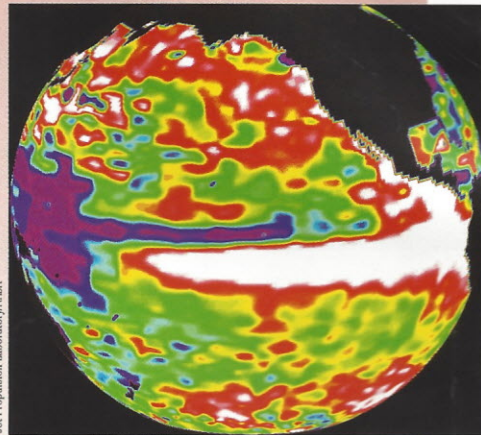


▶ Comet Hale-Bopp captures imaginations worldwide as it streaks past Earth for the first time in 4,200 years—or, since 2203 B.C. Hale-Bopp next returns in 4397.

AP/Wide World



Jet Propulsion Laboratory/NASA

▶ On October 13, the British jet car *Thrust SSC* becomes the first vehicle to break the sound barrier on land, traveling 766.6 miles per hour in the Nevada desert.



Reuters/Archive Photos

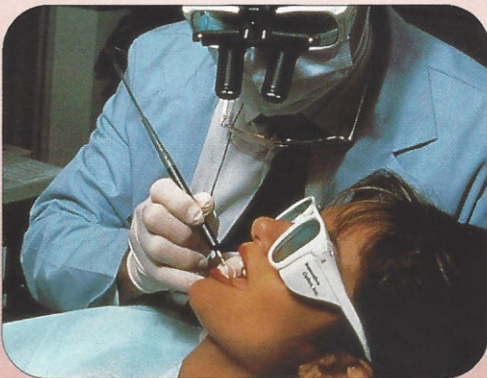
▶ El Niño stirs up global weather patterns. Caused by warmer-than-normal water temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, the '97 El Niño is blamed for storms and weather problems worldwide.



©John Kurita, Gamma Liaison

▶ In December, 159 nations gather in Kyoto, Japan, and negotiate a climate treaty to combat global warming by reducing greenhouse gases.

▶ The Food and Drug Administration approves a dental laser for treating cavities. Unlike traditional dental drills, the laser in most cases causes virtually no discomfort.

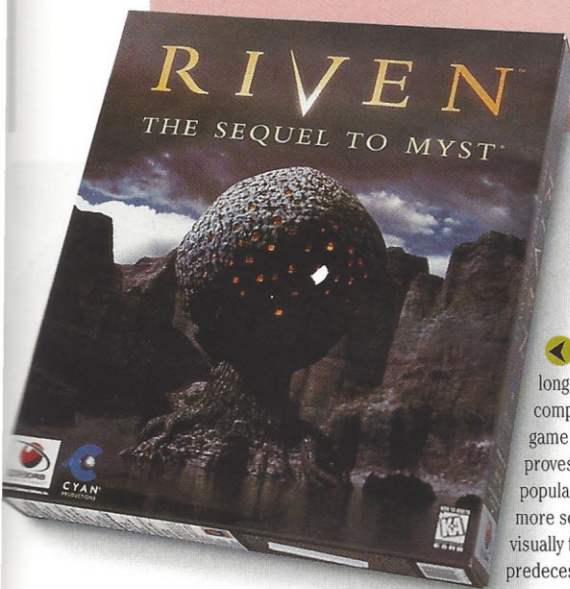


Premier Laser Systems, Inc.



Reuters/Archive Photos

▶ Protesters unsuccessfully attempt to prevent the October launch of NASA's *Cassini* spacecraft to Saturn, fearing an accident could shower the Earth with the rocket's radioactive plutonium.



▶ Riven, the long-awaited computer adventure game sequel to *Myst*, proves to be just as popular and even more sophisticated visually than its predecessor.

flash

Hong Kong authorities in December order the slaughter of more than a million chickens in an effort to halt the spread of a bird flu virus that killed six people.

The space shuttle *Columbia* releases the errant *Spartan* satellite in November. U.S. astronaut Winston Scott and Takao Doi, the first Japanese astronaut to do a space walk, retrieve the satellite for return to Earth.



Reuters/Archive Photos

▶ French oceanographer and award-winning filmmaker Jacques Cousteau dies in June at 87. His work gained renown through the popular television series "The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau."