

## TV Review: Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul Need to Prove ‘The X Factor’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 21, 2011 - 2:57pm

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CHICAGO – Singing competitions are becoming as pervasive as sports on TV. But as the “leagues” multiply, will the audience show up to yet another franchise? The granddaddy of all prime time singing judges, Simon Cowell, hopes he has “The X Factor” to create another hit, which premieres September 21st on FOX.



Using the tried and true format that made him a phenomenon, Simon Cowell again puts a panel of judges in front of potential singing stars to find what he calls “The X Factor” that separates mega-stars from mere singers. Signing up his old “American Idol” sidekick Paula Abdul, plus a guy who looks like Randy Jackson, (L.A. Reid) Cowell hopes to strike ratings gold again.

The X Factor is a traveling show, and there are a three differences from the Idol format. There is one extra judge, Nicole Scherzinger (of The Pussycat Dolls), the competition is open to anyone over 12 years old and the audition is also the performance. So besides the panel of judges, the singer is flaunting their stuff in front of thousands of audience members. This brings a bit more spontaneity to the proceedings and some potential for some truly awful stuff. But as the real singers are weeded out, the format will serve them and also determine the magic that will make them a star.



FOX offered a 13 minute summary for review, so there is not much beyond that description to determine what will make this show different

from Idol or last summer's hit, "The Voice." Variation is key to maintaining interest, and the summary didn't offer much variation besides the presence of an audience, which Idol eventually gets to anyway. It's impossible to know if the show will have the "IT" quotient beyond the X factor.

Is having Abdul come back to sit beside Cowell again really a good idea, or will it feel like 2002 is calling? I picture Abdul pushing back on Cowell much more in this new show, so perhaps some new discomfort will be realized. It is strange also that they found a similar-looking-to-Randy-Jackson man to fill one of the seats, and with the same type of industry credentials – L.A. Reid is the former Chairman of Island Def Jam Music Group. Nicole Scherzinger was asked to join The Pussycat Dolls after appearing on another singing competition show, "Popstars," so she will add the empathy for the performers.

The preview showed the usual backstage background and antics, which seemingly will be hosted by Steve Jones. With the contestants that were highlighted, there seemed to be more of a American Dream essence to it, as they are trying to upgrade their circumstances to be Star for a Day and beyond. That's always an important feeling for audiences to get behind, and it feels like The X Factor will delve deeper in that direction.



The Real X Factor: Simon Cowell Greet Fans While Promoting the Show  
Photo credit: FOX

Also it looks like the show will give their star judges more face time, as at one point in the preview a frustrated Simon Cowell lights into his production staff – his company owns the show – and tells them point blank that they are wasting his time with the product on stage. Since this is first time for everybody to see these auditions, the results are going to have less polish and maybe more stretches of simply bad acts.

Giving a "rating" to a show that doesn't offer a full episode for review is a fool's errand. But I'm giving The X Factor the benefit of the recommendation because of Cowell's track record and intrigue. The question will end up being, is this the show that will finally crack under the pressure of what it has to deliver?

*"The X Factor" premieres on Wednesday, September 21st at 8pm ET/7pm CT on FOX. Check local listings for channel location. Featuring Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul, L.A. Reid and Nicole Scherzinger and Steve Jones. Created by Simon Cowell.*



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