

# 'Pineapple Express' Tastes Familiar

By **CHRISTY LEMIRE**  
Associated Press



James Franco and Seth Rogen

be both, it doesn't completely work on either level. Seth Rogen and James Franco have great chemistry, though, as our half-baked heroes — not surprising, since they're both longtime Friends of Judd who co-starred on his TV series *Freaks and Geeks*. Rogen also co-wrote the screenplay with his lifelong friend, Evan Goldberg, with whom he scripted *Superbad*, which was inspired by their geeky adolescence. (Apatow shares a story-by credit with them. He is everywhere, you know.) This time, Rogen plays a vaguely more functional version of his *Knocked Up* slacker. His Dale Denton is a process server — he has to wear a tie, this must mean he's a grown-up now — but he's still dating a high-school hottie (Amber Heard) and his main priority is making frequent trips to his pot dealer. That would be Franco's character, the affable space cadet Saul Silver. It's a wildly different role for the actor, best known as the pretty-boy bad guy in the *Spider-Man* movies and for his star-making, TV-movie turn as James Dean. Here, he's just goofy and easygoing, prone to non sequiturs but sweet and instantly likable. And he takes pride in his work. Saul sells an inordinately strong strain of weed known as *Pineapple Express*, one that's so famously rare, he says smoking it is "like killing a unicorn." But because it's so identifiable, it gets him and Dale tangled up with a dirty cop (Rosie Perez) and a homicidal drug lord (Gary Cole). (The details aren't all that important. Suffice it to say that a substance known for inducing laziness sets the film's action

into high gear.) *Pineapple Express* is at its best when it's about these two guys getting to know each other by talking about absolutely nothing. In a twist on the traditional odd-couple roles, the heavy guy is the uptight one and the lanky one is more laid-back; Dale and Saul certainly offer an intriguing contrast to brothers-in-bongs Harold and Kumar or Cheech and Chong. But then *Express* goes off the rails and turns into a very generic action picture, full of fist-fights and shootouts and explosions, in what seems like an effort to be as broadly commercial as possible. There's a slightly slapsticky element to all this, but even that doesn't make such mundane material any more compelling. This is even more of a headscratcher when you consider that the director is David Gordon Green, who's made a career out of quiet indie dramas like *George Washington* and *All the Real Girls*. Green is, however, a longtime friend and film-school classmate of Danny McBride, star of the kung-fu comedy *The Foot Fist Way* who has a supporting role here as Saul's supplier. Green naturally has a sure hand when it comes to the dialogue and the smaller moments — it's his big, violent set pieces that lack any discernible pizzazz. Still, maybe all of this is more fun if you're under the influence of the same substance our stoner heroes are. Not that we're condoning that kind of activity, mind you. *Pineapple Express*, a Columbia Pictures release, is rated R for pervasive language, drug use, sexual references and violence. Running time: 108 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. ■

The formula is pretty familiar by now in these Judd Apatow-produced comedies. A couple of buddies get into trouble, and as they try to bumble their way out of it, their friendship only grows stronger.

Some clever linguistics guru somewhere even came up with a word for this pop-culture phenomenon: the "Bromance." *Pineapple Express* tries to breathe some fresh life into this comic genre by turning it into a serious action movie. But because it tries to

## A Tale of Two Divas

From Page 3 managed by Primeline under Ronnie Henares. From the provincial singing champion, Regine evolved into a beautiful swan, soaring to be one of the greatest singers of Asia.

Lani comes from a musical family and joins singing with her siblings in church. She was fascinated with singing like the big Hollywood divas such as Whitney Houston and Celine Dion. She worked with company producing multiplex tapes. Meanwhile, she would do back up for a band and later she was asked to do a record which became a sleeper hit with the song *Somebody Warm Like Me*. Later on, she was managed also by Primeline and became a singing sensation in the Philippines. She was dubbed as "Asia's Nightingale". However, for some twist of fate, Lani took the international route in forayed into performing in Vegas with the SOS band. In a few years, she is now heralded as "The Best Singer of Las Vegas."

These two divas have crossed parallel lines, coming from humble beginnings, managed by the same group, and soared to be respected markets far and wide. By no stretch of imagination did they think of having a concert together as they seemed to have gone in different directions. However, Starmedia picked up this brilliant concept and put it into reality. Now, the heat is on and the challenge is "Who will leave us breathless?"

