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The Dark Side of the Moon: 40 years after moon landing the doubts persist

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EXCLUSIVE by Dennis Ellam [14/02/2009](#)

Was it all a hoax?



In the words Neil Armstrong chiselled into history, it was one small step for a man

But were the Moon landings really mankind's greatest scientific leap or the most fantastic hoax ever pulled?

The thrilling TV pictures, so faint and grey that we might have been peering at a ghost moving through a thick fog, certainly showed a bulky shape in a spacesuit backing down a ladder, stretching out a leg, tentatively putting one booted foot on to the surface.

The surface of where, though? The Moon or an elaborate mock-up in a movie studio somewhere in a remote corner of an Earthly desert?

As the world prepares to celebrate the 40th anniversary of that July day in 1969 when the Apollo 11 mission completed the first manned Moon landing allegedly the doubts live on.

The conspiracy theorists, the lunatics, call them what you like, insist that Armstrong and his fellow astronauts, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins, never got further than a few orbits of the Earth.

They claim what the world was watching as it goggled at its TVs was all a fake, filmed months in advance and broadcast as if it were real and happening live.

The landing. The footprints in the dust. Those phantom figures bunny-hopping around in a barren landscape. They were all part of the scam.

A loopy idea? Consider this:

In 1979, when the first suggestions began to emerge that NASA might have been up to some dirty tricks, six per cent of Americans thought the Moon landing was a hoax. In 1999, the number had risen to 11 per cent.

When they counted again recently, they discovered no fewer than 22 per cent believed that the Apollo 11 Moon landing never happened.

That's more than 60 million suspicious Americans. And many more millions worldwide. The internet now teems with claims and allegations.

Mankind was conned, they argue, and there are good reasons for suspicion. First, the motive.

Ever since President John F Kennedy pledged at the start of the 60s that man would travel to the Moon and back within a decade, the Americans were desperate to beat the Russians in the space race.

That summer of 1969, Moscow was only a month from launching its own manned Moon shot.

Washington, burdened with the Vietnam war and civil unrest, benefited from a popular distraction to take attention away from its problems.

And then, the practicalities.

Technology then was positively primitive. The computer developed for the Apollo programme had only a tiny fraction of the power in a home PC today. The satnav that guides your car is many times more sophisticated than the machine which, so we are assured, steered a mission 250,000 miles to a few square yards of the Sea of Tranquility and back.

Even recently, when President George W Bush announced the USA's ambition to return to the Moon, he was told it would take 11 years to put the engineering together.

It's embarrassing now for NASA to realise that, as a four-decade anniversary approaches, a rapidly-growing body of public opinion is convinced the greatest moment was a fake.

At NASA headquarters in Washington, the men in suits even have a code for them. HBs the Hoax Believers. Area 51, the HBs argue, is the most likely spot where he put down his foot. Its a top-secret military installation in the Nevada desert, also known as Groom Lake, or Dreamland.

It would be the ideal place to hide a shed big enough to house an area of make-believe Moon.

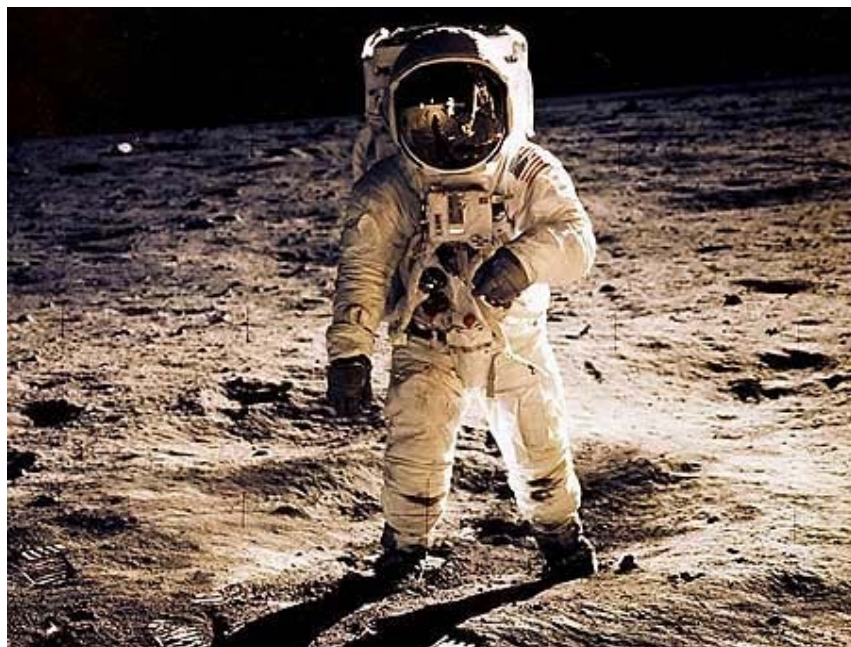
NASA had raised \$40billion of funding to go to the Moon. Plenty for a high-class production and, HBs say, enough to pay off a large number of people.

Of course, NASA has its photographic proof. Thousands of pictures, in fact. They were taken on Moon missions between 1969 and 1972, showing men and their machines, against a backdrop that had become very familiar to a public growing almost bored with the adventure by the end.

The HBs, though, kept picking over every detail. They began to notice strange tricks of the light.

