

Willy Ley: Prophet of the Space Age

Jared S. Buss

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Ley was a pioneer of both scientific exploration and widespread media entertainment; this biography gives the visionary his due.

Willy Ley: Prophet of the Space Age, by Jared S. Buss, is a dynamic biography of a remarkable scientific figure.

Buss's text chronicles the peaks and valleys of a prolific career. A German-born American writer with a keen interest in amateur rocketry, Willy Ley fled from Nazi Germany as a young man. Once in the United States, he became a prominent weapons expert and journalist. After the war, he served as a rocket researcher, leading to a public persona as a consultant for the popular 50's television series *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*, and later, the Disney episode, "Man in Space."

Considered an expert on all things scientifically space-related, Ley also had an interesting career as a pulp fiction writer, capturing the hearts, minds, and imaginations of an entire generation.

But the text also shows how, as astronauts became all the rage, eccentrics like Ley came to be ignored by the public and historians alike. Buss rights those wrongs and reestablishes Ley as the scientific visionary he always was.

The book is both informative and compelling. Even those who are unfamiliar with Ley will be drawn in by Buss's unhindered composition and commitment to his story.

Research has been thoroughly conducted and cited, adding to the validity of the argument that Ley was a pioneer of both scientific exploration and widespread media entertainment. Snapshots of Ley at different stages in his life—as a young man studying a rocket, with his children in their youth, and during publicity tours for different television projects—give context to the many facets of his personal and professional experience.

Nine compact chapters, including "Youthful Horizons" and "The Sputnik Challenge," chronicle the important phases in Ley's life. Within these chapters, section breaks hone in on specific periods or projects, allowing for a thorough examination of Ley's extensive oeuvre.

Fans of scientific history and those just looking for a fascinating new read are in for a treat with the thoughtful and well-researched *Willy Ley*.

AMANDA ADAMS (University Press 2017)

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