

Once-in-a-lifetime chance to view the red planet close up

# Sophie sets her sights on Mars

By Vicky Davidson

**F**ORMER Breakfast TV presenter Sophie Raworth has stars in her eyes – and it's got nothing to do with Matthew Kelly!

Tonight the BBC journalist brings some glamour to the world of astronomy boffins, as they get excited about their once-in-60,000-years opportunity to see red planet Mars at its closest orbit to Earth.

Co-presenting BBC2's All Night Star Party, along with Rajesh Mirchandani, she will be based at the Lovell radio telescope at Jodrell Bank, in Cheshire.

Celebrities, star-gazers and anoraked-up armies of amateur and professional astronomers will be flocking to join them.

Their fellow presenter, Chris Riley, gets the more reliable option – weather-wise at least – perched on the edge of a giant volcano in La Palma in the Canary Islands.

The programme launches National Astronomy Week, which coincides with Mars spinning closer to Earth than at any other time in the last 60,000 years.

THE ALL NIGHT STAR PARTY  
BBC2 11-12.00am

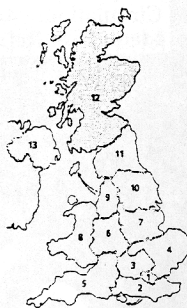
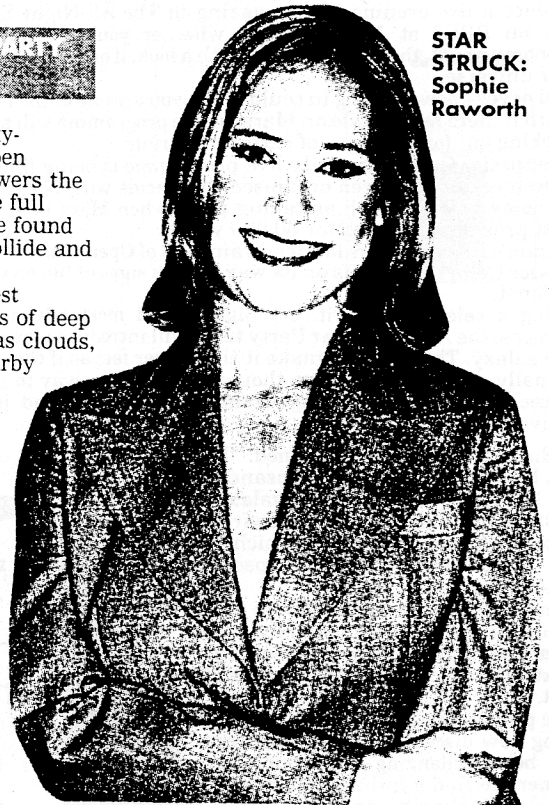
As Britain's largest TV sky-watching event, this live Open University special gives viewers the first ever chance to view the full splendour and violence to be found in the Universe as worlds collide and supernovas explode.

Some of the nation's largest telescopes will track sections of deep space, following dramatic gas clouds, impressive galaxies and nearby planets.

Producer Peter Brown says: "Not only is Mars at its closest to Earth for thousands of years, but spiral galaxies, exploding suns and spectacular swirling gas clouds where stars are born are also to be seen."

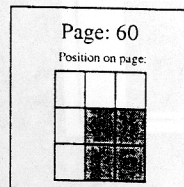
The producers also hope to discover a new asteroid while the programme is on air, which Brown says will: "serve as a chilling reminder that there are countless fragments of rock flying around out there."

STAR STRUCK:  
Sophie Raworth



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