



Arriving at Chicago's Avondale Elementary School on that hot August day, you knew before you even found the door that you were in the right place.



Our second verse only has three-fourths the length of the other verses.

So can we just make this part longer, or do we need to write a new bit?

We can just make this a whole thing instead of half a thing.

Oh! OK.

Never knows Best work on "We're Not the Same."



Isabella! No more cookies! Let's run through it one more time—then you can eat all you want.

Hot Pink Streaks

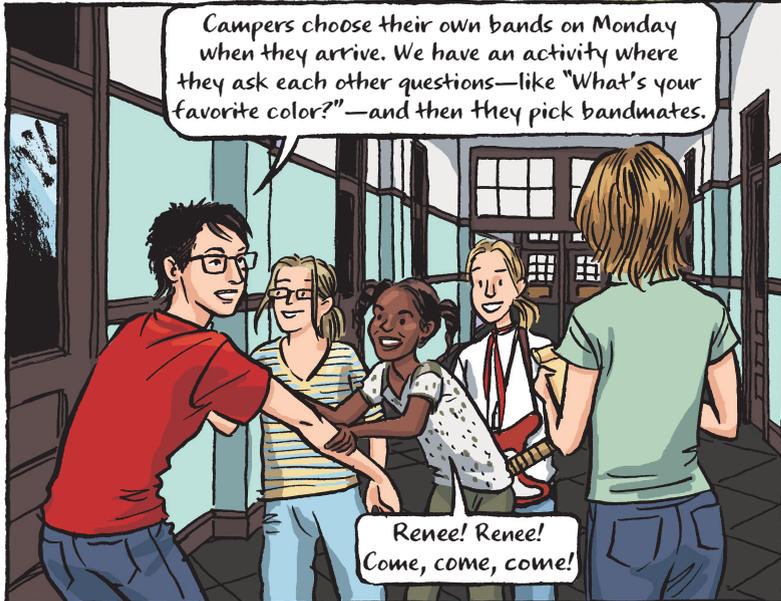
Yes, it's

# Girls Rock!

... A one-week, intensive rock 'n' roll summer camp for girls aged 9 - 16. Camp director Renee Neuner, AB'06, gave me the rundown.

Every day the girls have two hours of instrument lessons in the morning and two hours of band practice in the afternoon.

We run workshops in the middle of the day: button-making, the history of women in rock, using rock to promote tolerance.



Campers choose their own bands on Monday when they arrive. We have an activity where they ask each other questions—like "What's your favorite color?"—and then they pick bandmates.

Renee! Renee! Come, come, come!



Sugar Rush get an audience to rehearse their song, "Summer Break"

But first you have to comment on how fuzzy our microphones are.

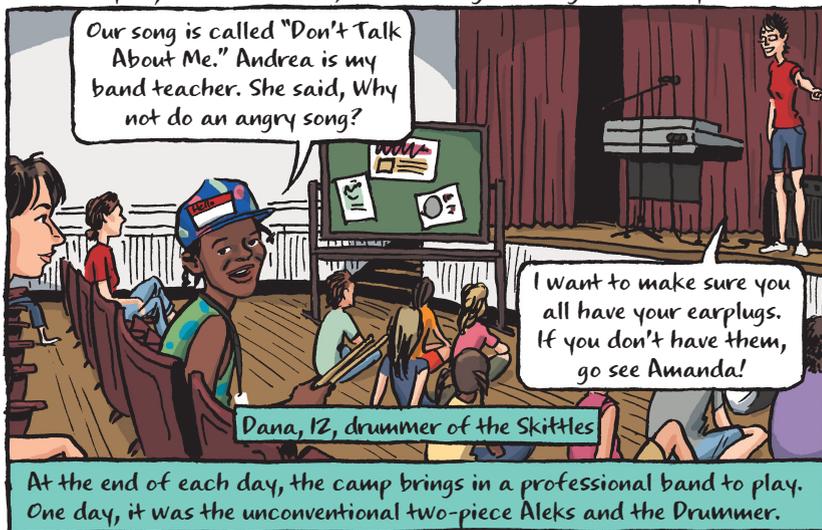
Very rock 'n' roll!

