



Space Invaders

Michel van Pelt

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When we think of the first earth orbit, Yuri Gagarin springs to mind. And the first landing on the moon calls up images of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in their spacesuits. What we tend to overlook is that Gagarin was preceded by Sputnik-1, and the Apollo 11 moonwalkers came after Luna-2. Manned missions, for obvious reasons, have always come after robotic probes, and will continue to do so. Machines were the first to orbit another planet, the first to land on Mars and Venus, the first to touch an asteroid, the first to send us close-up images of Saturn's rings. The list of robotic space achievements is long and impressive. In reality, the history of space exploration is overwhelmingly a history not of human missions, but unmanned ones. Indeed, manned space programs attract the most media attention, and it is not hard to understand why-the danger, the heroism, the sheer adventure we as earthbound observers can imagine when humans are involved. But robotic missions deserve a respectful and detailed history and analysis of their own, and this book provides it. Focusing on future modern spacecraft, Michel van Pelt explains the exciting life of unmanned space explorers, making the technology, design, development, operation and results of modern space probe missions understandable by lay readers. Instead of describing one specific spacecraft or mission, Michel van Pelt offers a 'behind the scenes' look at the life of a space probe: from its first conceptual design to the analysis of the scientific data returned by the spacecraft. While most popular books on space concentrate on manned spaceflight, this book shows that unmanned space exploration is just as exciting. It demonstrates to the reader just what it takes to send a robotic spacecraft to another planet and what fascinating insight and knowledge we have gained from these probes. **Offers an insight into the life of a space probe from concept through design to return and analysis of scientific data. **Explains what it takes to send a robotic space probe to another planet. **Demonstrates that unmanned space exploration can be as exciting as manned exploration. **Provides the reader with a view of how the fascinating images and knowledge are obtained from these probes. **Focuses on modern spacecraft and the future, rather than the history of past projects

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