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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: March 5, 2010 03:57 AM

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Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Elimination

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RATINGS COVERAGE: *American Idol's* results show hit 19.3 million viewers, according to [March Berman of MediaWeek](#), well above the competition but down about 10% from the 21.5 million viewers that tuned in one year ago.

SHOW COVERAGE: Four more *Idol* contestants said goodbye, none of them surprises. John Park and Jermaine Sellers were the two guys sent packing while on the gals' side it was time to wave farewell to

Michelle Delamor and Haeley Vaughn.

The show began with another godawful lip-synced group performance. The group performances with 20 folks crowding the stage invariably have a painful, Up With People aura about them. But lip-syncing goes again everything the show is supposed to stand for. Mind you, I also hate, hate the Black Eyed Peas song "I Got A Feeling" though it was kind of delicious to see white-bread mullet-wearing Alex Lambert shout out "Mazel Tov!" with a street swagger.

I assume the logistics or vocal mix is just impossible with this big a crowd and that's why they don't sing live. But if that's the case, they should shoot a music video a la those Ford commercials. Come up with a concept and do something fun with the kids rather than just have them trudge around the stage and mouth the words. It's painful for them and the audience.

Todrick Hall and John Park faced off and John was sent home, which was no surprise to him. Jermaine Sellers and Andrew Garcia faced off (that ought to wake him up) and Jermaine was done. Sellers was polite but his comment about being a church singer is either disingenuous or silly. If he was a **good** gospel singer, America would have embraced him. (Does he think Yolanda Adams or Tonex would have flamed out this early? Really?) And plenty of singers on the show have brought a gospel flair to various performances. But a lot more singers have brought an undisciplined indulgence via endless runs and trills and acrobatic vocalizing they associate with the church or with Mariah Carey but which have nothing to

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do with good singing, no matter what the setting. It was nice to see him end on a positive note and acknowledge God; to often, God only gets a shout out when the person has won it all, so good on Sellers for that.

Danny Gokey sang his new single "My Best Days Are Ahead Of Me" pretty energetically, though he seemed over-caffeinated during the interview segment.

Then Didi Benami and Michelle Delamor and since it was a toss-up who would go first, they both handled it graciously when Delamor was cut. Finally, Haeley Vaughn and Lacey Brown faced off and Simon rightly told Ryan to put Haeley out of her misery without delaying the results.

None of the contestants proved a wrong decision was made with their performance, though John Park was probably the most improved. But poor, sweet Haeley Vaughn was painful. Her off-key warbling was so hard to watch, it made you really resent the judges for ever letting her get into Hollywood Week, much less the Top 24. It just wasn't right. I doubt she'll ever gain enough experience to become a good singer (she just doesn't have a voice) but she should never have been put in this spotlight. Surely they must have known it by Hollywood Week. Vaughn can at least hold her head high for being a trooper and maintaining her good spirits.

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Michael Giltz: Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Women

The women took to the stage and after a very strong Crystal Bowersox, so many of the women crashed and burned that the not-bad women towards the end seemed pretty good in comparison.



Ken Levine: American Idol: The Girls Will Be Boys

Because Fox is trying to milk two hours out of a one-hour show, there was a whole lot more filler this week. Startling revelations like the big fat guy who cried all through Hollywood Week likes musical theater. No!!!



Michael Giltz: Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Men

A good improvement for a number of men this week on *American Idol* ... but then, so many of them had so much room for improvement.

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HUFFPOST COMMUNITY MODERATOR

MsMassachusetts 10:11 AM on 3/06/2010
249 Fans



I think Adam done broke this show. No one is going to come anywhere close to his talent, or his ability to hit those high notes. That's why they seem to be going for a singer/songwriter type. Obviously they want a female winner this year. Hopefully someone not as boring as Kris. He's a really nice guy, but bland as all get out.

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VicksieDo 09:02 AM on 3/06/2010
21 Fans [Follow](#)



I'm not impressed with anyone but Crystal, and she doesn't fit the Idol mold, so I'm just kind of embarrassed for the show this season. After last season's amazing discovery of Adam Lambert, and then America's nasty rejection of his sexuality, as evidenced by Kris Allen's win, this season had a high bar to go for, and it's failed.

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

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Michael Giltz 01:43 AM on 3/10/2010
59 Fans



I happily disagree that people rejected Adam, much less rejected him because of his sexuality. Adam let his freak flag fly proudly throughout the competition and yet he received tons of positive press and made it to the finals ahead of literally 100,000 other people, thanks to the votes of the public. Now he's launched a solo career and is enjoying a top 20 hit that's still rising, the cover of Rolling Stone and much more. He's not going anywhere and has a ton of fans, all thanks to the platform of a show that embraced him. If that's rejection, most artists would kill for it. Adam is from California and it's actually a disadvantage to be from a big state like that or New York or Texas. The entire state is not going to feel an identity with him the way Arkansas did for Kris (and Alabama did for its two winners). And when an entire state (even a small one) is pumped up for you, that can translate to a ton of passionate voting.

