

BBC WHAT YOUR BRAIN DOES TO CREATE REALITY

Science Focus

Why people think
THEY CAN HEAR THE DEAD

How to beat
COVID-19 BY 2022

How to teach
A MACHINE TO TELL A STORY

DARK

STARS

How a string of strange discoveries
could reveal a cosmos hidden just out of view

SF
SCIENCEFOCUS.COM

02 >



7 25274 77573 6

#360 FEBRUARY 2021
US \$11.50 CANADA \$13.99

IN THIS ISSUE

Health

Nature

Environment

The truth about gene-edited food

| Are climbing plants conscious?

| Genius zero-waste inventions



Mojave Air and Space Port, California



1



2

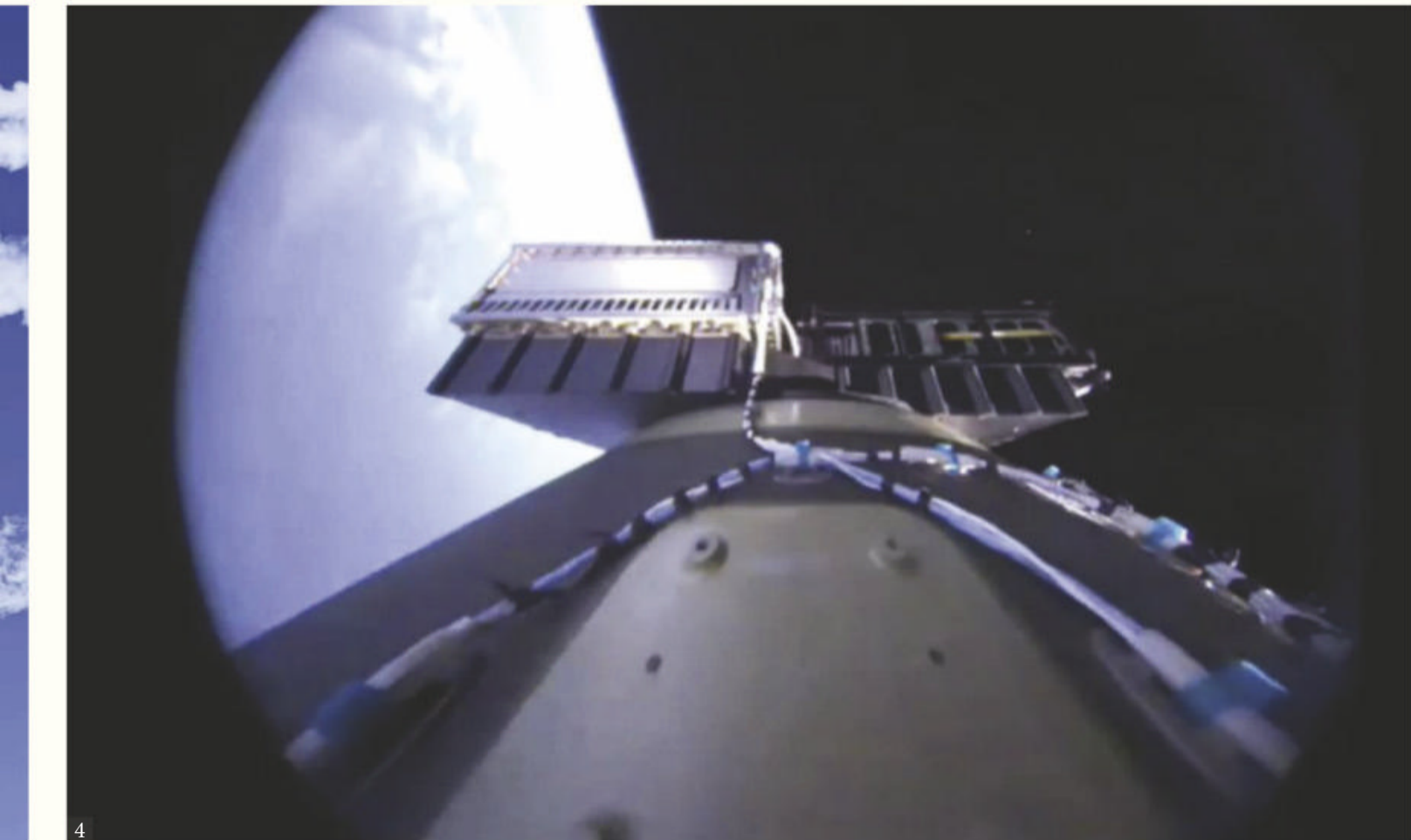
SPACE

Virgin air-launched rocket successfully carries 10 tiny ‘CubeSat’ satellites into orbit

On the morning of 17 January, Virgin Orbit’s LauncherOne rocket made its first successful voyage into orbit. The rocket was launched from under the wing of a jet aircraft, rather than a traditional launch pad on the ground, from Mojave Air and Space Port in California. It is the first orbital class, air-launched, liquid-fuelled rocket to reach space.



VIRGIN ORBIT X4
3



1. The satellites were selected by NASA's Launch Services Program as part of the CubeSat Launch Initiative. Nine out of 10 of the CubeSats were designed, built and tested by universities across the US. The CubeSats will carry out studies such as weather readings, debris analysis and effects of radiation.

2. LauncherOne was taken into the air by Virgin Orbit's carrier aircraft, a

customised Boeing 747-400 dubbed 'Cosmic Girl'.

3. After a smooth release from the aircraft at a height of about 10,000m, the rocket ignited and powered itself into orbit.

4. Once in its target orbit, the rocket deployed the CubeSats. The satellites are fitted with cameras, allowing them to beam back pictures as they travel around the Earth.