

Beyond the Saga of Rocket Science: The Never-Ending Frontier

Walter Sierra

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Beyond the Saga of Rocket Science: The Never-Ending Frontier is a comprehensive, fantastical technological exploration that begins in the post-war era and looks into the distant future.

Walter Sierra's *Beyond the Saga of Rocket Science: The Never-Ending Frontier* is a thorough and informative history of the development of rocket science from the mid-twentieth century onward, including fascinating projections for the future.

Concerned with both military-application missiles and with rockets that were designed for space exploration, this entry into the series begins with Russia, exploring its technological contributions from the period of the USSR into contemporary times. The contemporaneous efforts of the US, China, and other major and minor players in the space race are considered alongside Russia's efforts. Individual sections focus on events like the 1980s attempt to create an SDI missile defense program, which are described from their original conceptions through to their stages of development and their conclusions. The book goes into great detail about the mechanics involved in each effort, embellishing these explanations with interesting stories about the personalities who pushed the technologies forward. A chapter is even devoted to eccentric billionaire Elon Musk, including an amusing section on his love life.

But there are speculative elements involved in the book, too. It extends its considerations beyond mere historical accounts, investigating possible developments with air and space technology. It takes the position that rocket science itself has stalled, and considers such further developments unlikely; nonetheless, the book's last third is devoted to positing the technological descendants of the rocket age. This includes considerations of near field technologies, which are explained in accessible detail, as well as an engrossing discussion of warp drive, the propulsion system that's used in many science fiction stories, and that here is treated as an inevitability.

But beyond its serious discussions of possible advanced technologies, the book veers into too fanciful discussions of extraterrestrials, post-human evolutionary advances, the religious implications of technology, and unidentified flying objects. While these discussions are intriguing, they are a sharp departure from the book's early grounding in established science and engineering.

The book's use of photographs and other illustrations is lavish. Every page contains at least one picture, chart, or diagram, and most pages include more. The diagrams make the book's most sophisticated concepts easier for lay audiences to grasp.

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MATT BENZING (July 6, 2022)

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