

Eye on Our Generation

American Idol...or Idle?

He Said

By Steve Yevchak
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So I am sitting in my recliner a week or so ago, and my cell phone rings. It is my wife, telling me that *The Lion's Eye* is in a bind. Would I be willing to write an article as to why I believe that *American Idol* is awesome, she asks me.

My initial response to her plea? "Why would anyone NOT think *American Idol* is awesome?"

Thoughts of J-Lo and Randy calling people "dawg" raced through my head. Then my brain kicked in again. So I asked her, "Why doesn't one of the students working for this newspaper write why it is awesome?"

Much to my surprise, she informed me that out of everyone who shares in the task of putting out this fine publication, absolutely nobody thinks *American Idol* is awesome, especially the men on staff.

What is wrong with the youth of America? Have our young people lost sight of that which is great? Am I just getting old, or even worse, weird? Nevertheless, here is why I think it *American Idol* is awesome.

American Idol appeals to me because it is a good old fashioned talent contest. It's not too complicated. It is not a dance contest. You will not see stupid magic tricks. Nobody gets sawed in half, and there is nobody juggling chainsaws. It is purely a singing contest that, along with being entertaining, acts as a vessel for its contestants to pave a path towards fame and fortune by utilizing vocal talents that would otherwise remain buried in obscurity behind the doors of karaoke bars, living rooms, showers, or inside a car while driving.

I mean, we have all done it, right? Aspired to be something famous? The beauty of *American Idol* is that it takes amateur crooning to the next level, and we get to witness and take part in the process too. We have the opportunity to determine who can be America's next music icon. Dare I call it a shot at fame through democratic process? How awesome is that?

It opens the door for Johnny or Katie down the street to make it big in show business. Grammy award winning country singer & platinum record recording artist Carrie Underwood is just one of nine former winners. She was an Oklahoma farm girl before she entered and won *American Idol*. Last year's winner Lee Dewyze worked in a paint store before he tried out. One minute you are nobody, the next, a star! Pretty awesome!

Contestants don't even have to win to achieve stardom. Former *Idol* castoffs such as Chris Daughtry, Jennifer Hudson, and Hillary Scott from Lady Antebellum were all voted out, yet are still all enjoying prosperous careers in the music industry. Numerous others have also moved on to be successful recording artists and stars of stage and screen. Thanks to the magic of television, Americans and people from over 100 countries throughout the world get to witness the rise to stardom as it happens. It is so awesome it is mind boggling!

Some of these contestants are very good singers, a lot of them are not, but in either case, the show provides good family entertainment. One never has to worry about blood, gore, or any other "non-family" friendly content while watching it. As a matter of fact, it is this writer's opinion that the only possible distasteful scenario that one could possibly encounter watching *Idol* is perhaps a guest appearance by Lady Gaga, and that "has" happened. That was NOT very awesome!

So on any given Wednesday or Thursday night between January and May, you can find this old hippie kicked back in the recliner, shifting that lever on the side into 3rd gear, putting my feet up to about the same level as my head, with the flat screen fired up and a thousand watts of sound coursing through my Boston Acoustics speakers. I'm NOT watching Glenn Beck! I'm not watching crime TV! I'm not watching exploitative reality television! And no, I am not watching the 76er's losing by 20! I, along with 21.6 million other viewers on an average, am watching everyday people like you and me make their American dream come true.

It might not be a big house with a white picket fence. It might not be hot dogs, apple pie, or Chevrolets, but it's a dream none the less. Just the simple fact that dreams really happen for those on the screen and those watching is what makes *American Idol* pretty darn awesome!

Are They Us? Our ongoing series will explore our generation and who we are

By Ryann O'Donnell--Lion's Eye Staff Writer--roo5042@psu.edu

The spotlight on teen idols over the past couple years have grown drastically. Teen princesses like Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato, Selena Gomez, and their male counterparts like Drake and Josh and The Jonas Brothers cover magazines and tabloids, and to most, it seems like they are the only people in the news anymore. We hear "multi-platinum this, highest ratings that," their magical lives make it appear that everything they do is wonderful, and parents start believing they are great role models for their children.

However, even charmed lives have problems. Recently Demi Lovato, the star from the Disney's *Sonny with a Chance*, has been in the limelight, but not for anything to be proud about. She submitted herself into rehab because of an eating disorder, cutting herself, drinking, and using cocaine. She had an enormous amount of pressure on herself to be the best.

It seems that even when people seem to have it all, they are still not content with the person they have become and no where is it more apparent than the role models we have in young Hollywood today. Good looks, a singing voice, or that little thing called money seem to be the only things that matter to people in our generation anymore, at least by Hollywood standards. So the ques-

tion is, "Is the media truly representing our generation?"

Along with the Disney darlings, the seeming norms of our generation is being broadcast via MTV's little gem, *Jersey Shore*. The show follows late teens and twenty-somethings, DJ Pauly D, JWoww, The Situation, Snooki, Ronni, Deanna, and Sammi Sweetheart, through their lives as they spend a summer in Seaside Heights, NJ. Essentially though, these roommates are all being paid to get wasted and have sex with as many people as possible.

