

From Interstellar Ices to PAHs

A symposium to honor Lou Allamandola's Contributions to the Molecular Universe
Annapolis, MD, USA - September 13th to September 17th, 2015

INVITED TALK

Lou's Personal Odyssey in the Molecular Universe

A.G.G.M. (Xander) Tielens¹

¹ Leiden Observatory, Niels Bohrweg 2, 2333 CA Leiden, The Netherlands

E-mail: tielens@strw.leidenuniv.nl

Over the last 30 years, we have discovered that we live in a molecular universe: a universe where molecules are abundant and widespread; a universe with a rich organic inventory particularly in regions of star and planet formation; a universe where the formation of stars and the evolution of galaxies is driven in many ways by the presence of molecules; a universe where prebiotic interstellar molecules may represent the first steps toward life; a universe where molecules can be used as “dye” to trace important processes in the interstellar medium; a universe where molecules provide unique information on the physical conditions of a wide variety of regions; and a universe where molecules can work together to form such complex species as you and me.

In this talk, I will review the molecular road from deepest space down to Earth and the processes encountered. The shadow of interstellar ices, dust, and PAHs loom large over this road and Lou's studies are deeply intertwined with the progress of this field. Heralding Lou's personal journey along this road, this story will sketch the history of the field while charting the future.