

Royal Mail news New miniature sheet and PSB • New definitive and country packs

Opposite The front cover and the four panes from the new prestige stamp book *Across the Universe*. The front cover features Halley's comet; one of the Magellanic Clouds is shown on the back cover.

Astronomy miniature sheet and prestige stamp book A miniature sheet and prestige book on the theme of Astronomy go on general and philatelic sale from 24 September. The sheet contains four 1st class stamps showing: Planetary Nebula in Aquila; Seyfert 2 Galaxy in Pegasus; Planetary Nebula in Norma; and Seyfert 2 Galaxy in Circinus. The Queen's silhouette and 1st class indicator are positioned at top left with caption reading upwards on the right-hand side of each stamp. The sheet, price £1.08, was designed by Rose Design using imagery from NASA and The Hubble Heritage Team amongst others. The sheet was printed by Questa in gravure, sheet size 120 × 90mm. The stamps measure 41 × 30mm, perf 15 × 14, two phosphor bands, PVA gum.

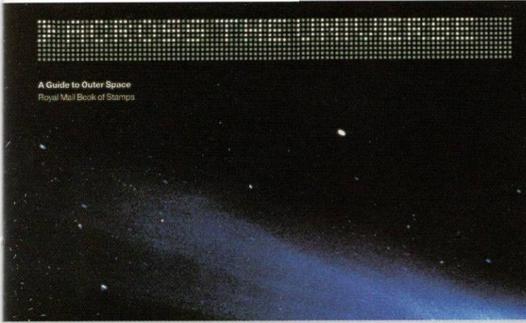
The new prestige book, entitled *Across the Universe*, costs £6.83. It contains Astronomy, other special, definitive, and country stamps in four panes as shown opposite. The book will be printed by Questa, the stamp panes in gravure, other pages in litho. This will be the first time Questa have printed the English country stamps, indeed the first time English country stamps have appeared in a prestige book. The book has been written by John and Mary Gribbin and designed by CDT Design Ltd. The stamp pane illustrations are by Andrew Davidson.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main Post Office branches, Royal Mail Tallents House, and Post Office philatelic outlets about a week before 24 September, price 25p. The cover can be used for both the miniature sheet and the book panes.

Orders for serviced Royal Mail covers must reach Tallents House by 24 September. Price £1.69 UK/£1.44 overseas with miniature sheet; £3.19 UK/£2.72 overseas with Jodrell Bank label pane. State whether Tallents House or Star postmarks required. Collectors may send their own stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Tallents House or Star, Glenrothes postmarks to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9BP, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Rutherglen DO, Duchess Place, Rutherglen, Glasgow G73 1BT. The outer envelope should be marked 'FD02 19' (Tallents House), or 'FD02 20' (Star).

Covers can be posted or handed in at most main Post Office branches for the Star postmark. Sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*. Any of the stamps in the miniature sheet and prestige book can be used, singly or in combination for all first day, philatelic and sponsored handstamps in use on 24 September.

PHILATELIC PRODUCTS A presentation pack containing the miniature sheet will be available, price £1.45; also five stamp cards (25p each) showing the sheet and each of the four stamps.



Astronomy The Universe is made up of billions of stars. The Sun, our nearest, is a stable star in the middle of its lifetime. Many stars are similar, producing a constant flux of heat and light for billions of years. Younger stars have only recently been formed from collapsing clouds of gas and dust. Older stars eject their outer layers as they begin to die. The expelled gas of these planetary nebulae form colourful and dramatic shapes as they expand violently into space. Beyond our own spiral-shaped Milky Way Galaxy are billions more galaxies, every one a collection of billions of stars ●

Across the Universe The prestige book contains Astronomy, other special, definitive, and country stamps as follows:

- Pane 1** Top and bottom rows: 1st class English stamp, 2nd class English stamp, 1st class English stamp. Middle row: 2nd class English, 1st class Scottish, 2nd class English. The pane margin shows the sign of the constellation Leo (lion).
- Pane 2** Four 1st class National Space Centre Leicester stamps (as in stamp book issued May 2000). Pane margin shows sign of constellation Scorpius (scorpion).
- Pane 3** Top and bottom rows: Machin definitives 1st (gold), E (European rate), 1st (gold). Middle row E stamp, label Jodrell Bank, E stamp. Pane margin constellation Cygnus (swan).
- Pane 4** The four Astronomy stamps as in miniature sheet. Pane margin shows continuation of designs.