Critics of the show say that their primary concern is that this show is sending a message that living like the *Jersey Shore* kids is the only way to have fun. So, who acts like that?

Interestingly enough, research at the Guttmacher Institute shows that at least 60% of high school graduates have had sex and SADD reports that over 70% of high school teens regularly drink. Are shows like *Jersey Shore* promoting this type of behavior, or is *Jersey Shore* showing the world what is actually happening in our country?

One huge criticism of the show also lies in the reward for being nothing. *JS* stars are millionaires now but where does hard work come into play?

Our generation deserves to be represented better,



She Said

By Karrie Bowen
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It's a typical Wednesday night in my house. Come home from work, make some dinner, get the kid ready for bed, and then relax with a cup of tea and a family sitcom, right?

Not in Chadds Ford.

My Wednesday and Thursday nights have been hijacked. Instead of relaxing, I get to listen to Steven Tyler's voice drip with sexual innuendo at girls young enough to be his granddaughters. I get to hear Randy Jackson say things like "Yo yo yo dawg." But mostly I have to endure unfortunate people, individuals who really think they are talented, attempt to sing Justin Bieber's *Baby* and in turn, become a national mockery.

Yes folks, *American Idol* is back.

My husband is addicted to this show. He pops popcorn, he turns up the stereo, he critiques performers in their auditions along with the judges. Since I am anti-*Idol*, he got one of my best friends, Stephanie, to be his

American Idol buddy, and they talk on the phone during commercial breaks. I simply stare at him and think "Why?" However, before I condemn him, I want to make a confession.

I, too, once loved *American Idol*. But that all changed with Seasons 5 and 6. What happened? In Season 5, with just four weeks left in the competition, America voted Chris Daughtry off the show. Everyone was stunned, even Simon Cowell. How do you vote off the guy that is dominating the show? More over, how do you let the gray haired, 28 year-old Michael Bolton wanna-be (Taylor Hicks) win the season?

Then Season 6 roared in. In that mix were lots of starstruck hopefuls, including Sanjaya Malakar. I watched as Sanjaya beat talented people, (this was prior to Howard Stern convincing people to "vote for the worst guy") and I was astounded. Was I missing something here? I mean, he was BAD. It came down to the spot to be in the Final 12, and Sanjaya tanked! It was over! But then, it wasn't. Sundance Head, who could actually SING, lost his spot in the Final 12 that week against Sanjaya, that was it for me. *American Idol* became a joke.

Yes, JOKE. *American Idol* is a prime example of just how shallow and stupid the American public is. Week in and week out, this "democratic" process is put into action, and week in and week out, what we see are results based on the swooning hearts of 14 year old girls sitting in their bedrooms with the AT&T text plans, waiting for the phones to open. Contestants go through to the next round not on their talent, but because they face some personal adversity in their life or simply because they are like, super hot.

What started out as a real talent show has now festered into a one-dimensional side show, especially in the first three weeks of the competition. More people tune in to watch auditions than continue to watch after the final 12 are selected, and why? Because it seems that mocking others in a small-minded way makes all of us feel better about our own lack of talent.

American Idol creates this illusion of the American Dream. Sure, sure...I agree that it shows that a kid from Small Town, USA can dream big and aspire to be anything, but it also very much, if you are not paying attention demonstrates how well television creates a lie that we want to believe.

Over 10,000 people line up to audition in each of six cities, out of that, 25 or 30 go to Hollywood. So 60,000 people audition and they take, maximum, 180? Pretty slim odds, right? Of those 60,000 people, there are a lot of people who are actually really talented, but because they are not gimmicky or they don't have some tragic life story, they get passed over in the preliminary auditions by the show's producers, thereby never seeing the Big Three. Call me crazy, but the music industry is home to many average looking, really talented singer/songwriter types, and personally, I think the music industry needs more talent and substance and less shock and awe. Jack Johnson, anyone?

Now, consider this: precious airtime is wasted on all of those people that get sent through that are absolutely horrific, you know, the William Hung's of this world. Why? *American Idol* thinks we want these people pushed through so that we can laugh at their expense and cringe as they perform. However, what would happen if they instead took that airtime and devoted it to the normal acting, talented people? Could that maybe be someone's big break? If *Idol* really wanted to make dreams come true, I think they would cut out the garbage, show true talent, and make it about that very thing.

However, America doesn't want that. America wants exactly what *American Idol* is. All fluff, no substance.

But what do I know? My brain is permanently addled from the billion decibels of power that shake my house when Sanjaya sings in The Man Cave.

with a true reality. The mass media can grab on to its audience and completely change the way someone wants to be. Whether Disney Channel stars or juiceheads, people in general can influence one another, and it is nice to think that it could be possible to change the way people think of us.

Or can we?

Are these accurate representations of people in our generation? **Top:** Selena Gomez and Demi Lovato. **Bottom:** Cast of *Jersey Shore*. (photos courtesy google.com)

