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ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
 May 22, 2003
America Picks RUU-ben!
 Ruben Studdard is named the new American Idol

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Do you feel the most talented person won *American Idol*?

- Yes, Ruben rocks!
- No, Clay deserved the Idol crown.

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Cheering fans roared "RUU-ben" as the soulful singer was named the new American Idol this week. In an extremely close contest, a record 24 million votes were cast for America's favorite singing sensation. In the end, Studdard, whose nickname is "velvet teddy bear," beat out his friend and rival, Clay Aiken, by just 130,000 votes!

Ruben Flies Without Wings!

"I feel great, man! Thank y'all!" said Studdard, 25, of Birmingham, Alabama. He then sang a song of gratitude, *Flying Without Wings*, as the crowd shouted "RUU-ben, RUU-ben!"

Runner-up Clay Aiken, 24, whose powerful pop vocals and spikey hair won over many fans, said he was very happy for Ruben. He called Ruben "one of the most talented people I know, one of the best friends I have. I'm so proud of him!"

Ruben was considered the show's early favorite. He charmed American Idol's three judges and stole the hearts of many fans with his soulful singing of popular songs like Stevie Wonder's *Signed, Sealed, Delivered*. But during Tuesday night's finals, Aiken sang Simon & Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and the often critical judge, Simon Cowell, said the performance might have won him the competition.



Clay and Ruben present Kelly Clarkson with a platinum record plaque for her album, *Thankful*.

New Idol Soon to Top the Charts?

As the runner-up, Clay will surely compete again with Ruben on the record charts. Ruben can look forward to a record that just may top the charts! America's first Idol, Kelly Clarkson, has already sold 1.3 million copies of her album, *Thankful*.

For Ruben and Clay, this was the end of a very long process. This season began with 70,000 auditions across the country. The field was cut to 12 finalists, who were eliminated one-by-one based on how many votes they received from viewers. Like the first season of *American Idol*, this season's show was a huge hit.

By Laura Weiss

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