

## '22 Jump Street' is sequel satire as sequel

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Jonah Hill, left, and Channing Tatum in Columbia Pictures' "22 Jump Street."  
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### 22 Jump Street

Rating: ★★★★★

If most casual moviegoers thought about it, they'd probably say that sequels usually cost more and aren't as good. "22 Jump Street," the inevitable sequel to 2012's surprisingly good "21 Jump Street," makes fun of this truism from the get-go, and paradoxically thereby gets away with being a sequel that cost more and isn't as good. It's good enough, but make no mistake: it isn't as good.

The first movie was based, sort of, on an eighties TV show, so opening the sequel with a "Previously on '21 Jump Street'..." catch-up sequence is moderately amusing, although the audience probably doesn't need to be reintroduced to [Jonah Hill](#) and [Channing Tatum](#) as Keystone Cops Schmidt and Jenko. And there's always a danger in showing too much of the first movie in a sequel if the new material isn't going to be as good.

Their superiors (Nick Offerman, [Ice Cube](#)) openly admit, they're going to do exactly the same thing they did in the last movie. Which of course makes a joke out of doing exactly the same thing they did in the last movie. The movie then proceeds to do exactly the same thing as they did in the last movie. This movie is a study in sequel satire as sequel.

If there's a problem with the gimmick is that it's talking about the way sequels were made twenty years ago. (And ironically, the "straight" cop movie sequel "Die Hard 2" also made self-aware jokes about the same thing happening to the same characters twice.) Eighties and nineties sequels generally operated the way TV episodes did: create a standalone plot using established characters and conventions. In the post-Harry Potter world this just isn't the way things work. Look at the Marvel Studios movies for one example, or even the way the James Bond series has worked in the Daniel Craig era. Movie series don't work that way now. Internal mythos are created and developed from installment to installment and audiences are expected to keep up.

Still, Hill and Tatum work in their roles, and the movie gets some mileage out of the gag that if they looked old to be high school students in the last movie, they seem even older as college students. Tatum, when he lets loose, is actually a very funny guy, and this time around periodically overshadows Hill, whom we expect to be funny. The filmmakers have done their homework depicting modern college life, right down to the Friday morning "walk of shame" when disgraced, hungover coeds, high heels in hand, slink back to their own dorms following a night with a guy who looked better after the sixth or seventh shot.

"22 Jump Street" isn't as consistently funny as its predecessor, but is arguably funnier at its peaks. The second act languishes with far too much emphasis on Jenko's budding bromance with a fellow football player (Wyatt Russell), which threatens the relationship between Schmidt and Jenko. It might even bear noting that after awhile, co-directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller's nearly constant piling on of homoerotic overtones between the main characters begins to smack ever so slightly of latent homophobia. Lord and Miller pick up the pace in the end though, and wrap their story up with a bang (although the biggest scale action is in the opening).

Amber Stevens is appealing as Schmidt's new coed love interest Maya, although her real purpose in the movie is to provide a surprise audiences may see coming. Jillian Phillips, as Maya's unpleasant roommate, steals the show in the third act. Ice Cube, who barely seemed to have a pulse in "Ride Along," has an expanded role here as Captain Dickson, and is actually front and center in the movie's single funniest scene.

As the movie itself jokes, the sequel had a bigger budget than its predecessor, and it is a reasonably handsome production. The thing is, the reported \$70 million budget invested by Sony is so much smaller than the same studio's "The Amazing Spider-Man 2," it could actually be far more profitable with lower grosses. Movie audiences are learning, slowly, that they risk missing stuff if they leave during the end credits. This is the case here, where the end credits are in fact a comedy routine unto themselves, and there is a scene after they've finished rolling. Don't rush to the restroom.

"22 Jump Street" does what it sets it out to do, although they didn't raise the bar real high. In the end this is a slacker movie with limited ambition that doesn't earn much more than a gentleman's C. "22 Jump Street" gets away with it mainly because it, and we, are in on the joke.



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