

# Outrageous Comedy 'Freud On Cocaine' To Open At The Whitefire Theatre

By Contributing Writer

When you hear the name “Sigmund Freud,” what comes to mind? Psychiatry? Dream analysis? The subconscious? The Oedipus complex? Penis envy? Cigars?

What about cocaine? Oh, didn't you know? He absolutely loved the stuff.

Fact: Freud on Cocaine, an outrageous new comedy set to open September 8 at the Whitefire Theatre in Sherman Oaks, is based on a collection of Freud's writings that was edited by his daughter, Anna.

Fact: Freud used up to a gram of cocaine daily for at least a decade. Fact: Freud touted cocaine as a panacea for pain, exhaustion, low spirits, depression and morphine addiction.

Fact: Merck Pharmaceuticals offered Freud free “product” in exchange for his continued research into its medical use.

Fact: Freud slipped cocaine into the love letters he mailed to his German fiancée, keeping their engagement secret from his future mother-in-law.



Fact: Freud convinced his fellow doctor and best friend, Ernst von Fleischl-Marxow, to use cocaine to control Ernst's addiction to morphine after a painful accident.

Fact: While treating patient Emma Eckstein for the “nasogenital” cause of her hysteria, Freud and another doctor cauter-

ized Eckstein's nose with a gram of cocaine, nearly killing her after three surgeries.

Writer and director Howard Skora describes

Freud's feckless applications of the drug to “treat” his patients as “hideous, horrible, terrifying” — hardly the appropriate subject matter for a comedy but for their sheer outlandishness.

“Everything in this play that appears insane is actually true,” he explains. “The comedy comes out of looking at the past through the lens of the present. We see how even someone as brilliant as Freud was a slave to the science of his time.

The data and studies he relied on were published by an American periodical called the ‘Therapeutic Gazette,’ owned by George Davis — the same man who owned Parke-Davis, the largest manufacturer of cocaine at the time.

Until his dying day, Freud insisted that cocaine was not addictive. What scientific beliefs do we hold today that might seem equally crazy in the future?”

“Howard uses the sharp scalpel of humor to delve into the darker issues,” says Bryan Rasmussen, producing artistic director at the Whitefire. “He's an extremely gifted writer of black comedy whose last three plays were all monster successes for us.”

Jonathan Slavin, known for playing “Ron” on Santa Clarita Diet, “Clark” on Dr. Ken, and “Phil Myman” on Better Off Ted, among others, stars in the title role as Freud himself: father of modern psychiatry, one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century, respected doctor, loving husband, devoted father, and drug addict. Freud on Cocaine is based on Freud's “Cocaine Papers,” which contains his letters, notes, dreams and recollections on the therapeutic use of cocaine, some of which were published in 1884 under the title “Über Coca.”

Freud on Cocaine opens Friday, Sept. 8, with performances thereafter on Saturdays at 8 p.m. from September 9 through November 4. There will be one matinee performance on Sunday, Sept. 10 at 2 p.m. General admission to all performances is \$40, with VIP seating (first three rows) available for \$50. The Whitefire Theatre is located at 13500 Ventura Blvd. in Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. For more information and to purchase tickets, call (818) 687-8559 or go to [www.whitefiretheatre.com](http://www.whitefiretheatre.com)