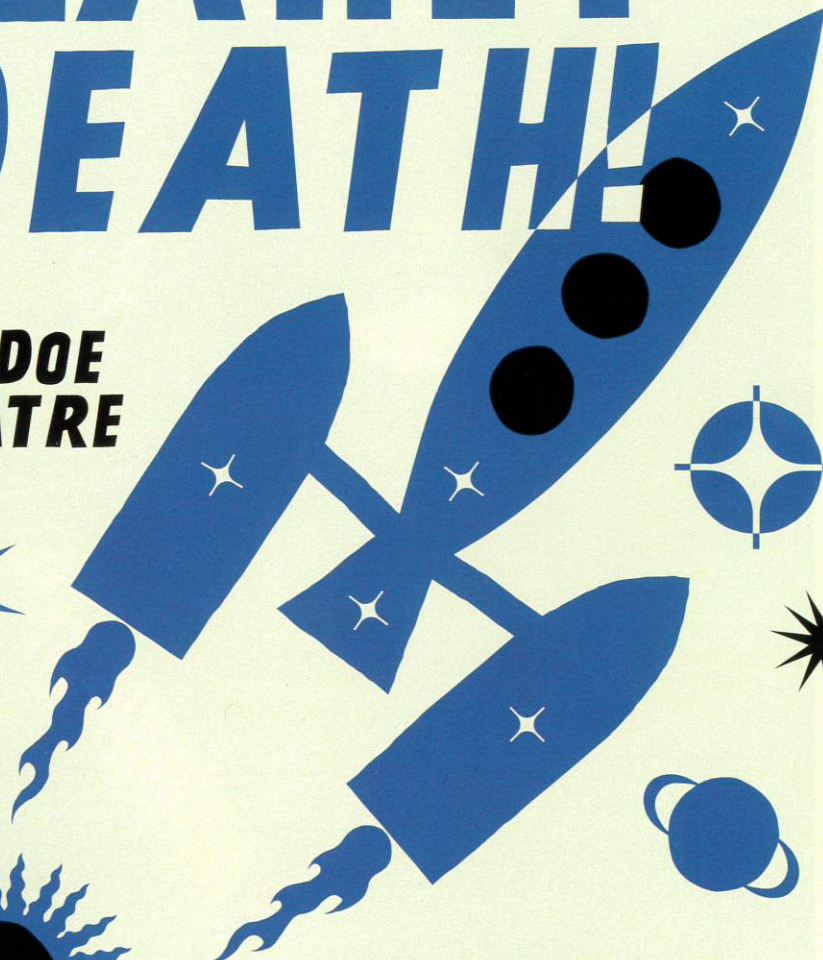


BYU THEATRE AND MEDIA ARTS presents

# ESCAPE FROM PLANET DEATH!

**PARDOE  
THEATRE**



**OCTOBER 29-  
NOVEMBER 13**

**ESCAPE FROM  
PLANET DEATH**

Written by Tom Russell and the Writers' Room  
Directed by Tom Russell and Courtney Russell

BYUart    
BYUARTS.COM @byuarts

# ESCAPE FROM PLANET DEATH!

Written by

Tom Russell

Directed by

Tom & Courtney Russell

Scenic & Lighting Design

Jacob Anderson

Production Stage Management

Paul Hintz

Live Foley Artist

J.P. Romney

Sound Design

Stephen Jarvis

Costume & Makeup & Hair Design

Rachel Olson

Dramaturgy

Cameron Cox  
Isabella Beals  
Shelley Graham

Production Illustrator

Kolin Van Why

October 29-30, November 3-6, 10-13 7:30 p.m.

October 30, November 6 & 13 2:00 p.m.

Pardoe Theater

I'm recalling a somber, painful moment in our home. My wife and I had gathered our children in the living room to tell them that their mom had just received a breast cancer diagnosis. Nothing can ease a moment like that, right? We didn't want to frighten the kids, but we also didn't want to pretend everything was fine. There were tears, there was silence. Finally, my 14-year-old son said, "I guess I really just have one question: is this contagious?"

We all laughed – especially my wife. It was funny. It was a relief. It was a reaction and a response. We were laughing at the monster. No one outside the family could have said that, of course. But he could and he did.

