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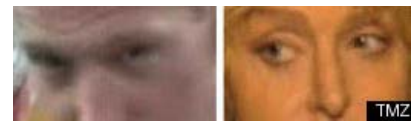
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Michael Giltz

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American Idol Top 11: The Beatles

Posted March 19, 2008 | 04:32 AM (EST)

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More music from the Number One band of all time, the Beatles. (I guess it's safe to say *Idol* won't be getting approval for a night devoted to the Rolling Stones or Led Zeppelin anytime soon. What would they say? Let's celebrate the #2 and #3 bands of all time?) They introduce the singers and no one gets even close to the screams of for David Archuleta. Actually, that's not true: Simon's screams comes pretty close. He can no longer be dubbed the judge America loves to hate. He's the judge America loves to love because he's blunt and usually right.

Amanda Overmyer -- Sang "Back In The U.S.S.R.," an insanely catchy tune that gently sent up and celebrated the Beach Boys and yet -- remarkably -- was never released as a single. (It's on the bursting at the seams White Album, which depending on the day of the week may be my favorite Beatles album of all.) If you're wondering how deep the Beatles catalog is, knowing this song wasn't even a single is all the proof you need. (Chubby Checker had a modest hit with it.) Amanda begins by trying to remember her favorite moment on *Idol* so far, a waste of time that amounts to instant nostalgia and which for most contestants amounts to simply replaying a clip from the previous week or so. Then she does her Southern rock thing. To be fair, even more of the lyrics are intelligible this time and the song was pretty recognizable. But you can't help noticing how thin her vocals are. The judges are pretty polite and Paula offers the disastrous suggestion that Amanda sing a ballad. Not a good idea.

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Kristy Lee Cook -- She tackles "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away," one of the key mid-period tracks (from the soundtrack to *Help!*) that proved the Beatles weren't just going to pen silly love songs. Cook chose it because she liked the title and was apparently completely unfamiliar with it. Then she sings it and Kristy proves she's still unfamiliar with it.

Her arrangement turns it into a power ballad of some sort, she's rough on the low notes, loses the melody completely at one point and by the end the song doesn't even remotely resemble the

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original tune. All three judges drop the hammer on her and Simon says simply, "You're not a good performer." Kristy rejoinders that she hopes to get back next week because -- she tells Simon -- "I can blow you out of your socks and you know it!" To which Simon laughs and says, "Okay!" Ryan keeps giggling over the unintended double entendre and Kristy finally catches on and looks amused and embarrassed at the same time. More to the point, I watched the song again and kept in mind that most people don't know the tune anyway so they won't notice or care how little it resembles the original. And Kristy looked just great, clearly did a better job than the week before and got to belt out a note or two. It might just be enough not to send her home. Still, vulnerable.

David Archuleta -- Sang "The Long and Winding Road," which he correctly points out was the last #1 single for the Beatles. (Ryan got it wrong last week and claimed it was "Let It Be.") And yes, the Archuleta train is back on track. We now know he's fallible, which means his smooth, polished, utterly professional and charming rendition of a tune that can be quite draggy in the wrong hands was just lovely. Randy said David should take more liberties but he's crazy -- the guy's worked with Mariah Carey too long and thinks endless, pointless runs are what singers should do. David did a great job and even looked abashed at the praise when he was done. He even looked like he might cry, so they cut to a commercial just in time.

Michael Johns -- Sang "Day In The Life" from *Sgt. Pepper*, the very definition of an album track (that is, a song that works beautifully on an album; sure it can be played on the radio but it belongs where it belongs). Mashups a Lennon verse drawing from newspaper stories and a McCartney ditty that blends in perfectly, topped up with an intense, orchestral meltdown. It seems a really bizarre choice to pick when you've got less than two minutes to sing and will have to cut out most of the song-- it would be like performing a truncated "Stairway to Heaven." And indeed, Johns gets the worst of all worlds by cutting and pasting this song which simply HAS to be heard in its entirety to make any emotional sense. His voice has a nice rasp to it at the beginning, but I think he's messed up the lyrics early on. (It's hard to tell since the song is edited.) Then he really messes up the lyrics at the end, even mumbling for a moment to cover it up. Pretty disastrous. All three judges drop the hammer. But bizarrely NONE of them mention the obvious fact that he forgot the lyrics. Then the recap at the end of the show replays that very same moment. Can it be that none of them know the song that well and didn't realize his mistake? He certainly looked like a deer in the headlights when it was over and only his good looks (he's really the only mature male sex symbol since Archuleta is very young and still very Tiger Beat, in a safe way) might save him. Very vulnerable.

