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**Michael Giltz**

Freelance writer and raconteur  
Posted: March 3, 2010 04:15 AM

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# Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Men

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**RATINGS COVERAGE:** With the Olympics out of the way, *American Idol* scored 23.4 million viewers, according to [The Hollywood Reporter](#). Though the format was different last season (with semi-finalists put in groups of 12), that's a modest 3-4% drop from last season's performance show on March 3, when the show scored 24.3 million viewers. *Idol* beats the closing ceremonies of the Olympics to be #1 this week, but next week belongs to the Oscars. After that, it's smooth sailing to the season finale when *Idol* will

retain its crown as the #1 show on TV for the sixth straight year, the first to do so in the history of television.

**SHOW COVERAGE:** A good improvement for a number of men this week on *American Idol*...but then, so many of them had so much room for improvement.

**MICHAEL LYNCH** -- Sang James Brown's iconic #8 hit "It's A Man's Man's Man's World," which hit the Top 40 the week I was born. Lynch benefited from doing exactly what Simon said: command the stage. Instead of being amiable, he was forceful and strong. Yes, when he got soulful, he garbled some lyrics. But for the first time, he seems like a contender. Solid.

**JOHN PARK** -- Sang John Mayer's "Gravity." He started off rough, then when the song got slower, he was worse, and it all felt a bit interminable. But it wasn't as bad as last week. Better, but not good. Will being cute keep him safe for another few weeks?

**CASEY JAMES** -- Sang Gavin DeGraw's lone Top 10 hit, "I Don't Want To Be," which has been performed a gazillion times on *Idol*. James apparently doesn't have a TV but once he realized how often it's been done, he should have picked something else. His guitar playing was fun but it's not good when the vocals seem like an afterthought. On the chorus, which sort of meanders down, he really struggled and faded out at the end of lines. But the show loves him; he got a flashy low-camera intro and lots of active cutting to jazz it up.

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**ALEX LAMBERT** -- Sang John Legend's "Everybody Knows." I love that Lambert invented his own language and he almost certainly won the sympathy vote with his stories of nervousness and throwing up before sporting events, much less *Idol*. (Don't knock the sympathy vote; anything to stay alive!) Yes, he was very improved but since he had so far to come that's not saying much. Lambert did sound pretty forceful at the moments where he dug in. But he was still very nervous and shaking and what an awful last note. Still a long ways to go and the judges overreacted with their praise. (Lose the mullet.)

**TODRICK HALL** -- Sang Tina Turner's career-defining, sole #1 hit "What's Love Got To Do With It." Last week he did Kelly Clarkson, so I thought, cool, he's gonna keep taking songs made famous by women until he gets it right. But he took a song that's already pretty slow (though in a deceptive way; Turner keeps it jaunty) and made it even slower. When he started to move it got a little better but then he had a horrible finale. And how can the judges say Tina Turner's song isn't relevant? It's a classic! Not good but not disastrous.

**JERMAINE SELLERS** -- Sang Marvin Gaye's brilliant #2 hit "What's Going On." I thought Simon was going to nail him when he started to describe the song as a great...pop song. Almost, but not quite. Here's the problem: Sellers sang one of the greatest protest songs of all time as if it were a love song. Maybe he thought he was singing "Let's Get It On?" Seriously, did he even pay the slightest attention to the lyrics? "There's far too many of you dying... War is not the answer..." and so on. But watch him perform and you'd swear he was romancing you. Sellers was smiling and even winking at one point, I think. When a singer is that completely divorced from the lyrics, nothing good can happen artistically. If he wanted to bring passionate gospel fervor, this could have been the perfect time to take it to church. Instead, he took it to the bedroom.

**ANDREW GARCIA** -- Sang James Morrison's debut single "You Give Me Something." (Morrison's sure getting performed a lot for a guy who's never had a Top 40 hit in the US.) He was weak, especially on the chorus and kept moving his arms robotically. It was so-so, not awful but sometimes that's worse since memorably bad is at least memorable.

**AARON KELLY** -- Sang the first #1 hit of The Temptations, "My Girl." I knew Aaron was going to break out or flame out when he did the whole, head-shaking thing. (You know, that back and forth sort of Egyptian-ish thing.) Now here's where it gets confusing. A lot of times I criticize singers for riffing all over the place and singing their asses off a la Mariah Carey when they've barely even sung the melody. But you can do anything you want if it works. And for me, Kelly's runs and pretty convincing growl on "my girl" and his massive amount of vibrato all worked for me. He was really quite good, although like almost everyone he ended weakly. But even if he'd been terrible, I would take issue with the judges, who all insisted the song was too old-fashioned, not contemporary, not relevant. Huh? It's a pop classic. It's not like he was doing some Tin Pan Alley number or John Park's disastrous take on Billie Holiday's "God Bless The Child." It's a timeless pop classic and people can sing it from now until doomsday as long as they do it well. Kelly did it pretty well. Ryan asking him if he liked Justin Bieber made me laugh. There's no good answer to that one, Ryan. Saying no annoys the girls who like him and Bieber as well; saying yes makes him look uncool.

**TIM URBAN** -- Sang Matt Nathanson's hit "Come On Get Higher," which sold a million copies. Leagues better than last week, though he set the bar so low that's not saying much. In fact, he wasn't bad and I agree with Simon. Kind of hit a groove in the middle, though again he hit a very very rough last note. Ellen's comment that he should act -- despite having no stage presence -- made no sense. Yes, it's nice when a cute actor can also sing, sort of, but it's even better when they can really sing. (And the cast of *Glee* can really sing.) And if you have no stage presence as a singer you'll probably have no stage presence as an actor.


