



### Top Stories

#### Zenit rocket launches DirecTV-11 satellite

A Ukranian-built Zenit-3SL rocket has had a successful lift-off from a Norwegian launch platform to carry a communications satellite for DirecTV into orbit. Launching at 22:47:59 (UTC) yesterday evening, the mission marked the 13th orbital launch of 2008 and the 25th commercial launch to be conducted by the international Sea Launch consortium.



#### Three of Serbia's neighbors recognize Kosovo

Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary, all of which border Serbia, announced in a joint statement Wednesday that they will recognize Kosovo as an independent state. The three nations expressed their interest in helping the European Union stabilize the region. Serbian foreign minister Vuk Jeremić criticized their decision.

#### George Bush discusses Iraq 5 years after invasion

George W. Bush, the President of the United States delivered today a speech regarding Iraq and the "global war on terror." He said



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that "removing Saddam Hussein from power was the right decision — and this is a fight America can and must win." The speech marked five years since the start of the Iraq War.

### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

#### Wikinews interviews author and filmmaker John Gaspard

Author and filmmaker John Gaspard spoke with Wikinews on his three low budget feature films and books. He told us how he was able to make his latest movie, Grown Men, for under \$13,000 and how his popular book, Digital Filmmaking 101, came to be. He even had a few tips for the amateur filmmakers reading this.

### Wikipedia Current Events

Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden releases an audio tape criticizing the European Union for allowing publication of cartoons that he claims insulted the Prophet Mohammed and threatening a strong reaction.

- Early elections are called for May 2008 in Kuwait after a crisis between the cabinet and parliament leads the emir Sabah al-Sabah to dissolve parliament.

- Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Monaco jointly recognize Kosovo's independence.

- Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov states that "the Albanians in Macedonia have already made demands that they be granted

### Wikipedia Current Events

such autonomy...which could be seen as a move towards independence." The Foreign Ministry also linked the events in Tibet with the declaration of independence by Kosovo, showing a growing movement of groups seeking independence.

- The Parliament of Pakistan elects Fahmida Mirza as its first female speaker.

#### Hubble detects methane on distant planet

NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has detected methane in the atmosphere of a planet 63 light-years away, marking the first discovery of an organic compound on a planet outside our Solar System.

The methane was found on a Jupiter-sized planet named HD 189733b. The planet closely orbits HD 189733, a yellow dwarf star in the constellation Vulpecula.

Although methane can play a key role in the chemical reactions needed to form life, the planet is too close to its parent star to support life, scientists say. It is known as a "hot Jupiter" - a planet whose mass is comparable to that of Jupiter, but orbits nearer to the parent star than Mercury, our Solar System's innermost planet.

This particular hot Jupiter takes just two days to completely orbit its parent star, and the temperatures in its atmosphere can reach 1,650 degrees

Fahrenheit, around the melting point of silver.

"This observation is proof that spectroscopy can eventually be done on a cooler and potentially habitable Earth-sized planet orbiting a dimmer red dwarf-type star." —Mark Swain

"The methane here, although we can call it an organic constituent, is not produced by life - it is way too hot there for life," said Giovanna Tinetti, part of the NASA team that made the discovery.

However, scientists believe the spectroscopic methods used to detect the methane can be used to find organic compounds on other distant planets. "This observation is proof that spectroscopy can eventually be done on a cooler and potentially habitable Earth-sized planet orbiting a dimmer red dwarf-type star," said Mark Swain, a NASA scientist whose paper on the discovery will appear in the scientific journal *Nature*.

Spectroscopy is the splitting of light into its components. As the light from the star passed through the planet's atmosphere, the atmospheric gases imprinted their chemical signature onto the light, allowing the atmosphere's chemical composition to be analyzed by Near Infrared Camera and Multi-Object Spectrometer.

To their surprise, astronomers found much high levels of methane than had been predicted for hot Jupiters. "This indicates we don't really understand exoplanet atmospheres yet," said Swain.

This discovery also confirmed the presence of water molecules in the planet's atmosphere, which was found by NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope last year using

spectroscopy. "With this observation there is no question whether there is water or not - water is present," Swain said.

