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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: February 25, 2010 03:56 AM

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Idol Season 9: Top 24 -- The Men

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RATINGS UPDATE: *Idol* triumphed over the Olympics both Tuesday and Wednesday. Tuesday was especially amazing since it featured night one of the women's ice skating. I'm certain the results show of *Idol* will place second to the women's ice skating final tonight. On Tuesday, *Idol* scored 24 million viewers over the 20.8 million watching the Olympics, according to the [Hollywood Reporter](#). Lost, by the way, settled into a so-so 9.9 million. Maybe it's finale won't be the juggernaut I thought it might. On Wednesday, *Idol* scored 22.8 million, beating the

Olympics again.

SHOW COVERAGE: The judges touted the women but the men on *American Idol* offered a little more positive news in their first live performances. Ellen improved a bit as she found her footing and both Randy and Kara (who wore a shirt that looked like something Tina Turner donned in *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*) seem to be working harder to set themselves up for when Simon goes. And Simon keeps staring off into the distance as if he's bored and wishes he could be done already. Happily, his comments remain on target.

TODRICK HALL -- Sang Kelly Clarkson's awesome pop single "Since U Been Gone," which hit #2. It was a clever idea for a guy to do it and he went for a funky, slower take...that removed almost all of the fun. He was rough on the verses and the chorus -- which is awesome in the original -- plodded. Going first is never fun.

AARON KELLY -- Sang the #1 country hit "Here Comes Goodbye" by Rascal Flatts. I thought the choice was too adult and giggled when he sang about "the truck tires" because I wondered if he even had his license yet. But he was convincing and smooth, with a decent big note (which *Idol* audiences love). Hopefully someone will help him calm down the over-dramatic hand gestures. Seemed too young when they put him in the Top 24 but he's changing my mind. This was a good step forward.

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JERMAINE SELLERS -- Sang the lone pop charting song by Oleta Adams, the #5 hit "Get Here." He started off too high and sounded thin, then got piercing and sharp on the high notes when he wasn't trying to throw in a million and one show-offy runs. If I was Randy, I'd coin something like, "All trill, no thrill." On the plus side, he was funny when saying Hollywood Week should be called Hell Week. Otherwise, pretty disastrous and even worse on the recap playback.

TIM URBAN -- Sang the smash #2 hit "Apologize" by One Republic. He says it was a last minute replacement but since they're one of his favorite bands, I'm sure he would have sung it eventually. He started off with a classic Idol sharp move, the savvy playing to the camera by looking down and then staring intently right into it as he began singing. The best news is that Tim did work the camera well and looked very cute, very Shaun Cassidy. The singing however was rough on the falsetto chorus and at best so-so on the verses. It came across even worse on the recap playback.

JOE MUNOZ -- Sang the Jason Mraz tune "You And I Both." He started off sitting and looked pretty confident. He seemed to be having fun, which helps a lot when he's rough on the chorus. Ran out of breath at the end of some sentences but charmed his way through and stoked the Latino vote.

TAYLOR GRADY -- Sang the Guess Who #1 hit classic "American Woman." Grady, borrowing leather pants from Constantine, started it off slow and bluesy which wasn't great but at least different. Then he performed his way past ok vocals, though the judges nailed him for looking like a poser.

LEE DEWYZE -- Sang Snow Patrol's #5 hit "Chasing Cars. He was a bit flat at times and never really grooved on the song but has a distinctive voice. Just needs more swagger. But somehow, though it didn't really work, still promising.

JOHN PARK -- Sang what Ryan called "the jazz standard" of "God Bless The Child." I've had a running commentary on people not always knowing the original performer or songwriter of a tune, especially a pre-rock standard. (Just because Michael Buble sings a song doesn't mean it's now a Michael Buble tune.) But come on. It's co-written by Billie Holiday, she sang it first and it's indelibly associated with her. So that's Lady Day's "God Bless The Child," Ryan. That was my first thought. My second thought was WTF? Why would he choose this song? He had an ok finale but overall it was a trainwreck. You can always spot a bad singer when you don't really concentrate on the lyrics or know what he's singing. That's because he's singing the melody, not the lyrics, so emotionally it doesn't mean anything. Bad bad choice.

