



Did 'Lost' finale leave you with more questions?

We uncork some of the answers, 8D

Michael Emerson and Jorge Garcia by Mario Perez, ABC

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Lifeline

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'Shrek' loses only to himself

Shrek Forever After was an easy No. 1, but its opening was the franchise's lowest since *Shrek's* \$42 million in 2001. The SNL sketch-turned-film *MacGruber* opened with \$4 million.



>> top box office

Film	Wknd	Total	Avg. per site	Pct. chg.	Out
1 <i>Shrek Forever After</i>	\$70.8	New	\$16,251		1
2 <i>Iron Man 2</i>	\$26.4	\$251.0	\$6,311	-49	3
3 <i>Robin Hood</i>	\$18.8	\$66.2	\$5,355	-48	2
4 <i>Letters to Juliet</i>	\$9.0	\$27.3	\$3,027	-33	2
5 <i>Just Wright</i>	\$4.3	\$14.7	\$2,343	-48	2
6 <i>MacGruber</i>	\$4.0	New	\$1,585		1
7 <i>Date Night</i>	\$2.9	\$90.7	\$1,559	-24	7
8 <i>Nightmare on Elm Street</i>	\$2.3	\$60.0	\$1,092	-50	4
9 <i>How to Train Your Dragon</i>	\$1.9	\$210.9	\$1,086	-62	9
10 <i>Kites</i>	\$1.0	New	\$4,609		1

Source: Rentrak Corp. Shrek by Dreamworks Animation

Here comes the 'Dance' judge: Abdul

Paula Abdul will be the lead judge and executive producer on *Got to Dance*, a CBS reality competition show. An airdate has not yet been announced.

Murphy's widower, 39, found dead



2007 AP photo

Monjack: With Murphy, who died in December.

The husband of the late actress Brittany Murphy was found dead Sunday night at his L.A. home. Writer Simon Monjack's death was reported as a heart attack and appeared to be from natural causes, Los Angeles County assistant chief coroner Ed Winter said.

'Lost' gains lost viewers, thanks to finale

The series finale of ABC's island mystery *Lost* drew 13.5 million viewers Sunday, according to preliminary Nielsen estimates, a solid if unspectacular number that marked the show's most-watched episode since February 2008.

Sir McCartney heads to White House

Paul McCartney will be honored with the third Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song at a star-studded concert June 2 at the White House. The program will air July 28 on PBS (check local listings).

By Cindy Clark with staff and wire reports
 E-mail USATCMLifeline@usatoday.com

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Today's puzzles
 Page 7D

USA TODAY Snapshots®

Book buyers by the numbers

Average age	42
Gender	Female 58%, Male 42%
Average price paid	\$12.19
Top genres purchased	Adult fiction 40%
	Juvenile 20%
	Adult non-fiction 16%

Source: Bowler's 2009 U.S. Book Consumer Annual Review
 By Michelle Healy and Sam Ward, USA TODAY

'Idol' outcome looks like a toss-up

DeWyze has most to lose

All season long, *American Idol's* judges have told Lee DeWyze, "Have confidence."

In retrospect, considering the way the paint-store clerk from Mount Prospect, Ill., has breezed through the competition and the judges' willingness to tune out his pitch problems, such encouragement sounds less like advice and more like a discreet signal: It's OK, we've got your back.

As *Idol* heads into its climactic performance show tonight (Fox, 8 ET/PT), DeWyze suddenly has become an odds-on favorite for many, despite the more consistent Crystal Bowersox's front-run-

ner status most of Season 9. At a glance, DeWyze, the gravel-voiced rocker, seems like an easier sell than Bowersox, the sort that appeals to an audience that scorns packaged talent. Truth is, though, the title matters more for his career prospects than hers.

Much of the earthy street busker's following has come from her "outsider" status. She acknowledged early on that she hadn't watched *Idol* and seems surprised to have done as well as she has. Though she has made the occasional nod to the judges' recommendations, she's not an appreciably different artist



By Michael Becker, Fox

And then there were two: Lee DeWyze and Crystal Bowersox face off tonight on the Season 9 performance show.

Contestant Q&A and our final Idol Meter, 2D

than she was 12 weeks ago.

