



Teach Yourself – Planets

by David A. Rothery

Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 2000. ISBN Pp vii + 226, £8.99.

When I first began to read this book, I was astounded at the sheer pace. The pressure of information is unrelenting and, I thought, daunting. I went to a bookshop to look at other books in the same *Teach Yourself* series: they are all alike in presenting facts, facts, facts and more facts. As the series is highly successful, the market must be there and getting what it wants.

True to the title, David wastes no time: a short introduction and useful review of the 'Solar System' leads us to 'Mercury'. Our Moon gets an whole chapter too; the other moons are worked over with their planets. When we get out to Pluto, that chapter includes Charon and the Kuiper Belt and the next looks out to planets of other stars. Each chapter has a standard box of planetary facts and there are diagrams, graphs and sketches

wherever needed. A useful Glossary and a short Index complete the book.

My only criticism is that many of the illustrations are reproduced in monochrome and too small for the detail to be clear. This was true of views of Io, but mitigated by the interesting snippet that zero degrees longitude is the centre of the Jupiter-facing side and ninety degrees is the centre of the leading hemisphere.

David is a colleague at the Open University and he knows his stuff. I have begun to use *Planets* as a reference book already. If you want a mine of information, this book is it.

Roger O'Brien

'Associate Lecturer with the OU' sounds good and 'freelance lecturer' reads better than 'jobbing astronomy teacher', but it is great to be teaching a fascinating subject to fascinated people.

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