

Mama Says You Can't Back Down! Costa Mesa's Footloose is a Toe-Tapping Triumph
written by Reiko De La Pena, a junior at Newport Harbor

In Bomont, a town muted by fear and strict rules, teenage hotshot Ren McCormack arrives from Chicago, stirring unrest in a community where dancing is forbidden. His defiance sparks a yearning for liberation, proving the freedom to express oneself isn't a mere pleasure, but a necessity of the human heart.

With hands casually tucked in his pockets, Riley Dow delivers a compelling performance of Ren McCormack, commanding the stage with relaxed poise that erupts into high-energy choreography, from smooth moonwalks to striking midair splits that electrify each moment. Magnolia Breslin as Ariel Moore contrasts Dow's calm confidence with rebellious charm as striking as her red cowboy boots, striding with lively flair and punctuating each step with confident hair tosses and flirtatious glances. In "Almost Paradise," Breslin softens her gaze, fingers drifting through her hair as her and Dow's vocals intertwine in a vulnerable duet, transforming past loneliness into shared connection and hope.

Diego Chavez embodies Reverend Shaw Moore's rigid authority through controlled vocals and a firm demeanor. Beneath his sternness, Chavez reveals a man grappling with grief, tightening his posture with restrained expressions to expose cracks in his composure. As his caring wife, Vi (Anne Rasmussen) radiates quiet resilience, her expressive falsetto and gentle gaze convey a nurturing essence as she guides her husband toward compassion. Together, they craft a nuanced portrayal of a fractured marriage, illustrating how love endures even through loss and strife.

Costumes (Parker Dow, Emi Marcus, Anne Rasmussen, Cali Ansari) perfectly execute Bomont's authentic 1980s country aesthetic through denim and flared silhouettes. Open flannels and casual cowboy hats reflect youthful camaraderie, while Chuck's black hat and deep purple wardrobe establish a darker, imposing presence, signaling his dominance and underlying danger.

Utilizing over 300 cues, lighting designer Sofia Sanchez masterfully captures the emotional pulse of Footloose. In "Learning to be Silent," soft, rosy pink hues envelop the stage, evoking intimate tenderness and symbolizing the suppression of women's voices, while the striking magenta tones of "Somebody's Eyes" create a tense, eerie atmosphere, reinforcing the paranoia of constant surveillance. The finale bursts with shimmering disco lights and a rainbow of colors, unleashing a joyous prom-like frenzy that complements the show's dynamic, infectious spirit.

Full of heart, humor, and rockin' energy, Costa Mesa kicks off its Sunday shoes, proving there's always time to cut loose!