

Blu-Ray Review: Disney's Sugar-Coated 'Prom' Lacks Tangible Insight

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on September 5, 2011 - 9:52am

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CHICAGO – If your ideal vision of prom is best represented by “Carrie,” then odds are Disney’s “Prom” is not for you. In fact, if you are a high schooler, were a high schooler or may become a high schooler, “Prom” is guaranteed to strike you as monumentally childish. It’s the sort of harmless dreck so mediocre and generic that it could’ve been made in any time period. In a sense, it’s timeless dreck.

See if this sounds familiar: a perky popular overachiever finds herself falling for the long-haired brooding loser with a motorcycle and a criminal record. “He’s a rude, arrogant menace!” she shouts early in the film, thus solidifying that she will undoubtedly end up in his arms at the final fade-out. Seriously, how many “Breakfast Club” retreads and Disneyfied teenage dramas does the human race need?



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

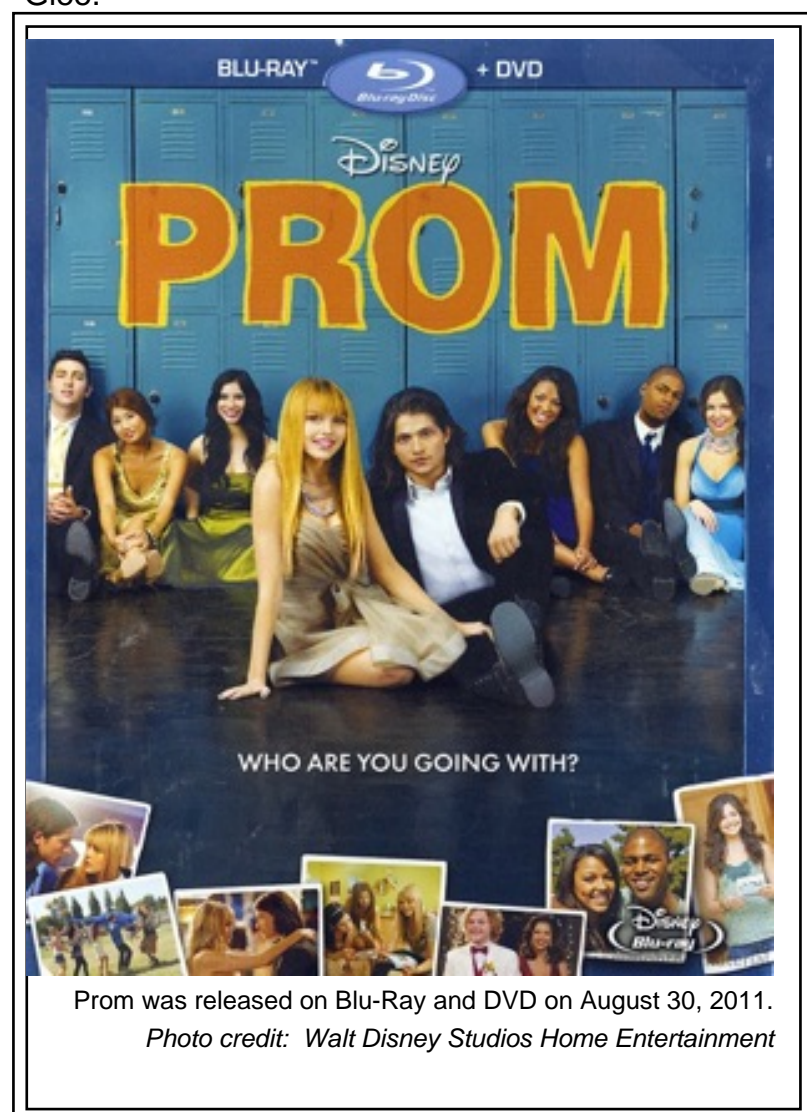
Of course, the real inspiration for this glorified Disney Channel special is “Love Actually,” Richard Curtis’s beloved romantic comedy of interlocking lives. The picture was gift-wrapped especially for the 2003 Christmas season, and has since inspired some the laziest Hollywood films in recent memory. It’s a simple formula: producers choose a holiday weekend, gather a bunch of contractually obligated stars and hurl them into a blender of melodramatic clichés. “Pretty Woman” helmer Garry Marshall has already made a reputation-tarnishing career out of churning out these forgettable money-makers, namely “Valentine’s Day” and the upcoming “New Years Eve.” Yet even though “Prom” was released on April 29th of this year, it failed to find an audience. Perhaps it was due to a lack of bankable names in the cast. Perhaps it was due to the bland direction from Joe Nussbaum, the same hack behind “Sydney White” and “American Pie Presents The Naked Mile.” Or perhaps it’s simply because Hollywood screenwriters have used the “Love Actually” formula as an excuse to stitch together a series of half-baked sketches and pass it off as a motion picture. The “Prom” script by Katie Wech requires the fresh young ensemble to struggle through undeliverable lines like, “The tuxedo is the ultimate symbol of conformity,” and “Prom...that soul-crushing mistress!”



