

# Newsweek

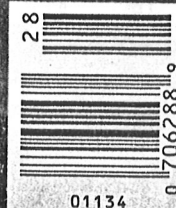
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**TERROR IN THE GULF**  
How Shaky Are the Saudis?

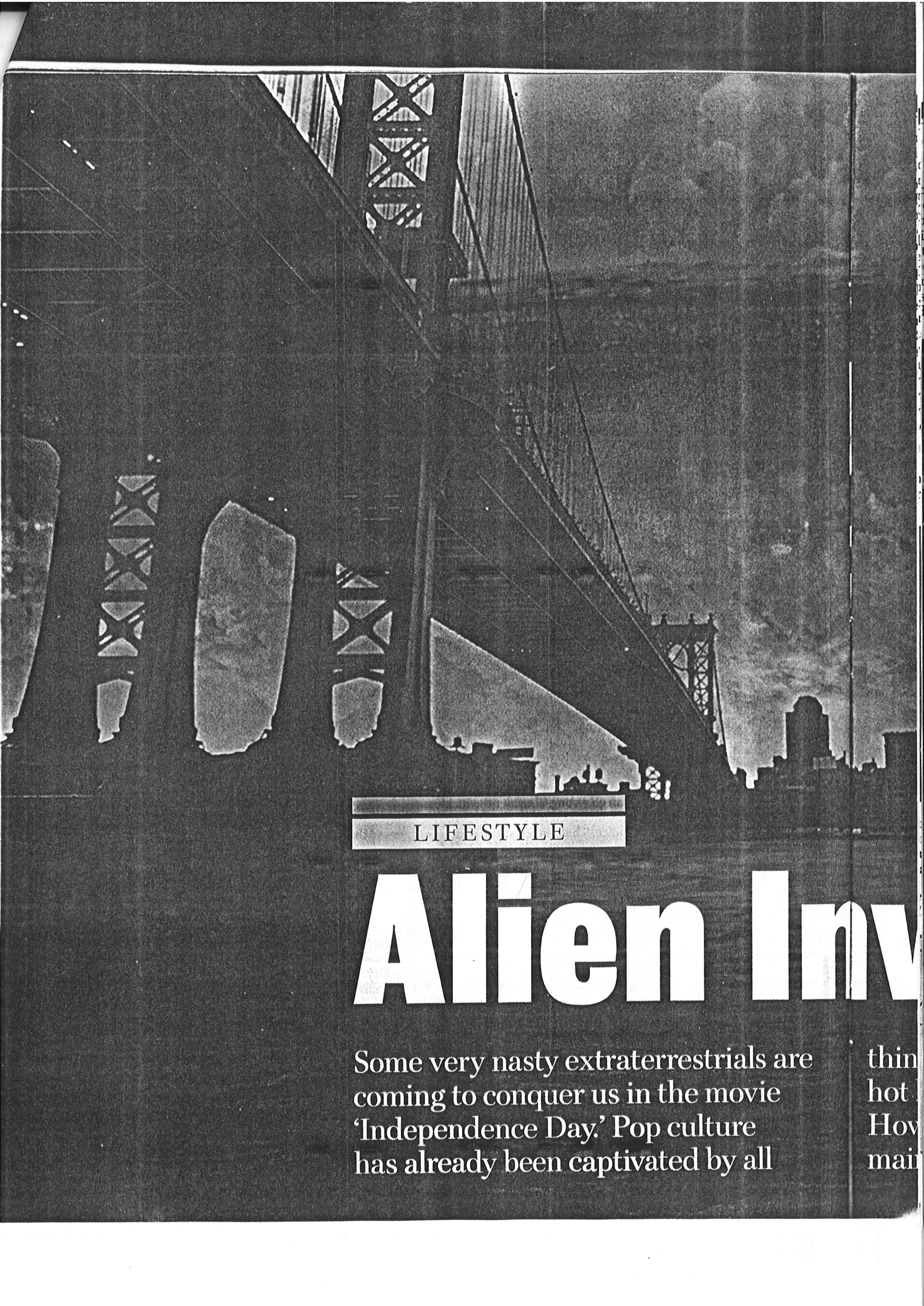
# Out There

From  
'Independence  
Day' to  
'The X-Files,'  
America Is  
Hooked on the  
Paranormal

'Independence Day's'  
Will Smith







LIFESTYLE

# Alien Inv

Some very nasty extraterrestrials are coming to conquer us in the movie 'Independence Day.' Pop culture has already been captivated by all

