



ALPHA LOG 6

EDITOR: CHRIS LANDRY

MAR.-APR. 1978

Dear Members:

Welcome to a very special issue of ALPHA LOG. This issue is dedicated to a recent event in Springfield called THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II. "The Springfield SPACE: 1999 Club" played an active role in this happening. I was also fortunate enough to talk to four of the prominent celebrities attending the program. Interviews will be included in the next two issues of ALPHA LOG. Because of these special features, many of our regular features will be postponed until future issues. I hope that you will enjoy this issue.

EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH "MAIN MISSION ALPHA"

You will be pleased to know that I am conducting another exchange program with a SPACE: 1999 club. "Main Mission Alpha" which is a club located in East Boston, Massachusetts will be taking part in this exchange program. Mary Bloemker, Operations Controller (not their club President) of "Main Mission Alpha" will be sending me a copy of COMMAND CENTER (their newsletter) and I'll be sending her a copy of ALPHA LOG. The exchange program will continue indefinitely, as far as I know.

This is the third SPACE: 1999 club that we are conducting an exchange program with, the other two being "Alpha Newsletter" in Stoneham, Massachusetts and "The Alpha Society" in Sherwood, Oregon. I hope that in the future that we will be able to make contact with more SPACE: 1999 clubs around the world. It seems to be working.

COLLECTOCON VII SLATED FOR APRIL

Just a quick reminder: another "collectables" convention will be held on April 16th of this year. Collectocon VII will be at the Highpoint Motor Inn in Chicopee, Massachusetts (exit 5 on the Massachusetts turnpike). It will be held from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. that Sunday. This show will feature comic books, gum cards, film posters and photos (SPACE: 1999, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, and STAR WARS items), old pulp magazines, horror items, and much more. The previous six shows have proved rewarding to me, and you might want to stop by.



"SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II"

On March 6th, the second SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING occurred in Springfield, Massachusetts. It was held at the Springfield Science Museum in the quadrangle complex from 12 a.m. to 6 p.m. with two showings that day. Both showings were sold out.

Several films were shown including FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE, WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, George Melies' A TRIP TO THE MOON, the documentary MARINER LANDING ON MARS, a STAR TREK episode (AMOK TIME), and a slide documentary CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FIRST KIND.

Several guest speakers attended THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II, most of whom I was able to interview. Science fiction authors Frederick Pohl and Philip Jose Farmer (both features in this issue), film consultant Nat Segaloff, author John Wallace Spencer, and UFO commentator George Earley. Pohl and Farmer gave talks on science fiction, Spencer and Earley provided a question/answer panel, and Nat Segaloff lectured on film special effects.

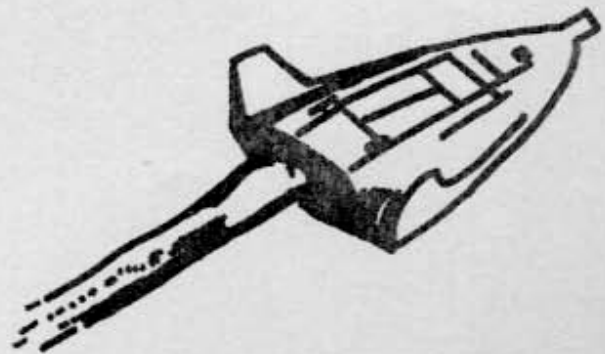
Two NASA exhibits shown at the program were an Enterprise space shuttle display and a 3-dimensional pictorial story of the Landsat satellite project. A book fair was also held.

"The Springfield SPACE: 1999 Club" was on hand in the production of THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II. Many local members worked as salesmen, ushers, information consultants, and such. Members thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity.

INTERVIEW INTRODUCTORY

As stated above, I was fortunate enough to be able to interview four of the celebrities attending THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II. They were science fiction authors Frederick Pohl and Philip Jose Farmer, author John Wallace Spencer, and film consultant Nat Segaloff.

In this issue, Frederick Pohl and Philip Jose Farmer are featured in interviews. Next issue, in ALPHA LOG 7, John Wallace Spencer and Nat Segaloff will be featured.



