

# A tubful of laughs

Time Machine a very vulgar and funny flick



JAY STONE

There's a scene near the beginning of *Hot Tub Time Machine* when some guys get into a hot tub and are transported back 25 years in time.

"It must be some kind of hot-tub time machine," one of them says, staring significantly at the camera, and maybe that's all you need to know about this cheerfully vulgar comedy that's sort of an X-rated *Back to the Future*, but with lots more booze.

The epiphany is enunciated by Nick (Craig Robinson), one of three friends who have made a return trip to an old ski resort where, back in 1986, they had some wild weekends. They're all slightly down on their luck now: Nick's singing career never panned out, Lou (Rob Corddry) is an angry failure who is also suicidal, friendless, trapped in a bad job and suffers from both halitosis and erectile dysfunction — his friends helpfully provide a list of shortcomings — and Adam (John Cusack) is a loner, recently abandoned by his girlfriend, the guy who never lived up to his potential.

They return to Kodiak Valley, scene of their glory days, to find an economically distressed town and a crumbling resort that includes a bitter, one-armed bellhop, played by Crispin Glover: Yes, it's George McFly himself, underlining the time-travel theme, if you can call it that, and adding a note of impending bloodshed. Back in 1986, he had two arms, and we know that, if we wait long enough, we'll see the blood spurting from his shoulder when he finally loses one of them.

Accompanied by Adam's nephew Jacob (Clark Duke), playing the role of the guy who won't get born if they change the past



The dopey gang of *Hot Tub* features, from left, Craig Robinson, Rob Corddry, Clark Duke and John Cusack.

**REVIEW**  
**Hot Tub Time Machine**  
Starring John Cusack, Rob Corddry and Craig Robinson.  
Directed by Steve Pink  
★★★ out of five

too much, the three friends hop into the hot tub and are magically sent back to the time of Ronald Reagan, big hair, Alf, Miami Vice, cassette players, "Where's the beef?" T-shirts, cellphones the size of, well, phones, and what one hopes is the final Michael Jackson joke ever, although it's a pretty good one.

The men have to make sure they do whatever it was that they did back in 1986 — break up with that girlfriend, get into that fight, sing with that band — so they don't alter the past too much while their hot tub is being repaired. The repairman is Chevy Chase, adding another note of faded glory.

However, *Hot Tub Time Machine* doesn't cleave too religiously to the idea that the past must be preserved: the characters go off on their own adventures with the devil-may-care attitude hinted at in the title. This is very much from the Snakes on a Plane school of high-concept cinema, tied to the slipshod kind of comic coarseness that distinguishes the contemporary buddy comedy.

The *Hangover*, for instance, had a similar rough-and-tumble ethic, made up mostly of teasing, pain, profanity and homophobia. Corddry, a veteran of this kind of thing (he was in *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* and *What Happens in Vegas*) is especially adept at the passive-aggressive ranting that is the keystone of such adolescent humour.

That is to say, the butterfly effect is dealt with only insofar as the concept is invited to take part in an unnatural sex act.

Despite the time-machine plot, the film is mostly about vulgarity and making fun of the 1980s, with a bit of melancholy thrown in. Cusack, one of the film's producers, is still playing that heartbroken guy who seems too smart for the room.

"We were young," he reminisces. "We had momentum. We were winning." It's a sad tone, but it doesn't take long before a scene of, say, projectile vomiting re-establishes the fun.

The result is a hopelessly dopey film that nonetheless has something of what Cusack is talking about: youth and momentum. Its jokes are alternately juvenile and disgusting, the acting is broad and calculated, the politics are regressive and the plot is incoherent. But it does have a great title.

# Stiller's Greenberg will stick with you

CHRIS KNIGHT  
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

REVIEW  
**Greenberg**

Starring Ben Stiller, Chris Messina, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Susan Traylor.  
Directed by Noah Baumbach  
★★★★ out of five

Ben Stiller's last four live-action films, and most of his work since *Zoolander* in 2001, in fact, have been marketed as Ben Stiller movies, with the actor's mug front and centre and very large in the coming-attractions posters.

