

We're not alone in our galactic neighborhood. The discovery of a new, nearby solar system bears a striking resemblance to our own and might harbor the potential for life.

A newsletter of unusual reports on various subjects. Published on an irregular schedule as an exchange publication only with others of a like nature. Comments should be sent to: Gene Duplantier, 17 Shetland Street, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2M 1X5

## Missing Entrepreneur Left No Tracks Up to His Vanishing Point

By KELLY DAVID  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

**T**HOUSAND OAKS—A year ago Monday, Philip "Taylor" Kramer drove off to pick up a business associate at the airport and never returned—leaving behind a family that daily mourns his absence and, occasionally, the thought of his death.

The disappearance of the Thousand Oaks computer entrepreneur was a mystery from the start, baffling investigators by leaving them with no physical clues. Only the absence of a strapping 6-foot 5-inch family man and stressed-out computer executive.

Now, relatives say, the yearlong search for the former bass player for the rock group Iron Butterfly has become a mind-numbing series of dashed hopes, dead ends and false leads. They have heard from everyone from a psychic, who says he sees him being worshiped as a god on a California Indian reservation, to welfare workers in Sacramento, who say he comes to them for food stamps.

"I've gotten to the point that I won't believe anything," said his father, Ray Kramer. "I will look at everything, but no firm evidence has come in."

That means no videotapes capturing his image on security cameras in stores. No photographs from concerned citizens who have seen one of the 100,000 plus fliers bearing his likeness in grocery stores or highway rest stops nationwide. No contact with friends or family.

The green Ford van he was driving the day he disappeared has never been found. Nor has his body

or anything he was carrying that day: His ATM and credit cards and his cellular phone have gone unused.

There are phone calls—very rarely—received by friends or family members in which their hellos are answered by dead silence. But even those are hard to have faith in, they say.

"Those kind of calls are something that happens to everyone all your life," said his sister, Kathy Kramer, a Newbury Park resident who has turned over her life to the search for her brother, distributing fliers and appearing on talk shows.

"So who knows?"

Still, when the calls do come, they stay on the line, talking to silence, urging him to come home.

Charles Carter, a private investigator hired to find Kramer, said the case is one of the most exceptional he has worked on.

"It is very unusual in that there is absolutely no evidence," he said. "There are a lot of circumstances, so many possibilities, but with no evidence to support any of them."

After Kramer's disappearance was featured on the "Phil Donahue Show" last July, Carter chased down about 100 leads that led nowhere. He is now working on another 300 tips generated from a November episode of "Unsolved Mysteries."

But not a single one holds much promise of leading to Kramer, he said.

The search has cost family and friends more than \$75,000. His sister, who came to Thousand Oaks looking for a job just five days before his disappearance, has quit job hunting and devoted herself

full time to finding her brother.

Kramer was last seen Feb. 12, 1995, by a parking attendant at the Los Angeles airport, where he signed an IOU for \$3 to leave the parking lot. Kramer never picked up the business associate, but parking records show he spent 45 minutes at the airport.

His father—who remembers Kramer asking for money the night before to take his children out for dinner—said Kramer probably had only 40 cents in his pocket. He never went to dinner that night with his daughter, now 5, and son, now 14.

**H**e awoke the next day upbeat. On his way to the airport, he made some calls on his cellular phone, to his wife promising to return with "the biggest surprise for you," and then, in a later call, telling her, "Whatever happens, I'll always be with you." He also called Iron Butterfly's original drummer, saying, "I love you more than life itself."

But the last call, from somewhere in San Fernando Valley on the Ventura Freeway, was the most alarming. In it, Kramer told a 911 operator: "This is Philip Taylor Kramer, and I am going to kill myself."

Even so, relatives and police detectives doubt the 42-year-old—whose 43rd birthday was July 12—could have killed himself and managed to hide his body.

"If you are going to take your life, it is extremely difficult to hide your body and your van," Carter said.

In their speculation, family members say they will dismiss no

scenario, no matter how outlandish.

UFOs? It's possible. Or maybe he is in a government protection program? Or has been hijacked or kidnapped or suffered amnesia and can't find his way home.

"It is not beyond the possibility that a plane landed in a field and has taken him and flown to South America," said his mother, Mary Ann, from her Ohio home. "You think, 'How far-fetched?' But in this day and age there are people disappearing in South America all the time."

In the final days before his disappearance, Kramer and his father, a retired professor of electrical engineering, believed they had made an important mathematical discovery that could allow information to travel faster than the

speed of light. Kramer barely slept, spending nights running equations on his computer.

And his business had just emerged from bankruptcy. The multimedia firm he owned with two friends specialized in fractal compression, a software-based approach to recording and playing back video images without high-end hardware accessories.

Although dismissive of theories he was kidnapped because of bad business dealings, some in his family say it's possible he may have been kidnapped for what he knew.

Or he was driven crazy by the knowledge of the complex mathematical equations he believed could explain the nature of the cosmos.

"No matter how you see it, my brother is a casualty of technology," Kathy Kramer said.

But for all the speculation, family members believe they are no closer than they were a year ago to finding him.

Nonetheless, Mary Ann Kramer still stuffs every bill she pays with a flier bearing her son's likeness.

Kathy Kramer has just finished taping an episode of "American Journal," which she hopes will help generate yet more leads.

And while trying to get on with her life, Jennifer, Kramer's wife, still accompanies her sister-in-law on trips to distant locales where strangers say they have seen a man resembling her husband.

"I vacillate back and forth all the time over what could have happened," Jennifer Kramer said. "I think he may be out there continuing his work somewhere. I think he is probably alive. But it is out of my hands. I am moving on, and so are my children."

# Solar finding renews hope we're not alone

By K.C. COLE  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

LOS ANGELES — Astronomers report they have discovered a solar system strikingly similar to our own and far closer to our sun than any of the previous half-dozen planet discoveries.

Evidence presented yesterday at the American Astronomical Society meeting in Madison, Wis., suggests the fourth nearest star from our sun has a Jupi-

ter-sized companion orbiting at about the distance of Saturn — and possibly a second, smaller, companion at the distance of the asteroid belt.

If confirmed, the new planet — just over eight light years from Earth in the direction of the Big Dipper — adds another piece of evidence confirming centuries of speculation that planets are common, and that astronomers don't have to look much beyond their own back-

yards to find them.

Some of these, astronomers hope, might harbor the potential for life.

"It's the beginning of a whole new field," said George Gatewood of the Allegheny Observatory in Pittsburgh, who discovered the planet orbiting a star called Lelande 21185.

"We've just lifted up the corner of the first page of the book."

After decades of false hopes

and dashed promises, astronomers have discovered a string of oddball planetary systems since the fall of 1995.

However, up until now, all have had bizarre features: one planet orbited its parent star in just four days; others were much larger than Jupiter — the giant of our solar system — and orbited much faster and closer to their suns. The closest of the previously discovered planets is at least 40 light years away.

Gatewood's planetary system, in contrast, looks much more like our own. The planet weighs in with Jupiter's mass, and appears to circle its star at a similar distance. Both possible planets also orbit in the same pancake-flat plane favored by Earth's planetary companions.

Travelling at light speed (an impossibility), one could make the approximate 80 trillion-kilometre journey to Lelande 21185 in just over eight years. Pros-

pects for life are dim, however, because all large planets previously discovered are mostly gas, lacking any terra firma.

Curiously, the latest discovery was not the result of space-age technology as much as persistence. The Pittsburgh observatory had been keeping track of Lelande 21185 for more than six decades with a 76-centimetre telescope — small by modern standards.

The Saturday Sun, June 15, 1996

## UFO watcher held in radium murder plot

BELLPORT, N.Y. (AP) —

The head of a Long Island UFO club is accused of plotting to kill Republican officials by spreading radium on their car seats and in their toothpaste.

John Ford, 47, was charged with conspiring to commit murder after police found in his home several lead canisters containing radium.

THE TORONTO STAR Saturday, July 20, 1996

## Stonehenge's age revealed

Scientists have at last been able to reveal the true age of Britain's most famous prehistoric monument. Using radiocarbon dating techniques, they have proved that Stonehenge, the mysterious circles of stones on Salisbury Plain, are 5,000 years old. It is the first time these methods have been used on a World Heritage Site. Another revelation shows that animal bones from the site were buried as relics and were already 200 years old before being put into the ground.

