

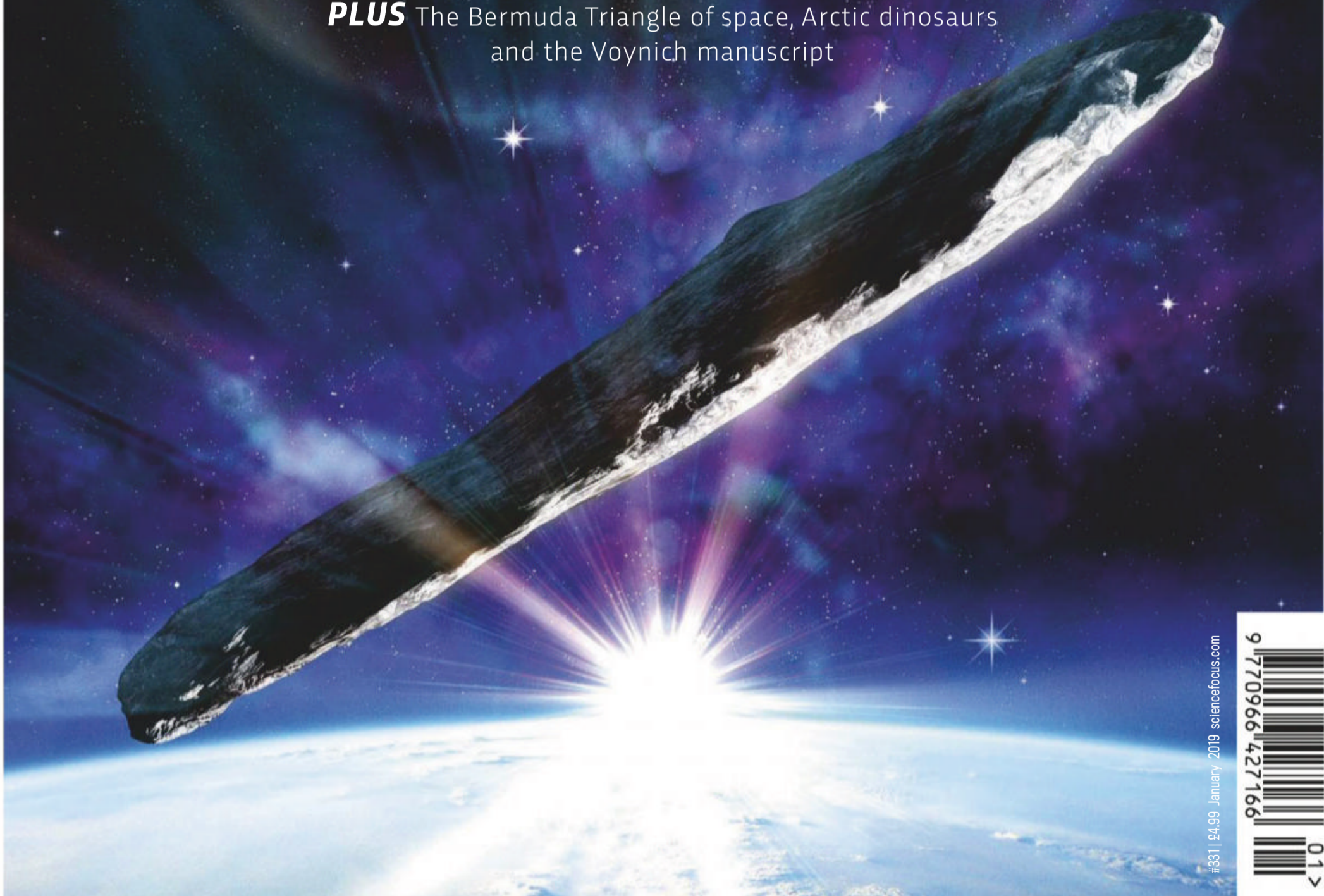
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INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION, LOW EARTH ORBIT

Astronauts on board the International Space Station (ISS) now have a new companion: a floating robotic head named CIMON.

Short for 'Crew Interactive MOBILE Companion', the spherical robot arrived at the ISS last July, and had its first interactions with Alexander Gerst – the German astronaut it'll be working with – in November.

CIMON was manufactured by Airbus for the German space agency. The robot sports a display screen, an AI 'brain' based on IBM's Watson technology, seven cameras for monitoring its surroundings and recognising faces, nine microphones for listening to voices and identifying directions, a loudspeaker 'mouth', and 12 internal fans for manoeuvring in microgravity.

CIMON is designed to assist astronauts with their work by displaying and explaining information about procedures and repairs, as well as acting as a mobile camera to find objects and record experiments. He's the first AI robot in space, but don't worry – CIMON won't be doing a 'HAL' and going rogue any time soon. The robot isn't equipped with self-learning capabilities, so it relies on instructions from its astronaut minders.

DLR

