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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted February 4, 2009 | 12:36 PM (EST)

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American Idol -- Hollywood Week Ratings Down But Strong



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OK, so I didn't post last week for two good reasons: my computer collapsed again (I spent so much time at the Apple Store, they should have paid me an hourly wage) and I headed down south to Alabama for my mom's 80th birthday party. Guess what? Old people tend not to have wireless networks in their home and the Starbucks in Birmingham closes really early. My quick impression of last week was that we saw a few more successful auditions (in short bursts) but quite a few questionable people got through.

Hollywood Week continued that trend. According to Marc Berman of *MediaWeek*, the overnight ratings for the Tuesday Idol were solid: the show scored a 14.0 rating. Ratings have yo-yo'd all over the place this season. Last week (with three episodes) reached 24-26 million people and went higher than the equivalent week last year. But last night's show reached about 26.3 million people (per *Hollywood Reporter*), which is about 25% lower than the first night of Hollywood Week last season (which came a week later and scored a 17.3 rating). Still it's growth over last week and last week was bigger than the week before. *American Idol* is the #1 show on TV.

Lots of news: the Top 36 people competing for the Final 12 slots has possibly leaked online. Check out [the Huffington Post link here](#) or go directly to the *NY Post*, which has a nice run-down of the entertainment careers of some of the contestants, including stints on Nashville Star, roles as child actors, recording of CDs on their own and so on. We've got to accept that anyone driven enough to get to Hollywood Week on Idol probably HASN'T been sitting at home in their bedroom: people who want to be stars claw their way to the top and Idol won't always be their first stop. Vote For The Worst.com has the complete alleged list.

Ken Levine didn't even watch the episode but groaned anyway. *Entertainment Weekly's* Michael Slezak has a great suggestion: why not make the final cut to the Top 36 a live episode rather than taping it weeks in advance? That way there would be no chance of the info leaking out. And it's still

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not too late for Idol to take advantage of the intertubes: as soon as the Top 36 is official, maybe THEN they could post all their auditions online so we can check out the ones who haven't received airtime. Go to the [official Idol forums](#) and champion this idea.

My biggest complaint about Hollywood Week is that I still feel like there are loads of people I don't know yet. The judges cut 147 people down to 104. No one was cut that seemed deserving to go on (keeping in mind that we didn't see performances by most of them). But some that did get through seemed highly questionable. What did you think of:

Nathaniel Marshall -- an 18 year old emo kid with lots of tats and a sensitive soul who sang an obscure song called "The Anchor Holds" and broke down crying while defending his song choice. By the way, I disagree with Paula when she criticized the song because it didn't have a broad range to show off his voice. Does every song have to cover three octaves? Can't someone deliver a great performance of a song with a modest range? To me, the range of the song wasn't the problem -- the fact that it made little impact was.

Rose Flack -- sang a very flat, uninteresting take on "(Sittin' On The) Dock Of The Bay."

Von Smith -- the cute guy who over-emoted facially and made Simon wince and declare it "indulgent nonsense." (In this case, the other three judges were right, I think.)

Jamar Rogers -- the buddy of Robert Downey Jr lookalike and superior singer Danny Gokey, Jamar sang "California Dreamin'" and left me cold again.

Katrina Darrell -- the bikini girl who delivered an extremely modest version of Faith Hill's "Breathe" and while it's amusing to see the gals get annoyed by Simon and Randy champion her, it would be more amusing if they didn't also put her through.

Emily (I missed her last name) -- the cool-looking punker who had a bold song choice she rehearsed endlessly and then "panicked" and chose a really boring song she hadn't rehearsed a whit and delivered a poor performance of it to boot.

Nick Mitchell aka Norman -- the guy who dons a headband and dorks around in a "fake" persona. This has to be the most annoying send-through of them all. Nick camped his wqy through "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" and if he were auditioning for a sketch comedy show, I'd say he was fine and shameless. Paula said it would be nice if he actually just sang a song. You think? Perhaps the reason is -- duh -- he isn't memorable as just a singer. And this is a SINGING competition. So why didn't the judges applaud him for being amusing (not to me, mind you) and send him on his way?

What did you think of these performers getting through? Were there any others you found questionable? Anyone who impressed you more than with their original audition? (I found oil rigger guy Jeremy Michael Sarver to be better the second time around.) And ain't YouTube great? Does **Von Smith out-sing Lil Rounds** on the Dreamgirls showstopper "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going?" And how long before we hear **Adam Lambert sing the Gnarl Barkley tune "Crazy"** on air? See you tomorrow.

