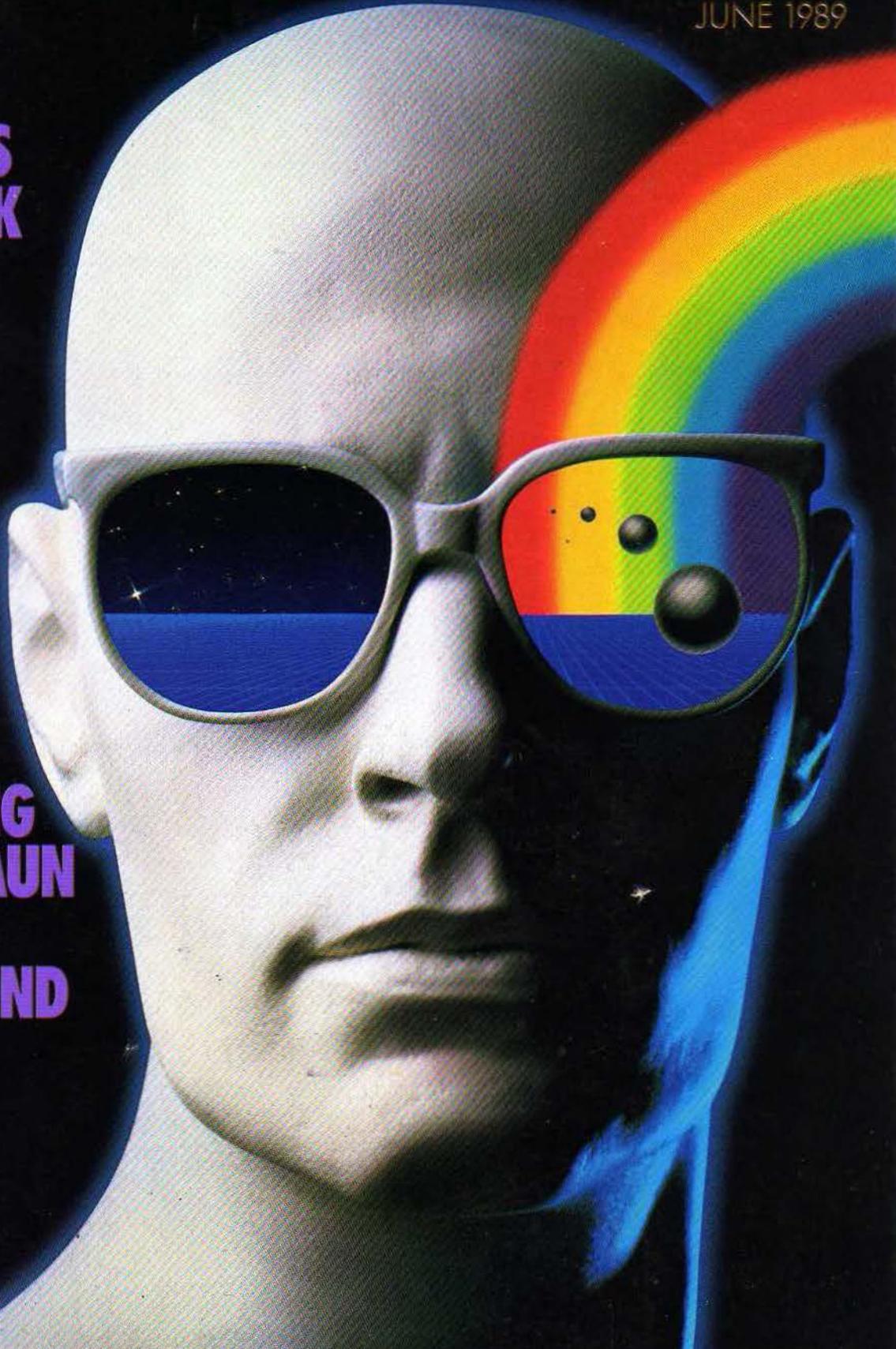


# OMNI

JUNE 1989



**DOLPHINS  
THAT TALK**

**WHY LSD  
STUDIES  
WERE  
STOPPED**

**DIARY OF  
A CAVE  
WOMAN**

**THE  
VANISHING  
PI-CHAUN  
AND  
OTHER MIND  
GAMES**

02484

06

0 778845 1

Existing international space law does not cover the  
eventuality of  
contact with extraterrestrials.

## ANTI MATTER

Astronomers involved in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence—or SETI—continually scan the heavens for radio signals from advanced societies. But what would they do if contact were actually made? That's the question asked in "The SETI Protocol," a document written by U.S. State Department official Michael Michaud.

Presented at the recent International Astronautical Congress in Bangalore, India, the protocol is meant to be signed by all astronomers involved in the search for extraterrestrial life. The goal of the document, "to reduce the chance of



## UFO UPDATE

a hoax or the premature announcement of contact," explains Michaud, director of the State Department's Office of Advanced Technology. The protocol, he adds, would also require that signatories make the discovery public. Alien messages would thus belong to the world, not just to a single university, organization, or government.

According to political scientist Allan Goodman of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, one of the protocol contributors, there are good reasons for drafting the document. First, he says, alien contact is not covered in any existing international law or protocol that deals with space. Second, in talking to SETI investigators, Goodman has found some who would be inclined to keep extraterrestrial contact a secret and some who felt that it should be treated like any other scientific discovery.

As far as Goodman is concerned, neither approach will do. "It would be the most dramatic scientific announcement in our lifetime," he says, "and must be treated as such."

Toward this end, adds protocol contributor and NASA Ames Center researcher Jill Tarter, "we are just trying to reinforce the need for caution within the scientific community at the same time as we convince the public that extraterrestrial contact will be announced."

Even so, not all SETI investigators are behind the protocol. Paul Horowitz of Harvard, for example, says, "I am strongly apathetic." He believes SETI is no different from any other scientific issue and that "science will take care of itself." Would Horowitz sign? "If I think it is reasonable

and stands for motherhood and apple pie and basically strives to remind us all of what good science is."

The chance to sign this document will probably come soon. Protocol proponents plan to obtain the endorsement of the International Academy of Astronautics and the International Institute of Space Law, according to Tarter. Then they will try to convince international scientific bodies like the International Astronomical Union. After that, says Tarter, "all individuals and institutions that we can identify who are taking part in any SETI activities will be approached." Even though the protocol could not legally bind a government, Goodman says that the final step will be to ask governments to sign as well. A separate question, of course, is who will speak for Earth once contact is made. Originally a part of the protocol, this issue will now be the subject of a further document. The reason? "It turned out to be such an emotional issue," says Tarter, "that we are giving it more careful and deliberate thought." —PAUL McCARTHY