

IMPACT YOUTH
MINISTRY

UPCOMING
EVENTS:

May 19

Thursday night,

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Impact News

MAY 6, 2011

Youth Culture News

Some parents think it's better to monitor prom-night drinking than to ban it altogether and run the risk of defiance. **The rationale, it goes, is that parents can do a better job at teaching responsible drinking by allowing it at home than high schoolers' peers are likely to do at unsupervised parties.** But according to a new study published in the *Journal of Studies on Drugs and Alcohol*, that belief is a fallacy. **Teens who drink with an adult supervising them are more likely to develop problems with alcohol later in life than those who are forbidden by parents to drink until they reach age 21.** The study's lead author, Barbara J. McMorris, said of the findings, "The study makes it clear that you shouldn't be drinking with your kids." [msnbc.com, 4/29/11 c&e]

Teens who binge drink could be causing long-lasting brain damage, according to a study from the University of North Carolina. **Researchers say that the brain undergoes a critical period of development between the ages of 12 and 20.** Researchers believe that too much drinking during these years can have a serious impact on a teen's ability to adjust to life's changes as they age. Other research has found that those who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to become alcoholics. [allheadlinenews.com, 4/5/11; msnbc.com, 4/29/11 c&e]

Excessive computer use has been linked to an increase in multiple-risk behaviors (MRBs) in adolescents. Valerie Carson, a doctoral candidate at Queen's University's School of Kinesiology and Health Studies, found that high computer usage was associated with a 50% increase in a cluster of six different risk behaviors: smoking, drunkenness, marijuana and other illicit drug use, unprotected sex and not using seat belts. "This research is based on social cognitive theory, which suggests that seeing people engaged in a behavior is a way of learning that behavior," Carson said. "Since adolescents are exposed to considerable screen time—over 4.5 hours on average each day—they're constantly seeing images of behaviors they can then potentially adopt." Her research has been published in the *Journal of Preventative Medicine*. [queensu.ca, 4/25/11; economic-times.indiatimes.com, 4/26/11 stats, c&e]

Happy Mothers Day! I hope you have a great day. Angela and I thank God for your faithfulness and your desire to raise Godly Teenagers! *"All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my Mother."* Abraham Lincoln

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Fathers don't provoke your children to anger. **Ephesians 6:4** BUT that does not say anything about moms so... LET EM HAVE IT WITH BOTH BARRELS!

2011 Assemblies of God PARK DAYS!

The whole church family is invited to attend one of this year's Assemblies of God Days at an amusement park near you! It's sure to be a day filled with fun and memories for everyone!

<p>Kennywood Monday, June 13th \$24.00 per person <small>(over 18)</small></p>	<p>Tickets purchased on this day are good on only Monday throughout the season. Pick up your tickets at the Group Sales office starting at 10:30 PM Monday June 13th. The rides begin at 11:00 PM. The park will close at 10:00 PM (depending on weather).</p>
<p>Hersheypark Tuesday, June 14th (and all season long!)</p> <p>\$35.00 per person (ages 9-59) \$28.00 per person (ages 3-8 and 55+) <small>Over 70: \$20.00 (person ages 9-59) \$15.00 (person ages 3-8 and 55+)</small></p>	<p>Tickets will be available at the Hershey Stadium ticket window on Tuesday, June 14th, from 10:00 PM-11:00 PM. Rides open at 10:00 PM. These tickets are good for only one time during the summer season.</p>
<p>Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom Thursday, June 16th \$24.00 per person (over 40 to 61 years) \$21.00 per person (under 40) <small>Over 62: \$41.00 per person (over 40 to 61 years) \$11.00 per person (under 40)</small></p>	<p>Tickets will be available at the Assemblies of God table located at the main entrance of Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom on Thursday, June 16th from 9:30 AM - 11:00 PM. The park opens at 10:00 AM and closes at 6:00 PM. Wildwater Kingdom will open at 11:00 AM and close at 6:00 PM.</p>

2011 parkdays

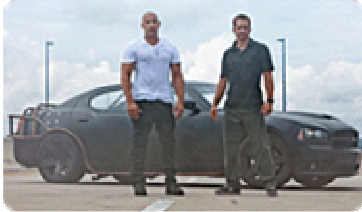
Where:
Dorney Park
Allentown, PA

When:
Thursday
June 16th.

Cost:
\$30.00 per
Person...need to
bring spending
money!

Please sign up in
the Gym!

Movie Reviews



Fast Five

MPAA RATING
PG13

GENRE
Drama, Action/Adventure

CAST
Vin Diesel as Dominic Toretto; Paul Walker as Brian O'Conner; Jordana Brewster as Mia Toretto; Dwayne Johnson as Agent Hobbs; Matt Schulze as Vince; Tyrese Gibson as Roman Pearce; Ludacris as Tej Parker

DIRECTOR
Justin Lin ([Fast & Furious](#), [The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift](#), [Annapolis](#))

DISTRIBUTOR
Universal Pictures

IN THEATERS
April 29, 2011

REVIEWER
Adam R. Holz

A white bus full of prison inmates ambles down a lonely desert road. Three fast cars zoom in behind it. Then beside it. Then in front. You know what's coming: One flipped prison bus later, outlaw street racer Dominic Toretto is a free man again.

