

THE DREADED JUDGE

Many Talent Quest Contestants look on the Judges with fear and dread. This is not necessary as they can be your 'friend'. They are the ones whose attention you can grab and who can promote you to greater heights. Many of those entering Talent Quests cannot understand why they have not been placed first or at least in the top three.

Following, are a few points that may help you understand what is required of you as a Contestant and Entertainer.

Remember, the word "*entertainer*" is very important. As a judge I would rather be entertained than bored to tears with five verses and choruses of a perfectly executed rendition of an old standard that has been sung to death.

There are thousands of excellent singers out there and you need to be different in some way. This is referred to as the "**X**" factor. It could be the way you dress, your voice, your personality, your material and many other things. Whatever it may be, you have to impress those Judges. For instance, in the finals of the "Gold Guitar Awards", it often becomes very hard to split vocalists just on points. Most have some faults but if one '*grabs*' the Judges with that "**X**" factor, they are likely to win. Having said all that, there have been numerous entertainers who have not been vocally perfect but have been hugely successful.

Try to find what your strengths are and use them.

General Judging Criteria

Talent Quests may vary in the way points are awarded but the items below may give you some idea of what Judges might look for.

Dress

Dress suitably for the Section and/or Song. It does not have to be the very latest or most expensive clothing. It is your overall image that will impress.

NB: If you were Shania Twain, dress would be very important. You can see that part of her appeal is her choice of clothing which is part of her "X" factor. Most entertainers wouldn't dare wear what she does.

Material

Here the Judge decides if your song is "*Country*, (which is a highly debated word). The opinion of some is that '*Country*' is a *feel* and a *way* of singing and playing.

NB: A good example of the difficulty in deciding what 'Country' is would be Shania Twain. Her material is definitely '*Rock*' but we accept it as Country because we perceive her to be a Country singer. Another example of confusion is "Sailor" by Patsy Rigger. This was a Pop song but sung by Patsy in a *Country* way and feel.

The Judge then decides if it is a song that suits you in general.

An average song will rarely win a talent quest and if your song sounds like Pop, you have probably made the wrong choice.

Performance

a. Introduction

Never come out and say "*Good morning Judges, ladies and gentleman, children. The song I have chosen to sing is.....*" Boring! ! ! !

If you are going to talk to the judges, make it worth your while and impress them. When speaking, slow down and speak reasonably deliberately. Know what you are going to say, get their attention and keep it.

b. Movement

Are they appropriate to the song? Is it smooth and appealing to the eye of the audience? During an instrumental lead break know what you are going to do.

c. Confidence

Demonstrate you know what you are doing, even if you don't. Hide your nervousness by knowing all aspects of your performance well. Practice.

d. Conclusion

Be as positive here as you were at the Introduction. Put the Microphone back on the stand. Thank the Band if you need to. Smile, wave or whatever is appropriate. Don't just let it trickle to an end.

Voice Quality

a. Tonal Quality of the voice through the range used. -

Pitch your song near the top of your register but not past it into the area where you are starting to strain.

b. Intonation - Are you able to keep in pitch?

c. Diction - Can the Judges hear the words?

d. Vowels - Are the sound of your vowels correct and natural?

Musical Ability

a. Timing - Can you keep in time?

b. Phrasing - Do you phrase naturally as in a spoken sentence or sing in pure time, with the beat?

c. Emotion - Very important and where most find their "X" factor. Make them understand what you are singing about.

d. Feel - Are you attacking the song correctly? Some songs require that you appear to be driving the music. Others, you lay back on the music as far as timing is concerned for a more *croony* effect.

e. Mic Technique- Many singers are unable to present to the audience an even level of Vocal volume. The volume level should be virtually the same from your gentle notes right up to your very strong top notes. Go fairly close for gentle bottom notes and vary the distance according to the level of your vocal. It can be a nightmare for the sound man if you whisper your introduction and then roar into your number.

f. Instruments - If you are playing, does it add or detract from the performance? If you are not quite good enough on your instrument, DON'T use it.

Acknowledgement:

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