

HOT TOPIC: OUT-OF-CONTROL PROMS

DANCE REVOLUTION
HIGH SCHOOLS ON
BOTH COASTS HAVE
CANCELED PROM IN
FAVOR OF SCAVENGER
HUNTS AND SENIOR
CLASS TRIPS.



promzilla

With costs—and expectations—skyrocketing, some schools are canceling their formals to try and ease the pressure it puts on students. Leigh Belz reports on prom excess.

lame John Hughes.

b If pop songs are responsible for making us swoony for unrealistic romance, it's teen movies (especially the classics that writer/director Hughes had a hand in during the eighties) that help shape our views about the importance of prom.

Think about it: From *Pretty in Pink* to *American Pie* to *Napoleon Dynamite*, everything leads up to that last dance. What better time to tell the person you've been hung up on for four years that you're sorta, kinda (definitely) in love with them? Prom is made out to be the crowning moment of high school. With all those expectations, it's no wonder it can leave you feeling stressed or anxious.

most of my friends spent about \$300 on their dresses," says Amy,* 20, from Los Angeles. "And when you added in the shoes and the limo, it all became very expensive."

There seems to be a definite relationship between preparation and expectation—as the prom grows in scope, it becomes harder for the night to live up to all the buildup. "After spending all the time and money, it would be hard for anybody to say, 'Wow, it was everything I wanted it to be,'" says Stein.

GIVING BACK

THESE FORMAL-RELATED CHARITIES ALLOW YOU TO HELP OTHERS—EVEN IF YOU GO ALL-OUT.

PRINCESS PROJECT

Laney Whitcanack and Kristi Smith Knutson started the Bay Area charity Princess Project in 2002 to help girls who don't have enough money for a gown. The duo asked friends to donate old formalwear after a teen they knew almost didn't go to the prom because she couldn't afford a dress. Since then, word has spread, and the organization helps more than 3,000 girls a year. To donate, visit www.princessproject.org.

LIMOS FOR LIVES

After a trip to India to visit a school for the blind, Connecticut teens Sophie Cole, Brittany McCann, and Katie Funk decided to start a charity for impoverished children. Their organization, The Starfish Children's Fund, runs a fund-raiser called Limos for Lives, which encourages students to give up their limo ride to prom in favor of making a contribution to Calcutta's Divine Fellowship Blind School. To make a donation, visit www.limosforlives.org. —CHERISE WATTS