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# SCIENCE



1849



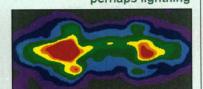
1836 A mountain of trouble

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1829, 1875,

Comet collision excites microwave emissions and perhaps lightning



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COVER

A male gray seal issuing a threat. Colonially breeding gray seals are widely assumed to be typical polygynous mammals, with males competing for positions among groups of physically smaller, more numerous females. However, molecular genetic analysis reveals

large numbers of full siblings. Such a pattern implies that many seals mate preferentially with previous partners. See page 1897. [Photo: P. P. Pomeroy/Sea Mammal Research Unit]



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#### **TECHNICAL COMMENTS**

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1917

Meiotic cell cycle arrest requires tension



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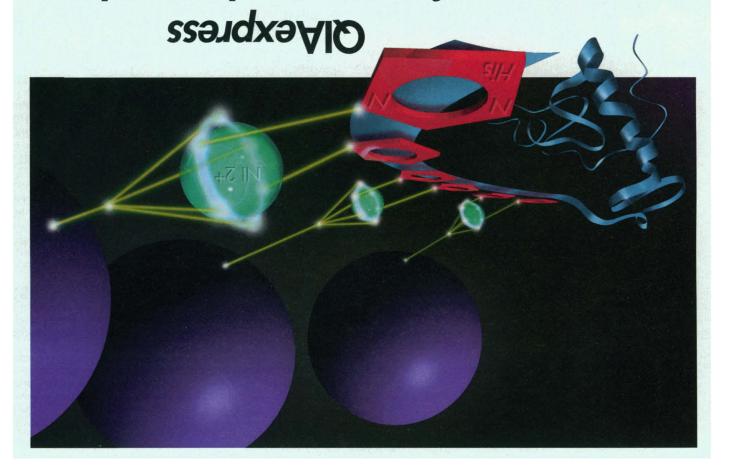
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#### This Week in Science

88

edited by PHIL SZUROMI

#### **Induced twist**

Polyisocyanates are stiff polymers that adopt a helical geometry, but their chemical structure does not predispose them to either a right- or left-handed spiral. Instead, long blocks of one handedness or the other alternate at helical reversals. However, one helical sense can be strongly favored by including a small fraction of optically active monomer units or by dissolving the polymer in chiral solvents. Green et al. (p. 1860) discuss these results and how they bear on theoretical descriptions of helix formation.

#### **Light switching**

Films of polymeric liquid crystals containing azobenzene groups have been used by Ikeda and Tsutsumi (p. 1873) to rapidly store and erase images. Images are formed because the trans isomer of these molecules forms a nematic liquid crystal, whereas the cis form is isotropic. Ultraviolet light isomerizes the trans molecules to the cis form and



can create images on a 200-microsecond time scale. Although the cis-trans back reaction occurs at room temperature, the polymeric material does not reorder. However, an intense infrared laser pulse can be used to heat the polymeric material and restore the nematic phase, thus erasing the image.

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#### Still having an impact

Two reports describe additional observations of the collision of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 into Jupiter. Martin *et al.* (p. 1875)

Shedding light on DNA repair

Ultraviolet radiation in sunlight damages DNA, mainly by forming pyrimidine dimers. DNA photolyase uses blue light to split these dimers and repair the damage. Park et al. (p. 1866; see the Perspective by Hearst, p. 1858) present the crystal structure of DNA photolyase from Escherichia coli. They identify the binding sites for the two cofactors, a light-harvesting folate that absorbs the photon and which transfers its energy to a catalytic flavin, which donates an electron to the dimer and then takes it back to split the bridging ring. The binding site for the pyrimidine dimers suggests that the dimer is flipped out from the DNA helix.

used the Photopolarimeter Radiometer onboard Galileo to detect light emission directly from the initial impacts. They argue that these signals originate from the early intense phase of a hot, compact fireball. De Pater et al. (p. 1879) report that the microwave emission from Jupiter's magnetosphere increased dramatically during the impacts, particularly near the jovian equator, even though cometary dust was expected to degrade the signal. The observations imply that the impacts somehow altered the population of particles in the magnetosphere.