FREDERICK POHL INTERVIEW

BIO: Mr. Pohl is the author of many science fiction novels and short stories including "Gateway", "Man Plus", "Slave Ship", "The Space Merchants", and many others. He is a science fiction editor for Bantam books and is also a Hugo and Nebula Award winner.

Landry: First of all, since we are basically a SPACE: 1999 fan club, what are your feelings toward the series ?

Pohl: Well, it turned me off by having the moon knocked out of orbit in the first installment by a big explosion. Science fiction doesn't have to be absolutely one-to-one correspondence with what's going on in science today, but it shouldn't be flatly and fatheadedly impossible which is what that was. If there has been an explosion like that, the moon would have been turned into gravel, instantly. And it could not, in the next ten million years, have begun the process of passing by stars that had planets and civilizations and so on because the distances are just too big. So that's silly. Somebody in the producers office simply had contempt for science fiction, and for science really, or that would have never happened. Outside of that, it was good. It had a good cast, some nice effects, but that big fatheaded blunder in the beginning was a disaster. And it shouldn't have been allowed. The fellow who wrote it in fact, I believe, is an old friend of mine named George Bellak. Ed Bell, I think, was a story editor there and may have written the first story. He's a good man, but I haven't seen him since it went on the air. And when I do see him, I'm going to reprimand him.

Landry: you belong to a society of science fiction writers called The Futurians. Could you explain this organization ?

Pohl: Yes, formed in 1937, '38. The Futurians were a group of fans who wanted to become pros. We were all in our late teens, early twenties. Quite a few of us actually made it. Don Waldheim is now Daw books. Cyril Kornbluth was a Futurian, Isaac Asimov was a Futurian. A little later on, Damien Knight was a Futurian. They just published a book on the subject which is full of all the scurrilous gossip about the Futurian society. Also many of the facts and most of the gossip is true. And so on. I think that there were about 30 or 35 Futurians, and about half of them became professional writers or publishers, at least for part of their lives.

Landry: What got you interested in writing science fiction ?

Pohl: I began reading science fiction when I was 10 years old because a copy of a magazine called "Science Wonder Stories" fell into my hands. And it showed a big, green, scaly monster knocking down some buildings, and I thought this was pretty jazzy. So, I read that. And then I found some other magazines and I found that science fiction was not only adventurous and exciting, but it made me think about things that I had not otherwise thought about. It made me realize that there were possibilities; there was some other kind of life other than the kind I knew in Brooklyn, New York. Whether it was on another planet, or in the future, or in different societies on Earth, I didn't know. It seemed to broaden my horizon. And I never stopped reading it. And that's 48 years ago.

Landry: In a recent interview, you stated that you enjoy science fiction literature more than the film. Why ?

Pohl: Science fiction in print is the work of one human being, or maybe a collaboration, and it says what he thinks. Science fiction for film and television is almost always the work of a committee. You have a writer or a series of writers. Very often, one person will write a story, someone will write a treatment of it, someone else will write a script, someone else will rewrite the script, somebody else will add dialogue. You have a director, producer, network executive, costume man, special effects man, stars, star's agents, producer's agents, everybody. All contributing to it, all contributing their own ideas, and the result is usually "smog". It's just not much good. When it's good at all, it's because some really powerful personality like Gene Roddenberry, or Lucas, or Steven Spielberg, or Stanley Kubrick has enough muscle and enough integrity to force his opinion on everybody else. But this rarely happens. What you usually get in the film and television is a sort of mish-mosh of everybody's ideas which don't relate to each other very well, which includes good ones and bad ones. And no one seems to be able to distinguish.

Landry: Do you have a favorite science fiction film ?

Pohl: Yea, THINGS TO COME, produced in 1936. And probably the reason it's my favorite is that I was 16 years old when I saw it, and I just imprinted it. There have been alot of good ones since, though. 2001 is a major film. I have quarrels with parts of it, but it's a significant film. CLOCKWORK ORANGE is a good film, FOREBIDDEN PLANET is a fine film. I've really enjoyed STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND even though what I enjoyed most was the visual stuff, and the stories themselves seemed pretty conventional or trivial. But there are alot of good ones out now.

