

The Babymakers: SXSW Review

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Paul Schneider and Olivia Munn star in a caper film about a sperm-bank heist directed by "Super Troopers" helmer Jay Chandrasekhar.

AUSTIN -- How is it that a premise offering more potential for juvenile gross-outery than any in the Broken Lizard filmography has produced the troupe's most mature, funniest work -- a comedy with a better shot at mainstream success than anything they've done?

It isn't as if *The Babymakers'* screenplay, produced outside the Lizard collective, has a promising pedigree: cowriters **Peter Gaulke** and **Gerry Swallow** haven't been credited on a live-action film since 2001's Martin Lawrence dud *Black Knight*. But in working with outside material and recruiting a lead (**Paul Schneider**) with something beyond stoner comedy on his CV, director **Jay Chandrasekhar** has found the sweet spot while retaining a touch of the weirdness first seen in *Super Troopers*.

While pot is off the menu here, plenty of hard-R gags arrive when Tommy (Schneider) and wife Audrey (**Olivia Munn**) realize they're having a hard time conceiving a child. First there are comically exotic home remedies paired with macho-deflating condolences, then visits to a fertility clinic, where Tommy suddenly has difficulty with a specimen-producing chore he (and every other man on the planet) mastered at adolescence.

Sweetly, Tommy loves Audrey so much he even fantasizes about her when he masturbates, but the script introduces bits of slapstick tension when Tommy's buddy (**Kevin Heffernan**) offers him some extramarital inspiration. Those hijinks pave the way for more outlandish set pieces: For reasons best unexplained here (but incorporating a groin-punch montage that, for once in lowbrow history, cannot be called gratuitous), Tommy and his friends decide they must break into a sperm bank to get what they need.

When Chandrasekhar enters the film, playing a former heist expert in "the Indian mafia," *The Babymakers* takes a turn toward wackiness that only occasionally threatens viewers' suspension of disbelief. The picture fares better than most dude-centric comedies when it comes to jokes involving homophobia; if it still doesn't quite know what to do with wives and girlfriends, Munn remains game in scenes that remind us of the story's family-minded roots.

Viewers may suspect the filmmakers have no clue about the actual operation of fertility clinics and sperm banks (the plot depends on some pretty dubious practices, particularly involving donor anonymity), but most will be laughing too hard to care.