

ROCK STAR: SUPERNOVA (PUBLISHED COURIER-MAIL, 2006)

Tuesdays (workshop episode)
Wednesdays (performance ep)
Thursdays (elimination ep)

FOX8, 8.30pm

After the surprise success (for many of us) of the first series of Rock Star, producer Mark Burnett set about trying to find another band who needed a new lead singer. Trouble was, there weren't too many around who'd had a tragic departure of a front person a la INXS. Instead, a new heavy rock group was created with the unfortunate name of Supernova (a bit Spinal Tap, don't ya think?), comprising drummer Tommy Lee from Motley Crue, Metallica's Jason Newsted, and Gilby Clarke from Guns N' Roses (and even more formerly, Heart).

We already know Tommy Lee as a reality TV whore from his own series, Tommy Lee Goes To College - it proved he'd do anything to get back into the spotlight. As for Newsted's and Clarke's motivations - well, the original Rock Star gave the reincarnated INXS a pretty good kickstart to their comeback. If the singer eventually chosen hits the right note (excuse the pun) with the voting public, Supernova could find themselves a very rich little group indeed.

As with the first series, Rock Star: Supernova features eye candy Brooke Burke as the host and former Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro (now in The Panic Channel) as co-host and critic/mentor for the contestants. Episodes air in Australia in time for us to vote for our favourites.

A worldwide search was launched for the lead singer, so naturally with such a wide spread, there's bound to be some pretty awesome talent unearthed. Powerhouse female singers such as Storm Large (don't you just love that name?) and Patrice Pike can belt out the songs with the best of them, while guys like Ryan Star and Lukas Rossi have rocked it hard and impressed the judges and future fellow band members. As for the only Aussie in there - Melbourne muso Toby Rand - it's hard to imagine him up on the stage in the company of Lee, Newsted and Clarke. Already the lead singer for Juke Kartel, who've opened for Nickelback, it's not like Rand doesn't have a job to come home to when he's (probably) eliminated.

Rock Star is a format which definitely has its pros, with its nod to American Idol but with the added element that the judges are also going to play in a group with the eventual winner, thus promoting a more understanding and nurturing atmosphere than the Idol shows. You don't want to totally destroy the person out there exposing their soul if you think you might want them fronting your band one day. In this sense, Rock Star has some moral superiority over the nasty Idol and its ilk.

This current series is markedly different from the Rock Star: INXS outing for the obvious reason that the band hadn't existed and been hugely successful before tragically losing their singer. It means there isn't the same emotional investment for the audience in a sense. Many loyal Michael Hutchence fans were simply outraged when the first series was announced, thinking that such a tacky plug for publicity would've been the last thing the ever-so-cool singer would've endorsed. I agreed, but in spite of misgivings I ended up totally addicted (and wish Marty had won).

There's no such high emotion for Supernova, with the contestants themselves proving to be the biggest reason for watching and becoming interested. I couldn't be less interested in Supernova's upcoming album and tour but I'm sure being entertained by the talent giving their all each week in their attempt to become part of rock history in a strangely un-rock 'n' roll fashion

Vicki Englund