Free, that is, to get out of Dodge, so to speak. And fast. And probably *in* a Dodge. High on the FBI's Most Wanted list, Dom, ex-cop Brian O'Conner and Dom's sister, Mia (O'Conner's girlfriend), head south. *Way* south ... to Rio de Janeiro's *favela* slums, where they hope to lie low until the heat subsides.

But sitting still isn't a strong suit for Dom and his crew. Especially when they're dead broke. So when Dom's childhood friend, Vince—who's been holed up in the favelas for years—suggests they score some quick cash helping a shady local pinch three exotic cars being transported on a train, they're game. After all, it's just a little job ...

... that goes wrong in a big way. Three dead DEA agents later—taken out by lackeys of the aforementioned shady local, a man named Reyes who runs Rio's crime syndicate—Dom and Co. quickly graduate to the *top* of the FBI's stack of *personas non grata*. And the fact that they didn't commit the crime they're being accused of matters little to Agent Luke Hobbs, a Terminator-minded emissary dispatched to hunt them down.

"Above all else," Hobbs tells his team, "we don't ever, *ever* let them get in the cars." It's a good command. Of course, it's also impossible to enforce. With Hobbs in hot pursuit of his fast-and-furious quarry, Dom and O'Conner decide it's time to disappear again. Forever. And that takes money.

As luck and the scriptwriter would have it, a GPS chip in one of the cars they stole tells them *exactly* where Reyes launders his \$100 million drug fortune. So Dom recruits some old friends for one last brazen heist, Brazilian-style.

As *lack* of luck would have it, their effort to outfox Reyes backfires, and he locks his fortune away in a bank-like vault in Rio's downtown police department. (After all, virtually every officer in the city works for him anyway.) But that's nothing a few fast cars and wily, on-the-lam former street racers can't handle, right?

Did I already mention that they're being systematically tracked by the guy formerly known as The Rock?

POSITIVE ELEMENTS

Within the convoluted context of this franchise, Dom and his car-stealing cohorts subscribe to a fierce family fidelity. In a speech to the group he recruits to pull off the heist (which, in addition to Brian and Mia, includes *F&F* alumni Roman, Tej, Han, Gisele, Santos and Leo), Dom tells them, "Money will come and go. The most important thing in life will always be the people in this room. Right here, right now. Salute, *mi familia*." Dom would go to any length to protect Mia (except, of course, excusing her from the crazy duties involved with stealing cars and driving them away, it seems). The same is true of Brian, and even more so after he learns she's pregnant.

After the first car theft goes awry, Dom evicts Vince from the group for not telling them who they were working for. Later, Vince saves Mia's life, and Dom welcomes him back, saying, "There's always room for family."

Conversations between Dom and Brian revolve around the subject of family and fatherhood. Dom talks about his father's devotion, while Brian remembers little of his dad. Dom assures Brian that he'll be a good father.

Dom also has deep sympathy for a local police officer named Elena Neves, whom Hobbs has recruited to help him. Like Dom, Elena lost a partner she loved deeply. (Dom lost his beloved Letty in *Fast & Furious*.) Each seems to understand the other's suffering.

SPIRITUAL CONTENT

As in *Fast & Furious*, the Toretto clan's Catholic faith is referenced. And Dom and Mia wear crucifixes which they seem quite fond of. References are made to saying grace before meals. Dom says his father always barbecued on Sundays after church, and that if there was no church, there was no barbecue. When a member of his crew gets killed, Dom genuflects and says, "You were always my brother."

Brian describes Hobbs as being like someone out of the Old Testament: "blood, bullets, wrath of God." One of Reyes' men says of the police protection around the safe, "God Himself couldn't get your money if He wanted to." The camera repeatedly shows us Rio's famous Christ the Redeemer statue.

SEXUAL CONTENT

At a street race, as is customary in this franchise, cameras zoom in on women wearing next to nothing, sometimes as little as a thong bikini. A beach scene boasts even more women in skimpy suits. Perhaps a dozen women employed at one of Reyes' money-laundering operations work in bras and panties. Reyes' office sports a large, Renaissance-style painting of a woman with one breast exposed. Elena, Mia and Gisele all wear less-than-modest outfits that expose leg, cleavage and/or midriff.

One scene features Gisele in a bikini (and the camera lingers on her physique) as she entices Reyes to caress and grab her backside in a ploy to get his fingerprints. Brian and Mia kiss several times. Obviously, sex between the unmarried couple is implied by her pregnancy. Crude comments invoke sex, legs, backsides and genitals.

In a scene that hints ever so slightly at sexualized violence, Dom roughly grabs the crucifix Elena is wearing (which belonged to Letty) from between her breasts.

VIOLENT CONTENT

There's no shortage of vehicular carnage, from the opening scene where the bus rolls repeatedly, to an explosive train heist in which three cars are stolen and three men shot. (One car plunges over a cliff with Dom and Brian in it.) A massive car chase through downtown Rio serves as the finale.

In that last bit of N2O-fueled mayhem, Dom's and Brian's cars have cables attached to the massive vault, which they've yanked out of the police station after ramming through several walls with a truck. For 10 or 15 minutes they careen wildly through town, the trailing vault smashing car after car. Even a building ends up quite a bit worse for the wear. Over and over again, pedestrians scamper to avoid being mortally clocked by the vault as it ricochets like a 20-ton pinball. Dom and Brian use the tow cables to clothesline police cars, many of which (and, presumably, their drivers) meet mangled ends.

