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Idol Season 9: Top 12 -- Rolling Stones Night

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American Idol moved to a bigger stage this week as the Top 12 tackled the **Rolling Stones**. Ryan stared down Simon, Simon gave Crystal Bowersox some helpful tips and the kids were alright. (I know, I know: that's the Who.) Amusingly, *Idol* couldn't get the Stones to appear but Jimmy Kimmel could. May 10-14 is Stones week on his late night talk show in celebration of the long-overdue reissue of their brilliant masterpiece *Exile On Main Street*. Different artists will cover songs from that album each night

and apparently Mick Jagger and Keith Richards will appear.

MICHAEL LYNCH -- Sang "Miss You," the band's last #1 hit. It's from perhaps their last classic album, *Some Girls* (though they came close in '81 with *Tattoo You*). I liked how Michael took their little woo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo (which could have sunk many a singer) and made it a soulful sort of whoop. Michael was pretty slick but only Simon noted how it verged on the Vegas. Like much of the Stones, the song oozes charisma; not so much in this rendition. Ryan goofily stared down Simon to try and pull out some constructive criticism and then muttered to the burly Lynche "I knew if he came for me, you'd back me up."

DIDI BENAMI -- Sang "Play With Fire," an oddball number recorded with Phil Spector and Jack Nitzsche that she delivered at a very slow tempo. She looked very cute, but Didi lost the melody in the third verse, looked overly dramatic (like me singing in front of the mirror), as always her high notes are strained and uncomfortable and she ended poorly. And yet for all that, it had an ok vibe. Simon's "solid, not brilliant," was about as nice as she could expect.

CASEY JAMES -- Sang "It's All Over Now," a Bobby and Shirley Womack song from *12 X 5*, one of their early albums when the Stones were still growing out of their bar band roots. Casey did his best Stevie Ray Vaughan and it was serviceable and fun. But why choose such an obscure number when the Stones

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BECK IN TROUBLE?

catalog is bursting with great tunes he could rock out on and make bluesy (blues and country are at the heart of their sound)? Terrible choice of song, though it won't be lethal. And as always, when a contestant is playing an instrument, the producers really need to mike it better and bring up the instrument in the mix. Ellen made a joking reference to being a lesbian and Simon got it right when he said Casey's performance was more like an audition.

LACEY BROWN -- Sang "Ruby Tuesday," a #1 hit from 1967 when the music was pouring out of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards; surely it's the only great rock song to lend its name to a chain of restaurants. Like Didi's version, this string quartet-led arrangement was sleepy; Lacey never got into it and had a rough ending. Ellen gave a perceptive note, observing how Lacey was moving around during the slow sections and sitting when the song got faster. That sort of subtle discontinuity can really throw off a performance though you may not put your finger on it. Ellen is getting better and more comfortable, with her humor feeling more organic. No one pointed out how odd her outfit was, with a jarring sort of halter-top that made it all look a mess.

ANDREW GARCIA -- Sang "Gimme Shelter," a dark, mysterious, brooding powerful song from *Let It Bleed*. Martin Scorsese has used it repeatedly in his films, including his masterpiece *GoodFellas*. Unfortunately for Andrew, the song absolutely dwarfed him. His performance had no danger or power and certainly any sense of impending doom was utterly absent (unless he was looking forward to the elimination round). It was...dull. People who know the song would find his version disastrous; people who don't know it would just be bored, though he had a pretty good ending and a big note of the sort fans love that could maybe save him. Ellen was the only enthusiastic one, just begging critics to quote her mockingly by saying, "What do I know" when saying it was his best performance yet.

KATIE STEVENS -- Sang "Wild Horses," a modest hit (#28 in the US) but surely one of their most enduring songs and one that has been covered by a **wildly diverse group of artists**. It's off *Sticky Fingers*, one of a string of classic albums during their greatest period. Perhaps heeding Ellen's note to Lacey, Katie starts sitting down and moves during the chorus. Maturity suits her and Katie did the best of anyone so far. She had a nice dress that was cute but not too adult or prom night-ish and delivered it pretty well. Hilariously, Simon said, "I recorded that song with Susan Boyle, so I know that song really well." Good God, man, surely you knew that song before Susan recorded it! He also spent much of the night dismissing their music as boring, dull and uninteresting. No wonder they didn't show up to perform.

TIM URBAN -- Sang "Under My Thumb." It's an album track off *Aftermath* and was the song playing when an audience member at Altamont was stabbed to death. As if that isn't bad enough, it's a bragging, sneering tune about a man who's put his woman in her place and showed her who's boss. For some bizarre reason, Tim decided this manly bit of swagger should be performed as an unironic love song set to a light-hearted reggae beat. To say it lacked even an ounce of dominance or menace is putting it mildly. Why not sing "Get Off Of My Cloud," a light-hearted bit of rebellion? Simon helpfully said, "It's quite a boring song anyway," and Tim did look dreamily into the camera.

