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Scientists replicate sounds on Mars and Venus

Natural sounds of other worlds, from lightning on Venus to whirlwinds on Mars and ice volcanoes on Saturn's largest moon, Titan, have been replicated by scientists.

4:10PM BST 02 Apr 2012

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The team, from Southampton University, also modelled the effects of different atmospheres, pressures and temperatures on the human voice on Mars, Venus and Titan, and found that on Venus humans would sound like bass Smurfs.

Professor Tim Leighton, of the university's Institute for Sound and Vibration Research, said: "We are confident of our calculations.

"We have been rigorous in our use of physics taking into account atmospheres, pressure and fluid dynamics.

"On Venus, the pitch of your voice would become much deeper. That is because the planet's dense atmosphere means that the vocal cords vibrate more slowly through this 'gassy soup'.

"However, the speed of sound in the atmosphere on Venus is much

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faster than it is on Earth, and this tricks the way our brain interprets the size of a speaker (presumably an evolutionary trait that allowed our ancestors to work out whether an animal call in the night was something that was small enough to eat or so big as to be dangerous).

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"When we hear a voice from Venus, we think the speaker is small, but with a deep bass voice. On Venus, humans sound like bass Smurfs."

Prof Leighton, who has been working on the sounds of space for the last ten years and has previously made the sound of a methane waterfall in space, added: "I'm interested in what music would sound like in space."

"If astronauts are based on Mars for several months, they might just take musical instruments along, or build one there. What would they sound like?"

"As a scientist, I reckon the most exciting thing to work on is a completely new idea, something that's never been done before."

Despite many years of space exploration, scientists have no evidence of the sound of other planets. While most planetary probes have focused on imaging with cameras and radar and a couple have carried microphones, none of them successfully listened to the sound of another world.

The sounds will be added to the Flight Through The Universe shows this Easter at the Astrium Planetarium at INTECH near Winchester, Hampshire.

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