

Celebrity Interview: 'American Idol' Winner Trent Harmon Is the First Contestant to Sing Justin Timberlake



By [Katie Gray](#)

Last Thursday night, April 7th, Trent Harmon, who chose the Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes classic "If You Don't Know Me By Now" and Sia's hit "Chandelier" for his final performances, was crowned the winner of the 15th and final season of *American Idol*. That's right – Harmon is the final American Idol! He now has a record deal with Big Machine

Records, and his first single “Falling” – which was co-written by *American Idol* judge and country superstar Keith Urban – will be on country radio.

Harmon, a 25-year-old former waiter from Mississippi, auditioned for the reality TV show in Little Rock, Arkansas. The country boy grew up on his family farm and would perform at his family’s restaurant. During his time on *American Idol*, he wowed the crowd with a Lynyrd Skynyrd cover and a rendition of Chris Stapleton’s “Tennessee Whiskey.” He’s the third winner to pursue a career in country music, following in the footsteps of Carrie Underwood and Scotty McCreery. In our exclusive [celebrity interview](#), Harmon discusses his relationship with God, his love for country music, and his journey on *American Idol*.

Celebrity Interview with the Final *American Idol*

After he won, the singer thanked his mother, family, and God. He’s a man of faith, and it’s easy to see that being a Christian is a big part of his life. When he had mono during the reality TV show and was essentially quarantined and isolated from the rest of the cast, he would pray, “It’s just me and you. It’s just you and me, God.” He didn’t have his parents with him and relied heavily on his faith. “If you can make it through this competition without believing in something, I wouldn’t say that’s impressive,” he shares. “Instead, it’s kind of scary.”

His relationship with God has been a part of his singing for as long as he can remember. He recalls his mom teaching him “Amazing Grace” at the age of 5. Of his deep connection to the song, he says, “That song means something. There’s a reason it’s considered a classic.” It was while singing “Amazing Grace” that he realized he could sing harmony.

Related Link: [Celebrity Interview: Mackenzie Bourg Channeled JLO During Love Songs](#)

As important as his faith is, when it comes to his music, the country classics really have his heart. “Whenever I got the opportunity to pick the song myself, I was singing country,” he shares. It’s no surprise, then, that Harmon’s musical influences are country singers. “I’ve always enjoyed the classics,” he says. “I love Conway Twitty. I’m a big Elvis fan – you know, Elvis did country. I’m a Ray Charles fan, and he did a country album.”

Of his future fans, he explains, “Country music supporters – they go to the shows; they go to the festivals; and they buy the songs. If you can make it in country, you can have a career.” Willing to move anywhere, he may even relocate to Nashville.

Trent Harmon Opens Up About His Reality TV Journey

Given the intense schedule of *American Idol*, Harmon hasn’t had time for a break. “I have sleep scheduled for next Friday,” he says with a laugh. Being the Final Idol is still completely surreal to him. “It hasn’t really sunk in. I jumped in the shower and started doing my warm-ups and practicing my songs, and then, I realized I don’t have to do that anymore,” he reveals in our celebrity interview.

Perhaps the most special moment of his journey was getting to perform a song by Justin Timberlake, who had never granted anyone permission to use his music on the show. Earlier this season, Harmon performed the hit “Drink You Away,” which Timberlake released to country radio after a performance with Stapleton at the Country Music Academy Awards in November 2015.

Related Link: [Celebrity Interview: American Idol Sonika Vaid Channels Love for Family](#)

He also had the opportunity to speak with some of the people on his bucket list, including Jordin Sparks and David Archuleta. Of the advice that he received from former contestants, he says, "They told me, 'Don't ever, ever, quit being genuine. Don't ever get out of that head.'" He was lucky enough to exchange numbers with some of them and looks forward to networking and applying their tips to his future endeavors.

Harmon never wanted "to coast along" and wasn't going to give anything less than his best. Ultimately, he credits this mentality and a lot of hard work with winning *American Idol*. "I knew that if I pushed myself and worked really, really hard, I could be more than just a pretty voice. I practiced every day," he says. "I practiced every different angle to be good, to be better, to be the best."

You can keep up with the American Idol winner on Twitter [@TrentWHarmon!](#)

Celebrity Interview: 'American Idol' Mackenzie Bourg Channeled JLO During Love Songs





By [Katie Gray](#)

The 15th and final season of American Idol is coming to an end! Next week is the finale and the 'Final Idol' will be announced. Last night Mackenzie Bourg was sadly eliminated after a great season. The 23-year-old from Lafayette, Louisiana put on quite the performance for his hometown visit before being cut. Bourg who was first seen on season three of The Voice on team CeeLo Green, also plays the guitar and piano. In our celebrity interview with this Idol star, Bourg opened up about the way in which he channels emotion while singing love songs, who he would like to perform a duet with and his plans to tour in the future.

Former American Idol Contestant Talks Reality TV & Loyal Fans In This Celebrity Interview

The singer discussed how American Idol allowed him to be his true self. "I think American Idol has done me so many favors,

just by not trying to change me – by letting me be myself,” he explained. With this platform, he has had the opportunity to expand his audience and reach people on a broader spectrum. “I get on Twitter and Instagram, and all these things, and there’s so many people I don’t even know, sending me nothing but love and support.” He continued, “And those people want me to succeed as much as the people at home.” From his presence on social media, it’s evident that Bourg has a close connection to his fans and followers. Some of them have even started calling themselves the ‘Mac Pack.’

[Celebrity Interview: American Idol Sonika Vaid](#)

Hometown Hallelujah:

During his hometown visit, he did a fantastic rendition of Leonard Cohen’s famed ‘Hallelujah.’ Bourg said, “Hallelujah’s one of the first songs I ever learned.” The television star used to perform it when he was starting out his career years ago, so he says it is a track that is near and dear to his heart. This weighed heavily on Bourg’s decision to perform this song for his hometown visit and ultimately what ended up being his final performance. He explained, “I just wanted to go out with something that left a good taste in people’s mouth about me.”

For Bourg, the song was a metaphor. “To me, the song was more than just the lyrics,” he explained. “It’s kind of like a reminder of how far I’ve come.” This explains why we were able to see the passion and emotion in his performance. He clearly gave it his all and went out with a riveting performance. “I sang it so passionately, just because I remember five or six years ago when I first learned that song, how bad I was at the song and how I never thought that in my wildest dreams I’d be on the biggest stage in the world – performing it.” Every one can take a cue from him, that life is about learning and growing. Nobody is perfect at something in the beginning, but with hard work you can achieve your wildest dreams.

From his time on American Idol and The Voice, it is apparent that Bourg performs love songs very well. Not only does the singer perform them, but he also writes them! This is why his favorite love song to perform is one of his very own. "I like the love song that I wrote, called, 'Roses.' It's a pretty cool love song."

Relationships go hand in hand with love songs. On American Idol we saw that Bourg has found a mentor in Lauren Alaina. Unfortunately for fans who were hoping for a Bourg-Alaina romance, they're not going to be a celebrity couple any time soon because she is already taken. "She's been awesome, I know she has a boyfriend so we're definitely just friendly. But yeah, she's been so supportive of me." Furthermore; "She's been a great mentor, not just musically but in the encourage department too." Bourg let us know that Alaina sends him positive text messages and genuinely congratulates him for his success on the show.

Bourg performed a variety of love ballads on American Idol. He even sang the classic 'I Want You To Want Me' by Cheap Trick for rock week! When asked where he gets his emotion to sing these deep love song he explains, "The easiest way to sing love songs on the show is to kind of stare at JLO in the eyes," said Bourg. "It kind of works sometimes when she realizes, she commented on it a few times this year. But yeah, that's definitely who I'm channeling when I'm on the show."

[Celebrity Interview: American Idol Contestant Tristan McIntosh](#)

Not only is Bourg open to expressing emotions in his love songs, but he is open to performing a duet. If he had to pick someone to do a duet with, it would be Taylor Swift. "I would probably say, I mean just picking it vocally, I would say Taylor Swift would probably sound really good singing with me. I know she did a song with Ed Sheeran that was really awesome." He added, "That would definitely be a cool song that I think I could do with her."

As for his plans for the future, he will be furthering his career in the music industry and going on tour. “Yeah, there’s definitely a chance I’ll be touring. I don’t think the show will be touring, but that’s definitely the plan and to release ‘Roses’ – a song I wrote and played on the show.” ‘Roses’ is set to be his next single. In fact, he tweeted today that he is recording it tomorrow!

Tune in next week to see who will be the Final Idol!

You can keep up with Mackenzie Bourg by following him on Twitter @mackenziebourg!

