

## Low Grade on Report Card For ‘Easy A’ With Emma Stone

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 18, 2010 - 7:37am

- [Amanda Bynes](#) [2]
- [Easy A](#) [3]
- [Emma Stone](#) [4]
- [Fred Armisen](#) [5]
- [Lisa Kudrow](#) [6]
- [Malcolm McDowell](#) [7]
- [Movie Review](#) [8]
- [Patricia Clarkson](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Penn Badgley](#) [11]
- [Stanley Tucci](#) [12]
- [Thomas Haden Church](#) [13]



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO - “Easy A” is simply a hard film to swallow. Set in a high school on another planet, it wants everything and ends up giving very little. The cast is game - Emma Stone, Patricia Clarkson, Stanley Tucci, Thomas Haden Church and Lisa Kudrow - but with few exceptions the players cannot handle the lead balloon banter that passes for jokey dialogue. It wants also to be a grand statement on gossip and those who get hurt by it, but perky Stone doesn’t seem that affected.

In one of the oddest premises in awhile, Olive (Emma Stone) begins a rumor with her best friend that she lost her virginity during a boring, stay-at-home weekend. Rhiannon (Alyson Michalka) starts to spread the rumor and suddenly it snowballs into Olive becoming a loosey-goosey skank. It seems to effect the Christian Coalition at the school, led by Marianne (Amanda Bynes) and infiltrates into the classroom of Olive’s favorite teacher, Mr. Griffith (Thomas Haden Church, miscast). He’s teaching Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter,” which will play out later.

Because of the rumors, Olive’s friend Brandon (Dan Byrd) approaches her with a proposition. To sway the bullies that torment him because he is gay, Brandon asks Olive to “pretend” that he has slept with her. This starts a whole “service” that Olive provides, allowing her new reputation to make the student population believe that she has been with most of the so-called losers in the school. This escalates the whole premise into absurdity, much to the chagrin of Olive and her progressive parents (Patricia Clarkson and Stanley Tucci).

When her back is against the wall, Olive reacts by starting to dress provocatively and wearing a scarlet “A” on her clothing. The guidance counselor (Lisa Kudrow, who also teacher Mr. Griffith’s wife), can’t get through to her a one-to-one level, and Olive finds out that she is cheating on Mr. G. The situation goes from bad to worse when Olive accidentally tells her favorite teacher that his wife is cheating on him, and even her best friend has rejected her because of this wicked reputation.



A-Em: Emma Stone as Olive in 'Easy A'  
*Photo Credit: Adam Taylor for © Columbia Tri-Star*

Olive must come up with a solution to her misinterpreted bad rep, and garner the attention of the only boy she's ever been attracted to – the school mascot Woodchuck Todd (Penn Badgley).

Giving Emma Stone some credit, she takes a tissue thin premise and works the heck out of it. But it is nearly impossible to believe that one, this kind of information about a fellow student would cause such a stir, and two, the whip-smart and striking-looking Olive character would care to allow such a thing to escalate. It becomes unlikely for the character to keep throwing gasoline on the fire, for example taking payments from the geeks for the pretend couplings. There is something odd and cold about the seemingly material-free style that Olive and her family emulates that has Olive collecting fees for such "service."

The high school movie with the students acting like 40-year-olds is also tiresome. Everybody who is not a acknowledged geek in the film are handsome and beautiful beyond belief. There is a point in the film where Olive goes out with a dude who seems like he is Woodchuck Todd, but ends up being her ex-best friend's old flame. It was difficult to tell the difference between the chiseled features of the twentysomething stud muffins playing high school suitors. Also a sequence where Olive dresses and vamps like Tim Curry in "Rocky Horror Picture Show" in front of the school fell into the chance of actuality meter between slim and none.

The Scarlet Letter background story is shoehorned in. First, Olive has to explain it to everyone (via her narrative device voiceover) what the whole purpose of the book is, and even afterward I don't know if the unfamiliar would get it. If the movie were to catch on, they might become a fashion statement. There were stick-on scarlet "A's" given out at the promotional screening, and women (and some men) were wearing them without a touch of irony.

The casting was also weird. Malcolm McDowell of "Clockwork Orange" plays the school principal for some reason (paycheck). Oscar nominees Thomas Haden Church, Patricia Clarkson and Stanley Tucci all are in supporting roles to a teen soap opera. Church looked particularly lost, mouthing the too-hip teacher role like he had rocks in his mouth. Emmy winning Lisa Kudrow is shrewish and harsh as the cheatin' heart guidance counselor, and every time her and Olive have a scene, the character became more unwelcome. Finally, "Saturday Night Live"'s diminutive Lothario, Fred Armisen, gets to pontificate about adultery while playing a minister. In many ways, that was the funniest scene, considering his recent personal life.





Mother Knows Best: Emma Stone as Olive and Patricia Clarkson as Rosemary in 'Easy A'  
Photo Credit: Adam Taylor for © Columbia Tri-Star

Stanley Tucci and Patricia Clarkson, as Olive's parents, were grateful highlights, taking sticky dialogue and somehow making it work. They were almost too slick, coming off as the coolest parents in the world while proclaiming lines that seemed more at home in a parlor comedy on the West End. But Clarkson is always a pleasure to experience and she had some nice chemistry with Emma Stone.

Nobody had a high school like this, but the movie wasn't even smart enough to create a social satire set in a high school. One of its notable sins was to do an homage to the great teen movie director John Hughes, to somehow compare their leaden meanderings to his stellar moments. To use a popular athletic analogy, "Easy A" couldn't carry the jock strap of John Hughes.

*"Easy A" opens everywhere on September 17th. Featuring Emma Stone, Amanda Bynes, Thomas Haden Church, Patricia Clarkson, Lisa Kudrow, Stanley Tucci, Malcolm McDowell, Fred Armisen and Alyson Michalka. Screenplay by Bert V. Royal, directed by Will Gluck. Rated "PG-13"*



[14]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [15]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [14]

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