Brooke White -- Sang "Here Comes The Sun," a George Harrison classic from *Abbey Road* that I will have played at my funeral (many, many years from now, hopefully). It seems like a smart choice, but she botches it up miserably, including a too obvious yellow dress with layers that looks frumpy. White seems not to trust this simple, lovely tune. She twirls around on stage, she bounces too much and seems to speed it up, she dances awkwardly and generally behaves as if she believes just singing the song would bore people to death. A train wreck, really. Everyone is pretty down, though Paula says something or other nice. Simon then bizarrely blames the song -- not only is it one of the absolute greats, it's definitely in what should be her singer-songwriter comfort zone. She just blew it.

David Cook -- Sang "Day Tripper" in a rocked-out version modeled somewhat on a cover by Whitesnake. It was the b-side to the #1 hit "We Can Work It Out" and went to #5 itself. Very good performance by Cook, despite a voice box interlude that brought up unnecessary memories of Peter Frampton. But overall, very solid. It's exactly what he should be doing. All three gave him credit, though Simon pointed out David's unfortunate tendency to look pleased with himself. (Cook might be the most modest guy on the planet; it's just the way he comes across on camera.)

Carly Smithson -- Sang "Blackbird," another gem from the *White Album*. (And really, if you don't own *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* and *Abbey Road* and the *White Album*, then you can't claim to love music.) Her rather dramatic rendition worked pretty well, though it was marred by an over-active audience who squealed anytime she let out a little volume, as if "loud" equals "good." Randy and Paula were positive but Simon had some criticisms - again, he seemed to think the song was bad! Carly's comeback in which she explained why the song was meaningful to her was very effective. Plus you got to see her seriously inked-up husband (you can barely see him behind all the tattoos) which I assume scares some of Middle America every week so it's cool to see her cheered on by him, not covering her own serious tattoo and even proudly displaying a new one she got to celebrate season seven.

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Jason Castro -- Sang "Michelle," one of Paul McCartney's world-class ballads, a Grammy winner for Song Of the Year and yet another classic (off *Rubber Soul*) that was never released as a single, though several other artists charted with it in 1966. This is a perfect choice for Castro: light, gentle and winning. The annoying audience again squeals just because he walks across the stage and claps along too fast. He really does have a thin voice and sings out of the side of his mouth at times. The judges are mixed but polite and really he has charm to spare and should be fine. Simon, by the way, that wasn't a "French-English" version Castro sang, it's the original version. Is this another Beatles tune he doesn't really know?

Syesha Mercado -- Sang "Yesterday," the #1 smash hit from the *Help!* soundtrack that has been recorded more than 2500 times, perhaps more than any other song in history. Finally! Finally, Syesha -- my crush - has a breakout moment. She's backed by a simple guitar (and later some strings) but doesn't try to overpower the song. She sings it directly and beautifully and has a great dress and killer earrings and looks wonderful and was just vulnerable and darn near perfect (despite a little wavering at one point and a weak run at another). All three judges are very positive, but not positive enough in my book. That song has been sung by everyone, so not boring us to tears or actually making us feel it again is a big accomplishment.

Chikezie -- Sang "I've Just Seen A Face" from *Help!* Since it worked the week before, Chikezie decided to do it again and delivered a fairly identical arrangement to the one he used last time. Not a good idea. Personally, I liked the slow, soulful delivery he began with. Then Chikezie vamped it up with a harmonica solo and a country-ish feel. Simon was right when he said it felt gimmicky. Not bad, but he can't pull this stunt again.

