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American Idol -- Top 9: Kris Allen Shines



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In a blessedly brief Idol (anything less than two hours feels like a speeded-up pleasure), the **Top 9 Idol contestants** sang any song that was available for purchase on iTunes, surely the weakest theme ever. And as Kara Dio Guardi sparred with the audience, delivered some bizarre lines (Studio 57?) and seemed to reach out to the other judges without success, it's gonna be the audition rounds for season 9 before we'll know whether she's coming back or not.

According to [Marc Berman of Mediaweek](#), the show scored a 13.3 overnight rating, followed by the dead-on-arrival Osbournes variety show, which lost 63% of its Idol lead-in.

The show began with the contestants walking out to center stage with Adam Lambert discretely guiding Scott MacIntyre. Ryan Seacrest mentioned that Idol finalists have scored 29 Top 40 hits. It wasn't clear to me whether he meant Top 40 on the Billboard charts or Top 40 on iTunes, but surely the total was low: if you include R&B and country and other charts, I'd say Idol finalists have scored significantly more hit singles.

ANOOP DESAI -- Sang Usher's "Caught Up," the final Top 10 hit from the massive, 9 million selling album *Confessions*. (His most recent album, *Here I Stand*, was such a flop that Usher is reportedly releasing another album sometime this year.) Anoop was wearing a ridiculous jacket with a chain on it a la Michael Jackson and strode the stage with a suburban swagger. I knew it was a mistake last week when Randy Jackson urged him to get funky again and indeed Anoop fell flat. Though not because of his vocals, which were servicable, especially if you listened to them without watching him. But he just looked like a goof. Kara said rightly that he looked as if some frat guys had just dared him to sing Usher and Simon called it posturing. For a guy who got into the Top 13 because of his likability, the more we see of Anoop the less we like. He seemed defiant during the critique, which never helps. But perhaps some of his annoyance came from the fact that

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every judge began by saying his vocals were pretty good but still trashed him. That plus going first means he is in serious trouble.

MEGAN JOY -- Sang Bob Marley's "Turn Your Lights Down Low" from Exodus but somehow thought the song belonged as much to Lauryn Hill, who covered the tune on a compilation album and had a Top 15 hit in the UK with it. Megan Joy needs to have Christopher Cross produce her debut album because she is the very definition of a studio voice -- someone who has a very limited vocal ability but quirky and intriguing enough that in the studio she might be able to piece together some good work. Certainly she'll never really cut it live. But whereas Anoop sang ok but seemed annoying, Megan Joy sang poorly but still came across as fun and goofy, including that odd moment of pointing towards the sky (or the band). Her vocals were flat and low and shaky throughout but I strongly disagree with the judges who said it was a terrible song choice. Seems well within her range to me; she just isn't that good a singer.

DANNY GOKEY -- Sang the Rascal Flatts tune "What Hurts The Most," their biggest pop hit to date. Gokey had a bum last note and oversang in the "big" moments just a tad, but it was a strong performance and a marked improvement over last week. The judges -- relieved to have the guy they've been touting back on form -- praised him to high heaven, with Randy again offering terrible advice that Danny should move more on stage. Uh, no he shouldn't.

ALLISON IRAHETA -- Sang No Doubt's massive hit single "Don't Speak" (#1 for 16 weeks!), which counts as a golden oldie for the 16 year old since she was about four when it came out. Yes, her outfit was more appropriate for a Cyndi Lauper cover, but the judges again ignored what a fine vocalist Allison is. Her version had some nice touches but was a tad too close to the original for my taste. Still, she sounded strong again. The judges all spent more time trashing her dress with the result that Allison again seems overlooked in the talent department. Is she under the radar a la Kelly Clarkson or simply being fatally ignored?

SCOTT MACINTYRE -- Sang Billy Joel's "Just The Way You Are," the first breakthrough hit of Joel's career. (It hit #3 and stayed there for two weeks and ultimately went gold. Previously, "Piano Man" had only hit #25. Joel went on to have 33 Top 40 hits.) Scott just sat at the piano and played the song, which is about as good a showcase for him as you can ask for. But it also highlights his many weaknesses. He was flat and off key and every time he tried for a vocal run or big note it was a disaster. Vocally, he's just as bad as Megan Joy but without the quirks to keep it vaguely interesting. The entire performance was at a funereal pace, which Paula referred to as "legato." All the judges praised him to high heaven so I have to assume he'll be safe for another week, though frankly he belongs in the bottom two.

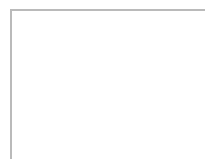
MATT GIRAUD -- Sang the current hit song from The Fray, "You Found Me." He sang the tune at his keyboard surrounded by the anonymous pretty girls who flood the front of the stage, a number of whom seemed more focused on the camera than his performance. It was kind of a mess and reminded me of a bar band covering a Top 40 hit -- serviceable and similar to the original, but soulless. The judges hated it. That combined with Matt looking unconfident and unhappy made for a very bad night.

LIL ROUNDS -- Sang Celine Dion's "I Surrender" from A New Day Has Come, which was never a single but has been performed on Idol multiple times. Rounds had a terrible look -- too much makeup and lip gloss that made her seem ready for the prom but not primetime. And her vocals were strained and flat on the big notes. Paula Abdul nailed it by saying she didn't want Lil to be adult contemporary but r&b and fun. Still, the first three judges were overly friendly when Lil could have come in for some serious critiques. Only Simon came down hard, calling it a wedding performance. I would have predicted the bottom three until Ryan joked with Lil's kids and one of them ended up hugging Randy while tears streamed down Lil's face. She'll be safe.

ADAM LAMBERT -- Sang Wild Cherry's #1 smash "Play That Funky Music," as good an example of a one-hit wonder as there is. Lambert insisted he would TRY to make it sound contemporary, but I wondered where the problem was. Last week was the first time I truly enjoyed Lambert's performance and that good will carried over to this week. I still don't like the vocal histrionics (every time he does a high-pitched vocal riff I think of KISS). But he stayed on melody for most of the tune and delivered the song flawlessly. The guy definitely can sing, even if I still think his sensibility is more for faux rock of the Rent kind than actual pop music. I never liked his original



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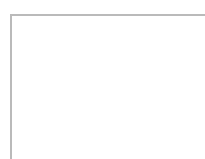
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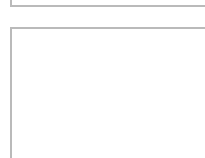
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hair style but it seemed like his real look. The Elvis look of the past two weeks seems more like a wig, like part of a costume, than the spiky look. And proving he's smart, Adam gave a shout out to the much-maligned house band. It's always a good idea to keep the behind the scenes folk on your side. And again, he delivered the song very well. That's two weeks in a row where I can applaud Adam. Kara's comment about it being like Studio 57 was truly jaw-dropping.

KRIS ALLEN -- Sang the Bill Withers gem "Ain't No Sunshine," his first big hit. If you don't own *Just As I Am*, do yourself a favor and buy it immediately. (Paired with his second album, *Still Bill*, it's a must have.) I've been a fan of Kris for purely superficial reasons from the get-go. But he keeps getting better and better every week. Tonight's performance was truly sensational. The tune has a tricky bridge with a string of "I know" repeated over and over. Withers makes it seem effortless and gripping but many other artists sort of just stumble through that moment. Kris broke it down very nicely and cleverly in a way that didn't mimic Withers but didn't abuse the melody either. He was soulful and intense and just generally great. All the judges rightly praised him but not enough in my book. With Lil stumbling and Danny just repeating himself, Kris looks like the one with the mojo to me.

Who belongs in the bottom three? Allison was treated so dismissively that I worry it'll be her. Matt Giraud was treated so roughly and seems so unhappy, it could easily be him. Lil Rounds would also be a contender if it weren't for her cute kids. Scott MacIntyre belongs there but the judges are propping him up right now. But being bad and going early is a deadly combination, so I think Anoop and Megan Joy are definitely in the bottom three. They'll be joined by...Matt Giraud. The bottom two is Anoop and Megan Joy and because there are so few women left, I think Anoop is going home.

