



The Martian
(by Andy Weir)

McGyver on Mars: The task is to survive being stranded on Mars with a food and water supply for only 30 days in a less than hundred square meters canvas habitat (Hab) for more than 900 days (sols) without communications nor a MEV (Mars Escape Vehicle) by just using available “on-board” means and engineering ingenuity to wait and hope for a rescue mission. The solution – “I’m going to have to science the out of this” (Mark Watney – the stranded Mars botanist and geologist).

As a NASA trained space operator I like the role of the “ground operations people” very much and their real-life roles they play as around the clock workers (fueled by coffee) willing to squeeze the last inch out of their knowledge and expertise to see their mission through – against all odds. The description of the working cultures at Houston and JPL are “on the dot”, in particular with respect to project and mission management, project and creative funding as well as the handling of “massive” public relations.

The excursion into the pathfinder history and Sojourner is exciting in particular having actively lived through this time period. The trekking to the “Carl Sagan Memorial site” – is also as realistic as it could be - under the circumstances.

I also appreciate the international crew onboard of Hermes (remember the name of the European version of the Shuttle!) and the cooperation with China. Even NSA pitches in for image processing support (great idea).

"In space I guarantee you - at some point everything is going south on you"

I would call this book not SF but a technological space thriller which keeps your suspension up to the last nozzle thrust – although you guess the outcome. The technical background is perfect and Andy Weir has to be applauded for his in depth research of biological, geological and above all, his state-of-the-art space technology extrapolation to “push the envelope” with his “what – if” scenarios.

"In space I guarantee you - at some point everything is going south on you": I wish the Mars-One astronauts (privately funded “one-way” mission sending Astronauts to Mars <http://www.mars-one.com/>)

could carry Weir’s book with them as kind of a “plan- Ω ” emergency manual.

It was fun to listen to the audiobook (excellent narration by J.C. Bray) – I recommend the book for on-console (space) operators during lonely shifts. The official trailer (starting in October) suggests that the movie is as excellent as the book, so don’t miss it!



To wet your appetite watch the official trailer of the movie: <http://www.foxmovies.com/movies/the-martian>

June 2015, Joachim J. Kehr, Editor SpaceOps News, “Journal of Space Operations & Communicator”