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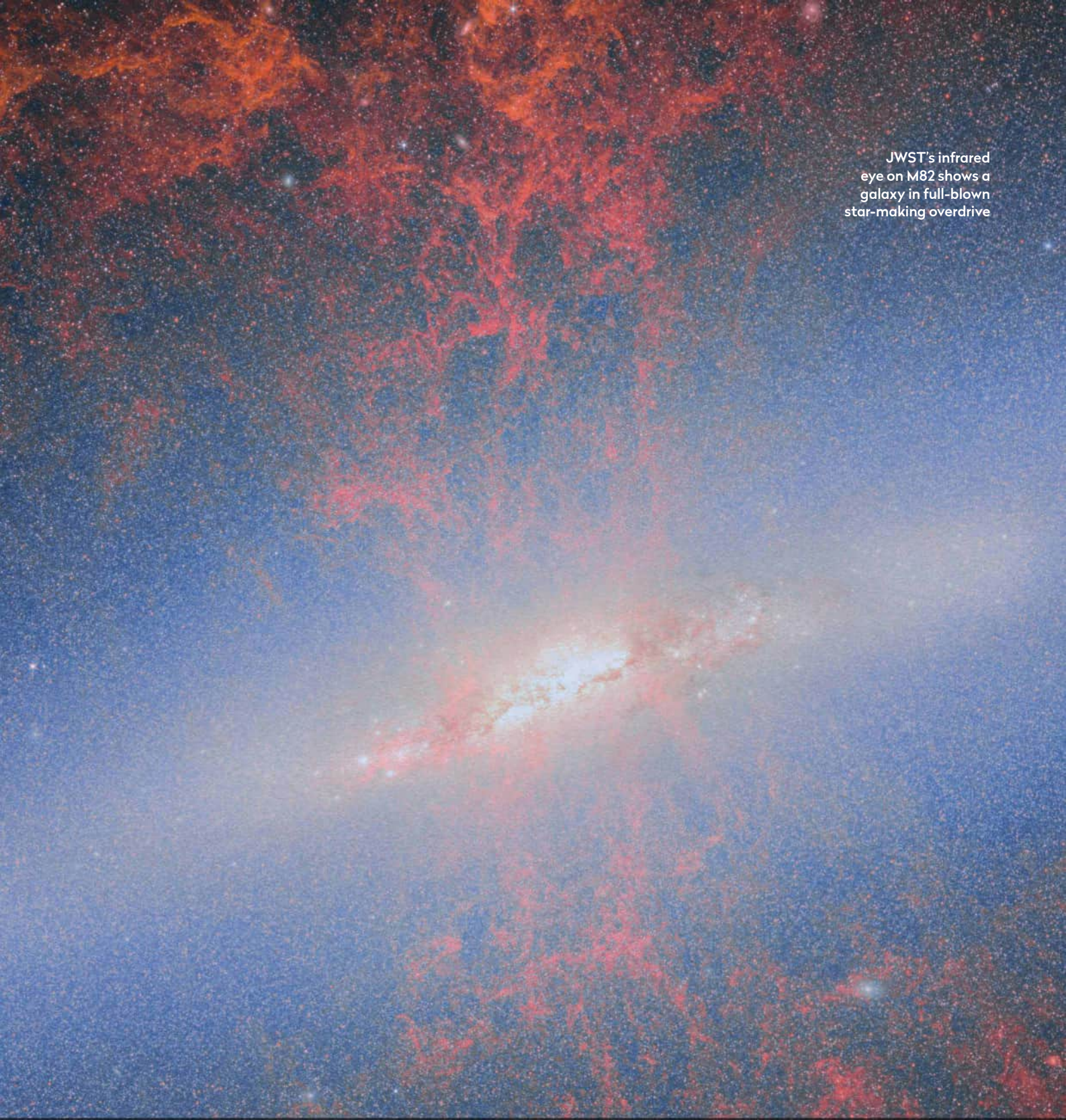

JWST's infrared eye on M82 shows a galaxy in full-blown star-making overdrive

Starburst galaxy outshines Milky Way

JWST image of galaxy Messier 82 reveals a flurry of star formation

The JWST has captured a nearby galaxy that is outshining the Milky Way. Messier 82 (M82), known as the Cigar Galaxy, lies just 12 million lightyears away and is classified as a starburst galaxy, one in which new stars form at a much faster rate than expected. The new image, taken with JWST's near-infrared camera (NIRCam), shows the luminous flare of billions of stars, as well as the glow of organic molecules called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

The burst of star formation in M82 is likely due to its neighbour, spiral galaxy M81. Astronomers believe gravitational interactions between the two sent large amounts of gas hurtling into M82's centre millions of years ago, which caused a flurry of new stars to form.

M82 is now home to over 100 super star clusters – more massive and luminous than other clusters – each containing hundreds of thousands of stars. **www.esawebb.org**