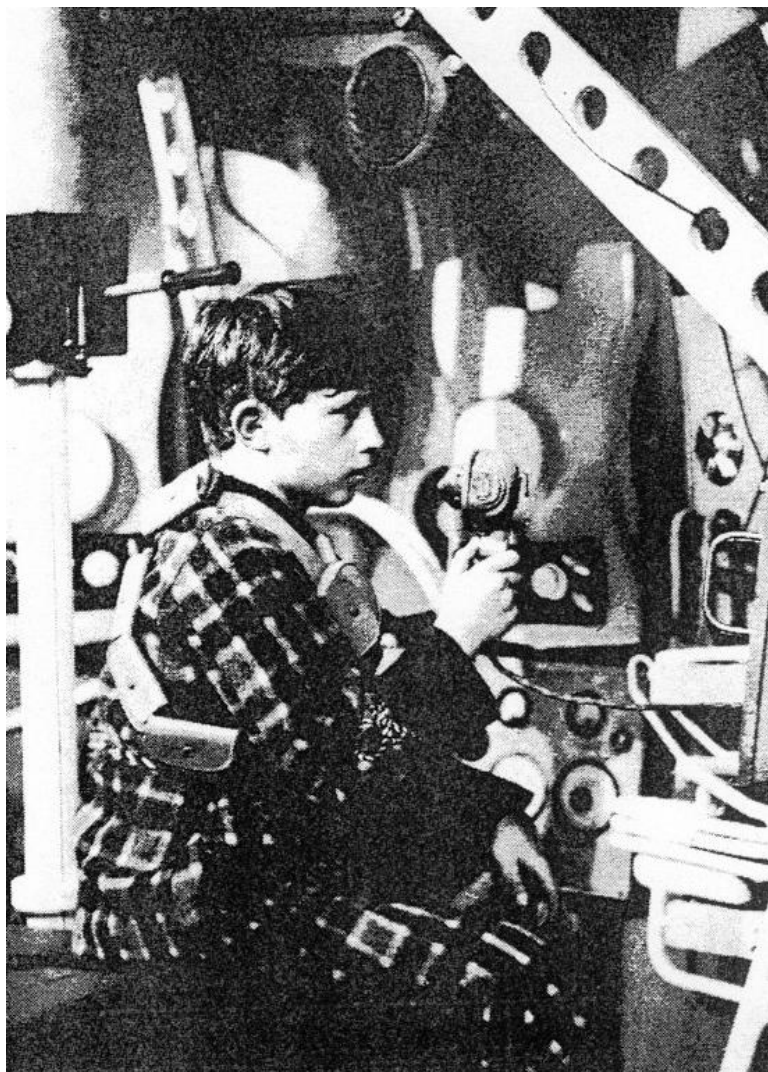


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Target Luna

UK TV serial : 1960 : dir. Adrian Brown : ABC : 6 x 30 min
prod: Sydney Newman : scr: Malcolm Hulke & Eric Paice : dir.ph.:
[Michael Hammond](#); [Sylvia Davies](#); [Michael Craze](#)
David Markham; Annette Kerr; Frank Finlay; John Cairney; Deborah Stanford; Robert Stuart;
Michael Verney; Phyllis Kenny; William Ingram

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Once again Britain leads the world – in terms of technological achievement, dress sense, and sending small boys around the moon. Scanned from a photocopy – hence the poor image definition Source: Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction

The Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction review:

"This 1960 comic-book-style saga sent one young boy to the moon and launched a family into a trilogy of pioneering space adventures. Despite its SF theme, **"Target Luna"** was an unashamedly old-fashioned "boy's own" fantasy in which a youngster takes centre stage doing all the things grown-ups do (and doing them better). Acted with gusto, it was as wholesome as Marmite soldiers and went down a treat in its Sunday tea-time slot.

The scene is set on an island rocket station off Scotland (though the open-air sequences were filmed off the Essex coast). Professor Wedgwood, having successfully sent a man into space, has invited his three children to join him for Easter. There the youngsters, Valerie, Geoffrey and Jimmy (plus obligatory pet hamster, Hamlet), find an even more daring experiment in preparation - the first manned rocket round the moon. At the last moment the pilot, Flight Lt. Williams, falls ill and the experiment looks set to fail. But little Jimmy (hitherto dressed, like every well-brought-up astronaut, in school blazer and tie) secretly takes his place and is shot into space.

