

Digital astrophotography – the state of the art

by David Ratledge (ed.)

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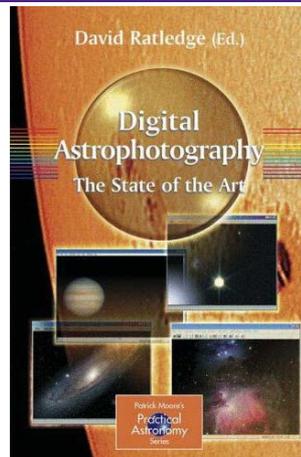
It is particularly difficult to compile a book on the 'state of the art' when the subject you are discussing advances as rapidly as digital imaging, but David Ratledge does a very good job. This is certainly a book to inspire. Ratledge has used many of the acknowledged experts in the field, each of whom has written a chapter on their own particular specialisation. These are people such as Christian Buil, Damian Peach, Brian Lula and Dale Mais so there is no shortage of practical experience on offer.

The book starts with relatively simple techniques, such as afocal photography, webcam imaging and the use of digital SLRs. It then progresses to more serious work and this is where the real jewels are to be found.

For many years I have received superb images from Brian Lula. Brian is an absolute perfectionist and takes amazing high

resolution, widefield colour images with exposures of hours. I particularly enjoyed reading about the techniques he uses and seeing the instruments that he has built. Brian's results are stunning but they might be rather intimidating to some readers. Much more down to earth and closer to home is the work of David Ratledge himself. David shows that, with the right technology and processing, it is possible to take excellent images from Lancashire.

This book does have one fault. It is a shame that Christian Buil's chapter on the *Iris* image processing program did not receive more attention at the editing stage. *Iris* is a fantastic program which I use on a daily basis but the description in this chapter is not very clear and it suffers from poor copy editing which is a characteristic of Springer. Chris-



tian was writing in a foreign language (he is French) and he should have expected more support from his publisher.

Despite the problem with Christian Buil's chapter I can thoroughly recommend this book. Many excellent images are included and the reproduction in colour is very good. If you are new to digital imaging it will help you get started. If you are already an 'expert' it will inspire

you to higher things, although the images obtained by messrs Lula and Peach are probably beyond most of us mortals.

Nick James

Nick James is the BAA Papers Secretary and is a professional engineer working in the space industry. He occasionally gets time to image the sky using an SBIG CCD and a Canon DSLR.

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