

Books

Snap heaven

Beyond: Visions of the interplanetary probes

by Michael Benson, Abrams, £38/£55,
ISBN 0810945312

Reviewed by Hazel Muir

ON 5 March 1979, Voyager I snapped the Pele volcano erupting on Io, Jupiter's fifth satellite (right). This is one of nearly 300 stunning pictures in *Beyond*, a collection of images beamed back from space over the past 40 years.

The photographs come from early pioneers such as the Mariner missions of the 1960s as well as high-tech ventures like SOHO, which is still operating today. They capture everything from rippling sand dunes defrosting in the Martian spring to dumpy little asteroids like Eros, which was so carefully scrutinised by the NEAR spacecraft in 2000. A serene image from Voyager of the crescent of Neptune with its moon Triton in tow is one of the best and rightly appears on the book's cover.

Contrast that with furious ultraviolet eruptions on the sun and violent volcanoes on Jupiter's spotty moon, Io. It is baffling to think that nature has built these diverse worlds from the same huge, bland cloud of gas and dust.

The print quality of the book is excellent, and it is refreshingly light on text, allowing the images to speak for themselves. *Beyond* is a breathtaking reminder that our solar system is a beautiful and strangely disturbing place.

