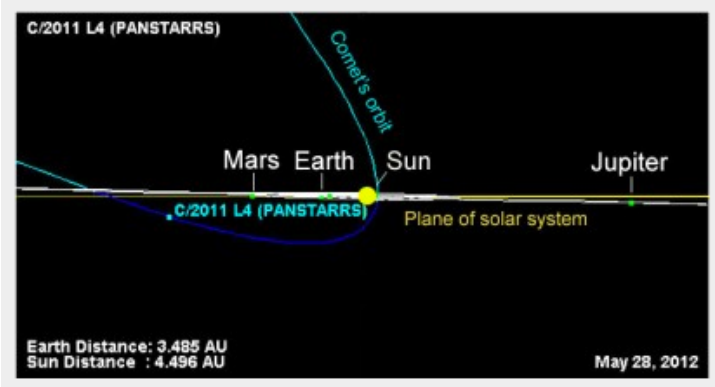
Tony Smith's Home Page - Comets

COMET C/2011 L4 (PANSTARRS)

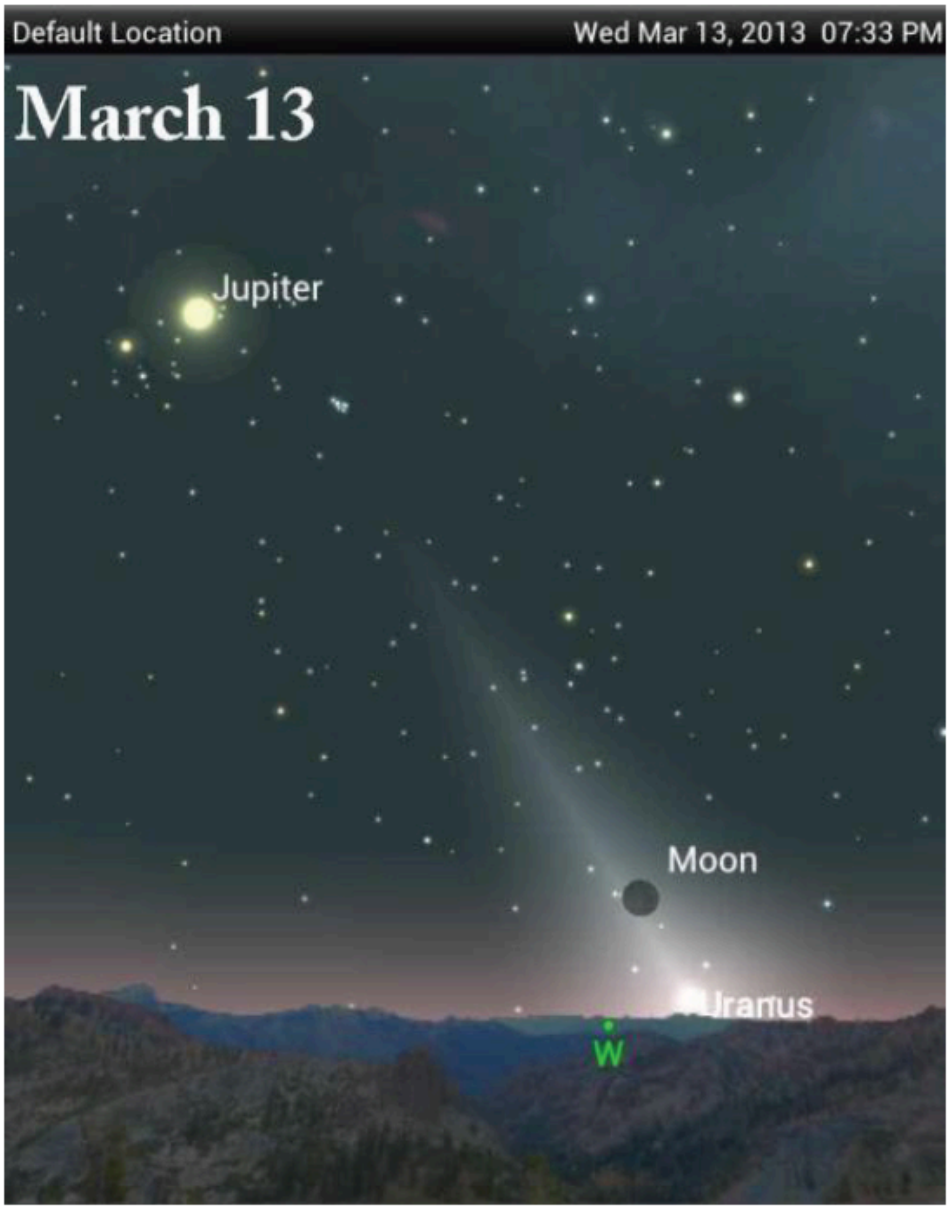
According to Gary W. Kronk's Cometography Comet PANSTARRS "... was discovered at a distance of nearly 7.9 AU from the sun ... June ... 2011 ...
The comet will reach a southerly declination of -45.6 degrees on 2013 February 5 and then turn northward ...
The comet will pass closest to Earth on 2013 March 5 (1.10 AU) ...
The comet will be closest to the sun on 2013 March 10 (0.30 AU) ...
The comet could be brightest between March 8-12, with magnitude near -0.5 ...
The comet will attain... its most northerly declination of +85.2 degrees on 2013 May 28 ...".