Humor is a risk. Not only because we all laugh at different things, but because much harm can come from humor. Comedy can be a foxhole for all kinds of cruelty and nastiness. We launch our grenades, then criticize the wounded for not being able to take a joke. Comedy is dangerous.

That said, indignation and wrath are not the only responses to life's injustices. It might be argued that a good sense of humor has effected at least as much necessary change in society as outrage.

In the case of *Escape from Planet Death!* we're using satire and a bit of parody. We allow a character to say something so absurd that the idea becomes laughable – but the character generally says those things with complete self-assurance. It's that certainty – the character's pomposity – that creates humor.

Luke Edley's brief definitions of satire and parody may be helpful.

**SATIRE**

*A work of satire uses humour (particularly irony and exaggeration) to expose flaws in human behaviour. By and large, anyone who writes a satirical story intends to ridicule people's idiocy or vices. When notions of human frailty, indecency, or inadequacy are juxtaposed with other factors—such as societal issues or political commentary—satire can be a powerful tool to provoke and challenge attitudes...*

**PARODY**

*A parody is any kind of work which mimics a familiar style (of artist, genre, or work) to invoke humour. Like satire, parody relies upon exaggeration to deride its target, but its primary aim is to amuse by aping something which others can recognize.*

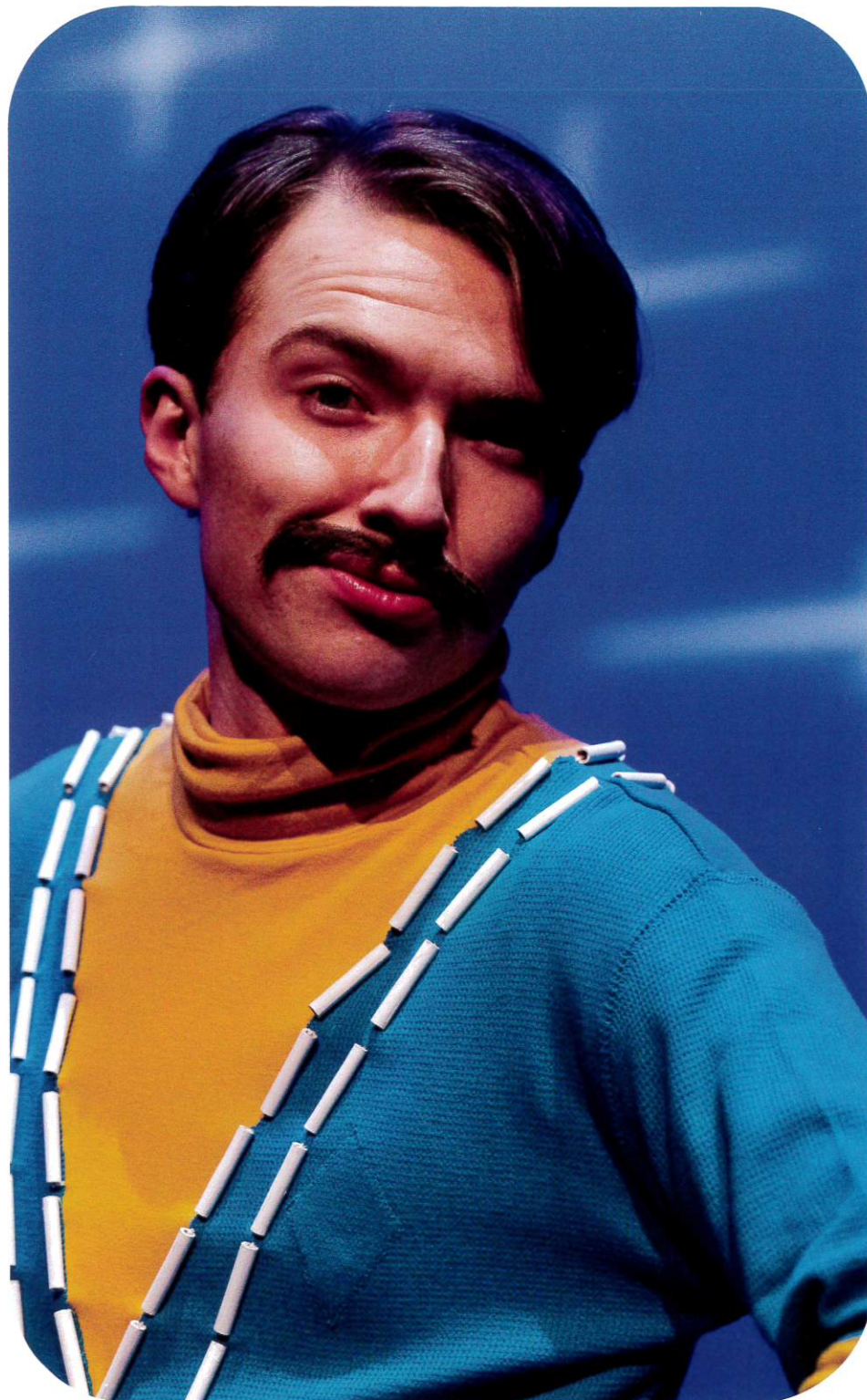
I take exception to the words *ridicule* and *deride*. Satire can and has done that. But I wonder if the practitioners in those cases might simply lack kindness. Ridicule may be little more than mockery. Mockery targets the vulnerable while satire often targets the arrogant. Mockery ridicules its object: it says you *are* this. Satire exposes behavior: it says we risk *doing* this. Mockery relies on clever cruelty. Satire relies on the mocker's self-assured but insipid cleverness.

