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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: May 26, 2010 05:49 AM

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Idol Season 9 Finale: Idol Jumps Shark

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RESULTS SHOW: For the second year in a row, *American Idol* had a stunning upset as Lee Dewyze beat Crystal Bowersox to claim the *American Idol* crown. One of the strengths of *Idol* is that you don't need to win in order to launch a career -- see Jennifer Hudson, Clay Aiken, Daughtry and many others. But with Simon leaving and both Adam Lambert and Crystal losing out to far less charismatic competitors, it's clear that *American Idol* has jumped the shark.

(And this isn't sour grapes. This year I voted for Crystal. But last year I voted for Kris; I just didn't expect him to win and realize the danger the show

faces when the final votes are out of whack with overwhelming expectations.)

The results show was jammed with the usual superstars -- but no Bonnie Raitt. Was that the first sign that everything wouldn't go swimmingly for Crystal?

To an unusual degree, the superstar guests came off poorly. Alice Cooper was forced to endure the least rocking version of "School's Out" ever recorded. Siobhan Magnus and Aaron Kelly sang with two vocally shaky Gibbs brothers. Christina Aguilera had to postpone her tour but appeared (very briefly) on *Idol*. Hall & Oates sounded okay but had some weird tempo changes and I don't think they ever looked at each other once. Crystal traded some good vocal licks with Alanis Morissette on "You Oughta Know." Lots of former *Idols* popped in (though not David Cook) and -- hilariously -- we had a fond look back at all those Ford Fiesta ads.

Bret Michaels came straight from the hospital to duet with Casey James on "Every Rose Has Its Thorn." Lee sounded pretty good with Chicago on "25 or 6 to 4." Paula Abdul appeared for a drawn out goodbye to Simon clearly expecting a lot more applause and laugh lines at various moments. Janet Jackson

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Thousands Of Birds Found Dead In Italy

proved herself the queen of lip syncing on "Nasty Boys," combining recorded vocals in a much lower tone with some live singing to make it sound like she was singing with someone else hiding off stage.

The highlight of the evening for me was hearing them play Sufjan Stevens of all people during a Chicago montage. Then Lee and Crystal sang with Joe Cocker on the Beatles classic "With A Little Help From My Friends." Joe sounded terrific and Crystal fit in so beautifully and seemed so comfortable with him vocally it just emphasized that she was clearly the standout. Lee looked a little stunned, as always. (On the plus side, Crystal and Lee's voices do sound good together; duets are in their future.)

Then it was all over, with Lee almost fainting even before the results were announced and then stumbling through U2's "Beautiful Day." Hey, he's got a nice studio voice (as the judges might have said in years past) and who knows, maybe he's a terrific songwriter. But Crystal is gonna pull a Clay Aiken on him and deliver the goods. They can both flourish in their careers but there can be only one *American Idol* and to everyone's surprise, it was Lee.

Do the results make you less likely to watch next season? Will you buy either of their albums? And who can replace Simon?

PERFORMANCE SHOW: In what even ardent fans must admit was the least musically exciting, least dramatic finale in *Idol* history, Crystal Bowersox received nothing but praise and Lee Dewyze heard -- at best - polite mixed reviews for his performances. Bowersox continues her march to the winner's circle by the biggest margin since Carrie Underwood was the odds-on favorite from the auditions to the finale. Of course, it's a new era where an artist is lucky to go platinum, so it'll be interesting to see what happens with Crystal's career. But barring any text-happy fans in Lee's hometown figuring out new ways to vote, Crystal will be the ninth *American Idol*.

It was an awkward night from the get-go, with Crystal goofily messing up her walk to the stage by dropping her mike, getting turned around, missing her mark and generally looking lovably unpolished. Lee sort of strolled to the stage, like a kid on a backstage tour. And that about summed it up.

