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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: March 24, 2010 02:30 AM

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Idol Season 9: Top 11 -- Paige Making Top 10? Only Against All Odds

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American Idol week now begins on Mondays, when the contestant who just left the show appears on the *Late Show With David Letterman*. Lacey Brown was very game but the segment was awkward since she was interviewed by Dave from across the room. (She was with the band.) Then he and Paul kept talking about her being rejected and kicked off, which is true but hardly necessary to keep repeating. Oddly, she chose to sing "What A Wonderful World," popularized by Louis Armstrong. Lacey did okay with it, but what

an odd, old-fashioned number for her to choose as her last chance to make an impression on the public.

But in fact Lacey was right in tune with the *Idol* contestants. This week they could pick any tune that hit #1 on the Hot 100. But it felt like oldies night since only two contestants (the two youngest) did a song from the past 20 years. The mentor was Miley Cyrus, the epitome of what one imagines an *Idol* winner might be like, though she's only 17 years old, barely qualifies to compete AND she's never had a #1 hit song. Ironic!

LEE DEWYZE -- Sang "The Letter" by the Box Tops, the only #1 hit by Alex Chilton, who would go on to enduring cult legend status as the head of Big Star. Everyone -- including Miley -- knows the drill. Lee can sing but has zero stage personality. Miley suggested he give them some notes they're not expecting. (Huh?) Lee pulled out all the stops, thanks to horns and backup singers...and he never seemed more like a retread of Taylor Hicks. Nonetheless, the first three judges were very (indeed overly) nice though Simon threw water on the whole affair. Lee even mumbled through his post-critique chat with Ryan. Wake up!

PAIGE MILES -- Sang the Phil Collins hit "Against All Odds," a rather stolid number but one that sent his solo career into the stratosphere (though Collins was sadly not invited to sing it on the Oscars). For Paige, it was a train wreck of epic proportions. She started poorly, singing tentatively and off key, then in

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BECK IN TROUBLE?

the middle of a verse she suddenly started belting and finally collapsed at the end. You could see the fear in her eyes as it all went off the rails. I assumed her voice simply hadn't recovered at all from her vocal problems. But either she didn't want to use that as an excuse or it wasn't the case. Paige blamed song choice as her stumbling block. It's only the second number, but I can't even imagine anyone else going home other than her.

TIM URBAN -- Sang Queen's low-key (for them) "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." If you ignore the vocals, he was pretty good. Dressed in *Miami Vice* style (t-shirt and a too-large jacket he swiped from his dad's closet), Tim *grabbed* the mike off the stand, he *slid* across the floor, and he *swaggered* into the pit of sorority girls (but wisely didn't indulge in ogling them). It's actually a deceptively difficult song to sing, since the chorus sort of winds down in an off-hand manner that's hard to pull off. Simon blamed the song, but surely Tim just isn't that good a singer.

AARON KELLY -- Sang Aerosmith's hit from *Armageddon*. It was always a little odd to hear Steven Tyler sing a love ballad while his daughter Liv was being romanced on-screen. But while it's atypical for the band, I actually have a fondness for the tune, which has a great melody. Aaron is suffering from vocal issues, but you'd barely know it from his performance. He stuck to the country twang (a phrase I wrote down before Kara used it), which is clearly where he shines and kept the melodramatic number low-key. On one big note, he was clearly straining, but all in all it was a very solid, well-thought out performance. Week by week, Aaron gets better and I'm starting to see him in the finals and giving Crystal a run for her money.

CRYSTAL BOWERSOX -- Sang Janis Joplin's "Me And Bobby McGee," a song written for her by Kris Kristofferson -- and if you haven't read Ethan Hawke's profile of him in *Rolling Stone*, it's well worth your time. (Unfortunately, [only a snippet is available online](#).) Why didn't I think of it before? If anyone wants to do a remake of *The Rose*, they've got their gal. A Janis Joplin biopic was bumping around for years, with Melissa Etheridge and Renee Zellweger committing to competing projects. Maybe Crystal can revive the flick. She did a very good job with "Me and Bobby McGee," and Miley's suggestion she sing in a higher key did bring out some different colors in Crystal. Ellen (who is getting better with time) gave her a good note by encouraging Crystal to react to the crowd more. And Crystal showed more personality by encouraging Ryan to flop down on the carpet she brought onstage for the post-critique chat. Frankly, it was the smartest thing she did all night. We know she can sing; she just needs to make people root for her.

