

Rip_Chord rips in to 'Sing-Off' competition

Lauren Ramsdell
Arts and Entertainment Editor

A few years ago, some Elon University guys got together and thought — hey. We're good singers. A cappella music is fun. We could do that — and do it well. And Rip_Chord was born.

Four years since, Rip_Chord is making its way into the male a cappella world. Its first CD, "Resisting A_Rest," was released last spring and they are making strides toward a second effort. But the summer has not spelled rest for the men yet.

The weekend of May 29 found the group in Atlanta at President Chris Kilgore's house prepping for the biggest audition for the group yet — a sing-off for the NBC reality show "The Sing Off."

"It's kind of like 'American Idol,'" Kilgore said.

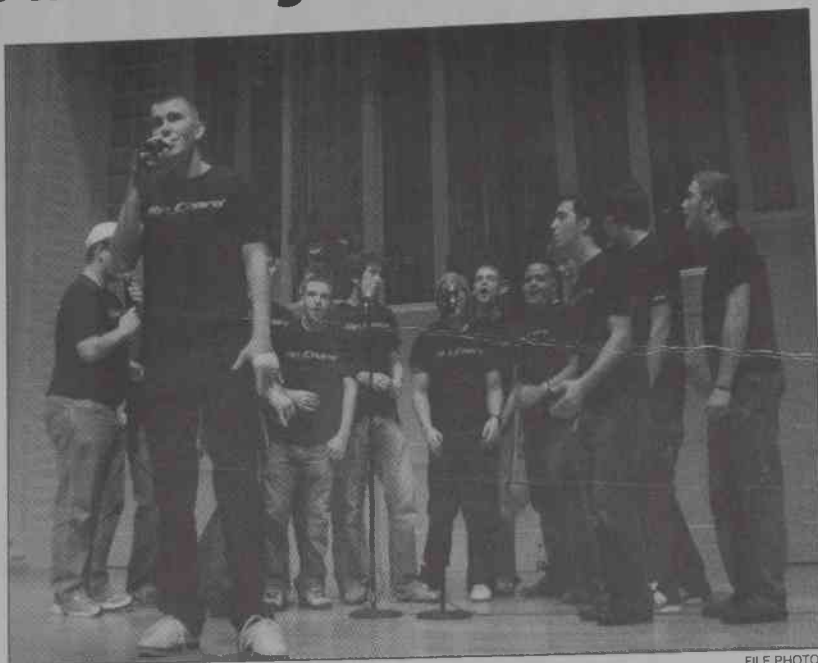
The audition took place in Nashville, Tenn., as well as four other cities across the country. He estimates that 25 other groups participated in the Nashville audition to get into one of the eight slots nationally to compete in the show.

Rip_Chord was not the only Elon presence to show up in Nashville. The group ran into both Sweet Signatures and Twisted Measure. "It was a pretty magical thing," Kilgore said.

If Rip_Chord even makes it through the audition process, it will be a success for Kilgore. This is the first professional audition the group has had and they look forward to performing more for an outside-Elon audience in the future. But, if they do get on the show and win, a prize pack of \$100,000 and a contract with Sony Records awaits them.

Oh, and all the publicity won't hurt either.

Typically, Rip_Chord does not practice or meet during the summer since, like most Elon groups, the members are from all over the country. The guys made a special effort for the competition, though, and flew to Kilgore's



Rip_Chord met at President Chris Kilgore's home to practice before the competition. The a cappella group will know in mid-July if they were selected as a finalist. It was the first time they were invited to audition.

house early to practice choreography.

"I think we did a really good job with what we were given," Kilgore said.

If chosen, Kilgore said he thinks the group's more laid-back attitude could be an interesting addition to the show.

"We could bring a fun and energetic style to the show," he said. "We like to infuse fun and vocal accuracy."

But, he still stresses that the group was just happy to be there. "We are all just excited to be invited," he said. Rip_Chord was invited via email from the show's casting directors.

Last season, the first-ever Sing-Off title went to Nota, a Puerto Rican group. Rip_Chord will find out in a few weeks about the result of their audition. Kilgore remains optimistic, but grounded.

"Our original goal was just to audition."

So far, he said, they have met that goal.

MOVIE REVIEW

★★★★☆

'Killers' makes a great date flick

Rachel Southmayd
Reviewer

When I first heard of "Killers," I immediately dismissed it into the "Katherine-Heigl-romantic-comedy-been-there-done-that" category. Ashton Kutcher is hunky and Tom Selleck is intimidating and he has a mustache. Big whoop.

