

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)Author: Mr. Josh Richards
AustraliaLAUGHING AT MARS: USING COMEDIANS & STORYTELLERS FOR WIDE-SPREAD PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT WITH SPACE**Abstract**

This presentation looks at a broad range of space outreach events conducted over the last 4 years for the general public, with a specific focus on using comedy and storytelling to engage adults not already interested in space. A major challenge in space science communication is making an incredibly interesting subject accessible and relevant to the general public: while few would deny the broad appeal of space exploration to kids, a lack of engaging space science events for adults often means that childhood enthusiasm fades.

Using stand-up comedy and Mars One's proposed one-way mission to Mars as a science communication "hook", adult audiences have been engaged and taught complex space science while they laughed during three, one-hour long comedy shows performed more than 40 times in 6 different countries since 2013. "Mars Needs Guitars" blended space science with personal storytelling, suggested that the first crew on Mars would need a balance of personalities similar to a stereotypical rock band, and was first performed during Australia's National Science Week with the support of Inspiring Australia. "Becoming Martian" shared how colonizing Mars would change humans physically, psychologically and culturally, and will be published as a non-fiction comedy book in 2017. "Cosmic Nomad" featured at the World Science Festival and shared how being shortlisted for a one-way mission to Mars impacts a candidate's life while still on Earth, while also explaining the search for extraterrestrial life, the Drake equation, and the Fermi Paradox by using a Tinder metaphor.

General public engagement with space science has also been achieved through large scale media events such as 20th Century Fox's "Bring Him Home" campaign for the Australian release of "The Martian". Coordinating with numerous television and radio stations, along with global media outlets and a sustained social media presence, the "Bring Him Home" campaign engaged more than 95 million people with space science and STEM education while a Mars One candidate lived "like Mark Watney" isolated in a glass and steel habitat for 5 days. Numerous external organisations such as Sydney Observatory and the Powerhouse Museum were also involved for ongoing educational impact and long-term space science engagement.

Lessons from these public outreach activities have been further applied to assist science museums in Australia and the US with space science events and exhibitions, such as Johnson Space Center's "Astronaut" exhibition (initially developed at Western Australia's "Scitech" science museum) and Boston's Museum of Science.