The ultimate goal of these studies is to identify the molecules of more Earth-like planets in the habitable zone of stars, where conditions may be favorable for life.

Adam Showman at the University of Arizona said, "We are thus now seeing but the opening salvo in a revolution that will extend humankind's view of planetary worlds far beyond the provincial boundaries of our Solar System."

Giovanna Tinetti, who co-authored the *Nature* article, believes the concept of life on other planets is not too unlikely. "My personal view is it is way too arrogant to think that we are the only ones living in the Universe," she says.

### **Wikinews interviews author and filmmaker John Gaspard**

Wikinews held an exclusive interview with author and filmmaker John Gaspard. His films *Resident Alien*, *Beyond Bob* and *Grown Men*, besides opening to positive critical response, were all made on very low budgets; costing around US\$30,000. He says this is because "I despise the process of trying to raise money to finance movies."

He has also written several books on filmmaking, most notably *Digital Filmmaking 101*. He says that it was "originally.....a series of notes to ourselves, to remind us of the steps we took to make a feature for very little money. We later expanded those notes into a complete book to provide beginning filmmakers with the tools they would need to make a feature for what most Hollywood

films spend on coffee and rolls."

Gaspard has written two other books as well. *Fast, Cheap and Under Control: Lessons Learned From the Greatest Low-Budget Movie of All Time* features interviews with some of the world's most well known low budget filmmakers, including Roger Corman and Academy Award winner Jonathan Demme (*The Silence of the Lambs*). *Fast, Cheap and Written that Way: Top Screenwriters on Writing for Low-Budget Movies* features interviews with successful screenwriters who have written for low budget films.

### *Interview*

Wikinews: You've directed three films (*Resident Alien*, *Beyond Bob* and *Grown Men*). Tell us about them.

Mr. Gaspard: Since I despise the process of trying to raise money to finance movies, each movie was written specifically to be shot on an ultra-low budget.

*Resident Alien* and *Beyond Bob* were produced on 16mm film, and each cost a little under \$30,000 to produce.

*Resident Alien*, a science fiction-comedy feature film, is the story of a UFO crash that changes the lives of two down-on-their-luck people in a small Midwestern town. The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* newspaper said, "*Resident Alien* is the best low-budget project to come out of the area."

*Beyond Bob*, an award-winning comedy from the other side, is a story of love and friendship, of passion from beyond the grave, of a love that was made in heaven ... and was just too darned important to stay there. *Beyond Bob* was recently awarded the "Best Feature" award at the Forx Film Festival; it also received an Honorable Mention at the Seventh Annual George Lindsey UNA Film

Festival, and a Bronze Award at the WorldFest Houston.

Grown Men is a digital feature, consisting of five interlocking stories from four Minnesota writers: Rewired by David Fields, It's A Date and The Late Mrs. Boynton by John Gaspard, The \$1,000 Wedding by Tom Poole, and Red Velvet Handcuffs by Matthew G. Anderson. Grown Men premiered at the Ashland Independent Film Festival. It was named "Best of the Fest - Best Feature Screenplay" at the Black Point Film Festival in Lake Geneva. It was also featured at the New York International Independent Film & Video Festival; the Waterfront Film Festival; the Oxford Film Festival; and the Tambay Film Festival.

WN: You're the author and co-author of several books, most notably Digital Filmmaking 101. Tell us about them. What inspires you to write?

Mr. Gaspard: We wrote Digital Filmmaking 101 originally as a series of notes to ourselves, to remind us of the steps we took to make a feature for very little money. We later expanded those notes into a complete book to provide beginning filmmakers with the tools they would need to make a feature for what most Hollywood films spend on coffee and rolls. My second book, Fast, Cheap and Under Control: Lessons Learned From the Greatest Low-Budget Movie of All Time, was designed to help keep new filmmakers from re-inventing the wheel every time they go out to make a feature. There is a wealth of knowledge in the low-budget movies that have come before ours, and it's a foolish filmmaker who doesn't heed those lessons. In the book I talked to both old-school low-budget filmmakers (like Roger Corman) and people from the current

generation (Swingers, The Blair Witch Project, Open Water, etc.). The latest book, Fast, Cheap and Written that Way: Top Screenwriters on Writing for Low-Budget Movies, does just what the title suggests. I spoke to over twenty top screenwriters who had previously worked on low-budget films and got their secrets on how to write for a tiny budget. Interviewees included George Romero, Tom DiCillo, Stuart Gordon, Bob Clark and Kenneth Lonnergan, among others.

