



A Man on the Moon

Andrew Chaikin (Foreword) , Tom Hanks (Foreword) , Bronson Pinchot (Reading) , Michael Kramer

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On the night of July 20, 1969, our world changed forever when two Americans, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, walked on the moon. Now the greatest event of the twentieth century is magnificently retold through the eyes and ears of the people who were there. Based on the interviews with twentythree moon voyagers, as well as those who struggled to get the program moving, journalist Andrew Chaikin conveys every aspect of the missions with breathtaking immediacy: from the rush of liftoff, to the heartstopping lunar touchdown, to the final hurdle of reentry.

A Man on the Moon Details

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Download and Read Free Online A Man on the Moon Andrew Chaikin (Foreword) , Tom Hanks (Foreword) , Bronson Pinchot (Reading) , Michael Kramer

From Reader Review A Man on the Moon for online ebook

Brad says

I am not a believer in the conspiracy theory of the moon landings. There were just too many people involved, and that many people simply can't be counted upon to keep their mouths shut for all these years.

Perhaps I am a little biased, though. As an expatriate Yankee, one who is shamed and saddened by much of what my country has done, the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo missions are one of the few things my country did in the Twentieth Century (and so far in the Twenty-First) for which I am actually proud.

Andrew Chaikin does an exceptional job of recounting the Apollo missions, ensuring that it is not all about Neil, Buzz and "What's-his-name?" (Michael Collins, for anyone who's interested).

Indeed, the most appealing aspect of A Man on the Moon is how Chaikin puts a face on the missions and men that are far from famous, from the other astronauts to the mission controllers and even those people involved in the design and manufacture of the space crafts.

One of my favourites is the story of Harrison Schmitt, a geologist who joined the Apollo program as an astronaut in the scientist group and made his moon walk on Apollo 17. Schmitt was instrumental in the geological training of his fellow astronauts, helping to turn Gene Cernan, Dave Scott, John Young, Charles Duke and James Irwin into Lunar Field Geologists. None of the astronauts were dumb men, in fact many of them were geniuses (including a genuine rocket scientist), but turning them into geologists on top of all their other duties and concerns was a huge undertaking, and one that gave us a far better understanding of the moon's geology than we could have achieved any other way.

Another fine account is Chaikin's re-telling of the landing pad fire aboard Apollo 1, which killed Gus Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffee. It is one of the saddest moments in the history of the Apollo program, and Chaikin manages to strike a balance between respect for the fallen and the investigation that came to see the accident as a "failure of imagination." He avoids the temptation of the maudlin, and the three dead astronauts would undoubtedly have appreciated that.

If you're a space buff, especially if you're a fan of the moon missions, A Man on the Moon is a must read; and if you are coming to that landmark moment for the first time, it is the perfect book to get you started.

Sarah says

This was an incredible accomplishment of space documentation. Andrew Chaikin's writing kept me spellbound through the many stories of the Apollo space missions to the moon. Bronson Pinchot was the perfect narrator for the audiobook, his voice filled with wonder, reverence, and urgency at the right times during each mission. An essential book for anyone interested in the history of manned space flight.

Steve Mitchell says

This is the true story of what was – arguably – the greatest technological and engineering achievement of the twentieth century. (No less a commentator than Arthur C. Clarke said that the moon landings will be the defining moment of our age that will be remembered in a thousand years time!) Anybody that doubts the genuine significance of the moon landings upon our understanding of the formation of the solar system and how the universe works should read this book. If you are one of those people that believe that the moon landings were faked (shame on you!) then reading this will demonstrate the true ingenuity of all those involved with the Apollo programme and the risks that the astronauts were prepared to take for the advancement of knowledge and exploration; some of whom paid the ultimate price during their quest. If I had to fault this book I would say that it is not the definitive and exhaustive history of the Apollo missions: my search shall continue.

Kristy Miller says

This is not about the scientists, or the engineers, or the thousands of people that made Apollo possible. This book is about the personal lives and inner thoughts of the astronauts. And it is fascinating. Chaikin's book served as the basis for the HBO series From the Earth to the Moon, which I must now watch. We only have a few Apollo astronauts left living. And we have not been back to the moon. Our "president" this week announced that he wanted to privatize the International Space Station, and I desperately hope that people with sense can stop that from happening. We should be going back to the moon, perhaps try and set up a permanent laboratory or something. We should be sending people to Mars, and more probes to other planets. Science and exploration are part of who we are as human beings. We shouldn't be putting price tags on these things, and they shouldn't be solely American ventures. Getting to the moon was humanity's baby steps. It's time to start walking.

