

## ‘Good Boys’ Misses the Mark But Manages to Land

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 16, 2019 - 5:08pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The innocence of childhood is about to be wrecked for the gazillionth time, c’est la vie. “Good Boys” is a raunchy film with foul-mouthed middle schoolers going on wacky adventures. The pretzel logic to set up these adventures are weak, but the core of the conclusion is the strength.

Forcing the boys who play the roles to spew some of the stupid lines and do some of the actions bordered on child cruelty, but the likability of the crew eventually pulls it off. The film is best when it focuses on common childhood angst like the first mix with the opposite sex and how friendships change when time marches on. This is actually toward the end of the film, as the boys do everything else to get to a “kissing party” that one of the popular kids are throwing. That everything else includes sex dolls, wanton destruction and drug buying. Yeah, that’s gonna happen. There is a lot to wade through to get to the point, which might have been just as effective without the high concepts.

The “Bean Bag Boys” – Max (Jacob Temblay), Lucas (Keith L. Williams and Thor (Brady Noon) – have been friends since childhood, but are moving together to middle school and sixth grade. On their first day, they score early with an invitation to a party with the popular kids, but learn also it’s a “kissing party,” and they don’t know how to kiss. Max then borrows his Dad’s drone to spy on neighborhood teens to learn how.





Keith L. Williams, Jacob Tremblay and Brady Noon in ‘Good Boys’

*Photo credit: Universal Pictures*

That was his first mistake, which leads to a series of adventures which includes lots of drone mishaps, a couple of teenage girls who are their rivals and misunderstandings having to do with a surprisingly easy access to a bunch of sex toys. Past those dreary high concepts, there is the core of the Bean Bag Boys friendship, which ultimately rules their destinies after all.

The writing reminded me of TV sitcoms, and co-writer/director Gene Stupnitsky is a veteran writer/producer in that medium, for “The Office” and “Hello Ladies.” Those are more sophisticated series, and it’s surprising that the film goes so weirdly absurd regarding the boy’s dilemmas until near the ending. That is when the relationships take over, and like a good TV sitcom drives the heart of the matter. Afterward, I wished that the production could have come up with better or more interesting set-ups, but at least I walked out liking the “good boys.”

The charm of the three lead actors keep the action going as well. Filmgoers have watched child actor Jacob Tremblay (“Room”) grow up through a variety of roles, and he anchors the proceedings with a confidence that makes even the stupidest situations viable. His partners in crime, Brady Noon and Keith L. Williams, push their characters a bit too much, but they do convey that mixture of bravado and “little boy” that define the move from grade school to the middle big time.





The Gang Encounters a Companion in ‘Good Boys’  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

The sex toy jokes are waaaay too emphasized, as if every American home has a collection of the props. The sophistication of the collection was astounding as well, including a gag regarding certain beads that any kid would shy away from, at least after looking it up on Google (which they would do). It really was weird and distracting. Also distracting were the kid’s foul mouths, dropping f-bombs like cat poop in a litter box. It was f-bombs for the sake of f-bombs, as if it coming from cherubic kids mouths was enough. And worse of all, it was boring.

But the film ends with a really interesting montage, going through several months of their sixth grade year, with the Bean Bag Boys starting to understand their interests and eschewing their childhood commonalities. There was a universality to it all, and everyone has gone through that in their own way. It’s so strange when a film comes into its own, after a series of lame jokes regarding drugs and sex toys. Ah, the culture of American entertainment.

*“Good Boys” opens everywhere on August 9th. Featuring Jacob Tremblay, Brady Noon, Keith L. Williams, Will Forte, Lil Ray Howery, Stephen Merchant and Michaela Watkins, Written by Gene Stupnitsky and Lee Eisenberg. Directed by Gene Stupnitsky. Rated “R”*



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]  
Editor and Film Writer  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [19]

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