

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR MATURA

ASTEROIDS TO HIT EARTH IN 2028!

If you saw the films *Deep Impact* and *Armageddon* and worry (1) about an asteroid coming too close to Earth, worry no more. Instead, find (2) _____ a little about them by reading on. Asteroids are mini planets (3) _____ revolve around the sun in their thousands. One, called 'Ida', even has its own moon. Although the vast majority are harmless and will (4) _____ be a threat to Earth, astronomers want to keep a track of the tiny percentage whose orbits could eventually put them on a collision course with Earth.

(5) _____ most recent scare of this kind was in December 1997 when scientists discovered a new asteroid. They predicted that (6) _____ would hit the Earth in 2028. Later observations showed that it would miss the Earth by a fraction. It is difficult to look at (7) _____ a huge area, but now scientists have developed a way to observe more asteroids (8) _____ a time. The solution is quite simple – a camera which takes digital images of the sky through the original telescope. The images are beamed onto (9) _____ giant TV screen, and with the wider field it is possible (10) _____ watch more asteroids in each picture.

Do you feel more at ease now that you know (11) _____ scientists with the latest equipment are permanently on guard? Unfortunately, I can't help wondering (12) _____ scientists will do the day they spot an asteroid heading towards us.