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**UFObia:** An  
'ID4' saucer  
arrives to  
eliminate  
Manhattan

# Invvasion!

things paranormal, from psychic  
hot lines to out-of-body experiences.  
How did this far-out stuff get so  
mainstream? BY RICK MARIN

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

**A** MAN WHO ONCE worked for NASA is lecturing a couple of hundred normal-looking Americans in the exceedingly normal-looking ballroom of the Asheville, N.C., Radisson. His name is Brian O'Leary, and he is not normal. Just look at him. The guy is wearing a shiny periwinkle shirt under his gray suit and is talking to a giant purple pig puppet. "We are no longer at the top of the cosmic pecking

order," O'Leary berates the pig puppet. Then, addressing this national meeting of the Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence, he explains, "People like Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking and the pig are mouthpieces for the old way of thinking." They do not believe in UFOs. O'Leary does. So do the members of his audience, who gaze raptly at a slide show of everyday scenes with little flying saucers in the background. Some of these even manage not to look like pie plates or Frisbees. Paul Walker, an Asheville bookkeeper who calls himself an "open-minded skeptic," says he's here listening to the pig-puppet man because he wants the answer to one simple question: "What else is there to life beyond this dimension of existence?"

He's not the only one. According to a NEWSWEEK Poll, 48 percent of Americans believe UFOs are real and 29 percent think we've made contact with aliens. Another 48 percent think there's a government plot to cover the whole thing up. In April the governor of Nevada officially renamed State Route 375 the Extraterrestrial Highway because of the frequency of UFO "sightings" reported there. Last week three men were arrested on New York's Long Island for plotting to assassinate local officials who the men believed had concealed a UFO landing. The American Astronomical Soci-

ety recently announced the discovery, in deep space, of a building block for amino acids, the foundation of life on Earth. Less reputable stargazers claim to have seen Elvis eating fried chicken on Uranus.

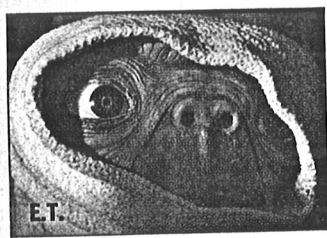
We're in a major alien moment, even more intense than the "Chariots of the Gods" mania of the '70s. This week the baddest aliens of all arrive—flying the baddest saucers you've ever seen—in "Independence Day," projected to be a summer blockbuster of galactic proportions

(page 51). They blow up New York, Washington and Los Angeles, then we fight back. Actually, we kick their alien butts, thanks to the planet-saving heroics of Jeff Goldblum (geeky science guy), Bill Pullman (cool president guy), Will Smith (wise-cracking fighter-pilot guy) and an awesome arsenal of special effects. If aliens ever do invade, we should forget about our primitive weapons and fight the bastards with special effects.

Predictably, almost every purveyor of pop culture has been busy cashing in on this renewed obsession with little green men. Disney World has revamped Tomorrowland to include an attraction called ExtraTERRORestrial Encounter. This fall, your television sets (do not adjust them!) will be invaded by clones of Fox's huge supernatural soap, "The X-Files": more paranoid sci-fi fantasies about alien ab-



**'The truth is out there':**  
David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson of 'The X-Files'



E.T.

Astronomers have found the building blocks of human life in space; less reputable stargazers claim to have seen

Elvis eating fried chicken on Uranus

LEFT TO RIGHT: KOBAL COLLECTION, MICHAEL GRECCO—FOX



ductions, government cover-ups and who killed JFK. "Contact," directed by "Forrest Gump"-ster Bob Zemeckis, and Tim Burton's campfest "Mars Attacks!" are just two of the 11 UFO movies on the way. "Starship Troopers," from "Showgirls" director Paul Verhoeven, will hopefully answer the burning question: is there lap dancing in space?

But UFOs aren't the only paranormal phenomenon scrambling our brain waves. The best-seller lists are seldom without a few helpful manuals on how to be embraced by the light, or a prophecy of the Celestine variety. And it's not only the usual crystal-gridders and "Jerry Springer"

guests who are into this stuff. Forty percent of those polled by NEWSWEEK admitted to believing in the supernatural. All manner of weirdness has taken hold of otherwise sensible people. Hillary Clinton is imagining conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt. Sony has set up an ESP lab. Designer Donna Karan says that in previous lives she was, among other things, a cowgirl and a painter in the court of the Medicis.