Compare that style with his tiny picture on the mostly empty ads for *Greenberg*, head tilted back in an up-the-nose shot backlit by a frizz of hair. For all we can see of the features, it might be Jesse Eisenberg or Michael Cera. It could be anyone.

Well, to some degree, it could. *Greenberg* is not a Ben Stiller movie. It's the latest from writer-director Noah Baumbach, whose breakout feature, *The Squid and the Whale*, was Oscar-nominated for best screenplay of 2005, and which he followed up with *Margot at the Wedding*.

*Greenberg* continues Baumbach's trend of talky, funny, surprisingly grown-up films. Stiller plays Roger Greenberg, a 40-year-old Los Angelino who long ago moved to New York City and picked up every neurosis for which its inhabitants (in the movies, at least) are famous.

When Roger's brother and family take off for a Vietnamese vacation, Roger returns to L.A. to house-sit and build a doghouse for Mahler, their German shepherd. (The fact that it's named after an early Modernist composer tells us volumes about the family; this is the kind of cinematic shorthand at which Baumbach excels.) Roger soon runs into his brother's personal assistant, Florence (Greta Gerwig), and finds himself weirdly, almost compulsively, drawn to her.

At the same time, he is hanging out with his old friend Ivan (Rhys Ifans) and dreaming about hooking up with long-ago-girlfriend Beth (Baumbach's wife, Jennifer Jason Leigh). Unfortunately, Beth is no more than mildly pleased to see him again, and Ivan is trying to forget that Roger was the one who broke up their promising band back in university. It's like a train-wreck version of *This Is Your Life*.

In a trait we've come to expect from Baumbach's scripts,

people are defined by what they say. Roger's seemingly offhand remarks prove deeper than they first sound, and also illuminate his personality, delineated early on with the news that he's just been released from a mental hospital following a nervous breakdown.

"All the men out here dress like children and the children dress like superheroes," he observes after being dragged to a party by Ivan. Later, he delivers a fantastic, drug-fuelled paranoid rant to a group of mildly drunk 20-year-olds, simultaneously praising his own generation and burying it. He's also a compulsive writer of letters of complaint, berating American Airlines for a non-reclining seat, and Starbucks for an atmosphere of faux culture that "sucks."

Stiller is revelatory in this role, so sullen as to make his other characters seem downright manic in comparison. And while there's almost always a layer of self-loathing to him, stretching back to the hapless Ted in *There's Something About Mary*, Stiller in *Greenberg* is positively unlikeable, given to pointless fits of rage and a complete lack of social graces.

But the real find in the film is Gerwig, whose guileless, understated performance as Roger's 25-year-old love interest nails her part — the slightly insecure, rootless 25-year-old who has realized she's been out of university now for as long as she was in it, but is uncertain what to do with that insight. Baumbach has — I don't want to call it a problem with endings, but his movies often seem to come to a sudden, unexpected halt. Perhaps it's because the characters feel so real, we can't imagine them suddenly fading to black while the credits roll. *Greenberg* ends with a remark that would go unnoticed if it weren't the final line in the movie. It's not when Ivan says: "It's huge to finally embrace the life you never planned," though that's a nice one. It's simpler. And it will follow you home.

## GATEWAY TO NATURE



Can You Believe we live 5 Minutes to Downtown?

Brandon Anson

With an attractive location nestled alongside the Bow River and surrounded by scenic bike paths and Pearce Estates Park, Statesman's Riverside Quays seemed like the perfect location for James and Ina Wall.

Describing themselves as "sedentary," it was Calgary's hundreds of miles of bike paths that got the couple travelling on two wheels.

Soon the married couple of 29 years found themselves treading the paths that run through Pearce Estate Park and there they discovered Riverside Quays.

Riverside Quays is Statesman's latest development in Calgary. The first building is completed and the majority of 124 suites are filled. Openness is evident throughout

The Quays and becomes clear when stepping into a Terrace Condo for the first time. Phase 2 of the Steel, Concrete and Brick structure has started.