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tlgeiger62 07:33 AM on 3/06/2010
116 Fans



This show passed its prime several seasons ago. I didn't read the article because I just don't care. But I did want to express my thought that this show should be out of the lineup.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 01:44 AM on 3/10/2010
59 Fans



Unfortunately for you, Idol remains the #1 TV show in the country for the sixth straight year, a record unmatched by any other show in history. It will be around for years to come. The X Factor will perhaps take a huge bite out of its audience in 2011 but I doubt another very similar show supplanting it will be any comfort to you.

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Yappa 06:18 PM on 3/05/2010

1 Fans

I think this is the best season yet. Kara DioGuardi is coming into her own and making great

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comments. Overall I think the comments are very good. If they repeat the comment that the song sounded like kareoke, well, a lot of them do sound like kareoke.

Why I'm writing though is a comment Simon made in the results show last night (March 4 2010). He said that when the judges listened to the playbacks of the contestants after the show they felt that they had over-estimated a couple of them. I think he said "We thought: What were we thinking!?"

I wonder if one of those was Lilly Scott. When I heard her sing, I thought she was dreadful: the bottom end disappeared and it sounded almost like she was talking instead of singing. But the judges said it was amazing and so on. At the time I wondered if she was holding the mike too far from her mouth, and maybe the judges could hear more live than we could at home.

Anyway I wondered if anyone else noticed this.

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Michael Giltz 08:12 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



I haven't written that yet in my main comments but when Kara isn't goofing around, I do think she's become a stronger judge as well. And randy early on was very focused. They seem to be stepping up their game. Maybe it'll take a season for Ellen to settle in and not feel like the new kid on the block. I'll bet Simon did think they over-praised Lilly's singing a bit. But the opposite is true from what you suggest: as they pointed out, on set the band is louder and can support the singer more. The viewers at home hear a mix where the vocals are much more prominent and up front. Sometimes it sounds like the band is in the next room. So we're hearing their vocals more nakedly than the judges do.

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beatrix 05:01 PM on 3/05/2010

23 Fans

This season is a train wreck . . . agree with the poster who says the bar was set so high by Lambert, that nothing can compare . . . think of all the real talent that has emerged over the past seasons . . . Jennifer Hudson, Carrie Underwood,, etc. This season's pool of singers is the weakest I have ever seen . . . and none are in the ballpark of some of these past contestants. I think Simon has checked out and the magic has been lost . . . predicting this may be the last season of AI.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

StephenDedalus82 04:32 PM on 3/05/2010
65 Fans



What's interesting is that the thought never crossed Jermaine's mind that God might be smiting him. No matter what happens, God did it, and it is good. Such an interesting phenomenon, this religious faith is.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

goodgravy 06:33 PM on 3/05/2010
39 Fans [Follow](#)



agreed. if he had done well it would have been gawd's will. if he failed it was gawd's will. this way he avoids any responsibility or introspection.

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Charity 03:25 PM on 3/05/2010

43 Fans

Poor Haeley. She seemed like a very long shot during auditions, but had a cute way about her. Plus she had a country connection, which she promptly lost once she reached Hollywood. She also "grew" a lot of hair, which I assume were extensions. In Hollywood, she became just another contestant - her uniqueness was erased. I wonder who advised her of that? Mom?

Plus, and it has to be said, her lisp did nothing to add to her singing.

But the depth of how young and how badly she sings wasn't truly realized until she was chosen for

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the top 24, and frankly, last night I switched the channel as she was singing her good by number.

You're right - she should have never gone this far.

As for Delamor, she should have stayed a bit longer, but was never going to make it to the top. I was shocked that Garcia was in the final bottom - he's one of the better boy singers. Let's hope he steps up his game next week.

Go Crystal!

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Michael Giltz 08:14 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



I don't think they characterized the pairings as the bottom two (or four). Sometimes the producers get tricky and put someone in that bottom two that hasn't necessarily received the second lowest votes. So Andrew might have been put there for dramatic purposes. Unless Ryan specifically says they both have the lowest vote totals that week, I don't think you can assume anything.

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MaryscottOConnor 03:07 PM on 3/05/2010
470 Fans



I think Didi will surprise.

