

2017 Bolton Lecture in Astronomy

INTERSTELLAR SNOWFLAKES: THE BEGINNINGS OF COMPLEX LIFE?

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Conference Auditorium 1, University of Leeds

5.30pm – 6.30pm

The space between the stars, the interstellar medium, is full of clouds of dust and gas which are the formation sites of the next generation of stars. These cold star-forming clouds shine with light from molecules that we can observe with radio telescopes.

These molecules are critical for the birth of new stars and the planetary systems that will eventually form in their surroundings. How do these molecules form and survive in the harsh environment of space? And what role do they play in star and planet formation and the beginnings of complex life on 'life-friendly' planets? We will explore chemistry in the extreme environment of space, and discuss the importance and influence of interstellar molecules in shaping and seeding forming planetary systems.