

Making the Bands

Music and more at the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls

GIRLS ROCK!: Directed by Arne Johnson and Shane King. Produced by Arne Johnson. Cinematography, Shane King. Animation, Liz Canning. With Palace, Amelia, Misty and Laura, and the staff of the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls. Shadow Distribution, 2008. PG. 90 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

The Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls is totally awesome. Since 2001, when the camp was founded, it's given girls ages 8 to 18 a place to go hang out with other girls (and the women who lead the camp) and learn to write, play and perform music with their peers. During the week of camp, attendees also go to workshops in things like self-defense and zine creation, groups in which girls can discuss the things that worry them and lunchtime concerts featuring women musicians of all genres. The camp (which has since expanded to include an after-school program and more) is the rare thing that makes me almost wish I were still a teenager — or, less drastically, that at least that I could play an instrument and therefore be part of it.

For those of us who've always wondered just how it works, *Girls Rock!* is a fascinating peek inside the Portland warehouse where the summer camp sessions take place. But more importantly, it's an introduction to the camp for parents and girls who may not have heard

of it before or have been uncertain about wanting to participate. In that sense, Arne Johnson and Shane King's well-intentioned documentary should be a success. Johnson and King follow four very different girls — 7-year-old Palace, a fashion-conscious singer; 8-year-old Amelia, a noise rocker whose muse is her dog, Pippi; 15-year-old Laura, who loves death metal and is also a vocalist; and 17-year-old Misty, who's never



Palace wants to rock you on

seen a bass before but takes to the instrument quickly — as they navigate the complexities of a camp in which the campers form bands with girls they most likely just met. The goal is to write a song in five days and perform it at the end of camp showcase. The magical thing is that they all do it. It gets messy and complicated, and a few young egos get bruised, but it works.

The rock camp isn't just about music; it's also about creating an empowering place for girls to talk about and deal with the difficulties of being themselves, and it's in the scenes where campers discuss the pressures they feel and the challenges facing

girls and young women that the value of the camp is most obvious. To illustrate these difficulties and complexities, the film veers off from time to time into quirkily animated segments that provide depressing and vital information about the lives of teenage (and younger) girls — but that also seem spliced in from a different film. In fact, there are three films and stories here, weaving around each other but not overlapping as well as they should: the stories of the four campers; the story of the camp and the women who work at it, who all have striking insights and anecdotes about the necessity and purpose of their work; and the animated segments that offer statistics and snippets of oversimplified backstory.

But this is the sort of film in which you might choose, as I did, to overlook the flaws in favor of the purpose. The film — though its DIY look is perfectly appropriate and its soundtrack spectacular — needs a sharper focus and a stronger narrative thread to pull it all together. But frankly, it's not the film that matters here so much as it is the heartbreaking, feisty, smart, troubled, savvy girls, and the possibility that they might inspire more girls to pick up guitars, to trek to Portland (or one of the other cities that now hosts a rock camp) and experience a place where nobody has to be perfect, mistakes can be made as loudly as you like and, when showtime comes around, absolutely everybody is a rock star. **EW**

Girls Rock! opens Friday, March 14, at the Bijou.

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Cloverfield: Though it's gripping while you're in the theater, this J.J. Abrams-produced monster flick about a beast that destroys Manhattan starts to seem flawed and somewhat silly once you step back into daylight. PG13. 90 min. Movies 12.

Doomsday: Neil Marshall (*The Descent*) directs this futuristic film about a country walled off in response to a deadly virus — and the team (led by Rhona Mitra, working the Kate Beckinsale in *Underworld* angle) that must venture back into that country to find a cure when the virus appears elsewhere. R. 105 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Funny Games: Michael Haneke remakes his 1998 film in an English-language version starring Naomi Watts and Tim Roth as a couple whose vacation turns horrifying with the arrival of two disturbed young men. R. 112 min. Bijou.

Girls Rock!: This documentary follows the young women and girls (and adult counselors and instructors) of Portland's Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls as they work to write songs, get along and prepare for a performance in just a week. But there's more than just music at the camp, which helps girls deal with the pressures and difficulties of being young and female. A well-intentioned, imperfect film that nonetheless ought to be seen. PG. 90 min. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Horton Hears a Who: The Dr. Seuss classic gets the animated treatment from the creators of *Ice Age*, with Jim Carrey as Horton and Steve Carell as the mayor of Who-ville, the tiny world on a speck that Horton discovers and defends from his fellow animals, who think he's gone nuts. G. 110 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Never Back Down: Is it just me, or does this film look like an excuse to shoot a lot of badass fight scenes? (With a story loosely draped around them, of course.) The new kid in school gets, er, schooled by the resident bully, who's got a hot girlfriend. But if he masters mixed martial arts, the new guy might turn the tables. PG13. 112 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Rambo: Jon Rambo (oh, you know who plays him) sees his solitary life in Thailand come to a crashing close when two American human rights missionaries (Julie Benz and Paul Schulze) track him down and ask for his help getting into Burma. When they don't return, Rambo knows what must be done. And it involves cheesy one-liners! R. 93 min. Movies 12.