Now, Donna may be a fashion designer, but she's not crazy. She's not one of those wackos who think aliens built Atlantis and that reptilian sewer-dwelling dwarfs were

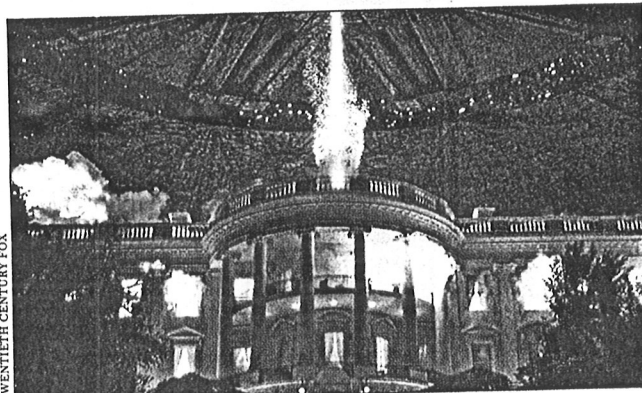
responsible for the missing-children scare in the '80s. The lunatic fringe represents one end of the paranormal spectrum. At the other end are sober researchers who think there might be something out there worth looking into (page 54). The interesting people are the ones in the middle. Donna. The guy in the next cubicle. The woman who runs your division. They have families. They can tell a joke and usually know where their car keys are. Yet they had their house exorcised before moving in and can't wait to see John Travolta get telekinetic in his new movie, "Phenomenon" (page 64). The extent of their belief drops them some-

# 'Earth, You Have a Problem': Kabooooom!

Aliens invade the Land of the Free. BY DAVID ANSEN

**W**HILE WE'RE ON the subject of the paranormal, has anyone noticed something almost... extrasensory going on in Hollywood? (Cue the theremin music.) Somehow everybody in town knew, before a foot of film was seen, what the three summer blockbusters would be: "Twister," "Mission: Impossible," "Independence Day." The first has already grossed more than \$211 million. The second, more than \$156 million. The third will explode on the Fourth of July weekend to record-book figures.

In some weird way, the success of these products was preordained—by the multimillion-dollar mumbo-jumbo marketing. Few civilian moviegoers actually speak warmly of "Mission: Impossible"; they find it cold and confusing. "Twister"? The computer tornadoes are great. But did anyone give a flying cow whether some Ping-Pong balls got sucked up by a funnel? No matter: there are a few high-concept movies that have been deemed Events, and Americans resist them at the peril of becoming aliens themselves.



**Zapped:** The White House is blasted to bits

Which brings us to "Independence Day." Unless you were sharing a cabin with the Unabomber, you already know what it's about (space aliens invade the planet, Earth fights back). So does it live up to the hype? Well, if I were a 10-year-old boy, I'd probably think it was the coolest movie going. Actually, I saw this movie when I was 10, for it turns out to be a reincarnation of a cheeseball '50s B science-fiction flick, albeit a B movie that cost \$70 million and comes with a PG-13 rating, which means its ideal audience needs Mom's and Dad's consent. (Give it.)

Brought to you by the "Star-gate" partners (director Roland Emmerich and his producer and co-writer, Dean Devlin), "Independence Day" has the saving grace of not taking itself seriously: it knowingly serves up recycled popcorn. One of Emmerich's inspirations was '70s disaster movies; as in those lumbering epics, we're given a medley of wildly divergent characters coping with the imminent destruction of the planet. There's the president of the United States (an improbably cast Bill Pullman, keeping a straight face). Will Smith is a fighter pilot so cocky he leaps

into an alien spacecraft no human has ever seen before and zooms off into battle. Quirky Jeff Goldblum is the smart Jewish cable guy who is the only person in the world to figure out the evil invaders' communication system. Judd Hirsch is his father, supplying borscht-belt comic relief. There's Randy Quaid swag-gering around as a dipso crop-duster who claims he was once abducted by aliens, and Vivica Fox as Will Smith's girlfriend, a stripper who dances only to support her kid (have we wandered into another summer movie here?). Even Harvey Fierstein shows up, camping giddily.

In the course of this amiably gung-ho adventure, New York, Los Angeles and Washington are destroyed, and Houston is contaminated by a nuke set off in a vain attempt to destroy a 15-mile-wide alien ship. Yet the surviving characters react to this apocalypse as if it were a mild flu epidemic. "How do I look?" perkily inquires the about-to-be-wed stripper, evidently having recovered from mourning the deaths of everyone she knew in L.A. The dialogue is tacky, the characters stock and the special effects no improvement on anything George Lucas did 20 years ago. Which is not to say you won't have some fun at this cheerful destruction derby, but just to prepare you for deep silliness. In the old days, this terribly important Event would have been on the bottom half of a double bill.



where along the slippery slope from "X-Files" viewer to alien abductee.

