

# Singing Competitions

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Singing competitions are not a new thing, though one just tuning into those being televised might think so. When we—ahem—forty-somethings were kids, we participated in talent shows in school, had Fourth of July singing competitions, and even had slim opportunities to go to the small local broadcasting station to enter a small local talent search. I cannot find the historical (lol) data now, but I do remember entering by mail one of the annual singing competitions produced by a modest TV station in Boston, Mass.. I did it discretely, without my parents' permission, though, so when I was notified of my acceptance as a contestant, I was not allowed to go. I got over that, though I never really got over wanting to sing for a living—although I did give up that bizarre notion of what fame is really all about.

I think about my gifts and about which ones have inadvertently gained me fame, glory, and increased self-esteem. I think about choices (in terms of free will versus determinism or fate). And I indulge in the shows featuring world-renowned singing competitions, often re-thinking such concepts or phenomena as luck, talent, and deals with the devil. I love those singing competitions on TV. Of the many that have come and gone, such as the illustrious Star Search (where did that show go?) or the not-so-popular I Got the Mike or Gimme the Mike or whatever it was called, I am of course addicted to American Idol. I particularly root for the rockers, who, along with the underdogs are more interesting, more talented, and more worthy of success than are the usually eh types (the awesome pop singers, excepted, of course, but I don't do pop all that well). I love the rockers for many reasons: they are grittier. They have had a harder time of surviving, or being accepted, or warring addictions and demons and stereotyping. I was a teenager in the seventies. I love rock. So, I am biased toward those in singing competitions that appeal, supposedly, to the pre-adolescent or pre-pubescent girlies, as they most of all have to sing well enough to transcend the rigors and protocol of the bubble gum world. Hey, granted, I had just as many cut-outs of Donny Osmond and David Cassidy when I was that age as I did album covers of Lou Reed and Patti Smith. But for right now, in the context of stardom/fate/choice, I send kick-ass kudos to Constantine, Chris, and Bucky and Taylor and Bo—for refusing to compromise, for denying anything less than dignified but iconoclastic, powerful performances, choosing to do the art of Creed and Traffic and Lynnard Skynnard over the (no less brilliant but different) music of Celine Dion or Debbie Boone. Maybe they are in the wrong singing competitions. But the separate singing competitions, those of individual genres, are few and far between. The only other show of the ilk of American Idol (now that Star Search is dead) that is of the rock genre is gone, as well. It was Rock Star INXS, and it was the best of singing competitions combined with the most brilliant of talented rockers. But they (INXS) found their new lead singer—a grateful, appreciative, and supremely worthy J.D. —. And as far as other singing competitions of other genres, they seem, on TV, anyway, in competition, if you will, with so many good reality shows, are more like must-misses than must-sees. Maybe we ought to get Mark Burnett on the phone and suggest more rock and roll?! Bring on the Ozzies and the Aerosmiths! Bring on the Creedences, bring on the Stones! Bring back the Beatles even. Just bring me some of my favorite list in some hard-ass, superstar talent, all at the same venue.