



JANUARY 7, 2011

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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: March 4, 2010 04:07 AM

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Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Women

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RATINGS COVERAGE: *American Idol* had another very strong night ratings-wise. It reached 23.5 million viewers, up from the performance show one year ago, which reached 22.8 million, according to [Mediaweek's Marc Berman](#). That's about a 15% growth. Week to week the show has been up and down but there's still a possibility the show will increase its total ratings over last season. The only other instances I can remember of a veteran series growing like that is the venerable *60 Minutes*, which fell to #7 before leaping

back to #1 in the 1991-1992 season and *Law & Order*, which enjoyed a long slow climb to its peak of #5 in 2001, 11 seasons into its run.

SHOW COVERAGE: 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. Last night the judges criticized the Temptations classic "My Girl" as not relevant and tonight they praised performances of Creedence Clearwater Revival, Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin's 60s hit "Think." Huh.

CRYSTAL BOWERSOX -- Sang CCR's flip side to the #2 hit "Lookin' Out My Back Door," the bluesy soulful "Long As I Can See The Light." Bowersox was smooth, confident and delivered the promised gospel flair with disarming ease. She immediately set the bar high and no one else matched it. Simon compared her to Kelly Clarkson and the moment when the first *Idol* winner suddenly stepped it up. I thought of Bonnie Raitt.

HAELEY VAUGHN -- Sang the Miley Cyrus tune "The Climb," which hit #4 and is a teen pop standard in the making. Unfortunately, she never sang it well. It was impossible to relax at any point during the song. Cute girl but way too young both age-wise and performance-wise. Really disastrous with the poor girl barely able to make it through a single line without messing up.

LACEY BROWN -- Sang basically the only hit Sixpence None The Richer will ever have, the #2 hit "Kiss

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Me." She was far improved over last week when you wondered how the heck she got that far. But it wasn't actually good, with nothing distinctive to remember.

KATIE STEVENS -- Sang Corinne Bailey Rae's #2 UK hit "Put Your Records On." I'm a huge fan of Rae but this is a bad choice for most anyone else to sing. It's low and hard to groove on and has an extremely tricky melody. In short, it revealed every possible limitation in the 17 year old singer in one three minute segment. Not good.

DIDI BENAMI -- Sang the #1 Bill Withers classic "Lean On Me." Benami is NOT a soul singer, so if she was going to sing this song it should have been with a folkie simplicity, not with an attempt to get down and funky. She tried to get soulful and was rough all the way through. Am I being harsh? At this point, Simon said, "It's a really bad episode."

MICHELLE DELAMOR -- Sang Creed's #1 hit "With Arms Wide Open." It wasn't especially good but in comparison to the four really bad performances that preceded it, this almost seemed ok for a while. Then she went off the rails completely before hitting an awful finale.

LILLY SCOTT -- Sang Sam Cooke's posthumous Top 40 hit and iconic protest song "A Change Is Gonna Come." Scott said she wanted to be seen as a current indie artist...so she sang a 45 year old soul classic? What a kooky choice. And yet it was pretty darn good and certainly distinctive and quirky. It sort of worked and again she seemed like nirvana compared to the last five.

KATELYN EPPERLY -- Sang Coldplay's #10 UK hit "The Scientist" from their best album, *A Rush Of Blood To The Head*. (In fact, it made my list of **The Best CDs of the 2000s.**) Certainly improved, it was ok and you were rooting for her and she had a good finale that left a positive impression (something so many have been lacking this season).

PAIGE MILES -- Sang Kelly Clarkson's #12 hit "Walk Away." It was fine but pretty anonymous until she hit the bridge and brought some personality to it. Fine but forgettable.

SIOBHAN MAGNUS -- Sang Aretha Franklin's Top 10 hit from 1968 "Think." I thought her voice sounded thin throughout -- when the backup singers sang "just a child" that brief phrase had more distinctiveness than anything Siobhan was doing. But it wasn't bad, just shadowed by better earlier versions, and I don't just mean Aretha's but Kelly Clarkson's on the show and others. But she also wowed them in classic *Idol* fashion with a really high note right towards the end that Siobhan nailed.

