

Film Delves into Question: Are Women Misrepresented in Media Today?

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

Diane Bell-Rettger is a soft spoken woman, but as President

of the American Association of University Women – Orinda Moraga Lafayette branch (AAUW/OML), she vehemently defends what she believes in. One of these beliefs is that women are misrepresented in the media, which is the premise of the documentary *Miss Representation* by Jennifer Siebel Newsom that AAUW/OML will show at 7 p.m. October 25 at the Rheem Theatre in Moraga. The film – which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2011 and was featured on the Oprah Win-

frey Network – explores how the media's misrepresentations of women have led to their under-representation in positions of power and influence.

“When Nancy Pelosi was the Speaker of the House of Representatives from 2007 to 2011 she was not once on the cover of a major magazine,” says Bell-Rettger. “John Boehner on the other hand (the incumbent), made covers six times in his first four months as Speaker.”

According to the film, the collective message sent by the media is that

a woman's value and power are tied to her youth, beauty, and sexuality, and not to her capacity as a leader. “The movie includes stories from teenage girls and interviews with politicians, journalists, entertainers, activists and academics,” says Bell-Rettger. “The facts and statistics presented are so overwhelming. Women leaders have no public voice or face; they are silenced and cannot be role models for the younger generation.”

The movie changed Bell-Rettger's perspective and drove her to

act. The local branch of AAUW got on board and persuaded the Rheem Theatre to rent them the main theater for the presentation. Bell-Rettger reached out to Lamorinda parents and invited them to come with their children. “The film is interesting for all ages and sexes,” she adds.

Tickets are \$10 with proceeds funding AAUW/OML's annual scholarship that sends middle school girls to a math and science camp at Stanford. For reservations, visit www.aauwoml.org.

Noodle a Touching and Sweet Movie at the International Film Showcase

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

This month the International Film Showcase is offering movie goers a touching comedy-drama, *Noodle*. It starts in Tel Aviv where a flight attendant finds herself in charge of a young Chinese boy who's lost his mother, does not speak Hebrew and is an illegal resident. The lost boy and the young woman, who has been hurt by life, rescue each other and find a way home.

An American movie director might have built more suspense and dramatic tension within the plot, but

Noodle director Ayelet Menahemi doesn't go there. While there are moments that create a bit of tension, it's never taken to climatic heights. Instead, the dominant tone of *Noodle* is that of a gradual transformation of the characters as they are confronted with very unusual circumstances.

The three main adults, Mili (the flight attendant), her sister Llana and her brother-in-law Izzy, are pushed out of their routine, out of the paths they've traveled so many times, and they grow as a result. The transfor-

mation unfolds subtly, as it might happen in real life.

Emotional spectators will still have to take out handkerchiefs once or twice; lost little boys looking for their mothers never fail to draw tears. But that too is not over done. It feels like something that could happen to anyone, and the way the characters react is normal, not heroic, hysterical or obnoxious. They are normal people doing the best they can, stretching themselves and becoming better human beings as a result. The normality of the story is probably why it's easy to believe, even if the plot includes a few improbabilities.

The actors are excellent. Special kudos go to BaoQi Chen who plays Noodle. The movie was first presented in the United States at the 17th Annual Jewish Film Festival in Portland, Oregon and it won the Special Grand Prize of the Jury at the Montreal Film Festival.

Noodle opens at the Orinda Theatre for one week beginning October 19. For times and more information, visit lamorindatheatres.com.

Lafayette's College Advisor The College Advisor's Role in Counseling College-Bound Athletes

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

College admissions can be complicated for everyone, but for college-bound athletes the process is often especially intimidating. College counselors can assist these students by preparing and guiding them through the recruiting process. But even when the signs all point in the direction of successful recruitment, that doesn't mean it will happen. Counselors can't guarantee admission offers. They can show you how to examine your options, narrow down opportunities, get on the coaches' radar. They can help you assure a balanced set of prospects for your education. But things still may not work out exactly the way the student hopes. Just like any other admissions outcome, you can only control what is directly under your control.

Although I could fill a book with the exceptions, there are still some common rules of the admissions game. Here are some general guidelines that get you going in the right direction:

Set Your Priorities. There are college athletic consultants that place a primary emphasis on the athletic recruitment process. From my viewpoint, though, you should always put academics first. Very few athletes in college continue as professional athletes. Instead, they go on to a career they prepare for in college. This fact should inform the choices you make now. Here's an example: Let's say a nationally recognized water polo athlete knew he wanted to major in engineering. This goal, along with a strong desire to pursue his sport, was the primary motivation that drove his college list. Now imagine that his athletic skills are so strong that Harvard, Cornell and MIT all reach out to him. The athlete may forgo his opportunity to go to Harvard, with a relatively weak engineering program, in order to ensure that he is accepted at a college with the best engineering training he can obtain. This example makes an important point. Who would ever turn down a chance to go to Harvard? The student who opted to consider his options carefully in terms of academic and career goals weighed against athletic opportunities.

