

BOOKIT

The book:
'Pitch Perfect: The Quest for Collegiate A Cappella Glory'
by Mickey Rapkin
(Gotham)

The buyer:
Universal Pictures

By **JOSH GETLIN**
Times Staff Writer

The deal
Universal Pictures options Mickey Rapkin's "Pitch Perfect: The Quest for Collegiate A Cappella Glory," which chronicles the cutthroat — but deeply human — world of a cappella singing groups, and their fierce battles for supremacy.

The players
Actress Elizabeth Banks ("The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Spider-Man 3") and Max Handelman producing. Kay Cannon ("30 Rock" and "Baby Mama") writing the screenplay. Rapkin is repped by Farley Chase at the Waxman Literary Agency and on film rights by Howard Sanders at United Tal-

ent Agency. The title is published by Gotham Books.

The back story
Who knew? If you're a student in college, or graduated in recent years, you know that a cappella contests are hugely popular, pitting rival groups against each other in campus concerts that draw thousands. When they got wind of Rapkin's book — an irreverent yet compassionate look at this sub-culture — Banks and Handelman, her husband and producing partner, moved quickly to snap up the rights.

"It's perfect for the comedy genre that's so big now, what's been called geek-chic," Handelman said. "On one level it's a very passionate world. On another level, it's utterly ridiculous. We knew it could be a great movie."

But first they had to sell studio executives. Banks is a friend of Cannon's and sensed she was the ideal writer to turn Rapkin's scathingly funny book into a screenplay. The two women huddled in Banks' Hollywood Hills home for several days, polishing their presentation, and then took it to five studios. "We did some singing of our own, mostly some Mariah Carey songs, and we also used videos from YouTube to show people what this world was about," Banks said. "This



NEILSON BARNARD *Getty Images*

MAKE IT SING: Elizabeth Banks is co-producing.

movie is 'Bring It On' for a cappella singing. Instead of hot cheerleaders, you have a bunch of dorky singers."

Rapkin, a senior editor at **GQ**, believed his book had the makings of a movie as he wrote it. But he wanted to make sure that whoever got the film rights also "got" the material. Those concerns were erased during a meeting with Cannon, who outlined her ideas for the first five minutes of the movie. Cannon had Rapkin cracking up. "So I'm comfortable," he said. "I'm not sitting here in my office tortured and wondering what they're going to do to my baby."

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