For me Crystal Bowersox was way ahead of the pack with Lilly Scott and Siobhan Magnus still there and the rest far behind. What did you think? Any favorites? And who of the many worthy possibilities will be going home?

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Page: 1 2 Next › Last » (2 total)

HUFFPOST SUPER USER

greymom 10:14 AM on 3/05/2010
226 Fans



For me, its all Siobhan, all the time. Crystal is like any other busker at the subway station but Siobhan is quirky, kind of pretty and I love her Earth shoes. My favorite was the Chris Isaak tune she did last night. She reminds me a little bit of K. D. Lang.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

euthman 06:21 AM on 3/05/2010
97 Fans [Follow](#)



Michael Giltz is right on target. My faves are Crystal Bowersox and Lilly Scott, but at this point, I don't see that any of the contestants, male or female, has the chops to be a Kelly Clarkson or a Carrie Underwood with a massive popular following. How on earth did Haeley Vaughn ever get to Hollywood, much less into the top 24? Thank goodness the voters gave her a ticket home.

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MindyM 03:18 AM on 3/05/2010

32 Fans

I am in agreement with most of the comments about the girls. Crystal really nailed it perfectly and has a quiet confidence that is amazing. She seems comfortable in her own skin and knows who she is as an artist, and that's half the battle. Lily gets props for managing to pull off a good version of Sam Cooke's great final song, "A Change is Gonna Come". He was my idol when I was very young and his death shattered me. No one can ever come close to him, but I give Lily credit for giving the song's words meaning and doing it in her own way. It was a huge risk, but she did it. Katelyn also managed to stand out to me with her Coldplay song. I thought she showed great vocal skills and gave meaning to the lyrics. I like that Siobhan had the guts to tackle the great Aretha Franklin. I agree that her voice wasn't quite big enough, but the girl has guts and energy and presence. If she can figure out how to use that incredible voice, then she will be a real contender.

My top four are Crystal, Lilly, Siobhan and Katelyn. The final two spots are going to be a battle. I am hoping that Didi steps it up, but the girl has to pick the right song or sing it the way it works for her unique, quirky voice. She is not an R&B soul singer.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

Joe Moore 02:03 AM on 3/05/2010
29 Fans



This season is BORING. The singers are boring, the judges are boring, the producers have seemingly fallen asleep at the helm. I felt like the episodes this week dragged on, and on, and on.

None of the contestants this year seem to really give a sh&t that they are on the show. No one has that 'umph' on stage or really seems to be working it up there. Seems the stage is the one in control, not the artist. I know a lot of people didn't really like him throughout, but Adam Lambert really worked the stage from the very beginning. So did Allison. They blew the competition out of the water because of their ability to perform, as well as sing.

These kids, and that's what they are, lack in so many respects this show looks like 'Idol Lite' to me. A mere shadow of it's former self.

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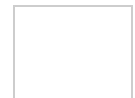
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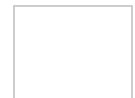
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Simon has it right to jump ship and do something else. I don't blame him for leaving at all.

Oh...and do you think they're really praying before they sing (all of them!!) or do you think they're going for the midwest vote because that's who chose the Idol last year? Honestly I don't care what you do before the show, none of it it working!

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
libwingoflibwing 10:16 PM on 3/04/2010
178 Fans



First review of this season's Idol that is congruent with my take. Crystal is out and out the best with Lilly and Siobhan competing for the next best. Everyone else is filler.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER
Michael Giltz 03:36 AM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



Thx for reading. Hopefully you can enjoy even when I get it wrong!

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
callyhouck 09:54 PM on 3/04/2010
5 Fans



I want to see Chrystal sing 4NonBlondes "What's Up"...she has a voice like Linda Perry...she's even got the dreds. I am not a fan of AI, but I'd watch it just to hear this girl sing.