Mark Twain once said, "If a person offends you, and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance, and hit him with a brick."

So, we'll keep an eye out for bricks. But throw them gently. We're writing and standing in for exaggerated people saying some objectionable things.

Our family story ends sadly. The monster ultimately has its way, leaving plenty of devastation in its wake. But I don't believe the monster won. I credit my wife's sense of humor with that. She maintained it till the end and responded to impossible moments by watching Harold Bissonette, Henrietta Lowell, Lucille McGillicuddy, Michael Bluth – and laughing.

**TOM RUSSELL**



## CHARACTER/CAST LIST

**ANALYN**  
Justine Kitteringham

**HARRY**  
Kyle Hollingshaus

**GLEN**  
Tommy Brown

**NICK**  
Sarah McDonald

**COLOSSUS**  
Joey Wright

**AVA**  
Darci Ramirez

**FOLEY ARTISTS**  
Patrick Egbert  
Makenna Johnston  
Jadelynne Pierce  
Conrad Smith

**LENA**  
Nicole Newman

**JEFF**  
Daniel Summerstay

**HIERONYMUS JONES**  
Tyler Weston

**ANNOUNCER**  
Kasia McPherson

**HOST**  
J.P. Romney

**ZOMBIE BOTANIST**  
Malin Glade  
Devoree Shields



## PRODUCTION STAFF

### THEATRE STEERING COMMITTEE

Producer . . . . . Megan Sanborn Jones  
Artistic Director . . . . . Stephanie Breinholt  
Design & Technology Area Head . . . . . Dennis Wright  
Production Manager . . . . . Jennifer Reed

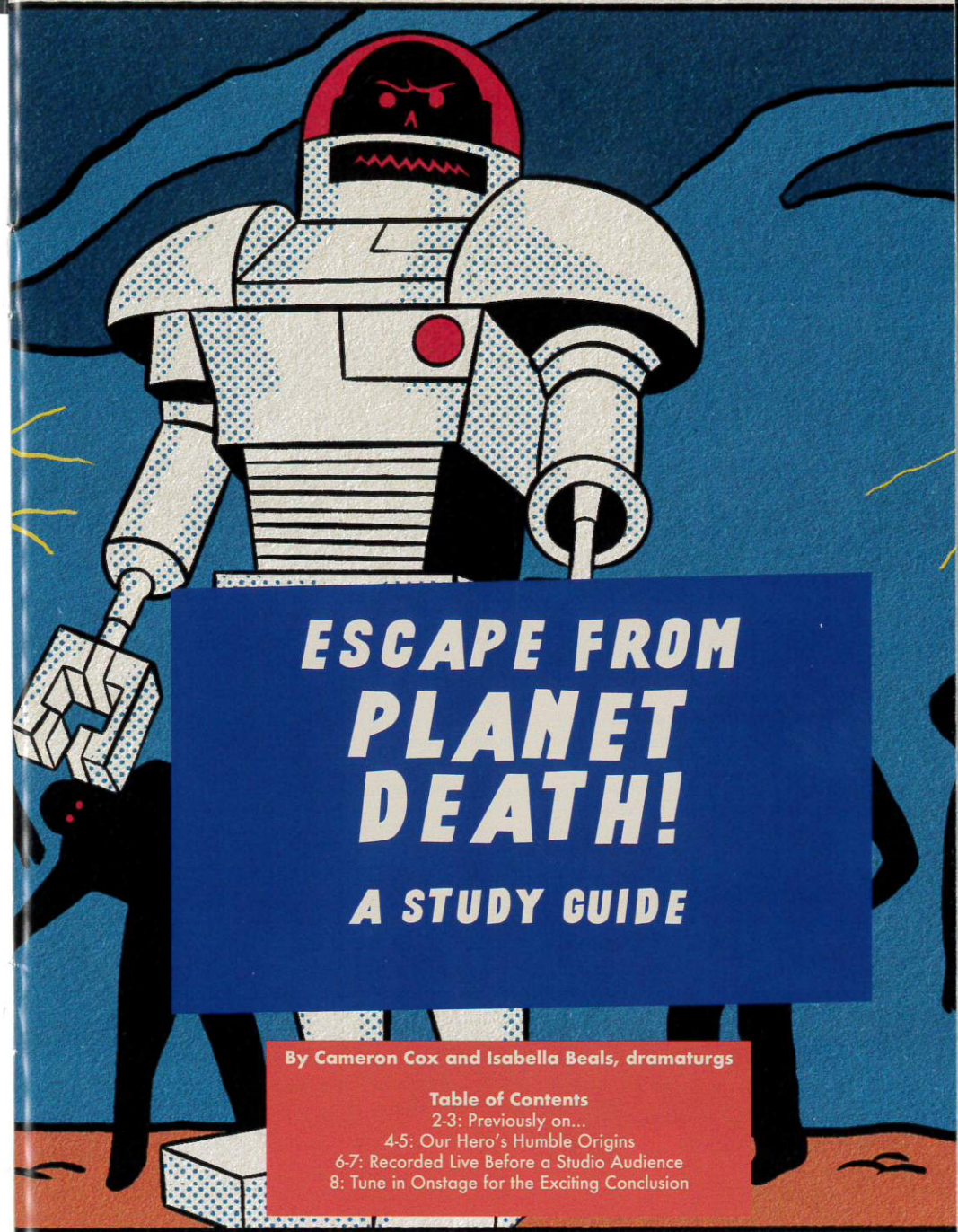
Directors . . . . . Tom & Courtney Russell  
Assistant Director . . . . . Samantha Daynes  
Faculty Design Advisor . . . . . Rory Scanlon

Technical Director . . . . . Travis Coyne  
Scene Shop Supervisor . . . . . Ward Wright  
Stage Ops Technical Director . . . . . Jared Patching  
Properties Supervisor . . . . . Jennifer Reed  
Properties Designer . . . . . Alison Rino  
Lighting Supervisor . . . . . Marianne Ohran  
Master Electrician . . . . . Tyler Christensen  
Light Board Operator . . . . . Sage Bateman  
Costume & Makeup Operations Manager . . . . . Jessica Cowden  
Costume Faculty Mentor . . . . . Dennis Wright  
Makeup Faculty Mentors . . . . . Jennine Hollingshaus

Costume & Makeup Crew: . . . . . Yao Kuang Lee,  
Olivia Stoddard,  
Sydney Wilson

Dramaturg Faculty Mentor . . . . . Shelley Graham  
Deck Crew . . . . . Alice Silva  
Marketing Services Manager . . . . . Rex Kocherhans  
Program Designer . . . . . Dylan Smith

- EPISODE 1 ..... Something Wicked This Way Comes
- EPISODE 2 ..... Stranded
- EPISODE 3 ..... The Revenants
- EPISODE 4 ..... Surrounded
- EPISODE 5 ..... The Ziffer System
- EPISODE 6 ..... Attack of the Mutant Salamanders
- EPISODE 7 ..... The Storm
- EPISODE 8 ..... The Key to Everything
- EPISODE 9 ..... Step 33



**ESCAPE FROM  
PLANET  
DEATH!  
A STUDY GUIDE**

By Cameron Cox and Isabella Beals, dramaturgs

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# PREVIOUSLY, IN THE HISTORY OF SCI-FI...

