



Since being named the winner of American Idol, Fantasia Barrino has had a lot to sing about.

AP FILE PHOTO BY KEVORK DJANSEZIAN

# Tripping the life Fantasia

*Life has revved up for 'American Idol' winner from High Point*

BY VICKI HYMAN  
STAFF WRITER

In the month since Fantasia Barrino won a little singing contest before, oh, 30 million television viewers, the High Point native walked the red carpet with the likes of Beyonce and Sarah Jessica Parker. Music mogul Sean "P. Diddy" Combs told her he wants to work with her. She has even had to dispel tabloid rumors about family strife.

But Barrino insists she's just a normal girl who still loves to shop at Target and is thrilled she's now able to buy her daughter a Barbie Jeep (as well as, for her mother, a \$500,000 home in Charlotte).

"I don't really see myself as this big-time celebrity," the 20-year-old singer says in a phone interview from Burbank, Calif.,

SEE FANTASIA, PAGE 3C

# FANTASIA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

where she is rehearsing for this summer's "American Idol" tour. "I just see myself as being able to do my music now and share it with the world, and just get a lot of love from a lot of people."

At least 142,000, at last count. On June 22, Barrino released her first single, the gospel-hued power ballad "I Believe," along with covers of "Summertime" and "Chain of Fools," all of which helped propel her to the "Idol" title in May. The single, released by J Records, debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, displacing Usher's "Burn."

The "Idol" juggernaut guaranteed an impressive debut, but the single isn't moving as quickly as those of previous "Idol" stars, including Raleigh's Clay Aiken, who placed second in the competition last year but sold 393,000 copies of his first single the first week.

Barrino's single might get some mileage from her performance of "I Believe" and "God Bless America" at Macy's Fourth of July Fireworks Spectacular, which aired Sunday on NBC.

The 48-stop "American Idol" tour kicks off in Salt Lake City July 14. The tour, which features the 10 finalists (Leah LaBelle and Matt Rogers, we hardly knew ye), heads to Winston-Salem on Aug. 21. Barrino says concertgoers can expect greatest hits from the competition with lots of group sings. She will resurrect "Summertime" and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours" and is rehearsing her take on the Prince classic "Purple Rain."

Between tour stops, she plans to record her debut album, which should be released in the fall.

"I've got to do a little gospel, because that's where I came from, a little R&B," she says. "I want to do encouraging music, and I want to work with a lot of people," including Combs, Missy Elliott, Macy Gray and Avril Lavigne.

During the tour, her mother will take care of her young daughter, Zion, in the Charlotte house, which she says is a homey, comfy place — not a mansion. A year ago, the single mother was living with her daughter in an apartment, scraping by on occasional singing gigs and working in her grandmother's day-care center in High Point. She couldn't afford to buy Zion that Barbie Jeep for Christmas.

"We went to my grandmother's house, and all the other kids had their Barbie Jeeps and Zion was standing there looking," she remembers. "I went and cried to my mom. I just prayed that next year for Christmas, God blesses me to where I can get her a Barbie Jeep. Now I can get her a Barbie Jeep."

Contrary to reports that Barrino dropped her last name, a la Madonna, she says she "didn't necessarily drop it." There's no plan to legally change it at this point, she says.

She also rebutted reports in the tabloid *Globe* that her father says he has been cut out of her life after pioneering her singing career.

"We're all tight," she says. "That's all I'm going to say."

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