

# Mean-spirited 'Idol' loses sense of fun

It comes as no surprise that "American Idol" (8 p.m., Fox) has returned as the nation's favorite show, attracting up to 40 percent of all TV viewers in some markets.

But just as "Idol" has come to resemble a school talent pageant, it has also begun to reflect the darker side of playground popularity and conformity.

It was impossible to ignore the persistent mean streak in last week's "Idol." And I'm not just talking about Simon Cowell's caustic commentary.

If, as we are repeatedly informed, "Idol" was besieged with tens of thousands of would-be warblers, then why did the show devote so much attention to sad cases?

Like a schoolyard bully drunk with power and popularity, "Idol" took its sweet time ridiculing the simple-minded and savaging perceived "sissies."

It's understandable that bad auditions have become part of the show's template. But deliberate cruelty is neither entertaining nor amusing.

• Things on "Lost" (9 p.m., ABC, TV-14) have been a tad intense of late. In just the past two weeks we've witnessed Eko's horrific life story and the disintegration of Jack's marriage. And let's not forget a seven-hour miracle surgery ending in failure and death.

So wasn't it fun to watch Hurley and Charlie kicking back in the mystery bunker and slapping some unrecognizable albums on the turntable? The best moment arrived when Sayid popped into the room and declared, "This music is thoroughly depressing."

Any show that has a former member of the Iraqi Republican Guard acting as a music critic is OK in my book.

On tonight's "Lost," folks begin to worry that Charlie has returned to his drug problems. And so far they don't even know about his secret stash of statues. Sawyer will encourage Hurley to pursue his "desert island" crush.

Of course all of this takes place with our knowledge that Grizzly Adams and his ominous posse still lurk in the bush.

The sudden arrival and disappearance of so many jungle torches in last week's episode reminded me of this show's "Survivor" elements. That's not to mention the bearded bad guy's resemblance to "Survivor" star Rupert Boneham.

Is Jeff Probst one of the "Others"? If so, I have a feeling that "Lost" is going to end with one heck of a Tribal Council.

• With a hit movie, an Oscar and a top selling single and album, Jamie Foxx has had the kind of year any performer would envy. The star of "Ray" has his



Kevin McDonough

own special tonight, "Jamie Foxx: Unpredictable" (8 p.m., NBC), featuring supporting talent from the fields of soul, pop, gospel and hip hop.

Filmed at the historic Orpheum Theatre in downtown Los Angeles, "Unpredictable" showcases Foxx performing with Stevie Wonder, Mary J. Blige, Angie Stone, Snoop Dogg, The Game and Common.

• Fans of self-assured female characters should not miss tonight's "Veronica Mars" (9 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) when the high school private eye gets a visit from an FBI agent played by "Xena" herself, Lucy Lawless.

## Tonight's other highlights

• Catch up with the competition with 10 consecutive hours of "Project Runway" (4 p.m., Bravo).

• One suspect stands out on "Criminal Minds" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-14).

• Plastic surgery makes a corpse even harder to identify on "Bones" (9 p.m., Fox, TV-14).

• "The War that Made America" (9 p.m., WFYI, WTIU), a documentary look at the French and Indian War, concludes.

## Cult choice

A poet (Javier Bardem) survives oppression in Castro's Cuban dictatorship and escapes to New York in the 2000 drama "Before Night Falls" (10:35 p.m. IFC) from painter-turned-director Julian Schnabel.

## Series notes

Decor woes on "Still Standing" (8 p.m., CBS, TV-PG) ... Hitting the books on "George Lopez" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-14) ... Matt doubts his dad's motives on "South Beach" (8 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... Under-dosed on "One Tree Hill" (8 p.m., WB, TV-PG).