MICHAEL LYNCH -- Sang Maroon 5's #5 hit "This Love." He was a confident performer, which helped mask a lot of middling singing. Simon called him a supporting act (which was devastatingly on target) and Kara accurately said if there had been a lot of good performances that night, they would have been harder on him. But relatively speaking, it was one of the more pleasant.

ALEX LAMBERT -- Sang James Morrison's Top 10 hit in the UK "Wonderful World." It was probably inevitable since his voice sounds so much like that artist, but that's exactly why it was a bad choice. He was rough on the verse, but better on the chorus which is why he sang the chorus twice in a row. Bopping up and down, Alex gave the most physically awkward performance of the night. Ellen said she supported him in sticking with the mullet. But he should lose it.

CASEY JAMES -- At first I thought Ryan Seacrest said he was gonna sing RYAN Adams, which really had me excited. Instead it was Bryan Adams and his first #1 hit "Heaven." There was nothing remarkable about the arrangement though he threw in some slight tweaks on the vocals. But the acoustic guitar and the straightforward performance was good, probably the best performance of the night, though not one to save. He'd do great on John Mellencamp night.

ANDREW GARCIA -- Sang Fall Out Boys first Top 10 hit, "Sugar, We're Goin' Down." It was a stripped down acoustic version and like several others tonight, Andrew was engaging if not exactly great memorable. Bizarrely, the judges criticized him and said what he should have done was something like his revamping of Paula Abdul's "Straight Up." Which is of course EXACTLY what he did: an unexpected revamp of a hit, this time a rock one. It wasn't a home run like the Abdul tune, but he was doing what they wanted and it was strange they didn't realize that. Next time, he should avoid that novelty approach and just sing something relatively straight.

Overall, the men had more performances that were...pleasant if not necessarily more memorable than the women. Certainly as far as air time and positive comments from the judges and a good performance, Casey James had a good night and Aaron Kelly proved he won't be the deer in the headlights I feared.

Does social networking matter? This early in the game, a passionate fan base might very well keep you safe for a week. That could be good news for John Park: he has the most fans on Facebook and the second most followers on Twitter. (Andrew Garcia has almost FOUR TIMES as many followers on Twitter and just eight fans away from him on Facebook.

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Three guys are in the bottom four on those sites: Michael Lynche, Jermaine Sellers and Joe Munoz. If two of them go home, we'll know this early indicator is something to keep an eye on.

So who did you like or not like last night? Anyone change your opinion of them for better or worse?

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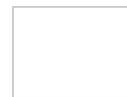
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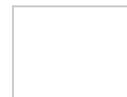
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anonimost 02:19 PM on 2/26/2010

6 Fans

I liked Casey for the purity of the performance. Too many times it sounded like the singer was drowning in the band. Although I did not care for their performances, I like the voices of Dewyze and Lambert. Munoz was okay. John Park has a huge voice but the performance was atrocious.

Big Mike annoyed me with smiles rather than substance. Jermaine is arrogant and indulgent. I just felt sorry for Tim Urban. What a bad performance on a likeable guy.

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CAMBEL 12:34 PM on 2/26/2010

304 Fans



I love Ellen normally, but really don't like her on the show. Not sure how the show will fare after Simon leaves.

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jade9403 10:49 PM on 2/25/2010

8 Fans

I thought all the judges were awful. Pretty much all Ellen could say is, "I like you." and "You'll probably go through because you're cute." Kara virtually sexually harassed Casey James and embarrassed both of them when she stated, "Casey, I'm a married woman." as if he was actually interested in her. Randy was the same old, "Dawg" this and "Dawg" that. Simon was the worst broken record of all of them, complaining about song choice or/or their rendition of the song. He also looked and acted like he'd rather be having a root canal.

I'm so sick of all the judges complaining about "song choice." I have a suggestion. After Hollywood Week, for the first two weeks the judges could pick three songs for each contestant and it would be up to the contestant to sing one of those songs. It's obvious how nervous they are. They are, after all, amateurs and perhaps it would lessen their anxiety while they get used to performing on a big stage with a huge audience. That would all but eliminated the chorus of "bad song," "I hated that song," and "You're too young/old for that song" from the judges and they could concentrate on actually critiquing the singing. Food for thought.