The chase ends with a vengeful killing as a man lies on the ground, begging for mercy. He's shot in the head (just offscreen). An ambush involves RPGs and grenades taking out vehicles, and an entire team of drivers getting killed. (We see several bodies on the ground.) Retaliation consists of shooting and killing perhaps a dozen more people. Other shootouts or on-foot chases (one across the many-leveled roofs of the favela shanties) result in dozens more anonymous pursuers getting gunned down. A man's neck is snapped.

Dom and Brian hang from their wrists in a prison cell. Multiple men are knocked out. An epic hand-to-hand battle between Hobbs and Dom features all manner of brutal hits and body blows, not to mention plunging through panes of glass, a mirror, walls and tables. Two characters fall through a roof.

CRUDE OR PROFANE LANGUAGE

One f-word. About 20 s-words. We hear close to 10 misuses of God's name, half of which are combined with "d□□n." Other foul language includes "a□□," "h□□□," "b□□ch," "p□□□" and "pr□□k."

DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

People drink beer and hard liquor in quite a few scenes. Brian and Vince are shown with five or six empty beer bottles in front of them. Mia abstains from alcohol because of her pregnancy.

We hear passing references to the fact that Reyes' fortune came from dealing drugs.

OTHER NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

Callous thieves, speeding cars, corrupt cops and ... exploding sewage. That's *Fast Five* for you. A pipe bomb in the police department explodes and hurls sewage all over the men's restroom—and all over a guy on a toilet. There's a crude reference to urinating.

It's a crowd-pleasing moment when Hobbs decides to join Dom's group after all his men get gunned down—which makes it no less a moral and ethical compromise motivated by Hobbs' thirst for vengeance. "I'll ride with you, Toretto," he says. "At least until we kill that son of a b□□ch." At the end of the film, sort of like in an old Looney Tunes short, Hobbs tells Dom that he has to keep chasing him, but that he'll give him a 24-hour head start.

On top of that, the film invites viewers to believe that Dom's crew stealing \$100 million from a notoriously wicked drug lord has a kind of Robin Hood-esque nobility to it.

CONCLUSION

Movie No. 5. Just like movie No. 4. Etcetera. This 2011 installment is *exactly* what you'd expect: Vin Diesel, Paul Walker and their supporting cast—which now includes Dwayne Johnson—doing absolutely insane things with cars and looking very cool doing it.

According to the movie's production notes, the filmmakers bought—and destroyed—nearly 300 cars making *Fast Five*. And if close-up shots of hood ornaments are any indication, the vast majority—not counting your requisite Nissan GT-Rs, Ford GT40s, De Tomaso Panteras and Porsche 911 GT3 RSs—were new Dodge Chargers.

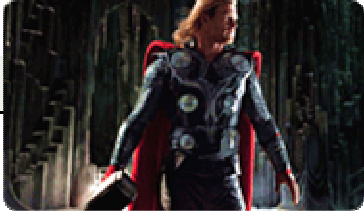
The heist angle this time smacks of something like [Oceans Eleven](#) or [The Italian Job](#). And Reyes' determination to take out both Dom's crew and Hobbs smacks of *Clear and Present Danger* too. So I guess it'd be unfair to say that *Fast Five* only plagiarizes earlier films in its own franchise.

No doubt the filmmakers hoped to do nothing more than give audiences what David Letterman calls "More 'splosions! More 'splosions!" It's an adrenaline-charged "good time" for giddy gearheads. But it's also chock-full of intense violence, profanity and titillation.

And beyond that, at the risk of sounding like a broken flywheel, this latest *F&F* film once again delivers a dubious, self-contained and subjective morality. At one point, Brian says the money they steal from Reyes will be enough to purchase "new passports, new lives." Then he adds, "We'll buy our freedom."

It's easy to swallow that feel-good line without much thought, because these characters' loyalty and family-like bonds pull at our sympathies. But the film is essentially saying that instead of paying the price for reckless, illegal activity, all you have to do is engage in more of the same, look smooth while you do it, then cash out to beat the system completely.

Absolutely no one who's even remotely interested in this film's fast cars and fearless action is really thinking about what that message does to our worldviews. Which is exactly why I'm bringing it up.



Thor

MPAA RATING
PG-13

GENRE
Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Action/Adventure, Drama

CAST
Chris Hemsworth as Thor; Natalie Portman as Jane Foster; Tom Hiddleston as Loki; Anthony Hopkins as Odin; Stellan Skarsgård as Erik Selvig; Kat Dennings as Darcy Lewis; Clark Gregg as Agent Coulson

DIRECTOR
Kenneth Branagh (*Sleuth*, *The Magic Flute*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V*)

DISTRIBUTOR
Paramount Pictures

IN THEATERS
May 6, 2011

REVIEWER
Paul Asay

Never mind that 1990 is ancient history. For Thor, it's *always* hammer time.

And with a hammer this cool, why wouldn't it be? It looks like someone strapped a slab of iron the size of a bread maker on a stick and called it good. Try framing a basement with this sucker, and you'll likely need a new basement. But Thor's hammer isn't really for pounding in 4-inch concrete anchors. And it's not even just for taking down 40-foot monsters. It can be hurled like a boomerang, spun like a set of nunchucks and can change the weather. It is, in the words of Thor's pop, King Odin, "a weapon to destroy or a tool to build."

Try getting something like *that* at Home Depot.