## Late night

Mischa Barton and Jeff Altman on "Late Show With David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Jason Lee and Nickel-creek on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

## WEDNESDAY EVENING

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
WTTV	Friends (CC)	Every-Raymond	One Tree Hill (N) (CC)		Beauty and the Geek (CC)		Sex and the City	Will & Grace	Sex and the City	Will & Grace
WRTV	The Insider (N)	Be a Millionaire	George Lopez	Freddie (N)	Lost "Fire Plus Water" (N) (CC)		Invasion "Redemption" (10:01) (N)	News (CC)	Nightline (11:35)	
WISH	Inside Edition	Ent. Tonight	Still Standing (N)	Yes, Dear (N)	Criminal Minds (N) (CC)		CSI: NY "Risk" (N) (CC)	News (CC)	Late Show	
WTHR	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Jamie Foxx: Unpredictable (N)		Biggest Loser: Special Edition		Law & Order "Ghosts" (CC)	News (CC)	Tonight Show	
WFYI	Business Rpt.	Queens Horses	National Geographic (N) (CC)		The War That Made America (N) (CC)			Tavis Smiley	Time Goes By	
WNDY	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	South Beach (N) (CC)		Veronica Mars "Donut Run" (N)		News	Access H'wood	South Park	South Park
WTIU	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		National Geographic (N) (CC)		The War That Made America (N) (CC)			Tavis Smiley (N)	Charlie Rose (N)	
WHMB	College Basketball Northwestern at Purdue.				Lester Sumrall	This Is Your Day	Life Today (CC)	Mount Zion	Emmanuel Church of Greenwood	
WCLJ	Billy Graham Classic Crusades	Behind Scenes	Hal Lindsey		Taking Authority	Van Impe Pres		Praise the Lord (CC)		
WXIN	The Simpsons	Seinfeld (CC)	American Idol "Auditions 4" (N)		Bones "Woman at the Airport" (N)		News (CC)	Geraldo Large	Seinfeld (11:05)	Drew Carey
WIPX	Pyramid (CC)	Family Feud	Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye (CC)		Early Edition (CC)		Doc "While You Were Snoring"	It's a Miracle	Paid Program	
WTBU	David Reagan	John Hagee	Rod Parsley	Joni Lamb	Celebration		Jimmy, Karen	Wisdom Keys	This Is Your Day	Believer's Voice
A&E	Cold Case Files (CC)		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Inked (CC)	Inked (N) (CC)	Criss Angel	Criss Angel	Crossing Jordan (CC)	
AMC	Death Hunt (6) (R) (81) ** (CC)		Goldfinger (GP) (64) **** Sean Connery, Gert Frobe. Adventure. (CC)		Thunderball (10:15) (PG) (65) *** Sean Connery. Adventure. (CC)					
AP	The Most Extreme Extreme births.		Planets Funniest Animals		Animal Report	Animal Rescue	Animal Cops Houston (CC)		Planets Funniest Animals	
BET	106 & Park	Access Granted	Jamie Foxx	Jamie Foxx	Beef (R) (03) ** Documentary. Feuds between hip-hop artists lead to more record sales. In Living Color					
BRAVO	Project Runway "Social Scene"		Project Runway (CC)		Project Runway "On Thin Ice"		Project Runway "Inspiration" (N)		Project Runway "Inspiration"	
CNBC	On the Money		Blow Out (CC)		Mad Money		The Big Idea With Donny Deutsch		Blow Out (CC)	
CMT	Dukes of Hazzard "The Meeting"		The 2006 Miss America Pageant	Las Vegas.			The Dukes of Hazzard: Reunion! (97) John Schneider. Comedy.			
CNN	The Situation Room		Paula Zahn Now (CC)		Larry King Live (CC)		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)			
COM	Com.-Presents Reno 911! (CC)		Daily Show	Colbert Report	Chappelle's	South Park	South Park	Drawn Together	Daily Show	Colbert Report