Colleen Fogerty has never spotted a UFO, but she sees auras all the time. A 49-year-old hospital-administration consultant in Minneapolis, she's been known to turn boardrooms into Ouija-boardrooms. "I'll be sitting in a meeting and a vaporlike apparition will come out of people and tell me what's really going on in that meeting," says Fogerty. "Now try to concentrate when that's going on. It's, like, 'Scoot!'" She doesn't channel spirits from The Other Side much anymore. "It makes me dizzy." But she does rely heavily on ESP. "These administrators can't for the life of them understand why they can look for a person for a year and I give them one in a week." She is, after all, a headhunter.

Strange things are going on in Minneapolis. Twin Cities business consultant Deborah Savage and her restaurateur husband head a neo-Masonic group that studies the teachings and consciousness-enhancing methods of Armenian mystic G. I. Gurdjieff. These lawyers, nurses, teachers (and one airline baggage handler) all aspire to the group's enigmatic inner circle. "The aim is to move toward a higher level of being," Savage says. "People become attracted to this after they discover there's more to life than material wealth."

Horst Rechelbacher, CEO of the Aveda beauty-salon chain, discovered that 20 years ago when he gave up a life of drugs and debauchery as a jet-setting hairstylist to the stars and got heavily into meditation. He now refers to his company as his "spiritual practice" and is a devotee of shamanic journeying—a sort of tourism for the soul, where you never have to worry whether they take American Express. "I like to bring myself into a state that I call alpha, which is tranquillity," he says. "I call it brain-wave surfing." Lately he's been surfing with New Age healer-to-the-stars Deepak Chopra. Together they're concocting a line of "wellness" elixirs designed to give your aura that extra bounce and sheen. Eric Utne, founder of the hipster digest The Utne Reader, excitedly predicts "shamanic journeys will be for people in their 30s and 40s and 50s what rock concerts are for people in their teens." Later this year, Utne is

launching "The Living Theater of the Soul," a paranormal road show where astral fellow travelers can commune and pay way too much for T-shirts.

Why has this vast middle class of credulous neospiritualists sprung up over the last few years? Boomers approaching their golden years are still searching for Meaning in their lives, something more transcendent than an old Grateful Dead record. Disillusioned Gen-Xers, prone to conspiracy theorizing, are convinced they have a better chance of encountering an alien than they do of collecting Social Security. It's a substitute religion for people who haven't got one and a supplemental one for those who already do. Carl Jung called flying saucers "technological angels," a modern mythology combining science with a notion of salvation.

"I want to believe" is the movement's (and the moment's) mantra. These very words are inscribed on a UFO poster behind Agent Mulder's desk on "The X-Files," the hit TV show that has codified and popularized once obscure lore about the alleged alien crash landing near Roswell, N.M., in 1947. According to legend, the remains of the spacecraft's alien passengers are now at a secret air force base in Nevada known as Area 51, where they were autopsied. Earlier this year Fox aired a program called "Alien Autopsy," a sensationalist pseudodocumentary of this very event. "Independence Day" takes us inside the same base. "The truth is out there" is another "X-Files" slogan that neatly skirts the issue of how much of this mythology is or isn't, or might just maybe, possibly be true.

## A Guided Tour of the Twilight Zone

**UFOlogy:** Belief in little green men from distant planets

MECCA: Area 51, "secret" Nevada base alleged to house a crashed UFO  
SACRED TEXT: 1947 newspaper accounts of the crash  
CELEB ADVOCATES: Laurence Rockefeller, alt-rock icon Perry Farrell



*'This Island Earth's' ET*

**Out-of-body experiences:** Traveling into another body or the next county



*'White light' glimpsed at near-death experiences*

MECCA: Monroe Inst. for out-of-body research, Charlottesville, Va.  
SACRED TEXT: "Life After Life," by Raymond Moody  
CELEB ADVOCATE: "The Celestine Prophecy" author James Redfield

**Shamanic journeying:** Soul-traveling through upper and lower worlds to learn "healing" lessons  
MECCA: American Southwest, for proximity to Native Americans



*Venice, Calif., faith healer*

**SACRED TEXT:** "Way of the Shaman," by Michael Harner

**Channeling and psychics:** Using people as conduits for chatty, otherworldly beings  
MECCA: Sedona, Ariz., and Santa Fe, N.M., spiritual-energy vortices  
SACRED TEXT: "Channeling," by Jon Klimo  
CELEB ADVOCATE: Shirley MacLaine

