

Hollywood Support: Crystal McCall,
John, Debra(wife), Julie Cox



Photo Courtesy of American Idol

americanidol.com

Just Sing

“ **Y** Written By Dottie B. Hicks

ou need to step up with your best game and just sing," says American Idol Contestant John Glos-son. To combat nerves which caused many to mess up, John's motto became, Just Sing! That attitude paid off big time. Out of 116,000 contestants who tried out for the 2008 American Idol, he made it to one of the last groups to be cut before the 24 were chosen. In fact, his number was 55 which I would say is pretty awesome. The journey was a whirlwind experience with a lot of "hurry up and wait" time.

When John was five, he began singing in his dad's church. Later as a college student, he was chosen to sing in the elite group "Sounds of Liberty" from Liberty Bible College in VA, and becoming the leader during his second year. He met his beautiful wife during that time. They were married and he took



a job as Minister of Music at a church in Jacksonville, Fl. Although he is not a TV fan, he got hooked on American Idol. That's when people began saying, "John, you've got to try out." He wasn't so interested at that time because many good professional musicians from college whom he knew had tried out and not made it. However, his wife was one of those who kept saying, "John, you just have to give it a try one time." In season seven, John gave it a shot and began telling us of his fascinating adventure. Here is his story in his own words.

One of my friends with whom I sang at Liberty said to me, "Let's just do it. Let's just go." So we drove up to Atlanta, got our ticket and went back on Tuesday to audition. Thousands of people were lined up - about 16,000. You're herded in like cattle. Fifteen tables are across the field with two judges at each table. You are put in a line of four and told to go to a table; then wait. When your row is at the front, you step up to the table, and the judges go from left to right saying, "sing, next, sing, sing." Sometimes you have two seconds, sometimes thirty seconds. It seems a little unfair because some people who really have talent don't have time to show what they can do. But that's when I decided I needed to

step up with my best game and just sing. When the four people in your line have finished, the judges go down the line saying "yes or no" to each person. I sang "Ain't No Mountain High Enough." The female judge said, "Are you going to tease me with that? Can you sing more of it?" I sang the verse. She said, "That's what I'm talking about." Then she asked me to sing something else. I sang "Bless the Broken Road" and got a "yes."

From the 16,000 in Atlanta, 276 made it. Many of those could not really sing but were chosen for humor. Those who showed up in a special costume were told to wear that same outfit again so the TV viewers could get a glimpse. If you make it through the first set of producers, you then go to another set. One of the judges was an executive producer from *So you think you can dance*. These big wigs call the shots. When you make it here, you go to a room set up like the one with Randy, Paula and Simon. I sang "Georgia On My Mind" and got no feed back, but they gave me my gold ticket which meant I got to come back the next day when Randy, Paula and Simon were there. Lots of camera people and producers were doing interviews and taking pictures. Fifty got to sing for the famous trio.

My interview was short because I am a no frill guy and really didn't have an exciting story. While I was sitting there, the producer said, "Excuse me a minute" and I got to see Randy and Simon actually arrive. It was pretty cool. Simon has no personality and said nothing, but Randy spoke to me and said, "How're you doing, man? Good luck!" You wait again - for "confessionals." They want to know who your favorite judge is and tell you to dance in front of the TV screen. My wife and some friends were allowed to join me and we saw the emotional gamut. Ryan Seacrest stood by the door. You walk in and face Randy, Paula and Simon sitting under the bright lights. Behind them are 40 other producers who are not shown on TV. Sometimes one of the three will lean over to get feedback from the others.

"Hey, John, how are you?" It was so surreal to me because you see them on TV and now you're standing in front of them and they're talking to you. "So, you own your Interior Design Company in

Douglas, GA. What are the hot colors for this season?" Since this was November, I told them we were getting ready for Christmas and the hot colors were bronze, silver and platinum. Simon said, "I thought it was red and green." Paula was like, "Stupid, those are traditional colors." They laughed it off. Then Simon said, "John, if you won a million dollars, what would you do with it?" I wasn't prepared for that question, but I said "Well, my wife and I really like to contribute money to my friends who take orphans different places. I would want to help these families." Simon rolled his eyes and wanted me to react, but I didn't. Then I said, "Guess I would buy my wife a purse because she really likes them." They made light of that. "What are you going to sing?" "Georgia On My Mind," I answered. I took a deep breath and started singing. Randy said, "you tore that up man." Both Randy and Paula gave me a "yes," but Simon said "no." Randy said "Welcome to Hollywood"! and they filmed me coming out of the



Photo Above: Pianist Jay Beverley and daughter during intermission



John performing during a public concert in Douglas at South GA College



Photo Courtesy of American Idol

door. Simon was listed as my favorite judge so he may have thought saying no would upset me. But I didn't show any reaction and my journey to Hollywood began.