MICHAEL LYNCH -- Sang Percy Sledge's "When A Man Loves A Woman." After jumping all over the place last week, Michael wisely stayed rooted in one spot and went romantic, right down to the velvet jacket. It was smooth but unremarkable. Plus, Michael needs to work on using the mike better, since sometimes his vocals get lost when he moves too far away from it. Ellen said it nicely by describing him as going the speed limit. He got where he wanted but it wasn't exactly fun. Nothing wrong with it, just not memorable.

ANDREW GARCIA -- Sang Marvin Gaye's 1968 gem "I Heard It Through The Grapevine." Gladys Knight & The Pips took to #2 in 1967 only to get obliterated by Gaye's version later and I don't think she's forgiven him yet. Maybe Andrew felt bad for Paige because he gave her a run for her money in the awful department. Perhaps he started in too low a key? Whatever the reason, his vocals were colorless and dull. (It was even worse on the playback at the end of the show.) Kara said maybe their constant references to his version of Paula Abdul's "Straight Up" had messed with his mind and he keeps trying to recapture that moment. So she suggested...he go back to that version of "Straight Up" and try and see what was special about it and do it again. Wha????? Simon dropped the hammer and said they'd simply over-estimated his talent. After weeks of subpar performances, I agree.

KATIE STEVENS -- Sang Fergie's "Big Girls Don't Cry." (I'm such an old fogey -- or maybe it was just seeing *Jersey Boys* -- that I thought for a second she'd be doing the Four Seasons number.) It was a clever choice by Katie: she chose a contemporary song so she'd come across as current but it's pretty serious, thus suiting her mature style. She also looked good. But there was a sharpness in her voice that was unsettling (Randy referenced it in an aside when it should have been the focus of all of them). It was literally unpleasant to listen to, not because she was so off-key or awful but simply because that sharp tone left you uneasy. Kara in her street-wise manner said, "You've still got mad pitch issues!" And I haven't the foggiest idea what Ellen's reference to Dakota Fanning meant.

CASEY JAMES -- Made the pretty left-field choice of Huey Lewis & the News' "The Power Of Love," the theme from *Back To The Future*. After saying he needed to work the stage more, Casey barely budged an inch and sang the song in a fairly straightforward way, maybe giving some lines a bluesy sort of spin. He needed to completely overhaul the song to make his performance special and he didn't. And why were the backup musicians positioned out front? It was OK, but Kara went over board, saying he's ready to make

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an album. Simon was closer to the truth when he said it was like hearing an 80s cover band.

DIDI BENAMI -- Sang Linda Ronstadt's "You're No Good," her sole #1 hit to date, which comes off **her masterpiece *Heart Like A Wheel***. (*The Best Of The Capitol Years* contains three albums from this period including *Heart* and is a must-have. Ronstadt is a criminally under-appreciated artist.) Didi's outfit was sexy and fun (love the boots!) but the song dragged instead of slinked during the verses. She was better on the bridge, but Didi continues to emote too much facially; she looks like a kid singing into her brush in front of the mirror. Kara nailed it by saying it looked like she was playing a character on stage.

SIQBHAN MAGNUS -- Sang Stevie Wonder's "Superstition," a funk classic of course. Siqbhan did her thing, including a crazy get-up (I always worry when contestants look like they're wearing costumes; Adam Lambert did it all the time) and crazy crazy hair. Anyone spot who was on her t-shirt? I thought it might be Katharine Hepburn. And then she wailed at the finale. Fine, but it is starting to seem formulaic. She should cover Prince.

Well, the bottom three will include Paige Miles, Andrew Garcia and either Didi Benami or Tim Urban. I think Tim still has the Tiger Beat vote while I'm not sure who is voting for Didi. it will come down to Paige and Andrew and Paige will be saying goodbye.

What did you think of the performances? Who will go home? Isn't it annoying that one week that told us the theme in advance and even let us see the playlist the contestants choose from and next week...nothing?

