



# Venus, Mars and Jupiter Shine

by James Stokley

If you think that the evening skies are now more brilliant than usual at this time of year, you are quite right.

Added to the display of bright stars visible on late winter evenings are three prominent planets. Two of them—Venus and Jupiter—are brighter than any of the stars. The third, Mars, is exceeded only by Sirius, the dog star.

The first to appear is Venus. On March 1 it remains above the western horizon for more than two hours after sunset and at the month's end this is

extended to nearly three hours. It is so prominent that you can see it in the west while the evening twilight is still quite bright.

Jupiter is high in the south, in the constellation of Gemini, the twins. Although less than a third as bright as Venus, it is so brilliant that you will have no trouble locating it.

At the first of the month Mars rises in the east about four hours after sunset and about two hours after on the 31st. Brighter than any star in that part of the sky and distinctly red, it is easy to identify. It is about a tenth as bright as Jupiter.

The accompanying maps show the appearance of the skies about 10:00 p.m., your own kind of standard time, at the first of March; 9:00 p.m. on the 15th; and 8:00 p.m. on the 31st. The position of Jupiter is about the same all month; that of Venus (in Aries, the ram) is its location at month's end.

During March, Venus moves from the next-door constellation of Pisces, the fishes (not shown on the maps) in Aries. This is a distance in the sky more than from Sirius, in the south to Regulus, high in the southeast.

Mars is in Virgo, part of which is shown low in the east, but this planet does not come up until after

the times shown on the maps.

Sirius, in the south in Canis Major, the great dog, is the brightest star of the night sky. To its right, and a little higher, stands Orion, the warrior, with two more stars rated as first magnitude. These are Betelgeuse, above, and Rigel, below. Between them are the three stars that form Orion's belt. Farther right stands Taurus, the bull, with ruddy Aldebaran to mark his eye.

Above the great dog is a faint constellation called Monoceros, which means "unicorn," and above that is the lesser dog, Canis Minor, with the star Procyon. Still higher is Jupiter and the constellation of Gemini. Pollux is another star rated as first magnitude, but nearby Jupiter outshines it. To the right of Taurus shown on the northern sky map, is Auriga, the charioteer, with bright Capella.

Three more bright stars, also rated by astronomers as first magnitude, are in the eastern evening sky. One is Regulus, high in the southeast in Leo, the lion. In the northeast is Bootes, the herdsman, with bright Arcturus. The third is Spica, near the eastern horizon, in Virgo, the virgin, but this star is so low that atmospheric absorption dims its light considerably; thus it is shown as magnitude three.



With artificial satellites already launched and space travel almost a reality, astronomy has become today's fastest growing hobby. Exploring the skies with a telescope is a relaxing diversion for father and son alike. UNITRON's handbook contains full-page illustrated articles on astronomy, observing, telescopes and accessories. It is of interest to both beginners and advanced amateurs.

**CONTENTS INCLUDE:**

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**CELESTIAL TIMETABLE FOR MARCH**

March	EST	
3	4:11 a.m.	Moon in last quarter
4	3:00 a.m.	Mercury between earth and sun
10	11:30 p.m.	New moon
12	8:00 p.m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,500 miles
13	2:20 a.m.	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness
	4:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Venus
15	11:10 p.m.	Algol at minimum
18	7:50 p.m.	Algol at minimum
19	3:32 a.m.	Moon in first quarter
21	2:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	2:37 a.m.	Sun directly over equator, spring commences in Northern Hemisphere
23	2:00 p.m.	Saturn behind moon
25	10:21 p.m.	Full moon
26	3:00 a.m.	Moon nearest, distance 221,700 miles
27	5:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Mars
31	11:00 a.m.	Mercury farthest west of sun

Subtract one hour for CST, two hours for MST, and three hours for PST.