Song #1 -- Lee chose to sing "The Boxer." My first thought was surely he could have picked a song where he triumphed more from earlier in the season. But looking through the list of songs he's done, actually there aren't a lot of stand-out performances. Maybe "Simple Man," but that was probably too recent. He was ok, but not as good as his first time singing it. Simon had the line of the night about his lack of passion: "That was a kiss on the cheek when I want a kiss on the lips." Crystal chose to sing "Me and Bobby McGee," which maybe seemed a little too obvious. So I looked over her songs and found four or five she nailed and could have done instead. But it's so clearly in her comfort zone, ultimately the choice seemed right. And she was good if not transcendent; certainly better than Lee. The judges of course loved her.

Song #2 -- This was the song chosen by the producers of the show and they made two dreadful picks, which certainly didn't help. Lee was given R.E.M.'s "Everybody Hurts" which is a ballad (not a good combo after his first song), and has an extremely difficult, drawn-out melody that probably doesn't suit him. If you've ever heard people massacre the tune in karaoke bars, you know how hard it is to sing. Lee seemed lost in the meandering melody and never got into a groove. The judges were as polite as they could be, urging him to do better. If you have to urge someone to do better in the finals, something's wrong. Crystal was told to sing "Black Velvet," one of those tired *Idol* songs that has been done a thousand times. Simon joked, "I'm almost allergic to that song." Crystal looked terrified as she tottered in high heels at the top of the stairs, looking down once and then twice before finally braving it and starting to walk down. It's not a bluesy song so much as a faux bluesy song and Crystal did what she could do with it. The judges raved.

Song #3 -- In a welcome switch, the contestants were given a classic tune to sing, rather than a bland new ballad. Here's hoping this is an innovation they keep. Lee was given U2's "Beautiful Day," a terrific rock song, if you can belt it out to the rafters. Lee was dwarfed by the tune, a line I wrote down during his performance. Kara echoed me by saying Lee was "swallowed up" by it, while all the judges tried to be polite. Crystal was given Patty Griffin's lovely Martin Luther King Jr. tribute "Up To The Mountain" to perform. Exhale. Finally, after a night of ho-hum moments, she hit one out of the park in a DVR-able moment that was absolutely great. Just marvelous and a much needed reminder of why she was the clear winner for months.

I was actually hoping they'd have Crystal and Lee duet on "Falling Slowly" again at the end of the show, which would have been a nice kicker and a good reflection of how no one was out for blood this season. Instead, they had Will Young, the very first winner of *Pop Idol*, performing his song "Leave Right Now" to a montage of clips.

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So, is there any doubt in your mind that Crystal Bowersox will be the next American Idol? And will you buy her CD?

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alanv25 11:35 PM on 5/27/2010

0 Fans

My wife and I watched every show of this American Idol season and thoroughly enjoyed it. Any series with so many live performances, especially from people who have never been in front of a camera before, will have its pitfalls, and the vultures will be there to gobble them up. There aren't many live shows on TV where so much has to come together. One thing I immensely enjoyed was how they followed the story lines of each contestant.

I also disagree with Michael and agree with Mira about the finale. There were a couple dud moments, but overall it was fantastic. I enjoyed seeing some of the artists that I grew up with

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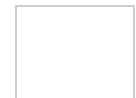
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perform once again, but there was also something for all ages. Crystal is just amazing. I'm from the Chicago area and was pulling for Lee until Tuesday night. I think the main reason why he won is because the Chicago media has whooped it up for him so much in the past few weeks and all those votes from the large Chicago metro area were too much for small-town Crystal to overcome. I can't wait to hear her first album.

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MiraMcB 03:19 PM on 5/27/2010



163 Fans

Gonna disagree with you, Michael. I thought it was a pretty great finale. Took it personally as a great send off for Simon on his last season. That's what the night was really all about for me and probably a lot of other fans. Crystal or Lee winning/losing was a very distant second.