Celebrity Interview: ‘American Idol’ Contestant Sonika Vaid Channels Love For Family In Love Songs





By [Katie Gray](#)

We now have our final four of the 15th and final season of reality TV show *American Idol*, but unfortunately Sonika Vaid did not make the cut. While Vaid hails from Martha's Vineyard, she blew everyone away with her audition in Denver, Colorado and continued to get by week after week. The now reality TV star has been singing from the young age of three and playing the piano since the age of 4. The 20-year-old pre-med student went on to compose her own music on the piano. While on the show, she has performed an array of love ballads and even did an amazing version of Demi Lovato's *Let It Go* this season. In our [celebrity interview](#), Vaid opened up about her musical journey, love for everything Disney and her favorite love songs and ballads.

Former American Idol Contestant Talks Musical Journey & Love In

This Celebrity Interview

From her time on the show, it's no secret that Vaid loves a good love ballad. One of her favorites from the show was *I Surrender*. "But just in terms of love songs, I would definitely say *My Heart Will Go On* by Celine Dion is a really iconic love song in my eyes. It's beautiful!" While she performed a variety of songs on the show, her personal favorite performance was *Bring Me To Life*. "That was the performance that really made me feel like I can do this – and that I do have the confidence somewhere in me to really perform and push myself to the limits and step out of my bubble," she says.

With love ballads comes the topic of relationships, but instead of channeling a celebrity relationship or relationship problems of her own, the singer channels all her love for her family in her performances. She is really close to her family and it was hard being away from them for the show. "Being away from my family, I miss them a lot," she says. "So I channel my love for my family and I put that through my songs. That energy goes into love ballads, all of the passion!" She chose to sing those type of songs because she connects with them. "Even if it's not true to me, there's just some songs where I relate to the melody or the chords, even," Vaid says. "It doesn't have to be the words necessarily."

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In the future, Vaid plans on continuing her career in the music industry while still earning her degree. "I'm still in college, I'm a biology major," she adds. "I definitely plan at some point to finish my degree. I think for right now, I'm going to focus on music. I think this whole experience has really opened my mind to the whole idea of doing this

professionally. I'm really excited about it." Furthermore, the performer plans to delve more into songwriting. "Prior to all of this, I had written a few songs, but now I'm going to take my songwriting more seriously," she says. "I'm going to really think about releasing a few singles and maybe an album one day!" She will be headed to a bigger city to accomplish working in the music industry. "I definitely think it's in the cards for me to move to Los Angeles or Nashville," she says.

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During her time on the show, Vaid expressed that this opportunity allowed her to push herself and grow as a person. "*American Idol* really helps you to become a better version of yourself," she adds. "They make you feel like you can push yourself and it is okay. It was just a great experience overall, no regrets." Even though she made it far in the competition, Vaid says that she was always prepared to get cut. "I always try my hardest to put my effort into the songs that I get every week because there's always an opportunity of 'oh, you're getting saved' or 'oh, you're not in the bottom' so I prepare myself for everything," she reveals in our celebrity interview. "I love making things my own, too. That's always something that I do."

One of the amazing opportunities the show gave her was to heed some advice from the legendary Sia. Sia shared with Vaid the importance of having fun! "She said you have a beautiful voice and that I'm very marketable which is insane because it's coming from Sia and she's one of the greats in my opinion," Vaid says. "Sia said just to have fun and enjoy yourself, because now that I have the singing down, I just need to really enjoy myself."

As for who she thinks will be the Final Idol? "I genuinely think they are all so different and so talented. America has a really hard decision! I think anyone there deserves to win.

They are really great," Vaid says.

You can keep up with Sonika Vaid by following her on Twitter [@sonikavaid!](https://twitter.com/sonikavaid)

Celebrity Interview: 'American Idol' Contestant Tristan McIntosh Values Communication & Spontaneity in Relationships



By [Katie Gray](#)

Nashville native Tristan McIntosh was sadly eliminated last night from the farewell season of *American Idol*, leaving only five contestants remaining. She is well-known for singing country music – she even sang Martina McBride’s “Independence Day” on this week’s episode – so it’s no surprise that her influencers are Carrie Underwood, Rascal Flatts, and Chris Stapleton. As fans saw, not only does she have beautiful vocals, but she also plays multiple instruments, including the piano, guitar, trumpet, and mandolin. In our [celebrity interview](#), McIntosh, who attends the Nashville School of the Arts, opens up about her *American Idol* journey, what she wants in a relationship (someday!), and more.

Related Link: [Celebrity Interview: ‘American Idol’ Winner Nick Fradiani Is Single](#)

Celebrity Interview with Tristan McIntosh

Only 15-years-old, being on the 15th and final season of the popular reality TV show is surreal for the singer. “*American Idol* was basically a dream come true,” she says. “As I was performing, I got a letter from my old English teacher, and when I was younger, I said that I was going to be on *American Idol*.”

Reflecting on the competition, she says that her favorite performance was of “Go Rest High on That Mountain” by Vince Gill, one of her personal idols. “I was really attached to it,” she explains. “The melody and the piano – it all just came together.”

Although very young, the singer is mature, humble, and genuine – all traits that will come in handy when she’s ready for a relationship. When it comes to a future partner, she says

that “humor, a personality, and being human” are three important traits. Although the reality star’s not focused on dating right now, she shares of her dream date, “I like surprises and spontaneity!”

As for her best piece of relationship advice, it’s simple. “It’s always communication,” she reveals. “You need to be able to understand that person’s situation and be able to trust them.”

Related Link: [American Idol Star Joey Cook Opens Up About Her Celebrity Engagement: “He’s the Love of My Life!”](#)

During her time on *American Idol*, the performer gained more and more confidence as an artist. Her journey on the show just ended, but she already knows what she wants to do next: “As a musician, I really just want to make country music for people who really *feel* the music. I want it to be full of meaning and appropriate for young girls.”

So who does McIntosh think will win? “Honestly, everyone on that stage deserves it,” she gushes in our celebrity interview. “They’re just amazing people and amazing performers, and any of them would make a great, final winner.”

You can keep up with Tristan McIntosh at tristanlive.com and follow her on Twitter [@tristanmcintosh!](https://twitter.com/tristanmcintosh)

**Celebrity Wedding To-Be:
‘American Idol’ Alum Pia**

Toscano is Engaged



By Dejha Carlisle

The [celebrity wedding](#) bells will be ringing! Sources confirm that *American Idol* Pia Toscano just got engaged to beau Jimmy Smith, according to [UsMagazine.com](#). It is believed that the two got engaged about two months ago. Toscano showed off her new bling in an Instagram post Smith shared on January 1. The [celebrity couple](#) is very excited about their upcoming [celebrity wedding](#)!

There's another celebrity wedding in the works! What are some ways to

choose the perfect engagement ring for your partner?

Cupid's Advice:

Engagement rings are supposed to be perfect, and you'll have to know what your partner will like. Cupid has a few pieces of [dating advice](#) centered on how to pick the perfect ring:

1. Consider the wedding band that will go with the engagement ring: A wedding band will probably get worn more often than the engagement ring, but when both are worn, it's important that they match. Choose the perfect wedding band first, since it will be worn non-stop, and then go from there as far as the engagement ring goes.

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2. Gemstones and settings: Does your fiancé want her engagement ring to include her birthstone, or does that not matter? If your partner isn't too fond of cubic zirconia, you may want to steer clear of that as well. Get some ideas from her friends before you blindly guess on what she'll like. Her mom might have some suggestions, too!

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3. Size really is everything: No, I'm not talking about the size of the rock. You have to be sure you know your partner's ring size. You don't want to buy a size three ring when your lady's actual size is a seven! You want to be able to slip the engagement ring on without a problem after your propose.

What are some other things to consider when choosing an engagement ring? Share your thoughts below.

Celebrity Interview: 'American Idol' Winner Nick Fradiani Is Single!



By [Rebecca White](#)

And the winner of *American Idol* season 14 is...Nick Fradiani! While the 29-year-old singer started out on the reality TV show as the underdog, in recent weeks, he quickly worked his way up as one of the front runners in the vocal competition. As he became more confident, he also became more comfortable on stage and finally began to break through his shell like the mentors and judges have been telling him to do all season. In

our [celebrity interview](#), the reality TV star talks about relationships and love and how he will remain relevant as an artist in the future.

***American Idol* Winner Talks About His Relationship and Love Life**

We first got to know Nick Fradiani when he auditioned for this season of *American Idol* with his girlfriend Ariana Gavrilis. However, the now famous couple has not been seen together in recent months, and Gavrilis wasn't even at the finale. So all the ladies want to know: Is Nick Fradiani single? Sure enough, during our celebrity interview, the performer confirmed that he is currently single and that being a musician and maintaining a relationship and love is hard. "Being in music has always made it difficult to have relationships, especially if I've been traveling a lot," the singer shares.