#### Two at a time

Several methods have been developed recently to observe the properties of single molecules, such as their fluorescence, in order to see how individual events differ from the average values seen in conventional experiments. Chemists are interested not only in spectra but also in whether individual chemical reactions between molecules in solution can be resolved. Collinson and Wightman (p. 1883; see news story by Service, p. 1846) developed a method for observing reactions resulting from the collision of a single pair of molecules. Microelectrodes generated cation and anion radicals of 9,10-diphenylanthracene, which recombine in a chemiluminescent reaction. The emission events, seen from a small diffusion encounter zone, follow a Poisson distribution.

Transverse image

Accurately imaging the upper mantle is a key to understanding the origin of complex tectonic features along plate boundaries. The Transverse Ranges in southern California, which formed from the convergence of the Pacific and North American plates along a prominent bend in the San Andreas fault, are among the most studied. Revenaugh (p. 1888) imaged the upper mantle structure in this region by combining known tomography with maps of seismic P-wave scattering, which can reveal small(2 kilometers) features. The images reveal that the edge of the crust subducting beneath the southern Transverse Ranges is abrupt.

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#### Common strategy

Many bacterial pathogens are highly species specific, yet despite the large differences between plants and animals, some bacteria can infect both. Rahme et al. (p. 1899; see news story by Wuethrich, p. 1850) examined

a Pseudomonas aeruginosa strain that is infectious in both an Arabidopsis thaliana leaf infiltration model and a mouse skin burn model. Mutations in three genes reduced pathogenicity in both hosts and suggests that common virulence factors can operate in plants and animals.

#### **Patchwork solution**

Many economically important crops have now been genetically engineered to express the crystal protein from Bacillus thuringiensis, which is toxic to pests such as the European corn borer, a moth that attacks maize. One approach for avoiding the development of resistance to the toxin is to plant fields of toxic and nontoxic crops next to one another, but heavy losses would be incurred in the nontoxic fields. A computer model developed by Alstad and Andow (p. 1894) that takes into account the life cycle and preferences of the European corn borer indicates that certain patchwork planting strategies, such as early planting of the toxin-expressing crop, can be more effective in reducing insect damage to the nontoxic crops needed to delay the onset of resistance.

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#### Pulled to a halt

The arrest of meiosis at metaphase I or II before fertilization is a common feature of oogenesis in many organisms. In *Drosophila*, arrest at metaphase II occurs only in oocytes in which at least one meiotic recombination event has occurred. Jang *et al.* (p. 1917) show that it is not the exchange event itself but the presence of tension on the kinetochore that regulates the proper progression of the meiotic cell cycle.

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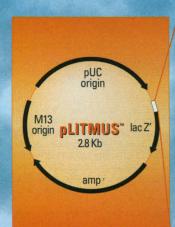