Landry: Of all of the books that you've written, do you have a personal favorite ?

Pohl: The book that I am willing to have engraved on my tombstone is, a most recent one, called "Gateway". I care about that book. I have a personal attachment to it, as I don't to many others. It has very little to do with how good they are, I don't know what it's a matter of. But "Gateway" is important to me in a way that the others are not.

Landry: Are there any other science fiction author's work that you admire ?

Pohl: There are a hundred, a thousand authors who's work I admire in one way or another. Most of the major writers around today. Phil Farmer, Ursula LeGuin, Bradbury, Clarke, Asimov, George Martin, John Barley, Jack Williamson. There are more than I can name who I think has done very well, and who I envy some of the things they've done. There aren't any I would want to change places with, but there are alot that I admire alot.

Landry: Do you write anything other than science fiction ?

Pohl: Sometimes. I'm the Encyclopedia Britannica's authority on the Emperor Tiberius, and the only living author of a book on Tiberius. I've written books on politics, non-fiction books on politics. I've written novels on other subjects than science fiction. I prefer science fiction.

Landry: What type of audience do you write for ?

Pohl: I write for me. I don't know how to describe my audience any other way. I write for the kind of people that I discover who are in science fiction groups and conventions who are intelligent and inquisitive and pretty opinionates. They want to hear what everyone else has to say, but they aren't about to swallow whatever anybody else says, blindly. I think they're the best audience there is. The science fiction audience. One of the reasons I write science fiction is that is that I think that the science fiction audience is the most responsive and demanding of any audience in the world.

Landry: You've won several awards for your novels, including the Nebula and Hugo Awards. What does this mean to you ?

Pohl: Well, the important thing about winning an award is that you don't have to worry about whether you're ever going to win one. When you don't have them, they're much more important than when you do. Before I had a Nebula, before I had any Hugos for writing, I felt much more strongly about them than I do now. But, they mean something. It's hard to say exactly what they do mean. I don't think they play any part in motivating me to write. But you feel naked without them, so I'm glad I've got them.

Landry: Why do you feel that science fiction has been so popular ?

Pohl: I think science fiction's been popular, increasingly, because audiences are becoming increasingly more sophisticated. They're more willing to open their minds to possibilities that they don't see in front of them. Science fiction is a literature of change as much as it is anything, and the principal fact about the world today is that it is in change, rapid change that we see happening before us. Arthur Clarke was asked once why he wrote science fiction. He said "Because it's the only literature that concerns itself with reality." And I think, increasingly, people perceive that science fiction is a literature of reality. Possible future realities, but realities all the same.

Landry: Do you think that it's popularity will continue ?

Pohl: Sure. I think it's been growing for 30 or 40 or 50 years. I don't think it has anything to do with whether there's a movie like STAR WARS or a TV program like STAR TREK or SPACE: 1999. I don't think they bring in many readers. I think the number just increases at a steady rate of growth at maybe 4 percent a year, like compound interest, and has been happening for a long time. There are probably in America now 2 or 3 million people who regularly read science fiction knowing that what they read is science fiction and do it out of choice, because it's what they prefer. I think that number runs about one percent of the population. Whatever the population is, about one percent of it are science fiction readers.

Landry: What do you see in the future of science fiction ?

Pohl: More of the same. I expect that there will be more emphasis on visual science fiction; TV and film. Particularly film because most of the television ventures I hear about sound pretty bad. And some of the films sound pretty good. But that, I think, is related to the fact that a smaller and smaller proportion of the human race wants to read. More and more, people seem to want to watch television. The increase in sophistication of the human race has been very vast in the last 50 years. Much more of this learning and contact with the world has been through the broadcast media and films than through books. The proportion of book readers has not grown very much, I don't think.

Landry: Do you have any current or future projects that you could let us know about ?

