



that Syesha was great tonight. I think what he meant to say was that she was great-looking, because she looked awesome in a slinky, sparkly gold dress and high heels, doing her best Tina Turner imitation. And it was an imitation, albeit a good, sexy one. And it's not Tina Turner's "Proud Mary," Syesha, it's Creedence Clearwater Revival's, though Tina darn near stole it away from John Fogerty. CCR hit #2 for three weeks and Ike & Tina Turner took it to #4 two years later in 1971. By the way, if you haven't seen Tina sing this tune on the Rolling Stones documentary, *Gimme Shelter*, you're in for a scorching treat -- it's about the sexiest, rockiest thing you've ever seen. Syesha had fun with it, right down to the same twirl across the stage, even if she was a bit sharp on some of the "rolling"s. But she sure learned how to shake her hips. Randy and Paula loved it while Simon was -- yet again -- harshly negative, calling it a bad shrieking version. The truth was somewhere in between, but much closer to Randy and Paula.

**JASON CASTRO** -- Sang Bob Marley's "I Shot The Sheriff." Jason said in the video intro that because it was rock and roll hall of fame week, there were a few songs he knew. (A few?) Marley was a natural but like Cook, Jason made a disastrously wrong pick. First, he has to compete with two legendary versions -- both the Marley original and the Eric Clapton cover that remains his only #1 hit. (It was also Marley's only tangential Top 40 hit since he only had one single -- "Roots, Rock, Reggae" -- chart at all, peaking at a measly #51. On the bright side, Marley's compilation Legend has sold 10 million copies in the US alone and is one of the best-selling greatest hits sets ever.) Besides all that history, "Sheriff" is a dangerous song and danger is not Jason Castro's middle name. "One Love," "No Woman No Cry," "Is This Love," "Buffalo Soldier," "Is This Love" -- almost any classic Bob Marley tune (even "Redemption Song") would have been a better fit for Castro. He jumped around on stage like it was a party tune, his voice was thin and lost in the mix -- it was just awful. Randy was negative, Paula couldn't find much of anything to say and Simon said it was "utterly atrocious."

**DAVID ARCHULETA** -- Sang "Stand By Me." Archuleta is so young that this Ben E. King song was a classic #4 hit in 1961 and then charted again 25 years later when it was featured in the Rob Reiner film *Stand By Me in 1986* (still the best movie adaptation for Stephen King) and went to #9 and yet it would still be another four years before Archuleta would even be born. And yet that's still no reason for Ryan to refer to him as "Li'l Dave." It's a solid performance, though Archuleta is definitely helped when the camera comes in on a mid-shot and cuts off his diva hand movements. His breathing is less noticeable but now that Andrew Lloyd Webber has pointed it out I can't stop watching to see how many times Archuleta struggles with closing his eyes. His applause is literally ten times as loud and strong as the others. (Bizarrely, Paula applauds him specifically for listening to ALW and not closing his eyes all the time when he clearly still does it.) All three judges rave, though Ryan insists Archuleta is so tense during the critique he seems to run out of breathing (maybe that's why Archuleta seems smart by keeping his mouth shut). "Their faces scare me!" he laughs, melting the few hearts left that aren't already in a puddle at his feet.

**DAVID COOK** -- Sang The Who's "Baba O'Riley" (aka "Teenage Wasteland"), a rock radio staple from 1971. He really needed to raise his game after the first forgettable performance and he does. Cook starts off nice and slow, which pays off so well I almost wish he'd stayed in that vein. Instead, and with predictably crowd-pleasing results, he starts to rock out and satisfyingly so. Still, it's a very long, meandering song and hard to truncate -- he fakes it well, though ending with the words "Teenage waste--" probably wasn't intentional. Still, much much better. Randy is positive, Paula says, "I'm really humbled to sit here and watch your soul," while Simon smiles at her babbling in a friendly indulging manner and then says simply, "Welcome back, David Cook."

