

Good Times Do a Snowball Roll in Fun ‘Project X’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 2, 2012 - 9:22am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The legendary high school party is often the myth of memory than actual events, but most people have been there, and that is what makes “Project X” so much fun. Thomas Mann, Oliver Cooper and Jonathan Daniel Brown are the party masters, rocking in Pasadena, California.

There is something weirdly voyeuristic about seeing a party go out of control, and “Project X” rolls off the tracks with fireworks to spare. What makes it work is that it’s always conscious of the shadowing civility in the real world, but chooses to toss that in the pool without looking back. The more outrageous the anarchy becomes, the more epic the party and the celebration is, even when the inevitable break down occurs. Plus the production is sharp and tight, with not a wasted frame of the good times, and even the aftermath includes a certain awareness.

Thomas (Thomas Mann) is celebrating his 17th birthday, on the same weekend his parents are out of town. One of his best buds, Costa (Oliver Cooper), dubs the potential celebration of that birthday “Project X.” He has even retained the services of school videographer Dax (Dax Flame) to record all of the impending events. Thomas and Costa recruit their other pal, J.B.(Jonathan Daniel Brown), to help plan the party-of-the-century, and turn to social media to invite virtually the whole town of Pasadena, California.



L-R: Jonathan Daniel Brown (J.B.), Oliver Cooper (Costa) and Thomas Mann (Thomas) in ‘Project X’
Photo credit: Beth Dubber for Warner Bros. Pictures

What starts as a plea from Thomas to have 50 people maximum, soon escalates into hundreds of celebrants, as the pool, property and house become engorged by the party monster. Thomas tries hard to tamp down the noise and size, to less and less success. Everything and everybody capitulates to a riotous celebratory state and the house, neighborhood and city explodes with the unforgettable event.

The one camera point-of-view is effective, giving the expanding celebration an intentional documentary feel. First time director Nima Nourizadeh also blends in the ubiquitous phone footage of the various patrons of the soirée, which adds to the escalation of the absurdities. This is one big farcical event, a "what if" of monumental proportions, and the screenplay by Matt Drake and Michael Bacall somehow grounds it in a scenario that taken together might actually happen. They even throw in a little father/son moment after the chaos.

The three main guys are also a key to maintaining the frantic pace. Thomas Mann is a perfectly nebbish character to deflower, and using his 17th birthday party for a transition has a "Risky Business" feel. Oliver Cooper is the obnoxious motivator nicknamed Costa, but still manages to be a facilitator, in both escalating the happening and trying to rein it in. Cooper has a charm that overcomes the negative aspects of the ambitious attention seeker, and is balanced on the other side of the trio by low-keyed J.B. character of Jonathan Daniel Brown, who has his own dragons to slay.

There are several elements associated with the party that pan out to good-time results including garden gnome baseball, an air-filled bouncing castle that is put to a couple good uses and a revenge-of-the-pot-dealer that has a helluva payoff. There is the usual use of partial girl nudity as a tease, but an epic party can't be complete without some skin show. Perhaps a little male exposure could have balanced that R-rated stereotype.



Everyone's in the Pool and Everywhere Else in 'Project X'
Photo credit: Beth Dubber for Warner Bros. Pictures

This is just damn fun, it's kind of stupid to try and analyze it. It is put together in a way to participate without being there. In essence, the stench of the beer and smoke, the horror/delight of random property damage and the sheer joy of being young, stupid and in an altered state is properly honored. There is nothing wrong with a little rave against the "man" in a story like this, plus fulfilling the wish of an epic high school memory, one that would never go away.

A nice interactive game with "Project X" is to keep a scorecard on all the party activities shown in the film that you have participated in over the years, or maybe the reason you can't remember them is that you never did them. Regardless, when the phenomenon of a great party becomes legendary, print the legend.

"Project X" opens everywhere in on March 2nd. Featuring Thomas Mann, Oliver Cooper, Jonathan Daniel Brown, Dax Flame, Peter Mackenzie and Pete Gardner. Screenplay by Matt Drake and Michael Bacall. Directed by Nima Nourizadeh. Rated "R"



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