

Pass It On®...

A Voice for Our Time.

The improbable dream journey of singer-songwriter Kodi Lee.

In a time when it seems like conventionally beautiful people rule the world and so much of who we are depends on fitting in, Kodi Lee breaks all the barriers. With seemingly “perfect” performers gracing our screens and large stages, it often feels like there is no room for the rest of us. Kodi Lee is a reminder that all are important and everybody has a voice worth listening to. But it wasn’t always so.

Kodi Lee was born in 1996 with optic nerve hypoplasia, a condition that left him legally blind. He survived a lifesaving surgery at five days old and, in his early years, was diagnosed with autism.

To see him enter the stage brings two emotions to the surface: You may feel like you want to protect him from failure, and you want to cheer him on. Even Simon Cowell rose from his seat the first time he met Lee on “America’s Got Talent.” The famous judge and producer was worried for the young man who wobbled a bit when he walked and couldn’t make eye contact. But with the aid of his mother, Kodi Lee made his way to the piano bench.

The audience grew silent, their faces filled with hope and fear. Fingers resting on keys, lips testing the distance to the microphone, Lee transforms into a performer who delivers raw, emotional lyrics drawn out of some inner power. His voice settles into the tones of a seasoned traveler who has seen and understands the world. His pitch is perfect, and his range is remarkable. When he sings the lyrics to Calum Scott’s “Biblical,” it feels like the whole world is laid bare and the love he sings about is the only thing we really need.

Lee is the child of Tina and Eric Lee. Because his ability to communicate is limited in some ways, he looked deeply for avenues of expression and connected with music. It is like a door that, once opened, floods his senses and focuses his talent. He is only one of approximately 25 people in the world considered a musical savant. He has an audio-photographic memory and holds a library of songs in his mind, everything from jazz to R&B, pop and classical.

When he first performed on “America’s Got Talent,” the audience was mesmerized and thrilled. The standing ovation carried on to his next performance. Lee was overjoyed. The happiest place in his life is at the piano in front of an audience, not because it shines the light on him but because it makes people so happy.

As we look at our own images on our screens, save a few spaces for messages that reach out and make others happy. No matter who we are, something profound inside us connects to people and brings them a little joy, a little encouragement and a big smile.

Sing Out... PassItOn.com

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