# Tales of Bloodthirsty Beast Terrify Mexico

■ **Folklore:** For weeks, the *chupacabras*, or goat-sucker, has obsessed the nation.

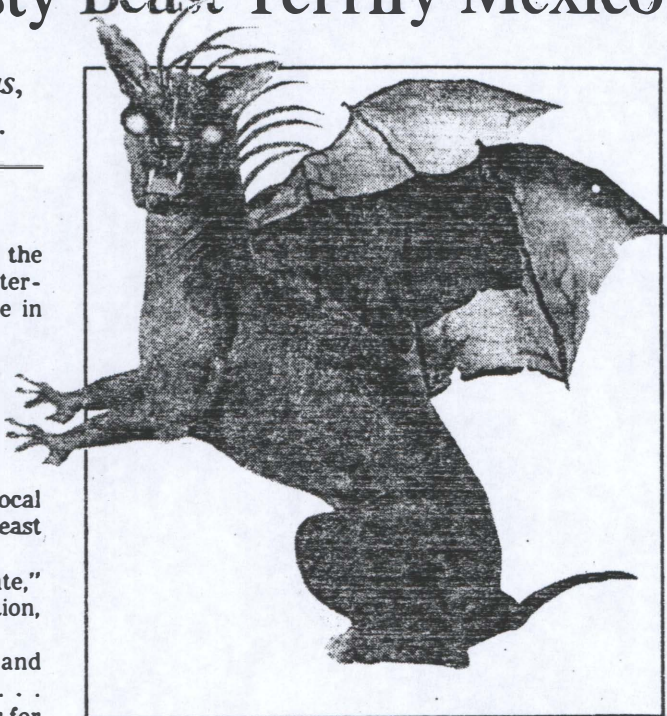
By MARK FINEMAN  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

NAUCALPAN, Mexico—The strange saga of the goat-sucking vampire that has captivated—and terrorized—much of Mexico began in a small village in the Pacific coast state of Sinaloa.

A local farmer reported that he found 24 of his sheep dead—with bite marks on the neck and their blood sucked dry—after seeing a giant, bat-like creature swoop down on his corral. A Mexican television network was on the scene within hours, broadcasting nationwide that local residents feared that a mysterious, bloodsucking beast was to blame: an extraterrestrial, or worse.

"This created a great panic across the state," Desiderio Aguilar, Sinaloa's chief of civil protection, said of last month's attack.

"Suddenly, normal deaths of chickens and goats and sheep are all being blamed on the goat-sucker. . . . Mothers have quit sending their children to schools for fear they could be attacked on the way. Farmers who



Reforma

Composite drawing based on "witness" accounts.

used to start work at 4 a.m. to beat the heat aren't leaving their homes until well after daybreak. Unfortunately, the people are very gullible, and this has generated a collective psychosis."

And that's how Mexico's version of this vampire story began.

Here's how it spread:

Federal experts rushed to Sinaloa in a vain attempt to stop the vampire rumor in its tracks. They conducted autopsies and announced results showing that coyotes or other natural predators had killed the sheep. Cabinet secretaries appealed for calm; government scientists called for reason.

But in today's crisis-ridden Mexico, where an ocean of superstition and suspicion lies just beneath a veneer of science and sophistication, it already was too late.

Traumatized by two years of political assassinations, skyrocketing crime, social instability and the worst economic crisis in recent memory, even the best-educated Mexicans were prepared to believe in the beast. And the least-educated were prepared to do anything—even attack the environment—to kill it.

In the weeks since the Sinaloa sheep deaths, the Mexican media have been filled with the nationwide exploits of the *chupacabras*, or goat-sucker. It has been sighted and blamed for attacks on every-

thing from barnyard chickens to

humans in nearly every state. A Durango farmer said his 32 hens were massacred and sucked dry. A hired hand at the governor's ranch in Guanajuato said he saw the creature: a yard-high dinosaur kind of thing with fangs, bulging eyes, bat wings, a needled spine and kangaroo legs. And parents in villages nationwide say they've been keeping their children home at night.

