



## The Spacesuit Film: A History, 1918-1969

By Gary Westfahl



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Filmmakers employ various images to suggest the strangeness of outer space, but protective spacesuits most powerfully communicate the dangers of space and the frailty and weakness of humans beyond the cradle of Earth. Many films set in space, however, forgo spacesuits altogether, reluctant to hide famous faces behind bulky helmets and ill-fitting jumpsuits. This critical history comprehensively examines science fiction films that portray space travel realistically by having characters wear spacesuits. Beginning with the pioneering *Himmelskibet* (1918) and *Woman on the Moon* (1929), it discusses other classics in this tradition, including *Destination Moon* (1950), *Riders to the Stars* (1954), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968); innumerable films which gesture toward realism but betray that goal with melodramatic villains, low comedy, or improbable monsters; the distinctive spacesuit films of Western Europe, Russia and Japan; and America's spectacular real-life spacesuit film, the televised Apollo 11 moon landing (1969).

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#### Review

"illuminating and entertaining"--*Locus*; "a breath of fresh air...recommend...an *amazing* accomplishment and a definitive read"--*Filmfax*; "Westfahl should be commended for opening this path and others to exploration"--*SFRA Review*; "Westfahl provides a detailed study of this particular film genre, summarizing movies both famous and obscure"--*The Space Review*; "a critical history of the appearance of spacesuits in film"--*Reference & Research Book News*; "a must. A great research book"--*SF Crowsnest*; "valuable...of great interest...informative"--*Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*; "both sf and media scholars have benefited much over the years from the work of Gary Westfahl and the publishing strategy of McFarland. Westfahl is a prolific and influential scholar who has authored a number of important historical studies of sf literature"--*Science Fiction Studies*.

#### About the Author

Gary Westfahl, retired from the University of California, Riverside, is an adjunct professor at the University of La Verne. A prolific writer and editor, he earned the Science Fiction Research Association's Pilgrim Award for his lifetime contributions to science fiction and fantasy scholarship. In addition to hundreds of published articles and reviews, he is the author, editor, or co-editor of more than twenty books about science fiction and fantasy.

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