With 5.7 hectares of land, Riverside Quays is a massive undertaking in community building that will take five years to complete. In the end, there will be space for 700 Terraces, Brownstones, and Garden Townhomes.

"[Riverside Quays has] easy access for main arteries: Deerfoot, 17th Ave., Memorial, and Blackfoot, it's central," said Ina. "We can go wherever. This is the centre of Calgary."

After moving to Riverside Quays in Sept. 2009, the couple was struck by how easy it was to access perhaps Riverside Quay's greatest natural amenities, Pearce Estate Park and the Bow River.

"We step out of our Terrace and can be right at the river," said James.

"In a two-hour period a couple of months ago, I took a walk through Inglewood Bird Sanctuary which is about a 15-minute walk from here," said James. "I took pictures of 12 or 13 deer in the hour I was walking through the park."

"It's like escaping the city without escaping the city," said Ina, a graphics designer.

"I don't know how many times when we're on the bike path or walking and [we say] that'd make a great shot," said James. "As it turns out people think I have an eye for it [photography]."

James' nature shots of life in Pearce Estate Park and the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary hang proudly in The Quays Bistro and have even been displayed in the Riverside Quay's newsletter.

With a state of the art health spa and a games room featuring pool tables, Riverside Quays endeavors to bring resident's together through regular events and commu-

nity mixers.

After a recent mixer in the main building's Bistro, residents have really begun to take notice of James' photography talents.

Mike Sali, Riverside Quay's head of sales, knows the drawing power of Pearce Estate Park and the Bow River to potential first time buyers looking to move into the Quays.

"Our two biggest amenities are this unbelievable location and our Health and Fitness Center."

Residents of Riverside Quays can take advantage of beautiful trails and self-guided tours explaining the park's history, said Sali.

With an area occupying 21 hectares, visitors to Pearce Estate Park have lots to experience from the provincial run-Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery Visitor Centre and Ducks Unlimited Canada's Marsh at the Bow Habitat Station.

"There are times you're in that

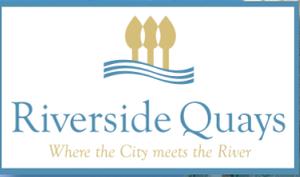
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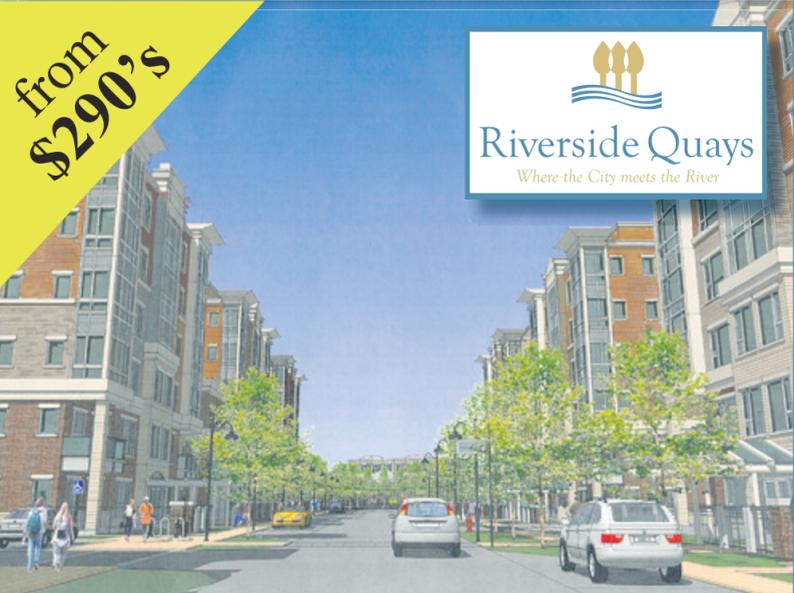
park [Pearce Estate Park] and you forget you're in the middle of Calgary and only five minutes to downtown," said Ina.



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