



Courtesy of Ron Cadiz and RCA

"American Idol" winner David Cook will perform at Shawnee State University in Portsmouth tonight. The show sold out in about five hours.

Seventh season 'Idol' winner coming to Shawnee State

By ANGELA HENDERSON
For The Herald-Dispatch

PORTSMOUTH, Ohio — One year ago, David Cook was trying to earn America's votes and become the next "American Idol."

Now, he's crossing the country on his first headlining tour. And maybe still trying to catch his breath.

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For all your "Idol" information, check out Angela Henderson's Idol Chit-Chat blog at www.herald-dispatch.com.

"The Declaration Tour-2009" will roll onto the campus of Shawnee State University in Portsmouth tonight, Feb. 27, as part of a 36-date tour

of mostly college campuses.

Cook's tour also will stop at West Virginia University on March 6, before wrapping up at the University of Tulsa on April 25.

"There's a vibe at the college show I've never found elsewhere," Cook said. "It's one of the most critical audiences. In no other place will you find more opinions about music than a college campus."

Cook also said that a college tour fits in with the style of his show.

"It's organic. It's real. It's accessible," he said.

The experience so far has been a good one, according to Cook.

"The crowds have been great. A lot of cool things have been happening," he said.

Upon hearing that the Shawnee State concert sold out in less than five hours, Cook responded, "Wow, that's amazing."

But there have been a lot of amazing experiences for Cook since this roller coaster began in 2008 after he made the finals of "Idol," eventually becoming the show's seventh winner.

"It's been everything I've dreamed of and then some," he said. "To share the stage with Neil Diamond, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Dolly Parton and Mariah Carey. To pick their brains was priceless."

Cook's self-titled debut album was recently certified platinum for over 1 million units sold, and his "Idol" coronation single "The Time of My Life" also went platinum. He performed for Hillary Clinton at Carnegie Hall and for troops as part of a USO tour.

"These are amazing things people never get to do, let alone dream of

Cook

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doing," Cook said. "Those experiences, which I'll take with me for the rest of my life, are invaluable."

But Cook admits there can be a downside to all the fame.

"Sometimes it seems like if I cough it's going to be on CNN. That's probably the most unnerving thing," Cook said. "But I appreciate that people care enough to talk about it." As someone told him once, "Loved or hated, never ignored. I'm OK as long as I'm not ignored."

And although he's busy with the tour and promoting his album, Cook does manage to make some time for the show that made him famous.

"I've seen very little of the show (this season), but I try to keep educated through the Internet," he said. "It looks like the talent is as strong as ever."

As for what people want to know the most about his own "Idol" experience, Cook said without hesitation, "Is Simon (Cowell) as mean as he is on TV, and the answer is yes." But Cook said Cowell was his favorite judge because "he motivated me every week."

So what would Cook say to struggling musicians to motivate them?

"It's really easy to try to chase what is at the moment, but there's no longevity in that," Cook said. "I guess if I had to give advice it would be, 'Don't try to be, just be.' When I started focusing on who I was, everything fell into place."

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