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Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted February 5, 2009 | 01:41 PM (EST)

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American Idol Hollywood Week Day Two Ratings Grow



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American Idol continues to dominate during Hollywood Week (which lasts two weeks, oddly enough). You can compare this week to last year or this week to last year's second night of Hollywood Week, but any way you cut it Idol is down a bit but still a monster in the ratings.

According to MediaWeek's Marc Berman, American Idol scored a 14.5 rating, which is up over Tuesday night but down 5% from the same calendar week last season. By the time you add in DVR watchers, that number will grow and grow.

Berman puts it another way: Idol drew a bigger audience from 8-9 p.m. than all the other four networks combined.

How big is Idol? It's poised to be the #1 show on TV for the fifth straight year and only one other show in TV history did that: All In The Family from 1972-1976. No other show has been #1 for five years in any way. (Scroll halfway down this Wikipedia entry to see the list of #1 shows by year.) The Cosby Show and Gunsmoke were #1 for four years in a row. 60 Minutes was #1 for four years, just not in a row. That's it. And is there any doubt Idol will be #1 next season as well? By that standard, American idol is the biggest TV hit in history. Other records are far away: Gunsmoke ran for 20 years, 60 Minutes was in the Top 10 for 23 straight seasons. But still, there's no getting away from the fact that Idol is a behemoth.

And a show that big always has controversies. Star Magazine reports that ringer Joanna Pacitti has way too many ties to Idol producers and a track record that would give anyone pause. When people complain about contestants who scored a record deal but went nowhere, for example, I always counter: have you ever heard of them? It's not like Gwen Stefani is getting in line to audition. But sure, I'm very wary of people who've had substantial success or even shot at success. And Pacitti lived in the same building as two Idol officials, called one of them her manager and best friend, appeared on an MTV documentary, had a major label record debut, and had songs played



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on *The Hills* and in movies. It does get pretty ridiculous. And *Entertainment Weekly's* Michael Slezak weighs in on Idol's penchant for drama by asking succinctly whether you're more interested in singing or sobbing.

Of all the tweaks they introduced this season, the group performance coming back was the only one I took issue with. It makes for good reality TV but it has very little or nothing to do with being a solo singer and people regularly are drowned by the distraction of an annoying contestant (like bikini girl or Tatiana) rather than sinking or swimming on their own talent.

My favorite moments last night were not the sobbings and fights, but the (very brief) glimpses of good performances. **The result was the cutting of 29 more people**, including bikini girl, thank goodness.

The group White Chocolate started the show off in stellar fashion with a terrific performance, though I did think Justin Williams was pulled through by being linked with the other three, superior singers. Another stand-out was the group led by Robert Downey Jr. lookalike Danny Gokey and his buddy Jamar Rogers. They did an outstanding a capella version of Queen's "Somebody To Love."

Jeremy Michael Sarver and Broadway baby Adam Lambert got some air time as well before making it through.

Of course what I can't help remembering was Tatiana, who is easily the most annoying, tiresome person on the show (and doesn't seem to have a very good voice, either). She wrecked havoc on two teams by jumping from one to the other, showed true star potential by making every conversation and discussion about *her*, kept singing after the judges told her to stop and yet *still* got through -- at which point she wept and prayed and thanked Jesus for getting through the round. The horribly named Team Compromise had Nathaniel and Kristin and poor Nancy Wilson, who had to endure crying and weeping from her teammates when all she wanted to do was rehearse, only to forget the words when they performed Duffy's "Mercy" and watch the two kids go through while she was sent home and then be portrayed as the baddie for being angry with them.

What I won't remember are the performances by a bunch of people I got glimpses of throughout the night. The final group fighting for the Top 12 slots is bigger than ever (36, I believe) which means it's even harder for us to get to know them. That may be one reason this season feels so frustrating. Why oh why don't they just drive tremendous traffic to their website by posting performances online over the weekend? It's literally impossible for them to create a storyline of some sort *and* show tons of performances in one hour. I get it -- the show would *not* be improved by just showing song after song. But there's no reason to hide those performances from us either.

Did anyone stand out for you? Was anyone sent home that surprised you? Or do you just want to hiss at Tatiana? (See, I complain about their focus on drama but I can't help talking about her.)

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i have never understood why this show continues to do the group thing, unless, of course, it is for the drama of it all. this is american "idol" not american "idols." then again, it's an easy cattle-call way of thinning the herd. what bothers me is sometimes some truly talented kids have a terrible time of it with their "group," stay up all night, and by morning, they are mentally and physically broken. it's sad to see, not fun, as the producers would like us to believe by their editing.

and frankly, i enjoyed seeing bikini girl jerk the show around on group night(s). i was also a tad surprised at the attitude taken by the two women on the judges panel (and you know their names) towards this young woman who was no worse in her schtick than norman gentle was in his. i mean, really, ladies - you kind of showed your you-know-whats, and if it was supposed to be funny, ahhhh, it wasn't.

the best part of all was when bikini girl refused to play along once she was ousted. i loved that the most.

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Thrilled that bikini girl is gone, bummed that Rose is gone, hope that Tatiana will soon be gone :)

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Great post Michael. Thanks for the TV stats that put the show in the proper context. Despite dishy blogs on other sites and the always constant "it's not as good as " comments, it is still one of the most important shows on TV, in which, unlike other reality shows, the prize is evident and truly life-changing. THAT SAID, Tatiana is so insane, and I find it hard to believe that she got through. The word you used "frustrating" is on the money, it was frustrating knowing so little about so many people. THAT SAID, I am thrilled Adam and India are still there. See you next week! (And I totally agree " Nancy Wilson was the only bit of sanity in that trio " she should have stayed or they all should have gone, no matter whose dream it is.)

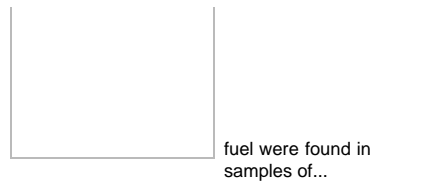
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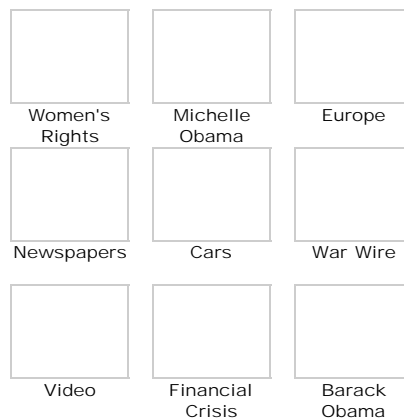
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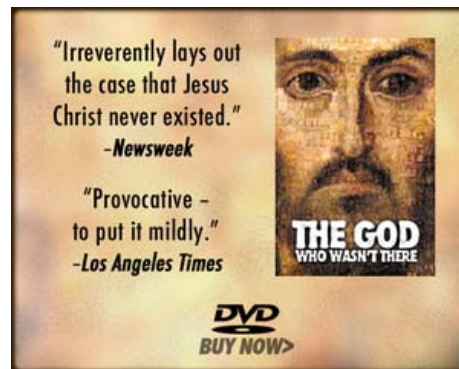
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