

SANJAYA'S 'IDOL' RIDE DOOMED BY 'KARAOKE'

Originally published in *The Blade* on Thursday, April 19, 2007

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So long, Sanjaya.

The wild ride that was Sanjaya Malakar, the smiling, soft-spoken cosmetologist's playground, finally was voted off *American Idol* last night.

Both reviled and beloved, the 17-year-old singer with the ever-changing hairdo became famous for garnering negative feedback from the show's judges while collecting enough votes from viewers to stick around. Until now.

True to the Bonnie Raitt song he went out singing, Malakar gave America "Something to Talk About."

After other singers deemed by many to be more talented vocalists were gone, he was still around. Malakar, of Federal Way, Wash., even drew the support of shock jock Howard Stern, though the radio personality only wanted to keep him in the competition to corrupt the voting process and "ruin *American Idol*."

On the country music-themed show that was his undoing, Malakar was critiqued by the judges on everything but the red bandanna he wore to hold back his curly locks.

"That was really just like karaoke," judge Randy Jackson said.

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Judge Simon Cowell, who had said he would leave the show if America named Malakar its next Idol, spoke in even stronger terms, calling his performance "utterly horrendous."

"I know this has been funny for a while, but based on the fact that we are supposed to be finding an American Idol, it was hideous," he said.

Rounding out the bottom three were LaKisha Jones, 27, a Flint, Mich., native, and Blake Lewis, 25, of Bothell, Wash.

Jones sang "Jesus, Take the Wheel" by Carrie Underwood. Jackson said she had pitch problems.

Only six contestants remain in the battle to become the next American Idol. The winner will be crowned next month.

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Sanjaya Malakar finally got voted off 'American Idol.' (ASSOCIATED PRESS)