How, for example, could an astronaut (below) be walking through a shadow, or have the sun at his back, and yet be brightly lit from the front, showing off all those bits of his spacesuit, especially the Stars and Stripes flag, in technicolour?

If you were posing this in a studio, with so-called in-fill lights blazing from every angle, you couldn't have produced a better result. The response from NASA? Well, you have to understand that on the Moon light can behave in odd ways.



There isn't the atmosphere to spread it around like on Earth, but there is an open surface to reflect it where you might least expect it. So where are the stars? In every photo, the sky was ink black, with nothing at all twinkling out there.

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Another lunar phenomenon, NASA said. Because the sun was so bright, and the surface so reflective, the stars would be too dim for a camera to capture, or an astronaut's eye to register.

It didn't take long, either, before questions were raised about moondust. Just like moonlight, it seemed to have strange properties. An astronaut's foot would leave a print, for example. Yet the lunar rover, with an Earthly weight of 10 tons, would not.

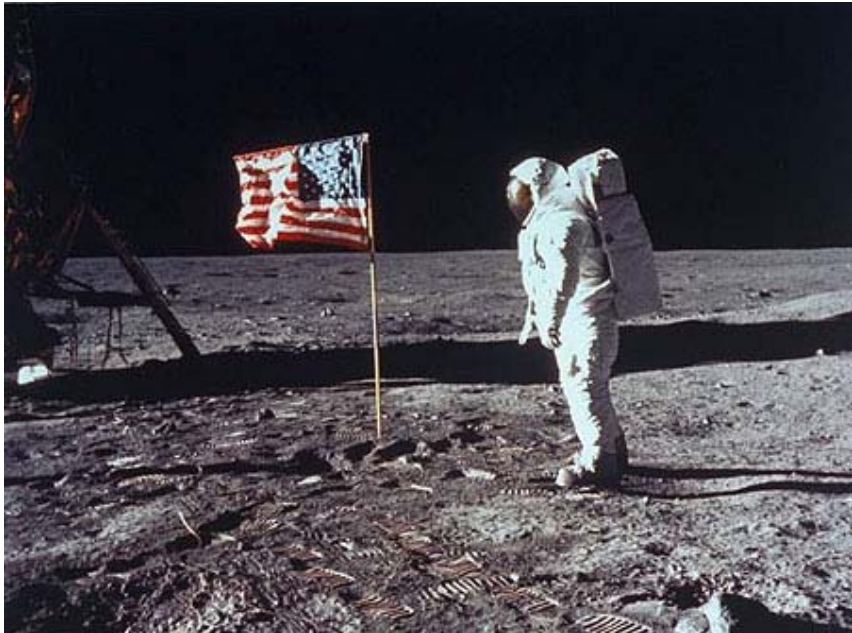
And how come, when the spidery landing vehicle hovered above the surface and fired blasts from its retro-jets to lower itself down, it didn't even appear to have disturbed the very ground underneath it.



To questions such as this, NASA scientists would sigh wearily, like teachers trying to educate the dullest kid in class in the simplest physics.

Surely everyone knew, they pointed out, how to work out the pressure from 3,000lb of thrust, across the square area of the engine nozzle, how a man's boot could exert a greater force on the ground than a large wheel and, for Heavens sake, how all these calculations change in a vacuum, such as on the airless Moon.

And the flag planted by Armstrong and Aldrin. The sceptics say the shadows cast by the astronaut, the lander and various rocks seem to go in all directions when they should be parallel, while the flag doesn't cast any shadow at all.



Nasa's version is that the shadows don't run parallel because of the distortions in perspective, projecting a 3D scene on to a

two-dimensional photograph. Some shadows disappear because the lunar surface has a peculiar property and reflects light back in the direction it came from.

But the HBs have begun to gather important allies.

A former engineer who worked on the design of Apollo rockets Bill Kaysing had his doubts during the 1960s about whether the Moon programme would ever get off the ground.

What I saw on TV made me a sceptic, he says. The whole thing seemed phoney to me.

He was particularly puzzled by the landing vehicle itself, which didn't seem to make any engine noise.

Almost as if, Bill points out, it was a prop being lowered by wires on to a movie set.

The chances of getting a man to the Moon and bringing him back again were something like 0.0017 per cent in other words, a virtual impossibility, he adds.

My view is they were told if you cant make it, fake it.

He's not alone in his doubts.

Brian OLeary says: "I can't be sure 100 per cent that man actually walked on the Moon."

Considering Brian was an astronaut in the 1960s, and an adviser during the Apollo programme, that's a bombshell.

Perhaps most outrageous of all conspiracies is that three men did indeed go to the Moon but there was not the technology to bring them back.

They were sacrificed for US pride. The Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins, who reappeared on Earth were lookalike actors.

Today only Aldrin, now 78, keeps a high public profile.

He was confronted two years ago by a TV reporter who demanded he swear on the Bible that the landing wasnt a hoax.

Aldrin's response? He punched the guy on the nose and narrowly escaped prosecution. More proof, said the HBs, of the pressure of keeping a 40-year secret.

The most telling evidence, say the HBs, is that the Moons still there, 250,000 miles away, but we dont go there any more.

And we haven't been since we abruptly abandoned the missions 37 years ago.

Has science moved so far backwards? Or are we about to celebrate the day when it really took all of us for a ride?

That small step begins to look even more mysterious than ever.

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