

# David Archuleta has been telling stories through his music for years. Now he's sharing his own.

The 'American Idol' alumnus talks about his music, his identity journey and being authentic to himself.

By PALAK JAYSWAL

When David Archuleta appeared on "American Idol" recently, he was in a very different place from where he was 16 years ago, when the country first heard the Utah teen's singing talent on the show.

But some of the old feelings came back.

"When I perform, I feel a confidence when I'm in my own shows, but when I go back to a TV setting, I suddenly feel like I'm under a magnifying glass," Archuleta said, a day after his performance.

As anyone who has kept up with Archuleta knows, the singing star

has gone through a quite public identity journey since he came out as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in June 2021. Part of that journey involved leaving The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in which he grew up.

On April 22, Archuleta returned to "American Idol" — the show where he was runner-up in 2008 — to perform his new song, "Hell Together." The song captures the reaction his mother, Lupe, had when he came out, and her eventual decision to leave the Latter-day Saint faith, too. While he sang photos of Archuleta and his mother cascaded across the stage's backdrop.

The music video for the song, released a few days after, was filmed



David Archuleta sings at the 2023 LoveLoud Festival at the Delta Center.

in an empty church, with Archuleta at a piano and dancer Olivia Cava performing while he sings.

At the end of the video, which is dedicated to Lupe and includes home movies of mother and son,

Archuleta leaves the church and steps into bright sunlight.

When he's performing on TV, Archuleta said, he gets in his own head, feeling anxiety over being scrutinized or not doing well. This time, he said he went back and watched his performance — something he usually doesn't do. Being on the stage also reminds him of overanalyzing and critiquing "every little moment," he said.

"The point is not about perfection right now, it's about being vulnerable... [At] the end of it, it's the story," he said. "I'm trying to connect with people through the story that I'm telling in the song. I'm really glad that I got to tell my story." Aside from the catchy dance jam, "Afraid to Love," that he released last August, "Hell Together" is the one of the few times

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