



Perris News

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Perris Resident Jackie Gonzales Reaches Finals on "La Academia"

Perris resident Jackie Gonzales spent five months in a house with 24 other contestants vying for fame and glory on a Mexican entertainment/reality show where pleasing a panel of judges and Internet voters topped all else.

The 23-year-old made the final round of competition for the television show "La Academia," an "American Idol" type production that attracted 120,000 contestants from around the Spanish-speaking world.

Gonzales nudged out the vast majority of the competition in a series of auditions in Los Angeles, where her singing, dancing and performing skills were put to the test before the panel of judges. Then it was off to Mexico City for more auditions before a no-nonsense panel of judges before she made the final cut.

From there, she was ensconced in a mansion with the other finalists.

More than 200 cameras watched everyone's every move. Attempting to leave the house meant expulsion from the competition. Professional actors, singers and dancers worked with the competitors, who performed in concert before a live audience of 800 and a worldwide viewership on television, including the U.S. Voters cast ballots over the Internet, deciding who to keep on the program and who to boot off.

She was the only California resident to reach the finals and one of only two Americans. Her attention to detail earned Gonzales the nickname "the Perfectionist" from the other contestants.

During her time in Mexico, Gonzales became a celebrity of sorts in Perris, where City officials honored her with a plaque and feted her during a recent festival.

"I can't believe how much the City supported me," she said. "I'm so grateful for their support. They made me feel really special."

Gonzales stopped by Perris City Hall right before Christmas to say hello to City officials and staff, many who supported her during her run on "La Academia." She attracted a huge fan base in Perris and Southern California.

"We are so proud of you," City Manager Richard Belmudez told Gonzales. "You did a great job of representing the City."

Gonzales said she tried to learn as much as possible during her time in Mexico. She studied acting, learned to dress and put on makeup to please an audience and took voice and dance lessons. She performed hip-hop dancing as well as the can-can and tango. She sang well-established songs, including

"Besame mucho," "Si tu no estas aqui" and "Abrasame."

"I wanted to focus on being the best I could be," she said. "It was a great experience. I learned a lot." She is no newcomer to performing.

She started in television at 12, working on a children's program produced in Guadalajara. She also worked in radio and commercials. She's written more than 100 of her own songs, some in English, others in Spanish. They cover a variety of topics—love, relationships, the state of the world.

Gonzales is set to return to Mexico right after the New Year. Although she did not win the competition, there is talk of a possible recording deal in Mexico.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez (left) and Redevelopment Project Coordinator Veronica Arana (right) wish Jackie the best during a recent visit to City Hall.



Perris resident Jackie Gonzales has written more than 100 songs. Some are recorded on a CD she produced.

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