**SYESHA MERCADO** -- Sang Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come." It's easy to make fun of *Idol* contestant's sometime lack of knowledge, but hey, they have a lot more rock n roll history to absorb than old fogeys like me who only had the Sixties and Fifties to catch up on. So it's fine that Syesha didn't know Cooke's greatest triumph was written in the heat of the Civil Rights era (and as an inspired creative response to Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind"). But I couldn't help laughing when she linked the Civil Rights era to her appearance on *Idol* -- that was a pivotal moment in history and this is a pivotal moment in her personal life. OK, I get it. But still. Anyway, it's a bit of a shock to realize the tune -- released after Cooke died all too soon -- only hit #31 in 1965. Syesha comes out in a prom dress (with some nice cleavage that offsets the dowdy look nicely) and gives the tune her all. It's more stately than soulful thanks to a stolid arrangement but she does well and is given a loving closeup during the big *Idol* style finale that compensates for a slight wavering on that final note. In all, a big night for her. Randy, however, disses her (have all three judges ever praised her at the same time?), while Paula gives her a standing ovation and talks about how

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Sysha has become a star and links the song to Sysha's personal growth and soon Sysha is melting down in tears. Simon does one of his patented dramatic pauses before revealing he agrees with Paula one hundred percent and teasingly chides Randy, "You made her cry!"

**JASON CASTRO** -- Sang Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man." Castro showed great taste this week, hitting Marley and Dylan at once. "Mr Tambourine Man" was the last semi-bitter time Dylan would see another artist, in this case the Byrds, as the latest of a string of acts who seemed to have smash hit after hit with his tunes while he couldn't make a dent in the Top 10. That would end two months later in July of '65 when Dylan finally had his own smash hit with the #2 classic "Like A Rolling Stone." Unlike "Sheriff," this tune fits Castro like a glove, especially with him sitting on a stool and strumming away on his guitar. Perfect. Then he forgets the chorus and miserably hums along instead of singing, "Hey Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me/In the jingle jangle morning, I'll come following you." Who could forget "jingle jangle morning," one of the iconic rock phrases of all time? See, pot use really can cause memory lapses. Ironically, the far more difficult verses aren't a problem for Castro who remembers the chorus the second time around and then ends very awkwardly with a quick halt in the rhythm and an ill-placed gentle coda. The performance wasn't revelatory but this was far, far better than his first one. But of course forgetting the words at this stage is an unforgivable sin. None of the judges can find anything nice to say and Simon typically doesn't try. "I'd pack your suitcase," he says.

**DAVID ARCHULETA** -- Sang Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender." It is indeed refreshing to see him stay away from soaring inspirational ballads and Archuleta just sits on a stool, stares lovingly and sincerely into the camera and has his way with the tune. Hilariously, he only gets four words into the song before involuntarily closing his eyes ("Love me tender, Love --" and boom, they shut.) After a while he is looking *below* the camera (presumably into the mosh pit) instead of into it and then his voice breaks slightly at the finale but he uses it like the uncanny little pro he is and ends nicely. I listen to it again without watching the picture, thus avoiding his puppy dog eyes, and it's better than I thought at first, despite the constant runs and inability to just sing a melody for more than a phrase or two. Randy raves, Paula says "I felt your heart" and Simon says "You didn't just beat the competition. You crushed them." Indeed.

**BOTTOM TWO** -- Well, I would assume the bottom two would be Sysha and Jason but given Cook's relatively weak showing, Sysha's strength and her tears, maybe it'll be Cook and Castro. Nonetheless, anyone other than Castro going home will be an honest to goodness shocker.

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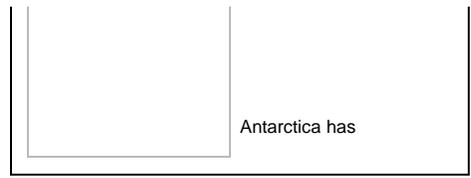
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**SharonB** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of SharonB](#) [permalink](#)

They are all just a bunch of kids tryin' to get a break.  
I do find it strange that all these old white men who write blogs about American Idol have torn Syesha apart for DARING to compare her struggle with the people Sam Cooke was writing about. Yep... if I was a young black woman the main people who could tell me how to feel about my experience is old, tired a\$\$ white men. I am a 57 year old white woman, what do I know about what it means to grow up black in America???? I give the kid credit for actually even giving a care about those who struggled to make things better for her. Maybe, just maybe she was shedding a tear for them.  
In any even she can sing. And, she is kick-you-in-the-BUTT gorgeous!  
Jason is so bad that Elvis keeps trying to posses my soul so that he can shoot a rifle at the TV when Jason sings.  
Both of the Davids are great. I would prefer that Cook wins, but Archuleta is okay, too.

