

**HARNESS THE WIND: KITE POWER!**

# OMNII

MARCH 1994

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# ELECTRONIC UNIVERSE

## THE FINAL FRONTIER:

New multimedia packages put the space back in cyberspace

By Gregg Keizer

**W**e can't *all* ride a rocket into space, cruise the interstellar void, or even claim a close encounter of the first (much less the third) kind. There's a quota for these kinds of things, you know. Only the best and the brightest get to climb on board the Shuttle, and only the lucky get to spot a danc-

*Shuttle*, a CD-ROM disc for the PC, ranks as one of the best excursions for space fans. Unlike a simulator, *Space Shuttle* doesn't let you run the complex spacecraft, but instead walks you through training, takes you up on 53 different missions, and shows you how the crew lives and works. Because it's on CD-ROM, *Space Shuttle* is heavily narrated and includes minimovies of launches, landings, and mission elements. When you ask it to tell you about crew meals, for instance, you listen to descriptions and watch a short video of heating dehydrated food and eating with magnetic utensils.

It's at its most interesting (and educational) when you fly one of the more than 50 STS missions. Pick STS-49, for example, and you watch as three astronauts wrestle the Intelsat telecommunications satellite into the cargo bay. Missions include everything from the first orbital test of *Columbia* to the January 1992 launch of *Endeavor*, although those dedicated to the Department of Defense don't include any in-space activity for you to monitor. Even the disastrous *Challenger* mission is part of the mix.

For a decidedly different experience with space, try Software Marketing's *UFO: The Planet's Most Complete Guide to Close Encounters*. Essentially a database of more than 1,200 encounter incidents, *UFO* lets you search by several criteria, including cattle mutilations, abductions, and psychic phenomena. It then displays the sightings on a world map, shows photographs taken at the scene, and in more than 20 cases, runs short video clips purporting to show unidentified flying objects in motion. Like *Space Shuttle*, *UFO* plays on a PC from a CD-ROM disc.

If you're already a believer,

this package will only strengthen your faith, but don't expect *UFO* to turn a skeptic into a disciple: The inclusion of the now-debunked crop circles in Great Britain and the oddball cattle mutilations in the United States take *UFO* to the fringe.

You're on safer scientific ground when you pop Time Warner Interactive Group's *Murmurs of Earth* in your Macintosh or PC CD-ROM drive. This eclectic two-disc collection includes all the images, greetings, diagrams, and songs that were packed onto gold-plated phonographs and bundled aboard both of the Voyager spacecraft. You can listen to the greetings and the music—including Louis Armstrong's "Melancholy Blues" and a Navajo chant—on a standard audio CD player. To view the 116 images that Carl Sagan and others selected back in 1977, though, you'll need your computer. Just what, you'll wonder, would an alien race make of the shot of birthing a baby?

Of more general interest is *The View from Earth*, another CD from Time Warner that works with either a multimedia-ready PC or on a Macintosh. This talking Time-Life book doesn't play moving pictures (too bad) but combines more than 600 sharp photographs and color illustrations with several hours of narration and music. You take tours through sections about the sun, the moon, Earth, and the other planets. There's nothing too deep here, so *The View from Earth* makes a good pick for the family that's interested in science.

Whether you're exploring on your own or as part of an electronic guided tour, the joy of titles like these lies in the traveling. Getting there—when *there* is somewhere you'd never reach in reality—is *all* the fun. ☐

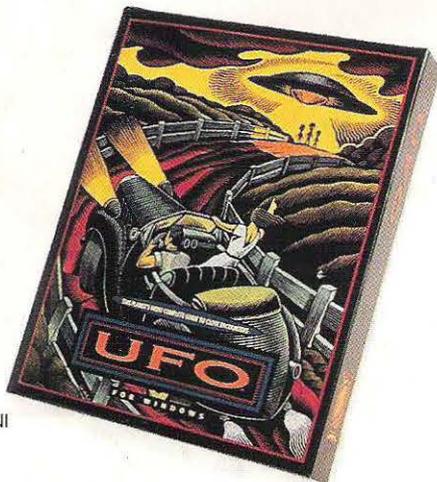


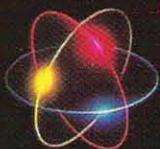
**While some CD-ROM titles offer a ride on the space shuttle or glimpses of planets, *UFO* provides a database with more than 1,200 close encounters from around the world.**

ing light in the sky and say they've seen a UFO.

Vicarious though the virtual experience may be, however, anyone with a CD-ROM-equipped PC—and in some cases, a Macintosh—can get a taste of space. These guided-tour software titles don't give the feeling of some solid rocket boosters at your back, but then you don't risk space sickness either.

