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# Man behind viral universe explainer 'Cosmic eye' video is a Perth scientist

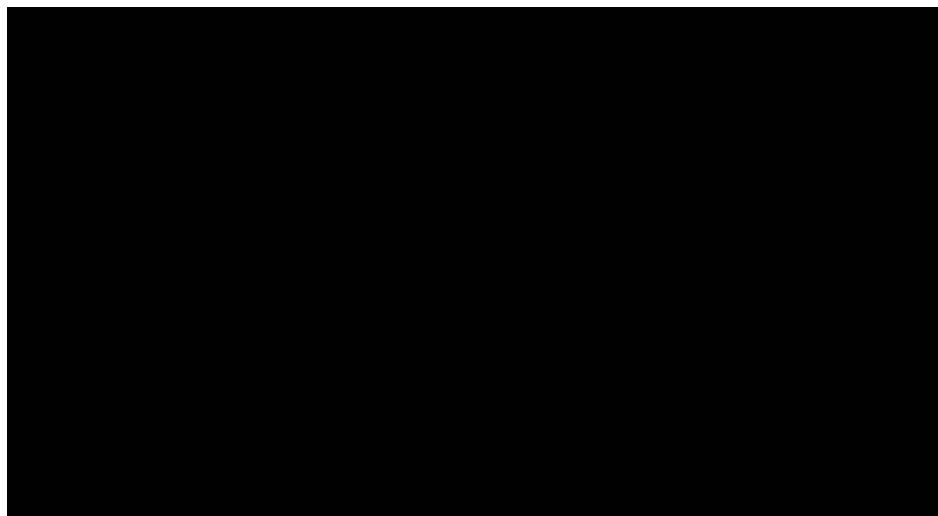
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April 18 2016  
**Emma Young**  
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In the past week you might have noticed a striking viral video on social media, which initially zooms out from, then goes back inside a young woman's smiling face to explore the boundaries of the universe.

What you might not have realised is that the video is several years old. And that it was created by a Perth-based astrophysicist who has been blown away by its sudden success.



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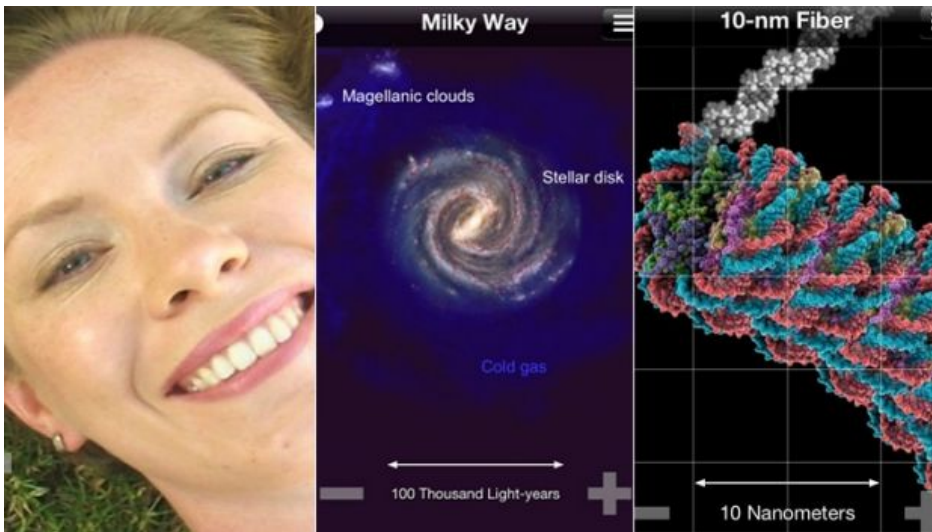
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## Cosmic eye

Starting with a woman's smiling face, Danail Obreschkow's video zooms out to show a universe view, then zooms all the way back in again.

Dr Danail Obreschkow put the video online a few years ago to little acclaim, but a week ago it was shared on Facebook by [The Science World](#), whose videos might generally get 10–20 000 hits.

Dr Obreschkow's creation has now surpassed 30 million views, 620,000 shares, 140,000 "reactions" and 20,000 comments and delivered an unexpected PR boost for the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research, which has "nodes" at both Curtin University and the University of WA.



The viral video starts with a woman's smiling face, zooms out to show a universe view, then zooms all the way back in again.

"It's generated a little bit of debate about religion and science, about our role in the universe," Dr Obreschkow said.

"It makes people talk about both how small they feel and how big they feel at once."

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"As an astrophysicist it's hard to sometimes justify the job you do.

"We work with taxpayers' money, and if you do cancer research, everybody understands that you are working on a treatment.

"We try hard as scientists to have



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interesting discoveries published and produce press releases and videos - a whole team works constantly on outreach, it is them who organises the Astrofest in Perth for example, and they often try to get a few hits on YouTube.

"If we make it to a few hundred thousand that's classed a good job and this is bigger than everything we have ever done.

"If we can explain a little to people of what we know about the universe and they are interested, maybe they feel it is worth the investment."

He learned how to code apps for phones and tablets to make the "Cosmic Eye" app, an interactive tool for users to zoom in and out themselves to see explanations attached to each part of the universe, then made a video from it.

The human model at the centre is his friend, WA Symphony Orchestra cellist Louise Mackay.

Zooming out, the video shows the ground beneath her, out to the solar system and beyond.

"All the stars you see in the night sky are part of a big system of stars all rotating around each other, the Milky Way galaxy," Dr Obreschkow explained.

"For 100 years we have known this is not alone, and there are many more, much farther away. The whole universe is made up of hundreds of billions of these galaxies.

"If you look from so far away, you see these galaxies as little points that are not just random but are lying on a really big web, what we call the cosmic web, which got its structure from the processes set off by the Big Bang.

"By studying this structure, we learn about the very distant past."

"Zooming" back in, the viewer enters through Louise's eye to see through cells, DNA, atoms, through to the smallest particles humans know about, or "quarks".

Originally from Switzerland, Dr Obreschkow said he hoped the video would help share the excitement he felt for his work.

"Most of the time in life, if you have a question, there is already an answer. You go to buy a car, and you wonder what to get and in principle, all the information is there for you," he said.




Dr Danail Obreschkow created the video to little acclaim a few years ago - now it's gone viral.

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"In astrophysics we ask questions nobody on Earth knows the answer to. It is nice to get up in the morning with this challenge ahead – sometimes I skip breakfast because I just want to get to the office and keep going."

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