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## Rad! Mounds View theatre takes on 1980s adolescence

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ARDEN HILLS — Remember the Rubik's Cube, Max Headroom and The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?

The teenage cast of Mounds View High School's production of 'Back to the '80s: The Totally Awesome Musical' doesn't, but their parents should.

First performed in North Queensland, Australia, in 2002, the play tells the story of the senior class of William Ocean High School in the 1980s, as remembered and seen through the eyes of Corey Palmer, now 30-something.

The Press caught up with the production's director, Victoria Sadek, in a recent email interview. A MVHS English teacher, Sadek has been directing plays for about 25 years and has acted in several productions herself.

Q: Why did you choose this show?

A: The music is really enjoyable, and I thought it would be a fun opportunity for students to learn about the memorable '80s decade. I knew that many of the students' parents were teenagers during that decade and that these adults would enjoy reliving the songs and culture of their youth. This is a relatively new show to the United States and has played very successfully to audiences and sold-out shows in Australia, the UK and Canada.

Q: How large is the cast?

A: Fifty (actors) plus 20 guest stars (MVHS football players, wrestlers, cheerleaders, Viewettes). The crew includes 48 people.

Q: Who plays some of the lead roles, and what are their strongest attributes as actors/singers?

A: The lead female "Tiffany" is played by senior Laura Smith. Laura is a leader and captain in the theatre program, having participated in all eight shows during her years at MVHS. She has a sweet, beautiful singing voice, takes her roles seriously, and spends considerable time making sure she develops a perfect character. As she graduates this year, she leaves behind a legacy of a genuine passion and love for Mounds View theatre and an ability to embrace all newcomers to the program with sincere friendship and a congenial spirit.

- The lead male "Michael" is played by junior Brennan Finn. Although this is Brennan's first show with MVHS theatre, it is obvious that he is a natural actor, dancer, and performer. He's extremely entertaining in his role as the proverbial "bad guy" and will have audiences loving his antics and ultimately rooting for his downfall.



Lead characters Michael Feldman (Brennan Finn) and Tiffany Houston (Laura Smith) strike a pose near some oversized 1980s-inspired props at Mounds View High School. Find more photos at [www.presspubs.com/gallery/](http://www.presspubs.com/gallery/). - Photo by Paul Dols

- Senior Erik Schelter is "Corey Jr." Erik has incredible energy, a positive attitude, and a very evident love for Mounds View theatre. He is a cast captain this spring. He is the eternal optimist, both in real life and in his character.

- Sophomores Dan Keeler and Maria Keeler, and senior Erik Keeler (all play) lead roles. Dan plays the lead, "Corey Sr.," who narrates the play, telling the story of his years in high school during the '80s. Maria plays "Debbie," a devoted fan of the school's biggest geek and outcast. Erik plays "Huey," one of Michael's "posse" and a Michael Jackson wannabe.

- Sophomore Jeff Landby plays "Mr. Lewis." Jeff's incredible singing voice is not to be missed. Audiences will simply love and truly appreciate his renditions of "Man in the Mirror" and "Believe It Or Not." Jeff's work ethic and positive attitude are an inspiration and I look for him to continue to be an important leader and role model during the next two years.

- Senior Scott Seifert plays "Feargal McFerrin." Scottie's new to Mounds View theatre this year, but has proven to be a talented and capable actor. I wish he would have been involved during his other years at Mounds View because he is truly fun to direct; audiences will laugh at his wonderful interpretation as the class nerd.

We have many talented secondary characters and ensemble members who are working just as diligently as the lead characters to create a great show.

Q: Who else gets credit for helping produce this play?

A: MVHS Band Director Phillip Richardson is orchestra conductor; Choir Director Erik Espe is vocal director; social studies teacher EmaKate Brohman is choreographer; and parent Kerry Meier is crew advisor. Student Director Alexandra Hall is a natural leader with a good eye for characterization and movement. Monica Yue, senior pianist, has been with us virtually every day providing critical musical leadership. Parent booster club BRAVO! handles a multitude of details from fundraising to ticket sales.

Q: What is your greatest challenge when staging something like this?

A: Finding an appropriate show that is family-friendly and calls for a large cast.

Q: What is the greatest reward for you?

A: Watching my students start with virtually nothing but a script and ultimately create magic on the stage. High school students are so energetic, creative, dedicated, and lovable. They always impress me with their ability to create a set on stage out of a pile of wood or a magnificent scene with just words, actions, and emotions. They always make me so proud.

Q: How difficult is it for the students to rehearse with all their other commitments?

A: Rehearsals can be challenging, working with a large cast and the inevitable conflicts that arise. We patiently waited for wrestling season to end since three MVHS wrestlers have lead roles (Brennan Finn, Dan Keeler, Erik Keeler) and our season always overlaps with the speech team's season. Fortunately, the speech coach Martha Mathis is supportive and works with us to accommodate everyone's schedule as efficiently as possible. We are currently rehearsing five days a week for approximately three hours per day, with three Saturday rehearsals scheduled.

Q: Are you at an age that you can appreciate all the '80s references?

A: Yes. I found myself often explaining references to the cast and crew. Even the names of the characters in the show cleverly reflect the music and TV icons of the times. This show will greatly appeal to anyone who remembers anything about the culture, music, and fashion of the '80s. All cast members will look like they stepped right out of the era. Audiences will see "big" hair (including a real mullet or two), plenty of blue eyeshadow, legwarmers, and other staples of the time. The music is truly entertaining; I've seen the show elsewhere and each time the audiences clapped and/or sang along.

Q: How difficult has it been finding costuming for this production?

A: Luckily for us, many of the fashion trends from the '80s are back in style. We have some items in our costume shops and it's been fairly easy to find or make cut-off sweatshirts, tank tops, legwarmers, lace gloves and many of the other popular styles from the era. We are fortunate to be able to borrow some vintage clothing from gracious volunteers and students have shopped thrift stores to find what we need (yes, skinny acid-washed jeans are out there). Some students are putting together their own costumes, with help from our student costume mistress, Leah Meier, and our adult volunteer, Melissa Gaul.

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