

## The End of the World Interview

Before you get all up in arms, the world isn't going anywhere. As a new take on Armageddon, the *End of the World Show* explores the value of humanity through improv comedy at downtown's [Arcade Comedy Theater](#). The show, conceived by the multi-talented Brian Gray, debuts this Friday, August 23, with a run each Friday night until September 13. In addition to the improv aspect, the show contains a few interactive components. Audience members are said to be aliens who will eventually decide the fate of mankind by the end of the show. Creator Brian Gray has also concocted a phone app to coincide with the action that unfolds during the night. There will also be animation by Spencer Diaz and Nico Zevallos, two talented and creative fellas whose resumes include CMU and Disney. We'll be giving away tickets to a show of your choice, but first, acquaint yourself with Brian and his apocalyptic endeavor.



**Kymbo Slice:** Have you always been involved with improv or do your roots lie in other forms of acting?

**Brian Gray:** I was an actor first. I eventually started getting bigger parts and soon I started doing community theater. Then I went to CMU to study computer stuff and dove hard into student theater. I was in something like 8 shows my freshman year. There I learned a lot more about actual acting, and I went to my first improv workshop.

**KS:** What is your background with comedy in Pittsburgh?

**BG:** I really enjoyed improv at CMU and was in a group called the No Parking Players (who are still around today) and we mostly did what is called short form improv. I never really imagined improv being this important to me, but it was easier than committing to a stage play. I eventually started teaching, and raised the eyebrows of a couple (Justin and Kasey Zell) who moved here from NYC to start the [Steel City Improv Theater](#). It was there that I really honed my long form by doing a lot of it and by teaching it to others.

**KS:** Is this your first attempt at creating a show for improv or scripted theater?

**BG:** I've created shows before — it gets a bit complicated in that in the improv world we have groups (usually a group of people who stay the same and may perform many different forms over time), shows (an idea or form that will play for a while but may have a rotating cast) and projects (an idea with a cast that is short-lived). I've created a couple groups. This may well be my first project.

**KS:** What inspired you to create the End of the World Show?

**BG:** The End of the World Show has been stewing around in my brain for years. The main driver of the show is that I am passionate about short form improv and I love it when it is done well. I do believe all improv (all theater) is about true human relationships, so I baked that into the premise.

**KS:** What is your relationship with Arcade Comedy Theater and what else can you tell us about this relatively new space?

**BG:** The theater was co-founded by a group of 5 and I am good friends with all of them. The Arcade is a space focused on all comedy of all kinds. I have mainly been down there to see improv acts, but I have really been blown away by some of the sketch, stand-up and variety I have seen. One of the first times I went I saw the owner of [Toonseum](#) from down the block do an act where he told a story that he illustrated live on stage. I have also been holding myself laughing at a singer-songwriter named Jesse Landis Eigsti. There has not been

a stage for acts like these previously, and certainly not for them all to be performing together.

**KS:** Can you tell us more about the interactive/media aspects of this show? How exactly will the mobile app work?

**BG:** I love to see what happens when artists from different media and different backgrounds come together and push each others' comfort zones. This not only helps to create new and interesting art, it creates something that audiences don't expect and brings fans of one artist in contact with fans of another. It's a win win win!

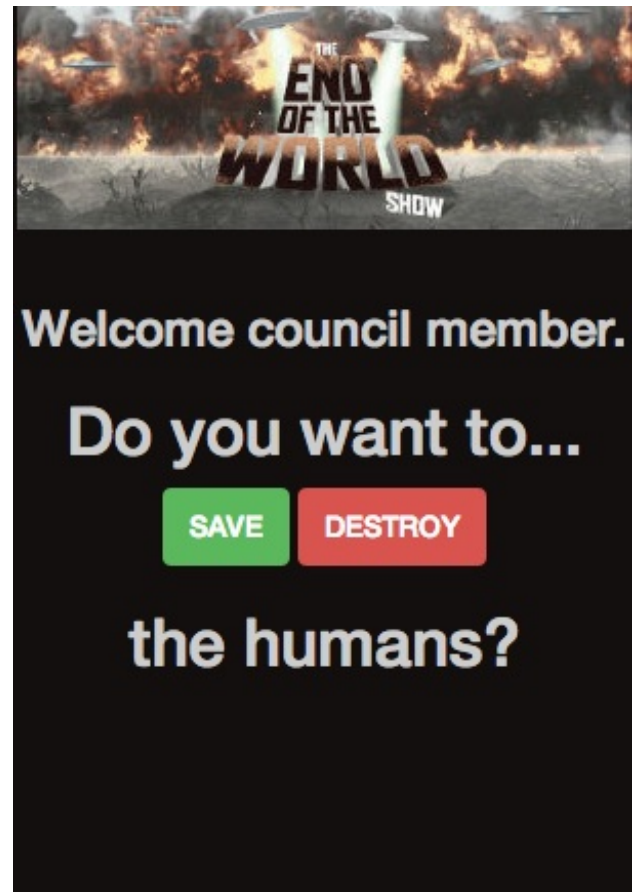
In *End of the World Show*, there is of course an incredible cast of improvisers who are a mix of veterans from established teams and new faces to the Pittsburgh scene. The show features an opening animation that is a collaboration by Spencer Diaz (Imagineer at Disney Research) and Nico Zevallos (fine art and robotics senior at Carnegie Mellon). The premise of this show is complicated and a lot to explain at the top of the show. And as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Spencer, Nico, and I (with the help of a few other improvisers) were able to outline out an animation that boils down the whole premise of the show to less than 1 minute while still being entertaining. It is incredible to me that these guys can create what they do so quickly! The mobile app also is about continuing to engage people in the experience. As they enter, they will scan a QR-code to uniquely identify the show. Toward the end of the show, the site they are taken to will kick them to a voting screen allowing them to decide to save or destroy mankind.

**KS:** What has been a personal highlight of yours with this production?

**BG:** It really is hard to choose just one. There have been so many extremes in this production. One aspect of the production is that each member of the cast plays a character. That character is based heavily on the actor, so to start

exploring we did some personal exercises. In one rehearsal, we all learned so much about each other, and there was just so much raw energy. Not all pleasant emotions, but it's not every day you get to feel strong emotions among people you (in some cases) just met. And actors don't shy away from that. That was great.

Catch the show this Friday night at 10PM at Arcade Comedy Theater and every Friday night from August 23-September 13. Tickets can be purchased [here](#). You can also leave a comment below to enter yourself to win up to 4 tickets to the production. The winner gets to choose which show they'd like to attend. Good luck!



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