It was against that backdrop that Abigail Carlos Tobon, a 25-year-

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**'It says a lot about the culture here. The Mexican has a great capacity for fantasy. And surrealistic things do happen in Mexico.'**

—GUADALUPE LOAEZA

Mexican author and social analyst

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old nurse, fell down the stairs earlier this month in this rural hamlet just outside Mexico City. By then, it seems, everyone—her neighbors, her mother, even the national media—was ready to believe almost anything. The story the following day would read that the goat-sucker had struck in Naucalpan and was closing in on the Mexican capital.

"She was on the stairs, and she bent down like this," Abigail's brother, Jose, 24, explained on a treacherous, concrete stairway inside the family home. "She fell against the wall. The bone popped out of her arm, and she was screaming, 'Mama, I fell!' Because of all this stuff about the animal, my mother heard, 'Mama, animal!' and she started yelling that the *chupacabras* had gotten my sister.

"The arm was terribly broken—it looked like some animal had bitten it off." And when the neighbors ran in, Jose said, all they saw was the arm and, at that very moment, a black, winged mass—it turned out to be a flock of swallows—flying away through the dusk.

"And that's how the rumor started here," he recalled.

Even well-educated Mexicans like Jose—a graduate student in civil engineering at the capital's National Autonomous University of Mexico—are vulnerable right now to legends like that of the goat-sucker.

"I think yes—it exists," Jose maintained. "It just didn't attack my sister."

Jose is certainly not alone.

A few miles away from his family's mountainside home, in a sophisticated Mexican capital bristling with skyscrapers, satellite dishes and computer links, the creature has become the hottest

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# MEXICO: Media Feed Fears of Vampire

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conversation topic everywhere from street-corner kiosks to suburban mansions.

Computer-graphics designers have produced widely published composite drawings of the creature based on "eyewitness" accounts. Not just one but two goat-sucker "Web pages" that were opened on the Internet after similar attacks on goats in Puerto Rico earlier this year have become the rage among the rich. The original victims in Puerto Rico gave the creature its name, but the widespread rumors in Mexico have given it its fame.

Radio stations have been playing at least two different hard-driving merengue tunes dedicated to the *chupacabras*. And local markets have begun selling goat-sucker dolls, cuddly in a terrifying way.

"It says a lot about the culture here. The Mexican has a great capacity for fantasy," observed prominent Mexican author and social analyst Guadalupe Loaeza. "And surrealistic things do happen in Mexico.

"But, with the economic crisis, the assassinations and all the terrible things that have been happening here, there is also a climate right now to believe in *chupacabras*. With everything that has happened, people believe anything can happen. The ground was prepared for this."

Loaeza, an expert on Mexico's wealthy and intellectual elite, described a dinner party she attended recently in Mexico City's most exclusive neighborhood. Among the guests: two university professors, a national political commentator and a Harvard-educated economist. The subject: the goat-sucker.

Here's a taste of the dialogue, as recounted by Loaeza:

"With respect to the goat-sucker, the other day I thought that, in reality, it had been created thanks to the pollution in Mexico City," the economist said. "Or perhaps it was born in one of those garbage dumps on the road to Puebla, where diapers, soda cans, pizza boxes, newspapers and plastic bottles accumulate."

"What if the government invented it to distract us so that we

wouldn't think about the crisis anymore?" one of the professors chimed in. "These guys are capable of anything."

"Or why not think of it as a messenger," the other professor added, "that is coming here to tell us how to govern the country?"

And no one at the table laughed. "Everyone was so serious. That's why I was so scared when I left," Loaeza recalled. "I think a lot of it is because of this economic crisis we've been living through for a year and a half now. . . . We're all a little lost; we've lost our compass. And I think that mood makes us react this way."

In the Mexican countryside, the impact of the reaction has been more severe than idle dinner chat.

Driven by genuine panic, peasants armed with torches have been attacking caves in some areas of the country to burn out bats, forcing a Mexican Cabinet secretary to publicly denounce the practice as a threat to rural ecosystems.

Environment Secretary Julia Carabias Lillo and other federal officials have been citing a battery of scientific reports and autopsies from throughout the country that have accounted for every alleged goat-sucker attack, attributing each to one of an array of drought-starved predators—coyotes, wild

dogs, cats.