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

I agree. At least give the girl some credit for bringing up political/social issues on AI. And what is wrong with relating one's personal struggle to a political struggle? If she were born x generations ago, she'd be a slave.

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**billicone24** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of billicone24](#) [permalink](#)

i think what was objectionable about syesha's comparison is that it seemed shallow. to take a song about one of the most important times in black history, the civil rights struggle, and then compare it to her experience on a reality show does not do that song justice.  
i really like her, but watching her bawl over that, instead of being moved by the true meaning of the song, was a little silly.

castro has to go. he looks like he doesn't even care anymore. i used to be a big fan of his too...

and archuleta...i feel like i'm the only one that hasn't melted. can he please sing a melody for once?! he did one verse of stand by me and the rest was rambling runs. it's all so calculated and insincere. i'm not buying it.

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

As I mentioned after Levine's post (although it disappeared for some reason), it was clear that she knew the significance of the tune in the context of the early '60s"she just failed to articulate why the song meant so much to her, but it was there in her face, and her voice.

And yes, little David's charm is wearing thin. He will win this thing, however.

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

Oh, BTW, while the theme was the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, they weren't given free reign over any song from any of the inductees (Duran Duran certainly ain't in there), but were limited to the licensable songs from the hall's "500 songs that shaped rock & roll."

Personally, I kinda wondered if someone would tackle Donna Summer's "Love To Love You Baby." Sounds like it was just written for David Arch, no?

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

True, but I think 500 songs to choose from is one of the most extensive lists they ever get -- I do wish the show would post the songs the kids are choosing from in advance. That would let us all judge their selections better. Archuleta fake maning through Donna Summer for eight minutes? My head is spinning.

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

i think syesha did just fine - again - and - again - wasn't completely complimented for it. what we tend to forget is this is a competition of primarily amateurs, not hardened, seasoned professionals. sure, some have professional experience, and some have competitive singing experience, but essentially, these are young people trying to find their chops in a tense-filled months-long competition. if they at any point insert any originality into their performances, it is the rare occurrence. the pressure simply to perform ably must be huge.

i think they receive so much push and "advice" from behind the scenes that they do much of NOTHING on their own - from show producers, hairdressers, stylists, creative consultants, voice coaches, song coaches, p.r. consultants, scriptwriters, moms/dads, relatives. you, meaning viewers, don't think they do that by themselves do you?

i for one, can tell the difference between tina turner and syesha, and if she wants to copy tina's version that's fine with me. it was one of the best performances of the evening. and the crying? i felt she cried because up til then all of the celebrity judges had been unduly critical of her and finally, at least paula was standing up and giving her proper due.

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

I agree about her crying. It was absolutely obvious that after weeks of negative criticisms for solid performances that when Paula echoed her pr-taped thoughts on what the song meant to her, that it got to her -- especially after Randy gave her another negative review she probably wasn't expecting. I think for the last three weeks when she felt like she delivered that it's been hard for Syesha to hear Randy and or Simon slam her. Hearing affirmation, even from the always affirming Paula, just got to her.

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**susieq1001** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of susieq1001](#) [permalink](#)

I like David A, but only because he has the BEST voice and always makes the songs sound good, regardless of what they are. He sings on key, has good rhythm and phrasing, and makes good choices when changing it up.

I do think he needs much much more coaching on stage presence, and, of course, he just needs some time to grow up. He's only 17, and a young 17, at that. The eye closing thing is a tough one, and MOST of the performers on AI do it. Jason does it, Brooke did it, Ramielle did it, Kristie did it.

David C is my next choice, then Syesha.

