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Freelance writer and raconteur

Posted January 22, 2009 | 07:40 AM (EST)

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# American Idol -- San Fran and Louisville



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**RATINGS UPDATE:** *American Idol* scored a 13.9 rating and was tops for the night with an audience above 33 million, according to **Mediaweek's Marc Berman**. That was a jump up from the night before (which competed with the inaugural) but down from one year ago. Don't get too caught up in the night-to-night comparisons. *Idol* is by far the biggest hit series on the air.

I was too caught up in the inauguration to watch *Idol* on Tuesday. (Thank you, DVR!) So Wednesday night was a double bill. And thank

goodness. So little happened that it took two hours of auditions to find two decent singers I could root for. I blame the producers: out of 31 golden tickets, we only saw nine full auditions of winners (and 18 total for a 50-50 split though none of the people rejected were close calls and a number of the winners were highly questionable at best). That's less than one-third of the golden ticket pool. Ugh. We did see sob stories and train wrecks and clueless folk but I don't care about these "heartwarming" stories. I just want to see some good talent. But I also blame San Francisco and Louisville. Obviously even the people who could carry a tune were pretty bland because the pickings for the show were awfully slim and if there were more jaw-dropping auditions, you can bet they would have made it on air.

**SAN FRANCISCO** -- This won't take long. We only saw four people audition and get through and only one of them deserved it. Tatiana Del Toro (whose friend is one of the world's most powerful psychics and therefore probably knew I would write that) got through simply because she's a kook. She's more a beauty pageant contestant than a singer though her voice was karaoke-quality fine. Paula actually got her through by sideswiping Simon and bringing the others along with her. Too bad it wasn't for someone good. Jesus Valenzuela got through because he has two cute kids and ushered them in to say hi. Kai Kalama is a nice guy who takes care of his ailing mom. I tend to resist/resent stories of heartbreak and nobility, especially when we watch a back story and then see

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the contestant work a reference into it in front of the judges. Kai sang "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" in an ok voice and just as I wrote "dull," Simon said he had the personality of a cruise ship singer. Like Jesus, Kai is good-looking in a straightforward way and certainly sweet. Maybe he'll come to life in Hollywood. (And who's gonna take care of "momba" while he's away?) Finally, there was Adam Lambert, a cute guy who's currently in the San Fran production of *Wicked*, has been doing musical theater all his life and had a crush on Paula Abdul when he was a kid (she was his first concert.) If he's not gay, he should be -- he must get awfully tired of turning down guys who ask him out on dates. Adam sang Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," which obviously plays to his strengths as a musical theater guy since it's very over the top. I'm looking forward to hearing him do something not in that vein. In a very weak crop, he looks like a winner.

### LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

After the dearth of exciting talent in San Francisco, I was hoping *Idol* would come charging out of the gate with some great singing. Instead, they started off with a train wreck.

**TIFFANY SHEDD** (NO GOLDEN TICKET) -- It's always a danger sign when someone acts more like Paris Hilton than an aspiring pop singer. Tiffany couldn't sing in the least and her indifference to criticism made Simon's comment that she should picture 22 horses and a mule when wondering how she did seem slightly less out of order. If you're wondering how someone who shouldn't sing in the shower could imagine they belonged on *Idol*, just watch Tiffany's mom hold her hand and jam out in rhapsody when Tiffany sings.

**JOANNA PACITTI** (YES, A GOLDEN TICKET) -- A pretty girl with a good voice who belted out Pat Benatar's "We Belong" (although she cheated on the high notes). So what's the problem? Joanna raises the perennial question of whether undiscovered talent can include someone who had a record deal at A&M. This has been happening since Kelly Clarkson (who sang on demos and/or had some minor deal that never went anywhere). As long as you don't have a current deal, you're eligible. Me, I try to keep in mind how much pride someone must have to swallow to go from having a deal at a major record label to standing in line with thousands of people to audition for a TV show. That's gotta suck when you already had your big break. But I definitely resist rooting for people who've been in the business so prominently. Joanna is gonna have to work extra hard to woo me.

**MARK MUDD** (NO) - Country dude who butchered a George Jones song and then said, "Be careful" when leaving, which the judges interpreted as a veiled threat. Surely that's one more reason not to put him on the air. If he really was making a threat and resented them, why put him on TV and stoke that bitterness? (I understand their reaction but I think it was just an awkward goodbye. However, I'm a huge fan of *Hill Street Blues* where the Sarge ended every meeting with "Let's be careful out there," so I'm biased.)

**BRENT KEITH SMITH** -- Good-looking married Christian (I noted the prominent cross and his wedding ring) who did a fine, if bar band-ish take on Bad Company's "Can't Get Enough." Definitely the whole package if his singing proves to be more than one note. Could be a sleeper.

