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***Girls Rock!* at the 2008 Wisconsin Film Festival**

Amelia Cook on Sunday 04/06/2008 11:30 am , (9) Recommendations

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If the Wisconsin Film Festival had an award for the most pixie stix consumed during a screening, *Girls Rock!* would win big.

Girls Rock! is a documentary about a rock ‘n’ roll summer camp held for -- no surprise here -- girls only. At this camp, girls are encouraged by their rocker counselors (Carrie Brownstein, formerly of Sleater-Kinney, for example) to take up space, be loud, and claim their voices. The campers have just five days in which to learn an instrument, form a band, write a song, and be ready to go for the big show on the last day.

Along the way, the girls are challenged not only to be themselves, but to actually like themselves. There are road bumps and breakdowns and *lots* of screaming, but by the fifth day, bands like the Juicy Tangles are ready to rock.

I suspect that the multitude of young girls in the audience left the Bartell thinking that *Girls Rock!* is about empowerment. But for the not-so-young girls like me, this film is not so much a tribute to girl power. Instead, it’s a sad testament to how much young women suffer, how things *haven’t* gotten better since we were ten years old.

Sure, the Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls is an awesome five days of self-esteem-building, but the statistics flashed on the screen throughout the film make it clear that summer camp isn’t enough. One in ten nine-year-olds has thrown up trying to lose weight and most girls, when asked to state their best feature, list a body part. Boys, on the other hand, mostly note a talent.

One flaw of this film is that while it has the potential to educate girls, many in the “beginning reader” age bracket will have a hard time reading the statistics, subtitles, and other text that is fired rapidly at the audience. Then again, maybe these facts *aren’t* aimed at the girls themselves, but at the big people they look up to.

As one of the members of an audience dominated by little girls and their parents, the highlight of my experience seeing *Girls Rock!* was when I overheard a small voice behind me ask, “Mom, what’s a *gig*?”

Girls Rock! has been picked up for distribution and it was with special permission that it screened at the Wisconsin Film Festival. It opens on Friday, April 18 at Sundance Cinemas.

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