

'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."

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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.