Overcoming HIV on The Voice

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By Lauren Tuck (Editorial Assistant, POZ)

I'm not usually a fan of singing competition television shows. They make me jealous that I'm tone deaf and will never sound as good as them (except in the shower because in there I'm a rock star). But last summer NBC's *The Voice* sucked me in. The premise is a bit different from *American Idol* and the *X Factor* because in the first round, the contestants are judged solely based on their vocal abilities.

Four celebrity coaches--Christina Aguilera, Adam Levine, Cee Lo Green and Blake Shelton--each choose eight members for their teams during blind auditions (the coaches can hear but not see the contestants). The rest of the competition progresses much like any other talent show, but Adam Levine's tattoos and sexy smirk, Cee Lo's wacky outfits and antics, Xtina's barely there outfits, and Blake Shelton's jokes keep me captivated for two very long hours.

A record-breaking 36.7 million people tuned into the new season's premiere, which aired after the Super Bowl. One of the contestants to try out on the second episode was Jamar Rogers. We are introduced to Rogers outside the headquarters of God's Love We Deliver (GLWD) in New York City's West Village. Rogers has been volunteering as a van assistant since June 2011 helping deliver the nearly 4,000 meals the organization donates daily to its clients, which include people with HIV/AIDS.

While loading a GLWD van, Rogers is surprised by *The Voice* host Carson Daly, who offers Rogers a trip to Hollywood to audition for the show. In the video, Rogers reveals he was addicted to crystal meth six years ago and contracted HIV as a result of his drug use.

Watch Rogers discuss his HIV status:

Some may recognize Rogers from *American Idol* season 8, but his booting off of that show didn't keep Cee Lo Green from choosing him for his team. "You've got style, you've got charisma, you've got presence, and you definitely got the voice," Green told Rogers after his rousing rendition of the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army."

Watch Rogers audition (but grab a hankie first, because I certainly needed one!):

During Rogers' first run on reality television, he didn't divulge the intimate details of his past. But, according to Yahoo Music, Mondo Guerra of *Project Runway* fame inspired him to be upfront about his HIV status.

Rogers says, "Mondo was my inspiration to tell everybody.... I was watching [*Project Runway*] with some friends and happened to see the episode when he was telling everyone [about his HIV status], and I

started crying.... I couldn’t stop bawling and my friends didn’t know why, and I didn’t want to explain it to them, and at that moment--I was just going through the *Voice* auditions--I knew. I was like, ’If he has the balls to do it, then so do I.’"

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