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Winning will also put his love life on hold for a while. "I'm sure it will make things more difficult, but I try not to look for those things. Hopefully, the right thing just happens," he says. Still, Fradiani knows exactly what he wants in a future girlfriend. He has three must-haves in a partner: humor, trust, and comfort. "I like to laugh and have fun, so I need to be with somebody who is funny," he adds. "I also need someone that I can be myself around."

Nick Fradiani Talks About His Post-*Idol* Plans

Now that the winner has been crowned and signed to Big Machine Records, how will he avoid the fate of recent *American Idol*

winners and actually stay relevant? “To me, the biggest thing is the songs,” the singer says. “I think winners that come off the show and don’t have a hit song have a tough time. The time of coming out with a new single can be damaging.” Fradiani has no reason to worry though: His single “Beautiful Life” is already at number two on iTunes. “I think this single will do well,” he explains. “I’m really confident as an artist in my songwriting ability and my ear for pop music, so I think I’ll be able to succeed because of that.”

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Eliminated Contestant Adanna Duru Says the Reality TV Show “Is Like Superstar College!”](#)

Next, the star will meet with Scott Borchetta, Big Machine Records founder, to discuss where they will go with the new album. “Beautiful Life” is the type of music that he wants to play and put out in the world. “I lucked out big time – I love the song,” he shares. “I’m hoping to write with some cool co-writers as well.”

He may even branch into country music. Borchetta and Fradiani have talked about him going country, but the singer says that won’t happen for a while. “Maybe in a couple years that could be an option,” he says.

You can keep up with Nick Fradiani on Twitter @nickfradiani!

**Celebrity Interview:
‘American Idol’ Runner-Up**

Clark Beckham Says, “Right Now, It’s Like I’m In a Relationship with Music”



By [Rebecca White](#)

The American Idol season 14 runner-up Clark Beckham first started singing in a gospel trio with his parents when he was 8 years old. Now, the 22-year-old finishes the [reality TV](#) competition with a platform large enough to become as famous as season 2 runner-up Clay Aiken...or as forgotten as previous contestants who have had no luck gaining fame after the show. In our celebrity interview, Beckham says he wants to model his career after singers like Bruno Mars, Robin Thicke, and John Mayer, although he plans to take his own approach to balancing his career and relationship and love life.

***American Idol* Runner-Up Talks Relationships and Love**

Beckham leaves the reality TV show with fond memories of being a finalist in one of the top vocal competitions in the country. On Tuesday night, the singer had one of his best performances with "Ain't No Sunshine," leaving the judges and America very impressed. [Jennifer Lopez](#) commented on the song by asking who Beckham was singing to because of the passionate performance. "I remember her asking that, and I was like, 'Oh Lord, do not ask me that,'" he shares.

But don't worry, ladies: The blushing Tennessee native is single and not in a committed relationship and love. "The song is about the person being gone, so maybe it is appropriate because there is no one," the star says with a laugh. "I think I was really able to get into that heartbreak, but there was no one specific that I was thinking of."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Eliminated Finalist Rayvon Owen Says Love "Is the Most Universal Thing"](#)

In terms of how being a musician has impacted his dating life, Beckham says that sometimes it's helpful because of the initial attraction people feel towards musicians. However, it's not always easy. "In the past, when I've been dating someone, she was worried that I would choose music over her, and that's an interesting balance," the singer reveals in our celebrity interview. "Right now, it's like I'm in a relationship with music. I really am in love with her, and I can't imagine a life without her."

He adds, "Sometimes, being a musician can get in the way of my relationships, but I believe that, when it is right, it won't be conflicting. Instead, it will elevate and help the relationship."

Clark Beckham Reveals What He Learned on *American Idol*

During season 14 of *American Idol*, the runner-up has faced many critiques from the judges and Big Machine Records founder Scott Borchetta. The mentors and judges have often stated that Beckham's musical style isn't modern, and they've told him to perform for the audience instead of himself. However, the singer disagrees. "I think the most modern is when an artist can understand and play music that is coming right now and is just on the brink and is right around the bend," he explains. "I really believe the music I put out is what's going to come around the bend."

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While the performer stayed true to himself and his music, he did learn a lot from the judges and mentors. "Keith Urban said, 'Don't sing and play what you can; play and sing what you *must*.' That's the best advice from the judges that I got," Beckham shares. Now that the show is over, the musician says that he's learned to be more conscious of pitch and that he's transformed as an artist from this experience: "I'm able to get more into the song emotionally and get into the music and get into character."

You can keep up with Clark Beckham on Twitter @ClarkBeckham and on his website, [http://clarkbeckham.com/!](http://clarkbeckham.com/)

'American Idol' Eliminated Finalist Rayvon Owen Says Love "Is the Most Universal Thing"



By Jenna Bagcal

Rayvon Owen has been referred to as “the comeback kid” during his time on *American Idol*. The Richmond, Virginia native was a finalist on the hit [reality TV](#) show and lived up to his moniker every week. Although he was consistently in the bottom two, he was saved by the fans and made it to the final four. He says that being able to redeem himself each week “brought out a fight in me that I didn’t know I had.” In this celebrity interview, Owen talks about his relationships with his mom and

God and what he's looking forward to in the near future.

***American Idol* Contestant Opens Up About His Relationship and Love**

Owen says that his favorite topic to sing about is love. "I think it's the most universal thing and is a language that everyone can relate to and understand," he explains. During his performance of "Want to Want Me" by Jason Derulo, the singer had someone in mind to make the delivery of the love song convincing: "It's nothing serious right now. I'm not in a relationship or anything, but I was thinking about someone."

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However, Owen says that it is difficult to balance romantic relationships while pursuing a career in the music industry, but he's open to finding someone special once things calm down. "Before the show, I was in a relationship, and it's tough," the singer reveals. "It's hard for me to even take care of myself, let alone truly dedicate myself to someone else. But since I am a lover and am someone who connects with people, that's something that's on my radar."

Although the performer predominantly sings about love, he says that his songwriting process stems from different experiences in his life. "Sometimes, it comes in a melody or a groove, and I just spring out random words and feelings. Sometimes, it's a little more intimate and specific...like I had a sucky break-up, and there is one new emotion that I'm feeling, so how can I portray that in a song?" he says. "Other times, there are some songs that are just *there* after I've woken up. That's happened a few times."

Reality TV Star Discusses His Relationship With His Mom and God

The *American Idol* contestant credits his great success to both his mother and God. “I’ve always wanted to make my mom proud and thank her for all her hard work and sacrifice that she’s made for me,” he shares. “Honestly, I would not be here if it wasn’t for her pushing me and making sacrifices like sending me off on all those trips, rehearsals, and lessons. She sacrificed what she had and what she didn’t have for me and my sister to give us an equal opportunity, even when we were in a situation where we wouldn’t necessarily have that opportunity.”

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Owen adds that God has had the most important role in his life and career. “I could have not done this without God. I pray every single day. I never prayed to win the competition; I just prayed that God’s will be done and that His light will shine through me,” he says. “I think that what He has in store for me is amazing, and I hope that I can inspire people as well.”

In addition to having a thriving singing career, Owen hopes to get into acting in the near future. He says that his perfect project would be a movie or a show where he could incorporate singing and acting. “I would love to appear on *Empire* – I love that show! Or have a similar moment like Jennifer Hudson in *Dreamgirls*,” he shares.

Keep up with Ryavon on Twitter @RayvonOwen. Watch American Idol on Fox at 8/7 every Wednesday!

'American Idol' Eliminated Contestant Tyanna Jones Takes Us Through Her Emotional Journey



By [Rebecca White](#)

American Idol reality TV star Tyanna Jones has been pursuing music since she was five years old. Growing up in Jacksonville, Florida, the 16-year-old has had a rough upbringing and was even homeless at one point. Her *American Idol* journey was no less emotional. In our [celebrity](#)

[interview](#), the eliminated contestant says that the show “at times can get really hard. My faith and my beliefs have helped me through a lot of that.”

Behind the Scenes of Tyanna Jones’ *American Idol* Journey

Making it into the top five of the singing competition is no easy task and all of the contestants have had good weeks as well as bad weeks. Jones was no different. The Jacksonville native had her own rough patch during the middle of the show. The judges were constantly questioning her choices, even though she was a front runner and power house from the beginning of the competition. The performer says, “My rough patch was a result of all of my feelings at the time and the stress and frustration that comes with the show.”

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As an emotional artist, when Jones was eliminated she started to break down when the montage of her time on the show began to play. “I was watching how far I had come,” the singer shares. “It really showed me how much I’ve grown.” Even though she didn’t make it into the top four, Jones still sang a send-off song, Beyoncé’s “Who Run the World.” The performer says that Beyoncé is one of her main influences. “I have wanted to do that song for so long,” Jones shares. “I knew that I had to make sure it was one of my best performances because it was one of Beyoncé’s songs.”

Jones hopes to be a role model for her fans, just like Beyoncé and her other favorite artists have been to her. She hopes that “seeing someone their age get to do this and be here will inspire fans.” She plans to use her position on the summer tour to make an impact in people’s lives. “I know many of the

people I look up to now were a part of this tour,” Jones says. “Now, I’m going to be someone people look up to.”

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After being eliminated, the singer feels like she has learned a lot from being in this competition. Big Machine Records founder Scott Borchetta has pushed her as an artist to find herself and truly understand what kind of music she wants to put out there. Similarly, the judges, Keith Urban, Jennifer Lopez, and Harry Connick Jr. told her to continue being herself and she’d be successful. As she moves forward with her musical career, Jones says, “I’m not the type of artist that puts myself in a box. Whatever I can sing or do to connect with the audience, I’ll do it.”

You can keep up with Tyanna Jones on Twitter @iamtyannajones and www.facebook.com/IamTyannaJones!

**‘American Idol’ Artist
Quentin Alexander Says
Communication Is Most
Important in Relationships**





By Jenna Bagcal

Conceptual, artistic, bold, and distinctive are all words that describe 21-year old Quentin Alexander. The New Orleans, Louisiana native was a contestant on season 14 of [American Idol](#) and made a name for himself during his time on the reality TV show. He blew audiences away with his performances each week, combining his emotion-filled vocals with stunning effects and clothing. The performer is self-assured in who he is, saying, "The type of artist I want to be is one that touches on all of the senses. A concert of mine would be something that would be just as appealing visually as it is musically." In this celebrity interview, Alexander opens up about his experience on the show and his plans for the upcoming year.

***American Idol* Contestant Shares How New Orleans Shaped Him As An Artist**

New Orleans is known as a cultural and musical epicenter of America and is a place that Alexander is lucky enough to call home. He cites his hometown as a major contributor to his

artistry and personality overall. “Growing up there really played the biggest part in the way that I present my art and the way that I am,” he shares. “There are so many different musical and cultural influences, so many different ways of life all in one small bowl. It’s like a Gumbo pot, just a mixture of everything.” He adds that being from such a culturally-diverse city gives him a unique outlook and advantage in terms of his music and avant-garde fashion sense.

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Star Joey Cook Opens Up About Her Celebrity Engagement: “He’s the Love of My Life!”](#)

In terms of relationships and love, Alexander reveals that having a partner who isn’t in the music industry makes for the best support system. “It’s always great to have that teammate supporting you from the outside, someone who isn’t really in the same kind of boat that you’re in,” he divulges. He also believes that the most important factor in a successful partnership is communication. “For anything to work, the best thing to do is to communicate and let each other know what’s going on,” he says.

Reality TV Star Discusses His Experience on the Show

Although he was eliminated from the reality TV show, Alexander has taken away many valuable experiences and pieces of advice from his time on *American Idol*. The most valuable tip came from [Jennifer Lopez](#), who told him to “hold on to your art – it’s the one thing that makes you *you*.” He adds, “It’s the truth. The one thing that separates me from everyone else is my art, my personal feelings, and how I go about doing things.” The singer says that the superstar’s comment assured him of his role in the competition and validated that he was going in the right artistic direction when he was questioning his choices. “Should I compromise my performances just to fit in this mold?,” he asks. “She confirmed for me that I

shouldn't. Just be yourself, and everything will work out like it's supposed to."

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Sarina-Joi Crowe on Being Eliminated: “It Motivates Me Even More”](#)

Now that his journey on *American Idol* is over, Alexander is excited to get home to New Orleans and attend the various festivals and events. "It's the greatest time of year in New Orleans to have all the music come in and all the people coming in from different parts of the world," he says.

In the future, aside from pursuing music, the performer plans on releasing some of his short films that include original music and fashion that he has designed. He also hopes to design an original clothing line within the next year. We can't wait to see what he does next!

Catch up with Quentin on Twitter @QAlexanderXIV! American Idol is on FOX at 8/7c every Wednesday.

‘American Idol’ Star Joey Cook Opens Up About Her Celebrity Engagement: “He’s the Love of My Life!”





By [Rebecca White](#)

Joey Cook will not only leave the reality TV show *American Idol* having gained experience and knowledge in the music industry, but she's also walking away with a [celebrity engagement](#)! Cook's longtime boyfriend Evan Higgins proposed a few weeks ago, and the now-famous couple shared the news on Twitter on Thursday, Mar. 26. In our celebrity interview, the performer opens up about the special moment, saying, "The proposal was really sweet. He's the love of my life!"

Behind the Scenes of Joey Cook's Celebrity Engagement

Even though *American Idol* keeps the contestants incredibly busy, Higgins whisked Cook away for ten minutes in between photo shoots to get down on one knee and put a ring on her finger. "There was this garden with a bench in the hotel we were staying at," the performer reveals. "He started out with all of this heartfelt stuff, and I thought he was going to break up with me! I was thinking, 'Wait until the show's

done!" Not only did Higgins find the perfect backdrop for a proposal, but he also made sure that the singer had her support system with her to make it even more special. "Evan called my family and made sure my mom was going to be there. My childhood best friend was there too," Cook adds.

Related Link: ['American Idol' Performer Qaasim Middleton Says, "My Girlfriend Has Been a Huge Impact in My Life!"](#)

The couple has carried out their relationship and love since 2009 and will celebrate their anniversary this summer – just in time for them to tie the knot. "I want to do the wedding soon because we've always wanted a summer wedding," the reality TV star gushes. "And it'll be six years this summer, so it's perfect!" Although we're sad to see her leave the competition, we're excited that she now has time to plan the perfect celebrity wedding with her beau.

***American Idol* Contestant Talks About What the Reality TV Show Taught Her**

Of course, Cook didn't just chat with us about her perfect celebrity engagement story. The eliminated contestant says that *American Idol* has provided her with so many resources for her future. "They've exposed me to millions of people," she shares. "I've never had vocal lessons before, and getting access to all of this information and being able to work with my vocal coach was amazing. I learned more about music in this last few months than I did in my whole life before now!"

The singer says she couldn't be more grateful for the life-changing experience, which taught her more about herself as well. "I wasn't confident as a vocalist before, and this show has shown me that, along with playing instruments and writing

music, I'm a singer, and that's what I do," she explains. "It's proven to me that I am good enough, and I am capable and deserving." We couldn't agree more!

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Eliminated Contestant Adanna Duru Says the Reality TV Show “Is Like Superstar College!”](#)

After saying her goodbyes, Cook has a different vision of who she is as a performer. "Now that I've been soaked in the *American Idol* world, I see myself so much differently when it comes to what I can do with a show and a backdrop and little things like that," the singer says. "It made everything larger than life for me."

You can keep up with Joey on Twitter @IamJoeyCook!

‘American Idol’ Performer Qaasim Middleton Says, “My Girlfriend Has Been a Huge Impact in My Life!”





By [Rebecca White](#)

We haven't seen the last of Qaasim Middleton! The performer has been a busy actor and musician since his first appearance on television in 2007. With fame and fortune still to come his way, he keeps himself grounded with his faith and his girlfriend. This week, he was eliminated from the [reality TV](#) show *American Idol* after being in the bottom two with his performance of "Stronger" by Kelly Clarkson. But don't worry: In our celebrity interview, he says he has "so much in the oven right now; it's just cooking!"

Qaasim Middleton Talks Relationships and Love

Related Link: ['American Idol' Eliminated Contestant Daniel Seavey Wants to Prove That He's "Not Just a Cute Kid"](#)

Middleton first got his start in the Nickelodeon show *The Naked Brothers Band* and is the guitarist of the real band of the same name. Still, his busy lifestyle hasn't stopped his

relationship and love life from flourishing. He says that he's had a girlfriend for about a year and that she's been a "huge impact in my life!" He doesn't like to talk about his girlfriend very much because he wants to focus on his work instead. However, he does say that being with her has been "a great experience."

Middleton was in the bottom two based on his performance of the famous break-up song "Stronger" by Kelly Clarkson. During the performance, he wasn't thinking of a past relationship and love though. Instead, he was thinking about "my *Idol* save and how I came back strong from that." With the new fan save element introduced last week, he had to fight for his life on the show for the second time (as he received the judges save earlier in the competition). He sang the song "Hey Ya" by Outkast, which ultimately resulted in his elimination.

Post-American Idol Plans for Eliminated Contestant

While most eliminated contestants discuss their album plans, Middleton is thinking even bigger. He has a video game in the works, likes to MC, is a producer, and, of course, will be writing more music. "Being a versatile artist helps with the professionalism and the craft," he explains. "I'm going to do some big stuff. The game is about to be completely changed." He plans to be the "next big stadium artist" and is excited to start boosting his career.