Pohl: In the fall of this year, DelRey books will bring out the hardcover edition of my autobiography, which is a book called "The Way Tomorrow Was". That I've finished. Tomorrow (March 7th) I have an appointment with the editor to discuss whether or not we're going to include a section of photographs with it. And from that point on, it's out of my hands. But I finished writing that some time ago, and the lawyers finished rewriting it some time ago. I'm just now finishing writing a novel called "Jem" which will be published in hardcover by St. Martins Press about January of next year, assuming I finish writing it when I hope to. And I have another collaboration with Jack Williamson called "Wall Around a Star" which is about half done. And I've just signed a 3 book contract with Random House for 3 new science fiction novels. There's not one word of any of them on paper, so I'm not prepared to discuss them. Because I'm not even sure in my own mind yet what they're going to be.

FOLLOW UP

I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Frederick Pohl for taking the time to do this interview. Also, for those of you who enjoy the work of Frederick Pohl, he informed me that he has written an article for FUTURE magazine which will appear in the third issue.

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FUTURE EVENTS

One of the regular features that will appear in every issue is "FUTURE EVENTS". This is a review of the events presented in future history seen in the SPACE: 1999 Warner calendar over the next two months. I hope that you enjoy it.

- MARCH. 1st- Alphans Clifford and Donovan killed by alien satellite which is en route to destroy Earth. 2001. "Ring Around the Moon".
- 2nd- Alien satellite takes control of Helena Russell and use her as a link to classified Alphan information.
- 7th- Alien satellite self-destructs and releases Russell after learning that it's home planet is now dead.
- 15th- Snow-covered planet Ultima Thulie comes into range of the moon. 2000. "Death's Other Dominion".
- 19th- Alphan landing party discovers immortal survivors of Earth Uranus Probe.
- 27th- Cabot Rowland, one of the leading Probe members rapidly ages and dies when he tries to leave the planet. Commander Koenig realizes that Ultima Thulie is a living graveyard.
- APRIL. 8th- Moon is destined to collide with planet Atheria, but when event does occur, the two merely "touch" and planet is transformed into pure energy. 2000. "Collision Course".
- 21st- Technician Anton Zoref becomes possessed by alien blue light. Zoref starts his rampage, consuming all forms of heat on Alpha. 2000. "Force of Life".
- 25th- Technician Mike Domonix and nurse Hillary Preston are frozen to death when touched by Zoref.
- 26th- After being charred to the bone by Alan Carter's laser, Zoref continues advancing and finally enters one of Alpha's nuclear reactors and the alien light escapes into space. Prof. Bergman theorizes that they have witnessed the birth of a star.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Again I would like to express my thanks to those who contributed to this issue of ALPHA LOG:

Marek Nowak for his photography at THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II.

Steve Poleri for his SPACE: 1999 art used in this issue.

Also, thanks to the many local members who helped out with THE SCIENCE FICTION SPACE HAPPENING II.

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PHILIP JOSE FARMER INTERVIEW

BIO: Mr. Farmer is a well known author of many science fiction novels and short stories including "Lord Tiger", "The Green Odyssey", "The Alley Man", the famous "Riverworld" series, and many others.

Landry: First of all, since we are basically a SPACE: 1999 fan club, what are your feelings toward the series ?

Farmer: Well, I didn't like it. I don't like it now. I hate to use such a hard word, but I really thought it stunk. I thought the science was either non-existent or invalid and that the plots were bad. The acting by Martin Landau and Barbara Bain; they didn't do their usual good job of acting. And after 3 episodes, I just couldn't stand it any more and turned it off.

Landry: You've written many books. Of all of them, do you have a personal favorite ?

Farmer: No, I don't have one personal favorite. I like the first two "Riverworld" books especially. I like "The Adventure of the Peerless Pier" in which Holmes and Dr. Watson meet Tarzan. That's because it was such a fun book for me to write. I'm also very fond of "Venus on the Half Shell" which I wrote under the nondeplume of Kilgor Trout. I get a big kick out of rereading my old novel "Flesh" because that was a fun thing. As a matter of fact, I've written about 43 novels and collections of short stories, so it's a little difficult to pick out a special favorite. One of my favorite short stories is "The Alley Man" which came out many years ago. It's been reprinted in a collection. Oh yea, "Lord Tiger" which is about a maniac Edgar Rice Burroughs fan who's also a millionaire who decides that since there wasn't really a Tarzan, that he'll raise his own. That's been one of my favorite books. That's all I can think of now.

