

Brian May, guitarist for rock band Queen, completes Ph.D. thesis following 30-year hiatus

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Brian May, the guitarist and founding member of the legendary rock band Queen, earned his PhD in astronomy last year from Imperial College London. His PhD thesis *A Survey of Radial Velocities in the Zodiacal Dust Cloud* has just been co-published by Springer and Canopus Publishing Ltd.

May's thesis examines the Zodiacal Light, the misty diffuse cone of light seen in the West after sunset and the East before sunrise. Though anyone can see the Zodiacal Light from a suitably dark location, it is poorly understood, and has been the subject of relatively little research. May began his research of the Zodiacal Light in 1970 and completed his research and thesis in 2007, following a 30-year hiatus to play guitar in the well-known rock band Queen.

While some readers may expect a rock-and-roll guitarist to write a popular astronomy book, *A Survey of Radial Velocities in the Zodiacal Dust Cloud* is a rigorous, academic examination of the Zodiacal Light. May's thesis documents the building of a pressure-scanned Fabry-Perot Spectrometer, equipped with a photomultiplier and pulse-counting electronics, and its deployment at the Observatorio del Teide at Izaña in Tenerife, at an altitude of 7,700 feet (2,567 m), to record high-resolution spectra of the Zodiacal Light. More than 250 scans of morning and evening Zodiacal Light were recorded, in two observing periods in 1971 and 1972.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my years playing guitar and recording music with Queen, but it's extremely gratifying to see the publication of my thesis, *A Survey of Radial Velocities in the Zodiacal Dust Cloud*," May said. "I've been fascinated with astronomy for years, and I was happy to finally complete my PhD last year and record my studies of the Zodiacal Light in this book."

Source: Springer

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