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## F#@king Up Everything

At the Tank at 45th Street Theatre as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival

Reviewed by Hilary Tuttle

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PHOTO CREDIT  
Jeremy Handelman

Williamsburg indie-rock club.

"F#@cking Up Everything" tells the age-old story of a nice guy falling for his perfect girl only to be thwarted by his seeming inadequacies and some "How could someone as amazing as you be interested in someone like me?"–fueled drama. Yet inventive, consistent rock music and solid performances elevate this show above the quagmire of cliché.

Noah Weisberg stars as our hero, Christian Mohammad Schwartzelberg, a clever puppeteer and textbook good guy who immediately falls for Kate Rockwell's Juliana. Given that each was the only straight queer studies major at their respective liberal arts colleges, he considers it meant to be when they meet in a

The show is billed in a press release as "a rock musical comedy with heart. And ironic T-shirts," and the performance not only lives up to that description but delivers an enjoyable musical for even the hipster-hating audience member. In fact, the hipster-related humor helps the show and adds depth to the characters. Weisberg's talent is clear in his belting of the songs and his impressive bar mitzvah–gone–rock show dance moves. Christian's Norm Chomsky, Robert Smith (from "The Cure"), and Iggy Pop puppets and his condemnation of "fucking ironic T-shirts with wolves on them" make him a funny, lovable figure. It's easy to root for him.

Neil Haskell as Jake, Christian's rocker best friend and romantic rival, and Jenna Coker-Jones as Ivy, a schoolmate of Juliana's who introduces her to Christian, also deliver strong performances, with great vocals and moments of both humor and depth. Veteran Liz Larsen ups the ante as Arielle, a cougar with whom Christian and Jake's drunken threesome fails; still, her connections help the puppeteer land his aspiring indie-rock princess. Larsen thrives in the spotlight in "Little Boys,"

showing off her well-honed voice and potent skills.

While the plot is unarguably unoriginal, the engaging actors and catchy music, paired with some funny twists and hipster-related humor, make this musical stand out as a fun, rocking show.

*Presented by Jeremy Handelman/Off the Leash Productions as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival at the Tank at 45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St., NYC. Oct. 7–17. Remaining performances: Tue., Oct. 13, 4:30 p.m.; Thu., Oct. 15, 11 p.m.; Fri., Oct. 16, 8 p.m.; Sat., Oct. 17, 11 p.m. (212) 352-3101, (866) 811-4111, or [www.nymf.org](http://www.nymf.org). Casting by Daryl Eisenberg.*

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