



***April 2006: The Newcastle Centre for Life launches Lifeseeker,
the most advanced research vessel ever built...
...with de pinxi, interactive theatre and show designer, at the controls.***

Since 7 April 2006, visitors to the Newcastle *Centre for Life* have been able to enjoy the ***Lifeseeker*** experience. This 20-minute interactive presentation takes them on a search for life forms, in locations offering the most extreme living conditions on Earth.

Visitors take the controls of *Lifeseeker* to begin their journey. Although aided by the captain, a biologist and an astrophysicist, they are the ones who guide the craft and decide which part of the planet to visit: they can explore the wide open spaces of the Antarctic or be transported into the very heart of the tropical rainforest. They may then proceed to the bottom of the sea, stopping off in vast deserts or dark underground caves: it is up to them to choose!

But that is not the end of it. The crew then have to leave Earth and go and explore the planet Mars and the moons Titan and Europa so that they can compare conditions in these distant worlds with those they encountered in the extreme environments they visited on Earth. After this research, each visitor has to come to his or her own conclusions and say whether he or she thinks any form of life is possible outside our planet.

Description of the experience.

The Dome, an interactive theatre with a 360-degree projection system, is set in the centre of the visitors' route through the Centre For Life. The audience enters it via a ramp to find itself in a futuristic immersive theatre that looks like a real spacecraft, with filtered LED lighting and a plethora of electronic controls at each seat.

The interactive mission involves gathering as much information as possible about the life forms encountered in the various extreme environments: *together*, the visitors create a databank about the objects they have found. As they leave each environment, the scientist summarises the essential factors for life that they have found there.

Once in the realms of space, the "spect-actors" operate their individual consoles to take soil and atmosphere samples from the planets they visit. When they have finished their research, the scientists draw on the experience they have acquired together on Earth to point out the factors that could be favourable to the development of life in these hostile surroundings: temperature, the presence of water etc.

At the end of the journey, visitors are shown a unique summary of the journey on which their interactions have taken them; the direction for future research is established....

What is more, the show is designed so that it can be updated to reflect the latest discoveries from the realms of space as they happen; *Lifeseeker's* journey could continue for many years to come.

Scientific contribution.

The ***Lifeseeker*** show was designed and developed on the initiative of the Newcastle Centre for Life, in conjunction its development team and educational department.

de pinxi consulted many experts and scientists to gather the information necessary for reconstruction of the different environments and to approve the various stages of the project.

We would like to thank in particular:

Frieda Billet - Belgian National Botanical Gardens.

The Communication Department of the European Space Agency (esa).

Brigitte Chiwy - AVES Brussels.

Dr Peter Convey - British Antarctic Survey.

The staff of the Han Cave Complex.

Technical notes

The show.

The show is based on synthesised interactive imagery including the reconstruction of complex natural environments populated by various different life forms (flora and fauna).

The people who assist the audience throughout the mission are real actors who react according to the audience's (inter)actions.

During their journey visitors have access to a databank of over 80 living specimens, categorised under 4 headings: classification, habitat, energy source, special characteristics.

The interactive theatre.

The experience is based on the exclusive *argoGroup*TM technology developed by *de pinxi* and designed for theatres seating between 15 and 150 people. The system allows visitors to interact simultaneously with all the components of the presentation: virtual worlds and sound atmospheres, lighting effects etc. Inside the Dome, which seats 69, each seat has an individual console with joystick, buttons, display and sound system. The system combines group action and social experience with highly individual interaction.

*argoGroup*TM was named best new show product at IAAPA 2001!

The partners in the adventure.

de pinxi is the executive producer of the show, realizing the interactive scenario, the sound and iconographic research, the graphic production, the filming, the animations, the original score and the programming. *de pinxi* also supplied the interactive theatre and the computer cluster with 6 graphics channels.

The show takes on an immersive dimension thanks to the 360° panoramic projection inside the Dome; the projection system was designed and installed by SEOS. The image is generated in high definition, with a basic resolution of over 8000 pixels!

The general automation, special effects and 9-channel sound system were installed by SkyScan.

General supervision of the Dome project was undertaken by Visual Acuity Ltd.

Project management of audiovisual production at CFL: Nick Blackwood; technical project management Terry McCartney

Documents available

Photos of the installation.
Tape of show launch.

About *de pinxi*

www.depinxi.be

Ever since 1993 *de pinxi* has been developing leisure and educational systems that seek to immerse the audience in their interactive content. Over 60 interactive installations have been realized worldwide. These experiences involve the creation of virtual worlds (infographics and sound), videos, special effects, information technology and control electronics which are placed in the audience's hands. Our job is to translate an idea, a scenario, a museum trip into a shared interactive experience which is far from ordinary!

Please contact us for more information about our interactive group experiences and virtual voyages.

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