

Look out! Here comes 'Impact Earth'

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Rice/HMNS production shows what would happen if a comet hits near Houston

In 1994, the world watched as Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 split into 22 pieces and smacked into Jupiter's atmosphere, leaving bruises easily seen through low-powered telescopes.

What if such a comet were to hit Earth? How dangerous is Earth's neighborhood? What can be done to prepare?

"Impact Earth," the latest collaboration between the Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) and Rice University, will attempt to answer these questions when the Burke Baker Planetarium premieres the show May 1, with a worldwide release to follow. The joint production was made possible by funding from NASA Earth Science.

Millions of asteroids and comets lurk among the planets, leftover bits and pieces from the solar system's formation more than 4