

## ‘Pitch Perfect’ Succeeds By Making Fun of Itself

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 28, 2012 - 8:12am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – When we last saw Anna Kendrick, she was the mid-twentysomething girlfriend of cop Jake Gyllenhaal in “End of Watch.” This week, she reverts back to freshman year in college, portraying a rebellious D.J. and songstress in the not-taking-themselves-seriously “Pitch Perfect.”

This is harmless fluff reflecting the “American Idol”-ization of the culture, where even the most off-key citizens can find redemption through singing. The strange path to all this is competitive a cappella teams (no instruments, all vocal) from various colleges, which apparently has swept the nation like goldfish swallowing. From the opening note to the final coda, plucky co-ed gals harmonize and choreograph themselves into our hearts. Who needs Psych 101 when you have four part choral sisters and Bruno Mars riffs?

The film opens with “the year before” as The Bellas, a Barden University a cappella team, are about to take the stage against their archrivals, the all-male Treblemakers. After a drastic stage breakdown, The Bellas are reduced again to also-rans, leaving only Chloe (Brittany Snow) and Aubrey (Anna Camp) to form yet another version of the singing sisters as the school year starts anew.



The Bellas Bring the Noise in ‘Pitch Perfect’  
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Enter Beca (Anna Kendrick), a sparkly-faced Freshman who has a rebellious streak, indicated by her solid mash-track work as a D.J. Somehow she is convinced to join The Bellas, along with campus rejects Fat Amy (Rebel Wilson, the British roommate in “Bridemaids”), low talker Lilly (Hana Mae Lee) and carnally fortified Stacie (Alexis Knapp), among others. There is just one problem – Chloe wants The Bellas run

her way, which includes no dating the rival Treblemakers, leaving out Jesse (Skylar Astin), who has a serious crush on Beca. What happens next, we wonder to ourselves.

This is a good excuse to create soundtrack material through the harmonizing a-cappella groups, and the musical numbers have a hey-kids-let’s-put-on-a-show quality to them, it doesn’t matter what the era is. The key to this enterprise is that nothing is really taken seriously. Co-producer Elizabeth Banks plays a minor role as the Greek chorus announcing crew (along with John Michael Higgins) at the competitions, and their quips having to do with what is on stage is a combination of sports hyperbole and non sequitur hilarity. They nearly steal the whole film.

The actors in the girl group also up the ante somewhat. Putting an unusual spin on types – rebel, sexpot, fat girl, stuck-up girl, etc. – the broad portrayals make the group meetings more fun than the actual singing. Hana Mae Lee as the low talking Asian girl and Rebel Wilson as Fat Amy (she calls herself that so as not to have it said behind her back) both provide necessary and surreal comic relief to the conventional rebel-versus-stuck-up rivalry with Kendrick and Snow. Kendrick actually plays it fairly straight, and allows the goofier characters around her to liven up the joint.

This is a pretty people movie, with all the girl’s hair and make-up needs front and center. Although not played for sex, there is a enough cleavage baring to satisfy the lusty heart, and the geeky-but-hunky man children are sure to flutter some passions. And none of the participants need or are shown going to classes, which will satisfy the slacker crowd at all universities. One of the highlights of the school year is a “jets and sharks” style sing-off in an empty pool. Put the hollow pool vibe in 1929 Berlin and it could have been “Cabaret.”



John (John Michael Higgins) and Gail (Elizabeth Banks) Provide Color in ‘Pitch Perfect’

*Photo credit: Universal Pictures*

The plot does lag a bit in leading up to the inevitable final show, where The Bellas blossom into something that in reality would take six weeks of out-of-town tryouts to get to the proper form. Everybody has to get their comeuppance before Beca’s DJ riffs can save the day, and a gross-out joke is repeated when once was enough. The head of The Treblemakers, a guy named Bumper (Adam DeVine), may also be getting a call from Jack Black’s lawyer, because he cops Black’s on-screen persona a little too close for litigious comfort.

All is fair in love, war and a-cappella song, and with the reality singing shows and “Glee” a staple of network television, the film copycats were inevitable. To keep her age appropriate balance, the rumor for Anna Kendrick’s next film is a portrayal of Golda Meir – with a plunging neckline, naturally.

*“Pitch Perfect” has a limited release on September 28th – including Chicago – and opens everywhere October 5th. See local listings for theaters and showtimes. Featuring Anna Kendrick, Brittany Snow, Anna Camp, Elizabeth Banks, John Michael Higgins and Rebel Wilson. Screenplay by Kay Cannon. Directed by Jason Moore. Rated “PG-13”*



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**Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 29 2024 - 4:12am*):**

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