Spidertron: Locally and independently produced sci-fi comedy uses nearby locations, UO students and a whole lot of determination to tell the story of a spaceship crew marooned on an alien planet. www.spidertron.com Bijou LateNite.

String Cheese Incident: Live at Red Rocks: Film of the band's farewell shows last August show onstage and through the venue's sound system. 200 min. 9 pm March 15, WOW Hall. \$10 adv., \$12 door.

Swedish Film Series: In Colin Nutley's *House of Angels*, Fanny comes back to her small Swedish town —

on the back of her boyfriend's motorbike — to claim her ancestral home on the day of her grandfather's funeral. Locals are upset when they realize the two are going to stay. 7 pm March 14, 177 Lawrence, UO. Free.

Who, The: This *Quadrophenia*-era TV broadcast was filmed at London's Charlton Athletic Club in 1974. Part of the In-Concert series. Bijou LateNite.

Women, Media and Rebellion in Oaxaca: Filmmaker Gabriela Martinez hosts the Eugene premiere of her documentary, which focuses on the role of women in the struggle against the governor of Oaxaca. A Q&A follows the screening. 7 pm March 14, DIVA.

Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com

CONTINUING:

Alvin and the Chipmunks: What's next? A live-action Care Bears movie starring Jason Lee? (He's in this and *Underdog*, for those not keeping track.) Those wacky little creatures with the high-pitched voices will surely cause him some trouble in this newest bit of family fare. With, um, David Cross. Now I'm confused. PG. Movies 12.

Atonement: Joe Wright's adaptation of Ian McEwan's exceptional — and exceptionally difficult to summarize — novel takes place across years, as the actions of young Briony (Saoirse Ronan) have lengthy, unimagined consequences to the futures of her sister Cecilia (Keira Knightley) and their housekeeper's son, Robbie (James McAvoy). ACADEMY AWARD: BEST SCORE. R. 123 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (1/10)

Bank Job, The: Jason Statham (*The Transporter*) and Saffron Burrows star in this film based on the 1971 robbery at Lloyds Bank in London. To the thieves' surprise, the box they steal has more than just cash in it. "Shapes up as one of the liveliest entertainments of the year," said Andrew Sarris in *The New York Observer*. R. 110 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Be Kind Rewind: Michel Gondry's (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) playful, creative new film looks like a total joy. Mos Def and Jack Black star as friends facing a dilemma when one of them becomes magnetized and erases all the tapes in the store where his friend works. Bingo! They'll make new versions of the films. PG13. 101 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (2/28)

College Road Trip: Martin Lawrence plays the overbearing father of a girl (Raven-Symone) who insists on coming along on her college-visiting road trip. I think quirky situations and wacky hijinks may ensue! G. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Enchanted: Beautiful princesses! Handsome princes! And ... midtown Manhattan? Amy Adams (*Junebug*), James Marsters (*X-Men*) and Patrick Dempsey (*Grey's Anatomy*) star in this charming fairy tale in the real world, which follows Princess Giselle (Adams) after a wicked witch banishes her from her magical kingdom. PG. 107 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (1/3)

Fool's Gold: Fools' choices? Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey play a divorced couple who reteam to bicker endlessly — and search for a sunken treasure. Totally sure they stay divorced in the end, too. PG13. VRC Stadium 15.

I Am Legend: Will Smith does the all-by-his-lonesome thing in a New York City left not exactly empty after a manmade virus devastates the globe. During the day, he tries to find other survivors; at night, he tries to survive the creatures that are what's left of humanity. PG13. 100 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (12/20)

In Bruges: Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson star in playwright Martin McDonagh's directorial debut, a slightly sweet, somewhat philosophical, totally sailor-mouthed tale of two hitmen sent to hide out in the Belgian town of Bruges. A mixup of genre and tone, it's nonetheless diverting and amusing, and Farrell, as the more distressed of the pair, is surprisingly sympathetic. R. 107 min. Bijou. ★★☆☆☆ (2/28)

