



Fantasia Barrino, the American Idol from High Point, performs in the Dorton Arena at the State Fair.

STAFF PHOTO BY TRAVIS LONG

# SHE'S STILL AN IDOL

## *Recent controversy doesn't slow Fantasia*

BY DAVID MENCONI  
STAFF WRITER

**RALEIGH** — A common way to measure music is beats per minute. At "American Idol" star Fantasia's State Fair show Thursday night, the key unit of measurement would have been North Carolina references per minute.

Regional pride was the star of the High Point native's show.

"North Carolina, it's so good to be home!" she hollered after walking onstage at Dorton Arena, setting the tone for the evening. And this followed introductory spiels by a local disc jockey and state Agriculture Commissioner Steve

Troxler, plus the national anthem sung by a student from Meredith College. Only at the State Fair.

Fantasia is actually in the midst of a tumultuous stretch after the recent publication of her autobiography, "Life Is Not a Fairy Tale." The book revealed that she is functionally illiterate, and it caused a furor in High Point over the way her hometown was described (see [www.fantasiaslies.com](http://www.fantasiaslies.com)).

But the controversy isn't slowing Fantasia down much. While she didn't sell out Dorton, her concert did draw a solid crowd in excess of

## TODAY

- Miniature Horse Show, Hunt Horse Complex at 1 p.m.
- Nigerian Goat Costume & Obstacle contests, Sheep Barn at 6 p.m.
- Demolition Derby (\$7), first round, Grandstand at 7 p.m.
- Third Day (sold out), Dorton Arena at 7:30
- Fireworks at the lake, 9:45 p.m.
- Full schedule at [www.ncstatefair.org/2005/oct21.htm](http://www.ncstatefair.org/2005/oct21.htm)



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From left, Sherri Shears, Natalie Watson, Darlene Terrell and Currie Terrell cheer as Fantasia Barrino takes the stage in Dorton Arena at the State Fair.

STAFF PHOTO BY TRAVIS LONG

## IDOL

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5,000. The people who may have come from farthest away were Jon Sawyers, 29, and Chris Harless, 30, who drove all the way from Peterstown, W. Va.

"This is my first concert ever," Sawyers said before the show. "I got into her from her record. I actually didn't even watch the season of 'American Idol' she won. But I just like her voice, especially 'I Believe.' That's why I started listening to her, that song. I've been excited about this for weeks!"

A few rows away, sisters Nashea and Melody Merritt were wearing homemade Fantasia T-shirts with song titles on the

front, and fan sentiments on the back ("#1 Fan of Tasia," "Best Idol Yet, Fantasia Rocks").

"She's down to earth, funny, from the South — like me," said Nashea, a nursing major at East Carolina University. "Plus she's about my age, and she can really, really sing."

Unfortunately, Dorton's notoriously poor acoustics were a less-than-ideal showcase for Fantasia's raspy howl of voice. But she still put on a commanding performance, probably walking at least a mile in her silver boots as she strode purposefully back and forth across the stage.

Fantasia's hourlong performance didn't include some of her best-known songs, most notably her "American Idol" signature,

"Summertime." There were plenty of other covers, including the Rufus/Chaka Khan classic "Tell Me Something Good," and a house-shaking gospel-soul rendition of Prince's "Purple Rain."

"Y'all gotta excuse me," she said afterward, "cause I'm from the church, and from time to time — I said, from time to time — I'm gonna take it back there!"

The show closed with an unusual cover choice, Aerosmith's "Dream On." Fantasia waved goodbye and left the stage as her backup singers vamped, "North Carolina, you got to dream on."

Staff writer David Menconi can be reached at 829-4759, <http://blogs.newsobserver.com/beat> or [dmenconi@newsobserver.com](mailto:dmenconi@newsobserver.com).