

Idol has come down to Haves and Have Nots

Written by Butch Burney
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American Idol's Top 12 looks to be a division of Haves and Have Nots. What do the contestants have or don't have? You know, the look, the voice and the intangible stage presence that makes watching them -- and listening to them -- something you want to do.

Some of the contestants were hurt last night by bad song choices as they had to pick songs released in the year of their birth. Let me tell you, 1989 and 1990 were bad years for songs.

That being said, after last night's performance, I have categorized the singers in the Haves and the Have Nots.

HAVES

James Durbin, "I'll Be There for You" (Bon Jovi) – This wasn't James' best performance – the arrangement was a little too fast -- but the guy is a star in the making. He's learned to use his screaming voice moderately so it doesn't overpower but adds a strong punch. At this rate, it will be he and Pia in the finals.

Haley Reinhart, "I'm Your Baby Tonight" – Haley is hanging on in the Haves category by just one of her permed hairs. She has the look and the growly, raspy voice, but she needs to have a real break-out performance or she'll get forgotten. Last night was not that performance.

Pia Toscano, "Where Do Broken Hearts Go" – Pia almost started off the season too strong, because now you don't know where she will go. Unlike James, who you feel will find a way to accelerate himself, Pia could end up petering out if she doesn't add some dynamics to her performance. But looks and voice are there, no doubt.

Casey Abrams, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (Nirvana) – Alright, Casey is winning me over. I wasn't a big fan at first, but I'm starting to like BeardBoy. He at least gives the stage some energy. A lot of critics didn't like his take on Curt Kobain's signature song because he was a little screamy, but I think it smelled like a winner.

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Lauren Alaina, “I’m The Only One” – Lauren redeemed herself from last week’s clunker, but is her personality going to drag her down? Isn’t she a little too “aren’t I the cutest thing ever” giggly, even for a 16-year-old?

Jacob Lusk, “Alone” (Heart) – Jacob probably won’t make it to the finals, because last night exposed his weakness for hitting and holding certain notes. But, the dude has a unique, strong voice, and he’s likeable. He even put what he called “Lusky stank” on the song. You go, girl.

HAVE NOTS

Naima Adedapo, “What’s Love Got to Do With It” (Tina Turner) – The voting audience got it right two weeks ago when they did not cast enough ballots for Naima to make it to the top 13. The judges allowed her back in, and that was a mistake. She was torture to listen to last night, and she is just as difficult to watch as she tries unsuccessfully to be sexy or sultry or something. Her stage presence is as off key as her singing. The whole thing is not working. She should be voted off tonight.

Paul McDonald, “I Guess That’s Why They Call it the Blues” (Elton John) – Paul has the moves of a drunken scarecrow when he dances and the voice of an 11-year-old when he sings. He does have that intangible quality of making you want to watch him, though, which is a plus. Ultimately, his voice is too shallow to be a star.

Thia Megia, “Colors of the Wind” (Pocahontas) – Wow, I didn’t think Thia could be any more boring, but she took it down a notch further. Put a mannequin and Thia on stage and see if you can tell the difference. The girl has zero stage presence, maybe because she’s 16 – but that’s the point. She’s 16 so she should be doing fun, popular songs, not those you hear in elevators.

Stefano Langone, “If You Don’t Know Me by Now” (Red) – If a man were to give birth, he

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would look like Stefano singing. Is it really that painful to move air through your mouth? I have yet to watch an entire song from Stefano without fast forwarding. The judges love him. I don't see it.

Scotty McCreery "Can I Trust You With My Heart" (Travis Tritt) – Actually, Scotty could be a "Have" but I don't like country music, so I put him in this group. He sang about 2 bars last night and I fast forwarded through his performance, so I can't critique how he sounded, but I can say that he belongs on one of the C&W shows, not American Idol.

Karen Rodriguez, "Love Will Lead You Back" – It may not lead Karen back next week, though. Apparently, there were no Spanish songs released in 1989, so she sang an English song, then changed the lyrics at the end to Spanish. Don't know if the Latino vote will get her through another week.

With all of that being said, it looks like Naima, Karen and Thia will be in the bottom three. I'd like to see Naima go because I think she has the weakest voice of any of the contestants. Ultimately, however, we all know that is not what is usually the overriding factor.