

Pitch Perfect 3 hits a sour note

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time: 93 min.

Pitch Perfect 3 opens with a bizarre scene that involves the main characters in a dangerous situation, performing before a group of crooks until chaos breaks out. It's all shown with little explanation and the sheer strangeness of it earns a laugh. One wishes that the rest of the film was willing to go in the more outrageous direction of its opening. Unfortunately, the majority of this follow-up is a genial but rather bland retread of ideas and themes that have been presented before.

This sequel picks up with the a cappella group The Barden Bellas having separated and struggling to make their way. Beca (Anna Kendrick), Amy (Rebel Wilson) and the rest of the group decide to re form after an unusual and highly improbable opportunity presents itself. The group joins a USO tour through Europe. They join rival bands who are competing to impress a famous entertainer (DJ Khaled) who will allow the winner to open for him at a final performance. While touring, the group attempts to fend off ex-commentators turned documentary filmmakers Gail (Elizabeth Banks) and John (John Michael Higgins), while Amy encounters a mysterious figure (John Lithgow) from her past.

While the occasional line here and there earns a chuckle, many of the jokes fall flat this time out and story points feel repetitive. The concept of the ladies leaving college behind and having difficulty finding employment and happiness in their adult lives is a little too similar to the concerns depicted in the previous entry. There is also a general choppiness to the proceedings here, with most of the characters (like the bands competing against the leads) falling into the background. And, there is little explanation as to why members of the Bellas are having an

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unwanted and unlicensed documentary made about them.

The film only really jolts to life when an antagonist makes some real threats and begins taking hostages. There is some amusing physical comedy during the climax as well as a few good lines when one of the characters attempts to threaten the villain over the phone. They attempt to do so in a menacing manner, but also try to hold an amiable conversation with a friend entering the room at the same time. These moments feel much more effective because they're fresh, new situations.

In fact, it leaves one wondering what the movie could have been had it followed this tangent instead. One can imagine a film in which the friendly, innocent-looking group is asked by the government to infiltrate and take down a criminal organization under the guise of a cappella entertainers. It seems like the results would have been a much funnier film than the one delivered.

Fans of the *Pitch Perfect* series may get a chuckle here and there, but this entry pales in comparison to the original film, and can't even match the middling returns of the first sequel. As it stands, *Pitch Perfect 3* doesn't take advantage of its most interesting ideas and instead relies on formula. It's unfortunate, and the end result sounds off-key.

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