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Charity 06:28 PM on 3/04/2010
43 Fans

Face it, the selection of singers this year kind of.... well....stinks. There are only two or three good singers, Crystal being one of them (and my early favorite from the auditions). Crystal has an inner strength and knows who she is and isn't afraid to show it - whereas most of the others are trying to be what they think they should be, not who they are. On the guy side, perhaps only two or three can even match Crystal - dude from the hood, Casey Looker Guy, and the guy who sang last.

Look, if I have to resort to euphemisms instead of actual names, AI has a problem. This time last year (and other years) I at least knew my favorites names.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
magicmary 05:09 PM on 3/04/2010
92 Fans



I wish I could be as comfortable with myself as Crystal and Siobhan seem on stage. Wow, and I'm over 50 too! Love Crystal and have my fingers crossed for Siobhan. I hope Crystal stays close to the Americana stuff.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
langstonhughesfan 04:52 PM on 3/04/2010
16 Fans



This show can ONLY be watched through the DVR so that you can fast-forward through the nonsense! I let it record the first hour, then start watching and get caught up with the live viewing by the end of the show. It's THAT painful to sit through. All of the silly "things you didn't know about me" segments and lengthy commercials!!! I Crystal is by far the best, and I actually really liked Katelyn (the one at the piano--right?) Siobhan is also pretty good. The rest--all of them--really need to go, starting with Haeley. Let's hope she's got her bags packed tonight.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 03:38 AM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



God bless DVRs. But it's not just Idol. I don't watch any live TV; commercials are just interminable and a waste of time. And for a show like Idol with a lot of filler, it's even more of a time-saver. Of course, I feel obliged to watch the intro videos and chats with Ryan just in case they say something notable so. Otherwise, I could power through an hour in about 22 minutes.

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Tilnar 09:12 AM on 3/05/2010

3 Fans

Oh, I totally agree. I mean, literally, the 2-hour show when you cut down to just the singing and the judges comments (and this season, some of the singing has also been FF-worthy) is less than the 44 minutes of a PVR-ed commercial-skipping drama. It's all filler, corp sponsorship and generally painful.

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Scottcluthe 04:41 PM on 3/04/2010

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yes, it is a fun diversion. I mean watching the rises, the crashes, the Simoness of it all. Thank gawd for digital taping. As to this posturing about singing Sam Cooke...er. Now really, please don't drag that kind of meaning into a young woman who decides to sing a song on AI. next thing you know you'll call for a boycott! lol.

And have you considered, that maybe, just maybe it will send a bunch of people back to hear the original?

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Michael Giltz 03:40 AM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



I'm all for singing Sam Cooke. I was just teasing the judges for claiming a Motown wasn't "relevant" but championing performances of other classic songs. I do indeed think these performances can and do lead people to check out the originals, which can only be good. It's better than the umpteenth rendition of a Jason Mraz song.

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Michael Giltz 03:41 AM on 3/05/2010
59 Fans



Yikes. You were referring to the post below. My bad. I sometimes forget these are posted in reverse order with the most recent at the top.

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SILVANUS 04:11 PM on 3/04/2010

138 Fans



This show. For all the yadda-yadda about "this is my heart, my life, my dream," I just see mercantile misery chewing on the last bones of what was once a viable music industry that occasionally had some heart and depth, and was NOT ONLY ABOUT MONEY.

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GiannaX 03:07 PM on 3/04/2010

62 Fans

At this point, Crystal Bowersox is the one to beat.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

RhiannonRings 02:59 PM on 3/04/2010

51 Fans



I'm liking Crystal, Siobhan, and Lilly...but who will go home tonight, that is the question.

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filmex 03:37 PM on 3/04/2010

43 Fans

Totally agree.

One thing I can't figure out: I love Lilly and think her bravery and rendition of the Beatles' "Fixing A Hole" last week was one of the best "Idol" entries ever, came back this week with "A Change Is Gonna Come". Now yesterday I posted that after hearing one of the guys butcher Marvin Gaye, I prayed that they wouldn't return next week and do the same to Sam Cooke.

During the Civil Rights movement, Sam Cooke was so perplexed that Bob Dylan was writing the only important protest songs, that he set down purposefully to craft a soulful entry, which he knocked out of the park with "Change".