DISC	Extreme Engineering (CC)		Superships (N)		MythBusters (N) (CC)		Stunt Junkies	Survivorman	Dirty Jobs "Alligator Farmer"	
EI	EI News (N)	EI News	Dr. 90210		Dr. 90210		10 Ways (N)	Number 1 Single	Saturday Night Live (CC)	
ESPN	College Basketball Maryland at Georgia Tech. (CC)		College Basketball Cincinnati at Louisville. (CC)		NBA Basketball Minnesota Timberwolves at Memphis Grizzlies. (CC)				SportsCenter	
ESPN2	Quite Frankly	College Basketball	Cincinnati at Louisville. (CC)		Tennis Australian Open -- Women's Semifinals. From Melbourne, Australia. (CC)					
FAM	Smallville "Slumber" (CC)		Grind (PG-13) (03) * Mike Vogel, Adam Brody. Comedy. (CC)		Whose Line? Whose Line?		Whose Line?		The 700 Club (CC)	
FNC	Fox Report With Shepard Smith		The O'Reilly Factor (CC)		Hannity & Colmes (CC)		On the Record-Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor	
FOOD	Good Eats	Unwrapped	Emeril Live Hunters. (N)		Behind the Bash/Sugar Rush (N)		Good Eats (N)	Ham on Street	Iron Chef "Tomato Tomato battle."	
FOXMV	The Mephisto Waltz (6) (R) (71) **		The Princess Bride (PG) (87) *** Cary Elwes. Fantasy.		Unfaithfully Yours (PG) (84) ** Dudley Moore. Comedy.					
FOXSM	Totally Football	Midwest Sports	Poker Superstars Invitational		Best Damn Sports Show Period		Totally Football	Sports Report	Sports Report	Best-Sports
FX	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	Big Momma's House (PG-13) (00) ** Martin Lawrence. Comedy.		That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	Big Momma's House (00) **	
HALL	JAG "JAG: San Diego"		Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)		Follow the Stars Home (01) ** Kimberly Williams. Drama. (CC)		M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H "Inga"		
HGTV	Curb Appeal	House Hunters	Kitchen Trends	I Want That! (N)	Buy Me (N)	Cash in Attic	House Hunters	What You Get	Dream House	FreeStyle
HIST	Modern Marvels (CC)		Modern Marvels (CC)		Modern Marvels "Wiring America"		Modern Marvels "Logging Tech"		Modern Marvels Salt Dependency.	
LIFE	Truth (NR) (06) Stephanie Zimbalist. Dean Cain, Thea Gill. (CC)		Painful Secrets (00) ** Sean Young, Robert Wisden. Drama. (CC)		Will & Grace	Will & Grace				
MSNBC	Hardball (CC)		Countdown With Keith Olbermann		Rita Cosby Live & Direct		Scarborough Country		The Situation With Tucker Carlson	
MTV	Direct Effect		Wild & Out	Wild & Out	Made "Battle of the Bands"		MTV Cribs (N)	Illest Improvs	R. Wrid Chal.	R. Wrid Chal.
NICK	Oddparents	Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob	Unfabulous	Full House (CC)	Fresh Prince	Roseanne (CC)	Roseanne (CC)	Roseanne (CC)	Roseanne (CC)
OXY	Murder by Numbers (6:30) (R) (02) ** Sandra Bullock. Mystery.		The Glass House (PG-13) (01) * Leelee Sobieski, Diane Lane. Suspense.		The Bermuda Triangle: Startling New Secrets (CC)		Momentum (03) Lou Gossett Jr. (CC)			
SCI FI	Out of the Blue The alleged UFO coverup. (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	U.S. Marshals (PG-13) (98) ** Tommy Lee Jones. Sam Gerard gets caught up in another fugitive case.					
SPIKE	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Sex and the City	Sex and the City	Orange County (11:10) (02) ** (CC)	
TCM	Castle-Hudson	MGM Parade	The Bad News Bears (PG) (76) *** Walter Matthau. Comedy. (CC)		The Karate Kid (PG) (84) ** Ralph Macchio, Elisabeth Shue. Action.					
