

# AMERICAN IDLE: MURDERING THE MUSIC

## By Randall David Cook

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ISBN: 1-932404-45-4

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## CHARACTERS

### THE HOSTS

RYAN SEASUNK, male, hyperactive California surfer host

BRIANNA DUNKLEFUNKLE, female, deadpan, sardonic Canadian co-host

### THE JUDGES

SIMON CALLOUS, male, British, snooty, always dressed in black

PAULA ABOMINABLE, female, relentlessly positive has-been singer, always dressed as a cheerleader

RANDY JACKALACKA, male, larger-than-life, bejeweled music producer

### THE PRODUCER

JOANNE LOOSEMORALS, female, British, avaricious, very spiky hair

### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

HANNAH HAPLESS, female, bored, matter-of-fact assistant

### THE DIRECTOR

FABIENNE LA FLEUR, female, gray-wearing French depressive

### THE CONTESTANTS

JENNY LEE LARKSONG, female, Deep-in-the-Heart-of-Texas sweetie

DEXTER SHAQ, male, big hair, big smile, big ego

KENEISHA GRAY, female, high heels and very tight clothes

NIKKI STIKKI, female, pastel-colored hair, gregarious

CARLOTTA CHRISTENING, female, beautiful, shy, somewhat snobby, glam

JJ MACNEIL, male, cute but anxiety-ridden

DJ PLAY, male, too cool for school, never removes his unglasses

MICKEY VERMIN, male, glasses, slightly nerdy, mentally deranged

TIFFANY STARMITE, female, husky-voiced and outrageously clothed

DOROTHY DANIELLE, female, southern belle, precious yet brutal

### THE STUDIO AUDIENCE

## **AMERICAN IDLE: MURDERING THE MUSIC**

by  
Randall

### **SETTING**

**A studio setting. Center stage is the performance/stage area. Stage right is the table where the JUDGES sit and pass judgment on the CONTESTANTS, and stage left are a few rows of chairs (preferably on a slightly elevated incline) for the STUDIO AUDIENCE.**

### **A NOTE ABOUT THE STUDIO AUDIENCE**

The STUDIO AUDIENCE can be as large or small as desired but should be, above all else, colorful. Some fans should carry posters; some should have obvious favorites among the finalists, and all should be fairly hyper. During commercial breaks, and until revealed, the STUDIO AUDIENCE should be behind an obvious miniature curtain that is open and closed at appropriate times, totally and absolutely controlled and manipulated.

### **DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

Hello, directors! If you've chosen to direct this play, my first piece of advice is to be very familiar with the show that it parodies. I am speaking, of course, of "American Idol," or, for the Canadians, "Canadian Idol," though the latter does not have the same hosts and judges as the American version.

No matter how wonderful or awful their performances, the contestants on the real show are achingly sincere, and all actors playing the contestants should be sincere in their portrayals, even if they are sincerely dreadful. The humor comes from the absurdity of the situations, and as long as all the actors are committed to treating their characters with respect and resist winking at the audience to let them know that they are in on the joke, all will be fine. This is not a call to refrain from outrageousness but rather a strong suggestion to let the humor come honestly.

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The play goes back and forth from on stage and on air to behind the scenes. The on-stage segments are purposefully very similar to what you see on television. The behind-the-scenes segments may be a little trickier. Try to have lots of people milling about during those parts of the play, looking very busy and doing technical chores, like handing sheets of paper to people, helping Ryan make costume changes, helping Paula stretch, bringing food to Randy, freshening up the make-up of the actors, doing mike checks (if you choose to use microphones, even prop ones), and anything else you can think of as long as the actors with lines are not upstaged by the accompanying action.

The studio audience can be represented in several ways, as big or as small as your needs require. The curtain can be a sheet that is held on either side by well-dressed and happy show models, like Vanna White or the ladies on “The Price is Right.” What’s important here is to show how the audience only gets to see certain parts of the show and is always being manipulated.

On the technical side, keep things simple. Lights can be as simple or as complicated as your heart desires. If you must use real microphones, go for it, but a few good props would be a lot less headache, especially if you are performing in a small venue. Whatever you do, don’t let it slow down the pace of the show.

Always, always, always keep the show moving! Audiences expect a much faster pace from their entertainment these days, so there’s a real need for speed. No need to race around or speed through lines, but make everything as tight as possible so that there’s a minimum of dead time between contestants and other transitions.

There’s one area where real honesty should be avoided...The actual murders in the play are written in a broad comic style so as to not upset any sensitive souls. These deaths are meant to be silly and funny, not sad and upsetting. Keep the tone light!

I have been asked if I wrote the French character as a reaction to France’s decision to not support the United States in this recent Second Persian Gulf War. The answer is no, as the play was written many weeks before American troops invaded Iraq. Instead, the truth of the matter is that I worked in Paris a few years ago and continue to sport a very healthy love/hate relationship with the French.

