

ESO, the European Southern Observatory, was created in 1962 to "... establish and operate an astronomical observatory in the southern hemisphere, equipped with powerful instruments, with the aim of furthering and organising collaboration in astronomy..." It is supported by ten countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. ESO operates at three sites in the Atacama desert region of Chile. The Very Large Telescope (VLT), is located on Paranal, a 2,600 m high mountain approximately 130 km south of Antofagasta. The VLT consists of four 8.2 metre diameter telescopes. These telescopes can be used separately, or in combination as a giant interferometer (VLTI). At La Silla, 600 km north of Santiago de Chile at 2,400 m altitude, ESO operates several optical telescopes with diameters up to 3.6 m. The third site is the 5,000 m high Llano de Chajnantor, near San Pedro de Atacama. Here a new submillimetre telescope (APEX) is being completed, and a large submillimetre-wave array of 64 antennas (ALMA) is under development. Over 1300 proposals are made each year for the use of the ESO telescopes. The ESO headquarters are located in Garching, near Munich, Germany. This is the scientific, technical and administrative centre of ESO where technical development programmes are carried out to provide the Paranal and La Silla observatories with the most advanced instruments. ESO employs about 320 international staff members, Fellows and Associates in Europe and Chile, and about 160 local staff members in Chile.

The ESO MESSENGER is published four times a year: normally in March, June, September and December. ESO also publishes Conference Proceedings, Preprints, Technical Notes and other material connected to its activities. Press Releases inform the media about particular events. For further information, contact the ESO Education and Public Relations Department at the following address:

EUROPEAN
SOUTHERN OBSERVATORY
Karl-Schwarzschild-Str. 2
D-85748 Garching bei München
Germany
Tel. (089) 320 06-0
Telefax (089) 3202362
Email: ips@eso.org
URL: <http://www.eso.org>

The ESO Messenger:
Editor: Peter Shaver
Technical editor: Henri Boffin
<http://www.eso.org/messenger/>

Printed by
Universitätsdruckerei
WOLF & SOHN
Heidemannstr. 166
D-80939 München
Germany

ISSN 0722-6691

CONTENTS

TELESCOPES AND INSTRUMENTATION

A. RICHICHI & R. G. PETROV – Under the Sign of Three: AMBER Joins the VLTI	2
P. BALLESTER ET AL. – The MIDI Data flow: First Observing Period	4
G. MATHIJS – Five Years of Science Operations of the VLT on Paranal	8
R. GILMOZZI & J. MELNICK – Th'ESObservatoire: Merging La Silla and Paranal Observatories ..	13
E. POMPEI ET AL. – Do It Yourself: La Silla Quick Look Tools	16
L. GERMANY – News From La Silla	17

REPORTS FROM OBSERVERS

I. APPENZELLER ET AL. – Exploring Cosmic Evolution with the FORS Deep Field.....	18
Revisiting the Orion Nebula (ESO PR Photo 20/04).....	24
R. SRINAND ET AL. – Constraining the Time Variation of the Fine Structure Constant.....	25
E. GALLIANO & D. ALLOIN – Extragalactic Embedded Clusters: Exploring Star Formation.....	29
C. MELO ET AL. – Two New Very Hot Jupiters in the FLAMES Spotlight	32
New VLT/NACO Images of Titan.....	35

OTHER ASTRONOMICAL NEWS

H. BOFFIN & R. WEST – Venus Transit 2004: A Tremendous Success.....	39
C. MADSEN – Serving European Science: The EIROforum Collaboration	42
D. ALLOIN, E. MASON & K. O'BRIEN – The Visit of Prof. R. Sunayev and the Topical Meeting « Accretion onto Compact Objects »	44
J. WALSH & M. REJKUBA – Report on the ESO Conference « Planetary Nebulae Beyond the Milky Way »	44
Fellows at ESO – T. Dall, M. Rejkuba, G. Verdoes & P. Vreeswijk.....	46
Former ESO DG Adriaan Blaauw Turned 90	47
E. JANSSEN – ESO at the « Exploring the Frontier Symposium »	47

ANNOUNCEMENTS

B. PIRENNE & P. QUINN – Science Products from Large Programmes to be available from the ESO Archive.....	48
C. MADSEN – Visit EIROforum at ESOF 2004	48
NOVA-ESO-MPIA Workshop on « VLTI/MIDI: Data Reduction, Analysis and Science »	49
IAOC Workshop on « The Cool Universe: Observing Cosmic Dawn »	49
Vacancy: Senior Astronomer – Director of the La Silla/Paranal Observatories	50
Personnel Movements.....	50
ESO Fellowship Programme	51

Front Cover Picture: *Cosmic Ballet or Devil's Mask?*

Composite image of the superb triple system NGC 6769-71, located in the southern Pavo constellation (the Peacock) at a distance of 190 million light-years. This image was obtained on April 1, 2004, the day of the Fifth Anniversary of ESO's Very Large Telescope (VLT). It was taken in the imaging mode of the Visible Multi-Object Spectrograph (VIMOS) on Melipal, one of the four 8.2-m Unit Telescopes of the VLT at the Paranal Observatory (Chile). The two upper galaxies, NGC 6769 (upper right) and NGC 6770 (upper left), are of equal brightness and size, while NGC 6771 (below) is about half as bright and slightly smaller. All three galaxies possess a central bulge of similar brightness. They consist of elderly, reddish stars and that of NGC 6771 is remarkable for its "boxy" shape, a rare occurrence among galaxies. (ESO PR Photo 12/04)