

## American Idol's Most Successful 10!



Last night, the fifteenth season and first episode of **American Idol** drew a **10.685 million viewers** in the 8PM hour and **11.016 million total viewers** in the 9PM hour, according to Nielsen fast national data, slightly lower than last year's premiere, which only occupied the 8PM hour and posted **11.20 million viewers total**. This is the final season of FOX's flagship reality competition.

Over the last 15 years, we've watched thousands of hopefuls audition to grace the stage of American Idol, with only a select few making the cuts. American Idol provides the vessel for people who sing in their church choir or their bathroom to be in front of a live audience and millions of viewers, with the ultimate prize of a recording contract. We've watched front runners such as **Kelly Clarkson, Jordin Sparks** and **Ruben Studdard** tremendously rise to stardom after being selected. **American Idol Alumni** have made a name for themselves through music, acting or business ventures.

In the spirit of Idol's very last season, we take a trip down memory lane and highlight the 10 most successful contestants to appear on the American Idol stage. Scroll along to see who made the **#1 spot!**

**Words:** Rachel George

**[1Katharine McPhee](#)**



Runner up on season five, Katharine McPhee went onto become a leading star. Her self-titled debut album reached **#2 on the Billboard 200** charts in 2007, selling over 116,000 copies its first week. She made a household name for herself within the acting industry, appearing in films such as **The House Bunny** and **Shark Night 3D**. McPhee held lead roles on CBS's **Scorpion** and NBC's musical series **Smash**, which acclaimed to be her most prominent role. She has also appeared in several television shows including **CSI: NY** and an episode of the **Biggest Loser 2010**.

**Net Worth:** \$6 Million

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$1 Million

[\*\*2Clay Aiken\*\*](#)



Clay Aiken was deemed for greatness after the Idol stage in 2003. Releasing five albums, he has sold **six million albums** and sold out 11 nationwide tours, some with past winners. His first solo album debuted at number one on the **Billboard 200 Charts**, selling **613,000 copies in its first week**. A year later, his memoir ***Learning To Sing: Hearing The Music in Your Life*** became a **New York Times Best Seller**. Aiken's Broadway debut in **Monty Python's Spamalot** was huge success. He is a strong advocate for **LGBT** rights and serves as a **UNICEF Ambassador** for education and child protection. He appeared on **Donald Trump's Celebrity Apprentice** in 2012 with Aubrey O'Day and Arsenio Hall. Taking his strides into office, Aiken unsuccessfully ran for Congress in his hometown of North Carolina in 2014.

**Net Worth:** \$7 Million

**Highest Gross:** \$1.5 Million

[3Kelly Pickler](#)



The “Small Town Girl” amazed America with her bold, intensified voice at center stage. Kelly Pickler proved that talent and fortitude are a potent combination. She captured the hearts of the country audience with her heartfelt songs of life and art. After *Idol*, she signed with BNA Records, releasing hits such as “**Red High Heels**,” “**I Wonder**,” which won her **Performance of the Year**, and **Breakthrough Video of the Year**. Pickler released, ***100 Proof***, a collection of songs that resonated with the artist’s life in 2012. Singing is not her only talent; she won the 16th season of ***Dancing With the Stars*** alongside **Derek Hough**. Last summer, she released her new single, “Feeling Tonight,” under Black River Entertainment. She also has a show on CMT, ***I Love Kellie Pickler***, a docu-comedy starring her and her husband, songwriter-producer **Kyle Jacobs**.

**Net Worth:** \$1.5 Million

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$2.5 Million

**[4Jennifer Hudson](#)**



After placing seventh on the third season of American Idol, **Jennifer Hudson** came back guns blazing with vivacious voice. Releasing her self-titled debut album in 2009, it sold over **one million copies**, with it's hit single "**Spotlight.**" Aside from the American Idol stage, Hudson has performed at the **Grammy Awards, Super Bowl XLIII** and the **White House**. Hudson amazed America again with her screen debut alongside **Beyoncé** in the blockbuster movie ***Dreamgirls***, which earned her an **Academy Award** for **Best Supporting Actress, Screen Actors Guild** and a **Golden Globe**. She has also appeared in films such as ***Sex and the City, Winnie Mandela,*** and ***The Secret Life of Bees.***

**Net Worth:** \$20 million dollars

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$2 million

**[5Kelly Clarkson](#)**



Known as the first winner of American Idol, Kelly Clarkson became a groundbreaking artist in the mainstream industry. She has released pop albums with hits like “**Since U Been Gone,**” “**December,**” “**Miss Independent**” and “**Stronger (What Doesn’t Kill You).**” Clarkson tried her hand at acting in the 2003 film, *From Justin to Kelly*, alongside runner up, **Justin Guarini**. Selling **45 millions albums worldwide**, she has also won **three Grammy awards** and **two Academy of Country Music Awards**. Her single, “**My Life Would Suck Without You,**” broke the Billboard record for the largest leap to the #1 position in chart history (#97 to #1), in its first week of release. Kelly Clarkson reigns as the only American Idol contestant to have reached a **number one in the UK**.

