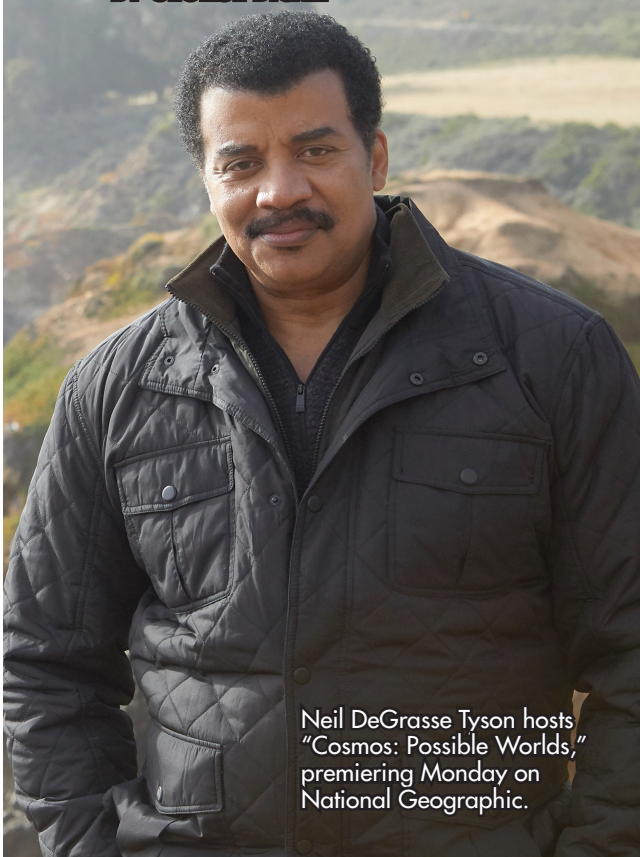


coverstory

BY GEORGE DICKIE



Neil DeGrasse Tyson hosts "Cosmos: Possible Worlds," premiering Monday on National Geographic.

Neil DeGrasse Tyson gives an enlightening tour of 'Cosmos: Possible Worlds'

In considering how and where humanity might migrate in the future, "Cosmos: Possible Worlds" looks to our past for a roadmap.

Indeed, the 13-episode third season of Carl Sagan's visionary "Cosmos" franchise, hosted by Neil DeGrasse Tyson and premiering Monday, March 9, on National Geographic, hearkens back to our ancient ancestors who used nature's forces to step out of their realms and explore and settle Earth's frontiers.

But here, those frontiers are also greatly expanded as through animation, holograms and other special effects, the series takes viewers on a journey through 13.8 billion years of cosmic evolution, starting at the dawn of the universe and progressing well into our distant future. Along the way, they'll visit never-before-seen worlds and meet those who made possible our understanding of life's spectacular voyage. It also reveals intelligent life forms that are right in front of us but are imperceptible to the human eye.

With talk of climate change and discoveries in space in the news, series creator and executive producer Ann Druyan feels this chapter of her late husband Sagan's brainchild is especially well-timed.

"We're living in a moment where exoplanets are being discovered throughout the galaxy," Druyan explains. "But to me, it's also the lost worlds of our past, the worlds of our future where the human species might one day live. And I called it 'Possible Worlds' because most of all, it's about ... this world and its possibilities and the future that we can still have if we

get our act together and start listening to science and taking what the scientists are saying to heart."

The opening episode, "Ladders to the Stars," looks back on our evolution and our initial interest in the stars. Subsequent installments examine the Earth's early existence, planets that could potentially support human life, science's efforts to solve major problems, the human potential for change, and the sophisticated and imperceptible communication of trees, otherwise known as the mycelial network – a lesson in biology that astrophysicist Tyson says surprised him.

"I think the more we learn about the Earth," Tyson says, "the more we recognize that there's a kind of intelligence already manifested in the life that we've so taken for granted. Because we're so myopic about what we think intelligence is or should be that you miss what Earth is doing, what the mycelium is doing under the ground."

Yes, science is the key to understanding our world, and if there is a message to be taken from "Cosmos: Possible Worlds," it's that without science there is no humanity – now and in the future. Tyson hopes viewers will take it to heart.

"Science has completely transformed civilization," he says, "and science brings with it an awesome power over nature that requires a tandem dimension of wisdom and maturity for how to shepherd that in the interest not only of our civilization, but of the relationship of our civilization and the Earth's systems themselves."

"Because we're embedded, we're not living separate from the Earth," he continues. "We are a part of Earth, and not enough people think of Earth that way."

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