Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: *«««* ***out of*** *«««««*
Running Time: 102 minutes

Over the past thirty years, there have been more than a few coming-of-age teen comedies. The latest arrival is *Booksmart*, another tale of young people spending their graduation night on the town and attempting to find some kind of closure for this chapter of their lives. This wild comedy isn’t perfect and follows some of the typical tropes, but does provide a good helping of laughs, thanks to efforts of its two leads and supporting cast.

Amy (Kaitlyn Dever) and Molly (Beanie Feldstein) are stellar students at their high school, excited to start the next chapter in their lives, but are less successful at navigating social cliques. When Molly criticizes her classmates for their relaxed attitude and boasts that she’s going to Yale, she learns that the other teens are leaving for equally prestigious institutes like Georgetown, Harvard and Stanford. The pair start to regret their choices and set out to make up for lost time by attending a big graduation party and hooking up with their crushes. Unfortunately, they have no address and must scramble around town to try and get to the shindig.

Credit must be given to young Dever and Feldstein as the two protagonists. Early on, their characters are, well, a bit grating (particularly Molly who carries an air of superiority). One can actually understand why some of the students behave dismissively towards them. Thankfully, when they’re together, far more normal and relatable conversations occur, generating plenty of laughs with more natural and improvised chatter (including a funny Autoharp song). When the film travels inside the character’s heads, there are other effective gags, including an imagined

exchange between one of the protagonists and the object of her affection.

The movie features plenty of familiar faces in supporting roles as well, including some amusing run-ins after class with a favorite teacher (Jessica Williams) and the school Principal (Jason Sudeikis), which results in one of the biggest laughs in the feature. Perhaps the most entertaining exchange comes as the pair attempt to threaten and extract information from a Pizza Guy (Mike O’Brien) who has just delivered pies to the desired locale. And there’s a good running joke involving a stuffed panda bear that pays off effectively during the movie’s final scenes.

As mentioned, this reviewer did have a few minor issues. While all of the material mentioned above works well, not every joke or conversation lands quite as effectively. And, of course, there are certain genre conventions that are followed, including a turn into more dramatic territory as the pair has a fight amongst themselves and shout their grievances at one another. And despite some of the unfortunate events that occur, things are tied up perfectly, and all of the kids seem completely at ease with each other by the close. It’s hard to believe given the interactions and animosity between some of the cliques, that everyone would be quite so forgiving the following day.

Still, these are the conventions of the genre, and at least the film occasionally attempts to spin a few elements in a slightly different way. In the end, *Booksmart* may not be the best coming-of-age movie around, but it is a solid comedy that should provide entertainment value for its target demographic, and perhaps even a chuckle or two for those who haven’t been to class in a few years.

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