



News Release

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WESTERN ALUMNUS MAKES AMERICAN IDOL CUT

St. Joseph, Mo. —Jan. 28, 2005 — Professor of music Dr. Dennis Rogers described Asa Barnes, a 2003 graduate of Missouri Western State College, as “electric in front of an audience.” Apparently, judges at the television show American Idol’s auditions agree, because when Barnes performed in Cleveland last August, he made the cut to advance to the next level in Hollywood. The Cleveland auditions will be featured on American Idol Tuesday, Feb. 1 on Fox, but Barnes couldn’t reveal the outcome of that or any future episodes, although he has already performed in Hollywood for the show. “You just have to watch the show,” he said.

“Asa is probably one of the most naturally gifted musicians I have ever met,” said Dr. Rogers. He said he wasn’t surprised when he found out Barnes, a native of Kansas City, Mo., had made the cut. “He has an ability to bring people into the music. He totally grabs an audience by the heart.”

In Cleveland, Barnes waited in line with about 20,000 hopefuls for over 15 hours before performing Stevie Wonder’s song “Overjoyed.” Only about 800 were selected for a second audition there, this time in front of American Idol’s celebrity judges. From that number, the select few advanced to Hollywood.

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“Simon’s not as bad as you think he is. He’s bad, but not as bad as you think,” Barnes quipped about celebrity judge Simon Cowell.

Barnes, a band director at Smith-Hale Middle School in Kansas City, credits his performance experiences as a student at Western with preparing him for the American Idol auditions. “I had a lot of performance experience with (Western’s) Steel Drum Band and with solos in the marching band. It’s hard to open up and feel comfortable on stage, but I had done it before so I wasn’t nervous.” He said his professors at Western gave him a good idea of what the music industry was like, also.

“Missouri Western doesn’t just teach theory, but we go the extra mile and give the practical part of music. The best way to do that is to bring students into performances,” said Dr. Rogers. “They gain experience by performing.”

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.