According to Astro Bob "... PANSTARRS's orbit is steeply inclined (84 degrees) ...



... May 28, 2012 ... its below the plane of the solar system ... but after perihelion ... its orbit takes it quickly above the plane ... Comet PANSTARRS' orbit appears ... to be nearly parabolic. ... Most comets on parabolic orbits come from the far edge of the solar system and have their orbits reworked by giant planets Jupiter and Saturn into very long but closed ellipses with orbital periods of hundreds of thousands to millions of years ...".

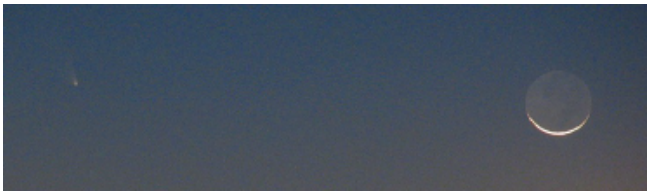
According to waitingforison.wordpress.com "... Looking forward to the appearance of Comet ISON in Winter 2013 ... and Comet PANSTARRS in March 2013 ... The following charts are drawn for ... mid northern latitude ... in the UK ...



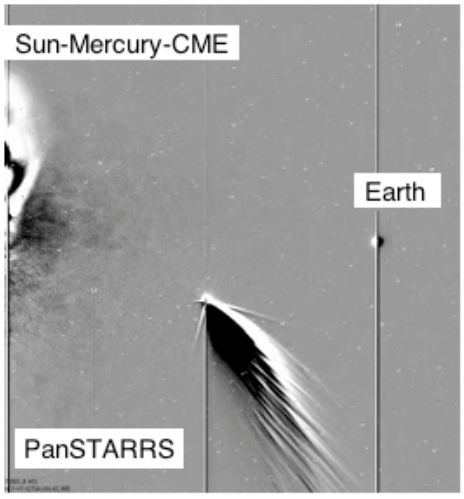
...[13 March 2013 is my 72nd birthday] ...

... Comet PANSTARRS will ... possibly rival... Comet Hale Bopp from 1997 ...".

