

The ultimate phallic journey

Hank Malone

1969

1. Andy Warhol would have given his right arm (and probably his left buttock) to have created that epically-dull 2-1/2 hour underground film (starring Neil "Jack" Armstrong and Edwin "Archie" Aldrin) that was shown on American TV under such unusual circumstances a couple of weeks ago.

2. Weird-picture-of-the-Century-Award goes to a three minute TV segment during moonwalk: Nixon intruding (in color) with a pink telephone on split-screen image, talking to Armstrong and Aldrin on the moon; they are standing at military attention, with the American flag-prop reduced to red (and symbolic) black and white in foreground, LEM in background. Very weird unconscious satire. Deep-meaning picture.

3. How many Americans viewed moonwalk stoned?

I did. Two trips for the price of one.

4. Everybody says it was "great" and "fantastic," and yet everyone really seemed bored by it all, not really tense or joyous. I felt guilty about finding myself bored after the first half-hour of moonwalk. My attention-span ran out of gas. I mean, there was really nothing going on except a kind of abstract notion that "history was being made." Like Johnny Carson said, after awhile it was like an incredibly bad 1935 movie.. That's America for you—they take a miracle and turn it into a bummer.

5. The moon landing was probably the ultimate expression of the WASP version of Western Civilization. The ultimate WASP-trip; "Son, why don't you stop smoking dope, and go to the moon?" The ultimate phallic journey. It seems truer than ever to say that our entire "civilization" is totally washed-up in hardware and super-technology. The entire event utterly lacked poetry and wonder. The WASP trip was a robot that discovered nothing but death and desolation. Very sad. Had the astronauts been poets the journey might have meant something to human beings. Poets stranded on the moon.

6. The strangeness of it all—the trip to the moon is now history, not "futuristic" but "in the past." The one thing science-fiction writers utterly miscalculated was the great differential between the orbits of human life and technology. The moon voyage was always imagined in a world that was itself advanced. No such luck down here in reality. Here we are in a world where half the people are still hungry, where the Neanderthal still controls the world, where nothing seems so very much different from the first air-flight at Kitty Hawk. And yet...here it is...here we are in a world where a trip to the moon is...history!

7. Neil Armstrong-Jack Armstrong, the all-American boys. Was this an accident, or a great meaningful pun?

8. The latest "game" is to get together and ponder what Norman Mailer will have to say about the moon voyage, how his strange turn of mind will grasp this event. Somehow the moon voyage will not be complete until Mailer digests it and spits it out.

9. The important thing about the moon trip was one's relationship to the non-stop TV coverage. For instance, what "version" did you watch; NBC, ABC, or CBS? Some people became channel-switchers, making their own composite event.

10. CBS filmed a very groovy Introduction, shown at the head of each hour, a kind of psychedelic history of man's yearning for space flight, ending in a kind of 2001 probing of a space-suit helmet, with the earth superimposed in

the background, with a fine electronic music backdrop. All by itself, that Intro was worth the price of admission; it lent some character and sense of wonder to the mission.

11. The moon trip is supposed to be the philosophical and ideological payoff and victory for the hard-core WASP American—the final justification for continuing his Howard Johnson way of life. “See, son, it’s all been worthwhile!” That, we know is horseshit. Most WASP Americans don’t have the slightest idea what to do with the simple fact that we’ve gone to the moon and returned without killing anybody. I watched hundreds of TV interviews (it seemed like hundreds) and nobody (but Nobody) seemed to have any perspective at all, except to put a hype on their emotions: “Gee, it’s just super-terrific...golly...the greatest thing since the Creation!” The fact is, the rate of American reality has speeded up so much that it has absolutely no reference for our capacity for feeling and knowing the events. The trip to the moon for the average American is as “marvelous” and incomprehensible as the concentration camps of World War II. The sheer size and scope of these technological events makes them incomprehensible.

12. Well, OK, let’s ask the question: were there guns taken on the voyage, or laser-ray pistols? I mean, what were our astronauts prepared to do in case of “hostile alien life-forms,” like encountering Indians, or “heathen savages?” Heh, heh.

13. After all is said and done, Mike Collins, who stayed alone in the command module, emerges as an intricate and interesting human being. I understand a “Mike Collins Fan Club” has been formed, a club for the first cosmic loser. He’s the one, in case you still can’t place him, who has the sense of humor, who spoke to the “kids” of the world while playing with a gravitation-less spoonful of water. “Well, see ya kids.”

14. Neil Armstrong’s parents, that good grey couple from Wapakonete, Ohio, spoke for all America when they stood before the TV cameras and said...almost nothing (gasp...choke) at all. Heh, heh.

15. William B. Furlong of *World Book Encyclopedia* recently taped three hours worth of Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon. He talked, according to reports, reluctantly, grudgingly, almost contemptuously. Among other things Armstrong said: “People are a third-rank category of things interesting to talk about. Someone once said: ‘great men talk about ideas, good people talk about things, and everybody else talks about people.’” Seig Heil! Android-of-the-Year Award goes to Neil Armstrong, whose friends call him j9-46823-41.

16. Whatever happened to Paul Henry of Mission Control? Is there a NASA glue-factory?

17. Much of Walt Disney’s Tomorrowland at the fabled California super-kid Paradise is now obsolete, unless they change the name to Yesterday-land.

18. The moon trip was like watching, for hours and hours, an electrician installing wiring in a new house. It was a technological event woven with little human significance. The sheer perfection of the trip made it truly ho-hum, and for us humans (who have been described as “foul weather creatures” who thrive on tragedy and adversity) it was a disappointment. As human drama it would have been far more “interesting” had Armstrong and Aldrin been stranded on the moon. Mankind is “touched” far more deeply by disaster than by success, particularly in America, where WASP “success” is so desperately routine.

19. Intangible gains to mankind. Slipped the surly bonds of earth. Assured mankind immortality. Spinoffs. \$24 billion dollars for the *Nina*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*.

20. What do we stand to gain from the mission of Apollo 11? What did Columbus gain that Eric the Red didn’t? Another day older and deeper in debt. In the words of Tu Fu, the ancient Chinese poet, “I will watch the last flowers as they fade, and ease the pain in my heart with wine...after the laws of their being all creatures pursue happiness. Why have I let an official career swerve me from my goal?”

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #85, August 7-20, 1969

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