

Voice of an angel

The sky is the limit for show-stopper Jack Vigden, who's busy preparing for his *AGT* semifinal sing-off

When Australia's answer to Justin Bieber takes the stage for the semifinals this week, Sydney's Jack Vigden will be looking to a higher power to help guide him through the next step in his *Australia's Got Talent* journey.

"Christianity is a big influence and has only recently become a part of my life," the 14-year-old says. "I only joined my local church this year."

"Mum became a Christian around the same time as me," Jack explains. "The pastor of the church saw me at a gig once. We went over to his house for lunch and he asked me if I could sing at the church on Christmas Day."

Feeling at home in the presence of the fellow churchgoers after that first performance, it wasn't long before Jack was a regular attendee at his local parish.

And with the task of impressing the judges in the next round at hand, it's his faith that Jack is turning to.

"I wear a cross necklace and I pray before I go on stage," he reveals.

He's also aware that idols before him have used their faith as a way of getting through the roller-coaster ride of fame.

"Justin Bieber is a Christian, and I'm pretty sure Usher is as well," Jack says. "The Christian community is very strong, and they're helping me grow."

Jack may indeed have the voice of an angel and hit the soaring notes that many singers only dream of, but is the talented teen worried about his voice breaking?

"It's dropped a fair bit and I don't think it's going to drop much more," he says. "But I might lose a couple of high notes. Hopefully I'll be like John Farnham – he has that high range!"

He's also been thinking about what R'n'B singers he can cover if the judges are after another song to match the big Whitney Houston number he sang in his audition.

"My voice could do something like Stevie Wonder or Justin Timberlake," he says. "The Whitney song was good, but now I need to enhance on technique and power."

With many young singers getting standing ovations from the judges, Jack is aware that he has some stiff competition.

"I'm a little bit worried," he admits. "I'm just trying to focus on the comment from [judge] Kyle Sandilands [that] I could easily win the competition. I'm trying to keep that in my mind and stay positive."

AUSTRALIA'S GOT TALENT
Tuesday, 7.30pm, Channel Seven

Jack was invited to perform on *Dancing With The Stars*, where he met host Daniel MacPherson (below left).



POLE PERFORMANCE

Besides gaining the thumbs up from the judges, it was his Aboriginal community that pole dancer Matty Shields (right and below) was worried about.

"When I was growing up, there was a big divide of masculine and feminine roles," explains the dancer, who's originally from Walgett in north-west NSW.

"If a man did a feminine role such as dancing, it would be looked down upon. I want to change the views that people have about those roles and tell people that boys can dance."

But it's not just any kind of dancing that Matty's taking part in – and he knows that his form of pole dancing could raise eyebrows.

"Prior to *Australia's Got Talent*, my family was a bit nervous about me because they saw pole dancing as being very sexual," he reveals.

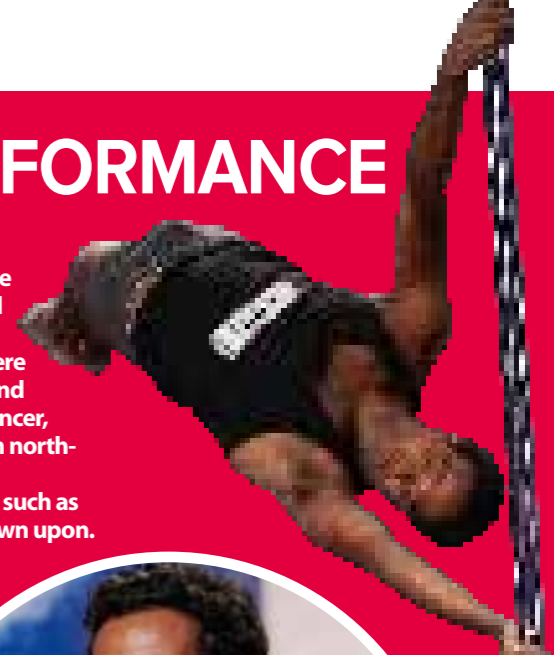
"I was quite worried when they watched the audition that it would be taken negatively."

Thankfully, however, Matty didn't have to worry at all. "The town is absolutely supportive of me. They've been amazing," he smiles.

And the overwhelming support for his passion for dance has inspired him

to win the competition. "I would use the prize money to teach my community and change their views of dancing," he says.

As for his future performances, Matty will only reveal so much. "They're going to be exciting, dramatic and very colourful!" he laughs.



THE BIG BREAK



With so many young guns like Jack Vigden wowing audiences, TV WEEK wonders how long their angelic voices will last. To find out, we catch up with vocal coach Leigh McRae (left).

At what age do boys' voices usually start to break?

The male voice will start to show signs of change at around age 12, and can continue gradually through to 15, with some adjustments, until full growth in the late teens.

Do voices always change?

They do always change, although some less noticeably than others. An exception would be in the case where an illness interferes with hormone production.

Could Jack's voice possibly start to break soon?

Jack is at the age where his voice is quite likely to commence changing – if, in fact, it isn't already. There's no reason that it will suddenly lose the qualities that it currently has, though.

Could a voice break while a contestant is midway through a song at the finals?

There's always a chance of this occurring for even the most experienced singer. If nerves get the better of any singer, they're prone to breaking or cracking because of the effect on the nervous system. This can also occur if the singer is insufficiently hydrated and not warmed up.