TLC	Against the Law (CC)		The New Detectives (CC)		Psychic Witness (N)		Mostly True: Urban Legends		The New Detectives (CC)	
TNT	Law & Order "Formerly Famous"		Law & Order "Attorney Client"		The Long Kiss Goodnight (R) (96) *** Geena Davis. Adventure. (CC)		Las Vegas "The Bitch Is Back"			
TOON	Foster's Home	Grim Advent.	Grim Advent.	Codename: Kid	Puffy AmiYumi	Foster's Home	Ed, Edd n Eddy	Cartoon-Toons	Family Guy	Futurama (CC)
TVL	Good Times	Good Times	Little House on the Prairie (CC)		Andy Griffith	Andy Griffith	Sit Down Comedy-David Steinberg		Good Times	Good Times
USA	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Criminal Intent	Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	
VH1	VH1 Special		VH1 Special		VH1 Special		Celebrity Fit Club		Fabulous Life Of... "Las Vegas"	
WE	Dharma & Greg	Dharma & Greg	Race to the Altar (CC)		Secret Lives of Women (CC)		Daddy's Girl	Daddy's Girl	Style Me with Rachel Hunter	
WGN	America's Funniest Home Videos		Becker (CC)	Becker (CC)	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	WGN News at Nine (CC)		Sex and the City	Becker (CC)
DISN	The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	That's So Raven	High School Musical (06) Zac Efron, Ashley Tisdale. Musical Comedy. Students conspire against two teenage singers. (CC)		The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	That's So Raven	That's So Raven	That's So Raven	
ENC	Dangerous Minds (6:15) (R) (95) ** Michelle Pfeiffer. Drama. (CC)		The Bourne Supremacy (PG-13) (04) *** Matt Damon. Suspense. Jason Bourne fights back when the CIA tries to kill him. (CC)		Road House (R) (89) ** Patrick Swayze, Kelly Lynch, Sam Elliott. Drama. A legendary bouncer agrees to tame a notorious gin mill. (CC)					
HBO	Spider-Man 2	The Making Of: Spider-Man 2	Meet the Fockers (PG-13) (04) ** Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller, Dustin Hoffman. Comedy. Future in-laws clash in Florida. (CC)		Inside the NFL (N) (CC)		The Sopranos	Carmela's father celebrates his birthday. (CC)		
SHOW	Just One of the Guys (6:30) (PG-13) (85) ** Joyce Hyser. (CC)		SHO Me 1st (8:15) (CC)		Saved! (PG-13) (04) ** Jena Malone. Comedy-Drama. A pregnant teenager faces ostracism. (CC)		The L Word "Lobster" Jenny brings Moira home. (CC)		House of the Dead (R) (03) * Jonathan Cherry. Horror. (CC)	
MAX	Broken Lizard's Club Dread (6:15) (R) (04) * Bill Paxton. Comedy. (CC)		The Edge (R) (97) ** Anthony Hopkins, Elle Macpherson. Adventure. A plane crash strands two rivals in the Alaskan wilderness. (CC)		Spanglish (PG-13) (04) ** Adam Sandler, Tea Leoni, Paz Vega. Comedy-Drama. A housekeeper works for a chef and his neurotic wife. (CC)					
TMC	Blind Horizon (6:20) (R) (04) ** Val Kilmer. Suspense. (CC)		So I Married an Axe Murderer (PG-13) (93) ** Mike Myers. Comedy. A commitment-wary poet fears his new girlfriend is a killer. (CC)		The Comedians of Comedy (NR) (05) ** Four comics perform their stand-up routines. (CC)		XX/XY (11:45) (R) (02) ** (CC)			
STARZ	The Village (PG-13) (04) ** Bryce Dallas Howard, Adrien Brody. Suspense. Strange creatures menace a 19th-century community. (CC)		The Pacifier (PG) (05) ** Vin Diesel. Comedy. A Navy SEAL becomes the guardian of five siblings. (CC)		Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (10:40) (R) (04) ** Renée Zellweger. Romance-Comedy. (CC)					

## ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

### Actress developed character's speech

Jaime Pressly says Joy, her breakout character on NBC's "My Name Is Earl," is more than a dozen characters from the South rolled into one.



PRESSLY

Specifically, Pressly says she modeled the way Joy talks from three states: a nasally tone she's heard from women in Virginia, the way she's seen some Arkansas women talk out of the side of their mouths, and her own fast-talking North Carolina accent.

Pressly's feisty character, Earl's ex-wife, has become a hero for women who approach Pressly and say Joy says exactly what they would like to say.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed playing her from the day I set foot on that set," the 28-year-old actress said Sunday.

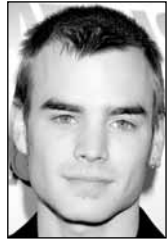
The range she's shown with Joy — a gutsy woman who sometimes shows her insecurities — has enabled her to break down stereotypes about her as an actress, she said.

"They've never looked at me as someone who could play a vulnerable role," she said.

LOS ANGELES

### Muscle car hobby consumes actor

"7th Heaven" actor David Gallagher loves cars, as long as they're made in America.



GALLAGHER

It's been nearly a decade since Gallagher landed the role of Simon Camden, evolving from a cute towhead into the troublesome teen on the WB series. Behind the scenes, he's had a passion for American muscle cars.

The 20-year-old actor has 11 of them.

"I'm way into cars," Gallagher told duPont Registry's Celebrity Car magazine, which features a photo spread of his collection in the winter issue of the quarterly, now on newsstands.

"A lot of it has to do with my dad," Gallagher said. "He was a mechanic my whole life. I grew up with cars."

His collection includes a 1964 Chevrolet Impala, a 1971 Oldsmobile 442, a 1973 Ford Mustang convertible and a 1967 Pontiac Firebird.

# Youngest witch finds charmed life on WB CALENDAR

By BRIDGET BYRNE  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## LOS ANGELES

Even with the aid of wires, Kaley Cuoco says she's still struggling to get the hang of tumbling through the air as the newest witch to land on the WB's "Charmed."

"I thought it was going to be easy, but it wasn't. I got tangled in the wires so many times doing my flips I almost strangled myself," says the 20-year-old actress. She might be terrible, she adds, "but I try, I try so hard."

Cuoco joined the cast of the supernatural drama series this season as Billie Jenkins, a college student with telekinetic powers.

Stunt co-ordinator Noon Orsatti says that although Cuoco sometimes needs a stunt double for the more dangerous sequences, as do the rest of the cast, the actress is "very determined and professional" about learning the technical skills necessary to be a witch.

Now in its eighth season, the show (8 p.m. on Sundays) stars Alyssa Milano, Holly Marie Combs and Rose McGowan as the Halliwell sisters, who are duty-bound to use their powers to protect the world from evil demons.

"Kaley's character keeps the show young and fresh by challenging the existing stars with a new perspective and new powers," co-executive producer Brad Kern said in an e-mailed response. "Kaley has such a strong screen presence that, along with her uncanny sense of comedic timing,



AP PHOTO

Kaley Cuoco stars as Billie on WB's "Charmed."

complements Alyssa, Holly and Rose perfectly."

"They've basically taken my character on as kind of their little sister. I think they are training me so I can go off to do the dirty work," says Cuoco, best known as Bridget Hennessy, one of the daughters on the sitcom "8 Simple Rules."

"We don't really know yet why she's a witch. She just has this power, and luckily found the Halliwell sisters. She wants to learn more about herself, but she's very naive and always getting in trouble," says Cuoco, chatting in a makeup trailer on the Paramount Studios lot while her blonde hair is

being flipped into shape.

Cuoco occasionally watches reruns of "8 Simple Rules," now airing weekdays at 4 p.m. on the WB.

"It was really weird to see ... I thought I was so cool when I was on the show, but I don't think I was," she says, noting the big difference four years can make when you're in your late teens.

Just 16 when she started on the sitcom, Cuoco had to survive the sudden death of star John Ritter at the start of the ABC series' second season in 2003.

"It was traumatic," she recalls. "It's just so difficult to talk about. But now that 'Rules' is playing on the WB, I'm actually excited because John was just so ... hysterical. I remember every moment I was with him. That year on the show was the best year of my life. I'm glad they are showing it and giving him some respect."

Cuoco is still getting used to the start-stop, one-camera world of dramatic television, as opposed to sitcoms, which are typically shot with multiple cameras in real time.

"Sitcoms are so much easier to understand," she exclaims in her free-wheeling conversational style. It's only when she sees "Charmed" episodes cut together with the special effects included that she realizes "what took us so long to shoot."

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END OF THE SPEAR (PG-13)  
1:40 4:20 7:00 9:40  
THE NEW WORLD (PG-13)  
12:30 3:30 6:30 9:30  
UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION (R)  
1:30 2:00 4:10 4:40 7:10 7:40 9:50 10:20  
BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (R) 2:40 6:50 9:45  
GLORY ROAD (PG) 1:50 4:30 7:20 10:15  
HOODWINK