

Doktor Kaboom!

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By [Andrew Zimmerman Jones](#), About.com Guide

The Bottom Line

Doktor Kaboom is one of the most innovative science presentations that I've ever seen - especially for young kids. An hour of Doktor Kaboom will remind anyone why science is fun. My four-year-old son loved it, and there's plenty of material to spark deeper discussions among older kids about the fundamental nature of science. As an adult, this show made me feel like a kid; as a father, it was a great experience with my son. When you get an opportunity to combine those two things, you really can't go wrong.

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Pros

- Original and innovative approach to science education through entertainment.
- Dynamic, enjoyable character of Doktor Kaboom, created and expertly performed by David Epley.
- Interactive performance allows students the opportunity to shine while teaching valuable lessons.

Cons

- The show lasts only one hour.
- It is not yet available on DVD.

Description

- This review is based on a March 13, 2010, performance at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.
- It is an interactive science show, featuring Doktor Kaboom. Three children volunteers were chosen to assist onstage.
- Doktor Kaboom is a character created by David Epley, who has over 20 years of improvisational acting experience.

Guide Review - Doktor Kaboom!

Doktor Kaboom! is an original, interactive one-hour science program created by actor David Epley, who stars as the unforgettable Doktor Kaboom. In this persona, complete with a thick German accent, Doktor Kaboom demonstrates a number of experiments to audiences of all ages.

The show started with a creative (and amusing) variant of the old "egg into a bottle" experiment, where Kaboom explains to everyone that there is no such thing as "suction" - just areas that have more pressure and areas that have less pressure. I personally thought this was the least compelling of the experiments, which is more of an indication of how good the other experiments are than a flaw with the experiment. However, it was my son's favorite, and in this case I think he gets the more decisive vote. (It is primarily a kids-oriented program, after all.)

From there, the show proceeds through a diverse series of experiments from physics and chemistry, with a bit of optical illusion thrown in. Epley's two decades of experience working the festival circuit really shine through, as he expertly takes each moment and plays it to maximum benefit. Doktor Kaboom is a character which could easily fall apart into campiness, but he embraces the mad scientist cliché so sincerely that the entire audience (young and old alike) goes along for the ride.

Going into the show, I knew there'd be scientific demonstrations, so that obviously wasn't a big surprise. What really blew me away was the unexpected emphasis on underlying science concepts that often get overlooked in the desire to teach the nuts and bolts of the subject. For example, Doktor Kaboom helps teach kids the importance of:

- science safety (goggles, gloves, don't step on bananas, etc.)
- the tentative nature of all scientific knowledge
- being wrong is allowed in science
- the need for repeated experiments to confirm a hypothesis
- the application of science in everyday life

Beyond these important concepts, Epley also takes the opportunity of having students on stage - the show had 3 student assistants in all - to present some concepts to help promote self-confidence. After the show, I asked my son, "Are you smart? Gifted? Creative?" He looked me in the eyes and replied, "Ja!" just as instructed by Doktor Kaboom. He also included a powerful demonstration of how visualization can help you achieve success (although Kaboom



Doktor Kaboom explains simple machines to students by demonstrating with the use of a catapult. He prepares to test his hypothesis that the catapult was originally used to deliver food (in this case bananas) to the masses.

Doktor Kaboom (used by permission)

himself said that not all students succeed at catching a piece of banana being hurled by a catapult).

So, with all of these other elements covered, I guess the question that remains is what "actual science" was demonstrated:

- air pressure - including an air cannon!
- [simple machines](#)² - especially the lever
- [projectile motion](#)³
- chemical reactions
- optical illusions

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