**Hands-on healing:** Using meditation, crystals or "subtle energies" to influence



*The old turban and crystal ball bit*

the body's health  
MECCA: Deepak Chopra's planned retreats in San Diego and New York  
SACRED TEXT: "Tibetan Book of the Dead" by Robert A. Thurman (Uma's dad)  
CELEB ADVOCATES: Donna Karan, George Harrison

**Telepathy, ESP, psychokinesis:** Psychic communication, mind over matter (spoon bending)  
MECCA: Princeton Univ.'s PEARLab

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Like more conventional religions, paranormalism has a strong millennial component. "There's going to be a boom economy in this [subject] at least until the year 2000," predicts Dennis Stacy, editor of the UFO Journal. Every thousand years, people expect the heavens to open up and reveal either God or little green men. "Independence Day" plays shamelessly to Judgment Day eschatology, with its fiery scenes of mass destruction, heaving dark firmament and plague of locustlike aliens. As one of the teenagers the movie is clearly aimed at might say, "It's, like, Biblical, dude." Totally. Dean Devlin, who co-wrote and produced "Independence Day," wanted his movie to be about "how will we react at the end of the world?" Ronald Reagan used to carry on about the same



thing. "Star Wars" (intergalactic Armageddon) as opposed to "Starman" (friendly alien falls to Earth and looks like Jeff Bridges) is the narrative du jour. Gone are the cuddly Spielbergian fairy tales of

benevolent beings from the sky. In "Independence Day" alien-loving earthlings gather on top of the Library Tower in L.A. with placards saying WELCOME! and TAKE US AWAY! They are among the first to fry.

As "X-Files" creator Chris Carter says, "Steven Spielberg did two wonderful alien movies a long time ago. The new approach is more apocalyptic, and that's interesting."

Not coincidentally, Carter's next TV series, moving into the "X-Files" time slot this fall, is called "Millennium." Fox is optimistically hoping its viewers will know what the word "millennium" means, even if they can't spell it.

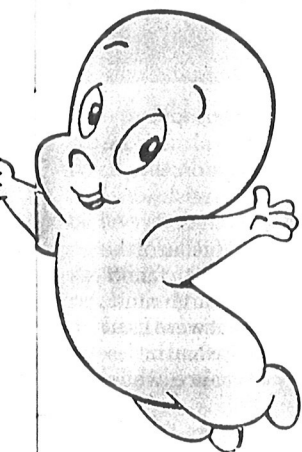
When the end of the world does come, it seems safe to say there'll be a home page devoted to it on the World Wide Web. Already the Internet has attracted a critical mass of sci-fi dweebs, paranormalists and conspiracy theorists who crowd sites like The Alien Exploratorium. "The underground population was there and interested, just like militias," says UFO Journal editor Stacy. "The Net simply makes that information available." If the paranormal is a new kind of religion, the Net is where its gospels are being written and spread to an ever widening body of the faithful. Linked sites cross-reference one user's fantasy to another's paranoia to another's casual voyeurism. On America Online's ParaScope site, launched in April, hundreds of thousands of subscribers read and jabber about everything from UFOs to sightings of El Chupacabras, the demon "goat-sucker" blamed for various farm-animal deaths in Florida and the Southwest. The Chupa is the Bigfoot of the '90s. Naturally,

Aliens and UFOs are the most prominent paranormal obsessions, but that's just a slice of the supernatural. From psychokinesis to cryptozoology, here's a clip-n-save directory to "The Other Side".



(brain-wave experiments)  
SACRED TEXT:  
"Parapsychology: A

Casper, the user-friendly ghost



Controversial Science," by Richard Broughton  
CELEB ADVOCATES:  
Dionne Warwick, Dan Aykrodt



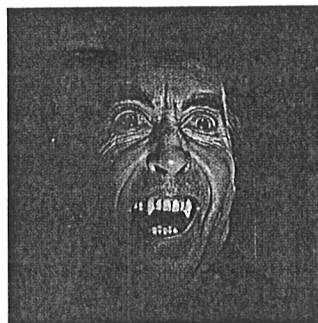
Bigfoot, Seattle's first grunge rocker

#### Apparitions & ghosts:

Souls who have been sidetracked on their way to the afterworld  
MECCA: Edgar Allan Poe's grave in Baltimore  
SACRED TEXT: "ESP, Hauntings and Poltergeists," by Loyd Auerbach

