

• **March 18, 2005 | 9 p.m. ET**

The high cost of calling E.T.: How much would you spend to send a message into outer space?

As [we reported on Tuesday](#), more than 130,000 messages from Craigslist subscribers were beamed into space through a [deal](#) with [Deep Space Communications Network](#) costing more than \$1,225. A spokesman for Deep Space said the company would offer its airtime to anyone at \$99 for a five-minute transmission. Meanwhile, [TalktoAliens.com](#) is selling transmissions to outer space at \$3.99 a minute via a 900-prefix toll line.

The idea is that you're paying for a chance to communicate with extraterrestrials, but most Cosmic Log readers were skeptical about the idea. Some thought such attempts to contact aliens had no chance of working. Others feared they'd work too well.

A few even managed to have a little fun with the concept. Here's a sampling of the feedback:

Matt, Robesonia, Pa.: "If the price was right, why not? It kind of gives you a sense of immortality knowing that your image or words are just out there in space for anyone to pick up. And on the odd chance that aliens would pick it up in, like, 3 million years from now, you'll always be known as a part of the ancient race of earthlings in some alien schoolbook."

Diana Kritsonis, Kirkland, Wash.: "Absolutely not. We probably look like idiots to extraterrestrials sending messages to outer space. They're far more advanced than we are and have the ability to communicate with us telepathically — the problem is, we just don't 'get it.'"

Chris Preston: "We are constantly broadcasting into space. Cell phones, TV signals, radio, anything that emits in the electromagnetic spectrum is being 'sent' into space. Now you can pay for what was previously free. Only in America!"

E. Garner, Santa Cruz, Calif.: "I am an enthusiastic supporter of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence — but this ill-conceived fiasco mislabeled as an attempt to communicate with aliens is just another sophomoric marketing prank created for the entertainment of members of our shallow, TV-addicted culture. Personally, I find it demonstrates no socially or scientific redeeming qualities whatsoever."

Jeremiah, St. Paul, Minn. "I like the idea. I really doubt that many people think they will actually communicate with other life forms, but for me, the reason to do so would be so at least there was a chance. It's your chance to say your message. It will likely never be heard, but if it were to be heard, you would have to ask if you would rather have not said anything, just so you didn't waste your time or money. I'm sure if anyone is listening, they will surely take our silence as just being reasonable beings rather than not having anything to say. Personally I'd rather not let them make a mistake on how I feel, and speak my mind, but hey ... I'm human."

William, Green Bay, Wis.: "Well, I think it is a neat idea to get people interested in space exploration and the idea of first contact. Beyond that, it is silly, as a 500-watt transmission wouldn't even escape our solar system intact."

Edward Reasor, Tampa, Fla.: "A 500-watt transmission would dissipate into nothing long before it even left our solar system. To send a transmission to even our nearest star, Alpha Centauri, you would need a 300,000-watt transmitter. These folks are wasting their money."

Conrad Paul: "Why would someone spend \$99 for a phone call to oblivion? Feed a homeless family or donate to the cancer society, but don't line the pockets of the already-rich. My reason includes the fact that I can't spend \$99 to chat with E.T. when I communicate with my family by email and we live in the same house! My buddies never phone — they 'Nudge' me (MSN Messenger) or 'Buzz' me (Yahoo Messenger). I have been a member of [SETI @ home](#) for a number of years and reason that any receiver out there that would deign to learn the message's content would quickly discover that we are years from anyone even collecting that message. Put a note in bottle and drop it into an unmarked and forgotten coal mine, then wait for the aliens to come here to find it and read it."

Lance Eldert, Scottsdale, Ariz.: "It is an exercise in futility that I wish I had thought of first. I may as well use a laser to transmit Morse Code ... hmm, now there's an idea. I could charge by the letter, too! Maybe I could just patent stupidity and collect royalties everytime someone comes up with ideas like these. I would never work again at this rate."

Ted: "While I assume that the messages that are broadcast will dissipate fairly close to Earth, within 100 light-years or so, I still think this is a foolish concept. Not foolish because it couldn't work, but foolish because it might."

"We have no idea what or who is out there, nor do we have any perspective on how they might react to messages from a place that is inhabited and that they might be unaware of. Further, there is no evidence that E.T. is there by earthly instrumentation ... that doesn't mean that he isn't there. ...

"When I was a kid on the farm, I used to look out on the pond in the morning. It was smooth and glassy, except for the fluttering of a moth who was trapped on the surface of the water and frantically beating its wings. As I recall, nothing good ever happened to those moths who announced their presence on the pond."

Rick: "That is a waste of energy and time in sending 'messages' into space. They should be using the technology for something more useful than spamming E.T. Haven't people had enough e-mail spamming already?"

Patrick Bishop, Caldwell, N.J.: "On my way to drop my kid off at school this morning, I overheard this startling transmission break into the Dr. Octavo mix of [Emma's 'Free Me'](#) on the radio.

"Hi! This is E.T. Since you people (and I use the term loosely) are intentionally yammering at me I figured I'd yammer right back at you ... just this once!

"Not only am I able to receive your intentional messages, but all your other broadcasts as well, and know more about you than you do about yourselves. My advice is stop spending \$3.99 a minute on trying to get my attention and use it to put some shoes and coats on all those kids in rural Appalachia who have none — this was a long and hard winter for them.

"The fact that you'd rather blow 99 bucks whispering in my ear for five minutes rather than taking care of your own problems just shows that you aren't the kind of creatures with whom nice extraterrestrials should associate. It's like my grandfather Goozefritznoodling used to say, "You can take the H. sapiens out of the jungle, but you can't take the jungle out of the H. sapiens."

"If you earthlings *must* intentionally broadcast messages at me, the only message content that is truly appropriate given your circumstances is, "Help, help! Somebody please come save us from ourselves!" In sending any message other than this, you send a much louder, if implicit, message as well: Human hubris refuses confinement

to Earth. Let me know when you get things sorted out, and maybe I'll consider you worth engaging in a pleasant chat. Until then, Good Luck and Goodbye!

"At first I was sure it was a hoax (given that the speaker sounded exactly like Elvis) but found myself returning again and again to the words themselves and how penetratingly, obviously true they were. Anyway, just figured I'd pass the message on to you."