

**For immediate release
Oct. 1, 2015**

**Contact: Kristina Martinez
608-259-9999
info@atlasimprov.com**

Unique live-elimination improv competition returns for 8th season

The energy is unbelievable. The fear, palpable. The tension, suffocating. Who will survive The Cut?

MADISON, Wis.--Madison's competitive, live-elimination reality show returns to Atlas Improv Co. on Oct. 9, when amateur improvisers will go head to head to prove themselves in the harshest theater arena the city has to offer.

Each Friday at 8 p.m. for six weeks, hopeful improvisers will take Atlas's one-of-a-kind stage to try to impress the judges and a live audience in the eighth season of The Cut. The winner earns an incredible prize: a spot in Atlas' professional troupe.

"The Cut allows the audience to take a peek behind the improv curtain and see how veteran improvisors see scenes and guide amateur improvisors to greatness," Artistic Director Kristina Martinez said. "Each year we fill the theater with the excitement and energy from the audience. We love it. It's a great way for us to introduce our stage to audiences not familiar with improv."

Improv is unscripted theater that uses suggestions from the audience to create games and scenes.

Cut competitors will be put through the gauntlet in front of a packed theater to perform in games they've made up only minutes prior, tell stories on the spot or orchestrate scenes while dodging any obstacles that fit the judges' whimsy.

Steve Horton, 2014 winner of The Cut, said the thrill, fear and excitement of the competition extend beyond the players on stage.

"Audiences get a one-of-a-kind theatrical experience," Horton said. "The Cut has all the positives of a good reality TV show, but it's local, it's real and it's authentic. It's probably also funny."

Atlas Business Manager Ben Taylor and host of The Cut said the six-week event offers a double dose of improvised storytelling.

"Our reality show is built on a foundation of improvised theater, an art form of spontaneous creation," Taylor said. "That means we're building crazy on top of crazy. The unexpected on top of the already spontaneous."

"It's a reality show that the audience can actually make a difference in. A reality show that will really change the life of someone in their community. A reality show where the only thing certain is it's unscripted."

The Cut 2015 will end with a winner, but after the final episode, it will also have let go of several competitors. Even the non-winners are in good company.

Taylor was himself cut from the competition. Twice.

In 2008, Taylor was voted out in Week 5, was brought back onstage in Week 6 as part of a last-second plot twist, but was cut again in the first half of the finale. He later auditioned for the company and has been part

of the Atlas professional troupe for nearly 7 years. In fact, a handful of the company's professional troupe lost The Cut.

"Losing The Cut makes you humble, makes you tough and makes you totally addicted," Taylor said. "You know who runs the hardest in the race? The runner who came in second last time. Because that runner has something to prove."

Martinez came in second place in The Cut 2008 and joined the company that winter. She said Cut competitors get a rare opportunity to experience the energy behind performing in front of a live audience, which brings with it a fearlessness that fuels improvised theater.

Martinez was mum on the specifics but said plans for The Cut 2015 will include a new twist on the competition and plenty of surprises for competitors and the audience.

"I'm excited to see what talent there is in Madison. I'm excited to see how folks rise to the challenge," Martinez said. "I'm excited to open our stage and our theater to a new audience. And I can't wait to see who makes The Cut."

Tickets for The Cut are available online at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/profile/1256605>, over the phone by calling 608-259-9999 or the day of the show at 609 E. Washington Ave. when the box office opens at 7:15 p.m. Regular ticket prices apply; no discounts or passes are accepted. The Cut begins at 8 p.m. every Friday from Oct. 9 through Nov. 13.

Atlas has presented The Cut since 2004, continuing the competition in 2006, 2008 and 2010, and converting it to an annual event beginning in 2012.

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About Atlas Improv Co.

Since its creation in 2004, [Atlas Improv Co.](#) has been a staple of Madison's improv and comedy community. Founded by then-members of ComedySportz Mary Parmentier and Bryan Judkins, Atlas sought to build a creative environment that would challenge and fulfill its members artistically in a way the constraints of ComedySportz would not allow. Today, Atlas is Madison's premiere improv troupe, performing four shows each weekend and teaching the art of improv in their own Atlas Improv Theater.

Find Atlas Improv Co. on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AtlasImprov), Twitter (www.twitter.com/AtlasImprov) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/AtlasImprov).

For more photos and information contact Kristina Martinez at info@atlasimprov.com or 259-9999.