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Finally, have fun! I wrote this play for my Canadian friend Ann Marie MacNeil and her students at Halifax Grammar School, who wanted something contemporary, relevant and entertaining. They gave me helpful notes when I sent them various drafts, letting me know what amused and what confused. The resulting script, which I dedicate to them, is one which I hope you and your audiences will enjoy.

Thanks, and break a leg!

Randall David Cook  
October 2003

SCENE ONE

*(Lively introduction music plays. RYAN SEASUNK jumps on stage and unveils the curtain for the STUDIO AUDIENCE as BRIANNA DUNKLEFUNKLE makes her far more casual entrance.)*

RYAN: Wowza! Hello there! Hiya! Hey hey hey hey hey! Welcome supercool fanzies! My name is Ryan Seasunk. Co-hosting with me tonight is the lovely...

BRIANNA: ...and far calmer Brianna Dunklefunkle. *(RYAN jumps up and down and waves at the STUDIO AUDIENCE, yelling and screaming.)*  
Ryan, you're up.

RYAN: I'm always up.

BRIANNA: Like a helium balloon. One that needs desperately to be popped.  
Read the prompter, surfhead.

RYAN: Oh yeah, how cool! We're your hosts for *American Idle: Murdering the Music*, the show where the singer who blows the most gets decimated by industry professionals. My name is Ryan Seasunk.

BRIANNA: We've already introduced ourselves.

RYAN: Can you believe I get paid to do this?

BRIANNA: I spend a great deal of time trying not to think about it. Without further nonsense from my co-host, let's go ahead and meet those esteemed industry professionals who make up our panel of judges. First off, a Grammy-winning record producer, the dude who believes that just as there ain't no mountain high enough, there ain't no gold chain thick enough... It's Randy Jackalacka!

*(RANDY JACKALACKA enters, pumps his fist in the air.)*

RANDY: Wassup dawgs?

*(RANDY ambles to his seat at the JUDGES' table.)*

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RYAN: Next up, the always lovely and supportive Paula Abominable!

**(PAULA ABOMINABLE bounds in dressed in a cheerleading outfit shaking her pom-poms.)**

PAULA: S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T! Straight up! I'll tell ya if I really want to hear ya forever! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

BRIANNA: Enough. **(PAULA cartwheels to her middle seat at the JUDGES' table.)** Finally, last and least, all the way from not-so-great Britain, the man who gave such hard knocks to Little Orphan Annie that she no longer believes the sun will come out tomorrow, it's the one, and thankfully only, Simon Callous.

**(SIMON CALLOUS enters.)**

SIMON: Who hired you idiots?

**(SIMON scowls at the hosts and takes his seat at the JUDGES' table.)**

RYAN: Wow. He's in a good mood. Exciting. Is it time for a commercial break?

BRIANNA: Not yet, Seasunk. But the good news is that tonight's show is live, so no matter what happens, we keep going till the last singer's standing.

RYAN: Super cool! How are the singers?

BRIANNA: We're going to find out in just a minute when the first of our ten finalists comes out to face the judges.

RYAN: Let's introduce the judges!

SIMON: We're already here, you noxious numbskull.

RYAN: Wow! I get paid for this.

BRIANNA: America truly is the land of opportunity.

RYAN: Also with us tonight in da house is our studio audience, randomly selected from the millions of you who faithfully watch our show each and every week. How you guys doing?

**(THE STUDIO AUDIENCE goes wild.)**

BRIANNA: Lovely. In order to test the range of our top ten contestants, our esteemed judges have decided to surprise the finalists with a different a *cappella* musical challenge in each round.

RYAN: Apple what?

BRIANNA: A *cappella*. That means they sing alone, without accompaniment.

RYAN: That's rough.

BRIANNA: That's right, Seasunk.

RYAN: Good thing Britney Spears was never on this show!

BRIANNA: She's already famous, Seasunk.

RYAN: But if she were on this show, I wonder if she would, like, "Be a Slave 4 Me," if you know what I'm saying.

BRIANNA: I never understand a word you're saying.

RYAN: You're really uptight for a co-host. Are all Canadians like that?

BRIANNA: Must we have this discussion again?

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RYAN: Yo, chill. Just trying to make some convo.

BRIANNA: May I continue? Please? As I was trying to say, in the first round each contestant will be asked to sing the first line from their favorite nursery song and then create the second line on their own.

RYAN: New lyrics. Retro rad cool.

BRIANNA: You obviously didn't attend rehearsal.

RYAN: **(holding up a soft-drink bottle)** That's because I was busy drinking Yummy-Cola, the most popular beverage around the world. Yum yum goody! Yummy-Cola!

