



Dark Side of the Moon: The Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest

Gerard Degroot

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For a very brief moment during the 1960s, America was moonstruck. Boys dreamt of being an astronaut; girls dreamed of marrying one. Americans drank Tang, bought “space pens” that wrote upside down, wore clothes made of space age Mylar, and took imaginary rockets to the moon from theme parks scattered around the country.

But despite the best efforts of a generation of scientists, the almost foolhardy heroics of the astronauts, and 35 billion dollars, the moon turned out to be a place of “magnificent desolation,” to use Buzz Aldrin’s words: a sterile rock of no purpose to anyone. In **Dark Side of the Moon**, Gerard J. DeGroot reveals how NASA cashed in on the Americans’ thirst for heroes in an age of discontent and became obsessed with putting men in space. The moon mission was sold as a race which America could not afford to lose. Landing on the moon, it was argued, would be good for the economy, for politics, and for the soul. It could even win the Cold War. The great tragedy is that so much effort and expense was devoted to a small step that did virtually nothing for mankind.

Drawing on meticulous archival research, DeGroot cuts through the myths constructed by the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations and sustained by NASA ever since. He finds a gang of cynics, demagogues, scheming politicians, and corporations who amassed enormous power and profits by exploiting the fear of what the Russians might do in space.

Exposing the truth behind one of the most revered fictions of American history, **Dark Side of the Moon** explains why the American space program has been caught in a state of purposeless wandering ever since Neil Armstrong descended from Apollo 11 and stepped onto the moon. The effort devoted to the space program was indeed magnificent and its cultural impact was profound, but the purpose of the program was as desolate and dry as lunar dust.



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