**LEE DEWYZE** -- Sang Hinder's #3 hit "Lips Of An Angel." It's easy to see the producers are rooting for him. He got wildly dramatic lighting, with the theater darkened during his first moments for the total rock star effect. But the audience started squealing during the first few lines (talent show *Nashville Star* loves it when that happens!) and I thought he looked very confident, hitching up his pants when he wanted to and smiling when girls screamed but digging into the lyrics. Some of the lyrics got mumbled when he was getting "passionate," but overall I thought he was quite effective. Too bad for him Kara stepped over Simon's big line that Lee may be the one to beat.


Too many ready for home to pick two. I'll just say that Lee Dewze and Casey James and Michael Lynche and Aaron Kelly are safe. Who did you like this week? And who's going home?

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This is bizarre. Where are Alec and Steve? I wanted them to ride in on horses or rise out of flaming garbage cans!



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This year's crop of live action short nominees is made up of three serious, issue-oriented stories, a Coen Brothers knock-off and a funny Swedish entry about a would-be magician.



**Michael Giltz: Idol Season 9: Top 20 -- The Elimination**

Last night's show began with another godawful lip-synced group performance. The group performances, with 20 folks crowding the stage, invariably have a painful 'Up With People' aura about them.



**John Wellington Ennis: Oscars Red Carpet: Best Doc Nominee The Cove Dazzles!**

Oscar Nominee for Best Documentary **The Cove** made quite an impression on the red carpet at the Kodak Theatre today.

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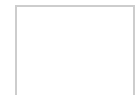
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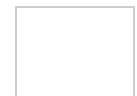
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1 Fans

MediaCurves.com conducted a poll on 3,804 American Idol viewers' perceptions of which male contestants should be eliminated from the top 20 on tomorrow's results show. Viewers selected Lee Dewyze as the contestant who should advance to the next round of the competition based on his performance last night. The contestants with the lowest percentage of votes were Jermaine Sellers, with 2.9%, and Todrick Hall, with 4.3% of the votes. The study will parallel American Idol voting to determine the weekly winners based on a democratic, "one person, one vote" methodology.

More in depth results can be seen at: <http://www.mediacurves.com/Entertainment/J7753-AmericanIdol-3-3-10/Index.cfm>

Thanks,  
Ben

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)**anonimost** 04:03 PM on 3/03/2010

6 Fans

My ranking out of 10:

Dewyze 8

Big Mike 7.5

Andrew Garcia 5.5

John Park 5.5

Casey 6

Lambert 7

Todrick 4

Jermaine 3

Aaron 6

Tim 6 (I think Ellen means he needs to "act" the part).

Overall I was much happier with the performances over last week., so that helps keep the interest alive. I am most interested in how Dewyze and Lambert evolve.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)**filmex** 01:36 PM on 3/03/2010

43 Fans

Lynch's performance was the only one that I could stand to listen to again. Entertainment Weekly called them The Boys of Slumber, and boy, ain't that the truth.

Hall and Sellers have more attitude than talent...("you should come hear me in church"). Seriously? It wouldn't be worth the gas money. I have my styrofoam brick ready to throw at the TV whenever either of them get around to butchering Sam Cooke.

Others are cute lightweights. When Casey has an off-week, you know the guys are in trouble. He should have a TV, then he would know people got sick of that Gavin DeGraw song just from hearing it on "One Tree Hill". And who knew Garcia's brilliant rendition of "Straight Up" would come back to ruin him.

I'll say it again. The Final 10 should be 8 females and 2 guys. Until the show becomes a meritocracy rather than an even-steven male-female connivance, it deserves to be the train-wreck it is promising to be.

[Permalink](#) | [Share it](#)**HUFFPOST SUPER USER****MeinNH** 11:03 AM on 3/03/2010

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Those who "changed it up" and "took a risk" got panned for doing so and those that just came out

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and sang got panned for not "changing it up" or "taking a risk".....what are the judges looking for?

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**Michael Giltz** 01:41 PM on 3/03/2010  
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Yep, the judges can often be contradictory, which gets confusing for the artists who don't know themselves and what they want to do. I always say criticism boils down to this: it didn't work. The rest is up to the singers.

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**SteveS** 10:11 AM on 3/03/2010  
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Jermaine Sellers and John Park need to go home.

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**RhiannonRings** 12:46 PM on 3/03/2010  
51 Fans



Agreed.

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**Michael Giltz** 01:41 PM on 3/03/2010  
59 Fans



No argument here.

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**Patrick Yaeger** 09:43 AM on 3/03/2010  
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What I always listen for is one word: elevation. Did the singer elevate the music through their choices? And by elevate I mean did the singer make the music primary and not themselves. I think three did last night:

Michael Lynch had the greatest performance of the night. Truly masterful artistry. No need for words. Just watch/listen to him.

Otherwise, Ellen got it exactly right when she said that Alex Lambert was something unique. The quality of his voice is something one can only be born with. And the fact that despite his nerves, he delivers almost a flawless vocal performance is a testament to the natural facility of his one of a kind voice. All the nervousness and inexperience is surely a plus. If you have a one in a million voice and know how to use it, sit in a chair and sing for all I care.

Believe it or not, Tim Urban was the only other one that stood out for me. I think the judges (minus Simon) need to listen to his performance back on video. He was strong and on pitch. It was a great song for him. It was simple and it really worked. He connected and elevated the music.

I think Aaron Kelly had the potential to do something special last night. Sadly his voice sounded really tired and that just completely distracted me .. and him .. from connecting, elevating the music. His battle with his voice became primary, not the music

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**Michael Giltz** 01:43 PM on 3/03/2010  
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Alex does indeed have a cool voice. Thanks for commenting.

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