Related Link: [Eliminated 'American Idol' Contestant Maddie Walker Talks to Her Fans: "I Was In It For Them"](#)

Although we've all come to know and love the energetic and lively performances from Middleton, he says that's all new to him. "I've been singing and playing guitar since I was 10, and I just started doing the dancing thing in December," he shares. "This is all new to me. I was experimenting with how

good I can do and be, and I found out that I'm pretty good at singing and dancing." It's clear the 19-year-old is starting to find himself and his comfort zone. We can't wait to see what new things he has to offer!

You can keep up with Qaasim Middleton on Twitter @QaasimOfficial!

'American Idol' Eliminated Contestant Daniel Seavey Wants to Prove That He's "Not Just a Cute Kid"





By [Rebecca White](#)

After a rocky road on the reality TV show *American Idol*, Daniel Seavey was eliminated during Wednesday night's episode. Throughout his run, the judges and mentors pushed him to grow and improve, which is something that may just come with age. After all, the 15-year-old was the youngest contestant to compete in *American Idol* history. It's no surprise, then, that in our [celebrity interview](#), Seavey says that his next step is to "start writing and put music out there to show I'm not just a cute kid."

***American Idol* Contestant Talks About His Future Plans**

Now that his reality TV journey is over, the teenager has big plans for the future. "I want to hold on to these fans, and I want to be able to share my thoughts with them," he reveals. Even though the young singer received some hate for getting votes because of his age and looks, he adds, "I had fun with the experience, however I got it." Now, he's ready to

prove that he's a true artist.

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Eliminated Contestant Adanna Duru Says the Reality TV Show “Is Like Superstar College!”](#)

This week, he had the pleasure of working with the original *American Idol*, Kelly Clarkson, who mentored him as he prepared to sing her hit song “Breakaway.” The Portland natives says that the pop star told him that he needs to be able “to breathe and get comfortable before a performance because, if you’re still here, that means people like you, and there’s no reason to be nervous.” Thanks to help from the judges and the other mentors, he also learned that “I really can do music for the rest of my life and that I have a lot of room to grow.”

Daniel Seavey Talks About the Reality TV Show’s New Fan Save

During this week’s episode, a new element – the fan save – was introduced. Once the bottom two singers were revealed, the two hopefuls sang their song from this week, and fans had five minutes to vote via Twitter for their favorite performance. The person with the lowest votes was sent home in real time.

Of course, there may be some kinks to work out. Due to when the show airs, most of the votes come from the East Coast, leaving the West Coast without a chance to vote during the live show. That may have been a hindrance to Seavey, who is from Oregon. “I actually heard that the majority of voters were on the East Coast, but it is what it is,” the performer shares. “The only thing that threw me off was the age limit because you had to be 13 or older, and a lot of my fans might be younger than that.”

Related Link: [Eliminated ‘American Idol’ Contestant Maddie Walker Talks to Her Fans: “I Was In It For Them”](#)

While the fan save isn't without its issues, it *is* a great way to involve the fans in the show even more. "I think the fan save is a good idea because it gives the singers a second chance to prove themselves, and America gets to show who they like. It needs a little work, but it was a good start to it!"

While most contestants are upset when they're eliminated, Seavey is looking forward to going home, especially since today is his birthday! "Tonight, I'm going to see all my friends at the airport," he shares. "Apparently half my school is going to be there tonight." Other than seeing his friends, he's excited to "sleep and get my life back."

You can keep up with Daniel Seavey on Twitter @SeaveyDaniel and www.instagram.com/seaveydaniel/!

Eliminated 'American Idol' Contestant Maddie Walker Talks to Her Fans: "I Was In It For Them"





By Jenna Bagcal

From the tender age of three, Maddie Walker has been pursuing her passion for music. The 17-year-old singer from Ankeny, Iowa, first auditioned for *American Idol* in season 13 but was sent home during Hollywood Week. However, this minor setback didn't stop her from auditioning again, and she made it to the Top 11 on season 14 of the [reality TV](#) show. Last week, she sang "Let's Hear It For the Boy" from the film *Footloose*, which earned her a place in the bottom three. Unfortunately, her journey ended on Wednesday when she was sent home in a double elimination along with fellow contestant Adanna Duru.

Aspiring Country Artist Discusses Her Time on *American Idol*

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Sarina-Joi Crowe on Being Eliminated: “It Motivates Me Even More”](#)

As the last contestant on *American Idol* this season representing country music, Walker says, "I think that it's

sad that no one is representing country. It breaks my heart a little bit.” The aspiring star was lucky enough to work with mentor Scott Borchetta, who is known for discovering [Taylor Swift](#). “I really loved working with Scott. I couldn’t have asked for a better mentor because country really is in his wheelhouse,” she shares in our celebrity interview.

Last week, Walker suffered from a ruptured appendix, and there were questions as to whether or not she could perform. “They were saying, ‘Do you think you can sing? You have to put your health first. Don’t worry about the competition.’ The thing is, people voted me through, and I wanted to sing for them,” she explains.

She adds that, although she was in pain prior to and during the show, her fans helped her find the strength to perform. “There were people in the crowd with signs that had my name on it, and I was standing there thinking, ‘How can I say that I’m not going to sing for the people that have taken the time to make a sign and cheer for me?,” she shares. “I wanted to prove to people that, no matter what happened, I was in it for them – not just for the competition itself but because they were supporting me.”

Related Link: [Adanna Duru Says ‘American Idol’ “Is Like Superstar College!”](#)

Despite her elimination, Walker maintains a positive outlook on her journey and time on the show. “I just need to keep working and moving forward because *American Idol* motivated me and taught me so much that I could’ve never learned anywhere else.”

We haven’t heard the last of this talented performer. “I’m definitely going to start writing and hopefully recording country music because that’s my goal,” she reveals. “That’s what I want to do.”

Find out what Maddie is up to on Twitter

@TheMaddieWalker! Tune in for American Idol on Wednesdays at 8/7c on FOX.

'American Idol' Eliminated Contestant Adanna Duru Says the Reality TV Show "Is Like Superstar College!"



By [Rebecca White](#)

Being on the [reality TV](#) show *American Idol* is not all fun and games. When it comes down to it, the contestants are there to

learn and improve so that they will be successful in the music industry. After the top 11 performances last week, the judges used the save on Qaasim Middleton, which meant that two of the hopefuls were sent home this week. Unfortunately, the journey ended for 18-year-old Adanna Duru. This came as a shock to the viewers and judges alike. In our celebrity interview, Duru says that she plans to “constantly stay active now because the fans look up to us and they want to see you doing things.”

***American Idol* Contestant Talks About What the Reality TV Show Taught Her**

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Sarina-Joi Crowe on Being Eliminated: "It Motivates Me Even More"](#)

A previous contestant on the third season of *The Voice*, she is no stranger to performing in front of large crowds. The eliminated contestant learned so much just by being on *American Idol* because of the professional atmosphere. “I’m all for self-improvement, and I’m always trying to figure out how to better myself,” she shares. “People get knocked down; that’s what life is about. You just have to seize the opportunities and go for it as hard as you can.”

It’s no surprise that judges Keith Urban, Jennifer Lopez, and Harry Connick Jr. taught her a few things too. “I learned that I can do a lot under pressure and with a lot of stress,” she explains. Big Machine Records founder Scott Borchetta also reminded her that she needed to be confident and that she could do anything that she puts her mind to. “*American Idol* is like superstar college,” she says with a laugh. “It’s like university. You’re preparing for the future, and you learn a lot.”

Adanna Duru on Being Eliminated From *American Idol*

Duru auditioned for *American Idol* in San Francisco. The California native made it past the first few rounds but was not voted into the top 10 by the fans. Instead, the judges chose her as the final wildcard and advanced her into the top 12, which she describes as the most surprising thing that happened to her all season. Once the show continued, the judges questioned her song choice at times. Even so, she sticks with her decisions: “If I did this entire experience over, I would still have sang all the songs I sang.”

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Runner-Up Kree Harrison Has “The World in Her Hands”](#)

She adds that she isn’t sad about being eliminated because “whatever happens is in God’s will. There are some things we don’t have control over, but the universe has a way of working things out.”

You can keep up with Adanna Duru on Twitter @adannaduru and www.facebook.com/AdannaDuru!

‘American Idol’ Contestant Sarina-Joi Crowe on Being Eliminated: “It Motivates Me

Even More”



By Jenna Bagcal

Perseverance and determination are two qualities that 19-year-old Sarina-Joi Crowe possess. The Columbia, Tennessee native has auditioned for reality TV show *American Idol* four times since 2011. This season, she made it to the Top 12, but her journey ended this past Thursday after she received the lowest number of fan votes. She performed Demi Lovato's "Neon Lights" as her save song, but it wasn't enough for the judges to keep her from elimination. While this came as a shock to viewers and fans, the singer isn't done yet: "This is not the end of me. There's definitely more to come!" she assures us in our celebrity interview.