#### Witchcraft:

Casting spells  
MECCA: Salem, Mass., site of witch trials in 17th century  
SACRED TEXT: "Witchcraft: The Heritage of a Heresy," by Hans Sebald



Christopher Lee's Dracula

#### Cryptozoology:

Freakish fauna like Bigfoot and El Chupacabras, the "goat sucker"  
MECCA: Pacific Northwest, Florida  
SACRED TEXT: "Mysterious World," by Arthur C. Clarke

Vampires: The undead, who drink blood and wear weird, "goth" clothing  
MECCA: Hollywood  
SACRED TEXT: "Interview With the Vampire," by Anne Rice

SOURCE: THE INSTITUTE OF NOETIC SCIENCES; THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PARANORMAL.



Who says witchcraft isn't a viable modern religion?



he has his own Web site, though he may still be looking for a corporate sponsor.

Is all this nonsense harmless or pernicious? Much of it is merely modernized pagan folklore about faeries and changelings. Chris Carter points out that "writers have always used the supernatural, paranormal, mystic and miraculous to tell stories." Hey, "Independence Day" is just a movie, right? Sure, but every time a Hollywood movie or "Communion"-like book penetrates the public consciousness, up go reports of alien encounters, sightings and paranormal experiences. Such is the fluid interplay between pop culture and the collective unconscious. Talk-show confessions and the Net encourage not just writers but *everyone* to use these fantasies to tell the stories of their own lives. The part of our brain that used to be filled with hobgoblins and incubi is now populated by bug-eyed aliens or creatures with Spanish names that suck the blood from goats. We dream in imagery manufactured in the laboratories of Hollywood or downloaded from AOL.

There is a psychic toll. Listen to the young woman who told the International UFO Congress and Film Festival in Mesquite, Nev., that she was abducted by aliens and sexually "probed," that the little men "took eggs out of me" and gave her a "very detailed sponge bath." You think, this poor woman is crying and could use some serious couch time. Then it turns out it's taken six regression-therapy sessions to recover these so-called memories. Scary. John Horigian, a Boston software salesman who moonlights as paranormal investigator and debunker, says, "There are definitely lu-

# Is There Anything to It? Evidence, Please.

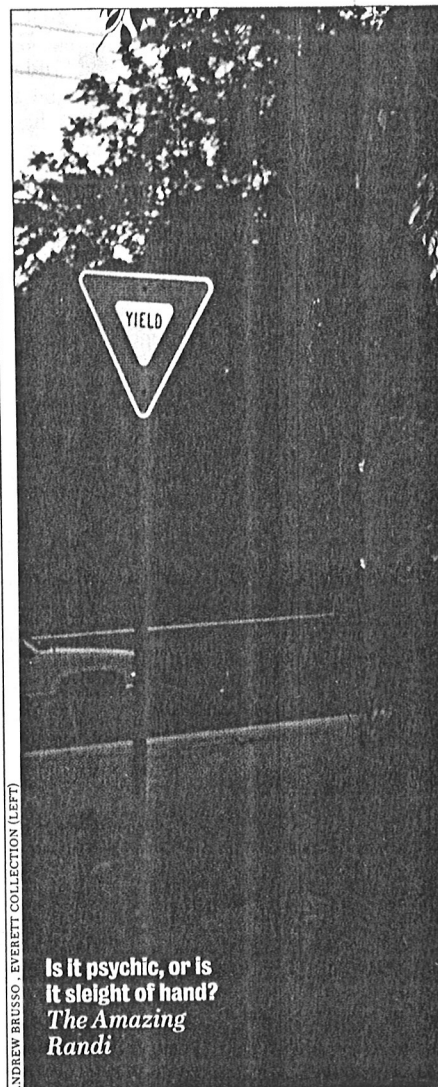
Science on the fringe. BY SHARON BEGLEY

**S**AY THIS ABOUT ASSERTIONS THAT ALIENS have been, are or will soon be landing on Earth: at least a scenario like that of "Independence Day" would not violate any laws of nature. In contrast, claims in other fringe realms, such as telepathy and psychokinesis, are

credible only if you ignore a couple or three centuries of established science. That alone does not mean that the claims reflect self-deception or hoaxes, as skeptics assert. But it does mean that the standard for accepting the claims is higher than it is for, say, accepting that aspirin reduces a man's risk of a second heart attack. As Cornell University astronomer Carl Sagan puts it, "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." Here are the experiments that offer the best evidence of paranormal