WN: Your films were made on very low budgets. Grown Men cost under \$13,000. How did you manage this?

Mr. Gaspard: Well, as soon as you realize that you won't be paying anyone, that cuts your costs significantly. Second, you should write the script to conform to locations and props that you can get for free. Third, you should shoot as quickly as you can -- 12 to 15 pages of script a day is not uncommon.

The main reason to make a movie for such little money is not just to save money -- it's also to help you maintain control of the movie.

Without backers breathing down your neck, you can make the movie you want at the pace you want. You may never see that money again -- a high percentage of low-budget movies never see the light of day, let alone turn a profit -- but the satisfaction of making the movie YOU wanted to make greatly outweighs the cost.

WN: Will you be doing anymore films in the near future?

Mr. Gaspard: We're mulling over some script ideas, but currently don't have anything we're dying to do.

WN: Do you have any advice for the amateur filmmakers reading

this?

Mr. Gaspard: See as many movies as you can -- low-budget independent films, Hollywood classic movies from the Golden Era. You can learn something valuable from every movie you watch, so the more you see the more you learn.

Read scripts to learn how to write one. And I mean real scripts, not transcriptions of finished movies. Learn what the words look like on the page and how that gets translated into images on the screen.

And, most important, don't ever try to fund your movie with credit cards. Don't believe what you read about other filmmakers doing this -- it flat out doesn't work. Happy filmmaking!

### **Pakistan's parliament elects first female speaker**

The National Assembly of Pakistan has elected Fahmida Mirza of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as its first female speaker, weeks after the general elections which ousted President Pervez Musharraf's party and gave the PPP the most seats in Parliament.

Mirza, a former medical doctor who has previously served three terms in the National Assembly, was the joint candidate of the PPP, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N), the Awami National Party (ANP), and other allied parties.

She received 249 votes out of the 324 who were present. Her main rival candidate, Israr Tareen from the former ruling party Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (PML-Q), received only 70 votes.

The result was announced by Chaudhry Amir Hussain, the outgoing speaker. "Fahmida Mirza is declared to have been elected speaker of the National Assembly,"

he said, as other Parliament members pounded their desks in approval.

"This is my third tenure in the National Assembly and I believe it is time that we all work together to address the challenges facing the country," Mirza told reporters. "I am sure we will be able to face these challenges with the support of parliamentarians, our people and Pakistani media."

Shah Mahmood Qureshi, a central PPP leader, said, "The election of Fahmida Mirza as speaker will be a big step towards the empowerment of women in Pakistan."

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, parliamentary leader of the pro-Musharraf PML-Q, told Mirza, "This is a big test and I hope that with the honour that Allah has bestowed upon you, you will be able to live up to expectations."

Later, in elections for the deputy speaker, PPP candidate Faisal Kundi defeated Khush Bakhat Shujaat of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, which is allied with the PML-Q.

The coalition government headed by the PPP has yet to name a Prime Minister, but they are expected to announce their nomination in the next few days. Party insiders say the prime minister, who will be named by Benazir Bhutto's son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, will only hold office for a few months until Bilawal's father, Asif Ali Zardari, becomes eligible for the post.

### **UAE launches national authority for scientific research**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced its first national authority for scientific research

(NASR) to coordinate and fund scientific research in the country.

The national authority for scientific research was announced on March 7 by Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE minister for higher education and scientific research. NASR will begin with an annual budget of AED100 million (approximately US\$27.2 million). The authority hopes to receive additional contributions from the public and the private sector.