***American Idol* Contestant Talks About Elimination and Relationships and Love**

Crowe grew up in a small town in Tennessee and worked as a hostess at a restaurant. She learned to sing in church and credits her mother as the driving force behind her tenacity. "She's always been very big on following our hearts, doing what we want to do, and not letting anyone stop us," she shares. This attitude is one that Crowe has held on to throughout her life, and it's what has pushed her to pursue her goals.

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Alex Preston Says His Girlfriend Kept Him Going](#)

While many contestants in the performer's position would feel disheartened, the veteran says that her elimination from the reality TV show "doesn't affect her determination" to pursue music as a career. "It actually motivates me even more. At the end of the day, I know everybody wants to go all the way on *Idol*, and that's ultimately the goal," she explains in our celebrity interview. "But if you can go from number 100 to 60 to 48 to 12, then it's a pretty good sign of what kind of career you're going to have. You're always gonna go a little farther; you're always gonna get a little better. I still have time to grow and do great things."

Of course, we had to ask Crowe about her relationship status! When she performs romantic songs like "You Really Got a Hold On Me," she's not thinking of anyone in particular. "There's nobody in mind because I'm so single, it should be illegal!" she says with a laugh.

Instead, she thinks of a personal experience or an experience of someone she knows and tries to channel that energy into the song and make the delivery of it convincing. "I try to use

past relationships and love as an example, or I try to jump into the shoes of somebody that I think would feel that way," she explains.

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Majesty Rose: “I Didn’t Change Who I Am At All”](#)

The young singer has also learned a lot about the audition process during her long history with *American Idol* and has some advice to share for next season’s hopefuls. “You should never give up. That’s the one thing I want to make known across the nation,” she exclaims. “When somebody tells you ‘no,’ you can’t really take that. You have to figure out what to do next and try it again. It’s that one ‘yes’ that’s gonna make the difference.”

To her fans, Crowe says, “I just want to thank them so much. I love them dearly! I’ve been reading so many great things on Twitter and Facebook, and it’s just really awesome to see a group of people who are so dedicated and loyal. I owe them everything because I wouldn’t even be here if not for them.”

You can keep up with Sarina-Joi on Twitter @SarinaJoi and www.facebook.com/SarinJoiMusic?ref=br_tf!

‘American Idol’ Runner-Up Jena Irene On Prom With Winner Caleb Johnson: “I

Still Don't Have a Dress!"



By Liz Kim

American Idol runner-up Jena Irene Ascitutto almost didn't make it onto the show. The 17-year-old singer didn't have enough votes to make it to the Top 10, but the judges saved her, and she is the first wild card contestant since Clay Aiken to make it to the finale. Each week, she proved the decision to save her right and was in the bottom only once during her amazing run. She did admit that almost going home shook her up. "My confidence wasn't that high in the beginning because America didn't vote me in, but that lit a fire under me to prove that I could do it."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Alex Preston Says His Girlfriend Kept Him Going](#)

Once she made it to the top 10, Asciutto's star quality was undeniable. Although still young, she's a seasoned performer. From the ages of 12 to 16, she was the front woman for the band Infinity Hour. "Being in a band had a huge impact on me," she says. "I played all around the metro Detroit area, and we played with other bands and kind of did different music depending on which venue we were playing. That definitely influenced me, and to be around all these local artists was fun because I saw what made them unique." Unfortunately, she had to quit the band a few months before her audition, but her bandmates have continued to support her from the sidelines.

Despite avoiding the bottom all but once, the runner-up says that she didn't realize just how far she had made it until the top five. "Once there were only five of us left, that's when it started to sink in that this was real." Every competitor had a distinct style, and she knew that it was anybody's game. "I just remember laying in bed one night wondering how I was there. I was just so excited."

Although she became friends with all of the finalists, Asciutto has become especially close with 23-year-old Caleb Johnson, who was announced the winner last night. She said she was grateful for his support during the show. "It was a positive effect," she shares of their friendship. "Even the production team who've been doing this for 12 years said they haven't seen as good of a connection as Caleb and I have. The stress was taken down a couple notches, and performing with my best friend made it better. You don't get to experience this with just anybody, so I'm glad we did it together."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Jess Meuse Says Show Affected her Relationship](#)

In fact, they are taking their BFF-ship to the next level, and Johnson will be Asciutto's date for prom. Fans got to watch the footage of her "prom-posal," and it was just as sweet as they imagined. "It started out as a joke a couple months ago,

and as we got closer to the finale, I realized that I actually didn't have a date to the prom," she explains. "He was serious about going the whole time, so I decided why not? Our schedules were able to accommodate the prom date, so I'm really excited."

And while they're not as daunting as singing on national television, Asciutto has the typical concerns of any teenage girl going to prom. "I still don't have a dress – I'm freaking out!"

Despite wowing the judges and America with her powerhouse vocals, the talented singer remains a humble. She still worries about her grades and has plans to go to a performing arts college. As for her future in music? "The fact that I got this far being so young and a wild card gives me hope," she says. "I am a unique artist, and I'm still trying to figure out who I am. My music has been evolving for the past three years, and I can't wait to see where I end up. I can't say for sure what my album will sound like, but that's the fun part!"

American Idol may be over, but you can still catch Jena on the summer tour! Until then, keep up with her on Twitter @JenaAsciutto1. Check back tomorrow for our interview with winner Caleb Johnson!

'American Idol' Contestant Alex Preston Says His Girlfriend Kept Him Going



By Liz Kim

Even before making it to the top three on *American Idol*, 21-year-old Alex Preston had a pretty impressive background in music. He can play up to 12 instruments (none of which he took lessons for) and has opened for Of Monsters and Men, Gavin DeGraw, and the Backstreet Boys. Music must be in his blood because he's also cousins with country music star Jo Dee Messina, who he's even written songs for.

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Jess Meuse Says Show Affected Her Relationship](#)

Week after week, the judges praised him for this artistry, and he managed to avoid being in the bottom up until the end. A common criticism *Idol* contestants hear is about making each performance seem like an original, but this musician never

struggled with that. "When I hear a song, I think of how I would do it, and then I usually take an hour or so and run through the song and run through alternative chords and chordal structures," he says of his process. "I had the most fun arranging songs and making them my own."

This week, the singer broke out of his comfort zone, and during his performance of Bastille's "Pompeii," he played both the drums and the guitar. "This competition has really taken me out of my shell, and I've learned a lot of myself as a performer. I've become more confident."

Although covering popular songs can be a fun challenge, Preston truly enjoys performing his own music and believes allowing more original content will improve *American Idol*. "Playing original music on the show was definitely an amazing opportunity because it's in front of millions of people," he shares. "It's your own lyrics and composition, and playing your own music on a show like *Idol* pushes it to the next level because it shows artistry."

Preston was especially excited to show off his talents when he and his fellow competitors were welcomed back to their hometowns. He went home to Mount Vernon, New Hampshire and gave an "incredible" concert for over 6,000 fans. "I got to show people who I really am outside the show, and that was probably the coolest experience for me."

Despite all of his achievements, the rising star remains humble. "I was expecting to be eliminated this week because Jena and Caleb are so good and their performances are so big," he explains. "I knew deep down that it was going to be them in the finale, but I'm proud to have been in the top three." His strategy during the competition was to take it week by week. "But once I hit top three, I did start thinking about the months ahead, where I want to be, and long term goals outside of the show."

Related Link: [10 Ways to Make Long Distance Love Work](#)

Beyond improving his musical skills, *Idol* is also where Preston met his girlfriend Jillian Jensen, who fans might remember from season two of *The X Factor*. The couple met during Hollywood Week, and while being apart has been difficult, the couple are making it work. "It's tough because we live on opposite sides of the country, but it works out because we can always talk and Skype. She came to the shows a lot too," he shares. "It sucks because we can't see each other as much as we'd like to, but since we're both musicians, we understand each other's schedules."

Being a reality television veteran herself, Jensen was a great source of advice. "She always kept me positive. She was completely honest with me whether it was good or bad and told me what she thought. She helped me through a lot in that aspect and kept me going."

Preston's time on the *Idol* stage may be up, but he knows that this is just the beginning. "I'm already starting to try to figure out a way to plan my record. I have a couple co-writes lined up that I do want to get on the album as well," he says. "If I could release a single, that would be awesome. I want to release something as soon as I can and kind of take advantage of the wave of publicity that the show has given me."

Want more of Preston? You can catch him on the American Idol summer tour, but until then, follow him on his Twitter [@RealAlexPreston!](#)

'American Idol' Contestant Jessica Meuse Says Show Affected Her Relationship



by Liz Kim

Jessica Meuse, 23, stood out on this season of *American Idol* – and not just because of her trademark pink hair. The singer from Slapout, Alabama, personified cool-rocker-chick, and her honest and easygoing attitude made her a favorite to both fans and judges. Many competitors get pigeonholed into a single genre, but she admits to being influenced by every genre of music. Her singing style is a mix of gritty rock with metal and country notes.