Now in its second year, the camp has a great recidivism rate: of the 17 girls who came to camp the first year, 14 returned. They were in the minority, though: 60 girls attended this year; that's 15 bands, each writing one song in five days.



We have a gear-loan program this year: the campers can take their instruments home for the year if they want to.

More than half of the kids have no musical experience, and many others have experience in unrelated instruments.



Our song is called "Don't Talk About Me." Andrea is my band teacher. She said, Why not do an angry song?

I want to make sure you all have your earplugs. If you don't have them, go see Amanda!

Dana, 12, drummer of the Skittles

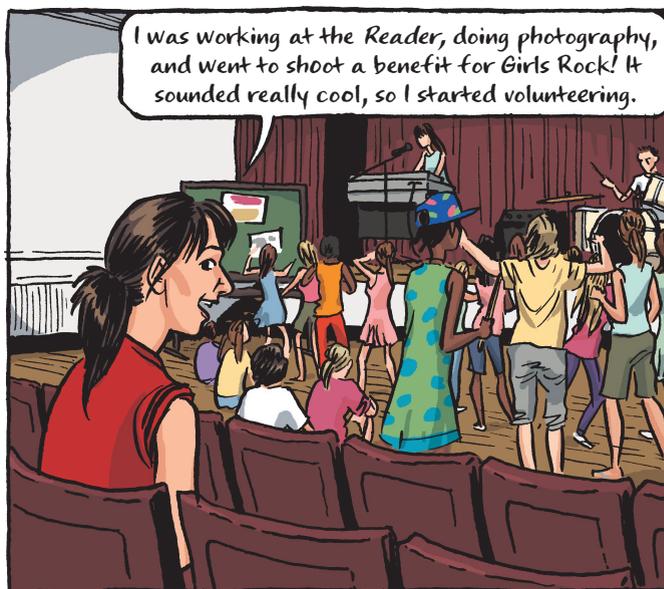
At the end of each day, the camp brings in a professional band to play. One day, it was the unconventional two-piece Aleks and the Drummer.



So I thought about how people spread rumors and how it makes me so mad.

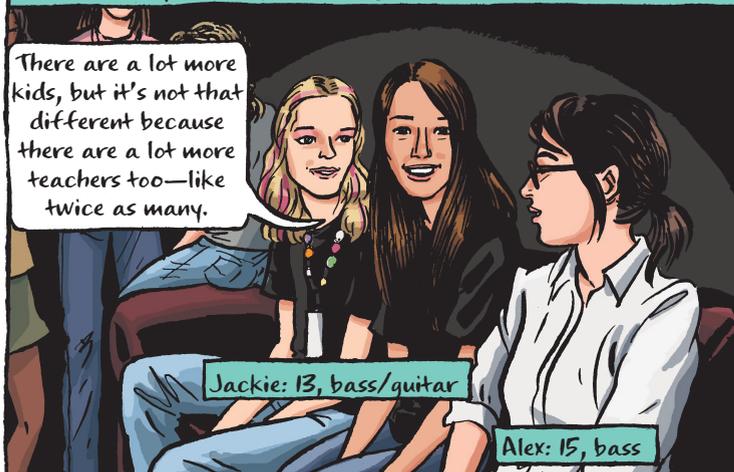
Andrea (band coach)

Dana came up with topic of the song and wrote the words. The guitarist had the idea for some chords. It's challenging, and it's really awesome to see how they progress during the week.



I was working at the Reader, doing photography, and went to shoot a benefit for Girls Rock! It sounded really cool, so I started volunteering.

On Saturday, the big show: all 15 bands performed their song for a screaming crowd of parents, siblings, and friends—at the Metro, one of the most important clubs in Chicago. I talked to a few alums from the camp's first year in the green room before the show.



There are a lot more kids, but it's not that different because there are a lot more teachers too—like twice as many.

