

Newsmakers 2010: Our American Idol: Crystal Bowersox

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It's been a whirlwind year for Elliston native Crystal Bowersox. From placing second on "American Idol," recording her debut album, getting married and touring nationally, the singer-songwriter has been busy.

Bowersox told *Toledo Free Press* she'll "definitely be nostalgic" come New Year's Eve.

"I finally get to see my friends again. The show, tour and recording took me away for almost a year," Bowersox said in a phone interview. "It's traumatic, it's like a roller coaster — it picks you up and slams you back down into reality."



Bowersox said she's looking forward to spending time with her family and friends, as well as playing with her bass guitarist Frankie May on a regular basis.

This time last year Bowersox was gearing up for New Year's Eve show with May while waiting to leave for Los Angeles and "American Idol's" Hollywood Week.

"[The show] was right before L.A. and Hollywood Week. It was pretty crazy knowing I was in the process — since I auditioned for the "American Idol" in the fall — but I didn't know what it was going to be like," she said. "It was like waiting for this mythical creature to walk in the room."

American Idol

Following Hollywood Week the 25-year-old received a unanimous vote from the four "American Idol" judges, advancing her to the Top 24, where American viewers could begin casting their votes.

During that time, judge Simon Cowell told Bowersox she had a head start because she is "infectious" and people like her.

"MamaSox," as her friends and fans dubbed her, received critical reviews her first week in the Top 24, singing Alanis Morissette's "Hand in my Pocket," but still advanced.

On March 2, Bowersox was hospitalized due to diabetes complications, and "American Idol" switched the men's and women's nights so she could still perform.

Despite the hospitalization only 24 hours prior, Bowersox wowed the judges with a blues rendition of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "As Long as I Can See the Light."

The song earned Bowersox enough votes to advance her to the Top 16 and she received high praise from Cowell.

"Crystal, I completely underestimated you last week, because for you to come back this week with that song, that performance ... I promise you, this was like the moment we realized with Kelly Clarkson that we've got a serious artist here. And I think we've got a really serious artist with you," he said.

Bowersox made it to the Top 3 contestants on the show and returned to Northwest Ohio on May 14.

Bowersox made radio visits, appeared at a local AT&T store, participated in a parade, sang the national anthem at a Mud Hens game and played at Levis Square in Downtown and the Ottawa County Fairgrounds.

The day was dubbed "Crystal Bowersox Day," by Ottawa County officials, and Bowersox received a number of accolades, including keys to Elliston and the city of Toledo.

"To me, one of the greatest things I did was the hometown trip," Bowersox said. "Playing in Levis Square I've never seen that many people Downtown. We all come from the same area and everything and there was a real sense of unity."

Bowersox said she is grateful of all the support she's received from the area.

Bowersox advanced to the "American Idol" finals where she lost to Lee DeWyze on May 26.

Giving Back

Throughout "American Idol," Bowersox has used her fame to promote diabetes awareness. She continually encouraged viewers and fans to donate to their local Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund.

Following her time on "Idol," Bowersox became active in other causes as well. She participated in the 12th annual Power to the Peaceful Festival in San Francisco and shared the stage with Melissa Etheridge at Pinktober to promote breast cancer awareness. Most recently, Bowersox opened for The Doobie Brothers at Concert for Kids, which benefits Toys for Tots.

"Everything I did was for things that were important to me or people I love," she said.

In October, Bowersox shared her personal story with the public when speaking out against bullying. She wrote an essay about being bullied as a kid and appeared on "Anderson Cooper 360" to talk about the issue.

Bowersox also assisted the local chapter of the American Red Cross after the tornadoes hit in June.

Bowersox signed a guitar that was auctioned off by Clear Channel to benefit the Red Cross. The guitar sold for more than \$3,500.

Bowersox also designed a pendant through Pennyroyal Silver, which donated a portion of the proceeds from the sales to the Red Cross.

'Farmer's Daughter'

Bowersox's debut album "Farmer's Daughter," is a snapshot of her life. The album debuted at No. 28 on the *Billboard* 200 chart with 58,000 copies sold.

While it debuted lower, the album outsold her fellow contestant DeWyze's CD "Live It Up," which only sold 39,000 units in its first week.

Bowersox's sales were higher than predictions that said she'd sell 45,000 to 50,000 copies in her first week.

Bowersox's album sold out at many locations locally. The album sold 300 copies at Culture Clash Records and was the largest sale the store ever had, said Pat O'Connor, the store's owner.

2010 has been a good year for the once unknown Bowersox. *Toledo Free Press* recognizes her for her accomplishments by naming her "**Star of the Year.**"