The singer said her ultimate goal was to stay true to herself and bare her soul to the audience – especially when she sang her original song “Blue-Eyed Lie” this week. “I lived it; that happened to me, word for word. It’s like taking my diary and reading it on national television.”

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Sam Woolf Talks Relationships](#)

In 2011, she self-released an album called “What’s So Hard About Bein’ a Man.” All of the songs were influenced by her own life experiences, and most of them focus on dark and serious subjects. Meuse has said this is because she wants her music to give hope to others in similar situations. “Writing my own songs about heartbreak and tough situations teaches me how to let go and just not worry about things you can’t control anymore.”

The contestant’s vocals were praised each week, but the judges repeatedly criticized her on her lack of stage presence and connection with the audience. Keith Urban even said she didn’t have enough “release.” Fans complained that she was picked on more than the other singers, but she chalks it up to part of the experience. “At times, I felt picked on, but it’s part of the game. I know I have bigger things ahead of me, and I’m going to make them happen,” she shares.

She does wish she could have sang more original material though. “I didn’t let not singing originals frustrate me because I do know a lot of cover songs from singing three to four hour gigs at home, but I really would’ve liked to do originals – at least one a week just because that’s who I am as an artist.”

Meuse also agrees that stage presence was most difficult for her – but she did improve during her time on stage. “I believe that I have shown emotion, and I’m growing as an artist,” she explains. “There’s always stuff to work on, but I think I’ve

grown a lot on the show. It's definitely different from singing in a bar where you're kind of just in the corner and only the bartender is looking at you."

It's no surprise that the scrutiny can be unnerving. "You're on national television, and everyone is looking at how your eye twitches. So it's definitely something you have to get used to," she says. "But I feel like I came into my own, and I figured myself out on the stage, so I'm very proud of that."

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When you're in an environment like *Idol*, it's stressful to say the least. And when you're also in a relationship, being apart for that long can create a rift. Unfortunately, that's what happened to Meuse and her boyfriend, Steven Atkins. Although he came to support her during a few of the live shows, ultimately, they went their separate ways. "Being on the show did affect my relationship to the point where it didn't work anymore, and we've actually been apart for about a month now," she shares. "It's just not the right time, but he's a good guy. Sometimes, situations just bring out the worst in people."

But heartache and stress are nothing new for the talented musician, and she's determined to achieve all of her goals. "The limits that you have are only the ones you put on yourself. If you really want something, you just have to work for it. After all, I went from singing in a smoky bar with pneumonia to singing on national television."

This isn't the last you'll see of Jess! You can catch her on the American Idol summer tour. Until then, keep up with her on Twitter @JessMeuse.

'American Idol' Contestant Sam Woolf: "A Sense of Humor is the Main Thing" in a Relationship



By Liz Kim

This week's *American Idol* elimination was not only disappointing for Sam Woolf but also for the legions of teen girls across America who've been screaming for him since his audition. The 17-year-old was coined this generation's Ricky Nelson by Harry Connick Jr., but the Bradenton, Florida teen is more than just a pretty face. He's been singing and performing ever since he can remember and was known to give

concerts on his high school's courtyard. The singer also writes his own music and even got to perform one of his original pieces on the *Idol* stage.

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Dexter Roberts on Relationships: "Keep Pushing Each Other to Become Stronger"](#)

Before *Idol*, he was just another student at Braden River High, but he probably won't be able to quietly walk through the halls anymore. His hometown cheered for him loudly and held weekly viewing parties. "The support means so much," he shares. "I don't think I would've made it this far without it." Although he was far from home, Woolf didn't forget about his schooling. He continued his studies in Los Angeles with the help of a tutor. Unfortunately, he won't be able to make it to prom but hopes to still walk with his classmates during graduation.

Despite criticism about his stage presence, he was given generally positive reviews and managed to stay out of the bottom for most of the competition. However, after landing there twice, he received the least amount of votes during week six. For the first time since Jessica Sanchez in season 11, the judges decided to use the save and keep Woolf in the competition. That moment is still a blur, he says. "I had no idea they would save me. I just remember my name being called and being so nervous."

The close call was just the motivation he needed. "It definitely pumped me up, and I realized I had to give it my all," he explains. "I was a little scared that I'd be saved and then go home the next week, but luckily, I made it a few more weeks."

This week, the show surprised the singers with a shocking twist: They could either vote for one person to go home as usual or for nobody to go home this week but two singers to leave next week. The catch was that the votes had to be

unanimous. “We huddled up as a group and initially decided to do the save, but as it came down to it, we realized that two people had to go home,” he says. “So in the end, we decided to just vote however we wanted to.”

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Woolf takes his elimination in stride. “I wasn't really surprised that the votes weren't unanimous. I think we should've just stuck with the original format of one person leaving every week.” He even tweeted to his fans to not get angry at the contestants who voted yes to somebody going home this week.

With all that talent and an ever-growing fan base, you'd think that the heartthrob has a line of ladies waiting for him. But the ever-humble singer is still a little shy when it comes to dating. When asked if he thinks *Idol* will improve his dating life, he answered with uncertainty: “I think so... I don't know! I guess? We'll see.” Woolf, who loved to prank his fellow contestants, is ultimately looking for somebody who loves to laugh. “I think a sense of humor is the main thing for me.”

The label of teen hunk is completely foreign to Woolf. “I wouldn't place myself under that category if I had the choice. I wasn't uncomfortable with the title; it's just not who I ever thought I was.” Although he might have had the boyish charm, Woolf struggled being more fluid in front of the audience. “I'm definitely lacking life experience.”

But he knows that practice makes perfect. “I've been trying to connect with the audience more and get better on stage. Each time I sing, I get more comfortable.”

You can still catch Sam Woolf on the American Idol summer tour! Until then, keep up with him on Twitter @samwoolfmusic.

'American Idol' Contestant C.J. Harris Says Family's Support "Puts Me at Peace"



By Liz Kim

C.J. Harris, 23, is wise beyond his years. He resonated with *American Idol* fans because the honesty and emotion in his voice was so apparent. The singer traveled all the way to Salt Lake City, Utah to audition for the show, and while he had previously tried out for *The Voice* and *X-Factor*, the third time proved to be the charm.

It's no secret that the ousted contestant is all about his family, who came to support him on several occasions. "It puts me at peace, and it's kind of like singing for people on the couch at home," he shares. "It helps to have someone out there in the audience that, you know. It made me proud to have my mom and my sister there."

With that said, Harris cannot wait to go home to his biggest fan: his 2-year-old son, Jordan. "He motivated me so much. Having him in the audience was so much fun, and we'll have a lot of great memories."

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He wasn't too far from home on the show, though, because both Jessica Meuse and Dexter Roberts are also from Alabama. In fact, Roberts and Harris were friends long before *Idol*. They met while on spring break in Panama City. "I remember Dexter walking up to me on the beach, and I was playing the acoustic guitar," he reminisces. "He asked if he could play with me, and there was just something about him that I really liked. We started playing there at the beach and then went back home and realized that we only live about 30 minutes from each other, so we played some places and became really good friends."

Roberts went home last week, but Harris can definitely see them working together in the future. "I'd love to do a duet with Dexter," he says. "Me and him have a bond. We've played together before, and it doesn't feel forced."

Given his big heart and charming voice, fans were disappointed to see the country singer get sent home this week. Despite being in the bottom several times, he never let it get him down. "I got a little frustrated, but it made me want to keep working harder," he explains. "I believe everything happens for a reason."

The judges' critiques are not only harsh at times but can also be confusing. Harris, however, was thankful for their honesty. "I never knew that I had pitch problems. I played for people I knew, so I never got the straight answer. I was glad that I got the criticism because now I know what I need to work on."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Malaya Watson Says, "I'm Not Afraid to Be Myself"](#)

And despite Harry Connick Jr. telling him to "stick to songs you can kill," the performer believes you shouldn't play it safe. "Always stick to who you are and prepare a lot of songs," he shares. "Don't stick to just one genre. And don't bring all your good songs out in the beginning. Save some good songs for later in the competition." He has no regrets and is looking forward to reuniting with his fellow contestants once more on the summer tour.

Still, adjusting to life after *Idol* will be tough. "My brain is still going 100 miles per hour, and I'm off a couple of hours of sleep. But I'm grateful and happy that I made it this far."

You can catch C.J. Harris on the American Idol summer tour. Until then, you can keep up with him on www.facebook.com/teamcjharris.

