



Pitch Perfect: The Quest for Collegiate A Cappella Glory

By Mickey Rapkin

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High notes, high drama, and high jinks collide as elite collegiate a cappella groups compete to be the best in the nation

Journalist Mickey Rapkin follows a season in collegiate a cappella, covering the breathtaking displays of vocal talent, the groupies (yes, a cappella singers have groupies), the rock-star partying (and run-ins with the law), and all the bitter rivalries. Along the way are encounters with a cappella alums like John Legend and Diane Sawyer and fans from Prince to presidents.

Bringing a lively new twist to America's fascination with talent showdowns, *Pitch Perfect* is sure to strike a chord with readers.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

According to *GQ* senior editor Rapkin, today's lively collegiate a cappella groups boast hip-hop repertory, professional vocal arrangements, competitions at Lincoln Center and a world shrunk by the Internet. During the 2006–2007 college season, Rapkin, an alum of a Cornell all-male singing club, followed three a cappella powerhouses: Divisi, an all-girl group from the University of Oregon, the testosterone-driven Hullabahoos of the University of Virginia, and Beelzebubs, from Tufts. Each is a collective with a score to settle, a tradition to honor. Robbed of a championship in 2005, Divisi wants payback; the Hullabahoos want respect without forfeiting their frat-boy charm; and the controversial Bubs want to hone their edge. Throughout, Rapkin engages with celebrity trivia (*Heroes'* Masi Oka sang a cappella at Brown) and music criticism. He profiles the cottage recording industry built from college a cappella. Most notably, he riffs through signature events and crisis moments with a snarky humor (onstage Divisi looks like the women in that Robert Palmer video) that turns each chapter into a picaresque progression toward graduation. (*June*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Designating unaccompanied singing, a cappella literally means "like the chapel," appropriately since the form, Rapkin says, began with Gregorian chant. In the prologue, Rapkin cheerfully clambers through a cappella's roots and varied branches, from shape-note singing and call-and-response singing to barbershop and the folk-pop hit "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" and gospel classics by the Soul Stirrers with Sam Cooke. Yet a cappella has come fully to life on college campuses. While the phenomenon's "gold standard" remains the Whiffenpoofs, founded in 1909 at Yale, there are now more than 1,200 collegiate a cappella groups in the U.S. A cappella is the opposite of cool, Rapkin concedes, yet such now-famous folk as Diane Sawyer, Art Garfunkel, and Osama bin Laden (!) once sang in a cappella groups. The bulk of the book examines three current groups—the University of Oregon's all-female Divisi, the Tufts Beelzebubs of Tufts University, and the University of Virginia's Hullabahoos—as they compete against one another in a scenario that makes *American Idol* look rather tame. A fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at an underappreciated musical subculture. --June Sawyers

Review

"Finally, a journalist with the courage to investigate the cutthroat world of college a cappella. . . .Rapkin has the perfectly bemused and giddy tone to tell these stories with the reverence they deserve."

-New York Post

"Rapkin's book reveals a world with as much discord as harmony."

-Newsweek

"Look out, barbershop quartets. Mickey Rapkin uncovers the dirty truth behind collegiate a cappella groups."

-Marie Claire

Users Review

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