Music.

On Dec. 14, 2009, a United Launch Alliance Delta II rocket carried NASA's Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer, or WISE, space telescope into a high polar orbit.

WISE lifted off from Space Launch Complex-2 at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California beginning its 10-month mission to map the entire sky in the infrared.

Preparations for launch started earlier in the year when WISE's builder, Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp., in Boulder, Co., shipped the spacecraft to the Astrotech payload processing facility at Vandenberg.

During the months of August, September and October the spacecraft was uncanned, uncovered and moved to a clean room for testing, weighing and balancing.

Meanwhile, at Space Launch Complex-2, build-up of the Delta II began on Oct. 19 with the hoisting of the first stage onto the launcher platform, shortly followed by the interstage section.

Once the first and interstage sections were secured, workers attached the three solid rocket boosters around the base and then lifted the second stage section into position.
By the end of October, the rocket was complete and testing began on its Tracking and Data Relay Satellite transmitter.

A demanding workload followed in November as technicians tested the rocket's propellant and guidance control systems, in addition to performing first stage leak checks.

At Astrotech, work continued with loading of the cryogenic hydrogen that will keep the spacecraft's infrared telescope super-cold during its months of observations.

After one final week of testing, technicians gingerly lowered a transportation canister over WISE for its move to the launch pad.

Then, the 1,460-pound spacecraft was lifted atop the Delta II rocket.

By the end of the month, an integrated electrical test was conducted to ensure the two crafts communicated with each other and with mission control.

In a clean room environment, the spacecraft was carefully encased in its protective shell, called a fairing.

The two-part fairing protects the spacecraft during the harsh environment of liftoff, and fell away once it reached orbit.

Technicians at the launch pad continued mechanical, electrical and avionics system checkouts of the rocket,
while cooling of the spacecraft's cryogenic systems continued until liftoff.

With a successful launch accomplished, the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer soon will begin scanning the entire sky to uncover hidden cosmic objects, dark asteroids and the most luminous galaxies.