Jonathan Deaux says

This is the "go to" book for nearly all things related to the Apollo Program for the average person interested in one of the greatest achievements of human history and the faces that made the trip. If you can only afford one book about Apollo, this is it. One reviewer seems to think that there may not be enough actual "political background" and "engineering" involved with this account. I read aviation and engineering books more often than not and this is not a book on the in depth engineering involved with the Apollo Program....nor was it intended to be. It certainly isn't meant to involve the politics or Cold War history that was running concurrent to the Apollo Program. I'm not sure what the other reviewer was expecting. He may be better served reading a text on Advanced Physics, Advanced Geometry, Advanced Calculus, the NASA mission briefs, the NASA flight logs and the Communist Manifesto if "A Man on the Moon" wasn't working for him.

Ushan says

The Apollo project was the culmination of the Soviet-American space race, the magnificently mad endeavor with no purpose other than national prestige, a twentieth century equivalent of the Great Sphinx of Giza. The Soviets were the first to orbit a satellite around the Earth, to orbit a man, and to land a probe on the Moon, Venus and Mars. Yet the Americans landed a man on the Moon, which the Soviets tried and failed to do. The project used machines more complicated than a Yamato class battleship of thirty years before, pushing the envelope of technology in all directions. The history of how this was done is fascinating; unfortunately, it is

not told in this book. Earlier in his career, the project director of the Saturn V rocket, which propelled the astronauts to the Moon, was the operations manager of the Mittelwerk underground factory in Germany, which produced the V-2 ballistic missile using the labor of inmates of the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp; of the 60,000 laborers, 20,000 died of starvation, disease and overwork. He was later stripped of his US citizenship, deported to Germany, and not given a visa to return for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Moon landings. This rocketeer, named Arthur Rudolph, is not even in the index of Chaikin's book! Dr. Wernher "I aim for the stars, but sometimes I hit London" von Braun is mentioned in passing three times. The failed Soviet manned moon program using the N-1 rocket is not mentioned at all, even though by 1994 its existence was well known: a CIA official revealed as early as 1976 that the agency knew about it; how could it not to, if American spy satellites routinely photographed the giant rocket on its launch pad?

Instead, Chaikin's book is a 600-page Life Magazine article about the astronauts: their early lives, their personalities and quirks, how they trained for the Moon missions, how they flew to the Moon and landed on it, what they did on the Moon (mostly walk around collecting rocks, though on later missions they also got to ride around in the Moon buggy), and what they did later in life (one became a one-term US Senator from New Mexico, another an artist, another a parapsychology nut). The designer of the Moon buggy, named Ferenc Pavlics, who emigrated after the failed 1956 Hungarian Revolution, is also not in the index. Apollo astronauts were the test pilots of spacecraft, which is not surprising given that many had earlier been test pilots of aircraft; Neil Armstrong once flew the North American X-15 suborbital spaceplane. They were heroes all right. Yet heroes are not uncommon; it was the engineers, including former Nazi rocketeers, who made the Apollo project succeed, and they are not given their rightful due in Chaikin's book.

Jacob Folkman says

Hyper-engaging, cinematic coverage of the Apollo missions. Can't recommend enough if you have even a passing interest in human space travel.

Paul Anheier says

Spanning the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs, Chaikin managed to scratch pretty much all my space exploration itches in one book. It has triumph, tragedy, lots of science, and a behind-the-scenes look at the tens of thousands of people that helped propel the astronauts to the moon and back. Though the coverage is undoubtedly skewed towards the astronauts, it's hard to come away from this book without a deeper appreciation for the expansive national resources involved in these programs.

Importantly, having read this on the heels of Command & Control, I'm now even more aware of how closely these huge leaps in science were tied to the the Cold War nuclear race. Indeed, much of the initial rocket technology for Gemini was borrowed from the Titan II missile program...except with a human on top.

And beyond all those political synergies, it's simply mind-boggling to me that the last Apollo mission was in '72. Fortunately, even with so many decades having passed by, the digital archives available today make reliving these moonshots easier than ever.

If you're into space history at all, this is more than worth your time, and occasional browsing of NASA archives as you read along can greatly enhance the narrative.

Marceline Smith says

I got this for Christmas and it was all I could do not to sit sit down and read the whole thing from cover to cover, enormous though it is. I've been a space nut since I was very small (wait, I am still very small) and this book is just a joy. It describes NASA's Apollo program in great detail, going through each mission from the disastrous beginnings through to the six Moon landings. While sometimes bogged down by technical language and military customs, it does a great job of explaining how it all succeeded and introducing all the people who made it happen. The actual moon landings are exhilarating to read about and each mission comes with so many problems overcome that you can understand why we've never been back (yet), though reading about NASA's plans at the time for moon bases and manned missions to Mars makes me so sad. The book is also the source material for HBO's rather great TV series From the Earth to the Moon, which is well worth checking out. My only disappointment is that Chaikin hasn't yet done a book about the Shuttle missions – come on man, get to it!*

*This is a joke, before anyone has a go at me. I'm actually way more impressed he's helping with current NASA missions and happy to wait.

Brad says

This review was written in the late nineties (just for myself), and it was buried in amongst my things until today, when I uncovered the journal it was written in. I have transcribed it verbatim from all those years ago (although square brackets indicate some additional information for the sake of readability). It is one of my lost reviews.

What a personally powerful book. A Man on the Moon is such a wonderful reminder of what we are capable of as a species and what wonderful things we can accomplish when we work together. I hope to see a man on the moon in my lifetime, although I doubt it will happen, which is a shame.

It never ceases to amaze me that true life figures are so impressive when their stories are told -- whether they are really impressive or not. Is this all just spin? Is it the grandeur of their accomplishments? Whatever. I love hearing tales of Crazy Horse and Custer, of Henry V or Julius Caesar or Cleopatra. But right now I most love to hear the stories of the Astronauts and Cosmonauts.

Apollo 12's tightly bound crew of Conrad, Bean and Gordon were inspiring with their camaraderie; Apollo 13's near fatal accident couldn't have been dreamt up by the greatest of screenwriters; then there's my favourite, the Apollo 17 crew of Cernan, Jack Schmitt and Ronald Evans. The finest scientific achievements of the program, and a fitting end to one of the world's greatest pursuits. Chaikan's book allowed me to take part in the Apollo adventures -- for that I am grateful.

Kieran says

A tale of the greatest adventure ever undertaken by humanity. And every day it strikes me as simply crazy that no one has walked on the moon in 45 years...

John Behle says

The moon landings and those joyous lunar walks (later they brought along a car) will always make a superb story. The science, the passion, the skills involved are a pinnacle of human achievement. Add the feelings extracted from days of interviews with not just the astronauts, but the engineers, the geologists, wives (current and ex) and the resulting soufflé of a work is fine listening (I enjoyed the 19 CD package) indeed. The clarion timbre of Bronson Pinchot holds true throughout.

Andrew Chaikin whips together all these components for a ride that had me thinking back to those halcyon days of hunched around the living room GE console TV. We all learned some of the rocket science, right? Recall Walter Cronkite's serious tones on how liquid oxygen was needed to form the oxidizer with the fuel, even on the first stage of the Saturn V? That fuel was 204,000 gallons of good ol' kerosene. In just 36 nautical miles, the craft was moving at 7,500 feet per second.

Beyond all the staggering facts, this is a work of human dimension. There are entire chapters dedicated on who, and the office politics of how they were selected, got to fly. Oh my, those precious, three, high and fast seats per flight were so one-in-a-millennium, that many of the astronauts suffered depression when they came back.

Each mission had harrowing moments. These are teed up and well displayed by Chaikin. The geology of the last three missions, and how hard fought that part of the program was, is drawn argument by funding argument.

Above all, I rekindled the pride we all shared on just how successful the Apollo program turned out.

Just A. Bean says

If you want to know about the astronauts of the Apollo Program, this is the best book I've read. It really digs into their lives and what it was like to work in space in that period. The book is funny and interesting, and covers a lot of the technical challenges, the training, and how the crews worked together.

It does not try to cover any other aspect of the Apollo Program. Mission Control is mentioned as a place that exists, but mostly in so far as the astronauts interact with it. An engineering team probably designed the rockets.

I would skip the long rant at the end about how modern NASA sucks, which seems obligatory in every Apollo book.

The narrator was a mixed bag. His dialogue was excellent and he often added a lot of humour, but he also did this breathless "They're going to THE MOON!!!" thing rather more than was needed.

Maura says

I actually finished this about a week ago, but have been wanting to find the time to give it the glowing detailed review it deserves. Looks like that's not going to happen, so i better just get it out here and simply say: THIS IS GREAT.

It's what the HBO Series "From the Earth to the Moon" was based on. It's what the actors read when preparing for Apollo 13. It's simply a thorough, engagingly written overview of the whole Apollo program. as someone who missed the tv & film renditions of this information, i was coming from a position of interest but only vaguely informed. This left me as jazzed about space exploration, and science in general, as any museum, book or movie has ever done. you feel like you're getting inside the astronauts' heads. you're meeting the scientists & technicians they worked with. it's just great. read it now!

Alex Templeton says

I rewatched Apollo 13 for the however-many time earlier this summer, and was reminded of just how incredible all things moon exploration were. I wanted to read a book that would give me a history of the Apollo program and some explanation of how all the science worked. This was the perfect book, and a fantastic read. Chaikin clearly conducted tons of interviews and research to write it, and his narratives of each Apollo mission make the reader go on the adventures right along with the astronauts. The moral of the story is that the Apollo program was an effing incredible endeavor, both in terms of what it represented in sheer effort and in sheer wonder. I get that we have many important things here on earth, but I would challenge anyone who reads this book to come away thinking that there is nothing terribly valuable about space exploration - and perhaps even further trips to the moon.

Alec Ritchie says

Very thorough history of the Apollo moon-landing. Chaikin is obviously very passionate about the subject-matter and his prose is pleasing to read. If you have ever wanted to know what the birth of NASA and the subsequent Apollo program is all about, I think you'd be hard pressed to do better than this book.

Nick Rolston says

One of my favorite books, a tale of mankind's greatest adventure documenting each of the Apollo missions through the eyes of the astonauts and scientists who experienced the journeys. The book reads like a novel and vividly portrays the imagery and exhilaration of what it is like to leave the only place we've ever called home.

Leah K says

A very interesting history of the Apollo missions. Well researched and many interviews. Did the audio

version which clocked in at over 23 hours - narrator did great and kept my interest.

Jake Cooper says

600 pages of the Apollo missions as experienced by the astronauts. There's almost no engineering, politics, etc. But the stories are very readable, and you'll learn the differences between Apollos 12-17.

"How could the most futuristic thing humans have ever done be so far in the past?"

Lara says

Dude, totally amazing.

Okay, so, I've owned this book for *at least* five years now and I kept putting off reading it because I've read a bunch of books about NASA before and also because...I mean, it's really big. When's the last time you read a nonfiction book that is 720 pages long?!? Holy shit! I mainly read YA and graphic novels these days, so it was kind of intimidating. But anyway, I think there was recently some deal where I got it for \$5 on audible and I figured I'd put it off long enough, dammit! And so.

First of all, I have a huuuuuge soft spot in my heart for Bill Anders of Apollo 8 fame, being as he's a family friend and his dad was a total badass. So it was awesome to hear so much about him and his thought processes and just...impressions of what being up there was like and about what he did after. And also hear the news that there's actually official proof that he took the famous Earthrise picture, which was under much debate for a long time.

I also hadn't heard much about Apollo 12, because it's like there's 8, 11, and 13 and the rest might as well not exist, but it might be my new favorite Apollo mission. Pete Conrad sounds like a lot of fun, and they were totally struck by lightning TWICE during liftoff! Crazy!!!

And the epilogue and the afterword...so good and so sad!

Basically, I *love* how Chaikin wrote this. I love that he interviewed all these men in person, and spoke to them about how going to space changed them (or not). I love how he tells the story of the Mercury and Apollo programs and how focused he is on the men involved. I love how personal he makes this story, and how he brings it back to a fierce longing for us to go back to the moon, and to become a species that lives on more than one planet.

And Bronson Pinchot does an absolutely fantastic job with the narration.

Why the heck did I put this off for so long? I will probably actually read all 720 pages again someday.