A loss at the last hurdle could rally Bowersox's fans, making them more supportive and dedicated, the way

Adam Lambert's second-place finish did last year.

In contrast, DeWyze still seems to be figuring things out. He has improved greatly

— a trait voters love to reward, as they did with Kris Allen. And he's peaking at the right time, like a Cinderella sports team making a playoff run. But if DeWyze comes up short, he'll be dismissed as someone who couldn't get good enough quickly enough, even in a lackluster season.

Idol producers have their work cut out for them next year. Viewership is down 9% from 2009. Voting is off a third or more in recent weeks, suggesting that both contestants will start their careers at a disadvantage.

Bowersox's story line writes itself whether she wins or loses. DeWyze, on the other hand, will need all the help — and all the media attention afforded to an *Idol* winner — he can get.

Every mother knows that raising children is hard, and parents make mistakes sometimes. So why do . . .



By Keith Simmons, USA TODAY

Moms judge one another?

By Liz Szabo
 USA TODAY

Sometimes it seems as if it takes a village to tell you how to raise your child.

Andrea Moleski was at a coffee shop with her baby when they were approached by a strange woman. The conversation began innocently enough as the woman admired Moleski's baby and asked her age.

Then, the interrogation began. The woman wanted to know if the baby, then 9 months old, was sleeping through the night.

"When I told her no, she was horrified," says

Moleski, 34, who writes for a March of Dimes blog, news.momsneed.marchofdimes.com. "It was almost as if 'bad sleeper' equals 'bad mommy.' I quickly and nervously had to defend what was going on in my home to this perfect stranger."

Although mothers can provide one another with invaluable advice and understanding, they also can be quick to cut one another down, making devoted mothers feel inadequate, says Wendy Sue Swanson, a pediatrician and mother of two.

"I call it 'competitive parenting,'" says Swanson, who writes the blog *Seattle Mama Doc*

Please see COVER STORY next page ▶

Cover story

Grisham's 'Kid Lawyer' approaches the bench

New 'Boone' is a legal thriller for youngsters

By Carol Memmott
 USA TODAY

John Grisham's new legal thriller, like the 17 that preceded it, revolves around a heinous crime. This time a man is on trial for strangling his wife.

One big difference — it's written for kids ages 8 to 12. *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* (Dutton, \$16.99), in stores today, is the best-selling author's first book for young readers.

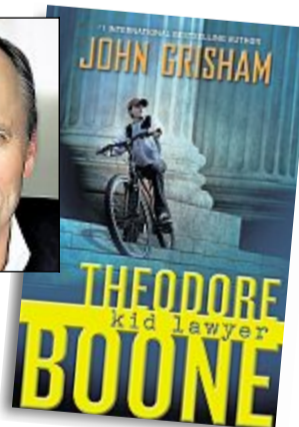
"After the first dozen or so legal thrillers — or any type of book that you write over and over — you quite naturally begin wondering if you can do something else," says Grisham.

In 2001, after writing 11 legal thrill-



By Bob Krasner

Grisham: Murder he wrote, but mildly.



ers, he wrote *A Painted House*, a novel inspired by his childhood in rural Arkansas. Other non-thrillers, including non-fiction, followed.

"I didn't know if I could write for kids," says Grisham, "but I had a good

story. I think everything goes back to the story. And I've been thinking about this story about a 13-year-old lawyer. One thing led to the other."

Theodore Boone isn't your typical kid. The fact that he dreams of one day being a judge or a lawyer — his beloved mutt is named Judge — has a lot to do with the fact that both his parents practice law.

His idea of a good time is watching trials at the courthouse. He doles out free advice to his schoolmates on divorce, custody, bankruptcy and an impounded dog.

Suspense builds when Theo gains evidence that can prove an accused man did kill his wife. He's sworn to secrecy, but if he doesn't tell what he knows, the man could go free.

"I was really not sure how suspenseful or how frightening to make the story," says Grisham, 55, who was careful with how he depicted the murder. "I really worried about it. I devised a crime scene and tried to make it as mild or as tame as possible. I didn't want bloodshed. You don't want to scare 10-year-olds."

First printing for *Theodore Boone* is 1 million copies. Grisham hopes the book is popular and plans a series even though he knows his deviations from the adult legal thriller genre sometimes don't sell as well.