NASR will look to fund research projects in various fields, including engineering, technology, medicine, water and agriculture, proposing specific projects to be competed for by researchers at universities and private research institutes.

"Projects are going to be selected to help promote scientific research and the growth of UAE society and we will compare them with international scientific research criteria," Gulf News quoted Al Nahyan as saying at the launch.

NASR will also train scientists and develop programmes for promoting public science awareness. It will also coordinate with government authorities on the issue of intellectual property rights, by providing advice on how companies and research centres should go about protecting their discoveries in the form of patents or licenses. It will also provide scholarships for researchers in the UAE to work on international research programmes, and organise national scientific conferences. NASR forms part of the UAE's strategic plan to improve higher education and scientific research.

Zakaria Maamar, associate professor at the College of Information Technology at Zayed

University, UAE, told Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) that, "This initiative is another boost to the research and development activities that are carried out in the UAE. It will definitely provide researchers with the appropriate funds to sustain such activities and promote best practices in the community."

Said Elnaffar, assistant professor at the college of information technology at the United Arab Emirates University, told SciDev.Net that, with this initiative, the UAE is taking the lead and setting a good example by building a strong development infrastructure founded on knowledge discovery and research.

### **George Bush discusses Iraq 5 years after invasion**

George W. Bush, the President of the United States delivered today a speech regarding Iraq and the "global war on terror." Bush claimed that the war in Iraq had been successful. He said that "removing Saddam Hussein from power was the right decision — and this is a fight America can and must win." The speech marked five years since the start of the Iraq War.

Bush said that "five years into this battle [the war in Iraq], there is an understandable debate over whether the war was worth fighting, whether the fight is worth winning, and whether we can win it. The answers are clear to me: Removing Saddam Hussein from power was the right decision — and this is a fight America can and must win." He continued saying that "The men and women who crossed into Iraq five years ago removed a tyrant, liberated a country, and rescued millions from unspeakable horrors. Some of those troops are with us today,

and you need to know that the American people are proud of your accomplishment -- and so is the Commander in Chief." This was followed by applause from the audience.

Bush also praised the troops who worked in Iraq. He said that "operation Iraqi Freedom was a remarkable display of military effectiveness. Forces from the UK, Australia, Poland and other allies joined our troops in the initial operations. As they advanced, our troops fought their way through sand storms so intense that they blackened the daytime sky. Our troops engaged in pitched battles with the Fedayeen Saddam — death squads acting on the orders of Saddam Hussein that obeyed neither the conventions of war nor the dictates of conscience. These death squads hid in schools and they hid in hospitals, hoping to draw fire against Iraqi civilians. They used women and children as human shields. They stopped at nothing in their efforts to prevent us from prevailing — but they couldn't stop the coalition advance."

In the speech, the Iraqi elections were also mentioned. Bush said that "over the past five years, we have seen moments of triumph and moments of tragedy. We have watched in admiration as 12 million Iraqis defied the terrorists and went to the polls, and chose their leaders in free elections. We have watched in horror as al-Qaeda beheaded innocent captives, and sent suicide bombers to blow up mosques and markets. These actions show the brutal nature of the enemy in Iraq. And they serve as a grim reminder: The terrorists who murder the innocent in the streets of Baghdad want to murder the innocent in the streets of America. Defeating this

enemy in Iraq will make it less likely that we'll face the enemy here at home."

Bush claimed success in Iraq when he said that "the successes we are seeing in Iraq are undeniable — yet some in Washington still call for retreat. War critics can no longer credibly argue that we're losing in Iraq — so now they argue the war costs too much. In recent months we've heard exaggerated estimates of the costs of this war. No one would argue that this war has not come at a high cost in lives and treasure — but those costs are necessary when we consider the cost of a strategic victory for our enemies in Iraq."

Bush concluded the speech by saying that "The best way we can honor them [the US troops] is by making sure that their sacrifice was not in vain. Five years ago tonight, I promised the American people that in the struggle ahead, we will accept no outcome but victory. Today, standing before men and women who helped liberate a nation, I reaffirm the commitment. The battle in Iraq is noble, it is necessary, and it is just. And with your courage, the battle in Iraq will end in victory. God bless."