Regine or Lani? Lani or Regine? Watch the show and you be the judge. Tickets are now flying fast. Call and purchase now. The show is presented to you by the following: The Law Offices of Michael Gurfinkel, Island Pacific Supermarket, Asian Journal, Guiding Star Realty, Dr. Frieda Brookshire Dental Center, The Belo Medical Group, GMA Pinoy TV. Major Sponsors are Manila Bulletin USA, Aqua Imaging Design, Philippine Fiesta, Philippine Headlines and Minor Sponsors are LBC Cargo, Medical Link Provider and Local Filipino.com. For ticket inquiries, please contact Starmedia Entertainment at (818) 549-9005 / (818) 547-1456 / (818) 913-5818 and all Island Pacific Supermarkets. This show is line produced by JSC Productions - Joey Camins - (650) 290-0542 / (650) 755-0513 and Prime Media Unlimited - (510) 329-1406 / (415) 370-2802. Log on to [www.starmediaentertainment.com](http://www.starmediaentertainment.com) for a show preview and seating arrangement. ■

## Stealing Thunder at the Box Office

By **NICKEE V. DE LEON**  
AJPRESS

Despite protests made by a coalition of disabilities groups, Ben Stiller's summer comedy *Tropic Thunder* has been making waves at the box office, knocking *The Dark Knight* off from its undisputed position.

*Tropic Thunder* is a facetious satire about the uglier side of Hollywood. The movie centers on the absurdity of "the rigors of movie boot camp and the location shoot," says Kenny Fischer of Collider.com. "*Tropic Thunder* is the comedic tale of a war movie gone horribly, horribly wrong," he further adds.

One of Tugg Speedman's (Ben Stiller) roles in the film was the mentally-challenged Jack — a character that infuriated many because of its perceived mockery of the intellectually-disabled. "A particular sore point has been the film's repeated use of the term 'retard' in referring to a character, Simple Jack, who is played by Mr. Stiller in a subplot about an actor who chases an Oscar by portraying a mindless dolt," says Michael Cieply of the *New York Times*.

In the same article, Dreamworks spokesman Chip Sullivan spoke in *Tropic Thunder's* defense, saying that the movie was "an R-rated comedy that satirizes Hollywood and its excesses and makes its point by featuring inappropriate and over-the-top characters in ridiculous situations." Sullivan also added that the film "was not meant to disparage or harm people with disabilities and that Dreamworks expected to work closely with disability groups in the future." However, Sullivan stressed that "no changes or cuts to the film will be made." The film stars Stiller (Tugg Speedman), Jack Black (Jeff Portnoy)

and Robert Downey Jr. (Kirk Lazarus), a group of primadonna actors who are in the middle of filming a Vietnam war movie. Their differences and shenanigans on the set caused a \$4-million explosion to go off with no cameras shooting. The ruckus almost brought the entire project to a screeching halt, when megalomaniac studio chief Lee Grossman (Tom Cruise) threatened to cancel filming unless director Damien Cockburn (Steve Coogan) finds a way to boot camp his dysfunctional motley crew. Armed only with digital cameras and with no other resort, Cockburn takes matters into his own hands. He leads his pack deep into the jungle to shoot the film, guerrilla-style. Here, the plot takes on an unexpected turn and their misadventures unfold after Cockburn literally explodes on them. Here's another tasty spoiler — expect a slew of ludicrous trailers that only Ben Stiller can deliver. The outrageously funny snippets are enough to make you as flatulent as Jeff Portnoy. Stiller came up with the idea for *Tropic Thunder* in the 80s and later collaborated with Justin Theroux and Etan Cohen to write the script. The film was shot in 2006 on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai for more than thirteen weeks. It was deemed as the largest film production ever made in the island's history. Marketing promotions were just as equally extravagant, with numerous film screenings, sales of the fictional energy drink in the film and faux websites for the characters, films and products shown in the film. ■



As a mom, I know how important it is for my kids to look just right on the first day of school. At Walmart I can get what my kids want, at the prices I want. They have lots of new quality brands, great looking T-shirts, L.e.i. jeans, Op apparel and exclusive Hannah Montana™ clothing — all at the unbeatable Walmart prices.

