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The Dobsonian Telescope

A practical Manual for Building Large Aperture Telescopes

David Kriege and Richard Berry

4/2004 Tom Trusock - [Click to e-mail author](#)



Psst – hey buddy – get a load of this... Ya want some aperture? Come on - Ya know ya want it. Just imagine what M51 will look like in a BIG scope... How about a 25” for \$10749? Too rich for your blood? Well I’ve got a nice 18” f4.5 I’ll let ya have for \$5295...

Still too much money?

What’s a guy to do?

Well.... You could build your own. If you aren’t a complete woodworking Neanderthal like me – and even if you are you still might be able too.

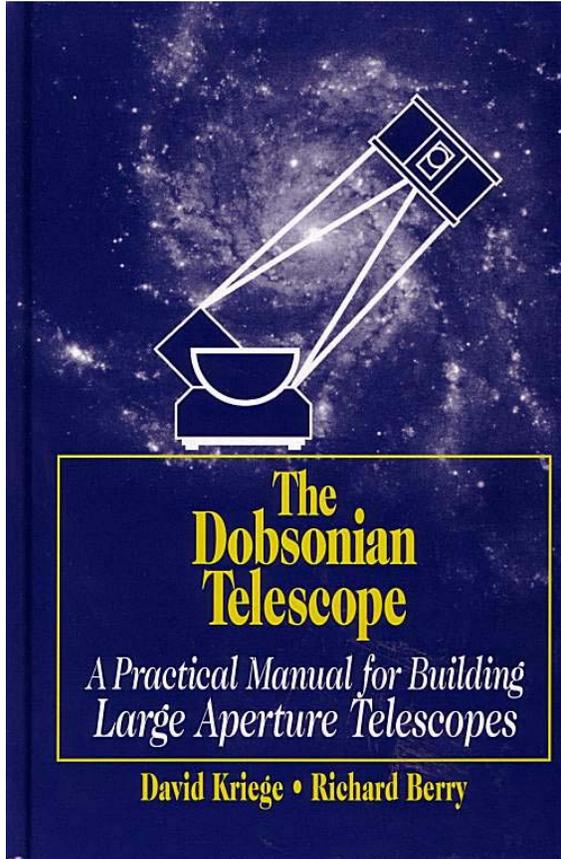
Level	Intermediate to advanced
Age	15 and up
Pages	475 pages
Type/Price	Hardback, \$29.95
Publisher	Willmann-Bell, Inc.
Summary	Everything you ever wanted to know about the construction of a modern <i>Obsession</i> style scope. Recommended for anyone who is looking to build their own scope, as well as anyone who currently owns a truss scope.

The Dobsonian Telescope warns you right off the bat that reading the book will almost CERTAINLY cause aperture fever. And while my case was what the insurance companies call a pre-existing condition (no, I can’t get insurance on it – I’ve checked) and wasn’t caused by the book Kriege and Berry did cause it to flare up, and I frequently caught myself daydreaming about selling everything for that 25” monster.

Let me be frank, buster (there’s an inside joke for all of you with three year olds – for the rest, let me just say it involves a pair of related Australian marsupials) - I’m a dob fan from way back. In fact I’m one of those guys that thinks the 6-10” solid tube dob is the perfect beginner scope – big enough that you can see tons of objects, small enough to be portable. Heck - *my* first scope was an 8” dob, and my most recent purchase is also an 8” dob. But I hadn’t picked up this book before this because I’ve never planned on building one. While this book does help you build that monster dob, it goes further than that – I’ll go so far to say that this is the truss dob owners bible. If you own a dob, let alone are considering building one, then this book is for you.

While the dobsonian traces its roots to William Herschel’s reflecting giants as early as 1784, what we consider to be the modern dobsonian wasn’t born until considerably later.

Ramakrishna monk, John Dobson crafted his first telescope in 1956, and was quickly convinced that everyone in the world needed to see the heavens through a telescope – and the bigger the better! The original dobsonians were built from scavenged parts – mirrors ground from portholes, cells made of giant plywood boxes, and solid tubes of anything that was handy – cardboard hose reel barrels or sonotube were just a few of the ingredients that made up these early scopes. *The Dobsonian Telescope* chronicles the evolution of today's dob; from the early use of Teflon bearings, through



the role of Coulter Optical in the dobsonian revolution to early tracking platforms and the birth of the truss scope. Kriege and Berry are of the opinion that today's truss scopes are of the "Second Dobsonian Revolution", and I'm inclined to agree, but I'd add that I think we are headed towards a third revolution with the advent of ultralight weight dobs thanks to the Hight design and the vendors that are now beginning to offer them commercially. The Dobsonian Telescope is lacking any mention of the UltraLight concept.

Chapter two is an attempt to talk you down off the 36 inch ledge with a discussion of the realities such a scope entails. Let me tell you – this chapter is well placed and much needed in deciding exactly what size scope will suit you.

But the real meat of this book comes next where Kriege and Berry take you in hand and show you step by step just how a modern *Obsession* (Kriege's company)

style dobsonian is built. Every aspect is covered – from initial construction, making mirror cells, torque analysis, setting up and taking down, collimation, to his logic behind truss pole placement. He even includes a list of resources where all the materials can be purchased.

At its heart, while it is a guide to constructing the scope of your dreams, *The Dobsonian Telescope* is really an owners manual for a truss dob that explains the particulars of its construction, and the logic behind it. This is *the* book for getting the most out of your scope. Everybody who owns a truss dob should have a copy of this book. In my opinion, Kriege should ship a copy with every *Obsession*, as it will help new owners understand exactly why Kriege builds their scope like he does.

While I have no intention of building a monster dob at any time in the near future, I've picked up several performance improvement tips that I want to try out on my measly little

15" scope, and I understand some of the stuff I'd been doing for years without really understanding why outside of the fact that it just worked. You know the - "I don't know why we do this, you just do", stuff.

The bottom line, is this book is highly recommended for anyone who owns, is looking to purchase or thinking about building a truss dob. If you are an aponaut with little interest in "big glass" you can give this one a miss.

John Dobson – "A dobsonian telescope is just a pile of stuff."

Related Resources:

Albert Highe's Ultra-light Dobs –
http://pw2.netcom.com/~ahighe/12_5ultra.html

Ultra-Light and Minimalist Dobs by Mel Bartels -
<http://members.efn.org/~mbartels/tm/ul-dobs.html>

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