Aimee Teegarden stars in Joe Nussbaum's Prom.

Photo credit: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

Aimee Teegarden of "Friday Night Lights" fame emotes admirably as Nova the Overachieving Heroine, but her central story thread is the least successful of the bunch. There's also a manipulative jock (DeVaughn Nixon), a pair of geeky sophomores (Nolan Sotillo and Cameron Monaghan), and a clueless loser (Nicholas Braun of "Red State") with no girl to take to the big dance. Braun isn't just afraid of women, he's a colossal moron. When a girl shows interest in him but confesses that she's already taking a friend to prom, Braun hangs his head in despair. Why doesn't he just ask her to hang out another night? Because "Prom" blows its titular ritual so exponentially out of proportion that the kids act as if they are asking for each other's hands in marriage. Nussbaum and Wech's depiction of prom as a unifying event is entirely wrongheaded. Everyone that's stepped foot in high school knows that prom is merely an uneasy meshing of cliques. "Prom" shows what high school would look like without sex, drugs, profanity, bullying, peer pressure, homosexuality and acne. Take all those ingredients away, and what are we left with? A feature-length "Mickey Mouse Club" episode from 1955. Sorry Disney, but this fluff is far too innocent for the era of "Glee."



"Prom" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French, Spanish and Descriptive Video Service audio tracks, and comes equipped with a DVD copy of the film. A 10-minute short edits together additional scenes of Braun's ultra-pathetic attempts at finding a date for prom night. The extra screen time allows Braun to sport a Jay Baruchel-like timing, and some of his self-deprecating quips are genuinely amusing, such as when he answers his phone with the line, "Purgatory, can I help you?" In a five-minute featurette, the filmmakers claim that they were attempting to capture an "authentic version of adolescent life" loosely based on the experiences of first-time feature screenwriter Wech. Nussbaum says that prom is an ideal topic for comedy because it inherently heightens the emotions of its participants to a ridiculous degree. Yet if this painfully sincerely exercise in saccharin sentiment is supposed to function as satire, I suggest that Nussbaum not only go back to the drawing board but back to film school.

Rounding out the extras are a brief blooper reel and no less than seven music videos featuring the work of "Allstar Weekend," "Neon Trees," "Moon," "Those Dancing Days," "Girl in a Coma" and Nolan Sotillo, a YouTube sensation who actually delivers a charming performance in the film as lovesick sophomore Lucas. Nussbaum and co-producer Justin Springer do a fine job hosting the disc's seven minutes of deleted scenes, and their diverting banter could've easily been stretched into an audio commentary. Most of the cut scenes are merely unnecessary beats, but there's one moment involving Nova's brooding beau Jesse (Thomas McDonell) that absolutely should have been left in the film. It takes place during a humiliating tuxedo fitting where the young hothead resists the urge to pummel a group of bullying peers. It's a tame scene but it's also an honest one, not to mention the only scene of teenage bullying to be found on this disc. More moments like this might've made "Prom" more substantial and less infuriating.

'Prom' is released by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment and stars Aimee Teegarden, Thomas McDonell, DeVaughn Nixon, Danielle Campbell, Yin Chang, Jared Kusnitz, Nolan Sotillo, Cameron Monaghan, Kylie Bunbury, Joe Adler, Janelle Ortiz, Jonathan Keltz and Nicholas Braun. It was written by Katie Wech and directed by Joe Nussbaum. It was released on August 30, 2011. It is rated PG.



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