

REVIEW: The End of The World Show, Arcade Comedy Theatre

Posted August 25, 2013 by Brian Edward & filed under The Shaker .

THE END OF THE WORLD COMES NOT WITH A BANG OR A WHIMPER BUT A GUFFAW

by Michael Buzzelli, 'BURGH VIVANT Contributor

The end is near. It actually came and went, but you have another chance to catch the end of the world at "The End of The World Show" at the Arcade Comedy Theater.

Director Brian Gray's premise is inspired. A ragtag group of humans sneak into an alien council meeting. The aforementioned aliens are about to blow up the Earth, but our heroes have 45 to sixty minutes to save the world (Okay Madonna and Justin Timberlake can probably do it in four minutes, but it wouldn't be much of a show, would it?).

Our stalwart humans have to teach the aliens about our culture, our lives, and our humor to prove that we're worth saving. That's where the audience gets involved. The audience gets to be the aliens. As comic strip creator Walt Kelly would attest, "We've met the enemy and he is us."

Before the show, you get a chance to get dolled up in alien attire (thanks to Cassie Brehmer, manager at Artist and Craftsman Supply in Squirrel Hill). There's make-up, jewelry, antennae, etc. As you enter the theater, you join the alien council led by their evil overlord, Brett Goodnack. Brett's character, sporting a curly blue wig, high bedazzled collar and other alien accoutrement enters and gets this party started. His character is part Mork, part Mathesar (Enrico Colantoni from "Galaxy Quest") and all evil. Goodnack is a ray gun of awesome, he shoots off some of the best zingers in the show. Unfortunately, the Evil Overlord sits in a large recliner at the back of the theater. Audiences had to crane their necks to see him deliver said zingers. He's worth the potential neck strain (here's hoping Gray moves the recliner to the side of the stage in future performances).

When thin, gangly, improvisational actor Krish Mohan spouts off a line of dialogue, Goodnack retorts, "Is anyone else annoyed by the little one?" Goodnack later pointed at Mohan and said, "I'm going to throw you like a javelin." The banter was brilliant, and Mohan's reactions were worth the price of admission.

After the premise is set up, the rest of the show follows a pretty standard Improv format. Goodnack takes suggestions from the other members of the alien council (i.e. the audience) and runs the troupe through their paces.

Some games were standard faire (games you would see on "Whose Line is it, Anyway?"). Games such as "Change," where the actors have to make a new choice each time the group leader (or alien overlord in this case) shouts out "Change." Members of the talented cast pulled it off with aplomb. Special shout outs to Mohan and Tessa Karel for their rapid fire wit. Another special mention should go to George Aivaliotis, a last minute replacement who slid into the team deftly.

The show could be improved with a little more elucidation. Audiences unfamiliar with improvisational games could have used the standard speech, "These guys are going to show me how they would eat break up with a lover, fire an employee, or eat spaghetti in space."

At the end of the show, audience members with smart phones are instructed to vote on the fate of the world using an App. The votes are tabulated on a graph ala the ask-the-audience question on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," with animation provided by Spencer Diaz and Nico Zevallos. On opening night, the ruthless alien overlords decided to "thumbs down" the globe. You may have missed the earth-shattering KABOOM, but you

have a few more chances to save the planet with three performances left; Aug 30, Sept 6, & Sept 13 at 10:00 p.m. at the Arcade Comedy Theater, 811 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. You may be our only hope!