



A journey into space. What is space?
It is nothing: yet it exists everywhere.
Space – the limitless, infinite, awful, lonely,
utter blackness to be found beyond the
universe... But the imaginative human mind
is a fast traveller, so let's move in and take a
closer look ...

These words, spoken by Guy Kingsley Poynter, opened the first episode of a new BBC Light Programme serial, *Journey into Space*, on 21 September 1953. The show was a replacement for *Riders of the Range*, a popular Western with music which had begun on 13 January 1949 and, after six seasons, had concluded the previous week. Like its predecessor, *Journey into Space* was written and produced by Charles Chilton.

Born in 1917, Chilton had joined the BBC as a messenger boy in 1933. After producing jazz programmes and serving with the RAF in the war, Chilton

continued with the BBC Variety Department. 'A lot of scripts began to arrive with the idea of doing science fiction,' recalled Chilton. 'Michael Standing, the Head of Department, called me in and said, "Look, you write pop adventures. Couldn't you write science fiction?" So I said that I'd try... At the time, true space travel was about to begin.' Chilton himself was a member of the British Astronomical Association who had built a small observatory in his garden, helped by Charles Irwin who played Luke in *Riders of the Range*. Originally it was planned that the series would run for twelve episodes, and Chilton wanted good cliffhangers, reminiscent of the chapter serials he recalled from his youth.

The basic creation of the series is discussed in the documentary *Journey into Space... Again*. Veteran actor Wilfred Walter was recommended to Chilton to play rocket pioneer Sir William Morgan.



The main hero, his son Captain Andrew 'Jet' Morgan, was played by Scots Shakespearean actor Andrew Faulds, who later became Labour MP for Warley. Playing cheerful Cockney Jewish radio operator Lemuel 'Lemmy' Barnet was David Kossoff, an actor well known for his Jewish folk humour. Writer/actor Guy Kingsley Poynter, whom Chilton had used before ('he was a very good poetry reader') played the team's soft-spoken American medical officer, Doc Matthews.

Unlike the subsequent seasons, the first run of *Journey into Space* had no formal title. In *Radio Times* it was subtitled 'A Tale of the Future', but by January 1955 it was referred to

internally by the BBC as *Journey to the Moon*. The shows were taped largely 'as live' in a 75 minute studio session, on 15ips magnetic tape. The stirring music – with titles such as *A Picture of the Universe*, *Rocket Away* and *Music for Outer Space* – had been composed by Van Phillips and was played in from acetate discs. Tunes such as *Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road* and *My Old Dutch* were played on Lemmy's mouth organ, and the

crew also heard Hank Snow and the Rainbow Ranch Boys performing their 1952 number *Honeymoon* on a rocket ship. Sound effects came courtesy of the National



Blast off: *Radio Times* billing for the first ever *Journey into Space* episode, 21 September 1953



Physical Laboratory at Kingston, and Battersea Power Station; the televiewer tones were from a naval ASDIC.

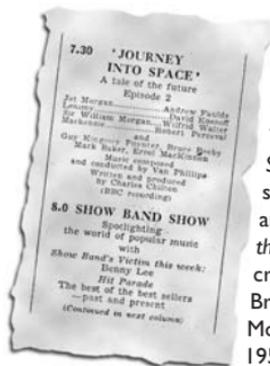
The series was promoted on 18 September by a *Radio Times* article in the *Both Sides of the Microphone* section about Chilton and his new series. *This is the BBC Light Programme,* crackled wirelesses across Britain at 7.30pm on Monday 21 September 1953. Then, to an ascending

whine of rocket engines screaming up through the atmosphere, Faulds's tones announced, *'We present Journey into Space – a tale of the future.'* The debut episode attracted 5.1 million listeners, more than *Riders of the Range*, but the reaction index of 59 was below average

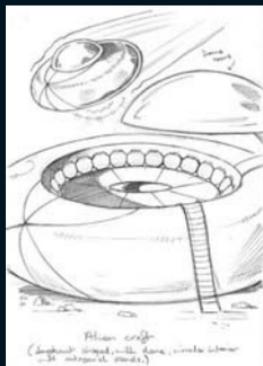
for Light Programme serials. Nevertheless, encouraging comments noted by the BBC included those of an Advertising Copywriter: *'It was a first class affair...I expected some Buck Rogers trash and had a very pleasant surprise.'* Other listeners found it slow, and ratings soon slumped to under four million.