In the Sinaloa birthplace of Mexico's goat-sucker legend, scientists from the biology department of a local university and experts from the state zoo formed a team of 15 investigators—backed by 25 members of a police SWAT team—to lay traps and gather the most minute evidence to support the official wild-predator hypothesis.

The team even put fresh sheep in the corral targeted in the first attack and posted two observers for an all-night vigil.

"Late at night, a few wild dogs showed up and attacked the sheep—leaving the same marks found on the first dead sheep," said Aguilar, the civil protection chief. "They captured the dogs and showed them to the townspeople. They went to the other municipalities where there had been attacks and came up with the same results. And a man who claimed to have been attacked by the goat-sucker . . . later admitted he had gotten into a brawl."

Still, science couldn't dent the goat-sucker rumor.

"There is just this huge psychosis," Aguilar said. "You see it everywhere, even though everywhere we go we prove that there aren't any extraterrestrials or vampires." CR: H. KAUFMAN

## Independence Day no hit with believer in extraterrestrials

MONTREAL (CP) — *Independence Day* may be off to an earth-shaking start at the box office but it hasn't impressed Rael, a self-proclaimed extraterrestrial ambassador to Earth.

Rael, author of a book called *Space Aliens Took Me To Their Planet*, says the movie gives the wrong idea about the mild-mannered beings who inhabit another planetary system.

*Independence Day* pits patriotic Americans against alien invaders who turn cities into trash.

But extraterrestrials wouldn't hurt a fly, says Rael, who claims he linked with them in 1973.

"It's terrible," said the

middle-aged man, born in France with the name Claude Vorilhon.

"We shouldn't apply our models of violence to beings from space. They're full of peace and love. They created us."

*Independence Day* is meant to promote fear and despair, said the former auto racing journalist.

"Now that they've eliminated the Russian menace, the Americans are making up a space enemy," he said.

"This movie was financed by the CIA and the U.S. army. It aims to frighten people so they'll keep believing they need weapons to protect themselves."

THE TORONTO STAR Wednesday, July 10, 1996

## Brain waves give power to switch on a light

SYDNEY (Reuter) — Australian scientists say they have discovered how to use brain waves to switch on a light.

By putting two electrodes on the skull and connecting them to an amplifier and transmitter, a person can use the minute voltage in their brain waves to control electric devices, the scientists said yesterday.

They stressed they were not controlling thought patterns, merely the voltage of brain waves.

"What we have done is to identify signals within the brain which we believe everyone can control, and devised some novel technology to pick up and analyse those signals," said health science professor Ashley Craig at Sydney's University of Technology.

"Once analyzed, those signals can be made to activate any device such as a household appliance," Craig said.

During the demonstration, fellow scientist Les Kirkup closed his eyes and relaxed, raising the voltage from his brain waves from 0.9 to 3.5, turning on a desk lamp across the room. As he opened his eyes, the voltage dropped and the light switched off.

Craig said the group of scientists based their work on the fact the brain emitted electric impulses to control the body.

The scientists are studying mind switch technology to develop applications for the severely disabled.

The Saturday Sun, June 29, 1996

## Animal bites off arm of girl bearing gift

TORGAU, Germany (Reuter) — A brown bear bit off the arm of a nine-year-old girl who climbed across a barricade at a zoo to present the animal a rose, police said yesterday.

# It was Nessie, witnesses say

LONDON (Reuter) — Sixteen people watched in amazement as a mysterious object plowed swiftly across Loch Ness, leaving a whitewater wake before disappearing after five minutes into the depths of the Scottish lake.

"I cannot find a rational explanation for what I saw," English

tourist David Neeld said yesterday after Thursday evening's sighting. "I do not think there is any other explanation than it was the Loch Ness monster."

Sightings of the monster, nicknamed Nessie and often described as having a long neck and large body like a brontosaurus, have been reported since the 15th century. Several expeditions have been undertaken in the loch but they have found nothing.

The strange object was first spotted at 10 p.m. by Kate Munro, joint owner of the Craigdarroch House, a hotel on the edge of the highland lake.

