

‘22 Jump Street’ is a Proud Bargain Bin Blockbuster

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 13, 2014 - 7:58am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “22 Jump Street” is a big budget Hollywood sequel that actively comments on the diminishing returns of sequels. Directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller know that for every “Lethal Weapon 2,” that manages to surpass the original, there are a dozen “Another 48 Hours” that try and fail to give audiences an approximation of what they enjoyed before.

The original “21 Jump Street” succeeded because it wrapped its own crappy jokes in a cocoon of meta commentary and irony. If anything “22 Jump Street” takes that element to even more hyper self aware extremes, but it also risks becoming its own self fulfilling prophesy.



My Old School: Schmidt (Channing Tatum) and Jenko (Jonah Hill) in '22 Jump Street'

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

The plot sends the team of Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill undercover in college to sniff out the supplier of a new drug after a young girl's untimely death. The drug is called why-fy and it offers 4 hours of adderal-type laser focus followed by an acid trip. This time it's Tatum who falls in with the frat boys and football players. He's having the time of his life and befriendng a quarterback nicknamed zook (Wyatt Russell). Meanwhile Hill falls in with the art student crowd and gets to know a girl (Amber Stevens) who lived across the hall from victim.

If all that sounds familiar, that's because it's the exact same plot as the first film, and Lord and Miller and the entire cast are there to point it out at seemingly every opportunity. There are also jokes about the presumably bigger budgets in sequels, the extra costs and higher expectations. The filmmakers find inventive ways to comment on the production itself, including a chase scene where Tatum and Hill try to

divert their vehicle to less expensive locales to save the production money. Ice Cube is back doing his take on the angry black police captain archetype. He gets in one of the movie's slyest jokes commenting on the cost of his footwear which will sadly go unseen by the movie-going audience.

The script's two go-to punchlines are old jokes, and gay jokes. The jokes about how old these supposed college freshman look, while positively ancient themselves, are much more effective. Jillian Bell plays an annoyed roommate and gets most of the best lines.

Tatum and Hill also take the modern bro-mance comedy to its uncomfortable extremes. They bicker like an old married couple who know each others rhythms like the back of their hands. But they continue to make an appealing comedy team. Their ying and yang chemistry provides a constant jolt of energy for material that is admittedly nothing special in the first place. That material also piles on the gay jokes and homoeroticism to a wearisome degree.



Captain Dickson (Ice Cube) Returns in '22 Jump Street'

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

The visual jokes come fast and furious. At times directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller approach "Airplane" style lunacy in their anything-fo-a-laugh aesthetic. But knowing that you're repeating yourself and making fun of yourself for it doesn't necessarily make it that much funnier.

The film hums along with a steady stream of chuckles, but never produces any big laughs. The film ends with a seemingly endless series of premises for sequels, complete with posters and taglines of widely varying degrees of effectiveness. They all seem scarily plausible though – let's hope this series quits while its ahead.

"22 Jump Street" opens everywhere on June 13th. Featuring Jonah Hill, Channing Tatum, Wyatt Russell, Ice Cube, Nick Offerman and Peter Stormare. Screenplay by Michael Bacall, Oren Uziel and Rodney Rothman. Directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. Rated "R"



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