

Sequel's Tune is Off Key in 'Pitch Perfect 2'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 15, 2015 - 5:51pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Pitch Perfect 2” wasn’t bad. There was the same off-kilter weirdness and funny lines of the first film, but in this sequel there were also stretches of boring, seemingly made-up stuff to slog through. I guess repeating a premise about college singing groups doesn’t offer much more to say.

Also, the charm that made the first film work wasn’t in evidence in the sequel. There was too much of a reliance on Rebel Wilson’s “Fat Amy” to take care of any dead spots, but often her schtick WAS the dead spot. The rest was just a repeat of the first movie – funny a cappella group names, sing-offs, weird jokey asides from the participants, in addition to Elizabeth Banks (who also directed the film) and John Michael Higgins as Greek Chorus commentators. It also subtracted a “Bella” (Anna Camp’s Aubrey, who has a small role late in the film), and added one (Hailee Steinfeld’s Emily) – who provided nothing to that character. As a followup to “Pitch Perfect,” it might work for fans, but as a separate film it’s a “meh.”

The a cappella college singing group called the “Bellas” from the first “Pitch Perfect” are back, but this time they are a raging success as the second film opens, and entering their Senior year. Beca (Anna Kendrick) leads them onto the big stage, singing for President Obama at the Kennedy Center in Washington. However, Fat Amy (Rebel Wilson) has a wardrobe malfunction, and the scandal rocks the a cappella society.



Beca (Anna Kendrick) Belts it Out with New Bella Emily (Hailee Stanfield) in 'Pitch Perfect 2'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

The directors of that society, John and Gail (John Michael Higgins and Elizabeth Banks) decide to suspend the Bellas, but there is one catch – the group can get their status renewed if they win the World Championship in Copenhagen. With the German group Das Sound Machine at their heels, the Bellas need all the song power they can muster, including some melody from the new Bella, Emily (Hallee Stanfield).

There are several good parts to recommend. The German group is appropriately Kraftwerk-like, and there is a running gag that Beca is sexually confused about her attraction to the lead German girl singer. The other singing groups are surreal and bizarre, with many cameos, including members of the Green Bay Packers. The same absurdist humor from the first film – especially from the over-eager commentators John and Gail – still hits the mark, including a solo song interrupted by a passing vehicle.

Yet there are long periods of radio silence in the film, meaning no singing or comedy, and the overuse of plot nearly ruins the whole story. Rebel Wilson would upstage a rabbi at a bris, and in the film she is increasingly annoying the more the story relies on her bull-in-a-china-shop demeanor. There is a subplot involving her relationship with “Bumper” (Adam DeVine), her shag partner, that takes way too much time to develop. The Bellas also go on retreat, which seemed to be just an excuse to bring back Aubrey and rely on a single gag that didn't need to be repeated, but was.

The two other subplots involve the new Bella named Emily and Beca's new internship at a recording studio (hee-hee, what a concept, a for-profit recording studio). The studio featured Snoop Dogg (doing a Christmas album) and Keegan-Michael Key of “Key & Peele,” yet it was still flat. Hailee Steinfeld as Emily should steer clear of any film asking her to be funny. What made her great as the stoic girl in “True Grit” remake made her terrible as an eager college Freshman.



The Bellas Face the Music in 'Pitch Perfect 2'

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

This is not a film to overanalyze, it's about college singing groups. But they could have loosened it up a bit, and not made it so reliant on dull plotting. This was Elizabeth Banks' debut as feature film director as well, and she might want to get some advice on pacing a story. Maybe even fans won't warm up to this “Pitch Perfect” like they did the first one, if the church-like silence at the screening I was at is any indication.

College sure has changed. There are a cappella singing groups, fancy internships, endless hours with those singing groups, theme parties that are amazing and time to set up fancy dinners to woo Fat Amy. Classes? They don't need no stinkin' classes.

“Pitch Perfect 2” opens everywhere on May 15th. Featuring Anna Kendrick, Rebel Wilson, Hallee Steinfeld, Elizabeth Banks, Snoop Dogg, Keegan-Michael Key, Katey Sagal and John Michael Higgins. Written by Kay Cannon. Directed by Elizabeth Banks. Rated “PG-13”



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