As an electrical storm cuts radio contact with Earth, Jimmy must operate the rocket's heating system or risk freezing to death behind the moon. Naturally, the young hero successfully circles the moon and heads back to Earth (though not fast enough to escape a bombardment of cosmic particles, and not too fast lest he overshoot). Finally, he is talked down to the requisite safe landing. A happy ending, of course, but an even happier beginning for the writers Malcolm Hulke and Eric Paice, who took the Wedgwood family further into space the following autumn [in **"Pathfinders"**]. The series (like its three successors) was produced by Sydney Newman, doyen of ABC's **"Armchair Theatre"**, and soon to spawn the longest-running science-fiction series of all - **"Doctor Who"**.

Episode titles :

- 1 : "The Rocket Station"
- 2 : "Countdown"
- 3 : "The Strange Illness"
- 4 : "Storm in Space"
- 5 : "Solar Flare"
- 6 : "The Falling Star"

Broadcast 24th April - 29th May 1960
(ATV - London)

Cast :

Professor Wedgwood.....David Markham
Jimmy Wedgwood.....**Michael Hammond**
Valerie Wedgwood.....Sylvia Davies
Geoffrey Wedgwood.....Michael Craze
Mrs Wedgwood.....Annette Kerr
Mr Henderson.....Frank Finlay
Ian Murray.....John Cairney
Jean Cary.....Deborah Stanford
Dr Stevens.....Robert Stuart
Mr Field.....Michael Verney
Pat MaxwellPhyllis Kenny
Fl.Lt. Williams.....William Ingram

Designer: David Gillespie; Producer: Sydney Newman; Series adviser: Mary Field

The Golden Age of Children's Television incidental note:

" [**"Doctor Who"**]..was the brainchild of Sydney Newman, a Canadian producer who had moved to the BBC from ITV where he had been responsible for the tales of the Wedgwood family in the children's sci-fi series **"Target Luna"** and **"Pathfinders"**... "

[no listing in "Halliwell's Television Companion", "History of Television", "How Sweet It Was", "Into the Box of Delights - a History of Children's Television", "Television's Greatest Hits" or "25 Years of ITV - 1955-1980"]

No further information currently available. All the above details are courtesy of *The Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction*, a little mine of material on these early television series. Nothing else is known of Michael Hammond, or the other kids named. In 1960 I was five years old, but I do very dimly recall the "**Pathfinders**" series which flowed from this. My elder brother recalls it, however, and his indignation when pioneer Jimmy, on his return to Earth, was rewarded by a grateful planet with the gift of a tricycle. Studio-bound and anæmic though these low-cost productions were (Roddenberry's "**Star Trek**", when it first arrived, looked amazingly sophisticated and technically accomplished compared to anything that had gone before) but the Sixties were the decade when Technology held the key to everything, and the space race stimulated a very genuine public excitement about what might be just around the corner, cosmologically speaking.

In terms of the critical cost of the thrust/weight ratio, one might think small boys would have been a logical intermediate step between monkeys and full-grown astronauts. But, the space programme being the ageist construct it was, they chiefly had to stow away in order to get their tails launched into Outer Space. If they were lucky, they got to tag along as part of a family group, as in "**Lost in Space**" or "**Land of the Giants**". Later, they would take to building their own space vehicles, as in "**EXPLORERS**" (85), or were forcibly abducted and press-ganged into service, as in "**FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR**" (86). The boy-in-space found his true apotheosis in the shape of Luke Skywalker, and watching "**STAR WARS**" it seems clear that, although Mark Hamill was 25, the character's true age was closer to 14 (just as the Paul Atreides character in "**DUNE**" was about ten years younger in the book than in the film). Space exploration speaks to something J.M. Barrie-ish in the male psyche, but the cinema has too often been sidetracked into employing SF as a crude projection of male (hetero)sexual wish-fulfilment. Young boys like to play with their rockets too.

See also "Pathfinders", and subject index under **EPIC JOURNEYS, SCIENCE FICTION** and **SERIALISATIONS**.