SIOBHAN MAGNUS -- Sang "Paint It, Black," the #1 song from *Aftermath* that was the only single released from the album (those were the days). Ryan casually mentioned her performance was going to be dramatic and he wasn't kidding. Strobe lights, huge dramatic buildup and a craaaazy scream of a high note towards the end that had me bursting out laughing, in a good way. And what's her shoulder tattoo? Edward Gorey? Kara made the obvious but needed comparison to the over-the-top Adam Lambert. Almost as much fun as the song was the sight of her family looking a little stunned when it was over. The judges raved; I'd just say at least it was memorable.

LEE DEWYZE -- He should have sung "19th Nervous Breakdown," but instead Lee sang "Beast Of Burden," a Top 10 hit from the Stones' final classic *Some Girls* back in 1978. He messes up the lyrics but Randy is right to peg Lee as in the Rob Thomas/Dave Matthews vein when at times he really shows some personality in his vocals. HOWEVER, Lee looks nervous in the pre-song interview, he looks nervous during the taped segment (in which his parents say the first time Lee sang for them as a little boy, he insisted they not look at him), he looks nervous during his performance and he looks nervous when getting feedback from the judges. This has been endearing but surely it has to end now. It's not fun to see him looking frightened. Simon tries to buck him up by repeating that Lee has "an incredibly good voice."

PAIGE MILES -- Sang "Honky Tonk Woman," the fifth #1 hit by the Stones and a fine way to close out the Sixties. Paige looked fun in shorts and boots and had some powerful moments with a song Simon dubbed "a little bit generic." But Ellen revealed she is battling laryngitis, which was news to Randy and Simon but not Kara. Given that, they were very polite to her.

AARON KELLY -- Sang "Angie," the #1 hit that's apparently NOT an ode to David Bowie's then-wife (or so they say). It's about the only great moment on their so-so 1973 album *Goat Heads Soup*. In the biggest

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surprise of the night to me, Aaron delivered a distinctive, very strong version of the song and his best performance yet. That's vocally; on stage, he has to watch out for his tendency to pose, rock back and forth and make mechanical hand gestures. Still, this was very good, especially since his country roots (we saw him in cowboy hats in the taped intro) came through nicely.

CRYSTAL BOWERSOX -- Sang "You Can't Always Get What You Want," the b-side to the single "Honky Tonk Woman" and a far, far better song. I thought she built the song beautifully to its natural climax and performed like a pro. But people online here have commented that she seems above it all and as if she already thinks the title is in the bag (I felt she is just kind of reserved and trying not to make a fool of herself). Clearly, the judges are aware of that impression of Crystal and wanted to help her out. Kara specifically referred to the vibe Crystal gives of looking confident and as if she's already won and Simon echoed that in a way that can help her out by taking her down a peg (always good for a front runner) and letting her show some humility. Crystal did it well by enthusing over Siobhan's performance and getting a chance to say she's never for a moment thought she had it all wrapped up. But with performances like this one, she will.

So what did you think of the performances? Who is in the bottom three and who is going home? I'd say the bottom three are Andrew Garcia, Paige Miles, and Lee Dewyze, with Andrew going home. Mind you, it could just as easily be Tim Urban, Lacey Brown and Didi Benami, with Tim going home. But I'll stick with my first three. My pick for the top 4 is Crystal Bowersox, Michael Lynche, Aaron Kelly, Casey James and Siobhan Magnus. Yep, that's five.

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violet4ever 02:06 AM on 3/20/2010

0 Fans

I don't think Crystal looked she she thought she had the title in the bag. Since last week's elimination she has looked depressed or maybe sick. It seemed like she was close to Katelyn and maybe disillusioned about whether or not talent could keep her or anyone else on the show. And that is a valid concern. To stay on Idol you have to not only be talented but also aim your talent at a sizable portion of the audience. Some people were too indie to get a lot of votes, and they are gone. I don't think Crystal has any problem with where she's aiming but she has to get her sass back.

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Charity 12:31 PM on 3/18/2010

43 Fans

Personally, I have no idea why they ragged on Crystal after her performance. Who says she thinks she has this 'all wrapped' up??? I have never for one moment thought that SHE thought that - what 'signals' has she EVER given off to ANYONE that SHE think she has this 'all wrapped up'???

She is clearly far and away the best and most relaxed - and natural - singer among all of them. It's not Crystal who thinks she has this all wrapped up - it's the judges since the rest of the field that they initially chose was so bad. I actually don't think they want Crystal to win at all - she is not exactly the cookie cutter version of what the show is based upon. So to say, this EARLY in the top 12, that one contestant thinks SHE thinks she has it in the bag is surely to register with those teeny boppers and take votes away from Crystal.

An absolutely ridiculous statement to make to Crystal, and frankly on a show that periodically appalls me, this was probably one of the most appalling statements they've ever made to a contestant.

