

# Singing an old tune

In *Indian Idol 5*, there are four singers who have participated in music reality shows in the past. Do they have an advantage over others?

One was under the impression that reality television shows such as *Indian Idol* are a platform only for 'fresh' talents from all across the country. Well, looks like that's not quite the case.

Recently, *Indian Idol* announced the 17 contestants who cleared the auditions and are now competing in the gala rounds. But surprisingly, as many as four of the top 17 have already been part of some earlier reality show.

Vishwas Rai is an ex-*Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Challenge 2005* contestant, who reached the top 11 in that contest. This 29-year-old music teacher from Allahabad then went on to do another reality music show for Zee, *Ek Main Aur Ek Tu*, where his partner was Twinkle Bajpai, who later did a few television soaps.

Another contestant, Manisha Karmakar from Kolkata, had participated in *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Challenge 2009*.

Eighteen-year-old Yashraj Kapil is yet another *Indian Idol* contestant who has been seen before. He was the winner of a singing reality show *Sitaron Ko Choona Hai on Real*. Though the show, like the channel, was not very popular, the participating singers were put under virtual house arrest and given extensive training in singing for three months. This Delhiite clearly has a lot of experience in music shows.

Most interestingly, a fourth participant, Sreeramchandra, is a professional singer and has given voice to a few Telugu movies!

The confidence level, finesse and the attitude that the above-mentioned con-

testants exuded made them stand out from the others at the event meant to introduce the 17 participants.

While participants who have been trained in music enhance the quality of the show, one does feel that pitting experienced reality show participants against novices is a different thing alto-

gether. It's rather unfair to those who have not yet been exposed to singing for television and may not have the same finesse.

We put forth this question to the show's judges and they seemed 'okay' with the idea of providing experienced singers a second chance. Salim Merchant retorted, "It is not that we selected them because they have participated in other reality shows. You think they do not deserve another chance? We have heard them ... they have come for the auditions, stood in long queues and we have liked their voice. How can we leave out good singers? These singers are here because we liked them."

Fellow judge Anu Malik added with a shrug, "Our format is such that we see if the person is between the age of 16-29 years, and whether he sings well. We have given ex-*Indian Idol* participants a chance too. One can keep trying ... and, in fact, I have told a lot of people to try harder and come back the next year. I'm not here to see who participated in which show and got eliminated for what reasons. I need that one voice; finally it is about *desh ki awaaz*."

When Salim was asked whom he saw in the top five round of *Indian Idol*, he mentioned, "Yashraj Kapil, Shashi Suman, Manisha Karmakar, Arpita Khan and Bhumi Trivedi, Swaroop Khan or Vishwas Rai."

There is of course some logic in this argument about participants getting a second chance. However, taking too many contestants who one has heard before on other shows, might just prove the point that the talent pool of singers is not as big as one has been lead to believe.

— MILI SWARNAKAR BNS



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**YASHRAJ**



**MANISHA**



**SREERAMCHANDRA**



**VISHWAS**