

# The big day approaches for 'American Idol'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — On Wednesday, Justin Guarini or Kelly Clarkson will be anointed an "American Idol" by television viewers. The winner's first single will be out in less than two weeks, the first album two months after that.

That's the certainty awaiting the finalists in Fox's hit talent competition, which started out with 10,000 aspiring pop stars hoping for a TV magic-carpet ride to fame.

After that? Get out the crystal ball. The top contestants have a shot at lasting careers if hard work, artistic growth and a sometimes-fickle public fall into line, say music industry insiders.

For now, even the show's co-executive producer admits the idol title is in name only for Guarini, 23, of Doylestown, Pa., or Clarkson, 20, of Burleson, Texas.

"This program or programs like it are great platforms for a career, but they don't guarantee any career," said Nigel Lythgoe. "Their music, at the end of the day, and where they take their music and the quality of their songs is going to do that."

Billboard's Geoff Mayfield agreed. "You really can't bet on how someone's going to fare until a record is made and it hits the stores," said Mayfield, director of charts for Billboard. Since artist development is a gamble anyway, the contestants' chances are as good as any, he said.

Independent producer 7 Aurelius, who has worked with stars including Mary J. Blige, Janet Jackson and Jennifer Lopez, expressed confidence that the show's best will find success.

"It already worked overseas," Aurelius said, referring to the hit

records produced by the three top finishers in Britain's "Pop Idol," the model for "American Idol."

He pronounced himself ready to work with Nikki McKibbin, 23, of Grand Prairie, Texas, who just missed out on the finals. ("I want to sign her. Print that," said Aurelius.)

There's precedent for enduring talent-show fame. Ed McMahon's "Star Search" (1983-95) gave us Rosie O'Donnell and Britney Spears. Winners of "The Original Amateur Hour," which aired from 1948-1960 with host Ted Mack, included 7-year-old Gladys Knight and college student Pat Boone. In 1937, radio's "Major Bowes' Amateur Hour" boasted the biggest idol of them all: Frank Sinatra.

"American Idol" contestants seem to have a ready-made market. The series attracted a healthy summer audience of 11.5 million when it debuted June 11; viewership swelled to nearly 17 million last week as the contestants were pared to the final two.

Fox crowns it has the highest-rated summer series among the young adult viewers favored by advertisers.

The number of callers voting for their favorite has swelled to more than 14 million weekly. That includes, however, "power dialers" making thousands of calls in a bid to change the voting outcome — which the producers maintain has had a statistically insignificant impact.

"We get to pick the winner," 15-year-old fan Ashley Knobloch said, explaining the show's appeal as she and several friends waited to take their seats at a taping last week in Hollywood's Kodak Theatre. Will they buy their records? Yes, they nod in

enthusiastic unison.

The two-part finale airs Tuesday (9-10 p.m. EDT) and Wednesday (8-10 p.m. EDT). Guarini and Clarkson will perform the first night and votes will be cast; the results will be announced the second night.

There's no cutthroat gamesmanship, at least none apparent, between the finalists. "This show, I'm going to be completely relaxed," Clarkson said in an interview. "Whoever wins, wins."

Predicted Guarini: "It's gonna be a lot of fun."

Both have come a long way in a short time. Clarkson had just moved to Los Angeles and was shopping a demo record when she answered the audition call during a brief trip back home. Guarini had been singing and dancing for a children's entertainment outfit.

"You could argue that the people who are competing now would be doing nothing more than singing in local lounges if it hadn't been for this show," suggested Billboard's Mayfield.

"It's a blessing," Guarini said of "American Idol." Clarkson concurs. "I love that I came up this way. First of all, I have nine close friends (her fellow finalists), and it's hard to find people you can trust and lean on in this industry."

Dan Miller understands their enthusiasm. Miller, just shy of 22, found himself vaulted into pop fame as a member of O-Town, the boy band that was the focus of ABC's reality series "Making the Band."

O-Town's December 2000 single, "Liquid Dreams," became the first debut record from a new artist and new label — J Records — to enter the charts at No. 1. Their first album went double-platinum; the second, "O2," is set for



Burleson, Texas native Kelly Clarkson (right) will go head to head with Justin Guarini (middle) from

Doylestown, Penn. Wednesday night. Nikki McKibbin (left), from Grand Prairie, Texas, was voted off last week.

release Nov. 5.

"I wouldn't be where I am now" without TV exposure, Miller said. "I'm doing what I love to do, and at the end of the day that's the good thing. However, there are advantages and disadvantages."

There was so much pressure to rush

their first album out, capitalizing on their series fame, that some of the songs were disappointing to band members.

