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Surprising hit play 'Jewtopia' appeals to all viewers



Courtesy of Michael Lamont

Bryan Fogel (left) and Sam Wolfson write and star in "Jewtopia," a hugely successful local play that will soon embark on a national tour.

hands. With only minor prior credits to their names, including Wolfson's single line on Fox's "That '80s Show" (which he freely admits nobody has ever heard), no one is as surprised as Fogel and Wolfson about their current success.

"The longer (the play) continues its run, the more bizarre it becomes," said Fogel. "We don't have any sort of Zen calmness. We're totally neurotic, and every show has to be a complete home run or else it's not worth it."

"Jewtopia," a story about two friends, one Jewish and one gentile, who are both obsessed with dating women of each other's denomination, has just recently booked with New York's theatrical agency The Road Company. Plans are under way to start touring much of North America by March.

"Initially we would go on tour with it, but after it was off the ground we'll probably walk away from it," said Fogel. "We love the show, but I can't imagine performing it five years from now."

Fogel and Wolfson met four years ago through a mutual friend after moving to Los Angeles from Florida and Denver, respectively. They became instant friends and began writing together. "Jewtopia" is the first big break for both since entering the world of theater.

"We're like an old married couple," said Fogel. "We fight all the time, but we somehow manage to create jokes in the process."

By combining wacky stories from their own Jewish upbringings, Fogel and Wolfson liven up the stage by playing up the clashing of cultures in a "My Big Fat Jewish Wedding" kind of way.

"People are dying (from laughing) for two hours," said Wolfson. "Perfect for a night

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Currently running in its seventh sold-out month, "Jewtopia," a hilarious play about dating across religions, has exceeded all expectations to become one of the longest running performances in Los Angeles theater history.

Bryan Fogel and Sam Wolfson, the writers and stars of "Jewtopia," are perhaps two of the most unlikely candidates to have a hit play on their

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out."

For the dynamic duo, there are key elements that make a successful play. This includes a receptive audience without which they would cry themselves to sleep after the show, both said. More important for the men's performance is a little witty humor.

"This is not Neil Simon territory," said Wolfson. "It's much more Farrelly Brothers, just a fun, hip Jewish comedy."

And as far as the audience element goes, they promise everyone will enjoy it, regardless of creed, culture or sense of humor.

"We guarantee that you'll find it funny, even if you don't speak English," said Fogel. "If you're an exchange student from China, you'll like it. It's a crazy show for the whole family as long as they're not under the age of 14."

"Jewtopia" is currently playing at The Coast Playhouse. For ticket information, call (877) Tix-4-Jew or visit www.jewtopiaplay.com.

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