Jackie: 13, bass/guitar

Alex: 15, bass



One advantage of having so many more kids is that we're here at Metro. Last year we were at Schubas Tavern, which was fantastic, but this year we're here.

What's it like for the camp to be all female?

There's lots of girls, like the counselors, who are better than guys. It helps us not be afraid to take ourselves seriously.

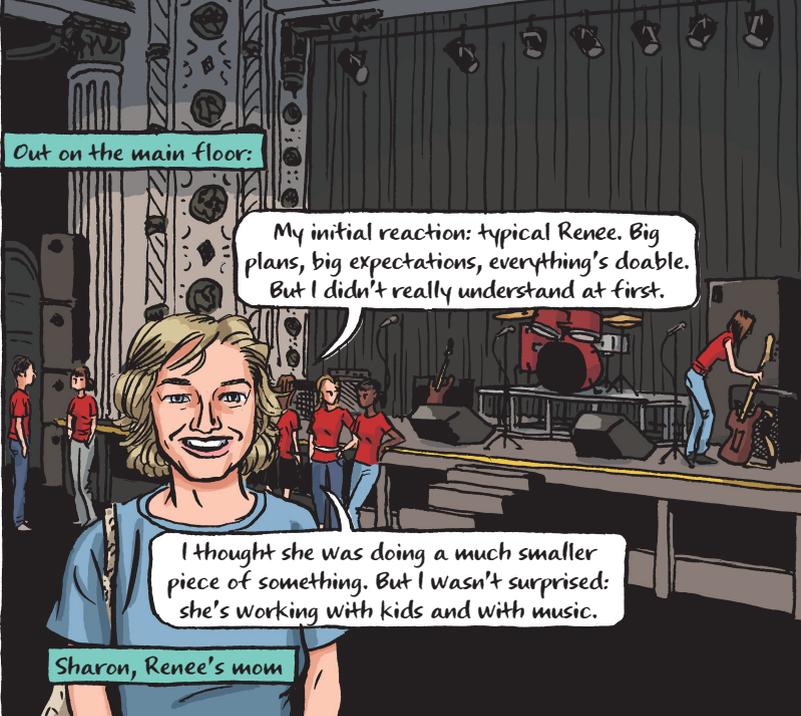
The counselors are great.



They act like kids!

With guys around, there would be some tension. We'd be more self-conscious.

All of the younger girls aren't intimidated by the counselors. Everyone is very comfortable.

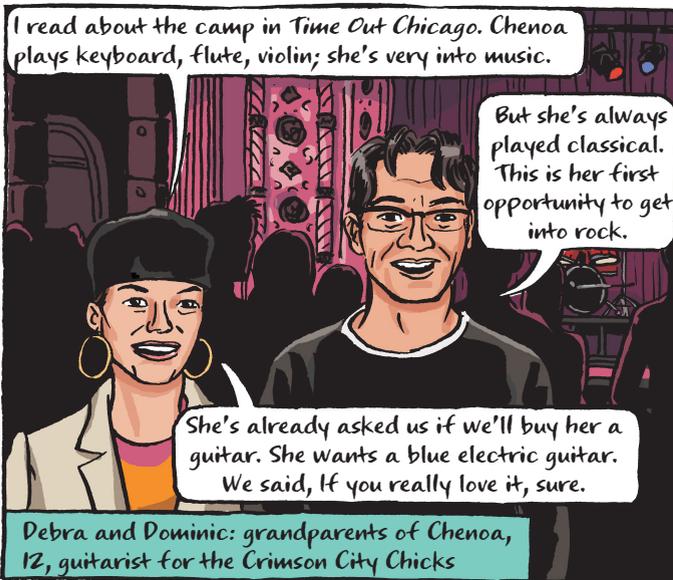


Out on the main floor:

My initial reaction: typical Renee. Big plans, big expectations, everything's doable. But I didn't really understand at first.

I thought she was doing a much smaller piece of something. But I wasn't surprised: she's working with kids and with music.