O-Town is taking its time with the new album, which includes songs written by band members, to avoid that trap. The group also is eager to prove it's more than the sum of its TV audience.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### LA's cathedral opens amid troubled times for the church

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The newest U.S. cathedral opened Monday amid prayers and controversy as protesters condemned the \$195 million cost and Roman Catholics continued to struggle with a national sex abuse scandal.

Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral was dedicated during a three-hour service that incorporated the many ethnic backgrounds of the community's faithful, from Vietnamese singing to African drumming to children in traditional Mexican dress.

Cardinal Roger Mahony led a procession of some 3,000 people, including more than 560 priests, bishops and other clergy, through the sweltering 90-degree heat of the courtyard, past the 25-ton

bronze doors and into the cool stone interior.

"My friends, welcome to the city's and your new cathedral," a beaming Mahony said as guests settled into the new cherrywood pews. "It is truly exhilarating to see it filled with people ... this is what it is all about."

Pope John Paul II sent a message that was read during the ceremony, saying the cathedral represents the diversity of Los Angeles.

"May this cathedral always remain an eloquent symbol of communion and fraternity, of mutual respect and understanding," said the pope's messenger, Cardinal James Francis Stafford.

Spanish architect Jose Rafael Moneo, whose style is noted for combining classic architectural themes with modern designs, built the towering, 11-story cathedral with asymmetrical design and lack of right angles.

# STUDIES IN PROGRESS

### Do you have Canker Sores? Have you had Canker Sores in the past?

If you answered yes to both questions, you may qualify for a research study with an investigational drug for canker sores. We are currently looking for people who:

- are 12 years of age and older
- do not smoke or chew tobacco
- get canker sores that take up to 5 days to heal
- are in good health
- are not pregnant or breast feeding
- have a canker sore that developed within the last 36 hours

You must be able to return for daily visits for up to seven days. If you qualify, you will receive compensation for participating in this research study. Call for more information.

### • ASIANS • LATIN/HISPANICS • AFRICAN AMERICANS

Do you have dark brown patches or darkened skin spots on your face, arms and hands due to sun exposure?

If yes, and you are at least 30 years of age, you may qualify for a research study to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of an investigational treatment.

Qualified candidates will receive, at no cost

- Dermatological evaluations
- Topical study medications
- Compensation for time and travel

Call for more information.

### OSTEOARTHRITIS STUDY

Persons with osteoarthritis of the knee, hip, hand, or spine needed to participate in a 12-month research study with an investigational medication. Eligible volunteers will be compensated.

Call for more information.

### SEBORRHEIC DERMATITIS (RED, DRY, SCALY RASH)

Volunteers, ages 12 and older with seborrheic dermatitis of the face, scalp, and/or chest needed to participate in a four week research study with an investigational topical medication. Symptoms include redness, dryness and scaling. Eligible volunteers will be compensated.

Call for more information.

### ATOPIC DERMATITIS STUDY (ECZEMA)

Individuals 18 years of age and older with moderately severe atopic dermatitis (35% - 75% body surface) needed to participate in a 28 day research study with an investigational topical cream. Study will include multiple blood draws and overnight stays. Eligible volunteers will be compensated for their time and effort.

Call for more information.

### DO YOU HAVE PSORIASIS

Are you: Suffering from mild to moderate Psoriasis & 12 years of age or older?

Help may be just around the corner. A physician in your area is participating in a clinical trial investigating a new treatment for psoriasis. You could be eligible to participate.

Call for more information.

### BACTERIAL VAGINOSIS STUDY

Female volunteers, ages 18 and older needed to participate in a clinical research study for the treatment of bacterial vaginosis. Symptoms include an odorous off-white vaginal discharge. Volunteers will receive free laboratory tests and medication and will be compensated for their time.

Call for more information.

### OTITIS EXTERNA STUDY (SWIMMER'S EAR)

Volunteers, ages 6 months and older, needed to participate in a research study of an investigational ear drop treatment for swimmer's ear (external canal infection.) Symptoms include itching, tenderness to touch and pain. No blood work. Eligible volunteers will be compensated.

Call for more information.

### YEAST INFECTION STUDY

Females ages 18 and older are being recruited to participate in a research study to compare two research medications for the treatment of a yeast infection (vaginitis). If you are currently experiencing vaginal burning, itching, or irritation call for more information. Eligible volunteers will be compensated up to \$150.00.

Call for more information.

J&S Studies, Inc.

The Physician Centre • 979-774-5933

3201 University Dr. E., Suite 475 Bryan, Texas 77802