Thor's the perfect guy to wield a hammer like that—or at least so thinks he. He's the heir to the great throne of Asgard. And he's got biceps bigger than bowling balls. So why not, he figures. But not to build, at least not quite yet. Thor's more of a demolition kind of guy. So when he learns that the family palace was nearly burgled by a handful of frost giants—eternal enemies of Asgard—Thor decides it's time to put the hammer to good use. Defying Odin's orders, he, his brother Loki and a handful of his best buds gallop across the Rainbow Bridge, get zapped into space and barge into the frost giants' chilly kingdom.

It almost goes without saying that Odin's none too pleased with Thor's willful disobedience. He was actually on the brink of crowning the boy king before this whole giant fiasco began. Now Odin wonders if perhaps his plan was too hasty. So the father calls the son a "vain, greedy, cruel boy"—and the son shoots right back with, "You are an old man and a fool!"

Well. Odin's had just about enough of *that* kind of talk. Hoping to teach Thor a lesson, he banishes him to Earth, sending the hammer along for the ride. The catch: Thor's just an ordinary guy down here (albeit extraordinarily large), and his nifty hammer's frozen in rock—a sort of "sword in the stone" trope to ensure that no one, not even Odin's No. 1 son, will use the thing until he's good and worthy.

Looks like Thor has some growing up to do.

POSITIVE ELEMENTS

For all his size and strength and warlike prowess, Thor really is how Odin describes him: a boy—impetuous, selfish and spoiled. I could fill this whole review with the titles of movies that generally laud childlike, *childish* behavior in their heroes—pretty much every Adam Sandler movie ever made comes to mind—but *Thor* picks another path: It exposes the harsh reality of the consequences for never wanting to grow up.

Earth proves to be a good boot camp for Thor. Stripped of his titles, prestige and nifty hammer, the guy learns about humility. When he's told that his father died from sorrow (a lie), Thor grows familiar with loss and regret—critical components to developing a new appreciation for what it means to be both a king and a son. And when a fearsome monster threatens his new human friends and begins to ravage the tiny New Mexico town they're all holed up in, he discovers a wellspring of charity and sacrifice.

[*Spoiler Warning*] Perhaps the most telling sign of Thor's radical transformation comes at the end, when the heir of Asgard opts to break apart the realm's Rainbow Bridge, the conduit through which he and others visit the universe's nine known realms. Breaking the bridge means, in essence, that he's giving up the chance of ever visiting Earth, and beautiful Jane Foster, again. But it also means saving another world—the world of the frost giants. We've been conditioned to see heroes make sacrifices for their friends or values. But when Thor sacrifices something of great value to save his eternal enemies ... well, that puts this warrior on rare ground.

SPIRITUAL CONTENT

In Norse myth and in Marvel's original comic books, Thor, Odin et al are "gods." And at least one of this film's promotion posters refers to Thor as "god of thunder."

But onscreen, the denizens of Asgard don't regard themselves as gods (even though they acknowledge that when they visited Earth about a 1,000 years ago, they were taken to be such). Sure, they have god-like powers—to us at least—and live in a heavenly realm, but the movie tries to explain away all that murky spirituality by casting them as aliens from a faraway world—a place where science and magic are one and the same.

About that magical science: Loki is considered to be something of a sorcerer, and Thor's hammer obviously has some serious power built into it. But if taken within its context—and if divorced from the Norse mythology—those story elements develop from natural, not supernatural, origins. Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke is quoted as saying that "magic is just science we don't yet understand," and when Thor breaks a seemingly magical connection with other worlds, the film hints that science may be able to rebuild it again.

There are, of course, a lot of *ifs* in that bit of explanation. And it is, in our world at least, very hard indeed to separate this cinematic Thor from the character's mythological roots. But Marvel and Paramount at least try.

SEXUAL CONTENT

Thor is an object of ardor when he's unceremoniously dumped onto our planet. When he's found in the middle of the U.S. desert, unconscious, by Jane, fellow scientist Erik and student intern Darcy, the intern sees Thor's pretty face and immediately volunteers her services. "Does he need CPR? 'Cause I totally know CPR," she says. And later, when he walks around shirtless, she says, "You know, for a crazy homeless person, he's pretty cute."

But Thor has eyes only for Jane, and she returns his affection. He delicately kisses her hand twice, while she plants a long, passionate smacker right on his lips.

VIOLENT CONTENT

In the Norse tradition, Odin, Thor and Co. lived to fight. It was their reason for being, frankly, and their version of paradise was characterized by all-day battles followed by all-night parties.

Here, Odin and, eventually, Thor, are more circumspect about violence. "A wise king never seeks out war, but he must always be ready for it," Odin says. Still, *Thor* boasts the sort of action that would make any self-respecting medieval Viking let out a gleeful, guttural *yawp*.

Battles, while not particularly bloody, are intense and relentless. Combatants are skewered by blades, pounded by hammers (sometimes vanishing into dust under the assault), frozen and crushed. Folks fall off the sides of cliffs. Others apparently vanish into the vacuum of space. One massive, robot-like guardian blasts fire out of his visor, causing much mayhem. Combatants are thrown through the air and contract frostbite (a side effect of a frost giant's touch).

Thor, naturally, inflicts his share of damage, and even without his hammer he's a force to be reckoned with. He beats up several guards while trying to reclaim his weapon of choice and roughs up about a dozen doctors, orderlies and police officers who are trying to care for him. While battling a huge beast, he turns himself into a human bullet—rocketing into the monster's mouth and exiting through the back of its head, leaving behind a gaping wound.