Landry: Is there any other author whose work you admire ?

Farmer: Oh, I admire many authors. It would be impossible to list them. As a matter of fact, they asked me that question at the last session and I said that it would be impossible to say. They also asked me what my favorite works were by other authors, and again that's impossible because the field is so heavily populated and there have been so many good stories written and there have been so many good authors that if I said one, I would have to go ahead and list at least 20 people.

Landry: What got you interested in science fiction ?

Farmer: I started to read science fiction in 1927, I think it was. I was about 9 years old when I first read Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" which I regard as science fiction. The, shortly thereafter, I came across Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Martian" series which fascinated me. And "Tarzan" which isn't really science fiction novels here and there. Then in 1929, I went up to the local drug store and they had copies of Hugo Gernsback's "Air Wonder Stories" and "Science Wonder Stories" with great illustrated covers. They made me run back and beg for money from my father and I ran back and bought them, and got hooked on magazine science fiction. And, of course, on the whole field thereafter.

Landry: Do you write anything else other than science fiction ?

Farmer: Well, the first story I ever sold was in 1945 and it was not science fiction, It was published in an adventure magazine in 1946. Since then, I think it was in 1957, I wrote a novel called "Fire in the Night" which was about race relations in a mid-western steel mill. I wrote a western mystery for "The Saint" mystery magazine. I wrote a story which is not science fiction for "Night" magazine and the December issue of "Playboy" contained a story of mine called "The Henry Miller Dawn Patrol" which is not science fiction. I plan to go into mysteries eventually, to write mystery novels. And perhaps some mainstream stuff. I also would like to write a mainstream novel about the science fiction world sometime in the future. But some publishers I've talked to about this have discouraged me because they say that books about the science fiction world don't sell very well. However, there has to be a first time, and I'm not planning on writing a book about the science fiction world which is like the other books. This would be a big epic thing.

Landry: What type of audience do you write for ?

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Farmer: Well, my work isn't specialized. I don't deal with any particular theme. I've practically covered the whole field of science fiction. I write what I would call adventure science fiction, philosophical science fiction, hard-core science fiction, experimental science fiction, and so forth. I've tried my hand at all of them. But mainly, in the future, I'll be writing more serious speculative fiction, which I regard the "River-world" series as a model for.

Landry: Do you have a favorite science fiction film or television series?

Farmer: Well, for sheer enjoyment, I'll have to admit the STAR WARS has really turned me on. I know it's on the comic book level, but it's just so much fun, so well done. In a way, it reminds me of the stories I read when I was very young, transformed to the screen. I can be a kid again when I watch it. I first went down to see it with my granddaughter Kim, who is 12, because she was after me. She loved it so much that she went back that evening with a friend to see it and she talked me into going with her to see it 3 times after that. And she's gone on her own a couple of times. Second, I would say 2001 because, although there were parts that were really difficult to comprehend, it was such a new thing in science fiction. It was sort of the movie that we'd dreamed of for years. That was a big turn on, but it wasn't a fun thing like STAR WARS was. Another one was THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL which I regarded as one of the all time great science fiction movies.

Landry: Why do you think that science fiction has been so popular?

Farmer: Well, it's popular because so many young people have an imagination that hasn't been stultified or crushed or warped or distorted or impoverished. So many kids have a great imagination when they start out, and somewhere along the way to becoming an adult, they lose it. But there are a lot of kids who grow up that don't lose it. Kids are stimulated by new ideas and new places, by something that's different, something with which they can identify. Because all imaginative children like to fantasize about everything and they can immediately project themselves into a situation. And as the population has been growing, the popularity of science fiction has been growing. We have more readers, therefore more books and magazines have been purchased and a lot of people who would not have become science fiction writers have become writers because the field is so much more wide open to them. And that explains the deluge of first stories and second stories and third stories by brand new young writers. Some of whom re-

main in the field and others who drop out. But actually I think that all readers of science fiction, the more imaginative ones anyways, would like to write their own stories, because they too have done a great deal of fantasizing and now the opportunity is open to make money and gain fame by entering the field.

