

## Not being a country singer took a toll on me: Malakar

Indian American teen Sanjaya Malakar feels he has been voted out of 'American Idol' as he is not a country singer and didn't have strong performances to 'let people forgive' him for his failing, but says the competition has taught him to see the positive side of everything.

After weeks of having to endure 'American Idol' judge Simon Cowell's acid tongue, Sanjaya Malakar was finally booted off the popular show Wednesday night.

His downfall came Tuesday during the Country and Western-themed night, he said, because 'honestly, I'm not a country singer. I think that really took a toll on me. And I didn't have enough really strong performances to let people forgive me for that,' he said, pouring his heart out to reporters for the very first time, reports [www.Hollywood.tv](http://www.Hollywood.tv).

'Like, for example, LaKisha, she's not necessarily a country singer either, but she had enough strong performances to get her though - and I don't think I did.'

The most he's learned from the show, especially when critics have been hammering at him, is that 'I think I've learned not to let any negativity get you - just to keeping on trucking, I guess,' he said. 'And try to find the positive in everything.'

He did admit, however, that he read the remarks of the online bloggers to keep track of how he was doing on the show. 'I read the blogs more to balance myself, because it was kind of impossible not to hear stuff, and often times it was negative,' he said. 'So I kind of balanced the negative and the positive just to keep myself grounded.'

Surprisingly, he bears no malice toward Simon Cowell.

'From the beginning I think that Simon saw potential in me, and when I didn't fulfil that potential, he was kind of disappointed,' he said. 'So I just want to say to him that he's an amazing person, and what he does is awesome. He's very opinionated, but I learned more from him than anyone else while I was on the show.'

Nor was he fazed by the fact that his hairstyles got more attention than his singing, 'Because at a certain point, that had kind of become my thing,' Sanjaya admitted.

'Because I think that everyone looks for something to grab on to with each contestant, so I feel like my hair was that for me. My philosophy was just to stay true to myself and try to put my personality out there - and that's all.'

However, at no time did he ever consider dropping out of the show and make way for the obviously more talented contestants when the critics had turned the heat up high. 'I was going to stay as long as I possibly could and just work every week and try to learn from everything that happened,' he said.

He was a bit surprised, to say the least, when presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton was asked about him during a news conference. 'I heard about that very briefly,' Sanjaya acknowledged. 'And it's interesting because I had no idea how much impact the show has. I think it's interesting that

someone like me, a 17-year-old Seattle boy, could have so much impact to get into the presidential debate.'

Meanwhile, 'I'm definitely looking at a music career but I also want to venture into acting and modelling and possibly Broadway or something because I want to get into the full entertainment business,' Sanjaya revealed, adding, 'I'm definitely ready to hire a bodyguard. I'm actually looking to do that right now.'

*Sheeraz Hasan* ( © IANS / India eNews)