

## Library - Book Review

### **Visual Astronomy In The Suburbs**

By Antony Cooke

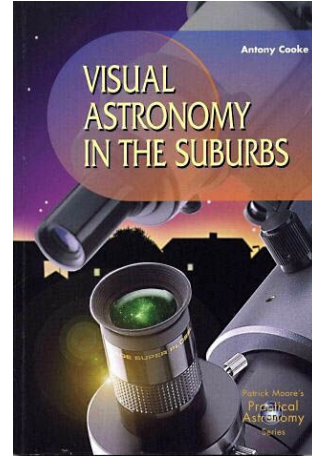
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Reviewed by: Ron Green

(Extracted From AAQ December 2004 Newsletter)

For many amateur astronomers it is a practical necessity that their activity be conducted from suburban locations. However viewing celestial objects live through the telescope eyepiece from these suburban locations is beset by an insurmountable frustration. Ever increasing levels of light pollution affect the night sky both in and close to cities. Quite often the only advice given to amateur observers is: stick to the Moon & planets in the suburbs and try to get to a dark sky location from time to time.

In his book Antony Cooke challenges this conventional wisdom that live viewing from light polluted suburbs is limited to the Moon and Planets.



He provides advice that is based on his long experience as a dedicated observational amateur astronomer. Currently much of his personal observing is carried out from a coastal suburb of Los Angeles using an 18" f4.5 equatorially mounted reflecting telescope. His viewing is significantly affected by light pollution escaping into the Los Angeles night sky and the problem of not being able to avoid direct lights.

Thus Antony Cooke's purpose for this book is to present to the reader the equipment and accessory choices – he calls them his "Big Guns" - and viewing techniques that he has found personally useful in overcoming the problems of city light pollution, haze and smog. The logical and detailed guide that has resulted sets out functional technical advice that makes it possible to extract the best viewing possible from these less than ideal suburban locations. This provides a great deal of encouragement and hope to other amateur astronomers observing from city environments. It is anticipated that observers applying Mr Cooke's accumulated knowledge will find a sizeable number of deep sky objects acceptably visible for live viewing through the telescope from light polluted suburban locations.

It is regarded as noteworthy that Mr Cooke advises his readers that he considers the modern image intensifier to be the most important "Big Gun" in his viewing accessory arsenal. He advocates the use of modern image intensifiers for both deep sky and planetary viewing from within light polluted situations. For example he maintains that even though many nebulae may prove disappointing when viewed from light polluted areas, it is always worth the effort of trying to observe them with an image intensifier.

The first half of the book sets out functional technical advice and the second half of the book provides the reader with three catalogues of objects carefully selected by the author.

The Primary Catalogue lists those objects considered by the author to be the very best objects for viewing from a suburban location. However the majority of these objects are noted as requiring the use of an image intensifier for best results. The Second Viewing Catalogue contains those objects that are considered to be good but not good enough for the primary listing. Finally for completeness there is a short Supplementary Catalogue for the Southern Hemisphere although they have not been seen by the author using the equipment noted in his book.

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These catalogues provide the reader with a handy short description and review of the objects selected by Antony Cooke along with many black and white photographs of how the object may appear when viewed as recommended. An earlier chapter on the Moon provides a personal selection of both well-known and lesser-known lunar features along with descriptive review commentary and black and white photographs of some of the features chosen. At the end of the book, Appendix C provides a useful technical summary with graphs of the optical frequency spectrum response of image intensifiers and the spectral frequency of some types of astronomical objects.

I would recommend this useful, practical book to any serious beginning observer. The Primary object list on its own is considered an invaluable starter for any observer beginning to use an image intensifier or video camera.