**Net Worth:** \$29 million

**2015 Highest Gross:** 2.5 million

[6Jordin Sparks](#)



The youngest to ever win American Idol, then 17-year-old, Jordin Sparks, emerged onto the music scene with her singles “**Tattoo.**” Her single “**No Air**” featuring **Chris Brown**, is the third-highest-selling single by any American Idol contestant, selling over **three million digital copies** in the US. Aside from music, Sparks released several perfumes and emerged into the world of acting. She performed on **Broadway** in the Tony-winning show ***In The Heights*** as Nina Rosario, and starred in the classic 2012 remake of ***Sparkle*** with the late, great **Whitney Houston, Derek Luke** and **Tika Sumpter**. In August of last year, she released her third album ***Right Here Right Now***. Sparks continues to promote her album, while dating rapper **Sage the Gemini**.

**Net Worth:** \$10 million

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$3 million

**[7Fantasia Barrino](#)**



This single mom from High Point, North Carolina won America's heart with her vibrant voice as the third season winner. Her first single **"I Believe"** hit **#1 on the Billboard Hot 100**. Her other hit singles include **"Truth Is," "When I See You,"** and **"Bittersweet,"** which won her a **Grammy for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance**. In 2005, she was featured on an innovative track with **Lyfe Jennings**, "Hypothetically. Barrino has performed in several Broadway musicals and plays such as ***After Midnight*** and ***The Color Purple***, which she earned 2007 **Theatre World Award** for her role as Celie. She returned to the American Idol stage in 2013 singing **"Lose to Win."** Critics described her performance as "dynamic, passionate and powerful."

**Net Worth:** \$3 million dollars

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$4 million

**[8Chris Daughtry](#)**



American Idol gave birth to successful rock star, Chris Daughtry. After placing fourth to **Taylor Hicks**, he started the band **Daughtry** and released their self-titled debut album in 2006 under **RCA Records**. It became the fastest selling rock album in SoundScan history, earning **#1** on the charts and a **Grammy** nomination for the single “**Its Not Over**” for Best Rock Song. Daughtry is the third highest selling American Idol Alum. He has worked with several other artists including **Slash**, **Chad Kroeger** and **Carlos Santana**.

**Net worth:** \$8.5 million dollars

**Highest Gross:** \$6 million

**[9Adam Lambert](#)**



Singer and Activist Adam Lambert left his footprint musically on American Idol and socially in the world. He became a prominent member of the **LGBT community** after coming out as gay in 2009. In the same year, he also released his debut album ***For Your Entertainment***, which was nominated for a **Grammy Award**. Lambert is the first American Idol contestant to headline a worldwide tour, **Glam Nation**, following his Idol season. He has won awards for **Outstanding Music Artist in 2010** and **GLAAD Media Award** in 2013. His hit singles included, “Whataya Want from Me” and “If I Had You,” which both were popular internationally as well.

**Net worth:** \$12 million dollars

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$10 million

**[10Carrie Underwood](#)**



Born in 1983, the Oklahoma native amazed America on season 4 of American Idol with her bold, country voice taking home the prize. Selling over **65 millions albums worldwide**, the singer/songwriter has set and broken several records in her career, winning **7 Grammy awards, 11 American Music Awards** and being the only country artist with the most no. 1 hits on the **Billboard Hot Country Songs** chart. Her top records include **“Before He Cheats,” “Cowboy Casanova,” “Blown Away,” “Something in the Water,”** and **“Somethin’ Bad.”** Underwood was inducted into the **Grand Ole Opry in 2008**, making her the youngest to date. As the highest selling **American Idol alum**, Carrie Underwood’s net worth sits at a whopping \$75 million. She also replaces **Faith Hill**, being selected as the performing artist for the **Sunday Night Football** theme for the 2014-15 seasons.

**Net Worth:** \$75 Million

**2015 Highest Gross:** \$20 Million