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# TK Productions deliver a sweet little 13

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Productions about teenagers, featuring teenagers, are often hard to find in Tulsa. Musicals about teenagers, featuring teenagers, are even harder to find. Those voices of youthful rebellion, their defiant “you don’t know my life and you’re gonna listen,” telling tales of the teenage lived experience, are curiously silent. Which is why TK Productions *13*, currently running at the TCC’s Van Trease PACE on 81st makes a welcome appearance. Not that *13* is exploding with youthful rebellion, but it certainly brims over with youthful enthusiasm. Weaving its tale of the teenage lived experience, it makes a refreshing change from yet another children’s fairytale which seems to be the only theatrical vehicle available for teenage voices.

*13* tells the tale of Evan Goldman, a twelve year old, Jewish kid from New York who has just moved to small town Indiana. Here he meets the local geek, Patrice, who develops an immediate crush on him. Desperately wanting to fit in, he offers to help the local quarterback Brett, hook up with the cheer leader Kendra, so that everyone will come to his Bar Mitzvah, and alienates Patrice in the process. What follows is part Footloose, part Grease, a little High School Musical and a whole lot of fun as Evan tries to makes friends, make things right, be accepted and be true to himself.

If the characters are essentially high school stereotypes, the story has enough irreverence and humour to give it a little edge and make it wonderfully engaging. As does the music by Jason Robert Brown, with songs like *Terminal Illness* in which a crippled teenager is enlisted to use his disability to guilt Evan’s mother into buying tickets to an R-rated horror movie. The love song *Hey Kendra* in which quarterback Brett and his boys sing of Brett’s desire for Kendra, vividly describes his wish to tongue her as he kisses her. *It’s A Lie* perfectly encapsulates the speed and inaccuracy of teenage gossip and *Bad, Bad News* sees the guys lament that age old axiom that once a chick comes along, friendship is chucked out the window.

All this is delivered with a remarkable degree of conviction by an enthusiastic, focused and energetic cast of high school teenagers turning in some engaging performances. John Tupy as Evan is suitably self persecuted as he tries to do the right thing and fit in at the same time. Jack Dean is believably attractive and repellent as the self-centred quarterback Brett, who along with his equally believable sidekicks Malcolm, played by Parker Slack and Eddie, played by Zach Johnson, rule the school. Kendra, beautifully realised by Maggie King, and Lucy, her best friend played with a vicious charm by Bailey Grufik, provide some delightful lessons in girl talk and back stabbing. Archie, played by Peyton Grufik, delivers a nicely understated performance as the

manipulative cripple whose heart is really in the right place. The lovelorn Patrice, geek extraordinaire and object of Evan's affections, is wonderfully realised by Riley Burnam who marries her performance with a strong on stage presence and a voice to match. All of whom were ably backed by an excellent supporting cast including Mary McGough, Kalee Brightmire, Sarah Mabardy, Jon Paul Keigley, Isaac Bullen, Holden Dempsey, James MacLeod, Kelly Larson, Caitlin Gibbons, Darcy Tipps and Lucie Peraza

TK Productions *13* doesn't have all the bows and ribbons. It isn't all shiny and polished and brand spanking new. Certainly some voices are better than others and the sparse, black set design, featuring a screen showing images, could have been more imaginative. But *13* has heart and soul and its very rawness hooks you in from the outset. Best of all it shows teenagers talking, singing and engaging with their own concerns, in their own voices, telling their own stories. And the honesty, focus and energy this cast bring are infectious, making this production of *13* one that is often funny, sometimes insightful, always entertaining and not to be missed.

*13* runs at the TCC Van Trease PACE, 81st and Highway.

October 13th– 15th at 7.30. pm

October 15th and 16th at 2.00 pm

Admission \$10.00



**Chris O'Rourke**  
Tulsa Theater Examiner

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