

# 'Prom' aims for pure intensity

## Disney pins its hopes on teens

By Anthony Breznican  
USA TODAY

Nothing comes as freighted with ambitions as a teenager's senior prom.

Similarly, Disney's new high-school comedy *Prom* faces its own expectations, mostly that the purveyor of squeaky-clean kids' entertainment won't be able to handle any edginess in the storytelling.

Disney is, after all, tackling a night known for its revelers' experimentations with adulthood: sex, drinking, even mortality. (The prologue to every prom night is usually a school assembly about the grisly outcome of drinking and driving.)

But director Joe Nussbaum says these aren't the only things that matter. He hopes *Prom* will show truth and heart in its com-

ing-of-age stories.

"Of course we're not going to show sex and drugs and cursing, which is a part of teenage life, for sure," says Nussbaum (*Sleepover*, *Sydney White*). "But there are a lot of other parts to teenage life, too — insecurity, anxiety, disappointment on the negative side, and also falling in love, having crushes, and the excitement of an event like this on the positive side."

Disney's plans to make it resonate with actual teens, as opposed to the younger tween fans who drove the *High School Musical* franchise, came to light in April, months before production began. New studio chief Rich Ross, formerly of the Disney Channel, told reporters he wanted *Prom* to be closer to the "honest and authentic" works of John Hughes and Cameron Crowe, icons of teen-dom from the '80s with movies such as *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, respectively.



By Richard Foreman Jr., Disney Enterprises

**Steady on:** Aimee Teegarden, left, Janelle Ortiz, Yin Chang, Jonathan Keltz and Joe Adler.

But those films dealt with sex, drugs, abuse and other issues that would make many parents cringe.

*Prom* doesn't delve into those dark corners, but Nussbaum's goal is to capture the intensity

of emotion on one of the most memorable (or notorious) nights in teen life. "High school elevates all the highs and lows in life," he says. "Everything is a big deal. And prom elevates it all even further from there."

First look  
**Prom**  
Opens April 29



For a photo gallery of the *Prom* teens, visit [life.usatoday.com](http://life.usatoday.com).