

'American Idol' Contestant Emily Piriz Says, "I Couldn't Ask for a Better Boyfriend"



By Liz Kim.

Emily Piriz may be done on the *American Idol* stage, but she believes this is only the beginning of her music career. The 18-year-old is no stranger to reality television, having auditioned for *The X-Factor*, *America's Got Talent*, and *The Voice* before finally making it through on *Idol*. She made the brave decision to sing Jennifer Lopez's "Let's Get Loud" this week, a song that she used "to sing along to, hairbrush in hand." Of her final performance, she says, "I don't regret doing it. That song is home to me."

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While Lopez and Keith Urban applauded her energy, Harry Connick Jr. felt her vocals were overpowered by the band and that she lost a little bit of control. Although harsh, she appreciates the criticism. "I like when people tell me what I need to work on. You don't improve if you only get positive feedback." The judges also told her to be confident and this piece of advice, the singer believes, is what will stay with her long after the show ends.

Piriz and her fans were moved by a surprise video message from her boyfriend Matthew Walesch of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines Fox Company. She admits she was a little shaken. "I had no idea they were going to show that video," she shares. "It was kind of hard to sing afterwards. It was hard to see him because I missed him and hadn't seen him in a long time. But I sucked it up and tried to use that emotion in my performance."

When asked about her relationship, the contestant thanked Walesch for always standing by her side. "Before *American Idol*, he would go to shows and open mics with me. And likewise, I supported him joining the Marines. He's been with me since day one, and I couldn't ask for a better boyfriend."

Their relationship may be long-distance, but she believes that love is possible even if you aren't physically near each other. Her advice for other couples in similar situations is "just trust each other and keep it free. Don't suffocate each other." She adds, "Matt and I have a great relationship because we love each other and trust each other and don't constantly keep up on the other person. We support each other. You just have to be happy with each other, no matter what you're doing."

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Moving forward, the performer plans on finishing high school

and then moving to California to continue her music career. She already has plans for her first album too: "I definitely see a pop/rock kind of vibe; I want some funky songs on there that have a little edge to them. I also want to be behind the piano and do some softer songs."

For others hoping to make it the music industry, Piriz thinks that dedication is the key to pursuing your dreams. She's been auditioning since the age of 13 and dealt with years of rejection. "Don't take no for an answer," she says. "I was told no a lot, but I never gave up, and look at me now! It's going to be hard at first, but you have to keep practicing and keep going and just believe in yourself."

Keep up with Piriz on www.facebook.com/emilypirizmusic. American Idol is on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8/7 c on FOX.