



A TOUR OF NO

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A Sitcom Come to Life: The Nerd Transforms WCP into a Live Studio Set

By DEVONGOHDE

WESTFIELD- Closing out their 2025-2026 season with a bang, the Westfield Community Players (WCP) presented Larry Shue's *The Nerd*. Directed by Christopher Peterson, *The Nerd* opened to a packed theatre on opening night.

Set in the early 1980s, *The Nerd* is a slapstick comedy about architect Willum Cubbert (Jason Benjamin), who on his birthday receives an unexpected visit from Rick Steadman (Brad Forenza), an ex-GI who saved Willum's life in Vietnam. Although they have never properly met, Willum stands firm on owing everything to Rick.

However, he is nothing Willum or his friends, Tansy McGinnis (Katy Cockrell) and Axel Hammond (Sean Buckley), expect, as Rick is socially clueless, painfully awkward, and oblivious to social norms, making everyone uncomfortable by interrupting conversations, insisting on playing confusing games, and laughing at inappropriate times. Despite pushback from others, Willum refuses to force Rick to leave, as he

feels morally trapped into making him feel welcome.

The Nerd makes the audience feel as if they are in the live studio audience of an 80s sitcom. Set in just Willum's living room during the show's duration, characters come in at the worst possible moment, conversations overlap, and tension builds in waves, all in one setting reminiscent of single-camera sitcoms.

Forenza, as Rick, is side-splittingly funny from the moment he enters the stage in his makeshift monster costume; the audience is immediately sucked into the antics he pulls throughout the show. Forenza's body language and vocal cadence perfectly encapsulate the typical 1980s nerd.

Bringing the audience to tears of laughter with every line.

Benjamin plays the well-meaning straight man that Willum is wonderfully. Stuck between Rick's antics and his frustrations with the current hotel project he is working on, he tries to keep his laid-back, chill composure. Benjamin, as William, brings another form of comedy, more straight-forward and dry than Forenza's outlandishness. He effectively grounds the play's chaos, providing a steady center that makes the surrounding absurdity even more humorous.

On Willum's side, Buckley effortlessly plays the charming, sarcastic Axel, who pushes Willum to finally

stand up for himself and strive towards what makes him happy. Buckley's way to deliver Axel's quick-witted lines brings a confident energy to the chaos surrounding his friend.

Cockrell as Tansy, the typical modern 80s woman, is the more morally sound one to Axel's sarcastic approach to Willum's dilemma. Although she comes off as more grounded, Tansy brings a lighter, more comedic approach to the show that Cockrell shines with warmth, charm, and wit.

Joe Lozito as William's client, Warnock Waldgrove, who finds himself wrapped up in Rick's antics with his family, wife Celia (Paula Enghrenberg), and son Thor (William Lozito), adds an extra layer of humor, making their scenes both chaotic and highly entertaining to watch. Lozito, as the high-demanding but on-the-edge Warnock, brings a sharp comedic timing to absurdity, with Enghrenberg as the frazzled, struggling-to-keep-it-together wife, bringing an endearing quirkiness. William, as the bratty Thor, is a scene-stealing burst of energy throughout the show as he runs rampant through Willum's party.

Together, this cast is stacked with hilarity and strong comedic energy that is not to be missed. *The Nerd* will be playing on May 8, 9, 15, and 16th at 8 pm. For more information, visit wcptheatre.org or call (908) 232-1221

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