

'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 Asciutto 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."

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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."

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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!