

52nd IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)

"Can you believe they put a man on the moon?" (3B)

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THE MOON LANDING AS A WORLDWIDE CASE OF POP SCIENCE

Abstract

On the 20th of July 1969, at 15:17 in Houston, Texas, the Eagle Module, hosting on board Neil Armstrong and Aldrin, landed on the Mare Tranquillitatis. After centuries of fantastical, visionary and surreal voyages, humanity had conquered Earth's satellite, the launch pad for space exploration. The Moon landing entered the collective imaginary and sparked a new interest in science, which includes literature, goes through cinema, music and fashion, and redefines the standards of communication, scientific disclosure, and dissemination. The attendance began with 78 television stations connected live from 40 different countries and ended with one billion viewers worldwide after the event. That long night has been one of the most influential media events of the twentieth century with an audience never seen before and perhaps never assumed.

PURPOSE

In all the history of science, no event or discovery has had the same social and cultural impact as the Moon landing. The aim of this work is to demonstrate how this scientific goal has created a link between the oneirical and science-fictional view of the satellite and the technological value of its conquest. The essay examines the media impact of the conquest of the Moon in the Italian press from July 1968 to July 1970.

METHODOLOGY

The sample taken into consideration consists of the two weeklies and the two most widespread periodicals of the 60's. In those years, the necessity of professional scientific journalists became concrete and many newspapers understood that they needed to reach an ever larger audience with transversal topics. The Italian press started many collaborations with international periodicals and these partnerships will be very important for the realization of journalistic inquiries and will enter the history of Italian journalism.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The analysed documents have confirmed that the conquest of the Moon should be still considered as one of the greatest scientific and technological achievements in the history of humankind. The worldwide growing interest in the Moon, which touched different aspects of knowledge, can be defined and studied as one of the most important case of Pop science and it will determine a real phenomenon of Moon-mania.