One comment on the first episode's Listener Research Report noted that *'a few thought Wilfred Walter's performance...was very poor.'* Chilton had already decided to phase out the character, abandoning Sir William's laborious rocket research and introducing a new character and scenario to quickly get Jet Morgan and Lemmy to the moon. This was short-tempered Australian engineer Stephen 'Mitch' Mitchell, played by Antipodean Bruce Beeby, whom Chilton recalled was *'like Mitch, always blowing his top.'*

The recording of the third episode was deferred while Chilton restructured



Radio Times
21 September 1953



Richard Williams's early design roughs for the box artwork

Episodes restored and remastered for CD by Ted Kendall

Booklet text written by Andrew Pixley

Original box and booklet illustrations by Richard Williams





his narrative. The producer generally worked very late to deadline. *'If we recorded it on Sunday, quite often I wouldn't start writing until Friday night...and then I'd be up all night and take it in on Sunday morning. One of the qualifications of being an actor on Journey into Space was that you could help print the scripts...'*

On 27 September, *The Critics* discussed the debut episode, mocking it for scientific inaccuracy, even though Chilton had been given technical advice by Flight Lieutenant Roger Burton. Chilton later commented, *'I tried to imagine what would happen if four men really did go out. I didn't want any green men or anything.'* The producer was still impatient to get his characters into space, recalling, *'I couldn't get away from this bloody western thing – all my characters sounded as if they were on horseback instead of in space!...Once I got 'em off the ground it then soared, like a rocket!'*

When Beeby was unavailable after the sixth episode, the role of Mitch was

taken on by Australian film director Don Sharp. From the third episode, many parts were played by BBC announcer David Jacobs, an old friend of Chilton's from their war service at Radio SEAC in Ceylon. Also joining the team was Deryck Guyler, a former star of *ITMA*. Another *Radio Times* item on 23 October focused on Andrew Faulds, who recorded a programme called *An Examination Into Flying Saucers* on 8 December, for broadcast the next day on the North of England Home Service.

The first letters had appeared in *Radio Times* as early as 9 October, and more followed, debating travel at the speed of light on 11 December. Chilton was one of the guests at the Schoolboys' Own Exhibition held at Westminster at the start of the year; a photograph of him fully spacesuited at the event appeared in the issue of *Radio Times* concurrent with transmission of the final episode, alongside a piece of art sent in by



listener B.M. Lewis depicting *Luna* on the moon's surface. From the fifteenth episode, the show was dropped back to 8pm on Tuesdays, causing an outcry from younger listeners which meant that the last two episodes had to be re-run at 6pm the following Saturday.

When the series came to an end, eight million listeners were tuning in each week – double that for *Riders of the Range* – and the BBC noted that the

substantially improved reaction index of 77 was 'an unusually favourable reaction'. Listeners hailed it as 'the best serial for ages', and a Listener Reaction Report noted 'the sooner *Jet and Co* return

to the air the better', with Kossoff's performance as Lemmy being singled out for praise as a favourite with the children.



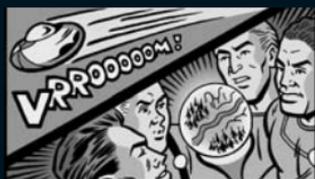
A glimpse of the future: *Radio Times* billing for the first episode of the second series

Chilton's novelisation, *Journey into Space*, appeared in November 1954 with a dust jacket depicting a sleek *Luna* sweeping by the Moon; 'I'd never written a book before', recalled the author, 'and I left that to the last minute too.'

Paperback editions were published in 1958 by Pan and 1963 by Digit.