Ramiele Malubay -- Sang "I Should Have Known Better" from *A Hard Day's Night*, which is exactly what it was for Ramielle. I've never been much of a fan, but to me she came off as a complete amateur, even on a night where a number of other singers stumbled. She was flat, off-key and awful. (Oh yeah, and still cute as a dickens, but that won't cut it anymore.) None of the judges were positive, but they didn't trash her the way I expected. This was a "thanks very much, make sure you pack your bags" performance and they didn't treat it as such. But I think the viewers will.

The bottom three will be Michael Johns, Kristy Lee Cook and Ramiele Malubay and I believe Ramiele is going home. What do you think?

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So Amanda is gone. A biker nurse. What guy hasn't had that fantasy? That said, it was her time to go. Every week, it was the same thing, three note songs. Her journey home started on 80's week when she sang Joan Jett. She should have tried a Tina thing, but she didn't. In retrospect, I don't think she could. She would have been better served if she knew any music beyond overplayed classic rock.

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HuffPost's Pick

Part 3

What kills me is that none of the singers have to play a guitar and sing at the same time. For pete's sake how much easier can they make it for these kids?

If you're just going to stand there and sing then do something like " The Magical Mystery Tour", "Get Back", " It's only love", or "Penny Lane".

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 01:53 AM on 03/20/2008

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

It has been interesting to see how few of them take advantage of playing a musical instrument. Jason Castro, for one, always does better. I just don't think his guitar picking skills are up to the task for the harder songs. You can bet Brooke White is going to anchor herself to an instrument from now on, though. However, just standing there and singing isn't exactly easy -- especially on Beatles songs, which often had very intricate vocal arrangements that gave them their appeal but which a solo singer can't duplicate.

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HuffPost's Pick

Part 2

Amanda sounds like she should be doing old Bob Seeger songs and blues numbers Janis Joplin stuff with that shouting/singing type voice she has. Sometimes she pulls it off and sometimes not. Bye bye. She has trouble trying to stretch herself into other types of music. Bye bye.

Blackbird is another song that is just too hard to sing if you don't have a high voice. If you're going to sing a song it has to sound strong enough and project confidence. If you can't do the high notes you

need to pick a different song.

David Archuleta manages to find himself a song that fits his voice and style instead of stretching himself to fit a different type of song. He may be doing Dean Martin imitations the rest of his life at this rate. I would like to see him try something like "Mother Natures Son" from the white Album and sing it straight. (not so much vibrato David) He ought to be able to do that.

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✔ HuffPost's Pick

Damn it, Michael! Now you've even got me watching this stupid show! I own all the Beatles CDs and so can't resist a show like this.

Where to begin, oh boy!

First, "I've just seen a face" IS a country song and perhaps that's why there was an attempt to sing it that way. Go back and listen to George Harrison bang away on his Gretsch Country Gentleman during the solo and he sounds just like Hank Williams, Chet Atkins, and the rest of the cowboys. This is a hard song to do right and he shouldn't have tried it.

Second, "Here comes the sun" is as much about happily spinning around in a yellow dress as it is about good riddens to the winter that has just passed away and how cold it was. I really had no problem with her because the judges keep telling the singers to take the basic song and put YOU into it and stretch so I thought that's what she was doing.

"You've got to hide your love away" is a slow painful lament by John Lennon who seems to be hurting over a lost love. I would have kicked Kristy Lee off since this is one of my favorite Beatles songs and she didn't even come close to sounding mournful. This is an easy song and she should have been able to really nail it.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 01:39 AM on 03/20/2008

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Ha! You're hooked. You're right, "Ive Just Seen A Face" does have a country twang in the original, And anyone who knows "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away" would have found Kristy's performance godawful. But once I realized most people DIDN'T know it and listened to the song again the way they might, I figured it had enough "Idol" moments (big notes and a big finish) and she looked so good that it would keep her safe. Since I was disastrously wrong about all my other predictions, I'll trumpet this one again. Frankly, none of the Beatles songs are easy to sing -- Yesterday seems simple but in fact delivering it style ain't easy. The Long and Winding Road is a tune that's a snoozer when performed by almost anyone else so again the fact that Archuleta did it well (just like he did with imagine) is very notable in my book. He is very very young and has already outgrown most of the vocal flourishes and diva-like singing you see him indulge in on clips from Star Search when he was 13. If he keeps improving, he'll be tremendous at 22. And hey, Dean Martin was a hell of a singer. Thanks for reading. Since next week ain't the Beatles, maybe you'll be able to walk away now from the show.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 01:53 PM on 03/20/2008

