

Space has an 'animalistic' sound according to artist in residence

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Trajectory. Credit: Andrew Williams

University of Leicester Leverhulme Scholar provides unique insight into the sounds of space

A new project led by a Leverhulme Artist in Residence at the University of Leicester, has revealed the 'animalistic' sounds in the dark, cold vacuum of [space](#) and the boiling mass of the sun.

We often think of the vast outer space as being as quiet as it is empty,

but it does in fact, have the capacity to be as noisy as anywhere on Earth. It also sounds surprisingly Earth-like according to new recordings generated by multimedia composer and Leverhulme Artist in Residence at the University's Space Centre, Andrew Williams.

Using data collected from satellites and long-wave radios, Andrew has revealed the similarities of sound created by electrons hitting the [upper atmosphere](#) of Earth to a dawn chorus of birds while the low hum of plasma passing through the sun creates a pulsing rhythm reflecting the heartbeat of the solar system.

Andrew explained: "I was quite shocked at how similar electrons hitting the Earth's atmosphere sound to bird song. Collectively, it is surprising to hear that space has an almost animalistic quality to its sounds which I have been quite struck by.



Trajectory. Credit: Andrew Williams

"By transposing sounds recorded by satellites into the audible range, I have been able to present the data as audio, providing a glimpse of what space would sound like if we were there and if the sounds generated were in our audible range."

The sound for the project was gathered from two main sources:

- Electrons hitting the Earth's upper atmosphere – recorded using Long Wave Radio by Cluster II satellite on 9 July 2001. This data has been used to create a new audio composition entitled *Chorus* which reveals the brief, rising-frequency tones caused by the impacts of electrons, and sounds like a chorus of birds singing
- Plasma passing through the sun – a deep pulsing sound recorded by the European Space Agency Soho spacecraft caused by bubbles emanating from deep within the star



Trajectory. Credit: Andrew Williams

Andrew, who became one of the University's Artists in Residence in 2012, has been exploring new ways of presenting and explaining scientific research to the public and presented the 'animalistic' qualities of space last month in an exhibition entitled *Trajectory* at Embrace Arts, the University of Leicester's arts centre. His work uses visual, audio and digital media to produce striking new compositions and interactive installations.

Andrew added: "People have reacted to these recordings in very different ways. There have been quite a few people who have been happy to just sit and absorb the sounds and a glimpse into a part of space they would not normally have access to."

More information: You can listen to Andrew's recording via this podcast: [soundcloud.com/university-of-l ... oes-space-sound-like](https://soundcloud.com/university-of-leicester/oes-space-sound-like)

Provided by University of Leicester

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