BRIANNA: Speaking of popular, let's hear it for our first contestant, straight from the churning bowels of a California shopping mall... it's Tiffany Starmite!

**(TIFFANY STARMITE enters wearing an outrageous outfit of stars and moons.)**

TIFFANY: Twinkle, twinkle, little star, I like driving my new car.

**(Loud clapping sounds as TIFFANY turns and faces the judges.)**

BRIANNA: That's it?

TIFFANY: Big things come in small packages.

RYAN: Judges, shout it out!

RANDY: Tiffany, Tiffany, Tiffany! How's it goin'?

TIFFANY: Awesome, man.

RANDY: How'd you feel about your performance?

TIFFANY: I thought it was good, man. Really good. I mean, like, I got a product placement in and all.

RANDY: I thought it was okay. Not your best, but that outfit rocks.

RYAN: Paula!

PAULA: **(while shaking her pom-poms)** Take a T and double it please - for totally terrific!

RYAN: Simon!

SIMON: Just because you wear stars doesn't mean you're going to be one.

TIFFANY: Thanks, man.

SIMON: I think you may be too relaxed to really compete on this show. I mean, not to be rude, but you're so laid back you're practically horizontal.

TIFFANY: Like, thanks again, man.

BRIANNA: Next up, all the way from Hotlanta, it's Keneisha Gray!

**(Loud clapping sounds as TIFFANY exits and KENEISHA GRAY enters, dressed in the tightest clothes and highest heels possible. KENEISHA enunciates everything perfectly and renders highly dramatic readings to everything SHE says and sings.)**

KENEISHA: Itsy, bitsy spider climbed up the water spout.

Spout spout spout spout spout!

Down came the rain, and my heart...

It just gave out out out out out out.

***(Thunderous clapping sounds as KENEISHA turns and faces the JUDGE.)***

RYAN: Judges! Randy!

RANDY: Keneisha, Keneisha, Keneisha! It's all going on, girl. I mean, when I worked with Mariah, she sounded just like that.

KENEISHA : Thank you. Like Mariah, I too have a vision of love.

RYAN: Paula!

PAULA: You have more than that! You have an infection! An infection of perfection! Perfection! Perfection! Yeah, yeah, perfection!

KENEISHA: It's fun being perfect.

RYAN: Simon!

SIMON: No one in England has ever sung about spiders the way you just did. Brilliant. Just brilliant.

KENEISHA: Thank you, judges. It's okay to fear creatures with eight legs, so I dedicate this song to all the arachnophobes back home in Hotlanta. That was for you. You're not alone. Peace out.

BRIANNA: Next up, JJ MacNeil!

***(KENEISHA exits as JJ MACNEIL enters, stands stage center, and starts dancing.)***

RYAN: What's up, dude? You haven't started singing yet.

JJ: I get nervous and my legs start shaking and I can't control them, so I start to move like this and people applaud and I pretend I'm dancing and...

BRIANNA: Sorry to interrupt, but we're ready to start when you are.

JJ: Well, I get nervous and my legs start shaking and I can't...

BRIANNA: Sing your song already!

JJ: London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down.  
London Bridge is falling down. My fair lady!

RYAN: Judges, your comments!

RANDY: JJJJJJJJ. I just lost count.

JJ: Hey, Randy.

RANDY: Yo, dawg, you were supposed to create your own second line.

JJ: I know. I forgot.

RANDY: That's okay. Bruce used to do the same thing when he first started out.

RYAN: Paula!

PAULA: ***(shaking one pom-pom)*** JJ is Ooooooooookay! Yeah!

RYAN: Simon!

SIMON: Thank goodness you Americans actually bought London Bridge in the sixties. Because after that horrible rendition, I imagine it will *indeed* be crashing down to the ground. ***(JJ starts moving uncontrollably.)*** Stop moving.

JJ: You're making me nervous.

SIMON: Well, losers make me nauseous. I'm sorry, but they do, and you are a big loser. Next!

***(JJ MACNEIL exits as DJ PLAY enters, cool as ice.)***

RYAN: Next up, it's DJ Play!

***(DJ strikes a pose. PAULA cheers spastically.)***

SIMON: Control yourself.

DJ: Jack and his girl Jill went up the hill, BRO',  
To fetch a pail of H2O, YO!  
Jack fell down and broke his crown, BROKE IT,  
So Jill dragged his butt to the house of slaughter.  
SO LONG, JACKO!

RYAN: Randy!

RANDY: DJ, DJ, DJ... Why do all you guys have names with J in them?

DJ: Lack of creativity, yo.

RANDY: Well, you're one slamming dude. Good looks, smooth moves... and I like your efforts to compensate for a total lack of a singing voice. Great job, dawg.

RYAN: Paula!

PAULA: All I have to say is...

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