The Software Toolworks' *Space*





# ANTIMATTER

## THE SPIRIT OF BARBIE

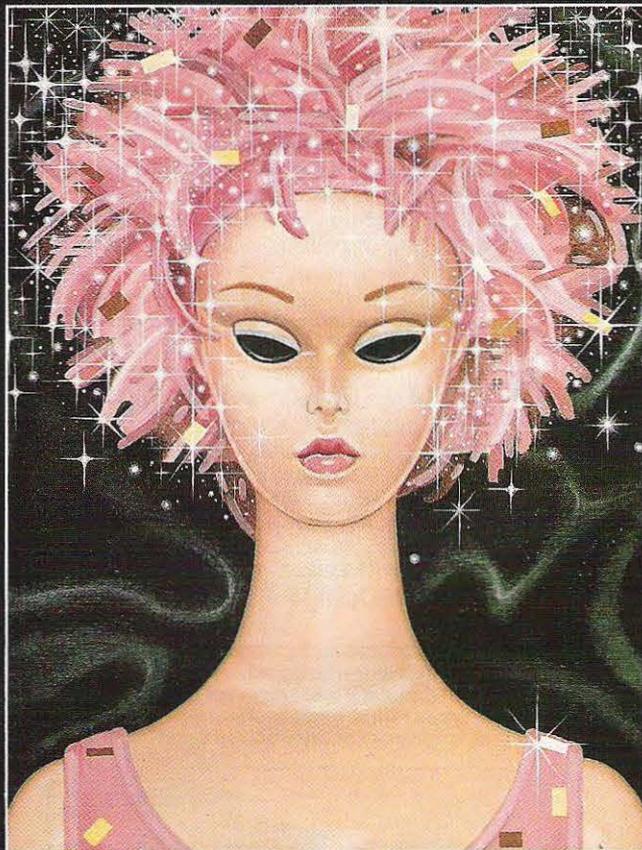
We've all heard about people who channel entities alleged from beyond. But only Barbara Bell, managing editor of the New Age journal *Common Ground*, channels Barbie.

Two years ago, Bell noticed a dozen of her four daughters' Barbie dolls scattered across the floor of her San Anselmo, California, home. "I thought, What does this poor doll think?" says Bell, "and Barbie's voice just popped into my head, saying, 'I need respect.'"

Hearing of her experience, Bell's colleagues suggested she channel Barbie. So Bell started the *Barbie Channeling Newsletter*. For \$3, she sends readers Barbie's answer to a personal query along with a copy of the newsletter. "I go into a light trance," says Bell, 44, whose nickname is also Barbie, "and the words come flying out. There are 700 million Barbie dolls in the world with no voice that's real."

Mattel, however, thinks the corporate voice of Barbie is doing just fine. "We feel that this use of our trademark adversely affects the family image," says Lisa McKendall of Mattel.

Bell, however, says



she's doing nothing wrong. "I'm not selling anything to little kids," she notes. "I'm writing about adult concerns and giving Barbie a broader market."

—Anita Baskin

Had a UFO experience? Want to talk about it? Call (900) 285-5483, and give us the details. Your comments will be recorded and may appear in a future issue. For more details, see page 80.

## END OF AN ERA?

Still waiting for your first UFO sighting—a night-time disk, perhaps, or a cigar-shaped craft that leaves tracks on the lawn? If so, says investigator David Jacobs, you're living in the past. The wave of the future in UFO research, he insists, includes nothing less than a systematic study of the thousands of people who say they have been kidnapped by aliens—the abductees.

Jacobs, who teaches history at Temple University in Philadelphia, says UFO researchers have already used hundreds of thousands of cases to classify UFO movement, color, sound, shape, and impact on the environment. "But how much verification do you need?" asks Jacobs. "Sighting data doesn't answer any of the 'why' questions, like why are the sightings taking place?"

But Jacobs views are called into question by Jerome Clark, vice president of the Center of UFO Studies in Illinois. "UFOlo-

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ARE RESEARCHERS WHO CLASSIFY UFOS BY MOVEMENT, SOUND, AND SHAPE WASTING THEIR TIME?

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gy is overlooking a treasure trove of information by neglecting sightings," he insists. "The more you back away from that sort of hard data, the more you get into speculation."

For instance, Clark recently examined a raft of UFO sightings in which crafts came within 500 feet of witnesses. "There wasn't one little gray man," says Clark, "which raises questions about why abductees see them now."

—Paul McCarthy