

# COUNCIL *for* MEDIA INTEGRITY

Sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP)

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Joe Nickell, senior research fellow, CSICOP  
Barry Karr, executive director, CSICOP  
William Evans, professor of communications, Georgia State University  
Etienne Rios, network director, CMI

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Glenn T. Seaborg, Nobel Prize-winner, professor of chemistry, University of California at Berkeley  
Steve Allen, author, TV personality

## MEMBERS

Phillip Adams, TV broadcaster, film producer  
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Stephen Barrett, M.D., psychiatrist, doctor  
Susan J. Blackmore, psychologist, University of the West of England  
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David Schwimmer, paleontologist, Columbus College, Georgia  
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E.O. Wilson, Harvard University

**EMBARGOED for release until Friday, November 13**  
**CONTACT MATT NISBET (716) 636-1425 ext. 219**

**FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH BRINGS...**

**THE CANDLE IN THE DARK  
AND  
SNUFFED CANDLE AWARDS**

**THE COUNCIL FOR MEDIA INTEGRITY  
APPLAUDS PBS' SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN FRONTIERS FOR  
SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF PSEUDOSCIENCE AND THE  
PARANORMAL**

**CRITICIZES RADIO HOST ART BELL FOR PARANORMAL  
AND CONSPIRACY MYSTERY MONGERING**

**SPONSORED BY *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER* MAGAZINE  
The Los Angeles Renaissance Hotel  
9620 Airport Blvd.  
Friday, November 13  
10AM**

**LOS ANGELES, NOV. 13** — In a press conference held today, a prestigious network of scientists that includes five Nobel laureates honored the producers of the PBS television series *Scientific American Frontiers* for balanced science programming while denouncing radio host **Art Bell** for perpetuating conspiracy myths and engaging in paranormal mystery mongering.

**(OVER)**

**CSICOP**

**Skeptical Inquirer**

THE MAGAZINE FOR SCIENCE AND REASON

In presenting the coveted *Candle In the Dark Award to Scientific American Frontiers* producer **David Huntley**, the Council for Media Integrity cited the program for “its outstanding contributions to the public’s understanding of science and scientific principles.” The series, hosted by **Alan Alda**, devoted the episode “Beyond Science” to examining claims of pseudoscience and the paranormal from a scientific perspective. Topics covered included dowsing, palm reading, free energy claims, therapeutic touch, graphology and the alien autopsy hoax. Last year’s winner of the *Candle In the Dark* award was **Bill Nye** for his science television program *Bill Nye, The Science Guy*.

Radio host **Art Bell**, invited but not in attendance, was named as recipient of the less-than-prestigious *Snuffed Candle Award*. The Council for Media Integrity cited Bell “for encouraging credulity, presenting pseudoscience as genuine, and contributing to the public’s lack of understanding of the methods of scientific inquiry.” Bell became notorious in 1997 following the Heaven’s Gate suicides. On his radio show and his website, Bell promoted the notion of a spacecraft following in the tail of the comet Hale-Bopp, possibly contributing to the cult members’ suicide in a delusional attempt to “graduate to the next level” aboard the Comet Hale-Bopp spacecraft. Last year’s winner of the Snuffed Candle Award was **Dan Akroyd** for his pseudo-documentary television series *The Psi-Factor*.

“Bell’s show cultivates conspiracy theories, a distrust of scientists, a misunderstanding of science, and belief in suspect, and often even demonstrably wrong ideas, concerning everything from astronomy to zoology,” says Georgia State University Communications Professor **William Evans**. “The radio station managers who carry Art Bell want to pretend that it is merely entertainment programming rather than news or information programming. Bell is thereby given license to offer biased programming with the purposeful exclusion of any voice that might lend criticism to his distorted worldview.”

The Council for Media Integrity, sponsored by *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, was founded in 1996 at the World Skeptics Congress in Buffalo, New York. The Council is a network of prestigious scientists, academics and members of the media concerned with the balanced portrayal of science. The award titles were inspired by the late **Carl Sagan's** book, *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*.

“What effects do paranormal depictions in the media have on the public? The evidence so far suggests that the media do indeed affect what people believe” says Purdue University Communications Professor **Glenn Sparks**. “Just as the networks and film producers have a social responsibility in the areas of violence and sexual content, the research to date suggests that there are important points for media practitioners to ponder about the messages they construct that deal with the paranormal.”

On hand to make presentations and comments at the press conference will be Sparks, Huntley, Evans, **Jere Lipps**, Professor of Integrative Biology at UC-Berkeley; **Barry Karr**, Executive Director of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal(CSICOP); and **Matt Nisbet**, Coordinator for the Council for Media Integrity.

The presentation of the **Candle in the Dark** and **Snuffed Candle** awards on Friday precedes a Saturday conference to be held at the Los Angeles Renaissance Hotel. Titled *That's Entertainment: Hollywood, the Media and the Supernatural*, the conference includes presentations by Sparks, Evans, UC-Berkeley scientist **Jere Lipps**, author/entertainer **Steve Allen**, special effects creator **Trey Stokes**, television director **Peter Bonerz**, and Sci-Fi Channel host **Justin Gunn**.

Contact Matt Nisbet (716) 636-1425 ext. 219  
EMBARGOED TILL NOV. 13.

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The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) is an international association of scientists, academics and researchers dedicated to the scientific examination of claims of the paranormal and pseudoscience. CSICOP's current roster of fellows includes five Nobel laureates as well as Stephen Jay Gould, Marilyn Vos Savant, Jill Tarter and Richard Dawkins. CSICOP publishes *Skeptical Inquirer*, The Magazine for Science and Reason.

Check out [www.csicop.org](http://www.csicop.org), rated one of the Top 10 science sites on the web.