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Why hasn't anyone picked John Lennon's " Oh darling! " That would be a show stopper! Amanda should have done that one. It's a real screamer.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 01:37 AM on 03/20/2008

DCDan See Profile I'm a Fan of DCDan permalink

Corrections on Beatles factoids for Guitarsandmore:

No Gretch Country Gentleman playing on I've Just Seen A Face. In fact, no electric guitars of any sort on the recording. (And not to mention, Hank Williams wasn't exactly known for his solo playing so that comparison is off base.)

Oh Darling is a McCartney tune through and through. Lennon had nothing to do with it.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 10:54 AM on 03/20/2008

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I stand corrected and am not too proud to admit when I am wrong. There is a solo after the bridge in "All my loving" that sounds very country and that's the one I am remembering, but you are correct "I've just seen a face" is all acoustic. I had to go back and listen to it twice to believe it and you are right.

As far as "Oh Darling!" is concerned I was lectured intensely by another Beatles fan/performer for a week about how that song was all John Lennon but Wikipedia seems to agree with you. It is a real screamer though and I would like to hear someone try it; that one and "Golden Slumbers".

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67bug See Profile I'm a Fan of 67bug permalink

About last night: it sucked, basically. Michael should be coming off much stronger and he should be using some creativity by now. Poor Chikezie, I loved him last week. I also thought of Frampton when Cook did his number, but I still love "Frampton Comes Alive!," great summertime album for me. I'm still not crazy about any of the girls, and I hope Kristy goes tonight; although I have a feeling it could be Studboy (Michael.)

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 05:56 PM on 03/19/2008

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

It was a pretty weak night. Not because they did the Beatles again. (The Beatles have plenty of classics) but because so many of the Beatles songs are more challenging than they seem. Day in the Life is a disastrous tune to try and squeeze into 90 seconds, for example. The voice box was a bizarre choice and certainly brings up frampton but I didn't mean to imply Frampton Comes Alive isn't fun.

♥ Favorite ⚙ Flag as abusive Posted 01:57 PM on 03/20/2008

mch755 See Profile I'm a Fan of mch755 permalink

another great summary of the show. I'm mostly on point with all your observations. Here's my take:

My favorite:

1. Syesha- Yes, at last a great performance from her! She looked fantastic and very comfortable on stage. I'm going to buy this on Itunes and she'll have no problem staying on for next week.
2. David C- I like this guy. He sang the song really well, and he's doing his thing. He's taking it one song at a time and thats a good thing. He does look a little self satisfied on the stage but who cares at least he's being himself. I really think he can go all the way, possibly even waylay the Archuleta train if he keeps doing his thing and gives a adult/rocking alternative each week.
3. David A- well the little man is back on the horse. I don't bother voting for him since 30 million tweens already do but he was very smooth. And he got back what he does so well, singing slow -tempo'ed songs where he can nuance and feel a song to great effect. Not one of my favorites as a singer anymore but he sang well.

Non faves:

1. Kristy- please someone give her a ticket outta here! I gotta agree with Simon, she's not a good performer, she looks like an android up there, albeit a very pretty one.
2. Michael J- I really thought he would be doing well, but each week it just gets worse. Me and my friends hooted when Paula said that thing about the ear piece. Whoa, embarrassing.

I think Kristy is out. I hope its not Ramiele, she's too cute to kick off and she does have a good voice, she just hasn't chosen a good song for her yet. Don't give up on her!

♥ Favorite ⚡ Flag as abusive Posted 03:54 PM on 03/19/2008

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

Thanks for reading. I think we're seeing why Michael Johns didn't have success when his band was signed to maverick. He has a good voice and certainly looks like a rocker. He just can't deliver consistently. Would be a good runway model, though.

♥ Favorite ⚡ Flag as abusive Posted 01:58 PM on 03/20/2008

mch755 See Profile I'm a Fan of mch755 permalink

thanks Mr. Giltz to actually responding to the readers. Well we all know Amanda got the boot. But I agree Michael is just not cutting it. People memories of "Bohemian Rhapsody" are fading being replaced with mediocre performances week after week. I do like the guy, he's pretty humble and takes the criticism well plus all my co-workers (the female ones at least) think he's good looking so maybe that will be enough for him to coast thru.