When the two subsequent seasons were

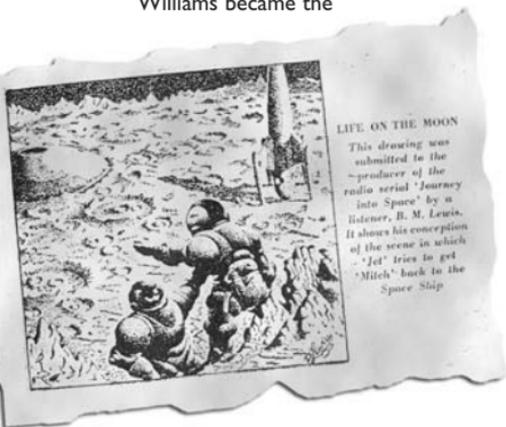
offered by the BBC Transcription Services for sale overseas, it was decided to complete the trilogy with a new recording of the first serial,



now retitled *Operation Luna*, since the original tapes had been wiped. Chilton took the opportunity to jettison the four opening episodes and begin with *Luna's* take-off. Van Phillips's music had been re-recorded by a sixteen piece orchestra, and two hour-long recordings were performed each Sunday. Alfie Bass had taken over as Lemmy in 1955, David Williams became the

latest voice of Mitch, and Guyler reprised his original role when Jacobs was indisposed for the ninth and tenth episodes. The shows were then broadcast on the Light Programme at 7.31pm on Wednesdays from 26 March 1958.

Although for a time the episodes were thought to be missing, in 1986, BBC recording engineer Ted Kendall located a set of mis-filed 16-inch coarse groove Transcription discs, which were duly transferred to tape for preservation. *Operation Luna* was repeated on BBC Radio 2 at 10pm on Fridays from 19 May to 11 August 1989; simultaneously a slightly edited twelve-episode version appeared on a four-cassette set from BBC Enterprises. A restored compilation was issued on cassette in June 1998, but the CDs in this Collector's CD Edition comprise a complete, uncut, episodic set of the Transcription recordings. Also included is the short extract still in



The original series inspired this artwork, published in *Radio Times*



existence from the final episode of *Journey to the Moon* and *Journey into Space...Again*, a documentary produced as part of the Moon Day programming on BBC Radio 4 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Apollo lunar landing.

The story so far...

The first four episodes of *Journey to the Moon* were not included in the *Operation Luna* remake. Details of the original run are as follows:

Regular cast: Wilfred Walter (Sir William Morgan) [1-3], Robert Perceval (Mackenzie) [1-3], Andrew Faulds (Jet Morgan), David Kossoff (Lemmy), Bruce Beeby (Mitch) [2-6], Guy Kingsley Poynter (Doc) [1-2, 4-18], Don Sharp (Mitchell) [7-18] with Bruce Beeby [1], Mark Baker [1-2], Errol McKinnon [1-2], Jessica Dunning [1], Guy Kingsley Poynter [3], David Jacobs [3-6, 9, 13, 14, 18], Deryck Guyler [6, 15-18], Duncan McIntyre [7], Wyndham Milligan [8]

Orchestra conducted by Van Phillips who also wrote the music.

Sound control and special effects by Brian Willey and Charles Warrender [18]

Journey into Space was written and produced by Charles Chilton.

Episode One

Broadcast 21 September 1953 (recorded 10 September 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2) Sir William Morgan prepares for the launch of his A.24 rocket in New Mexico with the aid of department heads A.C. "Mac" Mackenzie, Doc and the astronaut Denning. Take off is advanced to 7am next morning. Sir William's son, Captain Jet Morgan, arrives in New York in Super-Stratoship Flight No 321 from London; the Stratoship was also designed by Jet's father. Questioned by the press, Jet introduces his radio operator Lemmy Barnet. Hearing about the launch from the Rocket Research Station at Poker Flats, Jet and Lemmy rush to get a plane



to Las Vegas. On launch, the A.24's motors fail to cut out. There is no response from Denning and the erratic rocket is aimed for Las Vegas. Radio announcer tells the population of the city to make for the shelters: 'Get below ground level if you can...'

