



Evan (Michael Cera) and Seth (Jonah Hill) in *Superbad*

# Before Sunrise

Friends in search of a happy climax

**SUPERBAD:** Directed by Greg Mottola. Written by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. Produced by Judd Apatow and Shauna Robertson. Music, Lyle Workman. Starring Jonah Hill, Michael Cera, Seth Rogen, Bill Hader and Christopher Mintz-Plasse. Columbia Pictures, 2007. R. 114 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

If you've never watched the late, great *Arrested Development* — one of the funniest, most consistent half-hour sitcoms I've ever seen — you'd do well to rent a few discs before heading out to see *Superbad*. Why? So that you might properly appreciate the gentle comedic brilliance of Michael Cera, *AD*'s young George-Michael Bluth. With his guileless face and slightly hunched shoulders, Cera stumbles through *Superbad* under the weight of pretend bad-assery as he tries, via swearing and drinking and complaining about how he has to hide his every erection, to keep up with the frantic antics of his best friend Seth (Jonah Hill), a brash motormouth who's beginning to panic at the thought that he might leave high school a virgin. Seth is the muscle, the motion of *Superbad*, but Evan is the heart; he's a kind, shy lad who can barely bring himself to get mad at Seth when Seth's dissing Becca (Martha MacIsaac), on whom Evan has a tentative, clueless crush.

*Superbad* will probably bring to mind a handful of other comedies about sex-obsessed teenagers (different films depending on your high school graduation year). But this film — directed by Greg Mottola from a script by *Knocked Up*'s Seth Rogen and his childhood buddy Evan Goldberg, and produced by *Knocked Up* director Judd Apatow — is fearless in ways other teen-centric movies rarely dare. It's not just that the characters speak in un-PC language, obsess over body parts (and fear those they've never seen), drink themselves into stupidity and are desperate to get laid, though all those factors are present. It's that, in *Superbad*, the more complicated emotions of adolescence —

the insecurities, the needs, the assumed personas, the nearly-sexual tension of some close friendships — all make appearances as well. And they aren't played for snide laughs; the laughter that comes when *Superbad*'s best friends profess their love for each other is the sweet, understanding kind, not the mocking laughter too many high school tales rely on.

"Sweet" is really the word for *Superbad*, despite — or maybe because of, in a strange way — the swearing, the parade of dicks, the tampon jokes and the awkwardness. It pretends, like its characters pretend, to be all about two boys trying to get laid before high school ends. Once school's over, there's the summer, and then there's the end of life as they know it: Evan leaves for Dartmouth and leaves Seth behind. This is the real tension of *Superbad*, the conflict that spurs Seth's desperation and therefore the story's hijinks and insanity. What will Seth do — what will he be — without Evan?

Over the course of its one long night, *Superbad* finds endless humor in mixing and matching, setting the awkward teens — one pudgy, one lanky — to a funky, badass '70s soundtrack; sending their scrawny, cocky, extra-geeky friend Fogell (Christopher Mintz-Plasse) and his fake ID, which claims his name is McLovin, off on a long tangent with two doofy cops (Seth Rogen and *SNL*'s Bill Hader); pairing the awkward, sometimes crass boys with smiling, sweet girls; casting perennial dork Kevin Corrigan as a guy who starts fights. Hope and disappointment come and go as the boys make their way to the party that just might end all parties. Or maybe it'll just end the night, or the school year, or their time together. Being a teenager sometimes sucks, and *Superbad*'s creators clearly know that. But they also know that sometimes the worst nights have the best endings, and that it *really* sucks to be parted from your bestest, bestest friend. **CW**

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