Sharon, Renee's mom

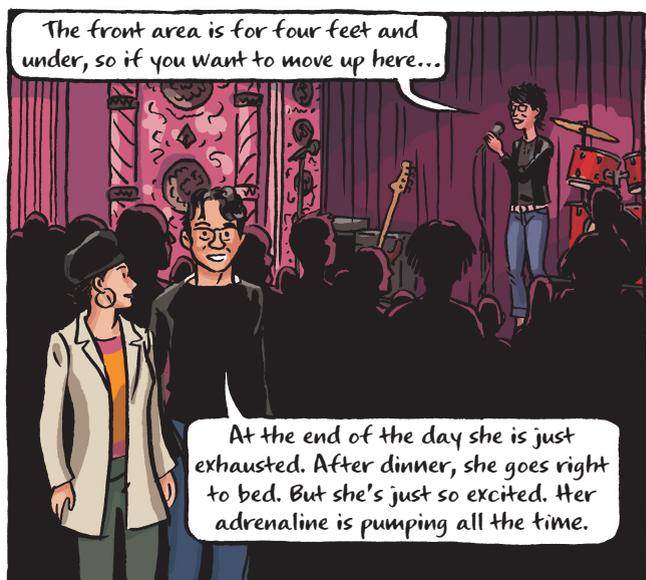


I read about the camp in Time Out Chicago. Chenoa plays keyboard, flute, violin; she's very into music.

But she's always played classical. This is her first opportunity to get into rock.

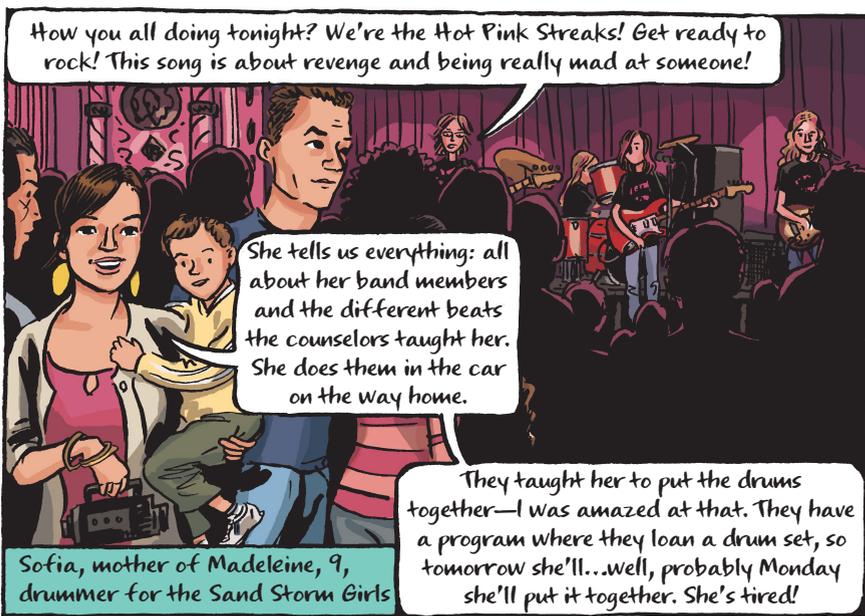
She's already asked us if we'll buy her a guitar. She wants a blue electric guitar. We said, If you really love it, sure.

Debra and Dominic: grandparents of Chenoa, 12, guitarist for the Crimson City Chicks



The front area is for four feet and under, so if you want to move up here...

At the end of the day she is just exhausted. After dinner, she goes right to bed. But she's just so excited. Her adrenaline is pumping all the time.



How you all doing tonight? We're the Hot Pink Streaks! Get ready to rock! This song is about revenge and being really mad at someone!

She tells us everything: all about her band members and the different beats the counselors taught her. She does them in the car on the way home.

They taught her to put the drums together—I was amazed at that. They have a program where they loan a drum set, so tomorrow she'll...well, probably Monday she'll put it together. She's tired!