While *Escape From Planet Death!* finds its roots in the 1950s style of science-fiction (sci-fi for short) entertainment, our heroes were not the first nor the last of out-of-this-world heroes. Let's take a look at the historic journey of the sci-fi genre.

## Early 1900s - Era of Silent Films

Early film-makers would often create short, silent films that featured new technology or creatures from other worlds. One of the most famous examples from this time period is George Méliès's *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), which features a group of spacemen crash landing on the moon after being launched by a giant cannon.

## 1930s and 40s - Space travel

Space-adventure stories began booming during this time. Audiences were beginning to fall in love with the space concept and many original movies produced in the 30s gained enough popularity for sequels in the 40s.

## 1950s - The Bomb Era

Sci-fi films became catalysts for the world's impending anxieties about the atomic bomb and the Cold War, leading to greater genre success. *Escape From Planet Death!* stems from this period. The play serves as a model of combining the public's real fears with fantasized manifestations of those fears in a monster that takes over the world.

Did you know? The term "science-fiction" was first used by publisher Hugo Gernsback in his magazine *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929.

## 2000s and On - Let's Talk Politics

Since the turn of the century, sci-fi movies have stepped increasingly away from space adventures and technological doomsdays. The genre has become more of a mouthpiece for political commentary and a way for creators to add their voice in an imaginative way.

## 1990s - World Wide Web

The development of the internet gave a revolutionary spin to sci-fi movies. The 'steampunk genre' began to emerge, which focused on darker themes and stories about technology taking over the world. Sequels to classics such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* were made following darker storylines.

## 1980s - Blurring of Lines

Thanks to the rising success of sci-fi films in the previous decades, the genre not only grew in popularity but also in definition. Many genres, including fantasy and superhero movies, started to blend together under the term 'sci-fi.'

## 1960s and 70s - The Icons

Bigger budgets and better effects led to some of the most notable sci-fi movies and series in history. Some successes such as *Star Wars*, *Superman*, and *Star Trek* all got their start during this period.

The stage production of *Escape From Planet Death!* certainly follows the trend of discussing hot-button topics. What are some of the nods to today's conversations that you notice in the play? Want to learn more about the commentary and goals for *Escape From Planet Death!*? Check out the 4th Wall dramaturgy page for more inside content!

## Sexism

The objectifying and belittling of women was sadly commonplace throughout the 20th century. Consequently, sexism was a big aspect of many 1950s sci-fi films. Look for the ways that the stage production of *Escape From Planet Death!* acknowledges this trend and then responds back to it.



# OUR HERO'S HUMBLE ORIGINS!



You are all part of our live studio audience! But originally our tale was not meant for the stage but was a part of a 10 episode podcast in a class created by director Tom Russell.



"We created the class because we had students get into writers' rooms and other professional writing positions and feel discouraged when their ideas would be overlooked or revised or rewritten — which is all part of the collaborative writing process. We wanted to increase collaboration between students while they're in the program to help them get used to rewriting somebody else's material and having their material rewritten. At the end of a project like this, they can say 'this doesn't feel like the thing we wrote,' but it's absolutely the thing."

Once the story was written, the podcast was put into production with an all-star cast including comedians Louie Anderson of *Baskets*, Kyle Mooney of *Saturday Night Live*, Whitney Call of *Studio C* and actor Joe Estevez. Each actor performed the audio for their respective characters at June Audio Recording Studios in Provo under the direction of Jerusha Hess, a BYU media arts alum known for films such as *Napoleon Dynamite* and *Austenland*.

