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Book Review: The Birth of Time: How Astronomers Measured the Age of the Universe

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The birth of time : how astronomers measured the age of the universe



Gribbin, John. Yale, 2000

237p, 0-300-08346-7 \$22.50

LC Call Number: [QB981](#)

Astrophysicist and writer Gribbin takes the reader on a historical journey from humankind's first speculations about the age of Earth to the recently achieved scientific consensus on the age of the universe, using everyday analogies to clarify the bootstrap process by which distances and ages are measured. He weaves an engaging tapestry that describes how scientific knowledge progresses in fits and starts toward the truth. However, the casual reader will find the thread difficult to follow, especially the last chapter and epilogue where recent developments are sketchily described. Gribbin tries to bring the excitement of discovery to the reader by relating his own research on galaxies. However, the substantial portion of the book devoted to this work may inadvertently overemphasize to the casual reader how important it was in resolving apparent discrepancies in determinations of the age of the universe. The book covers much the same ground as several others in the popular market, such as Stephen W. Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (CH, Jul'88), except that Gribbin takes an observational viewpoint. Recommended for readers with a scientific background, such as undergraduate students though professional scientists, as well as two-year technical program students.

Summing Up:

Reviewer: [T. D. Oswalt](#), National Science Foundation

Recommendation:

Readership Level: Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates, Graduate Students, Researchers/Faculty, Two-Year Technical Program Students, Professionals/Practitioners

Interdisciplinary Subjects:

Subject: [Science & Technology - Astronautics & Astronomy](#)