But amidst the summer-blockbuster craze and 3-D mania, "Killers," a 100-minute romp through an innovative mix of comedy and action is a refreshing departure from the norm, and makes for a great date-night movie.

The film is an original mix of the standard romantic comedy, with misunderstandings, mix-ups, and of course lots of missteps. But amidst the wit and slapstick, gunfights break out, tires squeal and spy gadgets are whipped out and suddenly you expect a Tom Cruise or even Daniel Craig to pop up to join the fight.

"Killers" even has "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" energy about it, minus the palpable sexual tension and with a much lighter heart.

Heigl is her usual sarcastic and awkward self, which makes her Jen character both likeable and relatable. Kutcher has many opportunities to display his physique, and makes for an interesting action hero, even if he seems to be treading in unfamiliar waters.

And Selleck, in all his mustached glory, plays Heigl's father. He is one of the best people in the world to play the role of spy-turned-overprotective daddy. Catherine O'Hara is equally suited to play Heigl's tipsy



Katherine Heigl (left) stars with Ashton Kutcher (right) in "Killers" where the two characters meet and quickly get married and learn they are in for an adventure.

mother. For whatever reason, audiences really enjoy perpetually-drunken older women.

The supporting cast, which includes some familiar faces, including The Daily Show's Rob Riggle, is also adequately overdramatic and cliché, adding to the wide appeal this movie is bound to have over audiences.

The entire plot of "Killers" is a bit predictable, but not in a bad way. The characters evolve in a way you'd expect them to evolve, there are twists that can be easily foreseen and there's a cutesy ending. But it's mindless in a good way. It's easy to follow and the laughs are frequent.

Plus there are a lot of cool explosions. And who doesn't enjoy that?

Recent Celebrity Deaths:



Name: Gary Coleman
Died: May 28
American Actor



Name: Dennis Hopper
Died: May 29
American Actor



Name: Rue McClanahan
Died: June 3
American Actress



Name: John Wooden
Died: June 4
Basketball Coach



'China Road' introduces students to the global picture

Rachel Southmayd
Senior Reporter

Every fall, a special committee of Elon University faculty and staff select one book for the entire incoming freshmen class to read the following summer. This year's selection was Rob Gifford's "China Road: A Journey into the Future of a Rising Power."

"China Road" is a record of Gifford's trip as he travels along Route 312 in China. Route 312 follows the old Silk Road and led Gifford from the coastal city of Shanghai, all the way to the town of Korgaz on the Kazakhstan border, which totals to about 2,998 miles.

Gifford served as National Public Radio's China correspondent for six years, and is currently NPR's London correspondent. His journey across China took two months in the summer of 2005, and began as a seven-part radio series.

"I wrote to teach newbies about China," Gifford said. "I told the story of modern China as I see it through the prism of one road, Route 312."

In the book, Gifford recounts visiting dozens of cities, villages, historical sites and riding countless forms of transportation. He also mentions meeting and speaking with Chinese people ranging from two young women from Shanghai, who are members of the Communist Party, to an impoverished farmer and his grandson along the side of the road.

Gifford blends anecdotes from his travels with lessons on Chinese history and commentary on the economic and political situation the nation finds itself in.

"I'd like people to see the complexity of China," Gifford said. "There's a tendency to see China, historically, in very black and white terms."

He said the tendency is for people from the United States to view China with the same eyes as they did the Soviet Union in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Even though China is a one-party state, it is more complex than most people believe.

"I say in the book, 'if you're not confused by modern China, then you really haven't been paying attention,'" he said.

Gifford said China's biggest challenge is managing the complicated nature of the economic, political and social scene, which he said he believes are inconsistent with one another.

"I think only a fool predicts China's future," he said.

Books are selected as the common reading based on their ability to fit in with the goals of both GST 110 and ENG 110 courses, which all freshmen are required to take. According to the course description, GST 110, or The Global Experience, focuses on "public responsibility in a global context," or taking the first step to making an Elon student a global citizen.

Gifford said he believes "China Road" fits in perfectly with this goal.

"I think that we can see in every area around the world, not just in Asia, China's becoming more important," Gifford said. "The question is, how does a rising China fit into a global economy without disrupting the global balance?"

Gifford said he believes the rest of the world, and even China itself, is not sure how to deal with its rapidly rising status.

"It's like a student who suddenly becomes a teenager and suddenly shoots up to six foot four," he said. "China has done in 20 or 30 years what America has done in 100 years."

Gifford will be on campus Sept. 21, giving a lecture about the experience described in "China Road," as well as visiting several classes and speaking with students.