For once, I thought the usually thick-as-a-plank AI producers did a pretty good job getting it all together. Some great acts and they did very, very well, considering some of those folks are getting pretty far along, age-wise. You don't really expect them to pop up looking/sounding like they did 30 years ago, did you? Bee Gees were great and a great quartet with Siobhan and Alex. The weakest ones, jmho, were Chicago. OUCH! Fun to see Alice Cooper! He sounded ok. Joe Cocker! Awesome! (He's gettin' on, too.) Janet did fine. Christina Aguilera! LOVED what I guess is her new single off the new album, "You Lost Me". Looking forward to that release.

Whatever. Paula was back! Simon was so obviously pleased to see her. He gave great farewell speech. We all had fun. It's over. On to X Factor U.S. Fall 2011!!!! YAY!

Good luck and God Speed, Simey! We hardly knew ye...

:~)

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alanv25 11:23 PM on 5/27/2010

0 Fans

I've seen Alice Cooper in concert 5 of the last 7 years and his concerts rock! He is still releasing albums and touring nearly every year. If you get a chance, check one of his shows out.

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MiraMcB 01:54 PM on 5/28/2010



163 Fans

Haha! I've never seen him perform "live", but we've run into him at Costco up in Phoenix a couple of times and my husband has run into him several times playing golf at the Biltmore. He's a very pleasant man. Very sweet wife. My husband has clearer memories of the "back-in-the-day" stuff. He's older. I do enjoy his music and performances myself, tho. :-)

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Michael Giltz 08:04 AM on 5/28/2010



59 Fans

Thanks for commenting. You're certainly right that it was all about Simon. But plenty of classic acts sound great and not woozy, so no excuses for the ones that did, in my book.

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MiraMcB 01:55 PM on 5/28/2010



163 Fans

Hah! Ok, fine, Michael, but I DID enjoy the Gibbs a lot more than Chicago, altho', after a second viewing they did sound a little better than I originally thought. Neener, neener... :-)

BTW, are you going to be covering X Factor U.S. when it gets here?

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Robert Wright 01:02 PM on 5/27/2010

24 Fans

Janet Jackson was AMAZING and was captivating last night. Not quite sure what you were watching. She did sound like Michael, and with the new haircut, looked like him too. But I couldn't take my eyes off the screen the entire time she was on stage. She was the one and only performer that had any impact, not to mention she looked absolutely FIERCE, and bless her, she was amazing.

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MiraMcB 03:20 PM on 5/27/2010

163 Fans



Yeah, loved seeing her. Really great performances!

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 08:04 AM on 5/28/2010
59 Fans



And Janet definitely got the loudest applause from the audience in the arena. So you're not alone.

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darc1818 10:01 AM on 5/27/2010

5 Fans

I love Crystal and think her voice (and her in general) is amazing. And that is why I am really glad that she DIDN'T win last night. Now she won't be forced into doing an album that the AI producers want her to do and she can do things her way. Winning AI has become a curse, other than Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood non of the winners had any real success beyond maybe one song. Jennifer Hudson, Clay Aiken and Chris Daughtry didn't win and I bet right now they are glad about that.

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MiraMcB 03:22 PM on 5/27/2010

163 Fans



Actually, if she is signed, and I'm pretty sure she will be, she will also be signing thru one of Fuller's companies and they WILL be guiding her along, as with any other Idol contestant. Having said that, I'm sure they will try to give her as much leeway as possible so as to not interfere with who she is as an artist.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 08:06 AM on 5/28/2010
59 Fans



You're right darc1818 AND miramcB. Crystal will be signed by Fuller. But because she's not the winner, she won't be rushed out as quickly and may very well have a better chance at taking a deep breath and doing it right. Though for most Idol winners (except Carrie) it's the second album where they come into their own or flounder.

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Kelly Hopkins 08:44 AM on 5/27/2010

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I feel like I have just been given an amazing gift. I have just had about 60 hours a year of my life that I would have spent watching future season of AI returned to me. Of course, that can't give me

back the 60 hours that was stolen this year. Actually, I exaggerate. I gave up watching the results shows and just checking on line.

