'Jump Street' earns R-rating, still hilarious

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As the final credits rolled for “21 Jump Street,” I was asking my wife how I would appropriately review a film that was less like the original television show and more of a recent comedy filled with sexual jokes, gratuitous violence and language, but the film did entertain.

I will go ahead and point out this movie definitely earned its *R* rating.

“Jump Street” is loosely based on the late 80s, early 90s television show featuring young-looking police officers sent into local high schools undercover to crack cases among teens and often dispensing a moral lesson or public service announcement afterward.

The film certainly abandons the public service announcement angle opting instead for a recent formula that has brought success to comedies about high school or college-aged characters.

Protagonists Schmidt and Jenko, played by **Jonah Hill** and **Channing Tatum**, respectively, were high-school opposites. Schmidt was the brainy, not-popular weird guy, while Tatum was the good-looking jock who isn’t so smart.

For whatever reason, both enter the police academy and find out they complement each other’s skills quite well, becoming friends and helping one another become officers. However, they

quickly find themselves on park-duty, riding around on bicycles and yelling at kids who disobey the “Don’t Feed the Ducks” signs.

After an erroneous arrest, the two are placed undercover at 21 Jump Street, the headquarters for the high school-snooping officers, led by a very in-your-face Captain Dickson, played by Ice Cube.

The two infiltrate a local high school as brothers and seek out a synthetic drug ring, finding their old high school roles are now reversed and they not only have to overcome their new social realities, but also find a way to catch the bad guys without alienating one another in the process.

Like most modern comedies, “Jump Street” is filled with sexual jokes that focus too often on the male anatomy, as well as homophobic jokes that only generate eye rolls. The overwhelming laughs are generated from a script that credits itself by knowing the limits of this premise, acknowledging them and inevitably, poking fun at them.

The great joy of the film are Tatum and Hill together, with this being Tatum’s first stint as a comedic actor. Previously, I’ve found it unbelievably intolerable to watch Tatum act in films ranging from “G.I. Joe” (2009) to “Dear John” (2010). But paired with Hill, a comedic veteran, the two create great laughs and Tatum’s deadpanning is worthy of applause.

Upon reentering high school, comedy flies from their total misconception of what is now “cool,” the fact that they both look hilariously too old to be in high school, mixing up their undercover identities and then finding their place in opposite roles. Tatum is placed in advanced Chemistry while Hill thrown into a drama class and getting in with the “cool” kids.

While the two characters’ inevitable short-lived split is organically achieved, although all movies with the “odd couple” recipe have made this predictable, the realization that the two need one another and are best buds is a bit heavy-handed, thanks to a cameo from a member of the television show’s original cast.

The comedy is spread with typical car chases, which actually poke great fun at action movie car

chases, hilarious bike chases, a gratuitous shootout and more. I certainly give a lot of credit to Michael Becall, screenwriter, and Phil Lord and Chris Miller, directors.

Dave Franco, playing Eric, the high-school drug dealer/cool kid and **Brie Larson** as Molly, the love interest of Hill's character, and
Rob Riggle
as teacher Mr. Walters, serve their purpose in supporting roles.

Overall, I would definitely give a long pause before taking or allowing kids under 18 to catch the film, but that's an individual choice. The movie is surprisingly hilarious and offers a decent character arc for both protagonists for a movie that is constantly making fun of everything, including itself.

"21 Jump Street" is currently playing at all local theaters and is rated R, (no one under 17 permitted) with a runtime of 109 minutes.

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