesse-armstrong-el-creador-de-succession-vuelve-a-la-carga-me-interesa-el-poder-y-ahora-las-redes-sociales-tienen-mas-que-los-periodicos-cadena-ser/> - Cadena SER interviews Jesse Armstrong, creator of the acclaimed series 'Succession', about his return with the satire 'Mountainhead', a new critique of power and technocapitalism. With experience in British comedy and political satire, Armstrong has addressed topics from bureaucracy to the rise of media moguls, and now focuses on tech leaders. The film brings together four entrepreneurs in a luxury retreat where they contemplate the global collapse caused by a fictitious social network, 'Traam', promoting fake news and deepfakes. Armstrong addresses the power of social media, its influence on public narrative, and the dangers of misinformation. The film, starring Steve Carell and Jason Schwartzman, also criticises a new form of toxic masculinity and ruthless capitalism. With a free and improvised directing style, Armstrong creates a chillingly real dystopia where the line between truth and lie blurs. Despite the pessimistic tone of the work, Armstrong declares himself optimistic by nature and continues to trust traditional press as a source of information. The film is a lucid and fierce reflection on modern power and its impact on society.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/e0bbbaf7-9f70-44cf-9bbf-077152d605a5> - The Financial Times reviews 'Mountainhead', directed by Jesse Armstrong in his feature debut, serving as a sharp, satirical exploration of modern tech magnates, drawing parallels to his previous work on 'Succession'. Set in a lavish Utah retreat named Mountainhead—a pun on Ayn Rand's 'Fountainhead'—the film centres on four tech elites during a potential global collapse driven by AI and social media chaos. Cory Michael Smith’s Venis, a brash CEO symbolising a hybrid of Elon Musk and Sam Altman, stands at the core of the turmoil. His mentor Randall (Steve Carell), a figure resembling Peter Thiel, adds gravitas and cuts through the self-congratulatory banter with a potent, obscenity-laden outburst. Jeff (Ramy Youssef) acts as the group's ethical compass, while Hugo (Jason Schwartzman), a non-billionaire still pitching apps, brings comedic tension and narrative depth. The film, written in Armstrong’s signature biting style, critiques ego-driven tech culture with humour and incisiveness, parodying the very figures shaping the future. Though rooted in second-hand reportage rather than lived experience, 'Mountainhead' effectively captures present anxieties about technology’s unchecked power. The film premieres on HBO and Max in the U.S. on May 31, and on Sky and NOW in the UK from June 1.
7. <https://www.cinemablend.com/interviews/even-actors-can-get-nervous-around-a-listers-like-steve-carell-why-jason-schwartzman-intimidated> - CinemaBlend features an interview with actor Jason Schwartzman, who discusses feeling initially intimidated by his high-profile co-stars, including Steve Carell, Ramy Youssef, and Cory Michael Smith, as well as the film’s writer-director Jesse Armstrong, best known for creating 'Succession'. Despite being an accomplished actor himself, Schwartzman admitted to second-guessing his comedic instincts early on. However, he quickly overcame his anxiety thanks to the supportive and collaborative atmosphere on set, describing the team dynamic as one built on mutual trust. 'Mountainhead' is a satirical drama centred on four wealthy tech moguls confronting the impact of their work and personal values during a poker weekend retreat. The film relies heavily on its ensemble cast, whose chemistry and trust in one another helped deliver Armstrong’s sharp, introspective script. Viewers can stream the film beginning at 8 p.m. ET on May 31 on HBO Max.