## High speed

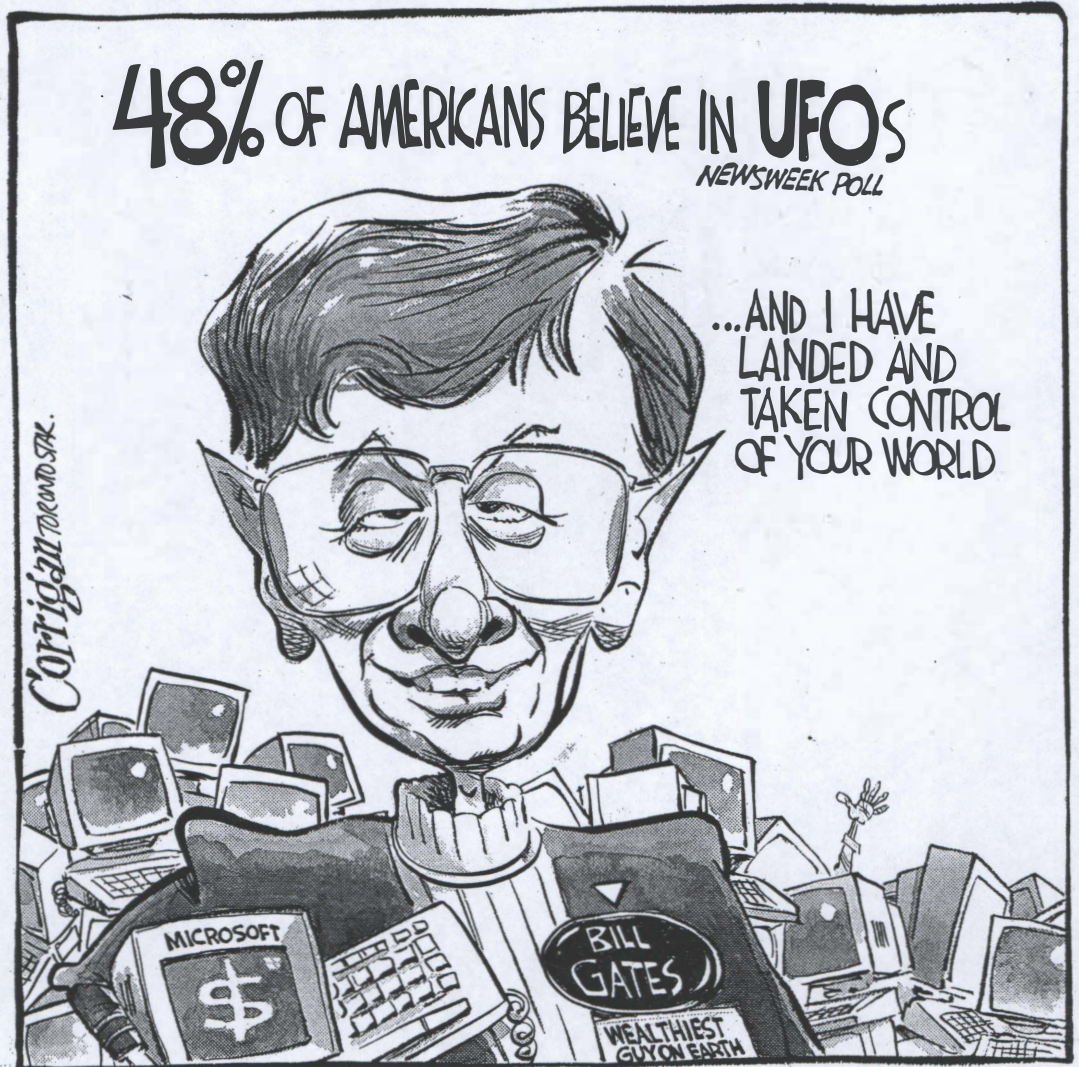
She alerted her husband Dave and 14 guests who watched the object for five minutes. They said it appeared to be something large just under the loch's surface, moving at high speed.

"There was no traffic on the loch at all, yet here was a wake as big as comes from a cruiser," Neeld said.

"There were a few locals in the hotel's bar and they said it was Nessie, so I will go along with that," he said. "I must say that I was very impressed."

Another tourist, Karen Hemmingway, said: "Whatever we saw was certainly quite strange. There were no boats around at all. I think I could well have seen the monster."

THE TORONTO STAR Wednesday, July 3, 1996



PATRICK CORRIGAN / TORONTO STAR