

The Toxic Avenger Musical Oozes Fun¹

15 Jun, 2016 in 2016 / Reviews tagged cult classic / hollywood fringe festival / lathr / musical / theater / toxic avenger musical / Tromaville by Russell

The Toxic Avenger Musical oozes with good laughs, catchy tunes, fun times and a touch of chemical lust. Presented by The Good People Theater Company and currently part of the Hollywood Fringe Festival, this show is definitely a ticket to get.

If you know the 1984 cult classic film "The Toxic Avenger," then you know going into this show that we are dealing with familiar territory. Boy meets blind girl, boy tries to defend girl against thugs and in the process gets transformed into a horrifically deformed toxic slime covered creature. You know, it's a love story.

Wisely taking the film as a jumping off point and making some tweaks to the plot to update it with a more eco-friendly and anti-corporate message, the musical manages to sneak in some clever surprises which I will not spoil here. Quite frankly, in a time when much entertainment that we are surrounded by centers around superheroes, many of them wearing incredibly tight spandex with perfect gym-toned bodies and flawless make-up, "The Toxic Avenger Musical" offers a different kind of superhero – this everyman turned vigilante never loses his awkwardness and insecurities once he finds himself taking on the role of public avenger for the weak and downtrodden of Tromaville, New Jersey. Actually, his imperfections are downright endearing.

A prime reason to embrace this show heartily is a cast willing to play a heartfelt story with a generous, kindhearted message while also never losing sight of how goofy this tale truly is. There's a lot here that you can see coming. Standard knocks on New Jersey, for instance. ("Ew, what's that smell?" – "Newark.") But, everything is delivered with sincerity... and a wink.



The show provides plenty of laughs while having fun with its own conventions. The Mayor has a showdown with the Mother of our hero... except the two characters are portrayed by the same woman (Shirley Anne Hatton) and the audience is treated to one of the highlight numbers of the show as the two women "meet." The love story between Melvin/Toxie (Jared Reed) and Sarah (Kim Dalton) plays out pitch-perfect, swinging between heartfelt honesty and good ol' sexy musical theater shenanigans. A hardworking "chorus," made up of the characters White Dude and Black Dude (Wesley Tunison, Danny Fetter), make up almost the entire population of Tromaville with hysterically fast transformations from character to character. A fine balance is struck by the entire cast (and a woefully under appreciated stagehand who offers silent judgement and insight of their own). It all adds up to a good, good time.

The show had an off Broadway run in 2009, winning the Outer Critic's Circles' award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Musical. The

combination of book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro, music and lyrics by David Bryan plus direction and choreography by Janet Miller combine in a perfect blend of comedy and heart. This is a feel-good show that offers warmth and fun while tickling (or possibly mutating) your funny bone.

Remaining performance dates for "The Toxic Avenger Musical" are June 15, 16, 18 22, 24, 25 and 26.

One can only hope that this Fringe Festival production finds a long-term home here in Los Angeles. This is a show that deserves a long, healthy life... or perhaps half-life. (For all you nerds out there.)

Check out [The Good People Theater Company](#) for more information.

Learn more at [The Toxic Avenger Musical](#) at their Fringe Festival page, or about the entire festival at the [Hollywood Fringe Festival](#) website.