Sofia, mother of Madeleine, 9, drummer for the Sand Storm Girls



Hellloooo Chicago! We're Sugar Rush, and our song is "Summer Break."



It's ten more seconds to summer break, nine seconds more, now it's almost 8...7...6...5...4...3-2-1, now we're out the door!

I work every day we're open. Some of the bands today are good. Some of them are really new. Rock 'n' roll is very male-dominated. I think it's good these women are helping bring up this generation of girls to...rock out.

Mike



On Sunday the bands each had a 30-minute recording session at a professional studio.

We have no model for what we're doing; we just kind of ask ourselves, What would have been really cool if I were that age?

We knew about a camp in Portland, Oregon, but we didn't realize what we were getting into. It turned out to be awesome.

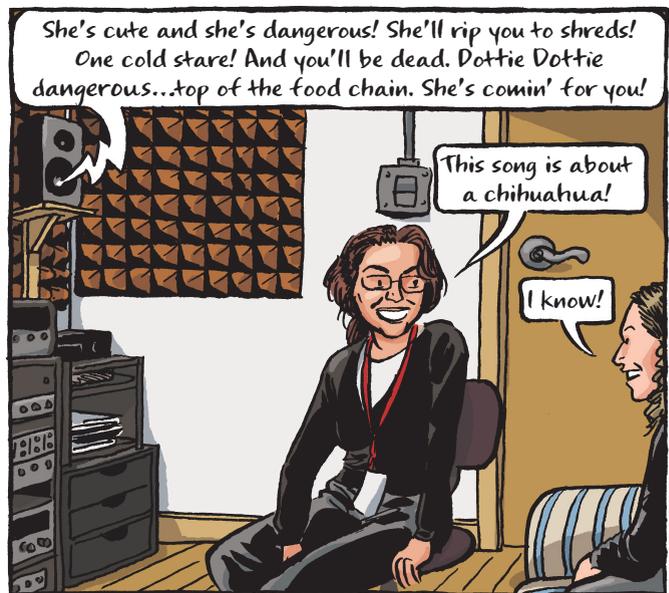


The 13 Black Cats record their song, "Dottie Dangerous."

All right, you ready to record?

Yeah, I think we're ready now...

Kinda scary...



She's cute and she's dangerous! She'll rip you to shreds! One cold stare! And you'll be dead. Dottie Dottie dangerous...top of the food chain. She's comin' for you!

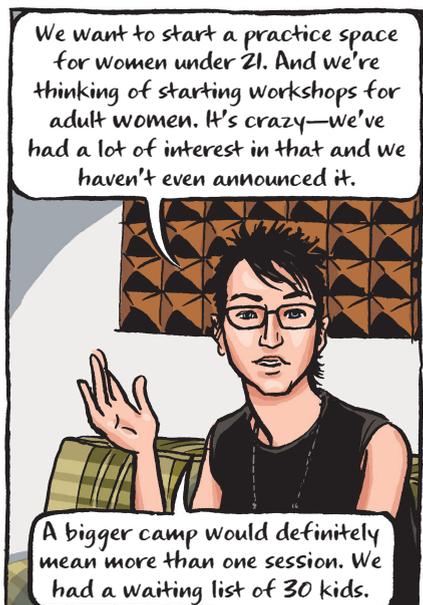
This song is about a chihuahua!

I know!



We just got an office in Wicker Park, and as of September 1, I'll be full time. I'll be doing grant-writing, and building relationships with other organizations, like the ones that serve low-income girls who have helped us get the word out.

We'd like to move into more year-round programming, like the gear loan. More than half the kids took gear home for the year.



We want to start a practice space for women under 21. And we're thinking of starting workshops for adult women. It's crazy—we've had a lot of interest in that and we haven't even announced it.

A bigger camp would definitely mean more than one session. We had a waiting list of 30 kids.



Right, so, I was just wondering, I'm going to have a baby daughter in a few months. Can I get her on the waiting list for 2016?

Ha ha ha! Definitely, we'll save her a spot.