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A hit is detected in 'Bullshot Crummond'

By KRISTAL SEEDEN
FOR THE REGISTER

American Coast Theater Company's summer production of "Bullshot Crummond" emulates the characters and storylines of several eras and genres of film, most notably detective B-movies of the 1930s, serials of the 1940s and cheeky British celluloid like the "Monty Python" series of the 1960s and '70s.

I knew I was in for a treat when the opening scene's "special effects" consisted of a toy airplane gliding down some fishing wire. The use of props and toys to accentuate the lack of an extravagant set added to the campy charm of the play.

Set in the pre-World War II English countryside, the play begins with the introduction of our villains. Otto and Lenya Von Brunno (James Whitson and Susan K. Berkompas) are a German couple plotting to steal a formula to create synthetic diamonds from a bumbling old scientist, Professor Fenton (Markus Parker). The evil pair, who reminded me of Steve Martin-gone-bad and a German version of Natasha from "The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show," capture Professor Fenton.

Our hero, Capt. Hugh "Bullshot" Crummond (Rene Scheys), is summoned to rescue Fenton by the professor's beautiful daughter, Rosemary (Heaven Peabody). The distressed damsel quickly becomes the object of Crummond's affection, sticking to the rules of the 1930s low-budget detective films.

The main roles are supported by several more minor characters – all played hysterically by the same actor (Parker) – including an effeminate assistant, a waiter and an inspector from Scotland Yard with a thick brogue.

The story continues with impossible explanations, wet willies, references to "The Matrix" and "Airplane!" and tons of ludicrous intrigue.

Surely, you would be making a monstrous mistake if you missed "Bullshot Crummond." (And no, I will not stop calling you Shirley.)

"Bullshot Crummond"

Where: Vanguard University's Lyceum Theater, 55 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa

When: On stage through Aug. 10.

Tickets: \$20-\$25

Go for: A phenomenal blend of cliches, comedy and mystery

Information: 714-619-6424 or www.americancoasttheater.org