

Idols shine after advice from seasoned rockers

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Eye on Idol



With former Styx vocalist Dennis DeYoung and Roger Hodgson -- formerly of Supertramp -- beaming from the live audience like proud parents, *Canadian Idol's* Top 7 hit the stage Monday night with a rollicking roster of classic rock.

When working with each Idol earlier in the week, DeYoung and Hodgson had plenty of advice to offer, particularly when it came to preparation and focus. Their help clearly made it through to the competitors, who performed the rock classics with ease and conviction.

Kicking off the night was Rob James, who picked a song well suited to his fine-tuned R & B capabilities: Grand Funk Railroad's "Some Kind of Wonderful." After delivering a better performance each week, he once again took his confidence and delivery to the next level.

"That song brought out more of your skill set than anything you've done,"

said judge Farley Flex. "The falsetto... everything was perfect."

While agreeing the vocals were great, Zack Werner advised Rob to work on setting himself apart from the crowd: "You've got to show what it is about you that is different from every other singer like you."

Next, Tyler Lewis took to the stage with only two guitars to back him up. Singing Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Simple Man," he brought out the honesty that had left DeYoung and Hodgson duly impressed.

"That was insane. You showed off the sweet edge to your voice that we've never heard before," said a gushing Sass Jordan.

"I thought it was somewhat predictable," countered Zack, noting the observation wasn't meant as an insult. "The guy's defining 'this is what Tyler does' and that's ok with me."

After hearing Gatineau's Eva Avila practice her song, DeYoung declared the only limits she'd have in her career were those she imposed on herself. "The sky's the limit for her," he said, based on her performance of Queen's "Who Wants to Live Forever."

"If I could I'd stand up to give you this compliment," said Farley, who remained seated in order to direct his comments to his microphone. "I've just made a turning point from being a judge to a fan."

"It was a lovely, mature performance and the singing was out of this world," added Sass.

When Craig Sharpe had his turn to learn from the veteran rockers he was told to take his obvious musical gift and throw in more distinct flair while making sure he meant the word he was singing. He pulled it off with his rendition of Foreigner's "Cold as Ice" -- at least, as far as most of the judges were concerned.

"Star power is so much about being unique," said Zack. "It's about bending all the barriers and letting it all go. Dude, in this competition and perhaps in the world, you are so unique. It's a cool thing."

"I'm a huge fan of your voice, but that was not believable to me," said a less

than impressed Jake. "I didn't buy it."

After remarking on her power and believability, DeYoung and Hodgson were treated to another star quality effort from Emeryville, Ontario's Ashley Coulter. In her rendition of Bob Dylan's 1970s hit "Knocking on Heaven's Door," Coulter gave the old classic a unique twist topped off by yet another new hairstyle.

"A really great rock performance and I'm glad you put your own spin on that song," applauded Jake. "Your instincts were riA lot of the contestants on this show are worried about what will happen post-Idol. I have no worries about that at all for you."

"It was cool... but it's something that's predictable," countered Zack, usually a stalwart Ashley fan. "But if you're going to win, you've got to show everybody that you're completely unique."

After a week with his worst reviews of the competition and his first appearance in the bottom three, Chad Doucette was looking for guidance from the rock royalty there to help tweak his performance of April Wine's "Bad Side of the Moon." Both DeYoung and Hodgson told him to focus less on eyeing up cameras or walking into the audience and more on his singing, saying the rest would fall into place.

"There are three really memorable and distinct voices in this room: Dennis DeYoung, Roger Hodgson and Chad Doucette," noted Farley.

"For those of you who were actually listening out there, I thought the first part was really cool because you used your flaws as virtues. Then you tried to turn the corner and really kick it and your flaws kicked you," said Zack.

Off all the competitors, showboat Steffi D seemed the most excited by the opportunity to work with the pair of progressive rockers, using much of her workshop time to fire off questions. Her performance of David Bowie's "Life on Mars" closed the night in perfect fashion, earning solid compliments across the panel.

"You're so weird for our little *Canadian Idol* world," said Zack. "You are a one-woman rock opera spectacular. I don't even know what to say except it's so cool, man. Weird, though, weird."

"Every time you come out here you turn every song into a performance number," added Jake. "David Bowie would be proud of that performance."

With an evening of compliments behind them, the Top 7 head into Tuesday's results show with no clear sign of who will face elimination. Find out who Canada sends home on Tuesday at 8 p.m. EST.