Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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***Rating:* «««« *out of* «««««**

Running Time: 90 minutes

Over the past couple of years, there have been plenty of coming-of-age comedies about kids growing up, dealing with conflict and strife in their personal relationships and coming away with strengthened bonds. *Good Boys* veers in a slightly different direction, taking its tween leads and putting them in increasingly exaggerated, over-the-top and, well, gross situations. Along the way, they find themselves broaching the barrier into, if not adulthood, then adolescence. Thankfully, there are enough big laughs to earn it a recommendation.

Max (Jacob Tremblay), Lucas (Keith L. Williams) and Thor (Brady Noon) are 12-years-old, inseparable best friends and outcasts who each find themselves at something of an individual crossroads. Thor is dealing with a family-related crisis, Lucas wants to join a surreal school production of the musical *Rock of Ages* but fears being teased by other students, and Max can’t stop thinking about classmate Brixlee (Millie Davis). When the popular kids invite Max to a spin-the-bottle party, the three team up to prepare him for potentially kissing the person he believes could be his future wife. Things go sideways awfully quickly, with the children getting mixed up in drugs, alcohol and drones as they struggle to prepare themselves.

The child stars are sweet, which makes the boorish situations they get themselves into all the

more amusing. Most remarkably, the three have good comic timing and play well off each other. Much of the humor revolves around the trio and all of the school kids posturing too hard to try to convince others of their life experience. Frequently, they misuse terminology and even cuss in bizarre ways that result in unintended double-entendres. It’s fun to see the group try to relay parental advice given to them and mix up the intent, or brag to others in their age group about their knowledge of vices and then resort to childish taunts or terrified screams. The kids even deliver a couple of entertaining physical gags, including a hilariously wince-inducing arm injury.

Things get even sillier when they interact with the older cast members. There are some comical scenes involving a variety of familiar faces that result in hysterical moments. This includes shady business dealings, a drug purchase that goes wrong, as well as an encounter with a cop finishing his shift who does not want to be bothered with hearing the boys confess to him about their activities, skipping school, or being involved in an illegal drug trade.

Admittedly, not all of the material delivered lands. However, the pacing never lags, so even when a couple of lines or gags miss the target, the movie doesn’t flag for too long. This also isn’t a story with particularly high stakes for the characters. Still, the fear, concern and seriousness with which the kids take every ridiculous situation they find themselves in, adds to the entertainment value.

On a personal note, this reviewer also appreciated the overarching themes. The boys often find themselves reassessing their relationships with those they’ve known their entire lives. Many recent movies on the same subject, while impeccably made, seem to resolve their affairs cleanly, strengthening and solidifying unions between the protagonists. This flick should be given credit for, between its cruder gags, dealing more honestly with the changing status and interests linking and breaking apart friendships.

The movie certainly isn’t a classic (and most definitely is an R-rated film not appropriate for younger children or even kids close to the same age as the protagonists), but it does have several enjoyable moments and even subtly manages to deliver a relatable and authentic message. While these *Good Boys* aren’t exactly angelic, their escapades are fun to witness.

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