

Local singer on 'American Idol'

Subheadline: Phillips makes it to Hollywood round

Slug: LANNWS-04-22-23 AMERICAN IDOL

Print depth: 25.17 (3750 characters)

Start date/time: Apr 20, 2023 02:53 PM

Section tags: nc-lan
nc-lan/features

Authors: hjones@thelancasternews.com

Byline: By Haley Jones
hjones@thelancasternews.com

Content

Local musician Brayden Phillips got his 20 seconds of fame earlier this month.

Phillips, a 2020 Buford High School grad, was one of the contestants on "American Idol" this season, which premiered Feb. 19. He made it to the show's Hollywood round before being eliminated.

Viewers across the country got to see the 20-year-old perform on "American Idol" on April 2 in his Hollywood performance, where he sang "Giving You Up," by Kameron Marlowe.

"I had to go to Nashville for my audition," said Phillips, who sang "What Are You Listening To" by Chris Stapleton in his initial audition last November. "In Nashville, I got three yeses from the judges."

Will Hudson, a 2019 Andrew Jackson High grad, played guitar next to Phillips in the Nashville audition. The two play guitar together in The Red Rose Band.

"(On) Dec. 5, I went to Hollywood," said Phillips, who performed solo there. "I was there for three days and I got sent home in the first round of Hollywood."

Phillips said he has been in music for a long time, and traces his roots back to childhood, singing at Temple Baptist Church in Lancaster.

"I probably sang in church by myself the first time when I was like 6," he said. "That's where I've been going since I was little, that's really where it started. My dad sang, and used to go around to different churches and sing, so just following him, that's what really got me into it."

Phillips posts snippets of his singing on the social media app TikTok, where he has amassed over 20,000 followers and 194,500 likes on his videos. His account, @braydenphillipsmusic, was his golden ticket into the “American Idol” auditions.

“Whenever I started making TikToks, apparently Luke Bryan (country singer and ‘American Idol’ judge) saw one of my TikToks and they (production) reached out to me about ‘American Idol,’” Phillips said.

Phillips said growing up he always joked that he would perform on “American Idol,” but never actually thought he would make it to the Idol stage.

“It’s actually pretty crazy,” Hudson said. “Me and Brayden only started playing together about six months (ago). We started on a sidewalk here in North Myrtle Beach playing and then six months later we was there on ‘American Idol.’ ”

The two met at Andrew Jackson High, before Phillips transferred to Buford High School. They also played on AJ’s baseball team together.

“I just remember walking in; I didn’t know how bright it would be in that room,” Hudson said. “We walked in and there was just lights and everything and it was bright — it almost didn’t even look real.”

Phillips said while it was a great experience, it felt a little more like a reality show than a true competition.

“You can have talent and make it a little bit, but if you don’t have a story to go along with it, you’re not going to make it very far,” he said.

“There was photo shoots and interviews and this and that, and honestly the producer was somewhat telling us what to say for most of it,” Hudson said. “It’s really, really staged.”

Phillip’s first single, “Old Young Man,” came out Sept. 7, 2022, and has nearly 20,000 streams on Spotify.

“I’ve seen a lot of people on Facebook just tell me they were proud of me, and I’ve had people texting me that have been in my life for a while,” Phillips said.

“There’s been people at my school, especially my roommate — we’ll be walking somewhere and he’ll just make a joke and he’ll be like, ‘Hey, get out the way, I got ‘American Idol’ right here!’ It’s been pretty cool.”

Phillips is a junior majoring in exercise science at Newberry College, where he plays quarterback for the Wolves.

The Red Rose Band, which also includes drummer Stryker Gandy and bassist Tanner Funderburk, will play from 3:30 to 5 p.m. May 20 during the Red Rose Festival in downtown Lancaster.

Child images

LANNWS-04-22-23 AMERICAN IDOL

