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April 28, 2025 The Top 12

1. Gabby Samone. I rank everything, including the Top Sixty Best Stage Performances By American Idol Contestants (Seasons 1-21). Elliot Yamin's superb vocal of *A Song For You* came in at #6. I love Elliot Yamin. You should hear his rapturous R&B version of Procol Harum's *Whiter Shade of Pale*, one of the best rock songs ever written and recorded. Thank you Gabby. This was a wonderful pick of both song and artist. And to top it off, Gabby delivered a masterful vocal of this wonderful Donny Hathaway R&B ballad (#12 on my list of the 80 Best R&B Songs of All Time). Gabby can caress a lyric better than any contestant remaining in competition for the title of American Idol Season 23. Her mesmerizing vocal manipulation of these lyrics sent chills up my spine. I think she's the best singer in this competition and that's saying something cause this year's contestants can absolutely blow. But know this, Idol is not just about singing. There are other factors at play (gender, race, music genre, habitat/regional bias, stage performance, looks, staging, nationality, personality, partnering with guests and/or other contestants, the judges' comments, likability and even sex appeal) so if you want Gabby to win, you must vote, vote, and vote and then hope that America agrees with you. And if they don't, it doesn't necessarily mean that they don't like Gabby or that they don't like R&B or that America is biased against racial minorities or that America votes with herd mentality or even that they got it wrong. It's all down to personal taste and artistic preference; we like what we like and what we like is a reflection of our upbringing and our community norms and moral codes. Finally, this. Gabby must also do her part to win. She must continue to sing well to have a chance to win the title, but she must also work toward winning over her critics and anti-fans so that she can bring them over to her side. Winning the 23rd Season of American Idol favors a White Southern Male that specializes in Country Music, but it certainly doesn't mean that others cannot win the title. It's been done ten times by a combination of women, minorities, Westerners and Northerners and by R&B, Pop, and Rock specialists. It's not a Mission Impossible. Absolutely Gabby can win.

2. Jamal Roberts. This was a stunning cover of Tom Odell's *Heal* from Jamal, easily his finest moment on the Idol stage. Thank God he was watching on the night that 3rd place finisher; Leah Marlene, sang it on Season 20 of American Idol. What we heard tonight from Jamal was an absolutely beautiful vocal, filled with tender emotion; sincerity, desperation,

pain, heartache, and hope for better days. One of the most moving performances I have ever heard or seen on the Idol stage.

3. Kolbi Jordan. This was a spectacular performance and an exquisite vocal of Judy Garland's *Over The Rainbow*. Kolbi at her very best. America, if you are confused about the word, Diva, Kolbi is the living definition on your screen. Kolbi exhibited excellent vocal integrity, as she was able to generate exquisite, mellifluous, and crystal-clear tone throughout. I am excited to see Kolbi back where she rightfully belongs. I hope she can stay in the Top Five. She is a magnificent singer and a one-in-a-million entertainer. I would not be surprised at all to see Kolbi under the bright lights of Broadway. She was born for the theater.

4. John Foster. Its not just the favorable criteria for winning Idol that make this young man a front runner, it is also his talent. My friends say, how can you pick this guy to win when he's being outsung each week? Please guys, remember, Idol is about much more than complicated melisma (runs), range, and glory notes. Here's the proof. Trent Harmon, a country singer with a two-octave range defeated the uber-talented jazz and R&B specialist, LaPorsha Renee with 3 and a half octave range. Kris Allen, with a 1.8 octave range, defeated the uber talented and high-powered rock vocalist, Adam Lambert who was/is a dynamic singer with a three-octave range, and the bookies and the judges favorite. And Noah Thompson, Laine Hardy, and Scotty McCreery have trouble negotiating a two octave range. And they won. Why would you think John Foster can't win? Of course he can! Surprisingly, John offered a wonderful vocal and an accurate cover of Carrie Underwood's *I Told You So*. In my opinion, John's best vocal of the season. He is the #3 favorite to win Idol in my personal performance rankings and the #1 favorite to win Idol on my computer rankings.

5. Thunderstorm Artis. I remember very well Haley Reinhart's cover of The Animals *House Of The Rising Sun*. I have it at #5 in my list of the 60 Best Live Stage Performances on American Idol Seasons 1-21. What Thunderstorm did tonight was classic Thunderstorm Artis. A song is not a song without Thunderstorm's patented caressing of lyrics followed by his low-to-high growling and unique melodies and phrasing. I love what Thunderstorm brings to the Idol stage, and I always anticipate his performances because he is a wonderful singer, loves to perform, and never disappoints us.

6. Canaan James Hill. This was a beautifully presented first verse of Ce Ce Winans' *The Goodness of God*, one of the best gospel soul songs ever recorded. Caanan took great care of these lyrics and took us on a slow burn to the final chorus. The journey was well worth the wait. I love what was

done here. Caanan is a wonderful entertainer and a terrific singer.

7. Slater Nalley. I have heard it many times, but I am not a big fan of *Angel From Montgomery*. It's a difficult selection for a singing competition because it lacks big moments that can impress the audience and judges. I would have preferred something more dynamic. For example, there are a ton of dynamic Chris Stapleton songs in the 22 season Idol songbook that would have served him better. With Slater, it's always about Song Choice. When he gets it right, he's a threat to win it all. When he doesn't, the threat to win just isn't there. But there was nothing wrong with this performance. It just didn't allow him to compete effectively.

8. Breanna Nix. This was an accurate cover of our Danny Gokey's *Tell You Heart To Beat Again* but structurally it is not as appealing as *Hope In Front Of Me* or *My Best Days Are Ahead Of Me*. But she made top 10, so it appears that she picked the right song. I love Danny Gokey's Christian music. He is a wonderful singer and a terrific human being.

9. Mattie Pruitt. This young lady's voice is money. When she grows into this voice, it will be unmistakable and distinctive in the music industry. She sounds just like Lauren Diagle, with that same distinctive and rare smoky alto. I loved her cover of Kelly Clarkson's *Because Of You*. Mattie's done well on the Idol stage. She's managed to attract many adult voters, more than I thought she would. But history exists for a reason, e.g., that we must learn from it. Her road to victory on American Idol is fraught with difficulty. Idol History is not on her side.....but that does not mean it can't be done. Good luck Mattie.

10. Josh King. This was a fine performance from Josh. I loved his unique arrangement of Eric Carmen's *All By Myself*. He mentioned Pia Toscano's excellent version of this classic song, but Latoya London also delivered a terrific cover of this song on the Idol stage. It might be worthwhile to investigate Zayn Malik's *Alienated*, for a future Idol performance because it's a terrific Chris Stapleton sound alike song with the same theme as Eric Carmen's *All By Myself* if this is the kind of music that makes Josh feel at home on the Idol stage, as he did tonight.

*******Che and Filo were eliminated tonight by America's vote*******

*******It appears that my Computer Algorithm (see my April 27, 2025 The Top 14 post on this site) might work. It correctly picked The Top Ten contestants tonight. My own ranking, using just the stage performances, also picked the Top Ten contestants correctly, but in a**

different order. I have Gabby Samone at #1 on my Review of Idol Performances and she's been there for several weeks. My reviews may reflect some bias. The Computer Algorithm, on the other hand, has John Foster at #1. The algorithm works solely from an extensive collection of historical data points for the previous 22 American Idol winners and has no emotional bias toward any contestant. The algorithm is all science.