The only bright thing about this season for me was Crystal. And after she obliterated Lee in the final, I was cautiously optimistic that maybe, just maybe, season 9 could be redeemed if the voting public made the right decision and showed us the title actually still means something.

Lee is a nice enough guy, but watching him and Crystal in the finale - no longer in competition - just went further to prove that Crystal is in a different league. She rocked out with Alanis while Lee fizzled with Chicago (admittedly, the shows producers must be to blame for the WORST guest duet performance choice ever), and when Crystal and Lee were finally side by side (and then with Joe Cocker) it was blatantly obvious who owned the show. Some people are calling audio fail, but I'm still thinking Lee even forgot to sing one of his lines.

Anyway, I really did think I was going to be pleasantly surprised. And so was utterly speechless when Lee was announced the winner.

Jumped the shark? Jumped the whole aquarium more like.

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Robert Wright 01:11 PM on 5/27/2010

24 Fans

Oh, please, they stole nothing from you. If you continued to tune in, you freely gave them your time. It's so tedious to hear people complain about lost time when they keep tuning in, and keep tuning in, and keep tuning in.

And yes, Crystal was great last night. And Lee was overwhelmed by the talent of Cocker and Bowersox during that performance. He just didn't seem to be in the moment at all with that one. And Crystal clearly understood WHO she was singing with, and seemed to enjoy it and appreciate it.

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MiraMcB 03:05 PM on 5/27/2010

163 Fans



Yeah, LOL! I agree with you on all counts. I don't think Lee must have had much exposure to the likes of Joe during his younger years. Hey, too bad, but that's ok, I guess. I did appreciate Crystal's obvious appreciation, tho.

:-)

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 08:08 AM on 5/28/2010

59 Fans



There is a certain relief when you cut a TV show loose. I remember doing that with ER after six seasons, only to discover my children had grown up and started walking and talking and were in school. It was nice to get to know them. But you'll lose those 60 hours again in the fall of 2011 when The X Factor starts!

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karmical 06:06 AM on 5/27/2010

23 Fans

Crystal got robbed. The teeny-bopper tweener girls again proved it's nothing more than a pre-pubescent popularity contest.

Lee is not nearly the same caliber as Crystal. Lee has zero personality... never said one funny or clever thing all season -- just had a dopey aww shucks look...

Crystal was solid from day one, + had many amazing moments. Lee had a few decent weeks towards the end, but blew the final show + was nowhere near Crystal's league - she's the true artist of the two. Either rigged or ignorant voting -- I'm done with this show, esp. w/no Simon. Lee will fade into obscurity in a few years.

*Crystal, quite simply, is the better singer -- she will be around decades from now.

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MiraMcB 03:07 PM on 5/27/2010

163 Fans



Naw. I think it was just a very, very close race. Two pretty evenly matched contestants and the vagaries of audience taste and voting. Who knows? Maybe some Crystal fans thought she was safe and didn't vote when they should have? Anyway, as you say, with no Simon, it's pretty much history now anyway. Crystal will do fine.

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progressivewithaP 06:05 PM on 5/27/2010

62 Fans

It wasn't close....just look at Dial Idol.

Lee won b/c he has a Y chromosome.

Girl's can't win this show anymore even when they are VASTLY superior.

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JustBeingMe 10:04 AM on 5/29/2010

3 Fans

Two pretty evenly matched contestants? Really??

Anybody that really understands music knows that you can go to a downtown bar in any big city and see dozens of guys who sing and perform as well, if not better than Lee. Lee is nothing special. AI is not based on talent..it's a teeny bopper, popularity contest. If it's based on talent, then AI and its fans have gotten the winner wrong for at least the past two years now.

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myJAGSRock 11:50 PM on 5/26/2010

0 Fans

CRYSTAL CLEAR- LEE DEWYZE IS THE NEW AMERICAN IDOL!

