

Blu-ray Review: Interminable 'American Reunion' Lacks Laughs, Reason to Exist

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CHICAGO – The sex comedies of Judd Apatow have rendered “American Pie” passé, but that certainly isn’t going to stop the franchise from pumping out paychecks. When compared to “The 40-Year-Old Virgin” and “Superbad” (not to mention Lena Dunham’s “Girls” series), the “Pie” farces are shallow and sophomoric. No wonder they’re most popular among junior high schoolers.

Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg’s “American Reunion” revisits the sex-crazed friends in their ’30s, and like “Scream 4,” the film has no reason to exist, except to increase sales of its predecessors. The adolescent antics that used to make these characters endearing are now off-putting. Like Joe Pesci in “GoodFellas,” Seann William Scott’s irrepressible character of Stiffler bullies the guys into doing moronic things for fear of losing their masculinity. Scott has proven to be funny elsewhere (see “Role Models” and “Goon”), but a little of Stiffler’s act goes a very, very long way.



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

As “American Reunion” opens, it’s clear that marriage and kids have served as little more than roadblocks in Jim’s tireless pursuit to get laid. As played by Jason Biggs, Jim seems no less neurotic and wide-eyed than he was in high school. It’s not long before his eyes start ogling the hot teen, Kara (Ali Cobrin), that he used to babysit next door. Cobrin is the one beguiling discovery of the picture, and she nails the girlish exuberance of a lustful virgin who secretly harbors a crush on the married man (when Jim says that he can’t come to her party, Cobrin finds the perfect note for Kara’s shameless line, “I want you to come so bad!”). As Jim’s sexually frustrated wife, Alyson Hannigan spends most of the time looking haggard and bewildered, while the script gives her literally nothing to do. Meanwhile, the insufferable Stiffler dominates the screen time, spanking women at work as if he were on “Mad Men,” while stomping around in self-righteous indignation. When he stumbles uninvited into his friends’ high school reunion, Jim and the gang (including Chris Klein, Thomas Ian Nicholas and Eddie Kaye Thomas) can’t help succumbing to his streak of idiocy. Stiffler attempts to convince Jim that it will help his waning marriage if he sleeps with Kara. This leads to an absurd but admittedly funny set-piece where Jim must smuggle a drunk and topless Kara into her home, while Stiffler foolishly attempts to distract her parents.



Ali Cobrin shines opposite Jason Biggs in Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg's American Reunion.

Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment

As usual, Eugene Levy earns the film's biggest laughs as Jim's amiable but wildly inappropriate pop, who bumbles his way into an affair with Stiffler's buxom mom, played by a woefully underutilized Jennifer Coolidge. If more time had been spent on the scenes between these two enormously funny Guest ensemble members, the film would've improved as a whole. Instead, Hurwitz and Schlossberg seem weirdly preoccupied with the franchise's least interesting specimens, such as Tara Reid and Mena Suvari's bland female eye candy. After its shrill and increasingly unfunny midsection (set at—what else?—a Stiffler party), the film falls apart during its yawn-inducing third act, where characters are required to reconcile while delivering "serious" dialogue that would be deemed too cliché for a daytime soap opera. It's like watching the cast of "Porky's" endure a mid-life crisis. Since these characters are of so little substance, it's impossible to become emotionally invested in their plight. It's obvious that the days of "American Pie" are in the past. In fact, the only thing in this picture that doesn't feel retro is its Apatowian instance of male frontal nudity, courtesy of Mr. Biggs.



American Reunion was released on Blu-ray and DVD on July 10, 2012.

Photo credit: Universal Studios Home Entertainment

"American Reunion" is presented in impeccable 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, Spanish and

French audio tracks, and includes Blu-ray, DVD, UltraViolet and digital copies of the film. Extras include over a half hour of additional footage, though most of it is in the form of extended scenes. There's some very funny riffing between Thomas and the criminally wasted Natasha Lyonne, who's featured prominently in the poster, but has about two minutes of screen time in the final cut. Klein's inexplicable hip hop dance routine can be viewed in its entirety, but Gilbert Gottfried's winning dance is apparently as nonexistent as Gottfried's Aflac career. The gag reel is funny primarily for an axed bit involving Levy as he clumsily attempts to place his arm over Coolidge's shoulder while observing, "Your chest is very meaty." Viewers who didn't get enough of Biggs's penis the first time around will be delighted by the alternate takes of his painfully awkward nude scene.

Biggs and Scott host the Blu-ray's "Out of Control" visual commentary track, where actors randomly pop up to riff on various scenes. On their audio commentary track, Hurwitz and Schlossberg highlight various homages and in-jokes included for the franchise's fans, and admit that their background in "Harold and Kumar" comedies is apparent in some of the film's more surrealistic flights of fancy. It's clear that the directors have every intention of making a sequel, though "Reunion"'s middling box office in the U.S. makes that somewhat unlikely. However, the film certainly serves its function to renew interest in the original trilogy, as evidenced in the disc's yearbook stuffed with clips from previous pictures, each ending with a snapshot of their respective Blu-ray releases. It's only a matter of time before we'll be seeing Biggs, Scott, Klein, Nicholas, Thomas, Reid, Hannigan, Suvari and Lyonne playing a group of horny geriatrics in "American Nursing Home," followed by "American Morgue" and (god willing) "American Afterlife."

'American Reunion' is released by Universal Studios Home Entertainment and stars Jason Biggs, Seann William Scott, Chris Klein, Thomas Ian Nicholas, Eddie Kaye Thomas, Eugene Levy, Ali Cobrin, Tara Reid, Dania Ramirez, Alyson Hannigan, Mena Suvari, John Cho, Jennifer Coolidge and Natasha Lyonne. It was written and directed by Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg. It was released on July 10, 2012. The theatrical cut is rated R.



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