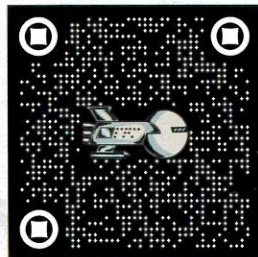
*Escape from Planet Death!* went on to be an honoree at the Webby awards as well as being an Official Selection at both the 2020 Hear Now! and New Media Film Festivals.

Now after a harrowing journey of development, extended by the Covid 19 epidemic, *Escape from Planet Death!* is ready to wow you live and in person. After two years working with the writer and directors, dramaturgy professor Shelley Graham helped the production team conceive a new world for the theatrical version of this script. She had this to say about the world-building process:

"It was so exciting to work with Tom and Courtney as we built the world of the play, growing from one that had used sound almost exclusively to tell the story (in the previous podcast/radio show style) to a theatrical world of the new script that included physical bodies, illustrations, projections, and a Foley artist on stage."

STAY TUNED TO WITNESS  
THIS EXCITING NEW WORLD  
IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF...  
**ESCAPE FROM  
PLANET DEATH!**

LISTEN TO THE ORIGINAL PODCAST HERE! →



# LIVE BEFORE A STUDIO AUDIENCE!



In media creation, Foley is the reproduction of everyday sound effects using a variety of everyday items that are added to films, videos, and other media in post-production to enhance audio quality. You may remember hearing behind-the-scenes stories of how the skull avalanche in the Paths of the Dead in *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* was created using the sounds of coconuts rolling on cement in a sound stage layered with the sound of walnuts; or perhaps you remember the iconic use of coconuts rolling down a ramp to create the sound of a horse trot in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, but it's not often that foley artists are seen live on stage.

*Escape from Planet Death!* honors its 1960's radio show pastiche by putting foley live on stage for the audience to watch, spearheaded by Josh Romney and a BYU student crew. Using a variety of props, this team will create a thrilling soundscape plunging you on board *The Ulysses* and beyond! You might even be asked to help participate in it's creation.



## HEY DUDES AND DUETTES!

I'm Nick and I'm designed to entertain all you hip teens. If you don't dig it, you must be living in Squaresville. We need your help! Can you correctly match all of these sounds with props our rad foley artists are gonna use?

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Monster Mastication</b>                | industrial air compressor |
| <b>Rolling thunder, spaceship burners</b> | sparring pads             |
| <b>Cryogenic pods</b>                     | metal sheet               |
| <b>Lightning storm</b>                    | celery stalks             |
| <b>Punches and slaps</b>                  | homemade slime            |
| <b>Monster roar</b>                       | metal garbage can         |
| <b>Spider robot army</b>                  | taser                     |
| <b>Exploding monster bits</b>             |                           |

FIND THE ANSWERS HERE!



See how all these and more are used in **ESCAPE FROM PLANET DEATH!**

**JOIN US ONSTAGE FOR THE EXCITING CONCLUSION!**

After all your discoveries through this era, we now present the thrilling, cumulative production you are about to see. We open onstage with a dedicated group of modern-day sci-fi lovers who have come together to recreate their favorite show. The group has spent countless hours preparing the most painstaking details to enjoy this moment. From each costume made out of household objects in an attempt to replicate our heroes and villains, to the iconic comic-book style of the 320 illustrations presented in the show, to the magic of live sound effects through foley, our entire presentation is a tribute to the 1950's sci-fi genre. Our creative teams have worked tirelessly behind-the-scenes in their various fields of expertise for one common goal: to create a heroic production that pays homage to this era of entertainment history.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF  
SCI-FI HISTORY?**

**WILL THE STAGE ADAPTATION OF ESCAPE FROM  
PLANET DEATH! WIN EVEN MORE AWARDS?**

**WHAT ADDITIONAL EXCITING SOUNDS WILL THE  
FOLEY ARTISTS USE DURING THE  
PERFORMANCE?**

**TUNE IN NOW FOR THE LIVE PRODUCTION OF...**

**ESCAPE  
FROM PLANET  
DEATH!**



Want to see even more technical elements for the show? Find out about the music, illustrations and more on [4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu](http://4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu)!