As much as I love Lilly, I found her quiriness SO misplaced in doing such a momentous song, found her SO detached from the actual content of the lyric, that I cringed through most of the performance. Instead of being moving, as the song inherently is, Lilly's version was as profound as listening to Melanie spin, "I've got a pair of brand new roller-skates, You've got a brand new key".

The fact that all the judges other than Simon thought it was great, and the best performance of the evening (!!!) was flabbergasting. Did they forget Crystal's performance so soon? Love Lilly, but that kinda praise for that song choice and performance escaped me COMPLETELY.

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HoldthatTiger 03:49 PM on 3/04/2010

2 Fans

filmex, I couldn't agree with you more about Lilly's performance of the Cooke classic--it was horrible, and I can't believe the kudos from the judges and more than one critic. The song was simply too BIG for her. IMO, only Bowersox has the true talent on the woman's side, and she, so far, is the singer to beat.

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libwingoflibwing 10:21 PM on 3/04/2010

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Actually Lilly's performance inspired me and healed me. I know the background to Cooke's song and the meaning it has. As a progressive activist feeling discouraged with the way things have been going, Lilly's modern take on the song reached my soul and encouraged me. I actually said out loud when she was done, "Thank you, Lilly." I needed it.

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MindyM 03:27 AM on 3/05/2010

32 Fans

Let me say that I adored Sam Cooke. I literally worshipped him growing up. His death just broke my heart. He is untouchable in my opinion. No one will ever sing one of his songs better than he did. Even now it's hard for me to listen to his last song, "A Change is Gonna Come". I break down in tears because of the loss of such an extraordinary talent.

I would normally despise anyone for even daring to sing this song, but I have to give Lilly credit. She did it her way, seemed to connect with the words and meaning of the song. It was the biggest of risks. Sam Cooke was the best, but Lilly showed gave this song tender loving care and did a good job. I applaud her for having the courage to pull this off.

I miss Sam Cooke every single day of my life.

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erica33 02:26 PM on 3/04/2010

5 Fans

While the girls are definately better than the guys this season, I can really only stand to watch the Crystal and Siobahn. The rest I tend to TEVO through even though the songs are short to begin with. The boys are terrible too. The Paula Abdul singer and the hot-Blond are the only two that hold any interest to me and they aren't very good either. I'm starting to wonder why I am even wasting my time watching the show. It takes up 3 nights a week and that's too much. The songs they sing are boring too. The Kiss Me song was horrific. To actually recommend someone sing that for a national singing contest seems incredible to me. Lacy Brown needs to go and really anyone else between the first and last performances could be voted off and I will be glad that it's one step closer to the finale.

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CAMBEL 12:28 PM on 3/04/2010

332 Fans



Could there be a rule that contestants aren't allowed to sing any songs that Kara wrote to try to get on her good side? She isn't a great song writer and they would do better to pick actual substantial songs. Additionally, The fact that Randy would ignore the entire sub-standard performance of "Think" just because she hit one incredibly loud note just reminds me how ridiculous his judging is. Crystal, Didi, and Lilli seemed to be the front runners here.

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Michael Giltz 02:21 PM on 3/04/2010

59 Fans



At least Kara hasn't recommended a contestant sing one of her songs yet :)

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filmex 03:40 PM on 3/04/2010

43 Fans

You pan Siobhan yet call Didi a front runner?? Seriously? Siobhan will rightfully be around next week while Didi, cute as she is, could be packing her bags after being reduced to tears by the judge's derisive reviews.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER

RhiannonRings 06:32 PM on 3/04/2010

51 Fans



Siobhan is quirky, kind of an art chick, I like that about her!

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Tilnar 09:14 AM on 3/05/2010

3 Fans

Thank you! Finally someone who also sees that.... The whole performance was painful, and then she nailed one big note at the end, and suddenly it was all ok. As I was watching, I said to my fiancee "This isn't a performance, this is an attempt to show off what vocal tricks Siobhan has..." -- and yet noone called her on it.

Lilly and Crystal both showed up and performed a song - and did so well, I thought (though Crystal over Lilly).

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