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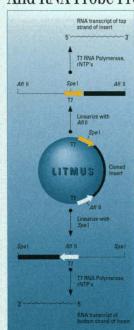
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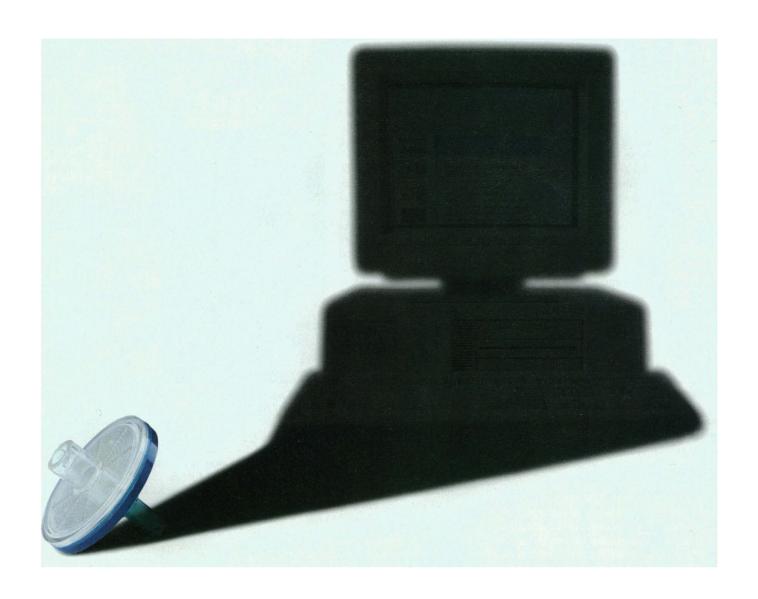
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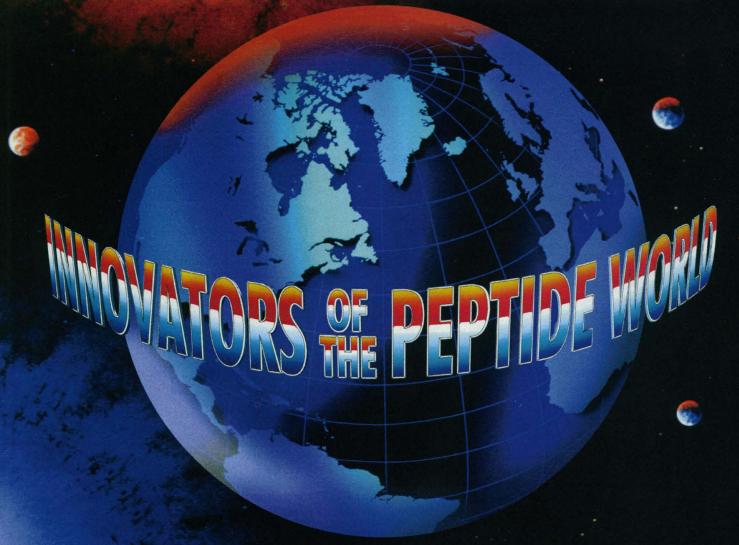


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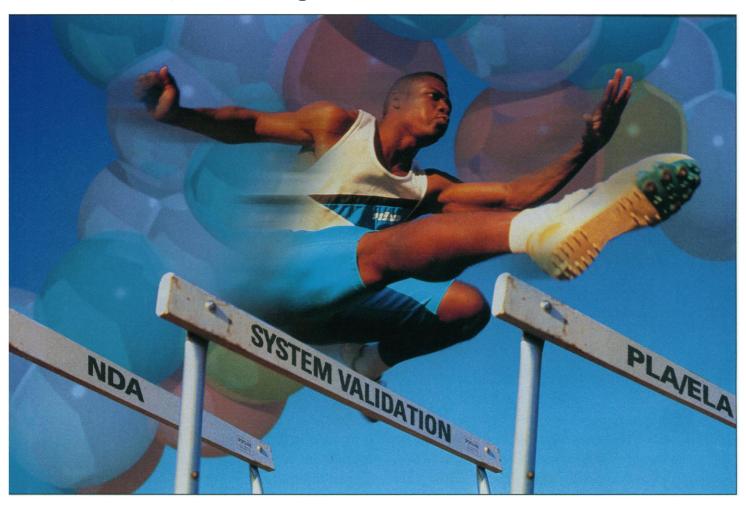
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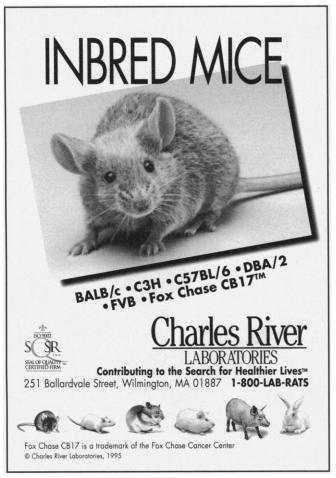
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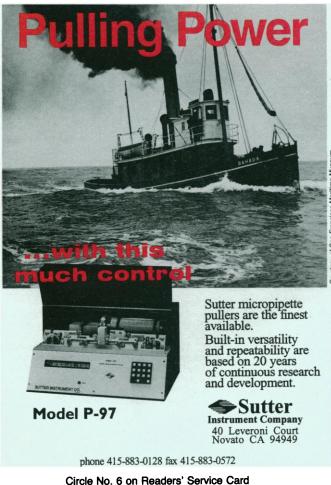
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