

Contact: Performing Arts Management
(801) 422-3576

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The Sing-Off's' Vocal Point Tries to 'Conquer the World with Happiness'

YAHOO! CONTRIBUTOR NETWORK

by Amy and Nancy Harrington, Pop Culture Passionistas | Yahoo! Contributor Network - Tue, Nov 22, 2011 11:06 PM PST

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Last week on "The Sing-Off," the Brigham Young University group Vocal Point was eliminated from the competition. For nine weeks on the show the college students had one mission -- to uplift audiences through music. In a recent exclusive interview, members McKay Crockett, Jake Hunsaker and Tyler

Sterling spoke about this philosophy and their time on the show.

Vocal Point is a 20-year institution on the Provo, Utah, college campus. The group is a course offered at BYU for which members receive one college credit, but not just anyone can join. Crockett explained, "At the beginning of the year every year, we have an audition to replace the members of the group who go on to graduate or other things... A lot of guys show up every year that want to be a member of the group, and so it's always a tough process to decide who's going to become the new members and carry on the Vocal Point tradition."

Vocal Point Is 'Upwardly Endearing'

This year's ensemble was lucky enough to be chosen for the cappella vocal competition "The Sing-Off." And the men saw it as an opportunity to carry their message to a bigger audience. When asked to describe Vocal Point's musical style, Crockett joked, "We like to call ourselves 'upwardly endearing' because we are just goofy guys who love doing what we do. And our musical style is really just any style that can bring happiness. As part of 'The Sing-Off,' we were able to expand our horizons and open ourselves up to new genres, and it was a real testament to us that there's positive and inspiring music in any genre that you like. It's just a matter of finding those songs and singing them. And so our style is just a clean-out, fun, upbeat style that tries to share happiness with those who are listening."

Vocal Point Channels Michael Buble

Hunsaker revealed that his personal influence is crooner Michael Buble. "I do that big band kind of crooner kind of style. I feel like my voice does that the easiest, and I enjoy the style of music and so that's what I tend to do."

But Buble does not just inspire Hunsaker. Sterling pointed out, "Michael Buble really is just a great performer... If you've never been to one of his concerts... he does such a great job of engaging the audience and letting the audience feel like they are a part of his concert experience while he is on stage. I think Vocal Point does that and translates that really, really well. Whatever it is they're doing onstage, they really try to be engaging and make the audience feel like they are a part of the experience that Vocal Point is having onstage."

Vocal Point Carries On With New Members Each Year

While the members of the group change as each graduation ceremony rolls around, the tradition of Vocal Point carries on. In fact, Hunsaker noted that the best advice they got during the competition came from judge Shawn Stockman who pleaded, "Don't you dare stop because you have people who love what you do and people who connect with what you sing. And so make sure that this propels you guys forward and isn't the end for you."

And that is precisely what Vocal Point plans to do, Hunsaker noted. "The Sing-Off' has been this amazing opportunity for us to extend who knows who we are and expand the way we're able to share our music and our message with people. And so for us, it's really just the beginning of something that has been going for 20 years and will continue to go even further. 'The Sing-Off' has really just propelled it all forward in a way that probably couldn't have been in any other capacity."

Despite being eliminated from the show just two weeks shy of the finale, Sterling said they have no regrets. "All of us were extremely happy with the outcome of the show. We went on the show like it was portrayed in the very first episode -- that we wanted to, as a kind of a joke, 'conquer the world with happiness.' And every week as we selected our songs and we made our arrangements and did our choreography, that was never something we ever let out of sight."

And even though their version of The Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud to Beg" may have been their downfall, they performed it with the best intentions in mind. "We put a lot of effort into making sure that that song was something that was going to uplift our audience members and our followers. And with that being said, I think we're very happy and pleased with the outcome of what we were able to accomplish on the show, the growth that we saw in ourselves, and also the limits that we were able to push Vocal Point to for future generations of the group. We're really excited to see what happens in the future."

Watch "The Sing-Off" Mondays at 8 p.m. E.T. NBC.

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HOT
ticket



LEWIS JACOBS/NBC

Vocal Point performs on "The Sing-Off."

Vocal Point well taken

This week's Hot Ticket suggestion will not cost you a thing. All you need is a television and a working remote.

We suggest staying in this Monday night and watching local lads Vocal Point in action on NBC's "The Sing-Off" at 7 p.m. The Brigham Young University male a cappella group has been earning rave review after rave review on the national talent show and advanced into the top five after this last week's competition. The show's three celebrity judges — Sara Bareilles, Ben Folds and Shawn Stockman — have been lauding the group from the beginning and seem to enjoy having some fun with the band's squeaky-clean image.

This past week Vocal Point advanced with unique takes on The Kinks classic "You Really Got Me" and "Life is a Highway" by Rascal Flatts.

