

Book review

Black Holes : The end of the Universe ?

by John Taylor

Fontana (1974) pp 190

I came across *Black Holes (The End of the Universe ?)* in a second-hand bookshop. The author is touted as a “distinguished physicist and mathematician”, so it ought to have been scientifically accurate. On this occasion my ‘rubbish radar’ let me down; it wasn’t even triggered into suspicion by noticing that this Fontana edition was part of their “Science & Occult” series.

A good book ignites the imagination, others are only suitable for ignition. This one is littered with speculative fantasy and scientific errors. Taylor seems to have particular problems with energy. For example, on the subject of stellar evolution he says “... the star’s initially high proportion of hydrogen allows it to build up helium, then carbon, oxygen and successively heavier elements, gaining energy in the process” (p. 52). I laughed out loud when I got this far, since stars obviously *emit* energy (hence why we can see them) liberated by fusion reactions. He also asserts that novae are driven by stars *gaining* energy from the matter falling towards their cores.

The book has clearly dated badly over the past 30 years and is best given a wide berth.

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18th March 2004

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