

# New Scientist

WEEKLY 8 March 2025

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## Spacebound



**Rhiannon Adam**

**Sony World Photography Awards**

THIS ghostly image of a Soyuz MS rocket at Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, shot the night before it took off for the International Space Station in December 2021, has a particularly poignant resonance for its photographer, Rhiannon Adam.

Around a month earlier, she had been told that she would be one of eight crew members in the dearMoon project. Set to be the first civilian mission to the moon, it was scheduled to launch in 2023 using a rocket developed by SpaceX, but was later cancelled.

Adam was part of a large crowd taken to see the Soyuz rocket that evening. As others started leaving, she hung back to get her shot before she was escorted away by security. “Before firing the shutter, I held my breath and closed my eyes, as I didn’t have a cable release,” she says. “It was an eerie kind of alien green light, the flood lights mixing with the mist, and I knew it was a sight I may never see again.”

Adam captured two frames before she was ushered onto waiting buses and had to cross her fingers that her photo would come out. “Luckily for me, it did. The image is a little bittersweet now, for what it symbolises for me, but when I can disassociate it from my own life, I still think it is a beautiful monument to human achievement,” she says.

She is one of 30 finalists in the professional competition at the 2025 Sony World Photography Awards, making the cut in the “creative” category for her photo series about the mission’s cancellation. The overall winner of Photographer of the Year will be named on 16 April. ■

**Alison Flood**