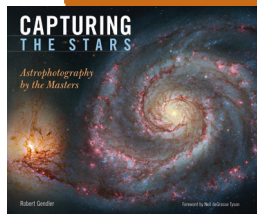


## Capturing the Stars



**Author:**  
Robert Gendler  
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£16.99 (Hb), 160pp

*Capturing the Stars* is an eclectic collection of imagery compiled by one of the world's leading masters of astronomical imaging and features a potent mix of both amateur and professional offerings. The book is printed in landscape format and its 9.5 x 11 inch size is perfect for the display of this type of material.

The book opens with a foreword by professional astrophysicist and author Neil deGrasse Tyson and continues with a short preface and introduction by Gendler. It's then straight into the imagery that is accompanied by short biographies of the astrophotographers. The first two featured are set in a historical context, starting with EE Barnard, a professional astronomer whose pioneering work at the end of the nineteenth century produced outstanding photographs of the Milky Way. Next is William C Miller, who produced some of the best colour images of the time while working at Mount Wilson and Palomar Observatories. The book then jumps to the present day with every page featuring a breathtaking image, sometimes taken with just a humble DSLR camera but showing glorious constellations or the ghostly wraith of an aurora over a frozen landscape.

Professional images are represented also and no book on astrophotography would be complete without images by David Malin, who worked as a photographic scientist at the Anglo-Australian Observatory from 1975 until 2001. His amazing images inspired generations of amateur astronomers (including the reviewer) and the pioneering techniques he developed for photographic emulsions have become essential for modern digital photographers.

I had several favourite contributors by the time I reached the end of the book. The amazing high-resolution solar corona images by Miroslav Druckmüller along with his image of Comet McNaught are breathtaking. The UK's own Damian Peach is rightly featured here with outstanding images of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars, which I consider to be the best in the world. And many contemporary amateur imagers, such as Russell Croman, Daniel Verschate, Johannes Schedler, Ken Crawford and



## INTERVIEW

A physician by day and an astrophotographer by night, Robert Gendler's life-long passion for astronomy has recently seen the publication of his second stunning book *Capturing the Stars*.

### How did you go about deciding which images to use in the book?

When I conceived the idea of the book's subject, it was initially daunting to decide which images and astrophotographers to choose from. The huge number of fine astro-images available today made the process difficult in one sense but also a lot of fun in another sense. Gradually I began to narrow down the list. I was determined to have a very diverse collection of images to show the full range of modern astronomical imaging. It was especially difficult to choose among the many qualified and deserving astrophotographers active today. Limitations of space forced me to make difficult decisions but in the end I hope that I was able to convey the richness of astrophotography through the selection of images of highest visual impact and interest. The images needed to appeal to not just seasoned astronomers but to the lay public as well.

### Which image or astrophotographer that you profiled in the book have you found particularly inspiring for your own astrophotography?

Wow... there are so many. I was immensely inspired by each astrophotographer. As the book came together the level of dedication and work by these individuals did not only impress me but I also became quite proud of what we have accomplished as a group. If I had to choose one person whose work really blew me away I'd say Miloslav Druckmüller. His high-resolution corona shots required so much precision and planning and left such little margin for error. He developed some of his own processing software to bring out details not seen before. I think he is the epitome of the passion and devotion that drives astrophotographers to do what they do. The other person would be Emerson Barnard. Being one of the earliest pioneers he explored new ground with each image and his marathon sessions required manual guiding for hours on end. His stamina and dedication were mind-boggling.

### Which of your own images are you most proud of and why?

Like most astrophotographers I'm my own worst critic. I'm constantly thinking of ways to improve on my images while looking for flaws. That said I am most proud of the large format mosaics I've produced over the years. The most recent one is the Milky Way mosaic I did recently of the galactic centre. Acquiring and assembling 50 separate frames took considerable patience and experience. I was proud of the result and especially surprised by the wide range of colours and details. You can see the image at: <http://www.robgendlerastropics.com/MWCenter.html>

### What advice do you have for beginners thinking about taking the first steps into astro-imaging?

Astrophotography is not easy. It is physically, technically, and financially demanding. It is very unforgiving of error and requires the utmost attention to small details. That said it can be profoundly rewarding on many levels. I would say to the novice, don't give up. Experience is critical and your results will get better and better over time. When I started there were no books or tutorials. There were very few people doing astrophotography and I learned mostly by trial and error (more error than anything). Today there are many more resources available for the aspiring astro-imager such as books, tutorials, web forums, etc.

### What do you hope readers will take away with them after reading *Capturing the Stars*?

For one I hope they get an idea of the breathtaking beauty of the Universe. I also hope they begin to understand that quality astrophotography is not just taking snapshots of the sky but requires experience, knowledge and dedication of the highest level. I want the reader to understand that astrophotography is not just a scientific tool but also a valid and significant art form in its own right. It demands the same dedication, creativity, and talent from its artists as all other forms of art.

*Capturing the Stars* and Gendler's first book, *A Year in the Life of the Universe*, are available direct from the publisher at [www.voyageurpress.com](http://www.voyageurpress.com).

of course Robert Gendler himself have contributed outstanding imagery. The latter is to be congratulated for sourcing such gems and the low price of the book

(available for £11 from Amazon) makes this a compulsory purchase for the shelf of any aspiring astrophotographer.  
*Nik Szymanek*