Jane accidentally hits Thor twice with her SUV (once so hard that a window breaks). Darcy tases the guy. And he's ultimately hit so hard by a gigantic, inhuman soldier that the blow appears to kill him.

Elsewhere, there are loads of ear-rattling explosions. Things crash violently to the ground, and several vicious storms are conjured. A resident of Asgard is nearly murdered in his sleep. Odin injures his eye in battle. (We see the bloody wound.) Thor tips over a banquet table, and he smashes a coffee cup in appreciation.

CRUDE OR PROFANE LANGUAGE

Characters say "d□□n" once, "a□□" once and "h□□□" four or five times. God's name is misused a half-dozen times.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

When Jane and her friends find Thor wandering in the desert, they hear him mumbling something about a hammer. "You're hammered, all right," Jane says. Later, trying to pull Thor's hammer from its resting spot turns into a party of sorts, with revelers setting up barbecues and drinking beer around the crater.

The head of S.H.I.E.L.D. (a shadowy superhero agency in the Marvel universe) makes Erik promise to keep Thor away from bars. The two, naturally, head right to the nearest saloon, and we watch them guzzle boillermakers. Later, Thor carries a very drunk Erik home. "We drank, we fought, he made his ancestors proud," Thor tells Jane.

Erik lies to get Thor out of the custody of S.H.I.E.L.D., telling them that their prisoner got so large by using steroids. A doctor injects

OTHER NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

Loki is a liar and traitor, manipulating circumstances to keep Thor out of Asgard, impress his father and claim the kingdom for himself. In turn, Thor's battle buddies defy Loki's orders to rescue Thor. Turns out, too, that Odin, Loki's adoptive father, lied to the guy for years about his true lineage.

Thor nearly causes a war just because someone taunts him.

CONCLUSION

"When you learn you don't have all the answers, you ask the right questions," Erik tells Thor. It's a paradox of sorts—the idea that we're a step closer to wisdom when we admit our ignorance—but we know it instinctively to be true.

This film pounds away at that concept and, in so doing, becomes something of a conundrum itself. It's a spectacular, silly action movie that, in spite of itself, has something to say.

We know all along that Thor is incredibly strong—yet he finds his true power when he's at his weakest. We know him to be a hero, and yet he's at his most heroic when he bows his head in submission. He was born to be a king but proves his worth in exile. He was trained to be a warrior but makes his most impressive stand without weapons, without armor. He scores his greatest victory when he suffers a killing blow.

I could go on. Some of this calls to mind, of course, another counterintuitive King. And while making too many parallels between Christ and Thor would be pointless, if not even a tad sacrilegious, they're interesting to note ... and lead to yet another paradox: *Thor*, a film with undeniably pagan roots, can feel at times almost Christian.

I won't and don't want to intimate any sort of an excuse for those ungodly underpinnings or the film's unremitting violence. *Thor*, like its namesake, has issues. But it still showcases a true superhero—one who becomes all the more heroic when he's not doing anything super at all.



Jumping the Broom PG13

GENRE: Comedy, Romance...IN THEATERS: May 6, 2011

Sabrina Watson and Jason Taylor are in love. We know they're in love because they date and kiss and listen to El DeBarge tunes.

They're even getting married. And love conquers all, right?

Pam Taylor sure hopes so. Pam is Jason's mother, and she loves her boy ever so much. She wants the best for him and knows that she knows what he needs, even when he doesn't know himself. And if well-to-do Sabrina really *is* wonderful enough and charming enough and good enough for her son, well, she'll be the first to congratulate the happy couple.

'Course, Pam has no clue whether Sabrina's all that and a box of Frosted Flakes, too. They've never met each other. That couldn't be Jason's fault ... her darling little boy wouldn't disrespect her like that. Must be Sabrina. Yes, it *must* be, what with her designer clothes and six-figure income and hoity-toity talk. Her pretty little heels are probably too dainty to visit Jason's old neighborhood. Probably she thinks she's too *good* for poor old Pam. Too *rich*. Too *educated*. She just wants to sweep Jason up and leave poor Pam all al—

No, no. Pam isn't going to think about *that*. And she's not going to hold that slight—as terrible as it is—against Sabrina. She'll go to the wedding and bite her tongue. She'll give the girl another chance.

Unless, of course, that girl messes something up. Then, well ... she's clearly not Jason's lifelong squeeze. And Pam'll do *anything* for her little boy—even break up a wedding if she has to. After all, a mother's love is love too, isn't it?

POSITIVE ELEMENTS

"The art of forgiveness is an important theme throughout the movie," Bishop T.D. Jakes, a popular megachurch pastor (at The Potter's House in Dallas) and the producer for the movie, told *Plugged In*. "I think when families lose their ability to forgive, they lose their ability to survive."

When Sabrina and Jason decide to marry, they draw together two different worlds. Sabrina's silver-spoon upbringing (the wedding takes place on her parents' estate on Martha's Vineyard) and Jason's blue-collar roots were bound to clash, and almost everyone is in need of a little healing grace before things get set straight.

Pam kicks off the wedding's biggest cataclysm, nearly getting the thing called off. And yet, even in the midst of this terrible pileup, Jason confronts his mother with love and respect.

"I'll always be there for you," he tells her. "That hasn't changed. It hasn't." But, he adds, *she* has to change ... and let him go a little.