"What I've learned by doing other books is that there is a very loyal fan base of people who just love the legal thrillers. The sales numbers kind of bear that out."

Those fans don't have long to wait. Grisham's *The Confession* is due from Doubleday in October.

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2010 American Idol Meter

By Ken Barnes, Special for USA TODAY

'Idol' is Crystal's or Lee's to win, or lose

It's the end of Season 9 and, more sadly, the end of the Simon Cowell era on *Idol*. It remains to be seen — after Simon pulled all the strings at his disposal last week (a whole string section, in fact, plus a choir) to create a "moment" for Lee DeWyze — whether voters will grant him a Lee victory as a going-away present. Or will the best singer win?



Watch the show on Fox tonight and Wednesday (both 8 p.m. ET/PT).

Let's give 'em something to talk about

The top two were still taking in their good news when they spoke Wednesday with USA TODAY's **Bill Keveney**:

Q: Has there been a high point for you during *Idol*?

Crystal Bowersox: "Hearing *Holy Toledo* (an original song she played during her hometown visit to Toledo, Ohio) and watching people sing along with it. That was an amazing, incredible feeling."

As for her *Idol* performances, "People Get Ready. I loved that. My dad was there. It was the one performance he was there for. It's all about gratitude for life, for family, for health, for love, for music, for my son, everything."

Lee DeWyze: "Playing *Hallelujah* (in top three week) was pretty amazing." He compares it with playing for his hometown crowds in Mount Prospect, Ill.: "I really didn't think about *Idol* at that moment, and I just felt it. It was just me and the song. That was a really big moment ... playing for all those people. The fans are the best."

Q: Has there been a low?

Crystal: "Musically, I don't feel there has. Other people said the judges or whatever. The hardest part has been being away from my kid (Tony) so much, but it's all for him, and I know that."

Lee: "Going home after Hollywood Week and waiting to come back (to find out if you made) the top 24. You have no idea what to expect. It was very alone for me, just anticipating."

Q: What do you think has been (your opponent's) high point in performance?

Crystal: "I loved, loved, loved Lee's *Hallelujah*. I've loved lots of things Lee's done. He's incredibly talented. He's a genuinely nice and humble guy and he deserves this. We both deserve this. ... I knew he would be here. I hoped I would. And we're here."

Lee: "She does great every time. We were both supportive of each other. I'm not upset that it's her with me right now (in the finals). She's a good person."

Crystal Bowersox **56**

Idol Meter high: 96, for *People Get Ready*
Idol Meter low: 22, for *No One Needs to Know*

Idol Meter's scientifically dubious but insightful stats awarded Crystal the season's highest performance score and an average score that's well above Lee's (55 to 42). But she has clearly broken the bubbly, lovable mold that *Idol* prefers for its female winners (think Jordin Sparks or Carrie Underwood), and that may cost her the crown.

Lee DeWyze **66**

Idol Meter high: 66 (three times, but of these, *Treat Her Like a Lady* was the highlight)

Idol Meter low: 1, for *Kiss From a Rose*

Lee was about the sixth-best singer this season, give or take an Aaron Kelly, but voters love his unassuming, earnest manner. The franchise seems to be pushing for him, and his arc of ever-increasing onstage confidence makes for stronger momentum than Crystal's predictably solid excellence and stolid personality.

Photos by Michael Becker, Fox

Gauging momentum: Our pseudoscientific, fast-track formula

Predicting the results on *American Idol* isn't a science. But it's fun to approach it that way. We've come up with a pseudoscientific, fast-track formula to gauge each finalist's momentum heading into the next round of competition. Contestants can score up to 100 points or — if they're in danger — into double-digit negative numbers.

Song choice

Choosing the right song is key to *Idol* success — right up there with performing it ably. Contestants can go wrong picking a song that is too closely identified with a previous *Idol*, too old or unfamiliar, too worn-out, or just plain unsuited for their voices. WhatNotToSing.com is dedicated to building a database that documents which songs work (or don't work) and will join us in determining the best and worst song choices.

Inspired choices = +10
Suitable selections = +5
Damaging picks = -5/-10
Indifferent choices = 0

Performance order

Studies by WhatNotToSing.com and others have established that singing first on the show is a clear handicap, while singing last is a big plus, and second-to-last a lesser but still significant plus.

