

# Theater Preview: 'Final Voyage of X Minus One' lifts off in Providence

**Wednesday**

Posted Nov 9, 2016 at 9:30 PM

Stage adaptation of '50s sci-fi radio dramas staged by Counter-Productions Theatre Company.

By Keith PowersSpecial to The Journal

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — "X Minus One." Even the words have an old-timey science fiction feel, harking back to an era when "rocket ships" were exotic, when "voyages through space and time" meant journeys into the unknown and unimaginable.

Counter-Productions Theatre Company revisits and explores "X Minus One" — the actual name of a 1950s radio show, which produced spoken dramas from authors such as Robert Heinlein and Ray Bradbury. Now in its 10th season, Counter-Productions has adapted and staged some of the campy, science-fun stories from the popular radio series on a biennial basis.

It's coming to an end. This weekend the troupe takes its last trip into outer space, "The Final Voyage of X Minus One," with stories directed by Rufus Qristofer Teixeira, at AS220's Blackbox theater.

"We're doing this as a wrap-up," says Ted Clement, Counter-Productions' artistic director and producer of the show. "It's the greatest hits version — four of the strongest. We hope that the pieces pay honor to the radio theater tradition."

These productions are not the first time that radio dramas have been adapted for the stage or made into films. Think of H.G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds," or Dylan Thomas' "Under Milk Wood." It's actually a particularly fruitful path for theater.

"There's a lot of imagery in radio plays," Clement says. "They had to describe everything, after all. Our goal is to make theater into a living, breathing experience. The fact they are from a certain time period, well, that's some of the fun of it.

"They are futurists," he says, "imagining what 1986 or 1993 in the future would look like. So inherently we are doing the future from the perspective of the past.

"Some are straight dramas. Some are written to be slapstick — Three Stooges–style comedy," Clement says. "We're looking for an honest balance between the stories as they were written and good theater."

All previously staged by Counter-Productions, this final voyage includes stories originally written by Tom Godwin, George Lefferts and Ernest Kinoy. Each was adapted by director Teixeira.

"These are distinct productions," Clement says. "There is a stylistic relationship, and we have an overall look and feel for the show. But some are thriller-based, and some are more lighthearted. We look to do what's appropriate to the adaptation.

"We've done very well with this series," he says. "There's not a lot of science fiction theater, but there is a cultural fandom. Technology and movies make things that had to be visualized for so long realistic now.

"But one of the great things about that is that science fiction is widely regarded as mainstream. And there's something magical when it's happening live in front of the audience.

"I think younger fans of science fiction have a respect for the older generation of stories," he says, "especially space and time travel. But now we're so used to having all the work done for us. I love that so many movies make stories so realistic. You don't have to imagine 'Star Wars.' But when you see something here in AS220, you have to imagine you're on Pluto. In a way, it's coming full circle."

*"The Final Voyage of X Minus One," staged by Counter-Productions Theatre Company, runs Nov. 11 through 20 at AS220's Blackbox theater, 95 Empire St., Providence. Tickets are \$20. Visit [cptcri.com](http://cptcri.com).*

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Keith Powers writes about the arts. Email [keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com](mailto:keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com); on Twitter:

[@PowersKeith](https://twitter.com/PowersKeith).

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