

'Reefer Madness' revival scores high marks from Hollywood

What do people get when they combine propaganda, Broadway-level theater production, and weed? Reefer Madness: The Musical.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, June 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Reefer Madness: The Musical](#) turns fake news on its head, pointing out the disinformation campaign around cannabis first disseminated in the original 1930s film. The show uses parody and plenty of song and dance to point out the claims made about marijuana, but it doesn't end there. There's an overarching theme of using scare tactics as a means of control, a prevalent practice nearly 100 years after the first Reefer Madness.

The show recently celebrated its 25th anniversary revival with a star-studded premiere in the heart of LA. Celebs like Angelina Jolie, Neve Campbell, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, and Seth Green walked the green carpet, sipped on champagne, and perused a Victory Garden complete with legal cannabis brand activations from Dampen, Sunstone, Blazy Susan, and more.

Kristen Bell, who starred in the original musical production and movie adaptation, told GreenState that while Reefer Madness may be nearly a century old, the story still resonates.

"I think the idea of critical thinking, curiosity, and questioning is always relevant—and it always will be," Bell said. "It's why our country formed a democracy, to begin with: to give people a little bit more freedom of thought. There will never be a time when a satire like this is not relevant."

The event featured notable appearances by celebrities, a chocolate fountain provided by Kiva, and a designated consumption area on a specialized bus, creating a unique atmosphere for attendees. However, the highlight of the evening was the production itself, which stood out as the centerpiece of the cannabis-themed celebration.

Entering the 'Reefer Den'

Attendees shared that the energy inside The Whitley, a 360-degree immersive theater built from scratch in a nondescript building on Hollywood Boulevard, was almost electric. The audience found themselves in the middle of the action, with the cast so close they could literally feel their breath (and, for some, their props).

The actors demonstrated remarkable dedication and energy throughout the entire 90-minute

production. Anthony Norman and Darcy Rose Byrnes delivered compelling performances as Jimmy Harper and Mary Lane, respectively. Nicole Parker, in the role of Mae, captivated the audience with a blend of humor and emotional depth.

Thomas Dekker portrayed Ralph with a convincing intensity, while J. Elaine Marcos, as Sally, added a lively dynamic that kept the audience engaged. The ensemble cast also contributed significantly, enhancing the production with their performances.

Bryan Daniel Porter stood out with his portrayal of seven distinct characters, showcasing impressive versatility and skill. His seamless costume changes and ability to imbue each role with unique characteristics highlighted his exceptional talent.

Porter told GreenState he originally auditioned for the role of Ralph but went full ham when given the opportunity to audition for the multifaceted role he ultimately landed.

"I went to Party City, and I bought some wigs. And I just really over-committed to it and used the movie as a template," Porter laughed.

Reefer Madness ticket holders will laugh, tap their toes in delight to the numbers, find their jaws on the floor during a few moments, and leave the room with a thought-provoking sense of wonder.

Reefer Madness themes extend beyond pot

The irony that a film intended to cement marijuana as a scourge of our society inspired a musical comedy production sponsored by legal weed companies was lost on no one. Porter argued it was fitting, given the mindset of the original film's creators.

"In a way, everybody involved with the propaganda knew that weed was not that big of a deal," he said while puffing on a joint. "But they understood for certain political reasons that they could use it to radicalize people into being scared and, therefore, control."

Several of the cast and crew echoed Porter's sentiments, including lead producer Christian Campbell, who played the lead role of Jimmy Harper in the original 1999 musical production and movie adaptation.

"The show has never really been about cannabis. It's about how power uses religion and flag to punch down on vulnerable groups," Campbell explained. "Reefer Madness has become a proprietary eponym that extends beyond cannabis to encapsulate all bogus government propaganda—particularly how hysterical, illogical, and dangerous this rhetoric can be, not to mention the policy it inspires and promotes."

Bottom line? Reefer Madness: The Musical is not just for pot smokers. The appeal extends beyond weed culture, enticing musical theater fans, advocates for truth, and anyone who wants

to have a fun night (or afternoon) out on the town.

The show offers exceptional value for the price, with [tickets available online](#). Curated events such as drag brunches in the Victory Garden and post-show celebrations at the nearby Cannabis Cafe add to the overall experience. Visitors to the Los Angeles area will find Reefer Madness hard to miss, with a prominent mural on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

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