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I'm a little embarrassed to love this show as much as...

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One more thing or ten-

WHO IS THAT NEW JUDGE?

What other reality show was she dragged from, was she one of the crazy ex-Idol rejects, or is it in her contract that she has to keep kissing and kissing up to Paula?

AND Ryan Seacrest has a "Girlfriend"? Was this a typo on E! ?

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The fix was in already. The picks were made. Several "cuties" were passed through just for their looks (Oh, mister musicals boy with the big mouth and weird facial expressions), their previous audition (No not bikini girl), their family stories for publicity (dead wife/new "buddy" and the Osmand "don't you have your own IN to getting a contract 'cause your family has been in the business for YEARS" who has a health problem with seizures boy), less on performance (many of the favored blew their auditions), and then there were the quotas (oops, we already have three cute darkish Mexican/Latin olive skin looking guys, we can't pass through another), and then the crazy heavy older psycho and the stripper-esque "Paris Hilton" girl to keep the crazy interview cycle alive.

I am not trying to sound prejudice or judgmental on the family or health issue candidates. I am judging the judges. Don't eliminate those who are good just because you have too many of one look, don't pass through someone you know is WRONG, and what about your previous rules and statements. If they didn't listen to you about not crying, begging, or picking a decent song and totally blowing it, why pass them through?

I am sure sad and happy that my roommate DVRs the program. Sad, 'cause I end up seeing each one. Happy that I can skim through it and then feel better when I press DELETE and get rid of one more episode.

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Don't you know it is against God's law to worship idols? Change the name of the show to American singer or American performer or American Rock Star - something like that....

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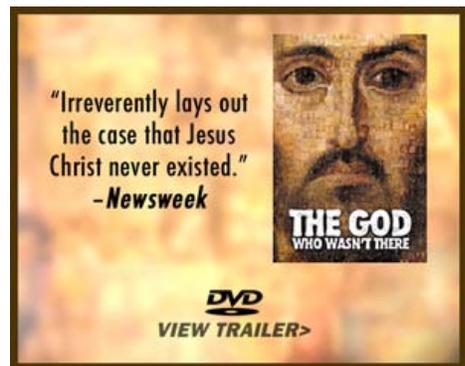
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I must say that American Idol is really missing the point. This is a singing competition, and though the auditions are supposed to drive the ratings (at least I assume that's why they air so many ridiculous auditions) they could, at least, air more of the Hollywood performances. I would like to see why these people made it this far, and more importantly, why those who were cut were sent home. I feel like Hollywood Week should be moving us into the main course of the show, but again we're being bombarded with unnecessary back story. If they insist on airing the back story of the contestants, why not show more of the "boot camp" footage to get an idea of how they prepared for Round 1. I'm really interested to see Emily's performance of her original song choice since they aired the commendation she received from the "boot camp" counselors.

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I agree 100 percent. I'd love to see boot camp -- hey Idol, more stuff to post online! Remember, they've reduced Hollywood Week to one week and just a few hours so they can realistically only show so much. But why waste the footage? put it online. And I'd much rather see an emphasis on the work they due to perform then backstories of people and bad auditions and tantrums.

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Glad to see you back Michael! I was worried last week, all I had to capsule was Slezak's thoughts! I do totally agree about posting the 36 online because last night there was so little to savor and so little time to do so " I had to pause the TiVo to look at the line and see if any of my early favorites were there. (Note " please de-glam Mr. Lambert " he looked just fine before!). It would help if we at home had a scorecard! I have been avoiding the leak, so thanks for not commenting. So far I like the waif Rose, but the dirty feet need to go!

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I think maybe Lambert likes the glam. Look how sexy/glamy he is on that YouTube video. But yeah, I liked his more casual appearance better too. And Rose is interesting. Thanks for posting.

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Well, Bill, I wasn't familiar with that website. I'll bookmark it and keep it in line. I was wondering if the Osmond contestant we saw was one of THE Osmonds. Good to know though I don't think it's a scandal that Simon worked with Marie Osmond. We've seen plenty of people auditioning who were relatives of celebs or Idol contestants. And none of them have won. The winners have all been relative unknowns. (Though Kelly had done demo work and I think had a CD, Taylor Hicks had a CD he did himself and released in Alabama etc.) There's just very little chance that someone who NEVER performed anywhere (no band, no TV, no local theater, no self-recorded album) would suddenly at 21 walk into an audition and be a complete unknown. I definitely prefer the folks who haven't had a major label push behind their debut album to those who have so I hear where you're coming from.

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