



## Book Reviews

### Canuck primer

|By Joseph Wilson

**THE QUIRKS AND QUARKS GUIDE TO SPACE: 42 QUESTIONS (AND ANSWERS) ABOUT LIFE, THE UNIVERSE, AND EVERYTHING** by Jim Lebens (McClelland & Stewart), 256 pages, \$22.99 paper.

Rating: NNN

This slim volume of astronomy trivia will appeal to fans of CBC Radio One's science program Quirks And Quarks. Written by Q&Q producer Jim Lebens, it consists of four- to six-page responses to 42 questions about space science and astronomy.

A wealth of gems are packed in here, such as Lebens's description of the most interesting moons in the solar system (Jupiter's Europa gets a flattering shout-out). His first-class explanation of dark matter hinges on an analogy to Gwyneth Paltrow's character in *Shallow Hal*.

It's comforting to read a book like this by a Canadian. Measurements are in kilometres, and analogies are made between the size of space-ship solar panels and the size of Alberta. He answers the question, "What will happen when an asteroid hits?" with a loving description of the annihilation of the buildings along rue Sainte-Catherine instead of relying on the clichéd image of a destroyed New York City.

Because the chapters are short, though, Lebens never gets deeply into any one topic. There is some repetition in the answers and, despite the sweeping promise of the book's subtitle, he never really digs into the implications or the philosophy of the science he's describing.

That said, this is a great reference guide, and McClelland & Stewart's decision to publish it only as a paperback should make that more likely.

It will be a great resource for high school students interested in questions like "What happens when you fall into a black hole?"