For those of you who prefer an actual duet to see Vocal Point, you can prepare for that, too. Vocal Point will be performing at the Covey Center for the Arts on Nov. 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m., with a 2 p.m. matinee on the 19th as well. Tickets are \$10-\$12 and available at www.coveycenter.org.

— Doug Fox



Performing Arts
Management

PO Box 28500 • Provo, UT 84602-8500 • 801-422-3576 • Toll-Free: 800-432-3576 • Fax: 801-422-0546

E-mail: perform@byu.edu • Internet: <http://pam.byu.edu>

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LEWIS JACOBS, NBC

Vocal Point performs "You Really Got Me," by the Kinks, during Monday's episode of "The Sing-Off" on NBC. The group is one of the top five groups in the competition.

Vocal Point is one step closer to winning 'The Sing-Off' title

BY SHARON HADDOCK
FOR THE DESERET NEWS

SANDY — Hundreds of Vocal Point fans cheered as the Brigham Young University men's a cappella group stayed in the running on NBC's "The Sing-Off" Monday night.

The nine-man a cappella sensation wowed the judges with "You Really Got Me," by the Kinks, as its rock 'n' roll hit, and "Life is a Highway," by Rascal Flats, as its country hit.

The judges said the "Utah boys" came off a tough week with a strong showing as the group's members started back to class in the middle of competition.

"Sometimes we rehearsed in the airport shuttle," said Ross Welch, one of the Vocal Point singers.

Delilah — the female group comprised of singers from the show's first two seasons, including Mormon lead singer Amy Lynn Whitcomb and vocalist Laina Walker — was

"It's a surreal experience to watch ourselves," said Welch, who sang a soulful rock lead for the group's first number.

"What surprised me the most is how much goes into the performance before you ever see it," said McKay Crockett, also a Vocal Point singer.

Vocal Point founder Bob Ahlander and his wife organized the local party and used the night to raise money for the group members who are full-time students with part-time jobs trying to balance books and the demands of a short-term show business career.

Vocal Point won the opportunity to be on the show with an audition tape, selected as one of 16 groups to be on the nationally televised show.

The groups have been whittled down to five: Vocal Point; Pentatonix from Arlington, Texas; Urban Method from Denver, Colo.; the Dartmouth Aires from Dartmouth (which includes singer/director Nic Chuaqui from Salt Lake City) and Afro-Blue from Howard

University. There are three more weeks until the live finale on Nov. 28. During the finale, the television audience will choose the winner.

"The Sing-Off" airs locally at 7 p.m. Monday nights on Ch. 5.

Next week the groups will be singing R&B songs.

Evans said that won't be a problem for Vocal Point.

"It's a little more what we do than these have been," he said after Monday's show. "But if the first thing the judges say is, 'It's fun. It's entertaining. It has musical punch,' that makes us smile."

Vocal Point will sing many of its "Sing-Off" numbers at a matinee concert in Provo Nov. 19 at the Covey Center for the Arts at 2 p.m. For ticket information, see www.coveycenter.org.

Sharon Haddock is a professional writer with 35 years experience, 17 at the *Deseret News*. Her personal blog is at sharonhaddock.blogspot.com.
EMAIL: haddock@desnews.com

Demans rock 'n' roll song, "Dream On," by Aerosmith, impressed the judges as Whitcomb "took it up into the stratosphere" with her vocals.

Dubbed a "female Steven Tyler" by judge Shawn Stockman, judge Sara Bareilles said perhaps the group peaked too early, leaving themselves nowhere to go.

In its country number, "If I Die Young," the judges cited pitch problems but called the song emotionally compelling.

Vocal Point, in ruffled shirts and dark jackets, leaped and jumped onto the stage, the steps and even into the camera lens with its rock 'n' roll number.

"How adorable are they?" asked Bareilles.

"Is that how they do it in Provo, Utah?" Stockman asked. "You showed a little bad boy and put your Vocal Point stamp on it. You came through."

Judge Ben Folds said Vocal Point always rocks, but this time it brought in hair metal.

For "Life is a Highway," the "BYU boys" put on cowboy hats, flannel shirts and boots and sang "legitimate country," according to Folds. "It sounded right. You pulled it off musically."

"You're all so proud of yourselves when you're done. It's so freakin' cute," Bareilles said.

Six of the Vocal Point members attended the party at Jordan Commons Megaplex Theaters Monday surrounded by more than 200 fans and friends.

They explained that they had access to network choreographers and arrangers but got so used to working together over the weeks they taped the shows that they basically arranged everything themselves.

Vocal Point member Keith Evans said it was still terrifying to see himself on the big screen just because "you're never sure what they'll catch and how it will look."