Clearly, from the perspective of the ILC, the "horses. We need different horses," Heuer says. "It's a mistake to back just one technique can reach higher energies. "It's a mistake to back just one technique can reach higher energies."

Heuer worked at CERN from 1984 to 1998 and was spokesperson for the OPAL experiment, representing more than 300 physicists. Since 2004, he has been research director for particle and astroparticle physics at DESY, Germany's particle physics lab near Hamburg, preparing its physicists to work with the LHC and, even eventually, the proposed International Linear Collider (ILC).

Heuer is known to be a keen supporter of the ILC. But under Robert Aymar, CERN has backed a rival linear collider technology of its own. Heuer says the worldwide community should pursue both avenues, because in the long run CERN's technique can reach higher energies. "It's a mistake to back just one horse. We need different horses," Heuer says. "Clearly, from the perspective of the ILC, the appointment of the new [director general] is a very, very positive thing," says Barry Barish, leader of the ILC's Global Design Effort. Heuer calls the position "probably the best job in physics research today."

Cosmologist George Smoot has donated a portion of money from his share of the 2006 physics Nobel Prize to help establish a new center for cosmology research at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to the $500,000 endowment from Smoot, the Berkeley Center for Cosmological Physics (bccp.lbl.gov) has received more than $7.5 million in gifts, including a portion of the award Berkeley physicist Saul Perlmutter received this year as a winner of the Gruber Cosmology Prize.

Two Cultures

SAME FREQUENCY. A musical parody of the trials and tribulations of working astronomers has become a hit on YouTube.

Taking a break last year from observation runs at the Mauna Kea Observatory in Hawaii, astronomer and flamenco guitarist Juan Delgado (front, right) began playing "Hotel California"—the Eagles’ rock anthem from the 1970s. The moment inspired Kelly Fast (front, left) and her colleagues from NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, to describe in verse what it’s like working at a high-altitude observatory, testing an instrument designed to study the atmospheres of Mars and Venus. "The baseline is drifting / The spectrum looks weird / Are those emission lines? / What’s this dip over here?" Fast croons in the video as her frustrated colleagues point at spectrographic data.

"Hotel Mauna Kea" has been viewed more than 10,000 times on YouTube since its posting on 20 November. "It captures in a humorous way the trials and tribulations of observing, especially when one has built an instrument and is struggling to get data," says Alan Tokunaga, an astronomer at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu. Fast says her group has some more songs up its sleeve, so stay tuned.

Movers

CHANGE AT CERN. German particle physicist Rolf-Dieter Heuer has been named the next director general of the CERN particle physics lab near Geneva in Switzerland. Heuer will begin his 5-year term in January 2009, half a year after the lab’s $3.2 billion Large Hadron Collider (LHC) is scheduled to be up and running.

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IN BRIEF

Maria Freire has been named head of the New York–based Lasker Foundation, which gives out prizes for clinical and basic life sciences research every year. Freire was previously served as head of the Office of Technology Transfer at the National Institutes of Health in Rockville, Maryland. She succeeds Neen Hunt, who has led the foundation since 1995.

On Campus >>

PERSUADED. Particle physicist Persis Drell has been named director of the 45-year-old Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) in Menlo Park, California. Acting director since September after the departure of Jonathan Dorfan, Drell, 51, was leading a search committee when Stanford President John Hennessy and Provost John Etchemendy convinced her that she was the best person for the job. "They prevailed on me," says Drell, who plans to revamp the lab’s management to better match SLAC’s newly diversified mission.

The daughter of SLAC professor emeritus Sidney Drell, Persis Drell came to the Department of Energy lab in 2002 and has helped broaden its research beyond particle physics. Experimenters will stop smashing particles in September, and in 2009 will begin using an x-ray laser for studies in materials science and biology. The lab is also pursuing astrophysics. "When we had a single mission, … we had one hill to climb and one flag to capture," Drell says. "It’s not so simple anymore."

Drell is a natural leader, says William Madia, executive vice president for laboratory operations at Battelle in Columbus, Ohio. "As lab director, you have to love all your children," he says, "and Persis understands all the parts of SLAC.”