Episode Two

Broadcast 28 September 1953 (recorded 15 September 1953, 5.45pm, Piccadilly 2) The A.24 hits Las Vegas, and Jet and Lemmy struggle from the debris of their hotel. Thirty-five people are dead and seventy-four injured, and when Mac and Sir William arrive, the crowd attack them. As the death toll rises, Sir William blames himself and is summoned to Washington. Doc reveals that Denning panicked on take off and hit every button in sight. Having failed to anticipate Denning's action, Doc feels he is to blame. As Jet and Lemmy return to London, the press attacks Sir William 'Mad Moon' Morgan, and an inquiry seals the fate of Poker Flats. In his London flat, Jet

receives a mysterious phone call from an Australian. The caller, Mitchell, invites Jet to join a project ten years ahead of its time. 'We're going to the Moon!'

Episode Three

Broadcast 5 October 1953 (recorded 27 September 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2) Jet doubts that such a trip is possible in 1965, but Mitchell is confident about his new atomic rocket motor design and wants Jet as pilot for the four-man team. Jet agrees as long as there is a role for Lemmy, and Mitchell reluctantly finds the radio operator a job on the ground crew on 'Operation Luna'. Travelling to America, Jet tells Mac and his father that he aims to be on the moon in a few months. Sir William wishes him luck, but has abandoned his rocket work. Jet and Lemmy fly from London Airport to the secret base of operations in Australia. On touch down, Mitch take them to meet Smitty, the team's doctor. Entering the office, Mitch finds Smitty dead...



Episode Four

Broadcast 12 October 1953 (recorded 4 October 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)
Doctor Smith has died from a coronary, brought on by testing his new spacesuit. As a replacement, Jet suggests Doc Matthews. Mitch outlines the five day trip to the moon for himself, Jet, Doc and Tom Newcombe – the radio operator and second navigator. Mitch becomes concerned about a plane flying around the launch site, and – believing that rivals are spying on him – advances launch by two weeks to give only days of preparation. Tom's wife is in hospital in Adelaide, and Doc explains to Mitch that Tom is in no state to join them – he would be a psychological misfit.

When Mitch asks Doc for alternatives, Doc suggests Lemmy – who trained alongside Jet. Mitch reluctantly agrees. Launch day arrives, and Jet gives the countdown: 'Firing in 15 seconds ... 10 - 9 - 8 - 7 - 6 - 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 - Contact!'

Radio Times, 23 September 1955
(accompanying the third series, *The World In Peril*)





OPERATION LUNA

Cast and credits:

Andrew Faulds (Jet Morgan), Alfie Bass (Lemmy), Guy Kingsley Poynter (Doc), David Williams (Mitch) with John Cazabon [1-2], Alan Keith [2], David Jacobs [3-8, 11-13], Duncan McIntyre [3], Deryck Guyler [9-13]

Orchestra conducted by Van Phillips who also wrote the music

Journey into Space was written and produced for the BBC by Charles Chilton

Episodes first transmitted on the BBC Light Programme

Episode One

Broadcast 26 March 1958

Recorded 10 November 1957, 4.30pm,
Broadcasting House 8

Remake of Episode Five, broadcast

19 October 1953 (recorded

11 October 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)



Radio Times

19 January 1954 (original series)



Episode Two

Broadcast 2 April 1958
Recorded 10 November 1957, 8.00pm,
Broadcasting House 8
*Remake of Episode Six, broadcast
26 October 1953 (recorded
17 October 1953, 7.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*

Episode Three

Broadcast 9 April 1958
Recorded 17 November 1957, 4.30pm,
Broadcasting House 8
*Remake of Episode Seven, broadcast
2 November 1953 (recorded
25 October 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*

Episode Four

Broadcast 16 April 1958
Recorded 17 November 1957, 8.00pm,
Broadcasting House 8
*Remake of Episode Eight, broadcast
9 November 1953 (recorded
1 November 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*

Episode Five

Broadcast 23 April 1958. Recorded
24 November 1957, 4.30pm, Piccadilly 2
*Remake of Episode Nine, broadcast
16 November 1953 (recorded
8 November 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*

