

Leave Los Alamitos' "Back to the 80's" Walking On Sunshine

written by Liv Hottinger, a junior at San Clemente High School. March 11, 2022

"Back to the 80's" at Los Alamitos explores the awkward love, struggle for acceptance, and flurry of emotions that come with any high school experience.

Corey Palmer recounts his senior year, full of memories both fond and excruciating. As he chases the doe-eyed Tiffany Houston and the title of class president, Palmer faces opposition from resident jock, Michael Feldman. With a soundtrack of classic 80's hits, the pair's epic rivalry and search for themselves ensues.

Joey Santagata's youthful, innocent portrayal of lovesick Corey Palmer Jr. is positively heartwarming. His meek demeanor and impressive vocal performance fill the stage with an unmistakable energy. Santagata's interactions with soon-to-be lover, Tiffany Houston (Kendal Villa), are the true epitome of puppy dog love. Villa's fun, flirty personality instantly draws your attention, in addition to her impressive dancing. Her soaring vibrato and lush tone perfectly deliver iconic songs, such as "Lost In Your Eyes" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun."

Barron Bliss-Frisinger delivers perfect comedic timing in his enrapturing performance as Michael Feldman. Bliss-Frisinger captures Feldman's egocentric view of the world with bold acting choices and exceptional improv in the face of costume malfunctions. The friend groups of both leads boost character development and create unique dynamics. Tiffany's spunky best friend, Cyndi Gibson (Luna Timmerwilke), is a particular stand-out. From her stunning vocals in "Material Girl" to the energetic dancing, Gibson's commitment to her character is apparent in her choices. Although he has little stage time, Huey Jackson (Tom Curd) commits to his imitation of Michael Jackson and uses a singular white glove throughout the entirety of the show. His enthusiasm is impossibly contagious and his obsession with Michael Jackson is beyond memorable.

The student choreography (Isabella Ruiz) lights up the stage with vivacious, bold movements. Ruiz's ability to create such clean movement within the cast is absolutely incredible. This choreography brings life to each individual number and creates a sense of unity with the ensemble. Costume design (led by Olivia Graser and Miranda Rojas) tackles an impressive 180 costume pieces for both leads and ensemble. Using both flashy colors and iconic 80's fashion statements, Graser and Rojas create a world of color onstage, all while still creating a sense of coherence.

With its incredible soundtrack and cast/crew, "Back to the 80's" is a blast from the past you won't want to miss!