Sabrina forgives Pam too—allowing her new mother-in-law a little more say in how the wedding's conducted than she originally planned. It's an important peacemaking compromise that goes a long way to healing the hurt on both sides.

Pam has company here. Almost everybody is in need of forgiveness by the time the credits roll. And almost everybody needs to forgive. And they do.

The film casually throws bits of wisdom around like so much wedding rice. It's refreshingly honest about the realities of both love and marriage. And yet getting married is worth it, Sabrina's mother, Claudine, tells her girl—a beautiful testimony of commitment, considering she's in the midst of her own matrimonial trials. "Sabrina," she says, "marriage is forever. It's for life." The vows say for better or for worse, Claudine adds, and she takes those vows seriously.

Characters demonstrate love, respect, patience and communication. We see people correct one another without condemnation (no easy feat). And we're given some nice examples of perseverance in the midst of some messy, messy lives.

SPIRITUAL CONTENT

Despite Jakes' involvement, it'd be unfair to label *Jumping the Broom* a Christian film—certainly not in the same way that, say, *Fireproof* is. But a Christian ethos undergirds it, and many of the people we meet are buoyed and motivated by faith.

When we first see Sabrina, she's getting dressed after a one-night stand. But when she realizes that her beau-of-the-evening didn't have any real feelings for her, she says a prayer, promising God that if He gets her out of this prickly predicament, she won't "give her cookies" to anyone else but the man she marries.

A bargain with God isn't exactly core Christianity, of course. But she does keep her promise—so diligently that her commitment to abstinence while dating Jason becomes a central theme and running joke. Both Jason and Sabrina indicate that their love is an answered prayer.

Pam reads her Bible a lot. And after she tells a dark secret that nearly sabotages the wedding, she says she did so because she believed God (through her reading of the Bible) told her to—Jakes' way of showing how we sometimes confuse our own wishes with those of the Almighty. In the aftermath, as Jason searches for his would-be bride, he pulls off to the side of the road and prays: "I can't fix this. I need You. I need Your help, God." It's a prayer that, really, we should all say every day.

We see several other people praying ... sometimes alone, sometimes at mealtimes. But when Pam says grace at the rehearsal dinner, it turns out to be a rambling insult directed at Sabrina and her family. "If that was a blessing," Pam's brother whispers to her, "you're going to hell." He confronts her again later, telling her that stirring up trouble at a wedding is probably not in God's will. "God don't like ugly, Pam," he says.

Jason and Sabrina pick out Bible verses to be read during the ceremony. 1 Corinthians 13:11 is used as an excuse for a 20-year-old man to hit on a much older woman.

SEXUAL CONTENT ***** I WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED IN THE SEXUAL CONTENT***

Many of the wedding guests are on the prowl for a paramour, and the film shows Sabrina in her underwear after a fling. That's purposeful, Jakes says. After a Denver screening of the film, he told the audience that it was important to show "how difficult [staying pure and true to your promises] is when you have a past."

In a later one-on-one interview, Jakes continued that thought. "The discussion [in the film] ... whether we're uncomfortable with it or not, our children are having every day," he said. "And this film [already shown in screenings] led them away from promiscuity into a life of abstinence, which is what the church teaches. I think the church has got to lose its timidity and start engaging in this conversation. And parents need to get engaged in this conversation, because I guarantee you, their children are talking about it. And anything you won't discuss, they're getting their education somewhere else."

Some of that miss education is coming from this movie. We actually end up seeing Sabrina in her underwear twice—the second time

shortly before the wedding when Jason climbs through her bedroom window. Elsewhere, maid of honor Blythe and the wedding cook start to get hot and heavy in the kitchen, sans pants.

Friends and relatives openly question Sabrina and Jason's countercultural behavior, wondering whether Sabrina might be pregnant or if Jason might be getting his sexual satisfaction elsewhere. When asked how he manages, Jason confesses that he masturbates a lot.

Conversation fodder includes affairs, premarital sex, sex-heavy songs, "whores," pedophile and hermaphrodite jokes, menstrual cycles, condoms, erections and aphrodisiacs. Bikinis and cleavage-baring outfits are worn. Aunt Geneva gives Sabrina lingerie.

VIOLENT CONTENT

Sabrina and Jason meet when she literally runs into him with her Audi. Claudine and Geneva slap each other. Jason punches someone in the face.

CRUDE OR PROFANE LANGUAGE

About a dozen misuses of God's name and 10 interjections of "h---." Someone says they're "p---ed."

DRUG AND ALCOHOL CONTENT

Wine, beer and champagne make stylish appearances. A bachelor party takes place at a bar. We see that somebody is suffering the legal consequences for driving drunk.

OTHER NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

One of Jason's cousins pushes him to disrespect his wife, encouraging him to stay out late with the guys after he has a fight with Sabrina. Claudine's husband tells her that, despite appearances, they're completely broke—a secret he's known for a while but was too afraid to share with her.

In an unguarded moment, Claudine boasts that now, instead of being a slave, she *has* "slaves." (She's talking about her servants.) Pam opines that rich people always own bidets because they're "full of it."

CONCLUSION

The practice of "jumping the broom" in African-American weddings extends back to the days when slaves couldn't marry in any traditional sense. To compensate, couples showed their commitment to each other—and to the community—by jumping over a broom handle together. In those days, when families could be torn apart by a bill of sale, it was a resonant, joyous ceremony—an act of optimism, hope and commitment made in the midst of a difficult, uncertain world.