Show-closers = +10
Second-to-last contestant = +5
Opener = -5
The rest = 0

Performance quality

Buzz, judges' verdict and (especially) song choice are vital to a contestant's survival, but none of that would mean a thing without what we watch *Idol* for: the performance itself.

Worth = Anywhere from -10 to +10

Exceptional circumstances

Idol is live, and the unpredictable can happen. When it does, we'll dole out points for incidents including, but not limited to, emotional shout-outs or break-downs, sickbed performances, superstar stage lighting, forgetting lyrics, false starts, major vocal gaffes, tantrums, overt sullenness, sassing Simon, being adopted as perverse causes célèbres, or anything else that might influence voting.

Worth = Anywhere from -10 to +10

Online buzz

Standout performances tend to generate high volumes of post-show searches, so contestants who spike in Google Trends, Yahoo Buzz, Twitter's popular topics or other queries get points.

Worth = +14, +10 or +5

Judges' verdict

Respect them (kudos to Simon) or not, the judges and their opinions can't help but influence voters. Simon's verdict is worth as much as the other three judges' opinions combined.

Positive/Simon = Up to +9
Positive/Randy, Ellen or Kara = +3 each
Negative/Simon = Up to -9
Negative/Randy, Ellen or Kara = -3 each
Mixed comments = 0
Unanimous, four-judge, flat-out rave = +3 bonus points (total of 21)

Dial *Idol*

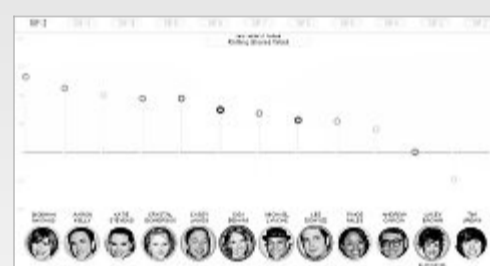
Dial*Idol*.com, which calculates phone-voting strength from busy signals, has a strong though not infallible record of predicting eliminations.

Green (or safe) ratings from Dial *Idol* = +5
Yellow danger zone = 0
Lowest-rated contestant = -5

Outcome

Nothing spells danger for an *Idol* contestant more than showing up in the dreaded bottom three the previous week.

In the bottom three = -5
Eludes elimination on first trip to the bottom three = +5 (one week bounce)
Escapes bottom three = +20



For a detailed breakdown on how your favorite contestants scored in each category this week, visit idolmeter.usatoday.com.



Follow the action in live time with Brian Mansfield at our *Idol* community, idolchatter.usatoday.com.

Moms can feel insecure if their choices are picked apart

Continued from 1D

(seattlechildrens.org/seattle-mama-doc). "Other parents can be so helpful. They tell you about a product and it changes your life. But they can also make you feel like junk."

Though women might shrug off criticism about other aspects of their lives, many say they feel crushed when someone picks apart their parenting — the job they care about most. "We're all so desperately in love with our babies," Swanson says.

And it's tough to have a thick skin when they're exhausted, sleep-deprived and under the influence of wild hormonal fluctuations from pregnancy or nursing, says psychotherapist Jenn Berman, author of *The A to Z Guide to Raising Happy, Confident Kids*.

"Being a mom can be scary and isolating, and we're all insecure about the job we're doing," Moleski says. "It's rare that someone tells you you're a good mom. That's why we get so defensive. It confirms our worst fears."

Many mothers struggle to recover from such criticism and with how to avoid inflicting it on others, even if unintentionally, Berman says.

Stephanie Bello, 31, a stay-at-home mom from Alexandria, Va., felt that public judgment after her 2-year-old son hit his head. On the one hand, she says, modern moms are commonly denounced for being overprotective. "But you're looked at as a bad parent if you are in the ER with your kid," she says.

Swanson vividly recalls the decision she faced whenever she fed her baby with a bottle.

"We were sitting at a playground, and a woman said to me, 'Oh, you chose not to breast-feed, I see,'" says Swanson, who was unable to nurse for several months after being hospitalized for a painful infection called



By Robert Deutsch, USA TODAY

"Being a mom can be scary and isolating, and we're all insecure about the job we're doing. It's very rare that someone tells you you're a good mom. That's why we get so defensive. It confirms our worst fears."

