

'American Idol' to return tonight

By Allegra O'Neill
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

The judges may have changed, but Kristin Reed's love of "American Idol" remains as strong as ever.

Ellen DeGeneres will join the show as the fourth "American Idol" judge, when the ninth season of the popular singing competition officially kicks off 8 tonight on Fox. Fox delivered the news in September that Paula Abdul would be replaced with the talk show host.

Reed (junior-marketing) said "American Idol" is her favorite show, and she has been looking forward to DeGeneres' debut.

"I really think that she will do a great job. Ellen is so funny — she will definitely lighten up the show," she said. "She will absolutely bring comic relief to the show if nothing else."

Though DeGeneres will not appear in the audition episodes beginning tonight, she will officially join the other judges for the Hollywood round to help narrow down contestants. The "Hollywood round" airs Feb. 9.



For a look at Cowell's cultural legacy and future check out our Snap. Crackle. Pop blog: psucollegian.com/blogs

Tonight's episode will spotlight auditions held in Boston. Another episode airing Wednesday night will focus on Atlanta auditions.

Jaelyn Walsh (freshman-liberal arts) said DeGeneres may attract people to the show who do not usually follow it.

"I usually don't watch 'Idol,' but I love Ellen's show," Walsh said. "Now that she is on it, I may tune in just to see her. She's great."

DeGeneres spoke about her new position on her talk show after Fox made the September announcement.

"Hopefully, I'm the people's point of view because I'm just like you," DeGeneres said. "I'm not looking at it in a critical way from the producer's mind. I'm looking at it as a person who is going to buy the music and is going to relate to that person."

But Kelli Komorowski (junior-finance) said she does not under-



Chris Pizzello/Associated Press

Ellen DeGeneres, host of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," will join "American Idol" as a judge in February. However, she will not appear on the show until after the tryout rounds.

stand what DeGeneres has to offer the show.

"I don't see why they picked her — she is not a musical icon. How can she judge others on music?" Komorowski said. "I think they should have replaced Paula with either a better-known star or someone in the music industry."

Abdul told TV Guide that while she does not currently have a steady job to replace her eight-season job as a judge on "American Idol," she hopes to some day host a talk show.

From its debut in 2002, "Idol" has been a successful venture for Fox, reigning at times as America's No. 1 television show, according to Nielsen, a company

If you watch

What: "American Idol" season premiere

When: 8 tonight

Where: Fox

Details: First season without judge Paula Abdul

that tracks television ratings.

As the show continues, audience votes will weed out contestants until the final twelve are chosen March 11. A season finale date has not yet been determined.

To e-mail reporter: apo5015@psu.edu

Simon Cowell says he's leaving 'Idol'

Despite the offer for more money, Cowell will appear on his talent show "The X Factor."

By Lynn Elber

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PASADENA, Calif. — Simon Cowell, the acerbic Brit who has helped give "American Idol" some of its sharpest — and nastiest — moments, will leave the hit TV singing contest after this season.

The cantankerous judge said Monday "The X Factor," a talent show he created and which is popular in Britain, will join Fox's schedule next year. Cowell will be a judge on "The X Factor" and its executive producer.

Cowell's decision is the biggest threat yet to what has consistently been the country's top-rated TV

program and a true cultural force. This season, original host Paula Abdul has been replaced by Ellen DeGeneres.

But Cowell, with his caustic commentary, has long been seen as the big star of "Idol."

He said it would have been difficult for him to do both shows. While he makes a reported \$36 million a year to be on "American Idol," he owns "The X Factor" and could make much more if the show takes off.

Ironically, "The X Factor" led to a lawsuit several years ago between Cowell and "American Idol" creator Simon Fuller, who alleged Cowell copied the format for the British version of "The X Factor" from the original British

"Idol." The suit was settled amicably.

Cowell and top Fox executives made the announcement to reporters in Pasadena at a meeting of the Television Critics Association; they said they had reached an agreement only a few hours before.

"I was offered a lot of money to stay on," Cowell said. "But that wasn't the reason behind it. I wanted to do something different. I wanted a new challenge."

But an even greater challenge is posed for Idol producers. Without the show's biggest attraction and most critical judge, will "American Idol" lose steam and plunge even more in ratings? At least one analyst, Shari Anne Brill of Carat USA, said the "Idol" audience probably will decline next season.

"I think it's that brand of sarcasm combined with professional

know-how that makes Simon the audience magnet that he is," she said. "I really believe the show revolves around him. He's the linchpin of the show's success. He has tremendous influence on how the audience votes. He's interesting to listen to. He's brutally honest."

That said, even without Simon, she predicts the show "will still be a formidable player on Fox's schedule." Kevin Reilly, Fox entertainment president, said Cowell's departure from "Idol" isn't necessarily a win for the network's competitors.

"I think it would be premature to be popping corks. Maybe they can say this gives us a little bit of wiggle room, but that's a big maybe. On the other hand, we're not losing Simon Cowell, we're potentially gaining another big headache for them in the fall," Reilly said.



Cowell

Nominees selected for best screenplay

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The sci-fi tales "Avatar" and "Star Trek," the comedy "The Hangover" and the recession-era story "Up in the Air" were among nominees announced Monday for best screenplay from the Writers Guild of America.

Writer-director James Cameron's "Avatar" and "The Hangover," written by Jon Lucas and Scott Moore, were nominated for original screenplay.

They are up against Mark Boal for the Iraq War saga "The Hurt Locker." Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber for the romance "(500) Days of Summer" and Joel and Ethan Coen for their 1960s comic dram called a "A Serious Man."

"Star Trek" collaborators Robert Orci and Alex Kurtzman are competing for adapted screenplay against "Up in the Air" writer-director Jason Reitman and co-writer Sheldon Turner.

Also nominated are Scott Cooper for the country music tale "Crazy Heart," Nora Ephron for her Julia Child story "Julie & Julia," and Geoffrey Fletcher for the Harlem drama "Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push' By Sapphire."

The guild honors potentially give a boost for the films' prospects at the Academy Awards, where screenplay nominations are chosen by the writers branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Oscar nominations come out Feb. 2.

Among documentary nominees were Michael Moore for his recession study "Capitalism: A Love Story," and Chris Rock and co-writers Jeff Stilson, Lance Crouther and Chuck Sklar for "Good Hair," a look at black-hair culture.

The guild presents its awards Feb. 20 in simultaneous ceremonies in Los Angeles and New York City.

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