



## He's Mean and Green | "The Toxic Avenger Musical" @ HFF16

WRITTEN BY: CAHWYGUY - TUE JUN 07, 2016 @ 9:19 PM PDT

OK, I have this thing for off-beat, quirky, what might be called "Off Broadway" musicals. Be it [Brain from Planet X](#), [Evil Dead: The Musical](#), [It Came From Beyond](#), [Zombies from the Beyond](#), [Zanna Don't](#), or even [The Rocky Horror Show](#) (yes, it was a stage musical — and Off-Broadway at that, before the movie) — these little musicals are just a hell of a lot of fun. I also like to find musicals for which I've heard the music but never seen them on stage. [Good People Theatre \(FB\)](#)'s [The Toxic Avenger Musical at the Hollywood Fringe Festival \(FB\)](#) is a two-fer: a wonderful quirky musical that I've never seen before. It is a spectacular production that you are sure to enjoy.

[The Toxic Avenger Musical](#) is based on [Lloyd Kaufman \(FB\)](#)'s [The Toxic Avenger](#). It was adapted for the stage by [Joe DiPietro \(Book and Lyrics\)](#) and [David Bryan \(Music and Lyrics\)](#) — the same team that did [Memphis – The Musical](#). I guess I should say, following my conceit, that Kaufman did a wonderful job of adapting the stage show.

In any case, *The Toxic Avenger Musical* tells the story of a nerd, Melvin Ferd the Third, who secretly loves the town's blind librarian, Sarah. Melvin also hates how his town of New Jersey has become a toxic waste pit. He investigates with a lead from Sarah, and discovers that the Mayor is behind the dumping of the toxic waste. He threatens to destroy her, and she sends her goons to take care of him. They dump him in a vat of toxic waste, and he emerges mean and green... and out to return New Jersey to the garden spot it is meant to be. After rescuing Sarah from attackers, she falls in love with him, believing him to be French (explaining the stench). So does the now christened Toxie save Tromaville, or does the Mayor win?

Yes, a comic story. Yes, a silly story. But one surprisingly relevant, based on concerns about toxic waste and global warming. The songs are infectious and upbeat, and I challenge you not to come out of this musical smiling. It is just great green toxic fun.

Of course, it is helped by spot on performances, under the direction of GPT's [Janet Miller \(FB\)](#). [Every time we've seen something Janet has done or directed, we have walked out impressed. Be it Fringe shows like Marry Me a Little or A Man of No Importance, or CSUN shows like Bat Boy, her direction guarantees a quality show. I'm not saying that to be nice. There are a few musical directors in Los Angeles who consistently do quality work in small theatres, folks like Richard Israel \(FB\) or Roger Bean \(FB\). Janet is part of that small group. If you see her name, go see her show.](#)

Back to the performances, the cast in this was outstanding. Before I get to the mean green man himself, I want to highlight my favorite: [Kim Dalton \(FB\)](#). [We saw Kim earlier this year in Chance's Dogfight, and we were impressed. This time, we were blown away. Kristen Chenoweth better watch out: this tiny package has a set of pipes on her that are astounding. I'm still thinking about "My Big French Boyfriend", "Hot Toxic Love", or "Choose Me, Oprah". Further, her acting was great. In this show, she is playing a blind librarian. This could have degenerated quickly into caricature or farce, but she did it realistically, reminding me of a blind friend of mine. She was touching, funny, sexy, and just remarkable. I look forward to seeing her in more Southern California productions.](#)

As for our mean green man, Melvin Ferd the Third, who become The Toxic Avenger, he was played by [Jared Reed \(FB\)](#). [Reed projected a wonderful mix of meekness and strength — a combination that made him accessible and friendly and distinctly not a monster. Except when you cross him. Here's a hint: You don't want to cross big green men. Just ask Bruce Banner. Reed also had a lovely singing voice, which he ably demonstrated in sochs such as "You Tore My Heart Out", "Kick Your Ass", and "Hot Toxic Love" \(a lovely duet with Dalton\).](#)

All of the other actors in the show play multiple characters. A particular standout is [Shirley Anne Hatton \(FB\)](#), who we first saw in GPT's [A Man of No Importance](#). Hatton plays the Mayer, Ma Ferd, and a nun, and just nails all three performances. From her solos in the opening number, "Who Will Save New Jersey?", her performance with the girls in "All Men are Freaks", to her over the top duet, "Bitch/Slut/Liar/Whore" — she is just spectacular.

