

# SMASHfestUK

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Meteoric science festival bound for London

### *Press release*

Lewisham, London, 14-22 February 2015 — SMASHfestUK, a brand new science and arts festival for young people, will pilot in Deptford, south east London during the February half term holidays.

Part sci-fi, part horror and post-Apocalypse, the festival is themed around a gripping story in which an asteroid is on a collision course with Planet Earth and a zombie invasion ensues. Visitors will have the chance to plan for Armageddon, whether it's preparing for survival, singing for their lives at the End of the World Cabaret, creating a time capsule or taking a trip to the Intergalactic Travel Agency.

SMASHfestUK is the first event of its kind, designed to widen participation and build diversity in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) by engaging young people and hard to reach audiences.

SMASHfestUK is the creation of science TV production company The Refinery, and is partnered by the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, the Wellcome Trust, Middlesex University, and the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

### **Science: too white, too middle class**

Over the next decade, the UK is heading for a shortfall of more than 50,000 workers for the STEM sector, but only 15% of students aspire to science careers.

In boroughs like Lewisham, the school population comprises almost 75% black and minority ethnic students. Yet black students identify even less strongly with science as a career aspiration, because of its overwhelmingly white, male, middle class image of science, and the multiple inequalities they face growing up, according to a recent study (see notes to editors).

**Dr Lindsay Keith, CEO Refinery Productions Ltd, said:**

“Science festivals in the UK tend to cater to people who are already engaged with science, and an audience that tends to be ‘non-diverse’. So we thought – ‘why not bring a festival to the young people of Lewisham?’

“We used a participatory design approach, and went out and actually spoke to young people about what they wanted before planning. They said they wanted zombies, aliens, UFOs, and a talent contest, so that’s what we’re doing! You can find science in any subject.

“You won’t find lectures or debates at SMASHfestUK – we’re about mass entertainment, bums on seats and science by stealth! If it’s not fun, it’s not in the schedule – simple as that.”

**Wyn Griffiths, Course Leader BA/BSc Product Design, School of Science and Technology, Middlesex University said:**

“At Middlesex University, we pride ourselves on the diversity of our student body. However, this is an ongoing battle, as overall diversity in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects is poor. That is why we are so excited to be the lead academic partners for SMASHfestUK, and equally excited by the events happening in Lewisham in February.

“Our future is increasingly technological with huge opportunities to mould and guide that future for passionate young people. Getting a balanced mix of lots of young people excited by and involved in SMASHfestUK will be one great way of building a sustainable future for science, technology, engineering, maths, design and the arts, whilst having a brilliant time!”

**Doreen Thompson-Addo, Programme Manager, The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, said:**

“The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust are pleased to be supporting SMASHfestUK. As an educational charity we are committed to providing innovative and creative learning experiences for young people and the wider community.

“SMASHfestUK will provide an exciting and engaging week of activities that will aim to make science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) fun, relevant and interesting to a wider group of young people.

“With fewer young people studying STEM subjects and entering into STEM related careers we hope that this event will inspire more young people to consider STEM as an exciting career path.”

**Notes to editors**

1. All events are either free or ticketed on a “Pay What You Can” basis.
2. A full schedule of events can be found at [www.smashfestuk.com/events](http://www.smashfestuk.com/events)

3. SMASHfestUK worked with young people in Lewisham through their Young Mayor's Office and Pupil Ambassador Scheme to come up with content and events that they wanted in the programme – the zombies were their idea.
4. Teacher perceptions/ practices: Strand's (2012) research found that minority ethnic (particularly Black Caribbean) students are less likely to be entered into higher tier examinations than White students, even after controlling for prior attainment.
5. Characteristics popularly associated with the 'ideal student', and particularly the 'ideal Physics student', tend to be aligned with white, middle-class masculinity, against which female/ working-class/ minority ethnic learners tend to be judged negatively, even if they are achieving well.
6. Only 9% of jobs in STEM (outside of Medicine) are held by women.
7. For more information about STEM see the following links:
  - a. King's College London: Young People's Science and Careers Aspirations  
[http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/aspires/ASPIRE\\_S-final-report-December-2013.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/aspires/ASPIRE_S-final-report-December-2013.pdf)
  - b. Improving Diversity in STEM, King's College London  
<http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/CaSEEDiversityinSTEMreport2014.pdf>
  - c. UK government policy on public engagement in STEM  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/engaging-the-public-in-science-and-engineering--3>
  - d. Strand, S. (2012). The White British-Black Caribbean achievement gap: Tests, tiers and teacher expectations. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38, (1), 75-101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.526702>
8. Free to use promotional pictures for SMASHfestUK can be found at [www.smashfestuk.com/gallery](http://www.smashfestuk.com/gallery)
9. For interview enquiries, contact [lindsay@refinery.tv](mailto:lindsay@refinery.tv)

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