

Cranked Review - Victoria News

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Andrea Lavigne

Play's convincing actor helps carry message

Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. By using spoken word and hip hop, Green Thumb Theatre's "Cranked" is speaking in a language kids understand and warning teens about the pitfalls of crystal meth.

Cranked has been touring across B.C. since October and will be showcased at St. Andrew's Regional High School Dec. 11.

Written by Michael P. Northey, the script sets the patois of teens against a backdrop of hip hop beats.

The music was written by Kyprios & Stylust, accomplished hip hop artists from Vancouver. Hip Hop and rap greets teens from the moment they enter the auditorium and carries them through the 50-minute production.

Green Thumb Theatre has produced several plays about topical issues, but director Patrick McDonald says the feedback to Cranked has been overwhelming.

"I would say in all my years here teenagers have very rarely posted any kind of reviews (on the web site). We're getting like 40 a day. It's been an unbelievable response."

Dalton Chiuppi posted: "OK, seriously that play was freaking sweet. I love how Green Thumb gets the message out to young kids. It's a great idea and a fun way to do it and I think everyone should support it. Also, the man who was the only character was awesome, good job."

Actor Kyle Cameron stars as Stan, a.k.a. "Definition," a horror film buff and rising freestyle DJ. In the play, Stan locks himself in his mom's basement to prepare for an upcoming freestyle competition. There, he is forced to confront his former crystal meth addiction. Stan struggles with his memories of the films, the meth highs and his music.

McDonald says Cameron delivers a believable performance.

"They buy into a character as a real MC. If it was fraudulent and they ever thought that the Kyle didn't know anything about this culture, then I think it would be like a rock dropping in the bottom of the ocean."

Cameron keeps it real by speaking in the same tongue as teens.

"Sometimes with high school shows there's a language issue and I can understand a school's response to 'I don't want this language or that language.' But in the context of the world of the play you can't cheat the teenage world. Because if you try to cheat the teenage world, then suddenly you're just talking down to them. So we have to allow things like 'hauling ass,'" Patrick said.

Even though it appeals to teens, it doesn't alienate adults.

"Using rap as a hook is genius. You've captured not only the young people, but all that were present, teachers, administrators, everyone," writes one teacher from Nisga'a elementary secondary school. Green Thumb Theatre of Vancouver has been creating plays that explore social issues relevant to youth since 1975. They tour elementary and secondary schools throughout North America with plays that explore issues such as bullying, illiteracy, immigration, family relationships, AIDS awareness and racism. Cranked will appear at St. Andrew's Regional High School at 1:45 p.m., Dec. 11. For more information visit www.greenthumb.bc.ca or call (604) 254-4055.



David Cooper photo

Actor Kyle Cameron stars as Stan, a.k.a. "Definition," a horror film buff and rising freestyle DJ struggling to deal with a past meth addiction.