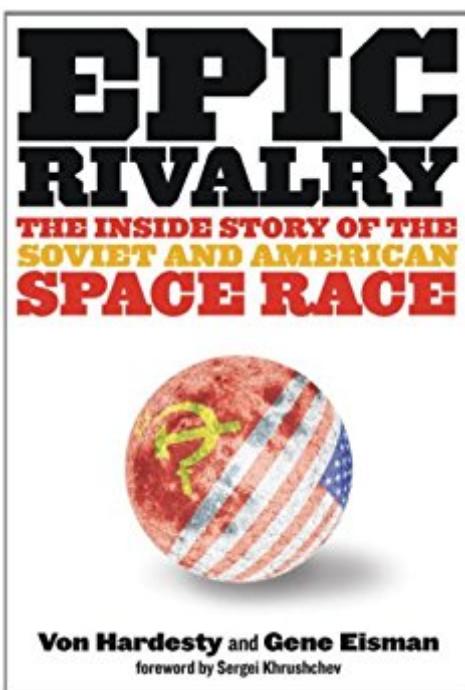


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Epic Rivalry: Inside The Soviet And American Space Race



Synopsis

When Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon in 1969, they personified an almost unimaginable feat—the incredibly complex task of sending humans safely to another celestial body. This extraordinary odyssey, which grew from the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, was galvanized by the Sputnik launch in 1957. To mark the fiftieth anniversary of Sputnik, National Geographic recaptures this gripping moment in the human experience with a lively and compelling new account. Written by Smithsonian curator Von Hardesty and researcher Gene Eisman, *Epic Rivalry* tells the story from both the American and the Russian points of view, and shows how each space-faring nation played a vital role in stimulating the work of the other. Scores of rare, unpublished, and powerful photographs recall the urgency and technical creativity of both nations' efforts. The authors recreate in vivid detail the "parallel universes" of the two space exploration programs, with visionaries Wernher von Braun and Sergei Korolev and political leaders John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev at the epicenters. The conflict between countries, and the tense drama of their independent progress, unfolds in vivid prose. Approaching its subject from a uniquely balanced perspective, this important new narrative chronicles the epic race to the moon and back as it has never been told before—and captures the interest of casual browsers and science, space, and history enthusiasts alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are interested in the race to the Moon, this is by far one of the very best books. The information about the Soviet space program was (for me) the most interesting and useful for one of my current writing projects. An excellent read!

Good behind the scene history of the early space race especially the Russian side and info from Khrushchev's son who was an rocket engineer.

In a snapshot world with nano attention spans, Epic Rivalry manages to grab and hold on. The world in 1957 was on the seam between vacuum tube and microchip, between perceived American complacency and Russian Atomic tests that dropped Strontium 90 in milk bottles across the United States. Amid the tension and fear, two clumsy stumbling giants began the race that framed the future and shapes the world view of space to this day. Von Hardesty and Gene Eisman take you back to the origins, before Sputnik, through its launch in October of 1957 and into the arms of current space. With eloquence and discernment they bring to life the voices of the electrifying story from both sides of the Iron Curtain. There is magic in these pages because what you are hearing isn't competing specifications but rather the rise and fall of mutual dreams. Noah could have floated on the flood of space books currently available. Epic Rivalry is the place to dip your oar. It's the core of the whole story. If you are old enough to remember or young enough to wonder, Epic Rivalry is your book and Hardesty and Eisman your always illuminating guides.

Overall, I thought this book was somewhat shallow, with little "meat" to fully engage the reader. It's an OK overview for someone who really didn't know much about rocket development/space programs from the 40's to the early 70's. I found the discussion of German rocket development during WWII the most interesting part, and learned a few things about the Russian space efforts that I hadn't heard before. The discussion of the US space program was fairly mundane. If you followed the news during that period of time you'll already know most of what's presented here.

This should be a good book, but disappoints in both the quantity and quality of its coverage of the great power rivalry for the dominance of space. It starts well, with an first-person account by Sergei Kruschchev of the first Sputniks. Kruschchev had a unique vantage point on the whole affair, as a technically knowledgeable person with an insider's pass on the political affairs of the Soviet Union. The first chapter or so, on the WW II German effort is worthwhile as well. From that point it deteriorates rapidly into superficial re-hashes of old news, poorly presented. I started working on an errata, but gave up after averaging one a page for twenty pages. Some are slipups on minor facts: page 159 map referring to "Kennedy Space Flight Center", or using the acronym "LEM", which was discarded in the early 60's, or saying that the Cape was scorpion infested. Some are bad editing, leading to incorrect statements: p. 249 "Mir, which remained in orbit between 1971 and 2001". Some are failures to globally edit, e.g. telling the tale of the renaming of Cape Canaveral twice. There's also a problem of scope: at times it can't decide if it wants to be about the 50s and 60s or today. This on top of being full of technical groaners too numerous to count, like constantly calling RP-1 "volatile" or completely missing the point on why Gemini used ejection seats rather than an escape tower. A single volume account of the most turbulent days of the space effort would be welcome; sadly, this isn't it. I wish I could even recommend it as an introduction, to be followed immediately by something more in-depth, but it's so full of inaccuracies I would be doing the reader a disservice. For the interested reader, "Apollo" by Murray and Cox, and "Red Star in Orbit" by James Oberg will readably take you through the two sides, are much more thorough and technically correct, and both rated 5 stars by hordes of readers. They will take you three times as long to read, but you will ultimately profit by not having to unlearn any thing later.

Not a very thorough book. The fact that the book was written by two authors is prominent and the same facts and the same stories are repeated in different chapters.

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