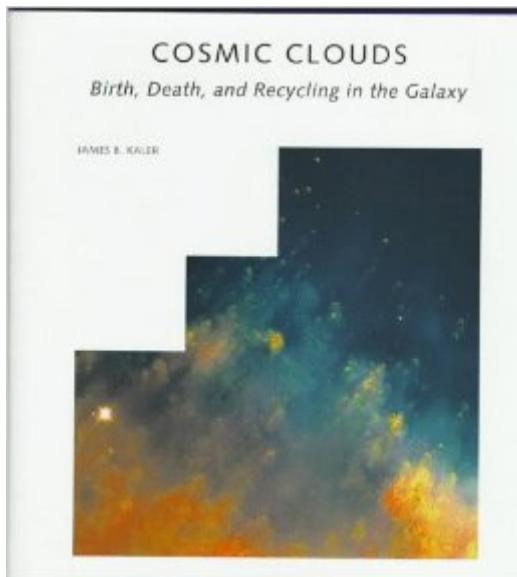


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Cosmic Clouds: Birth, Death And Recycling In The Galaxy ("Scientific American" Library)



Synopsis

Cosmic Clouds is about the creation of stars, the Sun, the planets, Earth and ourselves. The book examines the entire path of star birth and stellar recycling, in which one generation of stars sends a good portion of itself, including compressive forces and a lot of freshly-made chemical elements, back into the stellar nurseries to provide for the next generation. We thus see how stars beget more stars and how as a by-product of the process planets and our own Earth were created, quite literally distilled out of the heavy star-matter that infuses interstellar space.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Easy to read overview of astronomical techniques such as measuring distances of distant bodies and interpreting spectral patterns, as well as stars, nebulae, and star and planet formation. The cosmic cycle of interstellar clouds collapsing, the formation of stars, the death of stars with dust and enriched matter going back to interstellar clouds, is described. The Big Bang is theorized to have only created hydrogen, helium and a bit of lithium, with heavier elements produced in stars later. It is thus interesting to note that while older parts of our galaxy contain stars with very low levels of heavy elements, no stars have yet been discovered containing no metals, ie, with only the hydrogen, helium and lithium of the Big Bang.

Cosmic Clouds is more than easy reading--it gives a detailed, technical explanation of basic

principles of Astrophysics and discusses modern theories of stellar evolution backed up with details of star formation, the multiple roles played by supernova in the formation of heavier elements, their dispersal and shockwave initiation of solar nebula formation. The book ties these ideas to various stages of solar formation visible in the night sky. The role of a galaxy's diffuse magnetic field in slowing runaway solar nebula collapse is mentioned, the first time I've seen this idea presented in a publication. The whole crazy interplay of forces large and small resulting in the creation of stars, interstellar molecules, the gathering of matter into planetesimals, protoplanets and the progression from a dusty disc to a stable system of orbiting planets gives one cause for quiet contemplation. A superb book that would stand in for a college course in astronomy that gathers a wide range of facts and conjecture together to paint a coherent picture of a magnificent, ongoing natural history.

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