

'American Pie' just another flaky comedy

Despite hype, raunchy film lacking

BY SAMUEL MCKEWN
Editor

I have a hunch that most viewers and reviewers of "American Pie" will shower it with praise, calling it raunchy, sexy, cool and just downright hilarious. That is, after all, the buzz that surrounds a movie that has been compared to "There's Something About Mary."

There will be stories of its near NC-17 rating and people will file into the theaters in anticipation of the grossest gross the world have ever seen.

If my hunch plays out, it'll prove

to me just how little moviegoers expect of films today. Most are anointing comic greatness on this movie from Paul and Chris Weitz.

Well, it isn't that great. It's not even particularly good. It's pretty average, actually - a John Hughes comedy with an extra dose of nudity that's supposed to make us die laughing, as if drinking a cup of semen-filled beer or watching a boy put his little man into an apple pie was really that funny.

"American Pie," a tale about four high school seniors boys trying to lose their virginity by prom, has its humorous moments - they're just too few and too far in between. And as for

The Facts

Title: "American Pie"
Stars: Jason Biggs, Chris Klein, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Thomas Ian Nicholas
Director: Paul Weitz
Rating: R (language, sexuality)
Running Time: 1:37 (97 minutes)
Grade: C
Five Words: "Pie" falls short of hype

those claims from the filmmakers that this is *real* teen living, I laugh. No, this movie is just as cheesy and stupid as most other teen comedies. It aims no higher and fares no better.

But the movie wants to think it does as it introduces Jim (Jason

Biggs), Oz (Chris Klein), Kevin (Thomas Ian Nicholas) and Finch (Eddie Kaye Thomas), the four in search of sexual conquest. We get most familiar with Jim, a smart kid who more or less freezes up when he tries to talk to girls, especially the foreign exchange babe (Shannon Elizabeth).

Oz is a star lacrosse player who gets in touch with his sensitive side in the school choir, where he warms to Heather (Mena Suvari). Kevin is trying to bed down his love-minded girlfriend Vicky (Tara Reid), while the business-minded Finch looks to score women with lies.

Along for the ride is Stifler (Seann William Scott) the jerk that's only popular because of the parties he throws, the worldly Jessica (Natasha Lyonne) and Jim's father (Eugene Levy). Alyson Hannigan is band geek Michelle, who fashions her flute a sexual device.

Out of the ensemble cast, Biggs connects the best with a glib sense of comic timing as Jim. One senses he grabbed the lead based on his face alone, which screws up into contortion during a birds and bees talk with dad. His strip scene gone horribly awry is among the movie's funnier, albeit overly long, pieces.

Klein and Suvari are the only couple that generates any chemistry as Oz and Heather, and their story is sweet, not funny. Kevin and Vicky have no spark, which illuminates the weakness of the actors playing them.

I wouldn't want to spoil the big laughs in movie (which, for me, weren't many), but I expected many more. Paul Weitz, who is credited as the director, had to cut the film three times to achieve a "R" rating. I wonder if he cut out many laughs. I expect an uncut version when the movie hits video stores.

What remains is a movie that does not recognize where its talent lies. The movie literally abandoned Jessica, who's played by the best actress in the movie. Her character is highly underdeveloped. Once again, the women exist merely as objects to acted upon and not as characters themselves. That'd be OK if the movie created indelible male characters, which it doesn't, except for Jim.

And believable? Hardly, which angers me, considering the cast and crew's boasts of its authenticity. Look, no 17-year-old girl (European or not) walks into a boy's room, strips, finds his dirty magazines, masturbates to them, then invites the boy, whom she doesn't know, to have sex with her. She doesn't do it sober, anyway. Ridiculous moments like this are galore. Only a handful are funny.

And unlike "South Park" a brilliant work with twice the raunch, this movie is short on wit. Every good movie, even "There's Something About Mary" has it. Be it a lack of class acting or an over-emphasis on the crass, "American Pie" lacks it, and in the end, seems pretty half-baked.

Music

Blink-182
"Enema of the State"
MCA Records
Grade: B+

Few bands can twist topics of prank phone calling, masturbation and flatulence into a solid record worthy of a second listen. However, Blink-182 are funny guys who make good enough music to warrant such attention.

After beginning its musical career on the tiny independent label Grilled Cheese Records, the band has since surfaced onto MCA Records and has made a big name for itself.

This official band of the "Jim Rome Show" can be seen in the film "American Pie," a movie that captures the bands off-the-wall personality. The exposure has helped launch Blink's latest release "Enema of the State" to a No. 9 debut on the Billboard Top 100.

"Enema of the State" is Blink-182's most balanced record to date. The album is a steady 12 songs that are different enough to keep each number fresh. With new drummer Travis Barker, it seems Blink-182 is now playing a style of poppy punk rock that fits the band's attitude the best.

However, there are no strong hooks on "Enema" which warrant several listens on their own, such as "Carousel" or "Josie" from past

efforts. Where "Enema" lacks in grand tracks, it makes up in continuity. "Enema" thankfully has no comics shorts to break up the music.

Similarly to the past two albums, the first song on "Enema of the State" is its best song, thanks to the vocal styles of guitarist Tom DeLonge.

In fact, most of the better tracks on the record are sung by DeLonge. He twists the melodies of his vocals around more often on "Enema" to add spice to each song he sings, especially "Dysentery Gary" and "All The Small Things."

Bassist Mark Hoppus has a straightforward vocal style, and his tracks are more often centered on failed romantic relationships. His better songs include "The Party Song," which has an intended Nirvana "Come As You Are" reference, and the album's first single, "What's My Age Again."

Unfortunately, there is a lack of any hard punk songs that would add more energy to the album. While it wouldn't help the flow of the record, a rocking song in the vein of "Enthused" would have been a welcomed addition.

Nevertheless, "Enema of the State" is Blink-182's first album that doesn't need sketches to sell itself. The music stands strong on its own.

— Patrick Miner

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