

THE GOD WHO WASN'T THERE

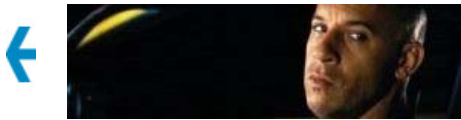
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Michael Giltz

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American Idol "Shout to the Lord" Controversy and Results

Posted April 10, 2008 | 11:46 PM (EST)



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Ok, first a rundown of the results show and then the controversy. Ryan Seacrest announced they'd raised \$60 mil so far. I assume after all is said and done they'll raise more than last year, which is the Jerry Lewis Standard of Success for a telethon.

Brooke White, David Cook and David Archuleta were all pronounced safe. Then Jordin Sparks did a fine duet with Chris Brown of her smash hit "No Air." I think Jordin is going to prove a much more

durable artist than those who dismissed her as a teeny-bopper will expect. She's already had several huge pop hits (including "No Air" and "Tattoo") and sure her album has only gone gold but people aren't buying albums right now. She looked great and sounded great.

Then Jason Castro was safe. Is this guy gonna slide his way in mellow fashion all the way to the final three? Sure feels like it. He's barely placed a foot wrong. Ryan teased Kristy Lee Cook before admitting she had avoided the bottom three -- where she lives -- and was safe.

THE BOTTOM THREE -- Sysha Mercado, Carly Smithson and Michael Johns. I had predicted Sysha and Carly and Brooke, with Sysha sadly going home. We saw promos from all three Presidential candidates with John McCain pretending he watches the show (joking about Simon when he wasn't joking about voting scandals in Florida and Michigan) and Barack Obama proving the only one to stand next to the American flag.

Then Boom! Ryan dropped the news that **Michael Johns was going home** so abruptly that people

weren't quite sure for a moment what had happened. Very annoyingly, Ryan then reminded us that last year they had not sent anyone home before pausing dramatically...and then telling Michael he was going home anyway. They should have made clear at the top of the show that someone was going home. Using it to torture the loser was especially mean. Syesha really dodged a bullet (and I've got a crush on her) while Carly was convinced the entire night she was going home and was the only one to really cry at the end. Then Michael sang a defiant "Dream On." This wasn't really a shock. Was Michael Johns going to make the finals? Nope. So then going home before the finals (in whatever order) isn't a shock or a scandal.

THE "JESUS" CONTROVERSY -- Confession: I fast-forwarded through *Idol Gives Back* because life is too short to watch telethons. I caught the kids singing "Seasons of Love" from *Rent* but apparently missed another finale where they sang "Shout To The Lord," an evangelical Christian tune written by **Darlene Zschech** and covered by **Ruben Studdard**. The first line of the wildly popular tune is "My Jesus, my Savior." On the telethon show, the lyrics were changed from "My Jesus" to "My Shepherd."

That's their first big mistake. If you're going to sing a gospel tune, sing it. Why change that word? Just a week earlier, at least two songs by Dolly Parton were performed that mentioned Jesus. Not surprisingly, some **evangelical Christians were annoyed**, debating among themselves whether it was better than nothing to hear the song with the word "Jesus" dropped and so on.

Bizarrely, they began tonight's show with all the kids singing "Shout To The Lord" AGAIN, this time reinstating the proper words "My Jesus, my Savior." Big mistake number two and in fact it really compounded the mistake they made the night before by making the song a group performance.

Thursday night was the first time I heard them perform this tune and as a practicing Catholic I was stunned, annoyed, upset for the performers and angry that this show had stumbled in such a stupid way.

Don't get me wrong: during Dolly week I suggested that some day they have a theme week devoted to songs of faith/gospel, which is practically what Inspirational Week is anyway. I love gospel music and have dozens of CDs ranging from classics by Mahalia Jackson to the soundtrack to the terrific documentary *Say Amen, Somebody* to the great Marion Williams and more recent artists. (Not to mention religious music from around the world and many other faiths.) I'm happy to hear individual singers perform gospel tunes, even if they do come from a more evangelical wing of Christianity than I adhere to. And of course with the kids free to choose whatever song they want, songs of faith could be anything from the spiritual "Didn't It Rain" to Yusuf Islam/Cat Stevens' "Peace Train" to Jackson Browne's "The Rebel Jesus" to XTC's acerbic "**Dear God.**" But asking all the kids to do a group sing on a born-again evangelical Christian number is wrong for many reasons.

1. It's unfair to the performers who want to win -- Pressuring them to sing an evangelical number is wrong. Who wants to be revealed as the *Idol* who refused to sing a song about Jesus? Think that might hurt their chances with Middle America? They should never have been put in that position.

2. It's unfair to the performers of conscience -- I'm a Catholic and that's a tune we would never sing in Church, though none of its lyrics are of the sort that conflict with my faith. (Though many evangelical tunes, in fact, do and entire trends in Christian music are embraced by liberal evangelicals, rejected by conservative evangelicals and vice versa.) But what about the *Idols* who aren't Christian? Maybe some of them are Buddhist or agnostic or Jewish or Muslim or god forbid, atheist.

3. It's offensive to the viewers -- I'm a Catholic and I was offended. I don't turn on *Idol* to be converted or evangelized to by the show -- and that's exactly what a group sing-along is. It's a statement by the show, not individual kids. America is the most religiously diverse country in the world (and I live in Queens, New York -- the most religiously and ethnically diverse corner of the world). That's something to celebrate and it also means respecting other faiths and people of no faith. You don't do that by hijacking *Idol* to make all the kids sing about Jesus. Even if each and every one of them is born again and dying to sing the praises of the Lord, you don't alienate the viewers like me -- and most Americans are not evangelicals -- who don't identify with that particular strand of Christianity.

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Dropping the "Jesus" from "Shout to the Lord" was a big mistake. Making all the *Idol* contestants sing it together in the first place was an even bigger one. If any individual *Idol* wanted to sing it, fine. But a group sing-along? Wrong. What do you think?

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[luckyt](#) [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of luckyt](#) [permalink](#)

Let's not forget that this is a Fox network and when it behooves them to wrap themselves in the flag and God they do. Additionally what a joke, they got 60 million in two days with the corporate sponsorship of Exxon/Mobil who extorted over 13 billion last year from the American people. I would like to know how much the major corporations give to relieve the misery they create in the world. Considering that in todays real world you could win 60 million in any state lottery in which the state gets to keep more than half.

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TurgidCaterwauling [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of TurgidCaterwauling](#) [permalink](#)

A lot of people here speaking for God. Perhaps if he could post his own comment, we might know how he really feels.

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Michael Giltz [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

Funnily enough, I don't think God remembered to register His own domain name -- check for burningbush.com or yahweh.com and you'll find others already planted there. At the very least I'd expect a MySpace page, but no luck.

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MichaelGabriel [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of MichaelGabriel](#) [permalink](#)

Everyone seem to be complaining about how in singing this song AI aren't respecting all other religions. However the only person who would respect all other religions is someone who really has none.

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Michael Giltz [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

You've got a great name, Michael Gabriel (doesnt get more Christian than that), but I heartily disagree. While intolerance of other faiths has been quite common throughout the years in Catholicism and certainly fundamentalist sects, it's by no means an essential part of faith. Many, many mainstream faiths (including the Catholicism practiced by most Americans and explored thoughtfully by American theologians) like welcoming Episcopal churches, Reformed Judaism, Unitarian Universalists, many UCC churches, and so on. One of the world's major faiths, Hinduism is tolerant both culturally and theologically towards other faiths, hence the precept that "Truth is one, but people call it by many names." As a Catholic who embraces a loving God, I'm not theologically trained, but dismiss out of hand the idea of a God who would condemn you to hell just because you were born in India or China and lived a decent, God-fearing life as a Buddhist or Hindu. Gandhi is in hell? Many if not most faiths would scoff at the idea. For me, it is essential to my faith to be loving and respectful towards other faiths and the more I learn about them (even the ones I disagree with) the more I can respect them. The idea of disdaining other faiths that spring from the same Abrahamic tradition seems misguided. I know the Pope believes Catholicism is the one true way to God, but he is meeting with Muslims, Jews and others in prayerful communion this week, isn't he?

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Retrofuturistic [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Retrofuturistic](#) [permalink](#)

I knew there was a reason I didn't watch that show. Now they're proselytizing? Uck. Well, it is called American "Idol"....

I guess maybe they thought if they didn't have any talent they could bring Jaysus into it? Kind of like the Republicans????

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soonerdem [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of soonerdem](#) [permalink](#)

I never watched Idol until the year Underwood won it. I became a fan. The show is wearing thin now and all it would take to see the last of me would be a little more of what we witnessed this week on the show. Actually it is turning into a musical soap.

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pakean3 [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of pakean3](#) [permalink](#)

My daughter was in the school band all through school. Not once did they do a religious song. It must depend what state you are in.

I enjoy watching AI. (go David Cook) I could not believe they were singing some spiritual song. I was shocked. Where did that come from? Who OK'd that one??? After all, AI is on FOX! I donated before they sang the song. It would of turned me off had they sang the song before I gave.

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WebDeb [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of WebDeb](#) [permalink](#)

I think you are taking this much to seriously and you really need to get over this one. Obviously you

weren't in a high school choir. The bulk of what choirs sing, especially for concerts around the holidays is Christian music. A great deal of great harmony to practice was written for the church. And yes, even today high school choirs practice these same songs. If you are a Catholic and that song offends you I am quite surprised.

The point is Contemporary Christian Music has carved itself out as a big portion of music industry revenues. Have you even seen the vast array of contemporary Christian music the recording industry is putting out? This is after all a singing contest. This is, after all, an attempt to identify a singer who can sell records. Leaving this genre out of the game is like leaving out Country or leaving out Pop.

"Shout to the Lord" is a popular Christian worship song and has been quite popular for 15 years. It has been recorded several times and is featured on albums that have gone platinum.

Try to remember folks, this is a singing contest. It amazes me that singing this song has caused controversy, while if someone sang "Sympathy for the Devil" which is a great rock and roll song by the Rolling Stones, no one would have batted an eye.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 09:52 AM on 04/13/2008

Michael Giltz See Profile I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz permalink

You attended a very unusual public high school if you had a choir in the first place. Music, theater, art -- all out the window at most public schools in the country, sad to say. And if you attended a public school and they had a choir AND "the bulk" of what they sang is Christian music...well, I don't know where you went to school but in the current political climate that strikes me as bizarre to say the least. I'm surprised parents haven't complained and the ACLU filed a lawsuit. That is NOT standard practice -- whether someone thinks that's terrible or wonderful, it just isn't. I sang in the choir on Sundays when I was little at my Catholic church, but my Catholic school did not have a choir as such, no. And obviously you didn't attend Bob Jones University, where they ban CCM from the dorm rooms.

As my post, said (did you read it?), I explicitly said Shout To The Lord was not offensive to me as a Catholic lyrically though there are MANY evangelical songs that emphasize ideas or beliefs not compatible with my faith (which ain't the same as being "offensive," just tunes I wouldn't sing). Indeed, there are whole branches of CCM that liberal evangelicals reject and vice-versa. CCM is a vibrant genre, though like every other genre it is struggling in the post-record store world. But since you can buy Larry Norman and Keith Green on iTunes, it will survive.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 01:26 PM on 04/14/2008

WebDeb See Profile I'm a Fan of WebDeb permalink

So sorry for you, but yes we did and yes they still do, and no lawsuits are filed. You might be surprised at the number of public schools who still rely on this music to teach 4 part harmony. I was simply pointing out that this is a singing contest, so let's not get our panties in a twist. I didn't like 50s or 60s week either. Big deal.

Regarding whether you were offended. If you weren't, I guess in point #3 "I am a Catholic and I am offended." was a "mis-statement"? Obviously, I read it.

Christian music is a part of the market share. I used to work for a label as creative director. I understand the market.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:27 PM on 04/14/2008

WebDeb See Profile I'm a Fan of WebDeb permalink

Thanks for your reply, but I stand by what I say. This "surprising" fact that Christian music is sung in public high schools is true. And, that same school I attended, that my grandchildren attend, still uses those songs to entertain parents at concerts in the high school drum. Don't shoot the messenger. It's a fact. I just think people make such a big deal out of everything that they don't personally agree with.

And yes, Michael I read your post. And, I was commenting on the fact that you mentioned in your bullet point #3. "I'm a Catholic, and I was offended". Soooooo maybe you didn't proofread before you posted?

I was the creative director for a Christian music label. I know about market share.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:16 PM on 04/14/2008

Aimleft See Profile I'm a Fan of Aimleft permalink

Please don't use the condescending Bushie phrase of "folks" when referring to people who happened to think it was BS to have this religious song on the show, just as it was horrendous to have to listen to the hysterical Jesus song sung by Dolly Parton a week or so earlier, and - worst of all - Cookie Girl (who looks just like Bush) singing "God Bless the USA" in a most calculating way. This show is obviously becoming a mouthpiece for the right wing, and I'm sick of them using the contestants - and the viewers - in such a way.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 11:09 AM on 04/14/2008

WebDeb See Profile I'm a Fan of WebDeb permalink

If you think the phrase "folks" is right wing, then broaden your horizons. It's rural, and I'm over 50 and I'm allowed to say any damn thing I want, until the Bush white house takes away that constitutional right too.

And, don't tell me I'm condescending..... are you working for the Hillary camp, by taking a "word" that means nothing and turning it into an issue? If you aren't maybe you should apply for the job.

And, you don't have to be a republican to have an opinion that doesn't agree with yours. And, republicans don't have the market cornered on faith either. It is a right we all have, to worship as we choose, and to embrace what we choose. Unless McBush gets in the White House, then you can probably kiss that goodbye too.

So some people wanted to hear this stuff. So what? I listen to Country and don't like that. Do I go to a website and declare war on Texans? Give it a rest.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:35 PM on 04/14/2008

Idiocracy See Profile I'm a Fan of Idiocracy permalink

Thats right, because Mick and the Stones never shoved their opinion down your throat of how you should live your life , just like the evangels, fake christians...

Jesus would be turning over in his grave if he saw what you people call a good christian,

Evangelicals are two faced, double standard, delusional people with very small minds..

Oh, and Christian music will NEVER be a "big portion of music industry revenues" as you say. It has its little niche of the market but dont you DARE try comparing christian music to "real, solid, well written music, written from the true self within and not conjured up by a false god.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 06:52 PM on 04/13/2008

WebDeb See Profile I'm a Fan of WebDeb permalink

Sorry for your experience that has left you so angry. I was making a point. That is commonly what you use words for in this forum. To make a point. We are all exposed to genres we don't like. I don't think anyone is trying to convert me to a cowboy when I hear country, or make me live in the city by listening to something urban. Get over yourself.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:37 PM on 04/14/2008

WebDeb See Profile I'm a Fan of WebDeb permalink

Wow. you certain are bitter.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:09 PM on 04/14/2008

MichaelGabriel See Profile I'm a Fan of MichaelGabriel permalink

- Jesus would be turning over in his grave if he saw what you people call a good Christian-

Um, Jesus is Risen..... that's kinda the whole point of Christianity.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 03:02 PM on 04/14/2008

NetParrot See Profile I'm a Fan of NetParrot permalink

Remember, singing about Jesus on TV is only socially acceptable on the HuffPo when it's Gospel music, so that the rich, white HuffPo culture vultures can stand back in awe while marveling at the "soufulness" of what they consider to be an "exotic" culture. Never mind that the messages are

identical, and mention Jesus about the same number of times. Condescending? Pffft.

I'd rather have seen the contestants attempt to sing "Shalom Aleichem", but I'm a rotten sadist like that.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 07:20 AM on 04/13/2008

Michael Giltz [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Michael Giltz](#) [permalink](#)

NetParrot, it would be nice if you actually read what I had to say first rather than accusing me of paternalistic racism. I enjoyed the country songs about Jesus during Dolly week and said so before this controversy began. (That same week I suggested they devote an entire week to songs of faith/gospel) though of course Inspirational Week opens the door to anyone who chooses to sing such tunes. I didn't condemn the song -- I condemned telling all eight contestants of varying faiths (or no faith at all) to sing an evangelical Christian song. That's it. As some evangelical Christians pointed out in the comments, Shout to the Lord is intended to proselytize and shouldn't be sung without sincerity and a desire to spread the word of Jesus. Doing so would cheapen the song and its message. Just one more reason why having it as a group sing-along was inappropriate.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 01:11 PM on 04/14/2008

Guitarsandmore [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Guitarsandmore](#) [permalink](#)

Listening to a hymn with four part harmony can be very awe inspiring indeed especially when you are standing right in the middle of it and it surrounds you from all sides. I would have picked "Fairest Lord Jesus" for the group song; that's the one that goes " Beautiful savior! Lord of the nations! Son of God and Son of man!" and so on and so forth ..You know the one? If you are Catholic or Lutheran you have to know that one!

The other song that could have been done is of course "Amazing Grace". Here was a missed opportunity to sing a hymn with some great four part harmony and "Amazing Grace" has such a long storied history behind it that it almost transcends controversy about religion. Napster has 493 different recordings of Amazing Grace by artists ranging from Aretha Franklin to Phish, and from the Oak Ridge Boys to the Vienna Choir Boys to Jeff Beck; but I could find only one recording of "My Jesus, My Savior".

There are some really beautiful hymns worth listening to and if you really do love music you will appreciate the sound. Music is not about the words. Words without music is just poetry and American Idol is not a poetry contest.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 01:00 AM on 04/13/2008

soonerdem [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of soonerdem](#) [permalink](#)

It never fails. Someone can't rest until religion is inserted. This gives assurance that we can have controversy. If Jesus were here today he would most likely be vomiting as He watches all the bullshit going on in this day and time.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 10:59 PM on 04/12/2008

mydogshakespeare [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of mydogshakespeare](#) [permalink](#)

What's all this buzz about "God" and "Jesus"? They're just make-believe characters, sort of like Barney the Purple dinosaur-like character.

But I can see where some are offended. No reasonable person likes having make-believe characters talked about as if they were really real, and then having laws passed and wars started because people believe they really ARE real.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 10:07 PM on 04/12/2008

larry278 [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of larry278](#) [permalink](#)

This blog has attracted a number of defeatist comments in which feigned apathy is combined with unfocused anger to create a virtual pity party. Self pity has replaced football as America's #1 pass times for many who've commented on this blog. Oh the pain-the furslinger pain, get me my veeble-fetzer [stolen from MAD & 57 years of reading MAD]. Damn, I'm writing word salad. It is time to go back to reading my book on the Korean war.
larry lynch

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 05:52 PM on 04/12/2008

NetParrot [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of NetParrot](#) [permalink](#)

Feigned apathy, unfocused anger and self-pity are the custom here. We don't take kindly to

criticism from newcomers, unless you meant those in a *good* way, of course.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 08:14 AM on 04/13/2008

rkweblog See Profile I'm a Fan of rkweblog permalink

I agree that it is not right to ask someone to sing something that is not of their conscience, especially in a competition where that may sway the results.

As an "evangelical" I do not mind hearing people sing something that is their faith in a setting like this, but I was offended or rather just awkward to observe this because I am pretty sure not all the singers share the same faith. BTW--Dolly was cool, even though her genre is not my fave.

Just to note, they did NOT get permission to change and indeed did fumble.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 04:38 PM on 04/12/2008

Riker See Profile I'm a Fan of Riker permalink

Can you imagine them singing about Mohammed or Buddha? The fundies would just die! So to claim it was "just" a song is incorrect. Who is behind these asinine choices that Idol is making? This was a major screw up.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 03:49 PM on 04/12/2008

liaisonsus See Profile I'm a Fan of liaisonsus permalink

To all those Jesus lovers, if he were to come back to this planet they would cruxify him again because what they have become, is so far away from his initial Philosophy. After all, he was a practicing Jew!

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 12:21 PM on 04/12/2008

graffen48 See Profile I'm a Fan of graffen48 permalink

So true, how many people have been murdered in the name of Christianity?

"He came dancin across the water, Cortez Cortez, what a killer!!"
(Neil Young)

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 04:47 PM on 04/12/2008

DramaQueen101 See Profile I'm a Fan of DramaQueen101 permalink

Yep... The Crusades, the Inquisition, the conquering of the Americas, Africa, the witch hunts... need I say more?

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 04:22 PM on 04/13/2008

elainebarili See Profile I'm a Fan of elainebarili permalink

you dont have a clue

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 12:38 PM on 04/12/2008

Necron99 See Profile I'm a Fan of Necron99 permalink

Nah...they'd just stick him in a "free speech zone" half a mile from the flow of traffic...and we'd all be too busy talking about American Idol to notice.

"Problem" solved & everybody can go to bed with a clean conscience.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 12:34 PM on 04/12/2008

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