



Jim Verraros: America is Ready for a Gay American Idol Winner

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

Chicago, IL - Is America ready for a gay "American Idol" this year? Former "American Idol" contestant and ChicagoPride.com "Idol" columnist, Jim Verraros thinks so. No openly gay contestant has won during the past six seasons of Fox's popular singing contest.

"It feels like we're closer now than ever to having an openly gay contestant on the show," Verraros recently told the Associated Press.

Verraros, a contestant from "American Idol" Season 1, publicly announced that he was gay after the competition was over for him.

"I'm not here to name any names, but I feel like there are some definite possibilities for this to happen this year," Verraros said to the news service. "Do I think it'll happen? I don't know. I hope it does."

On Thursday, the current 16 semifinalists were narrowed down to 12 finalists, after Asia'h Epperson, Kady Malloy, Luke Menard and Danny Noriega were ousted from Idol's seventh season.

Noriega, an 18-year-old from Azusa, CA -- the last semifinalist ousted from the competition -- was on track to becoming the first gay "Idol."

"This is my dream since I was 12-years-old," said Noriega during a video package of his Idol experience. "Be yourself -- don't be something that you're not -- because life's too short. My dream is to be successful. I want people to look up to me and relate to me."

For the remaining 12, Simon seems to have a few favorites including the three Davids - 17-year-old David Archuleta, 24-year-old David Hernandez, and rocker David Cook, as well as Irish native Carly Smithson.

Last week rumors that Hernandez was a male stripper were confirmed when Dick's Cabaret manager Gordy Bryan told the Associated Press that Hernandez did indeed dance fully nude and perform lap dances for the club's "mostly male" clientele in Phoenix, AZ. Hernandez also worked at gay nightclub Burn.

Though message boards and blogs continue to speculate on Hernandez' sexuality, he has yet to publicly come out.

"Simon and Randy have not hesitated to mock effeminate contestants and crack the occasional gay joke," AfterElton.com editor Michael Jensen told the Associated Press. "It has not communicated to contestants that it would be a good place to come out."

First-season finalist Verraros was publicly outed when his online journal was discovered. "American Idol" producers made Verraros take down the journal.

Verraros, a Crystal Lake, Illinois native, came out after "Idol" and continues on a path to success as both an actor and singer.

Editor Update: [David Hernandez gets bumped from "American Idol."](#)