



## Preface

The 1960s gave the world flower power, the contraceptive pill, the Moon rocket, and Billy Graham. But on the sidewalks of San Francisco, amateur astronomer John Dobson began an extraordinary evangelistic movement of his own, showing throngs of ordinary people how to build and use large aperture ‘scopes from just about anything. Up until that time, large reflecting telescopes meant using heavy mirrors and complicated mounts, but Dobson almost single-handedly changed all that. By placing a large telescope on a simple, Lazy Susan mount, Dobson opened up large aperture observational astronomy to the masses. The Dobsonian revolution, as it came to be known, continues apace in the twenty-first century, with new and improved models appearing on the market every year.

Dobsonian-mounted reflectors marry simplicity of design with portability and large aperture prowess in ways that other telescope designs simply can’t do. This book serves as the ultimate guide to buying and using a commercial Dobsonian for recreational astronomy. It provides in-depth accounts of the various models (plus accessories) on the market – both economy and premium – together with describing the wealth of innovations that amateurs have made to their Dobs to optimize their performance in the field.

There has been a huge increase in the popularity of these telescopes in the last few years, and Dobsonians (Dobs) have been heavily advertised in all the major astronomy magazines. In fact, they are now the best-selling large telescopes, both in Europe and the United States. Furthermore, if you happen to visit one of the many star parties taking place at different times of year around the world, you'll see a great variety of different Dob styles, ranging from the extravagant to the simplistic.

This book will be of particular interest to the many amateur astronomers who already have, or are intending to purchase, a Dobsonian telescope, perhaps to complement their existing arsenal of smaller 'scopes or to find out more about a premium model. But it is equally an attempt to attract enthusiasts of other telescope genres – refractors and catadioptrics, for example – to the great benefits these 'light buckets' can confer, as well as the very high quality images even economy-priced models can produce. Sadly, many thousands of Dobs lay dormant in the homes of amateurs around the world, neglected perhaps, for their portliness in comparison to a new ultraportable refractor. In this capacity, the goal of this book is to re-engage with this subset of 'lost amateurs' by expounding the great virtues Dobsonians already possess.

The book is arranged into two sections, for convenience. Part I recounts the story of John Dobson and the extraordinary movement he championed, before delving into the contemporary market. We will be showcasing everything from the very large to the very small and have endeavored to cover as many telescope models as possible. Due to space constraints, however, some products receive little or no mention. Our apologies in advance if we've not covered yours!

In Part II, we'll be dipping into the wealth of accessories that bring out the best performance of your Dobsonian, together with looking at ways to evaluate their optical performance under the stars. In this section too, we'll also be exploring how the humble Dob has now entered the twenty-first century, as auto-tracking and even Go-To models are now readily available, allowing amateurs to do things that were inconceivable only a few years ago. As you'll discover, things move pretty fast in the Dobsonian world!

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