

Photonic Cleaning Technologies presents; Chris O'Brien - Coming of Age with Astronomy

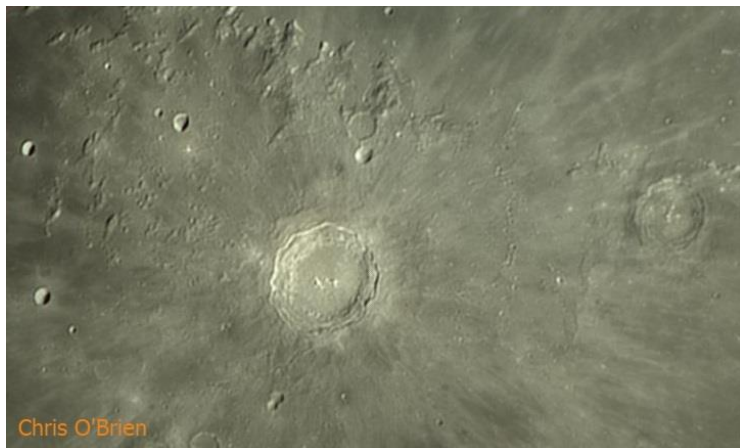


At my favorite dark sky site in Kentucky, USA

As a very young boy growing up in Kentucky, I remember riding in the car one night watching the nearly full moon out the window. I noticed that as we drove down the road that the trees and buildings that we passed receded into the distance, but the moon stayed where it was, only circling the car as we followed the curves in the road. From that point onward I was fascinated with the moon and everything in the night sky.

When I was only a little older, I saw a very bright star and asked my dad if he knew which star it was. He answered, "that's not a star, it's a planet, but I don't know which one. It's either Venus or Jupiter. You can tell that it's a planet because it doesn't twinkle like stars do". I couldn't believe my ears; you can see other planets in the sky! I was in awe.

Still a few years later, I remember being outside in our family's driveway after dark on an unseasonably warm winter night. Comet Kohoutek (C/1973 E1) was in the news, and I thought that I might catch a glimpse of it. Like so many others, I was sorely disappointed, but I saw a different memorable sight that evening - a brilliant meteor in the sky above my school. I couldn't contain my excitement. The next Christmas, my uncle gifted me with my first telescope. It was a small Newtonian reflector. Today I would say that it was a good example of a "department store telescope" with a flimsy mount and cheap plastic eyepieces. I didn't want to wait for a warm Spring night to use it, so on the next clear night, my dad and I set it up in our dining room, and we pointed it out the window at a bright moon.



Copernicus Crater, 17 Sept. 2021

Plastic lenses and viewing through a window do not make for good viewing, but nonetheless, I was thrilled by the sight of craters and mountains on the moon

I didn't use that telescope very much, but my love of astronomy remained with me. I learned how to find the naked-eye planets in the sky and how to tell them apart. Once I had a job, I bought a slightly better Newtonian telescope from a local camera shop in Evansville, Indiana. Using it at a nearby park I aimed it at Saturn, and I got my first view of those spectacular rings. It was a "Wow!" moment for me, and I've considered myself an amateur astronomer ever since.

In the years that followed I bought a couple of 200mm $f/10$ Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes that I enjoyed using to show my friends the night sky. Often it was their first views through a telescope. My friend, and fellow astronomy enthusiast, Mark introduced me to small refractors. With their pinpoint star images, refracting telescopes became my instrument of choice. I live in an urban area near Indianapolis and transporting my gear to better skies is a necessity. Because of that I avoided doing astrophotography since it would require longer setup and teardown time with more opportunities for Murphy to ruin an evening of clear skies (and he has!). But in 2019 I acquired an Atik Infinity CCD video camera, and I was able to capture the Horsehead Nebula (Barnard 33) in Orion from my driveway. It was by no means a showpiece picture, but it exceeded all my expectations of what I could view from my home. Since then, most of my observing time has been spent imaging the night sky using CMOS cameras with my refractors.

In May of 2022, with encouragement from my buddy Mark, I attended the Advanced Imaging Conference held in San Jose, California.



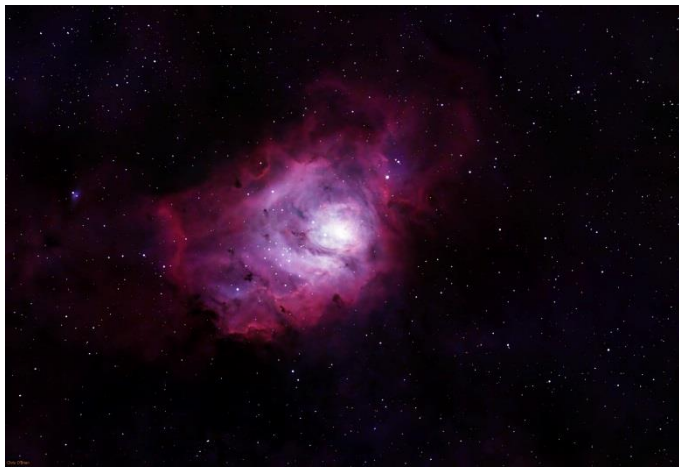
Jupiter with Europa shadow transit, 17 Sept. 2021



Saturn with those spectacular rings, 17 Sept. 2021



Horsehead nebula and the Flame Nebula, from dark sky site, 14 Jan. 2023

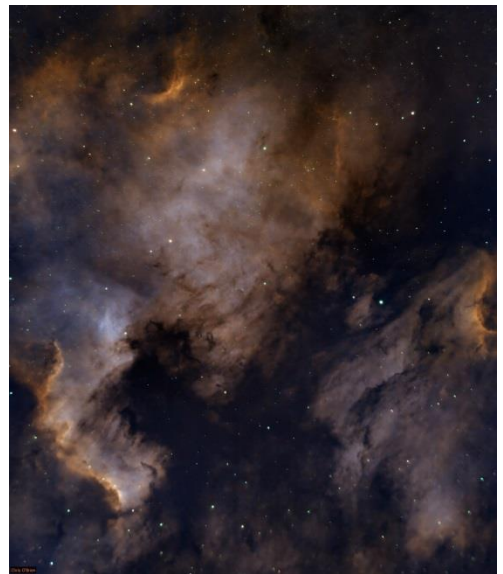


Lagoon Nebula, 3 July 2022



Trifid Nebula, 3 July 2022

It was there that I saw a demonstration of First Contact Polymer's Photonic Cleaning products. A few weeks after returning home from the AIC, I watched several of First Contact Polymer's YouTube videos, and I was impressed that their products are used to clean military and professional optical systems. I purchased their Red First Contact All-inclusive kit, and I was soon using it to clean my premium eyepieces, filters, and camera sensors. I found the cleaning process to be a fun activity on days when I can't observe. With other cleaning procedures I worry about scratching the surface of my lenses or damaging their coatings, but I have total peace of mind when using the First Contact solutions. A couple of months after having received my kit, David reached out to me to make sure the product was meeting my expectations. Both he and Debra were quick to respond with advice when I did have a question. I really appreciated that level of customer service.



North American and Pelican Nebulae in HOO narrow band, 9 Oct. 2022

Are you a First Contact Polymer user and Astro Imager? Contact us at sales@photoniccleaning.com for the chance to be selected as a featured guest in an upcoming issue of Amateur Astrophotography Magazine courtesy of Photonic Cleaning Technologies! Not familiar with our products? See our ad on the next page or visit us at <http://www.photoniccleaning.com>