Thanks for reading. [Visit Michael Giltz at his website and his daily blog](#). Download his [podcast of celebrity interviews and his weekly music radio show at Popsurfing](#) and enjoy the [weekly pop culture podcast he co-hosts at Showbiz Sandbox](#). Both available for free on iTunes. [Link to him on Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

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Tilnar 10:26 AM on 3/25/2010

3 Fans

I have to agree that Paige was the one who should have gone home, which is why I was shocked (and so was Kara, from her reaction) when she sang herself off and nailed it - reminded everyone why she was there. (I was totally like "Why would you save this for your departure instead of using it in the competition).

I'm also glad that Simon has started to call out Siobhan for using her gimmick-formula. The week that she first did it, her performance wasn't that good, but her pitchy and bad rendition of Aretha went away because of, as Randy said, "Wow, that note, wow." And she's been doing the same thing ever since - her performances are certainly unique and that's worth something, but I don't think they're all that good, and then she just ends with her scream-trick and suddenly it's like all the judges forget what happened before. (That's why she screams at the end, Simon, if she did it first, people would then remember the not-so-impressive vocals that follow).

I'm still not sure why everyone loves Aaron, though. Both this week and last I found myself FFling him (yay PVR) - he's just one other karaoke singer amongst the few actual artists.

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JohnKevari 05:00 PM on 3/24/2010

2 Fans

About last night's show.....

Paige Miles was not that bad..... But since the judges/producers do not want her to advance she has to be perfect and last night she was far from it.

Once again I'm not impressed by the middle aged woman on the show, but unlike others on the show it is obvious that the judges/producers are pushing her..... What was up with she and Ryan sitting on the rug..... I predict by next week she'll have the rug, the stray cats, and the milk crate with old albums in it one of which is Carole King's "Tapestry" album.

Was it just me or did it seem like Miley's dress got higher and higher as the show went on?

All week long NBC keeps promoting that the kid from "The Blind Side" will be on "Law and Order-SVU" this week. Well, apparently he's on Idol, too..... As a portly man myself I can tell you it's very bizarre to see a fat guy jump around and/or act as though he's the second coming of Marvin Gaye.

WHO'S GOING HOME THIS WEEK? Probably Paige..... Could be Tim Urban..... Outside chance it might be Andrew.

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JohnKevari 04:32 PM on 3/24/2010

2 Fans

MEMO TO MR. GLITZ,

It's Aaron Kelly!!!! Not Stevens!

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Michael Giltz 08:25 PM on 3/24/2010

59 Fans



Thanks. They're only teenagers and I'm already pairing off Aaron and Katie in my head -- even though his heart clearly belongs to Miley.

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skylar103 04:18 PM on 3/24/2010

0 Fans

okay here's my recap:

Lee: good vocals, no personality, boring

Paige: pitchy but she does have a good voice and she is sick

Tim: okay vocals, little much with dance moves, got out of his shell

Aaron: My opinion the BEST of the nite!! there was maybe 2 pitchy moments but he is amazing!!!

Crystal: BORING!!!! good vocals, but sounds the same each weak

Michael: a bit pitchy, overdone, annoyed really, okay vocals

Andrew: AWFUL!!!!!! He was good once and thts it, pitchy all over

Casey: average vocals, but a bit peachy in some but better than others (andrew)

Katie: A lot better than the last weeks, average vocals, but i like her!!!

Didi: oaky!!!, bu pitchy and a little fake acting while singing!!!

Siobhan: average vocals, good personality, a bit pitchy towards the ending

hoping that ANDREW finally goes home!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1

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anonimost 01:26 PM on 3/24/2010

6 Fans

Last night was brutal. Brutal. As an avid watcher I could not stand it. Are the contestants only allowed to sing "cleared" songs - therefore, oldies and re-runs we've heard on the show a million times? Well, not a million times... it just feels like it.

Lee: Boring song, good vocals

Paige: Just awful

Tim: Terrible performance, weak vocals

Aaron: Over done song, but decent vocals

Crystal: Excellent karaoke, very stand-offish performer

Michael: Loungey but in a okay way

Andrew: He did indeed peak with Straight UP. Simon is right, he has had more than a fair shot.

Casey: Okay cover but no spark

Katie: Tuneless and pitchy. Just awful

Didi: Just okay but indeed "actressy and corny".