♥ Favorite ⚡ Flag as abusive Posted 03:11 PM on 03/20/2008

DemandTruth See Profile I'm a Fan of DemandTruth permalink

The only two performances I really liked were David Archuleta's and David Cook's. I think with David Cook, Simon just didn't like that version of the song, but I LOVED it! And as far as looking cocky - I think he was just grooving on that sexy version of the song and rocking out! I'm youtubing that one for sure! Black Bird was okay - but that's such a lovely gentle song, I really think Carly hit it too heavy and I didn't really like the interpretation. Syesha did a lovely interpretation of a song that to me is kindof boring - but I wish she'd brought it down about 1/2 key or so, as she seemed flat the whole song. Everybody else sucked!

A vocal coach should really work with Jason on his support. He seems to sing from his throat and neck instead of his diaphragm. And everybody except the two Davids sounded really off pitch last night. As a classically trained singer - that's my biggest pet peeve!

♥ Favorite ⚡ Flag as abusive Posted 11:55 AM on 03/19/2008

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

I went back and forth on whether I thoght Syesha started the song at too high a pitch. But you're right about Castro sounding so thin -- maybe it's something as simple as him not knowing how to sing from the diaphragm, though improving that certainly won't make him a good singer. just not as weak a one. Yep, it's always bizarre when you get down to 10 singers from literally 100,000 auditions and you still wind up with some who just can't sing decently and you think, how the heck did they get in there?

♥ Favorite ⚡ Flag as abusive Posted 02:01 PM on 03/20/2008

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Michael, my assessment of the night is virtually identical to yours but please allow me to pile on for a moment because there were a few instances that deserve just that:

First, Simon's inane suggestion that the song wasn't good? I'm hoping that he 'meant' that the song wasn't a good choice for that particular person. None of those great songs seemed to suffer at all when the Beatles released them. Coincidence? I think not.

Secondly, Brooke White's total destruction of "Here Comes the Sun" was actually painful for me to listen to. I had no idea there was an annoying Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm version but I hope to never hear it again. Then her little verbal song and dance during her after-song critique (she's back-peddling so hard she even cuts Simon off) made me realize just how much she's bought into her previous praise. This is never a good sign. If you believe that everything you do will be touched by gold (and you're shocked when it isn't) then you're delusional and are not working hard enough to support whatever talent you have. I don't believe she's as good as she thinks she is. Not by a long shot.

Thirdly, as Paula was making the 'ear bud monitor' excuse for Michael Johns, he stood there very stoically and let her speak without jumping in to clarify the matter. It wasn't until Ryan walked over and did a bit of investigating that it was revealed that he had no ear buds and forced Paula into a quick critical back flip. Even so, there is little excuse for condensing a song that cannot be Reader's Digested.

Finally, as too seriously as Brooke White has begun taking herself, Jason Castro seems to think that everything is a throw away. I thought he was going to bust out laughing during the French part like some stoner who just realizes they ate a half gallon of chocolate chip ice cream in one sitting. Charm is still carrying his day but I can't see that lasting unless he actually delivers.

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I think (hope) Simon actually meant bad songs for those singers. He may be an idiot when it comes to Dylan (doesn't like him) but I don't think he could actually dismiss tunes by the Beatles. Good points all around. Michael Johns blew a good chance to have a funny, disarming moment but got "caught" instead of speaking up. By the way, Paula's wrong about not using an ear monitor meaning no excuses: they're used to make your life easier not harder so while they take get used t, not using them doesn't mean it's easier to sing on stage without them -- just a different challenge. And why would Michael just be getting used to them? His band was on Madonna's Maverick label so he might have had opportunities before Idol to use one.

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I would like to see Kristy Lee Cook go home tonight. At least the other singers that did bad last night have personalities when on stage. Kristy Lee Cook looks awkward when on the big stage.

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You might get your wish. I think she's very vulnerable. Any time all three judges criticize someone, they are thisclose to going home.

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