Landry: Do you think that the popularity of science fiction will continue ?

Farmer: Yea. I don't think science fiction will cease being a popular item because, though it was regarded in the beginning as not very respectable, it has become what I call respectable. That is, academics started to accept it. There might be a temporary decline, but we've gone through that in the past and always come out of it bigger and better than ever. Or bigger anyways.

Landry: What do you see in the future of science fiction literature and film ?

Farmer: Well, that's a question that's been asked alot, and there's no way of telling. Innovative concepts depend upon new writers coming into the field. And of course if they're innovative, there's no way of predicting them. All I know is that we'll be getting more and more ideas. If I knew what ideas were going to be introduced, I'd innovate 'em.

Landry: Do you have any current or future projects that you could tell us about ?

Farmer: Right now I'm working on a story called "Jesus on Mars" which will shortly be finished. Then I have to finish the final "Riverworld" novel. The first draft has been written. Parts of it have been rewritten. After that I have a novel with Ballantine called "Dark as the Sun, Bright as a Star". Then I have my third "Opar" series novel to write. Then I'll be through with my commitments. I hope from then on to write a novel and then submit it instead of submitting an outline to get a contract. Because the past couple of years I've been writing behind. So I would like to relieve that pressure and just sit down and write a novel and send it in. But, as I said, I also hope to get into mystery writing in the future.

FOLLOW UP

I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Philip Jose Farmer for taking the time to do this interview.

Philip Jose Farmer


SWIFT
NICK TATE JOINS JOHN CLEESE

Most of you must have heard of actor John Cleese from MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS fame. Recently, Mr. Cleese had a television special on PBS called THE STRANGE CASE OF THE END OF CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT which was a Sherlock Holmes satire featuring Claire Booth and Ron Moody. But lo and behold, SPACE: 1999

star Nick Tate (Capt. Alan Carter) played a cameo appearance as the Australian ambassador to the British security council. With a cockney accent and a jungle safari outfit, Nick Tate gave a hilarious performance. Nick Tate fans might be sorry to hear that his character was killed by a sniper's bullet. All in all, it was a very funny show.

ANIMATED REVIEWS

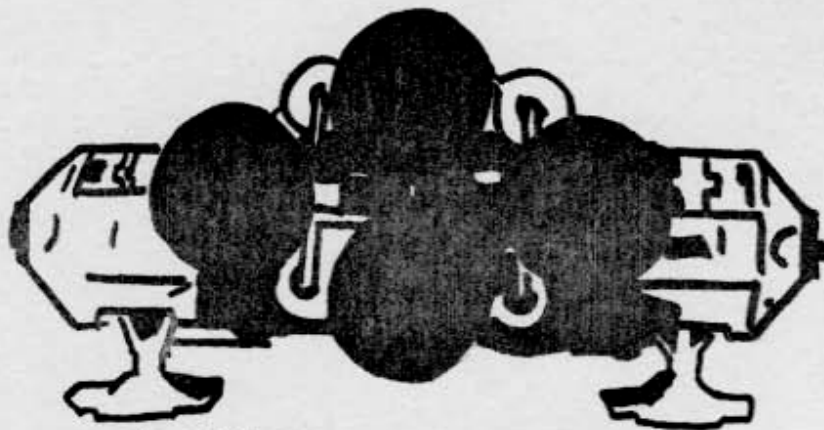
One of the regular features that we are not omitting in this issue is "ANIMATED REVIEWS" in which I summarize another of the SPACE: 1999 animated episodes featured in the Charlton magazines. Next issue "E Pluribus Unum".

THE POSSESSED (Episode 5; January 1976)

While investigating a derelict space ship which is now orbiting the moon, Eagle pilot Alan Carter becomes "possessed" by an alien entity. The alien is the long dead spirit of a crewman aboard the derelict ship who intends for he and his shipmates to take over the Alphans in order to live again. However, the process takes a while, and part of Alan Carter is still alive. Alan must battle the spirit inside him and determine the fate of Moonbase Alpha.

SPACE: 1999


SPRINGFIELD SPACE: 1999 CLUB



SO LONG FROM "ALPHA LOG" : : : :