Go here to read Enertainment Weekly's **Michael Slezak rundown** of the show, with another EW journalist **reporting on the show from the studio audience**.

Vote For The Worst (which tries to rally people to support their pick for the weakest singer) continues to bang the drum for Megan Joy.

Dial Idol -- which predicts who is going home based on the amount of busy signals their automated dialing system picks up -- says Anoop is in danger.

And the **Associated Press recaps the show**, but can't even be bothered to mention Matt Giraud. Ouch.

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I think the judges have pushed for Allison quite a bit over the run of the show so far. If Dial Idol is to be believed at all, she has never developed a fan base and always hovers right at the bottom in terms of votes. Simon has hinted that they would use the "judge's save" to keep her on the show if necessary, and in the results show last night he said only one of the three deserved to stay-- I have no doubt he meant Allison. I really think if she goes home, the judges can't be faulted; short of outright telling us to vote for the girl they have done about all they can.

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You right. Kris Allen is great

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Scott should have gone before Megan, but her song choices are uniformly awful; it's her own fault, really.

Next to go SHOULD be Scott, then Anoop, then Lil.

The Top 5 really are terrific in their own right. Matt should go, then Allison; the Top 3, in a perfect world, would be Danny, Kris (WHY is his name spelled with a K???) and Adam -- in that order. I know Danny has that sentimental, X-tian fan base (not to mention a bizarre resemblance to Robert Downey, Jr -- though no personality resemblance whatsoever) and is banking on it to the hilt, but he doesn't deserve to be Top 2; Chris does. And everyone knows Adam Lambert is a born star, ringer or no.

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scott and megan are two of the worst singers on idol this season. they remain for purely different reasons than their ability to sing. i cannot believe the praise that was heaped on scott last night; i quite nearly fell asleep during his "performance." as for megan - good grief. girl couldn't carry a melody if it was taped to her vocal chords. so naturally, since she is pretty, she'll go far in the recording industry where, as you say, her terrible and non existent "range" can be covered up. by the way, whatever happened to her counterpart, brooke, from last season? LOL.

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Thx for reading. I'm surprised Scott is still around despite the judges' support, frankly.

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

I believe that the name of the stage where Idol is taped is known as Studio 57, so possibly that is the reference Kara was using.

My grades:

Kris A-
Adam Lambert B
Allison B-
Gokey C+
Lil C
Matt G C-
Scott C-
Megan D
Anoop D

Overall it was a lackluster night but it really made me notice Kris Allen. I do agree with Michael about Megan Joy.

Anoop is very annoying.

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I'll keep an eye out for which venue they're currently taping in. But since Simon audibly corrected her, I doubt it was a reference to the Studio they're in right now or that would make him more clueless than she seemed. But at least it would clear that one up and make sense. Thanks for the grades.

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I agree that Allison I is being unfairly maligned, and week in, week out, under appreciated. She and Adam L are the performers I most look forward to (even though, as you point, Adam's shrillness can be annoying and his appearance distracting). I think Allison is the most naturally gifted of the whole bunch. Reminds me of a huskier Dusty Springfield. Would love to hear Allison's softer, sultrier side. If she's guilty of one thing--and you can easily attribute this to her tender age and lack of experience--it's belting a bit too much. I know she's unlikely to go too far, especially since she doesn't seem to have the judges pulling for her, but I still want her to win it all. AI for AI crown!

Megan brings-me-no-Joy needs to go bye-bye. She and her oversized, overdone, overexposed tattoo won't be missed.

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I completely agree. Allison really has a great voice and they are totally overlooking her. I believe that Adam and she have the best voices out of this group, with Anoop rounding out the top 3 (and I am not talking about marketability, which I think will be a problem for Anoop).

I cannot believe that Scott is still in this competition. It's ridiculous and straight up pandering to the blind.

And you can add Danny to the list of people who needs to go too. I am sorry I just do not get the appeal of this guy. His voice is ok, but not that great and he's a comball.

I wish this show was get over all the sob stories and handicaps and stick with trying to find extraordinary singers who need a break.

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I'm sure Allison will improve mightily with a little more experience. And it's a mystery to me why they're not more enthused about her. She's certainly very marketable.

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