Protect Your GPA. Many college-bound athletes have been putting a priority on grades since their early years in school. They are often hard working students with a good work ethic. With that in mind, college coaches like high achievers for many reasons, but one of the most important is that they don't have to plead with the admissions office for admission. All coaches prefer not to have to worry about this aspect of the recruitment process. The message here: study hard and keep up your grades.

Get Started Early. Students who are considering collegiate sports need to be ahead of the curve. They should start getting informed by the end of the sophomore year and register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; www.eligibility-center.org) early in their junior year. There is an excellent NCAA guide that explains the procedures you must follow. A college advisor can add clarity to these procedures, especially those surrounding unofficial and offi-

cial visits, and other sticky issues for prospective athletes.

You must initiate the recruitment process. Some coaches have athletes on their radar years before they apply, but that is actually rare. Don't wait to be contacted. Put together a packet of materials to send to coaches. This should include an athletic resume with a photo, high school transcript, a schedule of upcoming games or competitions and a letter from your high school coach. Introduce yourself in a brief email, expressing interest in the sports program and academic offerings. Include bullets emphasizing your most prestigious, recent athletic accomplishments. Many smaller and/or less prestigious schools would welcome a top athlete, but lack the budget to recruit.

The Parents' Role. I think it is okay for a parent to help out with the workload during this process. For example, the parent can send out the material packet along with the email the student writes to each coach. It's perfectly all right to ask the coach if he or she had a chance to look at the package and ask a simple “So what do you think?” That's about as far as a parent should go at this point. Let the athlete's resume speak for the athlete. As the student begins to narrow down the options, they should take the lead completely. You should stay informed, even be involved in a conference call, but try to say as little as possible.

Keep Your Eye on The Ball. Try not to get wound up over every twist and turn. Some coaches lead on athletes, then go cold and later make offers. Some athletes lead on coaches and then drop the college. This can be very hard on students and parents, coaches and colleges. Stay focused on the objective: getting one or more offers of admission to a college where you can spend four happy and productive years pursuing your major of interest and participating in the sport you love. If you get your heart set on just one school and that is the only school that will do, you may find your heart is broken.

Just like students who are pursuing the regular admission process, my best advice is to remain open to the possibilities, visit colleges, and apply to a well-researched list of schools that includes the whole range of selectivity; each one should be a school you would love to attend.



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Pitch Perfect Hits All the Right Notes

By Derek Zemrak



Fat Amy (Rebel Wilson) belts it out in *Pitch Perfect*, an out-loud comedy that's loaded with new takes on old favorites to hits of right now that are seamlessly mixed together, mashed up and arranged like you've never heard before.

Photo Peter Iovino

Starring Oscar-nominee Anna Kendrick (*Up in the Air*, *Twilight*), *Pitch Perfect* is the story of Beca, a reluctant and socially inept college student at Barden University where she is coerced into joining a struggling all-female a capella group called “The Bellas.” In the *Pitch Perfect* world, a capella groups rule – the members are treated like rock stars, and they have their own touring bus and adoring fans. The movie also stars Rebel Wilson, Kristen Wiig's gut-busting roommate in *Bridesmaids*, who again shows her impressive comedic mettle. The movie revolves around the metamorphosis of The Bellas from a discordant singing group of misfits into a hip, in-your-face, harmony-laden crew and their against-all-odds triumphant achievement to dethrone the Treblemakers, a cocky, all-male group from the same university.

While the movie is formulaic, it more than makes up for that with a hilarious script replete with quick-witted quips and lines that elicit not only laughter, but genuine guffaws. Rebel's character beats everyone to the punch with her self-

deprecating attitude. Elizabeth Banks as Gail, the commentator, delivers some of the funniest and smartest lines. For singing group fans, the musical scenes are cheer-worthy and collectively create a must-buy soundtrack. There are a couple of cringe-worthy moments involving projectile vomiting and vomit-angels (you have to see the movie to know what I mean). Even the romantic subplot involving Beca and Jesse (Skylar Astin) somehow fits well into the storyline and does not seem like an afterthought.

Does it look like a glorified *Bring It On* and *Glee* mashup? Of course it does. But the difference is, it is much, much, much funnier. Did I already say it is much funnier? And with its loving homage to one of my all-time favorite movies, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pitch Perfect*, for all intents and purposes, has the makings of a cult classic itself.

Derek Zemrak is a Film Critic, Film Producer and Founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news.