probe for the existence of telepathy, experiments have a "sender" in an isolated room look at a randomly selected "target" (magazine ad, art print, movie clip) for 30 minutes or so. Then the experimenter, ignorant of the target, shows the "receiver," in another room, that image plus three decoys. The receiver rates how closely each image matches her thoughts during the isolation period. By chance alone the receiver should score a hit one time in four, for a 25 percent success rate. In a 1985 analysis of 28 studies from several labs, the late Charles Honorton of the University of Edinburgh calculated a combined hit rate of 35 percent. A run of 354 sessions by Honorton, reported in 1994, yielded 32 percent. And a recent run at Edinburgh, using arts students, got a nearly 50 percent hit rate.

Was it telepathy? Some experiments failed to take into account that people hearing white noise think about water more often than sex (or so they say); if beaches appear more often as a target than a couple in bed, a high hit rate would reflect this tendency, not telepathy. Also, receivers tend to choose the first or last image shown them; unless the experimenter makes sure that



Is it psychic, or is it sleight of hand?  
*The Amazing Randi*

the target does not appear in the first or last place more often than decoys do, the hit rate would be misleadingly high.

Skeptic Ray Hyman of the University of Oregon found that, in the Edinburgh runs, video targets that were used just once or twice had hit rates of about chance, while



Every time a UFO movie or TV show penetrates our collective unconscious, reports of alien sightings and abductions go up

natics out there, but if all these claims are hoaxing and lying, we've got a serious pathology affecting this country." He's right. We do.

Arthur C. Clarke, author of "2001: A Space Odyssey" and noted millennialist, once observed: "Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the universe or we are not. Both are equally terrifying." It's enough to make you call one of those psychic hot lines. Almost.

With ADAM ROGERS and T. TRENT GEGAX

phenomena—and some of the objections to their conclusions:

**Telepathy.** Strap half a Ping-Pong ball over each eye. Cover your ears with headphones and lose yourself in the white noise. You are now supposedly in an ideal state to receive another person's thoughts. To

those appearing three or more times yielded a "telepathic" 36 percent. How come? A video clip run through a player several times may look different from one never played for the sender; a canny receiver would choose a tape that looked "used" over one that

rors" in which the experimenter might have known the target and prompted the receiver to choose it. Researchers have been hoodwinked before. Says magician James (The Amazing) Randi, "I can go into a lab and fool the rear ends off any group of scientists."

ship.) In Jahn's experiment, an electrical diode produces, at random, equal numbers of positive and negative electric pulses. The machine also counts how often the pulses alternate: plus-minus-plus-minus. Then a volunteer concentrates on making more, or few-

vein, Dean Radin and colleagues at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, tapping into the local resources, found that of the five days with huge slot-machine payouts, four came on days with a full moon, when psychic powers supposedly soar. The odds on that happening by chance are 2 in 1,000.

That's worth further study. But it means little until independent labs replicate it. As for Jahn's results, there are a couple of puzzles. First, one of the subjects, rumored to be on Jahn's staff, is responsible for half of the successes even though he was in just 15 percent of the trials. Second, some peculiarities in how the machine behaved suggest that the experimenters might have ignored negative data. Jahn says this is virtually impossible. But other labs, using Jahn's machine, have not obtained his results.

Researchers plead that paranormal phenomena are extremely subtle. For instance, explains psychologist Daryl Bem of Cornell University, if the hit rate

for telepathy is 34 percent, then an experiment with the typical 30 sessions has less than 1 chance in 6 of finding the effect.