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progressivewithaP 06:05 PM on 5/27/2010

62 Fans

I think you mean the Worst American Idol ever.

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myJAGSRock 11:45 PM on 5/26/2010

0 Fans

HA HA HA HA !

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 06:03 AM on 5/27/2010

59 Fans



With only 2% separating them to get into the finals and neither one ever appearing in the bottom three, it was always much closer than outsiders like me believed. The same may have been true for Adam Lambert and Kris Allen. I think next season the show would be smarter to mention tight voting more often so people know it's a horse race. Carrie apparently won by a massive margin every week. But if Lee and Crystal were neck and neck, they should have let us know weeks ago to create more suspense and keep people engaged. It could change the results, too.

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progressivewithaP 05:44 PM on 5/28/2010

62 Fans

Michael I don't think it was very close the last two shows of the season. For the overall season it might have been close, but Lee definitely went ahead the last two shows.

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progressivewithaP 05:45 PM on 5/28/2010

62 Fans

And by went ahead, I meant by votes not by performance lol.

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Dynamiccpg 06:55 PM on 5/26/2010

8 Fans

I agree that this was not the most exciting season but from the start it was easy to see that Crystal, just like Adam Lambert, was the most talented of the group. OK, there is noone that compares to Adam. Lee may win since most of the people that vote are 12 - 17 years old, and they are looking for the cute guy and not the talent. Crystal reminds me of the musicians in the 60's which will not go well with kids these days. I do hope Crystal will win.

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anonimost 03:15 PM on 5/26/2010

6 Fans

Crystal won the night. I think Lee will win the title.

Boring night. I sure hope show is better Wednesday night.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 06:04 AM on 5/27/2010

59 Fans



You nailed it.

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MiraMcB 01:15 PM on 5/26/2010

163 Fans



Meh. Thus far, it has been a tepid season and last night was a very tepid Final. Not a huge fan of either of these contestants. They are just ok. Best of the worst for this year. I think they are pretty evenly matched. Lee's performances weren't that much off from Crystal's, particularly in the first two songs. I think the judges threw ole Lee under the bus, jmho. But, hey! Gotta be a winner, right?

Chances are slim I would buy either CD/download. Just not wowed by any of it, altho' the Falling Slowly duet was pretty good.

One thing I don't care for is allowing contestants to sing songs they've already performed on the show. Boring and annoying. It's the Final, for pete's sake. Do something NEW.

Bottom line with these two: Haven't seen anything new from either of them for weeks. Felt like leftover meatloaf to me.

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anonimost 03:16 PM on 5/26/2010

6 Fans

I agree. Repeats are a huge turn off. I'd rather hear one of their originals.

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Scottcluthe 12:00 PM on 5/26/2010

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Just hope they sneak Bonnie Raitt into the show tonight so Crystal and Bonnie can sizzle on "Something to Talk About" as they announce their world tour!

This deal was over months ago....:)

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sansom 11:52 AM on 5/26/2010

0 Fans

For what it's worth, Dial Idol says Lee will win.

As a fan of Lee's, I have to say that Lee just seemed really nervous and Crystal performed much better last night.

However, I don't think Crystal needs the Idol crown to make her mark in the industry. Folks who like her and her music will support her career regardless of whether she wins tonight. Lee, on the other hand, would probably be helped by winning the Idol crown.

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PeanFarley 09:44 AM on 5/26/2010

0 Fans

Lee won with the right crowd last week and it has carried him through to the title. I love it that Crystal drove the bus over him on the way out though. She was pretty amazing. He played not to lose last night and it showed. Idol has never been more than a popularity contest occasionally impacted by talent. Not at all fair but we should be used to that by now.

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progressivewithaP 06:06 PM on 5/27/2010

62 Fans

Nice!!

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

MeinNH 09:40 AM on 5/26/2010

575 Fans



If it goes like last year, the person with the raves will not win.

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