

The blockbuster movie 'E.T. raises the big question

# IS THERE REALLY LIFE OUT THERE?



Aliens won't look like E.T. says astronomer Patrick Moore

By JUDY WADE

ARE we all alone in the vast emptiness of the universe?

Or are there thinking, feeling creatures living in a faraway galaxy, like E.T. in the blockbuster movie?

The mystery of what lies beyond life on Earth is the last great secret of the universe. Britain's top stargazer, Patrick Moore, is convinced

that some kind of life exists in outer space.

"There are 100,000 million stars in our galaxy and 1,000 million galaxies," he says. "So our sun is just an ordinary star like millions of others."

"The chances are overwhelming that other planetary systems like ours exist."

But Moore says that if beings do live in other galaxies, they will not be grotesque aliens.

He says "If you are talking about bug-eyed monsters, it's not very likely. But at the moment it is impossible to investigate and find out."

"We are at the stage now where, to do this, we would need space travel as advanced to us as television would have been to William The Conqueror."

But American astronomer Professor Carl Sagan, host of the BBC TV series Cosmos, thinks that if we cannot get in touch with aliens, they can get in touch with us.

## Wild

He suggests that the number of civilisations on other planets much more advanced than ours could be between 50,000 and one million.

He believes that these aliens are the sort that

wild sci-fi fantasies are made of. Early in their civilisation they would have cured all disease and perfected their development.

For such beings, heart transplants would be primitive medicine.

Telepathy would have replaced the telephone and they would no longer have to go to school. All they would need to do was to link their brains into knowledge banks.

So Professor Sagan believes that we should be constantly scanning the skies for signs of life.

But other scientists are asking gloomily: "If there is life out there, how come we haven't heard from them already?"

Fashionable trends come and go among space watchers just as in less scientific fields. Currently, it's the fashion to doubt that the universe teems with life.

And even if life does exist, the trendy boffins say, we might not recognise it, because the beings may have evolved in a completely different way.

## Sign

They believe that the chances of finding another planet with the same atmosphere and temperature to support life like ours are at least a billion to one.

The Venus space-probe a couple of years ago came up with no sign of

life. It seems we must search much further and much longer before we get the right answer to the biggest question in the universe.

And that's a big problem, according to Professor Graham Smith, the new Astronomer Royal.

He says: "The universe is an endless space. Exploring just a tiny section of it would take a hundred years."

"If you consider the enormity of the number of galaxies to search, we seem like insignificant specks lost in the emptiness of space."

So the professor thinks we should not waste our money on expensive scientific equipment to go hunting — at least until we know where to look.

"Suppose we picked up some signals from space? We could follow them up at great cost and discover—as we have done before—that they were just natural phenomena — not radio messages from other beings at all."

So E.T., if you are out there — please phone Earth!

## Baffling visits

HAVE Extra-Terrestrials already landed on Earth? Each year an average of 350 UFOs are sighted in Britain.

Nine out of ten have a simple explanation. But that leaves a lot of uncomfortably close encounters that remain total mysteries.

John Mann and his family were driving from Berkshire to Gloucestershire in June, 1978, when, they claim, they were kidnapped by strange, silver-suited people from space.

After examining them for an hour the beings, who said they came from the planet Janos, released John, his sister Frances, wife Gloria and their children Tanya and Natasha.

In March, 1978, engineer Ken Edwards was petrified when he met a seven-foot monster with flashing eyes while driving past Manchester University's nuclear reactor plant.

Ken, of Feainhead, Warrington, Cheshire, says: "I definitely saw a being which I believe to be from another planet."

Bob Taylor, a 50-year-old forestry worker, staggered shocked and bleeding from a wood near Livingston, Lothian, in November, 1979.

He claimed he was attacked by "machine-like" creatures from a silver spaceship.

Police later found marks in a clearing made by the legs of an unknown machine.

Eleven-year-old Gaynor Sunderland watched, terrified, when a silver, saucer-shaped craft landed in a field near her home in Oaken-

## from space

nolt, Flint, North Wales, in 1976.

Pauline and Billy Coombs were watching television in their isolated North Wales farmhouse one night in 1977 when they noticed a shimmering ball of light outside the window.

A towering figure about eight feet tall emerged from the light and watched them through the glass for about two hours before vanishing again.

On the way home from a judo class, 12-year-old Grant Dixon was chased by a mysterious ball of flashing lights in Exmouth, Devon.

His screams alerted his mother, Mrs Coral Dixon, who also saw the strange flying object before it disappeared over the coast.

Policeman Neville Hughes has sighted strange flying craft on three different occasions near Denbigh, North Wales. He and a colleague, Constable Berwyn Jones, followed one in their patrol car for three miles before they lost sight of it in January, 1979.

In March, 1979, several drivers reported seeing a silver-suited creature with a flat head that leaped along like a chimpanzee on the Isle of Sheppey.

Four police officers spotted a long, cigar-shaped object in the sky over Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, in November, 1979. The same mysterious craft was sighted in France and Spain.