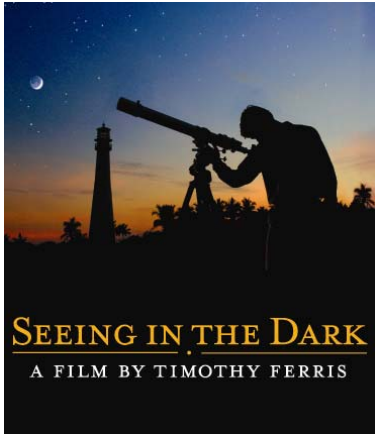


## *About Those Appearing in the Film*



**The Bisque brothers (Steve, Tom, Daniel, and Matthew)** taught themselves astronomy and computer science to develop The Sky, a leading program for exploring the night sky and controlling telescopes. In 1990 they incorporated Software Bisque, headquartered in the building in Golden, Colorado that housed the Colorado School of Mines geology department when their father, Ramon E. Bisque, was a professor there. The Paramount ME Robotic Telescope Mount they are seen installing in the film is of their own design and manufacture.

**Ron Bissinger** has been an amateur astronomer since childhood. Using a 16-inch telescope equipped with a CCD digital camera in his backyard observatory, Ron co-discovered the exoplanet XO-1b, as reported in *The Astrophysical Journal* in 2006. Ron was one of a handful of people who videotaped the Space Shuttle Columbia's final re-entry and breakup over California and Nevada on the early morning of February 1, 2003. His videotape was cited in the official NASA accident investigation report and became part of NASA's official investigation archive. Since 2001 Ron has collaborated with scientists at NASA and the University of California, Santa Cruz on detecting planets orbiting distant stars (see [www.transitsearch.org](http://www.transitsearch.org)). Involved in digital imaging for the life sciences, Ron is CEO of Alpha Innotech in San Leandro, California.

**Patrick Ferris**, a history major at the University of California, Davis, appears in the Key Biscayne sequences playing his father at age 17, then as himself in the film's final scenes. A singer, songwriter, and musician who plays guitar, keyboards, banjo, and fiddle, Patrick has recorded authentic and evocative reworkings of compositions by the blues masters Skip James, Son House, Bukka White, Mississippi John Hurt, and Robert Johnson. He has designed a number of striking academic and commercial Web sites, including [brokenbricks.com](http://brokenbricks.com), the authoritative site from which guitarists learn the techniques of the White Stripes. Patrick's other interests include boxing, metalworking, and computer programming.

**Debra Fischer**, the only professional astronomer in the film, uses the techniques and instruments developed by Geoff Marcy (University of California, Berkeley), Paul Butler (Carnegie Institution of Washington) and Steven Vogt (University of California, Santa Cruz), to identify exoplanets. She was a leader in the discovery of stars with more than one planet around them and is working to develop new instruments, on the ground and in space, to help identify and describe the properties of planets elsewhere.

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In her work, she collaborates with amateur astronomers who seek to observe such planets directly by noting the subtle drop in the brightness of stars that occurs when a planet passes in front of the star. Prof. Fischer, who earned her doctorate at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is on the faculty at San Francisco State University.

**Robert Gendler**, a physician, was inspired by photos he saw at New York's Hayden Planetarium as a boy and took up astrophotography as an adult, shooting first from his home in Connecticut and later, via the Internet, with a robotic telescope in New Mexico. Rob's mosaic image of the Andromeda galaxy was selected by *Astronomy* magazine as one of the greatest astronomical photographs of the last thirty years, and his image of IC405, the "Flaming Star" nebula, was issued on a stamp by the Royal Postal Service in 2006. A collection of his work appears in his book, *A Year in the Life of the Universe*, published in 2006.

**Michael Koppelman** holds degrees in music and astrophysics. As a musician he has written a number of songs —one of which, "Like Snow," is heard in the film — and played bass for Prince. As a producer, Michael mixed songs for Paula Abdul, MC Hammer, Patti LaBelle and Mavis Staples. As an amateur astronomer, he built his own observatory, north of Minneapolis, where in 2006 he imaged light from a star that exploded and created a gamma ray burst eleven billion years ago.

**Stephen James O'Meara** taught himself astronomy as a boy, earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern University and spent much of his career on the editorial staff of *Sky & Telescope* magazine. Known as an unusually keen visual observer, Steve was the first to spot Halley's Comet on its 1985 return, identified dark 'spokes' in Saturn's B ring before the Voyager 1 spacecraft imaged them, and was the first person to determine the rotation period of the distant planet Uranus. The International Astronomical Union named asteroid 3637 *O'Meara* in his honor. He is a contract videographer for *National Geographic* and writes the "Secret Sky" column for *Astronomy* magazine.

**Barbara Wilson** is well regarded in the amateur astronomy community for her ability to see dim and distant objects and her willingness to teach others how to do the same. In 1993 she joined the staff at the George Observatory, operated by the Houston Museum of Natural Science, where she teaches astronomy to school groups of all ages and conducts public Saturday night stargazing sessions. Barbara observes with a 20-inch telescope equipped with an equatorial platform built by her husband, Buster. Along with two other amateur astronomers, she discovered the globular star cluster IC 1257, which for a century had been mistakenly classified as an open cluster, and co-authored a paper reporting the finding, published in the *Astronomical Journal* in February 1997. For more on Barbara's observations see <http://redshift.home.pipeline.com/obscure.htm>.

**Robert Smith** was a first-round pick in the 1993 NFL draft and went on to become the top running back in the history of the Minnesota Vikings, leading the NFC in rushing in the 2000 season with 1,521 yards gained and setting an all-time NFL record for yards gained per touchdown run. He retired at the peak of his career, having scored 32 career touchdowns, to pursue an ongoing interest in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Robert observes the skies over southern Florida with a 16-inch computerized Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope.

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