

'The Last Summer,' a flat teen rom-com that needs updating



CHENNAI: After months of long, damp winters, summer can bring forth a burst of warmth and hope that is the perfect setting for romantic movies and Netflix's latest offering, "The Last Summer," is following that well-worn path.

Director William Bindley ("Madison," "Mother's Day") based "The Last Summer" on a script he wrote along with his brother, Scott Bindley ("The Nut Job 2: Nutty by Nature").

The film follows the streaming giant's successes with similar themes — "The Kissing Booth" and "To All the Boys I've Loved Before" — but this time we follow a group of boys and girls who have just graduated from high school in Chicago and are set to head for universities in different cities.

Some are friends, like Griffin (K J Apa) and Phoebe (Maia Mitchell), to whom distance does not seem to matter, even though they are heading off to different cities. For others, distance is an obstacle that leads Alec (Jacob Latimore) and Erin (Halstone Sage) to split up. Misogynistic jock Foster (Wolfgang Novogratz) has a list of girls he would like to date, while Audrey (Sosie Bacon) babysits a child star.

If that seems confusing in print, it isn't much better on screen — while the Bindley brothers do try and link up most of the characters, the movie fails to be cohesive. Too many people seem to crowd the canvas and this can be quite confusing. By the time a viewer begins the grasp who is who and starts to understand the contending storylines and relationship issues, the credits have already begun to roll.

Another failing is the largely one-dimensional characters seem to have been inspired by 1980s cinema, with very little of the magic of the era that became so famous for its quirky teenage, coming-of-age romances.

The out-of-touch dialogue is also an issue, particularly if you happen to be in the age bracket that the characters portray. From dated uses of “text talk” to a heavy-handed script that tries too hard, it just isn't fresh or relatable.

Teenagers will always face growing pains and leaving home is an interesting concept to explore, but this film's portrayal of the bumpy road to adulthood could do with some updating.