This leaves us with the men and women of all trades: [Danny Fetter \(FB\)](#) and [Wesley Tunison \(FB\)](#). Fetter, the generically titled "Black Dude", plays Sluggo, Professor Ken, Sinequa, Fred, Lamas, and a number of other unnamed roles. Tunison, the generically titled "White Dude", plays Bozo, Sal the Cop, Diane, the Folk Singer, Lorenzo, and other roles. This is one of the amazing things about this show: that these two guys play so many characters and constantly switch between them. They work really well together in "Big French Boyfriend", and Fetter does a wonderful song on "The Legend of the Toxic Avenger". The music was under the direction of [Corey Hirsch \(FB\)](#), who also played keyboard on stage. He was joined by Mike Lindsey on drums, Brenton Kossak (FB) on bass, Jeff Askew on guitar, and Dave Thomasson on reed. Orchestrations and arrangements were by David Bryan and Christopher Jahnke.

Turning to the remaining production and creative credits. The scenic design was by [Zorro J. Susel](#) who came up with a very clever design given the limitations of Fringe (load in and out in 10 minutes or so). The scenic design was supplemented by Emma Hatton's props. The clever costume design was by Mary Reilly, who did an outstanding job on Toxie's creative costume, as well as those worn by other characters, which supported rapid quick changes. This was supported by [Zorro J. Susel \(FB\)](#)'s makeup. Wigs are uncredited. The lighting design was by Katherine Barrett (FB) and the sound design was by Robert Schroeder (FB). We were at a preview performance, and both had problems — which wasn't surprising — this was their first time being exercised. Both showed the potential of being excellent, so under the fringe-preview-benefit-of-the-doubt, I'm expecting the other performances to be excellent. Katherine Barrett (FB) was also the stage manager, who I'm guessing got the double-duty of holding up the signs and interacting with the characters and generally having a huff when they just expected props to magically go off-stage. Then again, it might have been Rebecca Schroeder (FB), the assistant stage manager. [ETA: GPT clarified on Facebook: "Our sign girl is, indeed, our lovely Assistant Stage Manager, Rebecca Schroeder. Her mother, our illustrious Stage Manager, Kate Barrett, is in the booth!"] Remaining production credits: Logan Allison/FB [Assistant Director], Emma Hatton [Production Assistant]; Kimberly Fox [Marketing Director]; Michael P. Wallot (FB) [Casting Director]; and Oliver Lan [Graphic Designer].

This is a must see at the Fringe. Really. Visit [the show's Fringe Page](#) to book tickets. Remaining performances are: Friday June 10 2016, 9:00 PM; Saturday June 11 2016, 6:00 PM; Monday June 13 2016, 11:00 PM; Wednesday June 15 2016, 11:00 PM; Thursday June 16 2016, 7:00 PM; Saturday June 18 2016, 6:00 PM; Wednesday June 22 2016, 10:00 PM; Friday June 24 2016, 8:00 PM; Saturday June 25 2016, 5:00 PM; and Sunday June 26 2016, 1:00 PM. Performances are at the Sacred Fools Theater (Main Stage) at 1076 Lillian Way.



L TO R: DANNY FETTER, JARED REED, SHIRLEY ANNE HATTON, KIM DALTON, WESLEY TUNISON  
Photo Credit: Rich Clark



JARED REED AS THE TOXIC AVENGER



DANNY FETTER (SINEQUA), KIM DALTON (SARAH), WESLEY TUNISON (DIANE)



SHIRLEY ANNE HATTON AS MARY BABS BELGOOBY