

## DVD Review: ‘American Teen’ Doesn’t Graduate With Lackuster Release

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 17, 2008 - 1:50pm

- [American Teen](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Colin Clemens](#) [4]
- [DVD & Blu-Ray Review](#) [5]
- [DVD Review](#) [6]
- [Hannah Bailey](#) [7]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [8]
- [Jake Tusing](#) [9]
- [Megan Krizmanich](#) [10]
- [Mitch Reinholt](#) [11]
- [Nanette Burstein](#) [12]
- [Warsaw Community High School](#) [13]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [14]

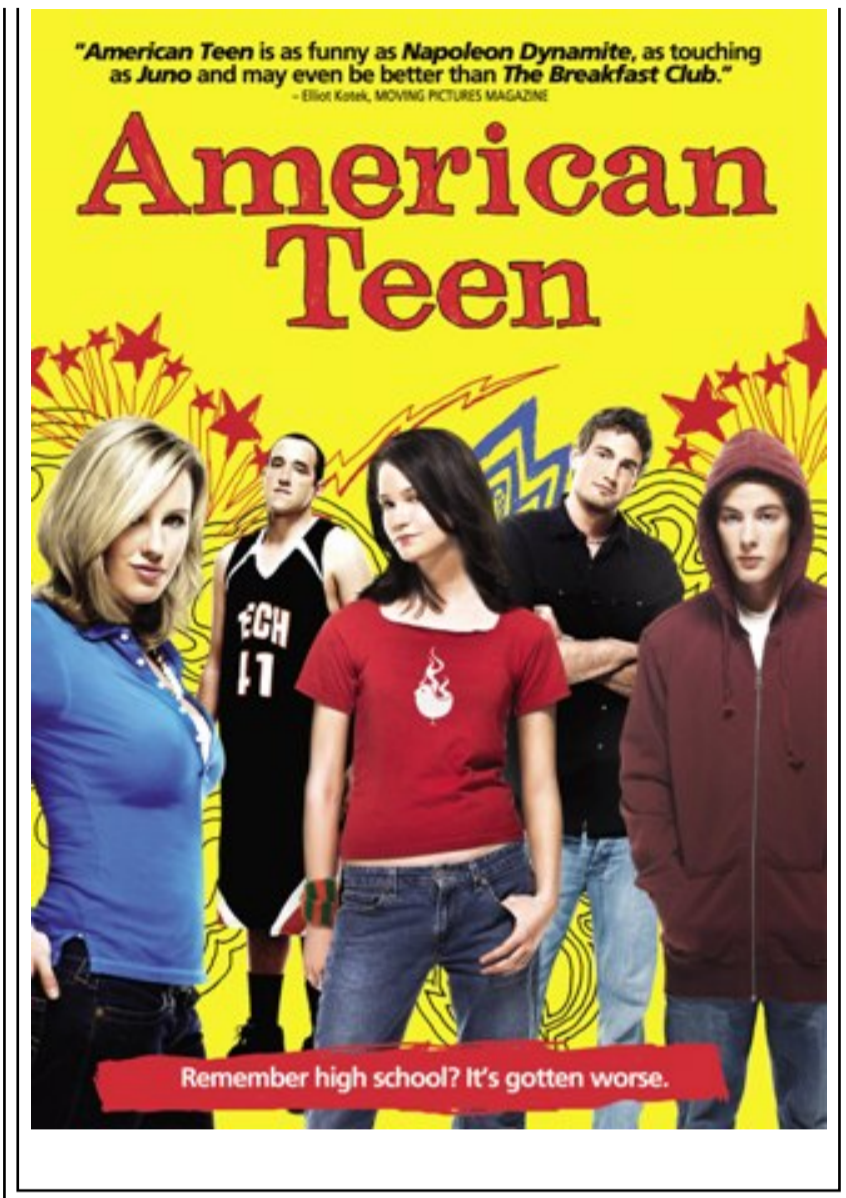
CHICAGO – The concept of “American Teen” is undeniably interesting but the execution is another story and the DVD assembled by Paramount to bring this acclaimed film to home audiences is a disappointment on nearly every level.

Before even getting into the quality of the film or the disputed believability of Nanette Burstein’s “Breakfast Club for the ’00s”, the DVD for “American Teen” misses an opportunity that a movie like this one needs to provide on the home market - updates. Audiences who fell for the kids of “American Teen” will obviously want to know what happened after senior year in Indiana. But Paramount gives them nothing. The dearth of special features on “American Teen” is remarkable, even for a low-budget documentary.



The fact is that, despite the film’s relative success on the arthouse/documentary scene, most people will be coming to “American Teen” for the first time. Knowing that, Paramount made the special features an afterthought, keeping the focus on the movie itself. In today’s market of increasingly interactive and updated bonus features, that’s not acceptable, especially for a movie that seems so easy to expand upon with behind-the-scenes details and updated interviews.





The conspiracy theorists around "American Teen" would point at the lack of special features and say that it's a case of not being able to see the "man behind the curtain" and I'm not sure they're wrong. Perhaps there are no behind-the-scenes interviews because then the facade that this is even really a documentary would collapse. Nanette Burstein reportedly followed five teenagers and their friends on their senior year in high school but many critics cried foul, claiming that the kids in "American Teen" were closer to actors than real people. I have to admit that "American Teen" feels to me about as genuine as MTV's "The Hills" or Paris Hilton's "The Simple Life". Yes, the people on those shows are real but their behavior and even dialogue is influenced by the people behind the camera.

Whether or not that makes the film genuine, "American Teen" does have a few interesting things to say about life in the Midwest and the common teenage desire to get away from it. What do the jock, geek, heartthrob, prom queen, and rebel of "American Teen" have in common? They all want to escape something. Almost everyone at Warsaw Community High School dreams of a college other than the one closest to their hometown and the teenager's pursuit of athletic scholarships, specific schools, and California dreams is the most interesting material in the film. The back of the DVD touts "five very different viewpoints" but what's most interesting about "American Teen" is that they're not that different at all.

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As for the aforementioned special features on Paramount's "American Teen", which will be available exclusively at Target, they are shockingly inconsequential. Sure, there are some amusing deleted scenes, including the longest awkward build-up to a kiss in the history of cinema, but the package is a missed opportunity. There are simple EPK-style, cast interviews, blogs by Hannah, character trailers, and the deleted scenes. That's it. It looks like we'll have to hope for "American Teen 2" to catch up with the stars of Warsaw High.

*American Teen is released by Paramount Home Video on DVD and was produced and directed by Nanette Burstein. It will be released on December 21st, 2008, exclusively at Target.*



[16]

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