One hundred and seventy contestants flew out to Hollywood. We were given a list of 37 songs from which to pick. My choice was "When I Need you." They tell you to bring a recorder; you pick a key with the band, go over it one time and that's it. We were split into two groups and started at 7 am. Each contestant had one practice with the band, then in the afternoon, we sang before Randy, Paula and Simon. On Monday, if you got a yes, you didn't have to sing again until the Thursday auditions. The others got a second chance on Tuesday.

This time everybody got to go to the auditorium. All of these contestants were really good singers with phenomenal talent. Yet, mostly unfavorable comments were given to the seventeen people before me. I'm thinking, "Oh, great, what are the odds for me?" The judges were being consistently hard. Cameras were in my face and I said, "I'm not talking." I was thinking, the reason everybody is flipping out is because they can't believe they are here and their nerves are getting the best of them, so I took a deep breath and said to myself, "John, just relax and sing

- just sing!" They really want you to make the song your own, so I completely reworked my song vocally. To my amazement, when I went up free styling in the middle of the song, many of the contestants started clapping and standing up. I kept singing. At the end, the crowd went berserk; they clapped and clapped. I was wondering what the judges were thinking. Randy said, "I remember you in Atlanta, you have an amazing voice, an amazing talent. This is what we are looking for; this is how you need to bring it to the stage. Let your nerves go and just get up here and do it." Paula said, "John, that was wonderful; I've loved you since the first day I heard you, etc." Then Simon says, "John, you are definitely an amazing vocalist and you're a likeable guy. You walk in the room and you might not say much, but people are going to like you and that's appealing. But I just don't know if you have star quality." Then he said, "Randy, Yes or No?" "Yes!" "Paula, Yes or No?" "Yes! And I said, "it don't matter what you say Simon; I got 2 yeses" and I started walking off. Simon said, "do you want to know?" And I said "Nope, I don't even care." Everybody was kind of laughing. He said, "Well, it's a no." I don't know if that was for shock effect or what. Then we were all laughing. I went into the interview room and was asked about the remark Simon made. I said, "I

think American Idol helps people grow and become a star." Anyway, I was one of the fifteen or sixteen who didn't have to sing again until Thursday.

While I was in Hollywood, I felt that I was not going to be picked. The ones with interesting backgrounds or stories got the attention. Nobody was rude to me, nor did they give me really bad criticism. The only negative comment was they didn't think I was star quality. On Wednesday, they did the biggest cut. It went from 176 to about 76. For those who remained, they brought in backup singers and a band. You got to pick what you wanted to sing. The advice given to us was - go with your gut feeling. Mine was to sing "Georgia On My Mind" again. So, I that's what I did.

Thursday was a lot like the first day. Everybody went to the gold room and waited. When the trio showed up, we started. I knew they were looking for the top 50 and there were about 76 of us. It was a bit more nerve wracking because you literally get one chance to go through the song with the band. Again Randy said, "Man, you have an amazing, amazing voice, but I might have to agree with Simon on the star quality thing." Paula said, "I just love you, John and your voice, but I really thought you might bring a little of that star quality today." I was thinking, "Now how do I do that? Do I put it in my bag?" After that Simon made no comment. Again, Randy and Paula

said "yes," so I went back upstairs to wait.

My prayer was, "Lord, if I'm not in the top 24, please cut me today." I had no desire to make it in the 50, go home for two months and then come back to find out I was not in the top 24. On TV, you get the impression that we find out the next day, but it's not that way. With my business, I didn't want to be put on hold for another 2 months.

Others were cut and there were 55 left. Now it was my turn. Paula was the one who said, "John, I hate to tell you, but your journey is coming to an end today." I said, "That's fine."

When John was asked if he would do it again, his response was, "I'm eligible to try out one more year. My friend and my wife are really encouraging me to do it. If I decide to audition again, I'll create a story by losing about 100 pounds. Not that I am unhappy with my size; my family likes to eat and that is who we are, but I would do it to change my image. Doing this would give me something to talk about, so I am considering it. Being a star is not my dream. I love singing, leading worship and church music. American Idol was a fun experience and something I may try again. They are looking for uniqueness, not an imitation of someone. They want someone different."

And who knows? John Glosson just may be that Someone! † **CCM**



John and Debra in Hollywood