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RhiannonRings 08:03 PM on 2/25/2010

50 Fans



I wonder how much help/advice the contestants get with choosing their songs? Seems like more help is needed!

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danusgram 08:01 PM on 2/25/2010

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The panel chemistry is horrible Ellen needs to stay on her show I love her but not on this show. Kara is so annoying boy she reminds me of a back stabber if I ever saw one I wonder if that is what happened to Paula, and the sexual inuendos while 8 year olds were tuned in was way too much for me. Lastly, the talent..are they kidding they most likely are trying to end the show and use a tax write off otherwise they better get a new set of producers I doubt they will be able to hold on to their audience this year.

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ChelleAgain 07:09 PM on 2/25/2010

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I agree that the song was too old for Aaron Kelly, and was surprised the judges didn't seem to care the way they do with the females. It was like he was imitating a middle-aged country singer.

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The Jermaine Sellers thing was just painful.

The judges always give contradictory advice -- try changing it up, but a song was successful for a reason so why did you change it? It all translates to you didn't do that well instead advice that can be used.

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porsche996 02:04 PM on 2/25/2010
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Can we just get rid of 6 a side tonight and get on with it?

12 girls...3 contestants...this has got to be the fault of the judges...when you audition thousands and wind up inviting so many losers to Hollywood you gotta ask about your own criteria for choosing...they really didn't get better than this?

Watched the guys tonight...same story...12 guys Maaaybe 3 contestants....waste of time this year...I predict ratings for this season will be all time low.

Nothing to see here....move along.

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CAMBEL 12:33 PM on 2/25/2010

304 Fans



Two things seem really obvious to me....

1. Idol producers want a femal Idol this year, from Simon announcing to the Papers a while ago that the women were better this, year, and after the women's horrible night, Randy telling the guys that they had to be on their game because "The girls really blew it up last night!"

2. In addition to having to have a ridiculous sob story, contestants this year were put through a beauty contest. Are they really trying to tell us that there wasn't ONE heavy female who was a good singer?! Thats funny, because Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Jennifer Hudson, Martha WASH, Oletta Adams, Wynonna etc... might beg to differ. I get that they want somebody who they think can sell records, but perhaps why none of the Idol winners are really selling has something to do with the fact that somebody like Stevie Nicks, Lady Gaga, Madonna, Michael Bubble, Tom Petty, etc... would never even have been picked to go to Hollywood week.

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Michael Giltz 01:25 PM on 2/25/2010
59 Fans



Idol has been pretty diverse throughout its run as far as race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and body type. They certainly are aware of having a diverse group in the Top 24 to appeal to lots of people. I think if this season there's no big-boned gal, it's just happenstance. There are too many instances in the past of plus-size gals to think they've suddenly decided only thin women can get through. And Michael Lynche is big enough for two or three contestants!

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CAMBEL 02:41 PM on 2/25/2010

304 Fans



I'm sorry, but your defense of them is ridiculous. The fact that in the U.S. something like 64% of adults are overweight or obese shows that this isn't a season where good singers who don't fit the looks mold have a shot. your sighting the fact that they have had a few overweight girls in the past are sort of like claiming that a country club isn't racist because they used to have one black member. I'm not on a huge crusade, I just get bored hearing one not great singer after another and knowing that they most likely shot down a huge amount of talent because they were dorky, skinny, fat, ugly etc... Even the supposed "Alt." people are ridiculous...with their squeaky clean dreadlocks, and the stories of them living in their car called into question by the fact that their parents are right there in the audience cheering them on.

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stratdude 12:30 PM on 2/25/2010

30 Fans

I agree with Michael for the most part, but I had to fast forward through Tim Urban, John Park and Alex Lambert, especially Park — I couldn't understand a word he sang. I judged the women's set as a little better overall, didn't feel the need to fast forward through any of them.

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Michael Giltz 01:26 PM on 2/25/2010
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You missed nothing by fast forwarding on those three, believe me. And your point of view is certainly one the judges agree with.

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