

# 'Idol' acts do what they do best

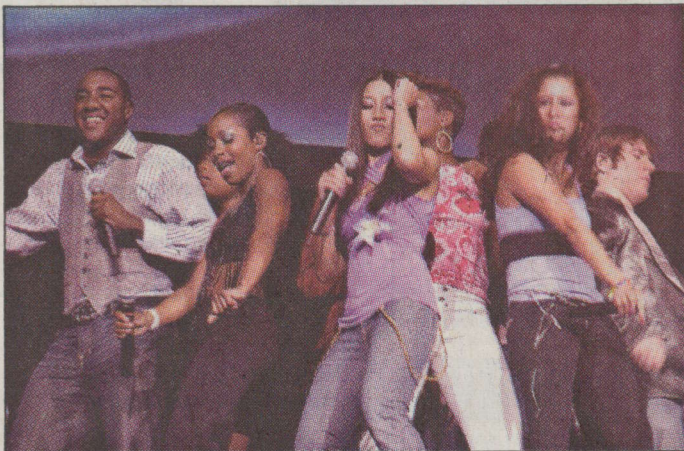
BY VICKI HYMAN  
STAFF WRITER

CHICAGO

**A**merican Idol" Fantasia Barrino is even more electrifying on tour, hometown favorite Jennifer Hudson stopped the show with a bravura performance of Aretha Franklin's "Since You've Been Gone," and Jasmine Trias — well, she's still cornering the market on cargo capris.

For the most part, the top 10 "Idol" finalists and special guest Tamyra Gray, the fourth-place finisher on the show's inaugural season, thrilled more than 6,000 fans of the world's most popular karaoke competition. Unlike the televised edition, the touring version of the Fox network show played solely to the singers' strengths, with nary a salsa number in earshot.

When not required to croon Gloria Estefan numbers, even the wooden John Stevens was impressive, charming the audience with a pitch-perfect version of the Sinatra standard "Come Fly With Me," and later joining Barrino for a flirty duet of Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love." The famously twitchy (and pitchy) Jon Peter Lewis took on Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" and almost made it work, although the throngs of screaming teenage girls wearing glittery "I Fell For JPL" T-shirts wouldn't have noticed either way.



'American Idol' finalists perform for more than 6,000 fans in Chicago.

PHOTO BY JAKE HERRLE FOR THE NEWS & OBSERVER

The first half of the show featured the "Idols" in order of their departure, building up to Barrino's big numbers, Gershwin's "Summertime" (stellar as always, but it wouldn't kill her to switch up the delivery a bit) and a blistering rendition of another Wonder classic, "Signed Sealed Delivered." In the second half, the "Idols" took the stage for a spirited but uneven Prince medley, with George Huff and Hudson pairing for a dynamite "Nothing Compares to U" and LaToya London offering a slinky "Kiss." Lewis and belter Amy Adams strutted around in an almost laughable "U Got the Look."

For the rest of the show, the "Idols" came together in various

permutations, ranging from the unexpected (Huff singing the Marvin Gaye classic "What's Going On" with Lewis on guitar) to the silly (an unironic group sing of "Soul Man") to the sublime (most of the women joining together for a sassy take on Tina Turner's "Fool in Love").

All in all, it was about three group sings too long. But the show picked up again when Barrino took center stage with the power ballad "I Believe," the song penned by Gray, and made the unbelievably treacly anthem simply unbelievable.

---

Staff writer Vicki Hyman  
can be reached at 829-4728  
or [vhyman@newsobserver.com](mailto:vhyman@newsobserver.com).