Jumper: Adapted from a novel by Steven Gould, this film follows "jumpers" who can leap through space and time. Among these lucky few are Hayden Christensen and Jamie Bell; Samuel L. Jackson provides the tension as a fella who doesn't approve of these crazy hijinks. Directed by Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*). PG13. 88 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Juno: Director Jason Reitman's turned out another buzzworthy movie, this time with a screenplay by newcomer Diablo Cody. Ellen Page (who was outstanding in *Hard Candy*) plays a pregnant teenager dealing with herself, her future, her parents, the best friend who fathered the kid and the couple who wants to adopt it. "Hilarious and sweet-tempered, perceptive and surprisingly grounded," said the *Los Angeles Times*. ACADEMY AWARD: BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY. PG13. 96 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15. ★★☆☆☆ (1/10)

Mad Money: The unexpected trio of Katie Holmes, Queen Latifah and Diane Keaton star as new friends who decide to rob their employer, a Federal Reserve bank, because the system is keeping them down, man. Directed by Callie Khouri, whom some of us will always love for writing *Thelma & Louise*. PG13. 104 min. Movies 12.

Meet the Spartans: Didn't I just joke, a few weeks ago, that apparently everything must get its own send-up movie now? The latest addition to the bloated category spoofs 300, Britney Spears and, um, *You Got Served*. PG13. 84 min. Movies 12.

Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day: Frances McDormand is Miss Pettigrew, who (in 1939 London) finds herself a job as a "social secretary" after being dismissed from her governess position. Over 24 hours, Miss Pettigrew and Delysia Lafosse (the wonderful Amy Adams) change each others' lives — and those of the three men circling Delysia (Lee Pace, Ciaran Hinds and Mark Strong). PG13. 92 min. VRC Stadium 15. **See review this issue.**

National Treasure: Book of Secrets: Nicolas Cage returns for more adventure and hijinks — something to

do with the president's secret book (hey, this sounds like *Crooked Little Vein!*) and clearing his family's name; did great-great grandpa have something to do with Lincoln's assassination? With Helen Mirren. PG. Cinemark.

No Country for Old Men: The latest from the Coen brothers is a near-masterpiece, an adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's acclaimed novel, and it's earning plenty of acclaim itself. The story involves a small-town sheriff, a deadly drug deal and a psychopathic killer (Javier Bardem). The reviewers say "intense," "searing," "an evil delight." ACADEMY AWARDS: BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR (JAVIER BARDEM), BEST DIRECTOR, BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY, BEST PICTURE. R. 122 min. Movies 12. ★★☆☆☆ (11/29)

Other Boleyn Girl, The: In this film, based on Philippa Gregory's novel, Anne (Natalie Portman) and Mary (Scarlett Johansson) Boleyn are sent by their family to lure the attentions of the king of England (Eric Bana). Court intrigue, family drama and other period-piece standards fill out the sisters' stories as they fight for love and power. PG13. 115 min. VRC Stadium 15.

Semi-Pro: Will Farrell continues to make millions playing idiots; here he's the coach-player-owner of the Flint Tropics, an American Basketball Association team dreaming of joining the NBA. Thing is, they suck, and wrestling bears isn't going to make them any better. With Andre Benjamin and Woody Harrelson. R. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Spiderwick Chronicles, The: Adaptation of Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi's books about a young boy (Freddie Highmore, playing twins) who finds that there's much more than meets the eye to an old family estate. Black has a knack for a different kind of fairy tale; let's hope the movie can translate that to the screen. With Mary-Louise Parker. PG. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Ten Thousand B.C.: Director Roland Emmerich (*Independence Day*) directs a set-ages-ago story about a young hunter and the lovely woman he'll stop at nothing to save from "mysterious warlords." Other key phrases from the studio's synopsis include "ultimate fate," "tyrannical god" and "empire beyond imagination." Did I mention our hero's name is D'Leh? PG13. 109 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Vantage Point: Dennis Quaid, Matthew Fox, Forest Whitaker and Sigourney Weaver are just half the people — and perspectives — in this thriller about an assassination attempt made on the American president (William Hurt) as he gives a speech about the war on terror. I think the real story might be, uh, complicated? PG13. 90 min. Cinemark. VRC Stadium 15.

Water Horse: Legend of the Deep: It's nice to see Ben Chaplin (*The Truth About Cats and Dogs*) again, even if it's in this too-cute-but-still-charming children's film about a boy who finds a mysterious eggs that turns into a mythical creature. Directed by Jay Russell (*My Dog Skip*). PG. 111 min. Movies 12.