

Puff, puff, giggle

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It's been said before and shall be said again: No one does camp quite like Carl Stewart.

So one must imagine, when he first read the script for "Reefer Madness," he knew it was perfect for his Terrific New Theatre. And when he read the scene with George Washington, Uncle Sam, the Statue of Liberty, Jesus and FDR in a wheelchair - backed by a patriotic ensemble straight out of Decatur's Spirit of America celebration - well, he must've thought he had died and gone to theater heaven.

That's just the tip of the iceberg in "Reefer Madness," TNT's delightful, slightly subversive romp through the off-Broadway musical based on the infamous 1936 film that purported to warn parents about the dangers of smoking pot.

It's a morality tale, spinning the story of Jimmy Harper and Mary Lane, two gee-whiz, golly-willikers high school lovebirds who are determined to live life just like Romeo and Juliet. Trouble is, they haven't read the ending, yet. Jimmy falls under the spell of the dreaded reefer, and his life spins out of control. He ends up on Death Row, after several people have been killed.

Believe it or not, this is all very funny, made all the more hysterical by Stewart's talented cast.

Best of the lot are Neal Hunter Hyde and Callie Hunter as Jimmy and Mary Lane. The two play wholesome and wide-eyed as well as addicted and hell-bound - and they can sing, too.

As the trio that leads them astray, Alec James (who does double duty as Jesus), Jan D. Hunter (Callie Hunter's mother) and Leah Williams hit all the right notes in the high-camp tone that's demanded.

And Tome Reinhart holds it all together with his wry turn as the Lecturer, who narrates the sordid tale as it unfolds.

"Reefer Madness" is not for everyone. But if you go into it with the idea that you're going to have fun, there is absolutely no way that's not going to happen. Just ask George Washington, Uncle Sam and FDR.

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