

The cosmic comic: Riding early waves

August 5 2009



13.8 billion years after the Big Bang: Two scientists arrange to go surfing of a cosmic wave. Image: Jojo Enßlin

(PhysOrg.com) -- Fundamental research in cosmology continues to disclose ever more mysteries of the first millennia of the universe. More detailed knowledge will be delivered by the recently launched Planck Satellite which will measure the microwave background - the so-called echo of the Big Bang. How can we expose the broader public to the complex physics of the early universe? In the "International Year of Astronomy" (2009) the Max Planck Institute for Astrophysics (MPA, Germany) tries an unusual experiment: a comic on the Internet about the physical processes that took place during the first 400,000 years after the Big Bang.

Two fictitious high-spirited scientists of the institute, passionate surfers, take off to visit the early Universe. Not to do serious research there but

to experience the ultimate ride on the plasma waves of the [big bang](#). However, they quickly realize that they would be stuck without their knowledge of the physics of the early Universe. This is not meant to replace textbooks or scientific texts but to guide the reader in an amusing way through a series of phenomena of [cosmic microwave background](#). Even one of the unsolved puzzles of cosmology - the strange "Cold Spot" in the microwave background - receives a new explanation.

The knowledge is always passed on casually via the story. The internet comic contains short, interactively selectable background information on the [early Universe](#) which leads to more detailed external internet pages about physics and cosmology. In this way a broader audience can be reached: youth that could be attracted by the unusual surfer story; interested amateurs who get an entertaining introduction into microwave background; and finally teachers who may use the material for illustrating their lessons.

This comic was created by the Ensslin brothers Torsten and Jojo. Torsten Ensslin is a cosmologist at MPA and heads the German participation in the Planck Satellite mission. Jojo Enßlin is a freelance illustrator, surfer and cofounder of the "Galerie Revolver" in Duesseldorf. MPA is one of the leading research institutes for theoretical astrophysics, and [cosmology](#) is one of its major research areas.

More information: [The cosmic comic: Riding early waves](#)

Provided by Max Planck Institute

Citation: The cosmic comic: Riding early waves (2009, August 5) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2009-08-cosmic-comic-early.html>

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