

Fountain Valley High's "Puffs" is Magically Hilarious

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"Puffs" retells the story of the classic "Harry Potter" series through the eyes of the widely hated, oddball Hufflepuffs. Awkward, wannabe-hero Wayne Hopkins and fellow Hufflepuffs work to save the day in the background of Potter's eventful years at Hogwarts.

Fountain Valley's crafty, personable production of "Puffs" was filled to the brim with student done comedy and raunchy teenage humor. Nathan Ziebarth as Wayne Hopkins, Robbie Macey as Oliver Rivers, and Katie Bell as Megan Jones created the perfect team of three awkward prepubescent best friends with their equal parts gawky and sweet characterization.

All of the Puffs themselves were able to create loveable and distinct personalities, from Paulo Davila's eccentric "imaginary" J. Finch Fletchley to Faith Vu's quiet bullying-victim Hannah. Each Puff delivered a different type of humor and individual physicalities-- Roger Nguyen's theater-kid-esque Ernie Mac to Emmy Luu's depressed Susie Bones.

The Puff house leader, the effervescent and vacuous Cedric, was masterfully portrayed by Clay Waite. His wide-eyed, innocent and ignorantly heroic persona lead the Puffs with confidence and was seen as the cool kid. Yet his ever-present sweet awkwardness disappears in the second act, as Waite instead plays the intimidating and vivacious Mr. Voldy. From his monologue about being bare foot to his rather sensual praising of his minion to his club-kid voguing in a flashback scene, Waite's Cedric and Voldemort combination stole the show.

The intentionally crafty, "low-budget" appearance of specific technical elements of the show added to its self awareness and sense of humor. The use of a children's worm-shaped hamper as a humongous deadly snake and a dragon onesie in the Triwizard Tournament created highly comedic moments that embraced the non-need for over the top technical extravaganzas.

Live sound effects, from a screaming 3-D printed golden egg to the sassy school announcements combined with pre-recorded sound effects created perfect comedic timing. The use of colorful lighting, designed by students, created different color schemes for each different school year, and highlighted romantic moments and death spells. The set's many entrances as well as the outside setting were utilized very effectively by directors to create distinct settings using only actor movements.

"Puffs" is a heart warming tale of young heroes doing their best and the magic of the teenage experience.