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Michael Giltz 08:15 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



You could be right. I know producer Steve Lillywhite agrees with you.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

goodgravy 01:34 PM on 3/05/2010
39 Fans [Follow](#)



i have been a big fan of AI since the fantasia season (2003-04). i don't know if i am just burnt out on the show or if this year is spectacularly under par. i program the show on DVR and, honestly, i have zipped through it in 20 minutes. i think i am watching only out of loyalty and if the singers don't step it up SOON i fear i may not be completing the season. i wonder if other AI fans feel this or if it is just me.

i think adam lambert raised the bar so high that no one this year can get close to bringing the kind of excitement to the competition that he did. listen to the judges comments. they all but say 'we want you to choose a song and bring your own twist to it, just like adam did.' and then when the contestants mix it up they get shot down...'you changed it up too much.'

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filmex 01:04 PM on 3/05/2010

43 Fans

Agree with the elimination choices but not your verdict on bringing Gawd into the mix. It takes an incredible amount of hubris and self-delusion to believe that Gawd "has a plan" for every person on the planet, or has so little on His mind that he is obsessed with what happens to little self-absorbed Jermaine today or any other day.

However, if that is true, perhaps Jermaine should assume (while he's at it) that Gawd HAS heard his church singing, and is doing his best to convince him he should find another line of work.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 01:29 PM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



In general, I agree with you. God does NOT care who wins Idol or he World Series or your high school basketball game or the Academy Award. Nothing could be further from the truth for a true Christian than believing God wants fame and glory for you (even if you imagine it's to give you a bigger platform to praise Him). That said, I was just trying to think of something polite to say about him. I try not to forget that these people like Jermaine and Haeley Vaughn are just regular people who've never been on local TV before and are suddenly on national TV and being examined under a microscope. So you know, I'll trash his performance and defense of it (it's church singing!) but if I can say something nice as they walk out the door, why not?

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filmex 01:57 PM on 3/05/2010

43 Fans

Fair enough, Michael. I would try and find the positive with most of these kids and could easily do so with the other three eliminated, regardless of their performance difficulties. But, Jermaine always displayed more arrogance than humility. He felt the need to answer back to every bit of constructive criticism offered him, challenged Simon to "come hear me in church" and generally acted like he was the second coming of John Legend, as if the judges were just too dense to realize it.

Having said that, I think this contest is more of a psychological endurance event than a singing competition. How these kids maintain their sanity when criticized one week for not making the song their own, then criticized the next week for not respecting the original melody is beyond me.

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seerickson 12:40 PM on 3/05/2010

77 Fans

I think Haeley's performance last week was vivid and showed her talent. This week trying to follow the bogus advice she received last week to choose something young which is such a general vague feedback they habitually give to anyone younger than 18 led her to attempt a shallow white girl pop tune was doomed, and there was nothing left to sparkle through the performance. At least Simon acknowledged its tough because they give such contradictory advice, especially from one week to the next, in their attempt to encourage the performers to find their own way. It is especially frustrating to me when they tell one kid to get out of his comfort zone, and then the next to stick to what they're good at. Huh?

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pangursperson 09:11 PM on 3/05/2010

7 Fans

No, she just sang it poorly. If she had even a decent voice and some musicality she could have made it work. It's really not a very complicated song.

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Thumbody 12:11 PM on 3/05/2010

11 Fans

This show has lost its 'sizzle" also, 90% of the judges comments for several seasons have been 'you chose the wrong song". I don't fault the talent but the producers and judges for this, regardless of talent if you choose the right song you will win. Its time has come and gone!

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mrlmsw 06:00 PM on 3/05/2010

24 Fans



I agree and also wonder WTF about the vocal coaches? Why don't they do a better job of guiding the contestants to the best songs for their voice and style? It seems like the vocal coaches don't do a good job because "you picked the wrong song" is the constant refrain

from the judges. And, Randy - "pitchy" is all he can say...

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pangursperson 09:13 PM on 3/05/2010

7 Fans

I think they're instructed not to influence song choices at all, precisely because song choice is considered a measure of their, dare i say it, artistry.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
libwingoflibwing 12:34 AM on 3/06/2010
177 Fans



I've noticed that Randy only complains about the singer being pitchy when they are sharp. He seems to love it when they are flat. Oh well.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
VicksieDo 09:04 AM on 3/06/2010
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...wrong song, too old for you, too big a song for you.
...pitchy, all over the place, a mess

Same old, same old. ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
RhiannonRings 11:10 AM on 3/05/2010
51 Fans



That was one loooong hour last night. I think Danny has discovered cocaine and Ryan and the judges are on Valium! That opening number was embarrassing and lame; I too, cannot stand the Black Eyed Peas. Glad to see Jermaine and John outta there, Jermaine was really annoying.

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