Siobhan: Volatile vocals with a predictable ending scream.

Ugh. I stayed up late for this?

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

RhiannonRings 03:06 PM on 3/24/2010

51 Fans



I agree. I think last night was one of the worst nights ever. Even my fave, Siobhan, was disappointing. Plus, what was up with the Sheena Easton hair on that poor girl?

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Michael Giltz 08:29 PM on 3/24/2010

59 Fans



Every song must be cleared. They're usually done in advance except for special requests. Depending on the genre that night, they can be given a list of 50-100 songs to choose from. (The backup bank can't automatically cover every song in history, plus as you say the show pre-clears as many songs as they can.) But contestants can request a song not on the list, which the show will try to clear. We weren't told the playlist they had to choose from this week, but I'm certain many of the #1s from the past two decades were available. Just dull obvious song choice. Of course many of the songs are classics and if you do them well people will love it. But a less obvious song would at least seem fresh.

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filmex 12:46 PM on 3/24/2010

43 Fans

Think the Final Four are rounding off to be Crystal, Siobhan, Casey and Aaron. Aaron...still can't

believe I'm saying that but the kid does seem to be hitting his stride. Isn't his last name Kelly though?

I'm not sure which Ellen Michael is watching but she's giving Kara a run for the Seth and Amy "Really?" award on every show. I certainly don't think Crystal needs to make overt shows of "Love" towards her fans. Simon was spot on, she doesn't need to change a thing.

And Ellen thinks Lee, who sounds like every grunge band lead singer in the world, is her favorite pen??? And thinks Casey's version of that gawdawful Huey Lewis song was "the best performance of the night". That's the second time she's made that declaration when Crystal was miles better. What show is she watching?

I said here a couple of weeks ago after Paige murdered Chaplin's "Smile" that she's not a great singer (you could find a better one in every church choir in America) and that she has a very odd vibrato which may be just bad technique but sounds like wicked nerves playing havoc.

It's bizarre how many mediocre singers there turned out to be this year. They ought to do a Bullpen selection and bring back Shelby (of the partial face paralysis) who just missed the Top 24 but was much better than half this lot.

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Michael Giltz 08:33 PM on 3/24/2010
59 Fans



Thanks for commenting. I didn't mean that I agreed with Ellen, just that she was more relaxed and offering more varied criticism than the first few weeks when she always just repeated what Randy had said.

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cyoohoos 05:04 AM on 3/24/2010

287 Fans



I don't think Paige wants to be on AI anymore. Who other than those 4 girls who showed up as her 'friends' would bother to vote for that performance.

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skylar103 04:20 PM on 3/24/2010

0 Fans

DISAGREE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1 she is sick give her a chance!!!! the one who needs to go home is ANDREW!!!!!!

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MindyM 03:01 AM on 3/24/2010

32 Fans

Oh my, did I mess up in my first sentence. I don't think there can be any doubt that the BOTTOM three should be Paige, Tim and Andrew. Gosh, that sure came out wrong.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 12:23 PM on 3/24/2010
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Don't worry -- no one could doubt you meant Bottom Three when your list included Paige :)

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MindyM 03:00 AM on 3/24/2010

32 Fans

I don't think there can be any doubt that the final three should be Paige, Tim and Andrew. But with this show, you just never know.

I love Crystal and she did an incredible version of the great Janis Joplin's "Me and Bobby McGee". But now I think she needs to get rid of the guitar and do something very different. She hinted that she may be doing exactly that next week. She also doesn't connect well with the audience. It's not just about singing, it's also about performing.

My favorite is Siobhan, but I was not pleased to hear another high pitched power note again. Her voice is so good that she doesn't need it. I thought she gave a terrific performance of Stevie Wonder's "Superstition". It's not an easy song to sing, but Siobhan handled it with ease. I love her lower register and want to hear more. Simon was ridiculously harsh with her. He is pimping Crystal WAY too much at this point. Siobhan can sing anything, she has tremendous range and power.

I didn't think Aaron was all that great. I thought the song was too big for his voice. He was smarter last week when he sang "Angie" and stayed within the limits of his range. He doesn't have the power for this song. I am willing to cut him some slack for the tonsillitis, but he's not good enough to be in the final three.

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