

Venus at Greatest Brilliance

by James Stokley

With the arrival of the first full month of summer, three bright planets are still prominent in the evening sky. However, the brilliant display they made during the spring is fading.

Venus is even brighter than it was a month or two ago. It dominates the western sky but it is rapidly drawing into line with the sun. This means that it sets a little earlier.

On July 1 Venus sets about 2.5 hours after the sun—and about an hour after at the month's end. On July 24 it reaches greatest brilliance. Then, through a telescope, it looks like the crescent moon. It will be so bright this month that it can be seen in full day.

Jupiter, also visible in the west, sets before Venus, which is about 13 times brighter than the giant planet. Nevertheless, except for Venus and the moon, Jupiter is more brilliant than any other object in the evening sky.

Still fainter, although equal to a first magnitude star, is Mars. It shines in the southwest in Virgo, the virgin, and near the star Spica, which is somewhat fainter. Mars can be recognized

by its steady red light, quite different from the scintillating bluish brilliance of the star.

The maps depict the sky as it looks about 11:00 p.m., your own kind of daylight saving time, at the beginning of the month, and at 10:00 p.m. on the 15th. At the end of July they would look about the same at 9:00.

Virtually directly overhead and a little to the east is the brightest star of the summer evening—Vega, in Lyra, the lyre, a group shown partly on each sky map.

Below it but still high in the northeast is Cygnus, the swan, with a bright star called Deneb that is fainter than Vega. Below Cygnus (on the southern map), in Aquila, the eagle, is Altair, which ranks in magnitude between Vega and Deneb. These three stars form the "summer triangle," so named because it is prominent at this time.

With Mars itself nearby, to the right, you can easily compare them. Antares is considerably fainter than Mars, and is also dimmed because it is so low. They suffer a greater reduc-

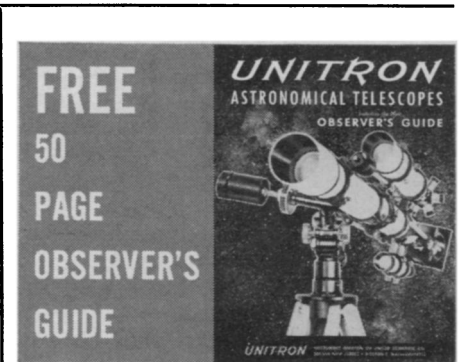
tion of light by atmospheric absorption than do objects that are higher.

About midnight the planet Saturn rises in the east, in Pisces, the fishes. And Mercury, the fifth planet that comes into naked-eye view, may be glimpsed low in the east just before sunrise for about a week at the end of July. On the 29th it will be farthest east of the sun.

CELESTIAL TIMETABLE FOR JULY

July	EDT	
5		Earth farthest from sun, distance 94,455,000 miles
7	1:01 p.m.	New moon
9	6:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	8:00 a.m.	Mercury between earth and sun
10	8:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Venus
14	11:53 a.m.	Moon in first quarter
	4:00 p.m.	Moon nearest, distance 229,800 miles
	9:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Mars
21	10:40 a.m.	Full moon
24	6:00 a.m.	Venus brightest
27	10:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Saturn
28	10:00 a.m.	Moon farthest, distance 251,100 miles
29	8:15 a.m.	Moon in last quarter
	11:00 p.m.	Mercury farthest west of sun

Subtract one hour for CDT, two hours for MDT, and three hours for PDT.



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.

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