Fast-forward about 150 years, and the folks we meet in *Jumping the Broom* are still living in a difficult, uncertain world—just as we all are. Jason and Sabrina, trying to remain abstinent, find themselves surrounded by folks who don't share their values and freely solicit sexual immorality. They live in a culture where marriage is sometimes treated as a business contract—one to be negotiated or terminated at a time of mutual convenience.

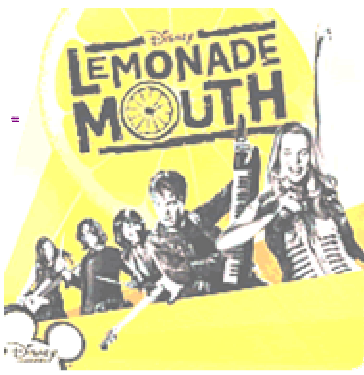
They don't condemn the folks mired in this world. They don't point fingers at those who have bought into its way of thinking. And neither does the movie.

That's part of the reason *Jumping the Broom* has issues aplenty—that can't be swept aside. But there's still something refreshing about its outlook. This isn't a romance with a barely believable happily ever after. Nor is it an over-the-top raunchy sex farce in which *love* is really just another word for *sex*. *Jumping the Broom* really is about relationships. "Sometimes, even a soul mate can really test you," Jakes tells us in a cameo as the couple's pastor. And sometimes even the best relationships are sorely tested by outside forces as well.

But is it worth it? Is love still worth our time? Is commitment still important, still beautiful? Does jumping the broom matter?

Yes it does, Bishop Jakes would like to tell us. Yes it does.

Music Reviews
Taken from pluggedin.com



The *Lemonade Mouth* soundtrack is a collection of songs from Disney's latest TV movie starring up-and-coming teen star Bridgit Mendler. It's based on author Mark Peter Hughes' popular book of the same title. And it's about a group of five detention-bound students who end up forming a band so they can give voice to their youthful beliefs and somehow work out their collective teen struggles through song.

The Mouse plus movie plus music equals lots of fans buying lots of products, of course, and this one jumped to No. 4 on *Billboard's* pop chart its second week of release. There's talk, too, of this fictional act getting its real on and staging a nationwide tour.

"A tour would be amazing," said 18-year-old cast member Adam Hicks. "We're all kind of waiting and hoping."

Speaking of *waiting* and *hoping*, what kinds of dreams is *Lemonade Mouth* stoking?

PRO-SOCIAL CONTENT

"Somebody" encourages young listeners to be more than simply invisible: "Can you see me/Cause I'm right here/ ... Oh, we're gonna let it show/ ... We were meant to be somebody." Likewise, the Gaga-esque "Determinate" counsels putting fear and sadness behind and, with friends, making the world what you want it to be. "You and me together!/We can make it better!"

Following that general theme, "Here We Go" continues the cheer for kids being heard and seen ("We're gonna stand up for what we believe in"). "She's So Gone" confirms that a shy girl has become so much more than her shallow ex ever thought she could be ("And I'm stronger than you ever thought I'd be"). Bandmates pledge to support and stand by one another on "More Than a Band."

"Life feels like a string of cloudy days" until a "Breakthrough" encourages turning the page. The album's bonus track compares the things of life to "Livin' on a High Wire."

OBJECTIONABLE CONTENT

Even though the opening track sports a sunny "Turn Up the Music" bounce, it also pessimistically suggests that music is about all kids have: "We're just tryin' to get through/ ... When we're stuck and can't get free/No matter what, we'll still be singing/ ... Turn up the music/It's all we got." Another ambiguous line early in the song advises, "So let's mess around/Cuz the future is unclear."

The hip-hopper "And the Crowd Goes" puffs up its pop-rebel chest with, "When we break the rules, They bend for us/ ... What do you expect/Yeah we deserve it." We also get a big dose of teenage braggadocio: "I'm a superstar and I got cool car/And the girls like me better than whoever you are." Similarly, "Don't U Wish U Were Us" starts with "My girl is hotter than your girl" and continues to spout its rather obnoxious anti-loser anthem from there.

"Here We Go" has some great positive messages ... and a bit of chip-on-the-shoulder attitude: "We're motivated/We're aggravated/We're dedicated/So, now you're barricaded/ ...Willpower/No consideration/We will devour."

SUMMARY ADVISORY

From a purely musical point of view, the 10 bouncy soundtrack songs of *Lemonade Mouth* sound like well-produced, Disney-buffed copies of today's pop and light rock chart-toppers. Even the most casual listener will recognize familiar-sounding Lady Gaga- and Katy Perry-like song hooks.

Fortunately—to paraphrase those old detective movies—most of the lyrics have been changed to protect the innocent. Instead of the heavily sexualized themes omnipresent in pop music today, these tunes generally belt out the tried-and-true Disney messages about building your self-esteem, standing by your pals and following your dreams.

But those aren't the *only* messages here. The album's biggest problem is the way it leans on the pursuit of fame as a the primary response to youth's inevitable insecurities and unmet desires. On "Somebody," for instance, we hear, "We will walk out of this darkness/ Feel a spotlight glowin' like a yellow sun." More of the same shows up on "Determinate": "Hate to feel this way/ ... I gotta get myself onstage."

That approach to life is all too often the weakest link in Disney's current teen star-making formula. And it's especially pronounced here. Why improve your world through hard work and a caring heart when you can just wow the wild and screaming masses with your dazzling smile and rock-'n'-roll radness?



