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A Decade of Rockin' Life Lessons From 'The School of Rock' Reunion

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on September 2, 2013 - 2:00pm in [Austin Film Society](#) | [Richard Linklater](#)



A good part of my day is spent getting schooled, be it from my professors, mother or smart-aleck roommate. Spending another two hours of my life watching the musical development of a group of youngsters on the big screen during Thursday's *The School of Rock* ten-year reunion at The Paramount ([my preview](#)) may not have been the wisest decision, especially because I skipped class (is it still considered skipping when you notify your professors ahead of time?) and have homework due, but it was definitely more fun.

Some of *The School of Rock* cast members had similar college woes, like [Aleisha Allen](#), who says she recently graduated from Pace University. Allen played Alicia, one of the band's designated backup singers. Despite a degree in speech pathology and an education minor, the New York native says her musical aspirations haven't waned.

I'm in a similar boat, as my childhood dream to become the next Stephen King (yes, I aim high) has yet to set sail. I was inspired to major in English at Texas State by my high school teacher Mr. Simpson, who bears similar physical and mental characteristics to *School of Rock* star [Jack Black](#) and his character in the film, Dewey Finn.

Black himself played a subconscious role in my educational development too. If memory serves me correct, it was in 2003, right around the time *The School of Rock* premiered in theaters, that me and some of my friends took a CosmoGirl "Celebrity Soulmate" quiz online. My friends were all matched with then-celebrity heartthrobs, but I was told my soul had a deeper connection with Black because of his humorous disposition. The quiz seems to be correct, as all my boyfriends (meaning the only one I've dated so far) have proven to be masterful in the art of making me laugh.



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But *The School of Rock* wasn't created to help me realize what I do and don't want in a man. The film's lessons have far more substance.

That is, if the cast can remember them.

"I don't remember," says Black jokingly (I think), as he looked to the film's director, Austinite **Richard Linklater** for help. "I don't even remember what this movie's about. How do you remember the lessons? I think it has something to do with trying to do what you enjoy. I think the lesson is play rock with passion."

Linklater, after complimenting Black on his performance in the film, hesitantly added that *The School of Rock* is about passion and process, and that "math and English is like, totally useless, but music is great."

"(In the film) kids are getting an early taste of what adulthood could be, where they follow what they're most passionate about," says Linklater. "(Black's) character is giving them an early taste of the freedom of that."



After debating on whether or not *The School of Rock* has any life lessons, besides the actual music lessons that Black's character leads the kids on film, he and Linklater came to a conclusion.

They hope there isn't a lesson in the film.

That's so punk rock of them.

Maryam Hassan, who plays Tomika in *The School of Rock*, the band's lead singer, had a more serious response to the film's questionable life lessons.

"Being yourself, accepting who you are and just going for it -- being confident," Hassan says.

Hassan, who spent a year studying fashion at The Art Institute of Atlanta, continues to sing and has a YouTube channel. She also works for MAC Cosmetics in New York's SoHo and is starting her own clothing line, due out sometime next year.



Fellow New Yorker **Brian Falduto**, who played Billy, the band's no-fuss fashion designer ("You're tacky and I hate you!"), is attending Wagner College as a performance theater major. Wagner College's Main Hall was used as the film's fictitious Horace Green Elementary.

Falduto's takeaway from the film: "Teamwork. We're all such different characters and we work together and it's a great finished product."

The now-grown *School of Rock* band members re-teamed for a VIP after-party performance on Thursday at the Gibson Austin Showroom to perform live the film's eponymous song and "It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock'n'Roll)."



Former Nickelodeon *iCarly* star **Miranda Cosgrove**, who played the band's manager Summer, says the reunion was the first time she's seen the majority of the film's cast, besides Black and bassist Rebecca Brown, in a decade.

The School of Rock serves as a time capsule for many of the film's cast, who've taken some of the film's life lessons to heart.

"(J)ust do what you want in life, don't let anybody tell you what to do with your life and your decisions -- do what you love," Cosgrove says of the film's life lessons.



[Photo credit: **Black at Q&A and Linklater on red carpet** by John Leach; **School of Rock on red carpet, Black and backup singers, Black and Rebecca Brown and Black on red carpet** by Gary Miller. All photos used with permission from Austin Film Society.]