IMO, Jason should have been gone AT LEAST 2 weeks ago. I really just don't like him at all.

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

Re David A.'s readiness to be crowned AI champion, he will win for the same reason Jordin Sparks -- another high-schooler -- won last season. He has the "potential" to be the best singer among this batch of contestants. He's not ready now and Jordin wasn't truly ready when she won. IMO, they should raise the minimum age requirement by at least a year or two. It would add credibility to the show and raise the level of competition. 16- and 17-year-olds are not mature enough vocally, and are generally not poised enough to handle the

pressures of stardom. David A. is a prodigy: great tone, phrasing, pitch, etc. Has all the makings of a really good singer; just not quite yet, title or no title.

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**susieq1001** See Profile I'm a Fan of susieq1001 [permalink](#)

I agree on all counts. They really should raise the age to at least 18.

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

one thing i've noticed about david archuleta is he is just flat out physically tired. he has lost some of that wonderful sparkle and peppy enthusiasm he had during the first couple of weeks.

the boy has a genuine love for song and music and has a voice that will take him to a good career in show business. part of his appeal, at 17, is his boyish, childish charisma. i think he's either plum tired or told to be more "adult" in his presentations - but whatever it is, that bounce, that love, that pep and sparkle have gone from the boy we first saw in weeks one and two. it will be awhile before we see what david truly can do - but make no mistake, this kid is a keeper.

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

David A reminds me a Bowfinger when he says "thank you" with his upper teeth jutting out. Cute kid but not someone I would seek out to listen to.

Jason intentionally bombed.

Cook too smug and substandard.

Syesha a nice surprise and fighting for it.

Michael, please change your picture.

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

When I'm back in the US, I'll give it a shot. But it won't get much better, trust me.

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

What was with the sound last night? The voice mics were so loud that you heard every breath and mouth movement while the accompaniment was really pushed into the background. It magnified every minor issue the singers had as well as any pitch problems. It was really difficult to watch this episode. It was that bad.

David A was spot on with every note and really had the only tolerable performance because of the sound issues. Cook's first song was really bad with this sound problem, and Jason Castro sounded exactly as Simon said.... like a first round audition loser. Syesha did well in spite of it, but it wasn't the night for choreography.

Did anyone else notice this? I DVR'd the performance (watching the primary results) so maybe it was my DVR... I don't know.

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

I noticed the vocals were a little bright in the mix, but I'm away from my DVR and can't check it out again to see what you're talking about. You can blame the producers, especially if it happened the whole show, though of course it also depends on how the singers use the microphone.

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

I got a slight feeling that David Cook was trying to throw this thing.  
I really don't think he wants to win - can't say I blame him.

Michael, did you sense that at all or did I imagine it?

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

I don't think he's trying to lose or has decided he doesn't want to win. I think he's either realized he CAN'T win (because Archuleta is clearly a prohibitive favorite) or he thinks it's not cool to look like he wants to win. In either case, it came off as indifference last night.

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

Am I the only person in the room who cannot stand David Arugula? The guy looks like a fetal alcohol baby and has no soul whatsoever. Can't really stand any of the remaining idols. Screw 'em, I'm going home.

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

ya

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**dcree77** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of dcree77](#) [permalink](#)

I am a 40 something black guy but I still like him. I don't know what it is. I like his voice, especially when he sings the ballands. He is young and it shows but think he will grow out of it. I know he has his haters out there, but that is why there are so many successful artists. Different strokes for different folks.

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

No, you're not the only one. There's a strong "what's with the teeny bopper" contingent out there. It's just that you're outnumbered by the screaming teenage girls. You probably didn't care for Shaun Cassidy either.

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

i'm with ya! he looks like a scared robot and he has the WORST taste in music! he'll be another winner who can't keep a record contract!

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

I still have my heart-shaped Shaun Cassidy necklace! But David Archuleta makes me crave salty food.

I'm sad about Jason; I really do love his voice and his style of music. I wish he would have made better song choices these last few weeks of the competition.

Favorite Flag as abusive Posted 01:57 PM on 05/07/2008

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