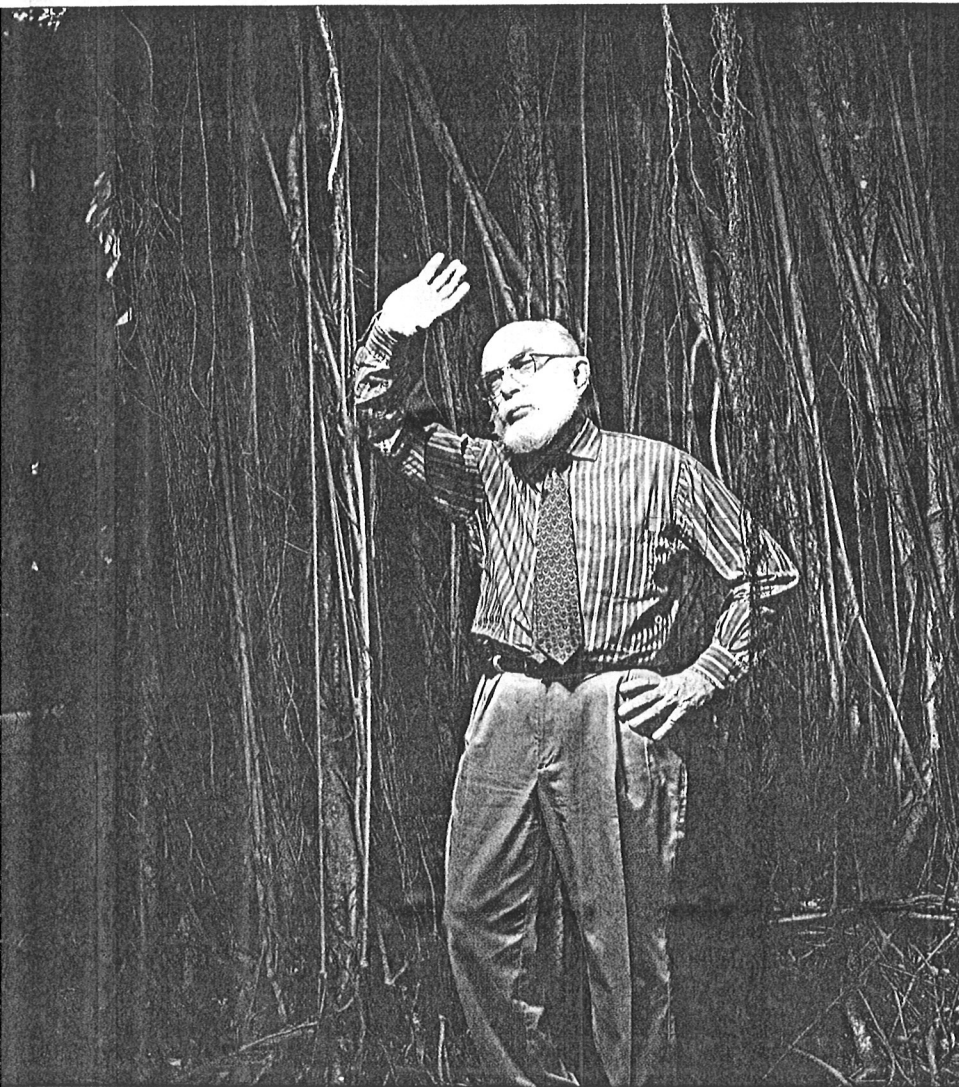
**UFOs.** The possibility that intelligent life exists far beyond our own has grown more plausible in just the last year, thanks

to the discovery of the first planets (seven) orbiting other suns. Sure, the existence of extraterrestrials requires more than a habitable rock orbiting a stable star. But other demands—that life begin and evolve, that a civilization arise and send emissaries to distant worlds—are looking more likely, too. Biologists hot on the trail of how a soup of molecules sprang to life, for instance, suspect the process isn't that difficult. Says astronomer Frank Drake of the University of California, Santa Barbara, "It's widely accepted in the scientific community that there are other civilizations."

But do UFOs come from such a civilization? Witness accounts are not proof. Photos come closer. But Joe Nickell of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, a group of skeptical scientists who check out UFO sightings, spoon bendings and similar claims, has amassed a catalog of ordinary explanations for UFO photos. A blister in the emulsion can create a round object in the photo, for instance. And computers make perpetrating UFO hoaxes as easy as counterfeiting the old \$100 bill. Says Drake, "There is not one accepted fact that would lead one to conclude UFOs are extraterrestrials."

Believers are right in complaining that their results are subjected to more scrutiny, and after-the-fact nitpicking, than those in any other field. But then, no other field makes such extraordinary claims.

With ADAM ROGERS and PETER BURKHOLDER in New York and WILLIAM UNDERHILL in Edinburgh



didn't. Also, of the 28 studies Honorton analyzed in 1985, nine came from a lab where onetime believer Susan Blackmore of the University of the West of England had scrutinized the experiments. The results are "clearly marred," she says, by "accidental er-

**Psychokinesis.** The most credible experiments in whether mind can affect matter come from the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research laboratory, founded by rocket engineer Robert Jahn in 1979. (In response, Princeton stripped Jahn of his dean-

er, pulses match this pattern. After more than 14 million trials, Jahn has found a persistent effect: in every 1,000 trials, subjects somehow produce one more or one fewer match than predicted by chance. The odds that this is a statistical fluke are 1 in 5,000. In a similar