— Andrea Moleski, with daughter Hannah

mastitis. "I said, 'It wasn't my choice, but yes, he's lucky he can get formula.'"

More choices, arguments

Many modern parents feel inundated with information and overwhelmed by choices, Berman says.

Parents who have researched and agonized over their choices — such as whether to use a pacifier, co-sleeper or baby sling — may feel a need to defend them, she says. Parents may wonder: If I've made the wrong choice, does that mean I'm endangering

our children?

"Oftentimes, it can seem like a threat to see someone else deciding differently," Berman says.

Parents also may feel they're getting conflicting advice.

Expert guidelines on a range of topics — such as safe sleeping positions, preventing allergic reactions and treating colds — have changed markedly in recent years. Staying on top of the latest child-rearing recommendations can be a challenge — and a badge of honor.

By the time a mother's kids are in middle school, much of what she knows about baby care may

be considered out of date — or even dangerous. That can cause divisions between generations of parents, Moleski says.

A decade ago, for example, parents considered themselves progressive if they gave their kids apple juice instead of soda or Kool-Aid, she says. Today, pediatricians, concerned about empty calories, now tell parents to give their children only water or milk.

"My sister asked me when I was going to give my daughter juice," says Moleski, whose daughter is 15 months old. "I told her I'm not, and she rolled her eyes. I can tell by her reaction

that I've made her feel badly, and I didn't want to."

Most mothers say they struggle to make peace with hurtful comments.

Swanson says it can help to remember that most parents are less sure of themselves than they appear. "There is no one who comes into my clinic and shuts the door and doesn't have any worries," she says. "We're all trying to get it right."

Unintended slights

Monika Phenix says most mothers don't mean to hurt, and they honestly want to help.

"I think moms love kids and they want all kids to be safe," says Phenix, 31, a stay-at-home mom from Austin. "As a mother of three, I feel like I've seen a few things. I'll see a friend who has a child, and I wish I could tell her how to help."

Psychologist Mona Spiegel, a life coach in Rockland County, N.Y., says Phenix is right to hold her tongue. Often, the best thing that a friend can offer another mom, Spiegel says, is to listen.

"It's always easier to solve someone else's problem than one's own," she says. "But we don't always need to fix things for people. We need to have more patience and compassion, for other people and ourselves."

Mothers don't need to take criticism to heart, Spiegel says.

Moms can often defuse a tense situation — and let go of hurt feelings — by considering what motivated someone to criticize them. Someone who condemns the parent of a noisy toddler, for example, may simply be revealing her own need for control and may not be the best judge of good parenting, she says.

And many slights are unintentional, says pediatrician Tanya Remer Altmann of Westlake Village, Calif., author of *Mommy Calls*. People may offer unsolicited advice, she says, because they really wish someone had

told them what to do.

And other mothers may be sleep-deprived, stressed-out and insecure, too, says Remer Altmann, who acknowledges that she may have unintentionally offended other parents.

"My son loves soccer, but he's the slowest kid on the field, and when the ball comes to him, he freezes," says Remer Altmann, whose son is almost 5. "Sometimes I may say, 'He's not the best athlete, but I'm sure he's the only kid out there who can read and do math.' It's because you want to make up for their losses. But my husband said, 'Don't say that, or you'll make the others feel bad that their child can't read and do math.'"

'Rejuvenating' moments

Sometimes, mothers may be happier gravitating toward parents with similar parenting styles, even if that means spending less time with people with whom they are prone to disagree, Berman says. A play date may simply go more smoothly, for example, if parents agree on which kinds of television shows to allow.

And because criticism often comes from all sides, getting support from other mothers can be vital, she says.

"The experience of being in a room with like-minded moms whose kids are going through similar issues developmentally is rejuvenating and healing," Berman says. "It lets you know you are normal. ... Sometimes you just need to hear from another woman that you are not crazy and that what you are feeling is normal and that your kid isn't wacko."

The best gift people can give to a mother, Moleski says, is to tell her she's doing a good job.

"We put a lot of pressure on ourselves," she says. "The parenting decisions people make all stem from the love they have for their children."