Now that March 2013 is here, it is clear that Comet PANSTARRS is much less impressive than Comet Hale Bopp



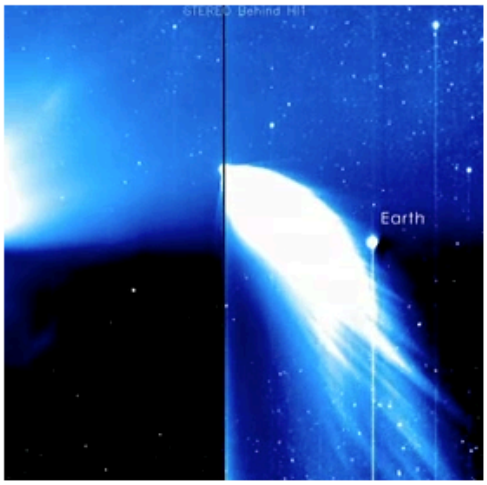
as seen from Earth as in this 13 March 2013 California image from Kronk Cometography in which the Comet is a faint dot far to the left of the Crescent Moon. However, an image from a NASA STEREO video during 9-12 March 2013

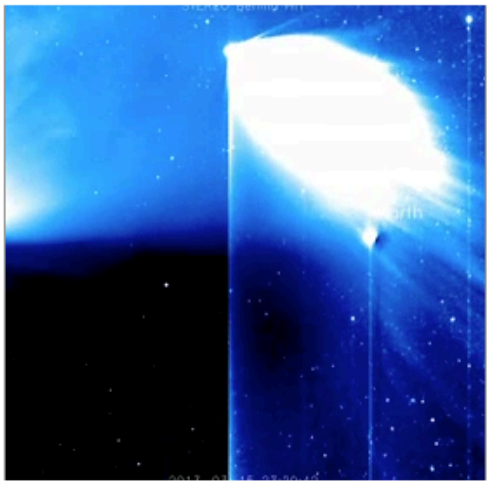


NASA STEREO-8 on 9-12 March 2013
(Solar TErrestrial RElations Observatory)

shows a Solar CME, Mercury, Comet PanSTARRS, and Earth to form an interesting system. NASA says:
"... the tail looks quite complex and it will take computer models to ... understand ... what's happening ...".

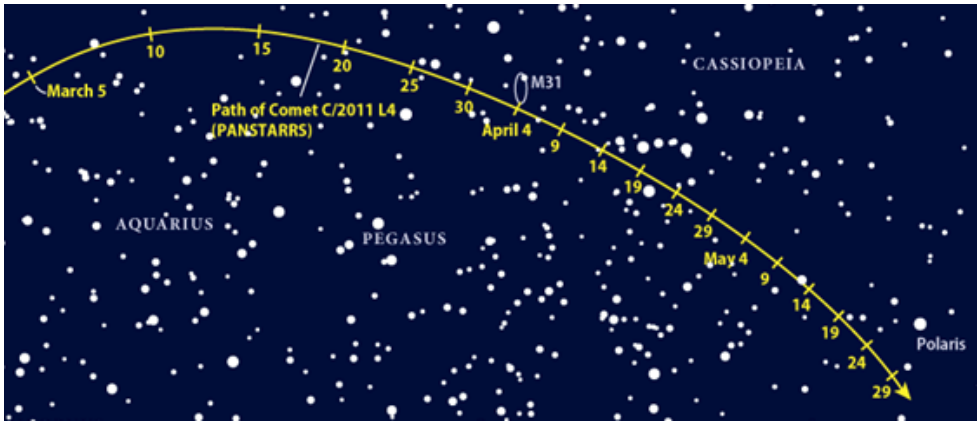
Here are NASA STEREO images during 10-15 March 2013



as to which NASA says "... While it appears from STEREO's point of view that the CME passes right by the comet, the two are not lying in the same plane ... the comet's tail didn't move or change in response to the CME's passage ...".

Here is a map from Astronomy Magazine showing the path of Comet PanSTARRS during March, April, and May 2013:



Tony Smith's Home Page

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Here are Comet PanSTARRS and the Andromeda Galaxy M31 taken by Smilyk Pavel 31 March 2013 60 km from Syktyvkar, Russia: