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American Idol Hollywood: The Final 24 Chosen

Posted February 13, 2008 | 11:52 PM (EST)

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A fun final 24 though the show began with a very lame plug for the action sci-fier Jumper with Hayden Christiansen and Ryan Seacrest joking around. (I haven't seen the film yet but the quite different book by Steven Gould is finally back in print (along with some others in the series) and is a lot of fun. It's filed in either the young adult or sci-fi section of bookstores.

The running gag tonight was Simon chiding Paula for easing out the results and not just taking the old Band-Aid approach and giving the good or bad news with one quick tug. Of course, "the talent is the strongest it's ever been," says Ryan Seacrest who I promise to pay \$100 (hey, that's a lot to me) the year he says, "Boy, it's a weak field this season." As usual, the final 24 is filled with familiar faces and people who - because they're boringly talented and not prone to drama -- didn't get much camera time. Jason Castro? Alexandra Lushington? Luke Menard? Leif Garrett-look-a-like Garret Haley? New faces to me or at least people I'd forgotten. We think we know who the strong people are but the final 12 always has some surprises.

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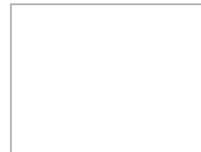
Carly Smithson -- the lass who missed out on Hollywood because of visa problems (but got a major record deal anyone and millions spent on her first album and video that flopped) -- whoops, does that spoil the Idol mystique? Paula was so meandering I thought she wasn't going to make it, but she did.

Simon muttered, "You were torturing that girl" and as usual he was right.

Amanda Overmyer -- the rock chick was coolly confident again and seems a lock for the final 12.

David Archuleta -- the sweet 16 year old who wowed them in Hollywood said, "I've always

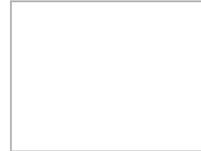
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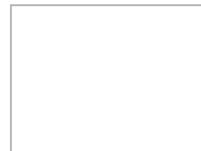
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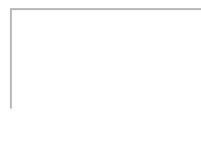
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doubted myself," and thought friends said he had a good voice because he was short. After getting through and walking to the elevator, he remembers his manners. "Have a nice day," he says.

Kristy Lee Cook -- the first surprise for me since I don't think she can keep singing "Amazing Grace" every week and without that crutch it seems like she'll wilt. But she got through.

Brooke White -- looking too thin, Brooke did a great version of carole King's "Beautiful" but we seem to have missed some of the drama since one version of it she stumbled badly. Also, I do think her vocals weren't as strong as the whole performance. My sister Libet didn't understand this: how could Simon say someone wouldn't be as good when they weren't playing their guitar or I say she wouldn't be so enjoyable without playing the keyboards? Well, the more instruments someone plays at a time, the more forgiving you are. If a one-man band strums a banjo and plays the harmonica and taps a drum etc., we're amused whether or not he can sing a lick. The same is true even with just one instrument. A terrific guitar solo or just vibrant playing can impress us and mask so-so vocals. True, they're all backed by a pro band, but seeing them play an instrument just seems more impressive. Suddenly you're judging two skills rather than one, even subconsciously. Hence my belief that she won't be much of a threat come the final 24. Prove me wrong, Brooke. And eat something; you're skin and bones!

Danny Noriega -- another high school kid without the face time of Danny Archuletta. He too gets through and has a strong voice. The shag haircut may have to go, though.

Drew Poppelreiter -- the farm boy who looked like an Abercrombie & Fitch model had his prepared exit line: "I won't miss turkey season." Presumably his Hollywood performances were bad in an uninteresting way since he shouldn't have made it this far and he got no airtime.

Michael Johns -- the Aussie with a cute wife (and handsome buddy or perhaps brother) seems like a lock to make the Top 12.

Syesha Mercado -- Paula made a play on her name by asking how it was spelled. What's that word in the middle? Hoarse-voiced in Hollywood, she's another apparent lock for the final 12, a total cutie and a major threat.

Robbie Carrico, Kady Malloy, Amy Davis, Alaina Whitaker, Jason Yeager, Chikezie Eze and Asia'h Epperson (whose dad died one day before her audition) -- all made it. We haven't really seen much of Chikezie but besides having a name that's fun to pronounce he seems like a comer.

David Hernandez -- he sang the Stephen Stills song "Love The One You're With" and won over Paula and Randy but Simon said he voted "no" and that David would have to work much harder to make it to the final 12.

Josiah Leming -- the living in his car 18 year old with a faux British accent, Josiah was shown saying, "I think they're going to put me through." Oops. In the biggest moment of the night (if not the biggest shock since Josiah's story and personality were always better than his singing), they sent him home. The producers must be really heartbroken since Josiah was pure gold, breaking out the accent at one minute and the tears at the next. We see him wandering into the cold, dark night. (By the way, how does a homeless kid have a MySpace page?) Does Idol have counselors on hand for the people who get this devastating news on national TV and might need someone to talk to? They should. And Josiah might be 18 but I hope someone tried to get him back in touch with his family. He seems like a lost little lamb.

The cruel final showdown between two contestants. It would be nicer to bring them both up and keep one in a holding room while the other gets the news and doesn't see the person go down. They both go up and each come down separately without seeing the other so the news isn't spoiled but they don't have to hear it in front of each other. It always means the winner is cheated of their celebratory moment. Unnecessarily, unless you like seeing them both suffer. It would be just as "fun" to know what's going to happen to the last person seemingly before they do.

Colton Berry and Kyle Ensley -- another big surprise as Clay Aiken 2.0 Kyle is sent home over the strong objections of Simon. I haven't seen enough of Colton to know what I think about him, but I never thought Kyle had a good enough voice to get to the final 12 much less win it all. So Paula and Randy were right this time. And Kyle was poised enough to make a beauty pageant veteran jealous. He actually seems to have enjoyed the ride without fooling himself into thinking he

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should devote his life to a pop career.

Cordin McKinney and Joanne Borgella -- and here's the lesson of the last seconds of the show. Always, ALWAYS tape the next show on FOX because Idol has a history of running a few minutes over that get cut off by DVRs. MY recording of the show ended just as the judges were about to give the good news to plus-size model Joanne, according to several online sites. That was certainly the right decision, since she was very winning. I wonder how she reacted.

So next week we winnow it down to the final 12 with three nights of Idol including the first night of live results next Thursday. My picks for the biggest threats are David Archuleta, Syesha Mercado, Michael Johns, and Joanne Bergalla. Who do you like?

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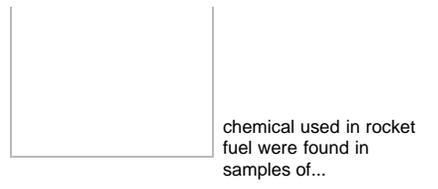


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I doubt that I am the first person to point out that this show is not really a talent show in the strictest sense, an amateur talent search ; so I would hope that everybody involved , whether it be the comedy failures;(those who appear on the show to be held in ridicule, the poor sods who will be on Youtube for eternity., or the "non-winners who didn't receive top prize are all recompensed as paid entertainment

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I have to admit I'm a sucker for this show. But I normally don't bother to watch until there's a top 12.

I think Amanda Overmeyer (the Janis soundalike) is fantastic. While I would love to hear the "something different" that Simon mentioned - every song can't be sung like a muthah, you know? - still she doesn't sound like anyone else out there right now, so why mess with it? I mean, Simon, would you tell Joss Stone to quit it with that bluesy sound already and sing more like everyone else?

And I second the whole counselor thing. Josiah was such a sweetie (and not the only one devastated by being cut) and he just left alone? Thing is, his style of singing is hitting big right now (not really my thing but he kicked butt when he sang at the keyboard).

Also agree about Kyle. Dude has a voice, and personality for yards - and it's not a put on.

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Does Idol have counselors on hand for the people who get this devastating news on national TV and might need someone to talk to? And Josiah might be 18 but I hope someone tried to get him back in touch with his family. lasvegaswekly.com

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