Crystal has always come off as a humble person. She has real, raw talent. I enjoyed her song, thought she did the best most original job - and then to have the judges slam her in such an arrogant manner made me angry. I'm sorry it mattered to me - but that statement was totally

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Charity 12:33 PM on 3/18/2010

43 Fans

...uncalled for.

(The last two words were cut off.)

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Kevin Anderson 1 01:52 AM on 3/18/2010

6 Fans

I think Crystal is exceptional. Unfortunately she seems so reserved that I think people might have a hard time feeling invested in seeing her win. Her personality (what she shows on the show) is nowhere near as bright as her talent. She almost looks depressed sometimes.

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clarityjane 01:14 AM on 3/18/2010

0 Fans

The tattoo on her shoulder is Mary Poppins! It's the famous shot of her holding her umbrella sitting on a rooftop.

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CMR 05:06 PM on 3/17/2010

0 Fans

You really should check out Karen Salkin's review of last night's "Idol" on www.ItsNotAboutMe.tv. I love her reviews - she always says it best!

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Burnsey 02:14 PM on 3/17/2010

14 Fans

Thank you most of all for the Edward Gorey info. I spent most of the time trying to figure out what was on her arm. Her "look" was great, reminded me of my youth in the 80's, and I also think Crystal was wonderful, never thought she felt she had it wrapped up, she did express that there were familial issues, but didn't elaborate, and the fact that she was in the hospital, seems to me that she is just trying to keep it together for the actual SINGING part of the competition. And Ryan looked like a total dip for that opening stare down. He should go, and Simon should stay...I say bring back

Brian Dunkleman, he wasn't as annoying as Ryan has been.

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JohnKevari 11:51 AM on 3/17/2010

2 Fans

WHAT I LEARNED FROM LAST NIGHT'S SHOW

A) Rolling Stone Night should have been called Country Night since all of the songs were performed as if the performers were from Nashville

B) Crystal Bowersox WILL NOT win since America will not vote for a middle aged woman.....
Oops! She's not a middle aged woman? Could have fooled me..... When they do the movie version Meryl Streep will play her with no make-up and in a foul mood.

C) After hearing Tim Urban do "Under My Thumb" he'll next do "Helter Skelter" during Beatles Week.

D) Michael Lynche is like the fun-loving Uncle who sings Karaoke and thinks he's really good.

E) The Judges are doing everything in their power to try to position certain performers as the favorites..... This will back fire.

F) Either Aaron Kelly or Siobhan Magnus will be the eventual winner.....I'll put my money on Aaron.

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kirtlandpat 11:01 AM on 3/17/2010



165 Fans

You are far too kind. This show was brutal. I got the sense that the only one who had even heard a Rolling Stones song before was Crystal. So of course they criticize her for being too relaxed and confident. Why shouldn't she be?

The first thing I did after the show was go back and listen to some real Stones recordings to get these horrific, painful renditions out of my head.

And vote for Crystal, of course.

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Bluesue 11:14 AM on 3/17/2010

196 Fans



Crystal is my favorite. I thought she was the best of the night - in fact, every week. I think you're right about her being reserved. She certainly isn't the cutesy, giggly type. Unfortunately, that can be misinterpreted, especially by younger viewers.

I also like Siobhan. She has a beautiful voice but those high notes hurt my ears. She can get screechy. I'm so surprised Simon hasn't said she borders on screaming.

Between the 2 of them, it would be Crystal's album I'd buy.

Speaking of Simon, am I the only one who thinks he's different this year? He seems less harsh to me and I actually kind of miss it.

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Michael Giltz 12:43 PM on 3/17/2010

59 Fans



Simon is definitely less engaged this season and maybe that results in him being less pointed than usual.

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Burnsey 02:16 PM on 3/17/2010

14 Fans

Simon did mention that she screams. He said she was going to have to scream at the end of every song because people are expecting that "high" note.

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MiraMcB 09:06 PM on 3/17/2010



165 Fans

Kirtlandpat,

Yeah, we did, too. Threw the Stones on the big system and blasted it just to shake it all off.

The show was in the ok range for most, probably, but for a die-hard Stones fan brutal says it. Instead of being the best of the best, it worked out to be the best of the worst for us. There were a couple of "almosts" in there, but mostly it was meh.

Michael was ok. Siobhan is the rave today. It was ok, but we laughed when she hit that gratuitous high note literally out of nowhere. Fortunately, she ended it ok. Crystal was ok. Nothing to write home about. Aaron delivered the weakest, reediest Angie I've ever heard, Paige was predictable as a sunset with that song choice. Andy was boring and verged on ruining one of my personal favs. Lacie - why is she still here? And so on...

So far, nothing is really jumping out at us as this being a great season with great talent and a hot run off. Early days. We'll see.

yawn

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