

THE COUNTRY HAS SPOKEN: Lambert, Allen take to the stage to try for 'Idol' status

It's been a long journey, but we're finally here. The last two episodes of the season.

Tonight, Adam Lambert and Kris Allen will take the stage and sing three songs to try and earn our votes.

And then Wednesday, we'll watch the confetti fall on our new "American Idol," Adam Lambert. Right?

Not so fast, people. Everyone has been underestimating Kris too long. I think it's time that stopped.

Dark horse, underdog, whatever word you want to use, Kris has been it from the beginning. You'll remember that he came out of group two, the same group as Adam and Norman Gentle (who you just know will be back for Wednesday's finale). It would have been easy to overlook him, especially since we had seen very little of him during the audition rounds.

But from that first performance, Kris showed what a shrewd contestant he would

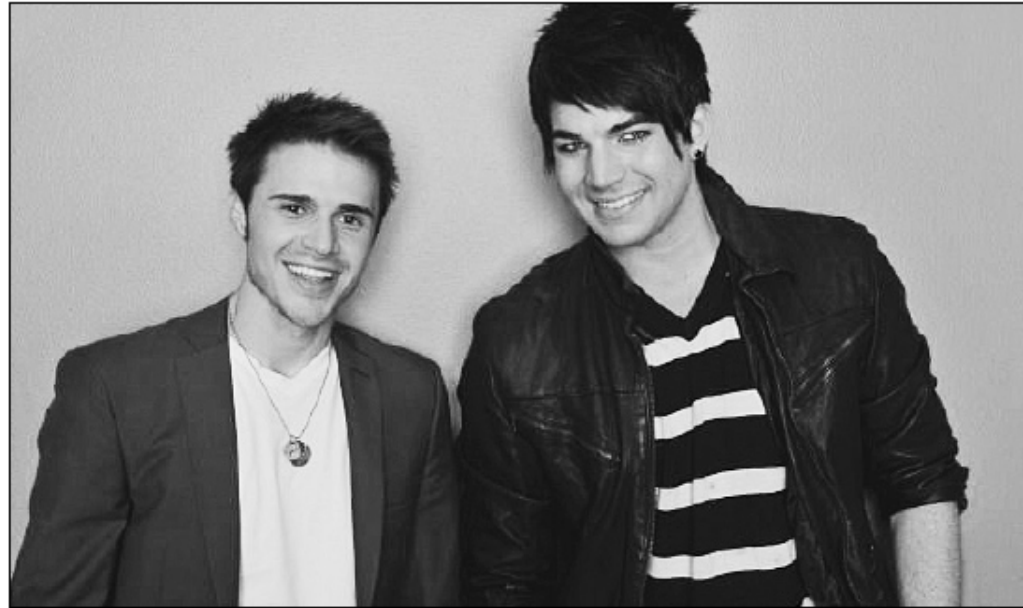


Angela
HENDERSON

turn out to be by making the perfect song choice with "Man In the Mirror."

And while Adam and Danny Gokey were grabbing all the headlines, Kris was earning more and more fans with his renditions of songs like "She Works Hard for the Money" and "Ain't No Sunshine." Plus, it didn't hurt him any that he's pretty easy on the eyes.

The judges were so busy pushing their beloved Adam vs. Danny finale that they totally missed just how popular Kris was getting. But it was impossible to miss last week during the homecoming videos when Kris' crowd completely dwarfed that of Danny's and maybe even Adam's.



Courtesy of Michael Becker/FOX

Kris Allen, left, and Adam Lambert advanced to the finals and will compete for the title of American Idol 2009 on "American Idol's" two-day season finale airing today, May 19, and Wednesday, May 20, on FOX.

That was my first indication that maybe Kris could make it to the top two. And that's also

a reason why I think he's got a shot at this thing.

If Kris can command the

stage tonight like he did with

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'Idol'

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"Heartless" Tuesday, I think he can win. And since Kris won the coin toss and chose to go second, he has deprived Adam of one of his patented dramatic show closers. Plus, unfortunately, there are the nagging questions about Adam's personal life that could have an effect, not to mention there could be a backlash over all the attention he's been getting. The "Entertainment Weekly" cover and Katy Perry's jacket embroidered with Adam's name hasn't helped him any.

And then there's the wild card in the whole equation - the Danny fans. Who will they support? If they're too ticked off that their guy got voted out, they won't vote at all. But those who decide to will most certainly back Kris over Adam. Ryan Seacrest told us last week that there were only a little over one million votes separating Adam and Kris. Those Danny fans could really make the difference.

But let me remind you that we don't know who the top vote-getter was last week. It could have very well been Kris.

If you had asked me last week who I was rooting for, I would've told you that for

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the first time in "Idol" history, it didn't matter to me who won. But the more I've thought about it, the more I realize that Kris needs to win. Adam will be fine win or lose. But if Kris finishes second, he'll become another Bo Bice or Blake Lewis. He'll release one album that the record company won't support, and then he'll get dropped like a hot potato. The only way he'll get the support he needs to be a success in the industry is to win "American Idol."

And since I think he deserves to have a successful career, I'm rooting for Kris. But part of me really wants Adam to win just to see what the "Idol" machine will do with him.

I'll be back next week to officially wrap up the season. In the meantime, feel free to share your thoughts on my blog or by dropping me a line at idolchitchat@hotmail.com.

Angela Henderson is a die-hard "American Idol" fan who chronicles the show, contestants, judges and much more in her "Idol Chit-Chat" blog on www.herald-dispatch.com.