**'American Idol' Contestant
Dexter Roberts on**

Relationships: “Keep Pushing Each Other to Become Stronger”



By Liz Kim

Dexter Roberts, 22, stood out on this season of *American Idol*, not just because of his smooth country crooning but because of his easygoing demeanor and always present smile. Nothing seemed to shake him, and even after landing in the bottom two this week, he took it all in stride. “I just don’t know what happened this week,” he shares. “I had a great time on the show, and I know I’ll have a great time on tour.”

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Malaya Watson on Her](#)

Ideal Boyfriend

For Wednesday night's performances, the contestants picked out each other's songs, and despite the preconceived notion that competition brings out the worst in people, all of the singers looked out for each other. "It was easy to pick songs for each other because we know what kind of artists we want to be and we didn't want to jeopardize each other." C.J. Harris picked "Muckalee Creek Water" by Luke Bryan for Roberts, and although he got generally positive reviews, he was ultimately eliminated.

The Fayette, Alabama native won fans over with his Southern twang, and despite getting some criticism about diction and pronunciation, the singer says that's just who he is – but he'll work on it. Ever the perfectionist, he actually wishes he had gotten tougher criticism. "I wanted the judges to be harsh on me because criticism helps you become a better artist," he says. "I told C.J. that I love criticism because it drives me more. It puts fuel onto my fire and makes me want to do better each week."

Roberts got particularly close to fellow contestants Caleb Johnson and Harris, but Harris and Roberts had already been friends for over five years before *Idol*. They met during spring break in Panama City and bonded over music. Neither friend told the other that he was auditioning for the show because both assumed the other would be there. Roberts made it through first, and after lending Harris his guitar, the good luck must have rubbed off because both friends went on to Hollywood. "It's just a great experience to get closer and to make it this far."

Being southern gentlemen, they never let competition get in the way of their friendship. "We've always had a great chemistry with each other; he's like a brother to me. We try to help each other out and fix each other's technique."

Not only did Roberts get to go on his *Idol* journey with a close friend, but he also met his girlfriend Savannah Coker at auditions. Coker, part of the country music band Sweet Tea Trio, didn't make it to Hollywood but showed her love by being in the audience with Roberts's mother. "She's been nothing but great support, and she's been behind me the whole way," he gushes. "Along with my family, her family has also supported me so much."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant Ben Briley Sings For His Family's Future](#)

When two people in a relationship are chasing the same dream, jealousy and hurt feelings can get in the way, but this couple only wants the best for each other. "Any relationship takes work. Just go in and keep standing by each other and pushing each other to become stronger. Have fun and enjoy life!"

Although he may be done performing on the *Idol* stage this season, don't count Roberts out just yet. He has special plans for the *Idol* finale and the upcoming summer tour. "I'm gonna try to come out and do something different. I'm going to surprise you!"

You can catch Dexter Roberts on the American Idol summer tour. Until then, you can keep up with him on www.facebook.com/IdolDexterRoberts.

'American Idol' Contestant Malaya Watson Says, "I'm Not

Afraid to Be Myself”



By Liz Kim

At only 16 years old, Malaya Watson is the youngest contestant ever to compete on *American Idol*. She dominated the competition from early on, and viewers quickly forgot how young she was after listening to her powerhouse vocals. Her positive attitude, confidence, and jokes garnered a lot of fans, so it was no surprise that the singer's elimination caused controversy with many who stated that the judges use of the save last week was a joke and that Watson deserved it more than Sam Wolf. Some have also said she deserved to win and that the votes were miscounted, while others announced that they would no longer watch the show.

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant Majesty Rose: “I](#)

[Didn't Change Who I Am At All](#)

Throughout it all, Watson remains upbeat. Although she didn't walk away the winner, she still gets a neat consolation prize. "It's weird being the youngest contestant, but it's cool because I can 'be in the books,'" she says. "It's pretty awesome." She admits, though, that being a teenager also has its downfalls. "At the same time, it was hard because I also have to focus on school. Managing time with school and my music and just trying to balance everything evenly and get everything done was tough."

The Southfield, Michigan native cites her father Ronald Watson and her two grandfathers as her musical influences. Her father is a professional guitar player, and the contestant shares, "If he didn't do music, I wouldn't have either because I wouldn't have been around it a lot. Growing up, I was always around music, and having him around always playing music really influenced me." Her childhood explains her love for old school R&B, blues, and soul music, and it makes sense that she can see her first album having a similar sound.

Watson may have an impressive set of pipes, but that's just the beginning. She can also play the tuba, the sousaphone, and the piano. Although she can't divulge all of her secrets, she hinted at a tuba performance during the *Idol* summer tour and even planned on playing it next week had she stayed.

The performer also stood out because of her trademark glasses and braces. Although the music industry is notorious for unrealistic beauty standards, she says the best advice she received on the show was to always focus on the music. "Harry told me that I should focus more on my craft rather than my stardom," she says of judge Harry Connick Jr. "At first, I thought the music business was just all about how you look, but it's honestly all about how you sound."

Related Link: ['American Idol' Contestant MK Nobilette Talks](#)

[About Being a Role Model](#)

With school and music, there's hardly any time to worry about boys and dating, but Watson still knows exactly what she wants. "He has to play football; he has to be taller than me (in heels); and he can't be stupid," she reveals. "He has to have a nice side and be loyal and honest, and he must be busy because my schedule is busy. He also has to understand what I'm going through – no whiners!"

Although she's still young, the singer has a good head on her shoulders. Her advice to teens wanting to audition for *American Idol* and pursue a career in music is to "focus on school but to follow what your heart wants you to do. If I didn't audition for *Idol*, then I wouldn't be here. If you really want to do something, do it while you still have the chance. There will come a time when you want to do something but don't do it, and you'll regret it later."

You can catch Watson on the American Idol tour this summer. In the meantime, keep up with her on www.facebook.com/IdolMalayaWatson

'American Idol' Contestant Majesty Rose: "I Didn't Change Who I Am At All"





By Liz Kim

Twenty-one year old Rochelle York – better known as Majesty Rose – was an early standout on *American Idol*. Her quirkiness charmed fans, and her diverse tastes in music always surprised the judges. “When I picked my songs, I wasn’t really thinking about what America likes; I was thinking about what I like,” she said. “Yes, America was voting for me, but it was really my time to present myself, and so I thought about what made me most happy and most comfortable.”

Related Link: [‘American Idol’ Contestant MK Nobilette Talks About Being a Role Model](#)

The singer credits the support of her family for keeping her strong each week and says it was really hard to be away from them. While she formed close bonds with her fellow contestants, she shared, “It’s just hard to be around people you don’t really know that well, so it felt like I was alone. I really needed a heartfelt hug from my family, but I’d call them a lot, and we would pray together before shows.”

Before *Idol*, Rose was living in Goldsboro, North Carolina and working as a preschool teacher at the Goldsboro Family YMCA. She became the pride of her town, and every week, they held viewing parties to cheer for her.

It's this community that the star is looking forward to most now that's she done on the *Idol* stage. "I'm really excited to go back home and see my friends and family. I'm going to visit my kids, but I don't know if I'm going to be a teacher – hopefully, they saved my spot!"

Rose has big plans for her future – but first, she's ready for some R&R. "I'm glad I'll have a little downtime to just rest. After the tour, I'd like to do so many things, like being a commercial model," she explained. "I want to do a lot more music, and I'd also like to do some acting. People tell me that they could see me on Broadway, and I think that would be really fun." Plus, she wants to continue to be a positive role model for younger girls and spread the message of self-acceptance.

True to her quirky personality, Rose has some unconventional ideas on how her future album will sound. "I think it would be a mix of the acoustic stuff; I really love Coldplay," she explained. "But there will also be happy music like Janelle Monae. I want it to be really inspiring – you'll laugh one minute and cry the next because it'll be a roller coaster."

For now, though, she's focused on the summer tour and is looking forward to reuniting with her *Idol* friends. Rose said, "I'm excited to get back with the contestants because I made a lot of close friendships, and we're going to get even closer on the tour; we're going to be like a family." Of course, she didn't forget her Rosebuddies. "I'm excited for my fans to be able to see me again. I'm just so grateful to have all the support from them, and I hope to make more fans."

Related Link: [How to Listen to Your Heart](#)

While she may not have won the competition, Rose is very proud of how far she has come. “I learned so much about myself. I learned that I’m a much stronger person than I thought,” she said. “I persevered through so much. It’s easy for somebody from a small town to change, and that’s one thing I can say – I didn’t change who I am at all.”

Although Rose isn’t looking for a romantic relationship right now, she still has a pretty good idea of what she wants. “I would look for somebody who’s like me, somebody who’s level-headed. I’d like to be with somebody who knows where they are going in life.”

You can catch Rose on the American Idol tour this summer. In the meantime, keep up with her on Twitter @PsMajestyRose.