**MATT GIRAUD** (YES) -- A 23 year old dueling piano player who looks like Michael Buble's cousin, Matt had a disarming buildup that made me expect a train wreck. But he had a very interesting performance and distinctive voice, something every judge commented on. Not sure if he's versatile, but he is definitely one to remember. Besides, it'd be fun to have an *Idol* winner from Kalamazoo.

**ALEXIS GARCIA** (YES) -- a sweet, cute, stay at home mom who got pregnant at 19 and is engaged to the baby's dad, a guy currently in military school. She sang Aretha's "Dr. Feelgood" and knocked it out. Another one to watch; she could surprise or fade away of course, but I liked her and Paula wooped while she sang (and then later gave some critiques as if Alexis didn't rock her world.)

**AARON WILLIAMSON** (NO) -- Enthusiastic guy who "wooded!!" a lot and could have played Cuba Gooding Jr.'s buddy in *Jerry Maguire*. Why would Paula say, "You don't have it ready yet" when clearly he is never going to make it as a singer -- not even in a bar band? I hate it when being polite means leading people on. "Singing's not for you." Is that so hard to say? On the positive side, Paula's outfit showed off her cleavage spectacularly well.

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**REBECCA GARCIA (NO)** -- Utterly without talent, which made Kara look at her profile, spot that Rebecca was named "most humorous" in high school and then die with shame when she asked the singer if this was a joke and then realized it wasn't. They all desperately tried to be nice to her.

**LENESHE YOUNG (YES)** -- Her audition was preceded by the story of Leneshes's struggle with poverty, the sort of heart-tugger that makes me resist mightily. I do NOT want to hear anything about these travails when we get to Hollywood -- but the show has seemed more like *Queen For A Day* then ever before, so I doubt I'll get my wish. (That was an old game show where the person with the saddest tale of woe won a fridge or whatever.) Then Leneshes announces she's gonna sing an original song. That's about the biggest warning sign there is for me. Do people really think their own tune is better than the zillion classics they could choose from? Imagine my shock when Leneshes sang some tune she called "Natty" and it had a winning melody (for a while) and the amusing line "I like your thuggish ways" (which sounded cute when she sang it). AND she could actually sing. The most promising audition from both nights, by far. To top it off, as the judges said "yes" and heaped praise on her, Leneshes broke down only to look up in shock when Paula gave her vote and said "no" just to tease the girl. Hilarious and wildly unexpected from Paula, of all people.

But out of 31 winning auditions we only saw 9 and out of those barely three were intriguing. Come on, *Idol*, show us ALL the winning auditions [on your website](#).

So who did you like? P.S. I'll update with ratings once I see them.

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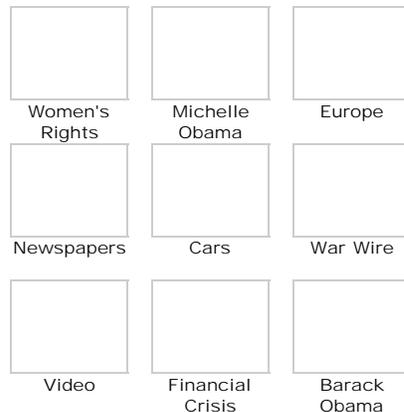
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**Bex724** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Bex724](#) [permalink](#)

Joanna Pacitti was Annie in the revival with Nell Carter. That was about 10-15 years ago. She will definitely know how to handle that stage!

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

Thanks guys, I couldn't agree more. But Oreduck87, I think it's way too early to talk about the finals (unless maybe you meant the final 12 -- I thought you meant the finale.) We haven't seen the rest of the auditions and of course Hollywood always reveals more contenders. I do think the paucity of talent was a factor in why the last two nights were so long on story and weak on performance. But there's no excuse for not showing more winners.

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**Furry1968** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of Furry1968](#) [permalink](#)

Once again, a solid wrap-up of the show, and I liked Adam, cause as a community theatre actor I appreciate his theatrics, and I really appreciate the cute factor. I also thought Matt was interesting as well. BUT what about the guy who drank out of Paula's cup? Is he dead now? How strong could that have been! Thanks Michael, looking forward to next week!

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**OreDuck87** [See Profile](#) [I'm a Fan of OreDuck87](#) [permalink](#)

I think Joanna Pacitti probably has the clearest road to the finals. I enjoyed Leneshe but did notice some shortcomings (pitch problems and a noticeable break) about her voice that will become apparent as the weeks go by. Most of the others were blips on the screen. Alexis Garcia was probably my favorite but I predict that she will go the way of other AI female vocalists whose voices have a little bit of edge: early round exit.

I wish they would show all of the qualifiers as well. I am sick to death of the mean-spirited tone this year. I think, contrary to what was promised, that it is worse than ever.

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

I so wish they would dump all of the back-story, autobiographical garbage and SHOW US EVERYBODY WHO MADE IT TO HOLLYWOOD. Thanks.

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