The Pretty Reckless...Light Me Up

Light Me Up should have arrived on store shelves and download sites with two warning labels. The first should have been the music industry's standard "parental advisory" label. The second should have let fans of *Gossip Girl* know that the album has absolutely *nothing* to do with the show.

Fronted by platinum blond teenager Taylor Momsen—best known for her role as Jenny Humphrey on *Gossip Girl*—The Pretty Reckless dives into material that would shock even the jaded, morally vacuous teens and twentysomethings who inhabit CW's drama. Because even by that randy-to-raunchy TV show's loose standards, Momsen's mascara-smudged musical exploits with The Pretty Reckless aren't pretty reckless, they're a whole lotta reckless.

Liberally appropriating the taboo-shredding attitudes of Runaways-era Joan Jett, early Alanis Morissette and the always-controversial Courtney Love, this tired-beyond-her-years teen growls with the world-weary soul of a vampire who's tasted everything life has to offer ... and is left with a soul hollowed out by decades of drugs, abuse and sexual indulgence.

Pro-Social Content

The title track hints at recognition that a relationship is abusive ("Do you think it's right/When you hit me to the ground?"). Several songs involving sex, drugs and alcohol include moments where Taylor seems partially aware of how empty those choices have left her. On "Just Tonight," she admits, "Here I am/And I can't seem to see straight/But I'm too numb to feel right now." "Miss Nothing" records the outcome of similarly soul-sapping excesses: "I don't know where I've been/And I don't know what I'm into/And I don't know what I've done to me."

"Since You're Gone" says that life's been better since a breakup with a lying, cheating, stealing boyfriend. "Nothing Left to Lose" expresses a desire to be known ("I want you to know me").

Objectionable Content

"My Medicine" is a drug-dazed fever dream. "Somebody mixed my medicine/I don't know what I'm on," Taylor sings. Smoking and (probably) cocaine turn up on "Light Me Up": "Do you have a light?/Can you make me feel alright?/There's plenty of white to go around." "Just Tonight" admits, "Can't think from all of the pills," so the singer invites her inebriated partner ("You're too drunk to hear a word I say") to "Start the car and take me home," where, it seems, they'll share a one-night stand ("Just tonight I will stay, and we'll throw it all away").

A gothic, *Twilight*-esque vampire vibe haunts "Make Me Wanna Die," which proffers the lyrics, "Taste me, drink my soul/Show me all the things that I shouldn't know/ ... I could belong to the night/ ... Everything you love will all burn up in the light." Taylor repeatedly sings, "You make me wanna die," a disturbing line that is no less problematic if we interpret the song as a young woman's wish to become like the vampire she loves. Similarly, she dramatically inhabits the body of a 2,000-year-old undead girl on the nihilistic and hopeless "Zombie" ("I am wandering right through existence/With no purpose and no drive, 'cuz in the end we're all a lie/ ... Dear all of you who have wronged me/I am a zombie/ ... I'm dead/I'm dead").

"Miss Nothing" drips with self-contempt and careless disregard for everyone else, too ("I'm Miss Autonomy, Miss Nowhere/I'm at the bottom/ Miss Androgyny, Miss Don't Care/What I've done to me"). I'll note that this song's lyrics are curiously absent from the album's liner notes, replaced with "Censored," allegedly because Taylor mispronounces *misconstrued* in a way that evokes the obscene c-word.

"Goin' Down" is about a 16-year-old who confesses to a priest that she's killed her boyfriend and mutilated his genitals ("Next day on the television they identified him by the circumcision that I made") after catching him in bed with someone else. She then strips in the confessional and propositions the priest.

"Nothing Left to Lose" finds a 19-year-old reminiscing about the great sex she had with a 29-year-old beau who left her. Now she says she's "lost between Elvis and suicide." "Factory Girl" glorifies a Los Angeles prostitute's backseat business. On it, a John tells her, "Wait a minute girl/Can you show me to the party?/Just let me in through the back door," and a double entendre alludes to an orgasm.

The title track dismisses critics. "Does what I'm wearing seem to shock you?" she asks. "Well, that's OK." Regarding the suggestion that she should jettison dangerous habits, she says, "I don't think I can be anything other than me."

Summary Advisory

"After Jesus and rock 'n' roll/Couldn't save my immoral soul/Well, I've got nothing left to lose," Miss Momsen brags on "Nothing Left to Lose." And that "confession" succinctly encapsulates this astonishingly hardened 17-year-old's musical message.

Taylor's breezily detached depiction of debauchery (with an assist from the liner notes which picture her in fishnets and lingerie) feels like the desperate work of an insecure girl who's gunning for the title of "Nastiest Teen Star Ever!" What's more troubling, though, than that kind of vamping is her suggestion that her songs (which she co-wrote) correlate with her real-life experiences. "The hardest part about writing is writing honestly, and I think that's the most important thing—to make an honest record," she said in an interview with *thefrisky.com*. "It really takes a lot of looking at yourself, and it's not the easiest thing to do, but to say something true you have to be honest with yourself."

Given such unexpurgated "honesty," then, it's probably best to take Taylor seriously when says, "I wouldn't recommend 8-year-olds to buy the record. ... I wouldn't recommend young people to listen to it, [and] I wouldn't recommend a Disney audience to listen to it."

Did I mention she's 17?