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# 'Idol' Justin Guarini takes PHilly jazz band to new level

By John J. Moser | OF THE MORNING CALL  
July 4, 2009

Here's one way to get "American Idol" runner-up [Justin Guarini](#) to sing with your band: Give your blessing to his plan to marry your daughter. That's what happened with Bernie Capodici of Doylestown, percussionist/

leader of the [Philadelphia](#)-area smooth jazz cover band Drivetime.

Ten months ago Doylestown resident Guarini, 30, proposed to Capodici's daughter, Reina, 26. Now the runner-up to [Kelly Clarkson](#) on "Idol's" first season sings with Drivetime, which has a CD release party Thursday at Warmdaddy's in Philadelphia to celebrate "Reflections." Guarini sings the disc's cover of Bobby Caldwell's "What You Won't Do for Love."

Capodici says he met Guarini years ago when his wife, Karen, taught him English at Central Bucks West High School, then reconnected two years ago when Guarini came home for the holidays and spent time with Capodici's daughters -- they were former classmates. Capodici says Guarini "fell head over heels over my Reina" and a spring wedding is scheduled.

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Capodici says asking Guarini to sing on the record had less to do with his family tie than his talent.

"I think he is one of the most natural talented singers I've ever met," Capodici says. "I mean, he's just phenomenal."

The 10-year-old band is made up of "all Philly guys who have been pounding out music night after night for as many years as I can count and are just probably the most top-notch players that Philly has to offer that just never got in the right band or in the right place," Capodici says.

Guarini, who's back in Doylestown after living in Los Angeles, says that he had sat in with Drivetime previously, so singing on the new CD wasn't much of a stretch.

For the past two years Guarini has hosted TV Guide Network's "Idol Wrap" and "Idol Tonight" shows -- on which he generated controversy this year by revealing that "Idol" contestants lip-synced the show's opening ensemble numbers.

Asked about the flap, Guarini demurs: "Mmm-mmm. The past is the past, it is what it is. You learn from it and move on. They're amazing singers, and it's tough, it's really hard. And at the end of the day, lesson learned."

He has also covered the Grammy and Emmy awards for TV Guide, has his own "Justin Guarini Show" on Blog Talk Radio and is a commentator for [NBC's](#) "Today" Show, [MSNBC](#), [Fox News](#) Channel and other programs.

He also says he's been filming an Internet sketch comedy show, "Sketched Out," scheduled to debut July 14 at [sketchedouttv.com](http://sketchedouttv.com). He hopes to shop the show to television.

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If all that seems to have left Guarini little time for a singing career -- well, it has. Guarini says all the work even sidetracked a CD that would be his first since "Stranger Things Have Happened," which he released independently in 2005.

Guarini has also been meeting with publishing companies about building a catalog as a songwriter. He's gotten attention for "I Can't Live," which was inspired by the "Twilight" book series and which he publicly has campaigned to get on the soundtrack for the "Twilight" movie sequel, "New Moon." The song was co-written by fellow "Twilight" fans Shaye Smith ( [Kenny Chesney](#)'s "That's Why I'm Here") and Tammy Hyler (Martina McBride's "I Love You"), who he met on the CMT show "Gone Country."

Asked whether he ever feels frustration that his singing career hasn't taken off like other "Idols," Guarini says, "Oh, of course. I'm only human."

After "Idol," Guarini released a self-titled disc, which hit Billboard's Top 20 before he was dropped by RCA Records. He then co-starred with Clarkson in "From Justin to Kelly," a film conceived by "Idol" creator [Simon Fuller](#). After it was trashed by critics, Guarini severed ties with Fuller's 19 Management.

Guarini says his difficulties resulted not only from his own "lack of experience," but the show's as well. "They didn't have the machine worked out," he says. "

But he says he's happy where he's at and with his "Idol" experience.

"I feel fortunate about being on that first season," he says. "Everyone watching remembers that moment, the impact of the first time they saw ' American Idol,' remembers Kelly and I on that stage. For me, that's as good as winning, 'cause here I am, seven years later, still working. ... You can't buy that kind of recognition and that kind of branding."

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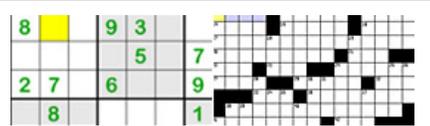
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