

'Dicks: The Musical' is odd, but also distinguished

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: <<<<

out of <<<<<<

Running Time: 86 minutes

This feature from A24 will be released in several markets including Albuquerque on Friday, Oct. 20.

Off-Broadway productions have been getting film adaptations for some time, with titles like *In the Heights* and *Dear Evan Hansen* being a couple of recent examples. This week sees the release of a musical comedy from one of the more adult-oriented shows staged at this kind of a venue.

In fact, *Dicks: The Musical* is based on a production that has an even more off-color official title. It doesn't have the budget of the titles listed above and, if you're easily offended, has several moments that may cause one to head for the exit. But if you don't mind a mix of expletive-filled songs and gross-out humor, then it is a memorable experience.

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Narrated by a flamboyantly-dressed God (Bowen Yang), the story follows Craig Tiddle (Josh Sharp) and Trevor Brock (Aaron Jackson), two exaggeratedly masculine "Vroomba" vacuum-part salesmen who become competitors when their branches merge. While the performers look nothing alike, we are told that both characters share a remarkably similar appearance.

The two eventually realize that they are identical twins who were separated at birth. One was raised by their eccentric mother Evelyn (Megan Mullally), while the other was cared for by their gay dad Harris (Nathan Lane). After crooning about their not-so-hard trials in life and deciding that their single-parent upbringings were unsatisfying, the two hatch a strange plan. They decide to impersonate each other in order to meet their parents, reunite them and all live together happily ever after. Of course, things do not go as planned.

Leads Sharp and Jackson are the writers and stars of the off-Broadway play. The opening credits announce that they are gay, and their caricatures of alpha-males are amusing to watch. They clearly have a working history and the duo play well off of each other, whether they are butting heads at work or reveling in their newfound brotherhood and family.

And of course, the other established performers are given the opportunity to make the most out of the story's bizarre scenarios. There is a subplot involving Harris's disturbing pets that he calls "Sewer Boys" (which are portrayed by low-grade puppets). The gross-out humor involving these disturbing figures is maximized by Lane, not only in the way he dotes on them, but also how he chooses to feed them.

The film is directed by Larry Charles (*Borat*, *Brüno*, *The Dictator*), who has no issues pushing every verbal and sight gag to its absolute extreme. There is a lot of posturing and unsubtle notes involving body parts and incest. Viewers will also see a few sights that can't be easily erased from memory. This includes the "Sewer Boys," as well as a character's reproductive organs that take on a life of their own.

Most of these odd visuals are accompanied by unique and raunchy songs that poke fun at common stage musical tropes. And a few of them do linger in the brain, including the truly outrageous finale number.

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Not everything in the film works quite as efficiently. For every few gags that land, one or two don't elicit the same level of laughter. It is also clear that this project was created on a limited budget. Some of the musical numbers don't have the grand scale hoped for and many of the sets are obvious studio backdrops with limited dressing (although the screenplay does manage to work in a few jabs at how cheap everything looks).

In the end, *Dicks: The Musical* really goes for broke to sell its message that all love in this world can be, well, kind of gross.... and is generally successful in relaying the idea. It'll turn some stomachs and displease a few viewers not ready for a shock or two, but the movie is both odd and oddly distinguished in its unique approach and original vision.

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