

All I want for Christmas is... Caesium, Rubidium and Xenon

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Never mind Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh — one Christmas wishlist this year features staples of the chemistry lab like Rubidium, Hydrogen, Caesium and Manganese.

That's according to 'An element for Christmas', a festive take on chemistry that has just been published online as part of The University of Nottingham's Periodic Table of Videos project.

The Periodic Table of Videos — 143 fun and informative short films, each themed around one of the chemical elements — has been an unexpected worldwide hit on YouTube this year, with more than four million viewings since its launch in the summer and an army of thousands of online fans.

'An element for Christmas' has already had more than 40,000 hits in just a few days on YouTube and has attracted hundreds of positive comments from viewers. It features as the 'No.1 Science & Technology video' on YouTube on most of its national sites and on its worldwide page (see above).

The short film is a light-hearted look at Christmas from the point of view of chemistry staff and students at The University of Nottingham, who were asked “If you could have one element for Christmas, which one would it be?”

Answers varied from the predictable Gold and Platinum, to the more

esoteric options of Hassium, Rubidium and Terbium. One interviewee singled out Neodymium — because it is an element that can be blue, red or green depending on its concentration... giving it plenty of decorative potential for Christmas.

Professor Martyn Poliakoff CBE FRS of the School of Chemistry, who introduces many of the 'Periodic Table' videos including 'An element for Christmas', said: “This is the first Christmas that we've celebrated with our Periodic Table of Videos and we've been really thrilled by the number of people who have contacted us, who have made comments and suggestions. I hope that in 2009 they'll carry on doing that and that we can bring you more exciting chemistry.”

Latest comments left by YouTube users who have watched the Christmas special online include:

- “I love this video! it just makes me excited about chemistry!”
- “So cool! We're glad you keep making these videos too! As a college chemistry major, I can really appreciate the fun you put into these videos!”
- “I'm really glad I found this channel, I love getting on YouTube everyday and seeing the periodic videos right next to everything else... keep doing the videos.”
- “This video made me smile, hurray for chemistry!”

Initial comments suggest that viewers' most popular elements are: Platinum, Uranium, Iron and Caesium.

The video also features the 'Chemical Sisters', a pair of researchers who give an unusual rendition of the popular festive song 'The 12 Days of

Christmas'... on home-made pan pipes made out of test tubes.

Brady Haran, The University of Nottingham's film-maker in residence, filmed the material for The Periodic Table of Videos including the latest Christmas special.

He said: "I think the elements have a special mystique because they're nature's building blocks at the purest form.

"But there are still 118 of them, and each is totally unique... So we thought it would be fun to ask 'which one would you'd like under the Christmas tree?'"

"As for me, I think I'd choose Francium... It's extremely rare, very dangerous and totally radioactive, which means we've not been able to film it for the Periodic Table of Videos. Being able to make that video would be my ideal Christmas present!"

The Periodic Table of Videos features members of the University's School of Chemistry explaining and demonstrating the properties that make each element unique — sometimes with explosive results. The videos will remain online as a permanent resource for chemistry students and enthusiasts on the website with weekly updates and special features.

The Periodic Table of Videos is an off-shoot of the award-winning Test-Tube project (www.test-tube.org.uk), an online showcase for the university's scientific research, presented by the scientists and engineers themselves, in their own words.

To see more click on the following links:

'Which element for Christmas?' www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujBA_C...feature=channel_page

Periodic Table of Videos: www.periodicvideos.com

Provided by University of Nottingham

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