Episode Six

Broadcast 30 April 1958. Recorded
24 November 1957, 8.00pm, Piccadilly 2
*Remake of Episode Ten, broadcast
23 November 1953 (recorded
15 November 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*

Episode Seven

Broadcast 7 May 1958
Recorded 1 December 1957, 4.30pm,
Broadcasting House 6A
*Remake of Episode Eleven, broadcast
30 November 1953 (recorded
22 November 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)*



Episode Eight

Broadcast 14 May 1958

Recorded 1 December 1957, 8.00pm,

Broadcasting House 6A

Remake of Episodes Twelve and Thirteen, broadcast 7 and 14 December 1953

(recorded 29 November, 6.30pm/

6 December 1953, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2).

This episode is most of the start of Episode Twelve, omitting discussion about survival on the planet, and then the second half of Episode Thirteen, omitting a cliff-hanger where Lemmy hears a growling and drumming sound from the forest as something approaches Luna.

Episode Nine

Broadcast 21 May 1958. Recorded

8 December 1957, 2.30pm, Piccadilly 2

Remake of Episode Fourteen, broadcast 21

December 1953 (recorded 13 December

1953, 6.30pm/20 December 1953,

6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)

Episode Ten

Broadcast 28 May 1958. Recorded

8 December 1957, 8.00pm, Piccadilly 2

Remake of Episode Fifteen, broadcast

29 December 1953 (recorded

20 December 1953, 6.30pm/

27 December 1953, 3.15pm, Piccadilly 2)

Episode Eleven

Broadcast 4 June 1958. Recorded

15 December 1957, 4.30pm, Piccadilly 2

Remake of Episode Sixteen, broadcast

5 January 1954 (recorded

27 December 1953, 3.15pm/

3 January 1954, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)

Episode Twelve

Broadcast 11 June 1958. Recorded

15 December 1957, 8.00pm, Piccadilly 2

Remake of Episode Seventeen, broadcast

12 January 1954 (recorded

10 January 1954, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)



Episode Thirteen

Broadcast 18 June 1958

Recorded 22 December 1957, 3.00pm,

Paris Theatre

Remake of Episode Eighteen, broadcast
19 January 1954 (recorded

18 January 1954, 6.30pm, Piccadilly 2)

Journey into Space...Again

Broadcast on BBC Radio 4, 20 July 1999

Recorded 25 June 1999

featuring Charles Chilton, Andrew Faulds,

David Jacobs

Produced by Nick Baker

A Testbed Production for BBC Radio 4

MCPS

Radio Times billing accompanying 1989
repeat transmission of Operation Luna

AGI Austria
0563 524898

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Return journey

Long before David Jacobs was a silk-smooth disc jockey he was a radio actor of many parts, and dozens of these parts were played in Charles Chilton's classic science fiction series *Journey into Space*. From its start in 1953 to its last spectacular orbit in 1958, Jacobs was the announcer, the voice that, at the start of each episode, intoned so eerily 'Journey in-to Spaaaaace'.

It was the last radio series ever to pull in a bigger evening audience than television and it sent a generation of children – myself included – to bed with the jitters. The sound effects and the music – played live in the studio – were terrific. And this week we can thrill again to the adventures of Captain Jet Morgan (Andrew Faulds, now a Labour MP) and the crew of the spaceship *Luna* as *Journey into Space* blasts off for a 1.3-episode repeat of one of its great adventures, *Operation Luna*, last heard in 1958.

David Jacobs will be listening. 'There's never been anything to match it,' he says. 'Dated? I doubt it. Yes, we got to the moon before the real astronauts got there but did they get an alien tapping on the outside of their module? That's still spooky. Things were not always so spooky during the recordings. The cast narrating,' David remembers. 'Andrew Faulds once poured a jug of water inside my trousers. I was soaked and did the rest of the programme in a raincoat!'

DAVID GILLARD
Journey into Space
Friday 10.00pm

Bound for the stars:
David Jacobs
in 1958