### **Three of Serbia's neighbors recognize Kosovo**

Croatia, Bulgaria and Hungary, all of which border Serbia, announced in a joint statement Wednesday that they will recognize Kosovo as an independent state.

"The decision on the recognition of Kosovo is based on thorough consideration," the statement said.

Croatia and Hungary later confirmed they had officially recognized Kosovo, while Bulgaria is expected to make an

announcement Thursday. Yesterday, Bulgaria's security council held a meeting regarding Kosovo. Angel Naidenov, spokesman of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, praised Kosovo for their efforts in establishing a "multi-ethnic and democratic country."

The statement says Kosovo's declaration of independence was prompted by the international community's failure to work out a solution between Serbia and Kosovo. "In these circumstances the change of the unsustainable status quo was unavoidable," the statement said.

The three nations express their interest in helping the European Union with stabilizing the region, and they wish to develop ties with a Kosovo that "maintains good relations with its neighbors, enjoys economic growth, and keeps its European orientation."

Serbian foreign minister Vuk Jeremić criticized their decision. "Every country that decides to recognize the illegally declared state of Kosovo breaches international law," he said, adding that countries who recognize Kosovo "cannot have good ties with Serbia."

"I call on states, particularly those of the region, not to take this step. Do not injure our country's territorial integrity and sovereignty," Jeremić said.

Boris Tadić, Serbia's president, had previously warned Croatia that recognizing Kosovo would have a negative effect on their relations. "We want to have the best possible relations with this country," Tadić said. "But recognition of Kosovo is certainly not an act of goodwill between

neighbors."

Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader says he does not expect relations to worsen. "I do understand this is a difficult one for Serbia to swallow. That's one of the reasons we have waited until now. But I don't expect a worsening of political and economic relations because there is no alternative to good neighborly relations."

Kosovo's deputy prime minister, Hajredin Kuçi said the decision was "very good for the Serbian perception and the people of Serbia that everybody who is in the neighborhood is recognizing the new reality."

### **Moldova's Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev resigns**

Moldova's Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev resigned on Wednesday (March, 19, 2008) at the Government meeting. The president of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Voronin took part at the meeting.

Vasile Tarlev expressed his satisfaction with the results the Government has attained so far, which, according to him, have been appreciated by many international structures.

According to Tarlev, within the period he headed the Government, a range of the Government's representatives have been trained, so that now they are ready to function as members of any Government.

Vasile Tarlev was appointed as premier in 2001 and is the prime-minister who has been in office longer than anyone, after the proclamation of independence.

### **McCanns granted newspaper apologies**

The parents of Madeleine McCann, the four-year-old British girl who went missing in May 2007, have won a court case against the Express Newspapers group in the settlement of a libel case regarding the group's coverage of their daughter's disappearance. In a statement read outside London's High Court on behalf of the McCanns, the couple say that the outcome was 'the only just and proper response' to the 'utter falsity' of the reports.

The Express Newspapers' four publications, including the Daily Express and Daily Star, will also print front-page apologies to the couple, in which the papers admit they were wrong to suggest the couple were responsible for their daughter's death. Kate and Gerry McCann explained they welcomed the outcome of the case, and that the £550,000 settlement will be paid to the Find Madeleine Campaign.

Madeleine's parents have been named as suspects by Portuguese police, but the Daily Express admits that they hold "no evidence whatsoever" to suggest that their reports that Madeleine's parents were involved in her death and disappearance were true. The front-page apology in the Daily Express reads "We accept that a number of articles in the newspaper have suggested that the couple caused the death of their missing daughter Madeleine and then covered it up," and goes on to explain that Madeleine's parents are "completely innocent" of any involvement.

