

# Forty years after that giant leap

THE SKY'S  
THE LIMIT



NEEL ROBERTS

Bryan Adams has a hit song from the 1980s called Summer of '69 and while he's reminiscing about his band and romance of that year, 1969 was in fact one of historical important and milestones. Woodstock, New York, was practically unheard of until they set a record attendance of half a million flower children

congregating on Max Yasgur's farm near Bethel, New York. The top chart song was Age of Aquarius by the 5th Dimension while Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid dominated the box office. The Vietnam War and Helter Skelter seemed to grab headlines as much as Nixon did, but nothing so much captivated the world as Apollo 11 landing on the Moon that hot summer day. Finally! John F. Kennedy's 1961 pledge of putting a man on the moon came to pass at 2:56 UTC July 21, 1969 when Neil Armstrong placed his left foot on the surface followed by the immortal words: "That's one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind."

At that moment, practically every TV set in the world was being watched.

Travelling to the Moon had been imagined for centuries by many novelists long before JFK's 1960 campaign promise. Cyrano de Bergerac wrote of travelling to the moon, buoyed up by jars of dew. In the 19th century, Jules Verne wrote of Civil War era astronauts flying to the moon in a ship fired by a massive cannon. Herbert George (H. G.) Wells has his explorers travel to the moon in a ship built of an impossible gravity shielding material he called Cavorite. Also in 1902, "A Trip to the Moon" (Le Voyage dans la lune) was a black and white silent French movie loosely based on two popular novels of the time: "From the Earth to the Moon" by Verne and "The First Men in the Moon" by Wells. With the advent of motion pictures, journeys to the Moon became the subject of film as well. Following Le Voyage came films such as the German movie Frau im Mond and the George Pal classic

Destination Moon, Space Odyssey in the '60s and much more!

So why is man so fascinated with its neighbour satellite? The Earth's neighbour has had a profound effect on the entire history and development of human civilization. Many cultures used the cycle of lunar phases to measure time. The moon has been venerated in various forms throughout history. The Greeks worshiped the moon goddess Artemis. The Romans called her Diana. The Celts called her Arianrod. The Egyptians considered Isis a goddess of the moon. In fact, even the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament wrote of God holding the moon and sun still for a day as the battle of Gibeon raged on (Jos. 10:12-13, Hab. 3:11) while Jesus in the New Testament warned that signs in the sun, moon and stars would usher in the end times (Luk. 21:25, Mat. 24:29). When Galileo first discovered it through his telescope, he wrote in his 1610 book *Starry Messenger* (you can get this in your library today) the moon was a world with mountains and dark areas that he called "mare" or "seas", which we now know are relatively flat areas that are nevertheless drier than the most arid Earthly desert. Nineteenth century astronomers thought that the moon might be an abode of life, much like the Earth, and some psychologists today still believe the moon can alter a person's mindset the wrong way — that's how we get the word "Lunatic"! (Did you know rock star Frank Zappa named his daughter "Moon Unit"?)

What motivated us to finally go for it in the last century? Sure technology plays an instrumental part but history shows man is usually never satisfied with what he has. Case in point: Mount Everest has been around since the dawn of time, yet it was not knowingly conquered until 1924. So when British climber George Mallory was asked why he was determined to be the first to the summit, his answer was simply, "Because it's there!"

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