### **George Bush and Irish Prime Minister attend reception at White House to commemorate St. Patrick's day**

Bertie Ahern, the Prime Minister of Ireland visited the White House Monday to commemorate St. Patrick's Day. Mr. Ahern makes this visit annually, for what he calls a "very substantial and useful meeting." Mr. Ahern started his speech by saying "Mr. President and Mrs. Bush, thank you for the welcome and honor which you've extended to our delegation, and to all the Irish guests, from North and from South, who are here at the White House this morning to mark St. Patrick's Day, Ireland's National Day. I'm very grateful, Mr. President, for the opportunity which we have just had to hold a very substantial and useful meeting with you in the Oval Office. We appreciate it, and we appreciate the amount of time that you've given to us."

Mr. Bush commented on the relationship between the US and Ireland, saying that "we've [the US and Ireland have] had a long relationship, Taoiseach. Our history has been one where the United States and Ireland have made liberty our common cause, and both of our nations are richer for it. Our partnership is based upon principles, and it's also based upon people. Ireland founded itself -- found itself in the grip of poverty and famine in the 19th century, and millions of Irish came here to our soil. They were drawn here by a promise that success would be attainable to all those who were willing to work hard. And that's certainly what happened."

"And that's what we celebrate on St. Patrick's Day. Our countries are more than just partners, we are family, Taoiseach. And today

more than 35 million Americans claim Irish ancestry. America is richer for every Murphy, Kelly, and O'Sullivan. I should have said McCain -- Well, I just did. After all, this history together, the United States and the Republic of Ireland continue to stand side by side in firm friendship. We were friends in the past, we're friends today, and, Taoiseach, I am confident, after my time in office, the next President will be friends with Ireland. We are cooperating to build prosperous economies and vibrant trade and sound investment between our countries," continued Mr. Bush. The mentions of McCain in this article were both followed by laughter and applause from the audience.

Mr. Ahern also commented on the resolution to the conflicts that had been troubling Ireland for many years. He said that "we [the people of Ireland] are all glad to say, and enormously pleased and proud to stand here and say that we've achieved peace in Ireland. It's a peace that I firmly believe will endure to future generations."

### **Visionary and author Arthur C. Clarke dead at age 90**

British expatriate science fiction author, futurist, and visionary Arthur C. Clarke died on Wednesday in a hospital in his adopted hometown of Colombo, Sri Lanka. He was 90 years old.

"Sir Arthur passed away a short while ago at the Apollo Hospital. He had been in hospital for the past four days. He had been in and out of the hospital in recent weeks," said Clarke's assistant, Rohan de Silva.

Reports say that after a long 50 year battle with post-polio syndrome, Clarke died at 1:30

a.m. (local time) on Wednesday from breathing complications.

Famous for writing over 100 science fiction and science publications, including 2001: A Space Odyssey, he is also credited as the one who presented the concept of the geostationary communication satellite.

"Sometimes I am asked how I would like to be remembered. I have had a diverse career as a writer, underwater explorer and space promoter. Of all these I would like to be remembered as a writer," said Clarke not long before he died.

### **Today in History**

1852 – Uncle Tom's Cabin, a novel by American author Harriet

Beecher Stowe about slavery in the United States before the Civil War, was first published.

1883 – Eleven countries signed the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, one of the first intellectual property treaties.

1987 – The antiretroviral drug zidovudine (AZT) became the first antiviral medication approved for use against HIV and AIDS.

1995 – The Aum Shinrikyo sect carried out a poison gas attack on the Tokyo Subway, killing 12 people and injuring thousands of others with sarin.

2003 – A U.S.-led coalition force invaded Iraq, beginning the Iraq War.

March 20 is March Equinox (05:48 UTC, 2008); International Earth Day, Norouz in Iran and various Central Asian countries and in Zoroastrianism (2008); Mawlid (Sunni Islam, 2008); Fast of Esther begins at dawn (Judaism, 2008); Purim begins at sundown (Judaism, 2008); Maundy Thursday (Western Christianity, 2008); Independence Day in Tunisia.

### **Quote of the Day**

If we have learned one thing from the history of invention and discovery, it is that, in the long run — and often in the short one — the most daring prophecies seem laughably conservative.  
~ Arthur C. Clarke

### **Word of the Day**

poignant adj

1. Incisive; penetrating.
2. Evoking strong mental sensation, to the point of distress; emotionally moving.

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