

Simon to help judge 'Idol's' world contest

Simon Cowell will soon get a chance to eviscerate singers from five continents.

Cowell, the brutally forthright record producer and judge on "American Idol," has been named one of the judges for the world competition, which will air on Christmas and New Year's Day on Fox. Winners from 11 "Idol" shows around the world, including American Kelly Clarkson, will compete for the "World Idol" crown.

One judge from each version of the show will also be part of "World Idol." Cowell, who first came to prominence on the U.K.'s "Pop Idol" (where the format began), will represent "American Idol" at the judge's table.

"Pop Idol" hosts Anthony McCartlin and Declan Donnelly, known across the pond as Ant and Dec, will perform the same duties for the worldwide competition. The duo has recorded several albums and recently won the award for best entertainment personality at Britain's National Television Awards.

The "World Idol" contest will follow a similar format to each local version. On the first night, the 11 singers — from the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Norway, Lebanon, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands — will perform and be critiqued by the judges. Fans will then have the chance to vote for their favorites, with the winner announced during the New Year's Day broadcast. (*Zap2it.com*)

'Queer Eye's' influence

A new survey of shoppers sug-

TV NOTES

gests that there may be a Fab Five Effect in the nation's spending habits.

The survey of more than 2,600 shoppers at malls in seven major cities found that men were five times more likely than women to go shopping on Wednesdays following a new episode of Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy." (The show airs Tuesday nights.) Nearly half of the men surveyed said they shop with another guy on post-"Queer Eye" Wednesdays, as opposed to just 12 percent who do so on other days.

What's more, shoppers said "Queer Eye" fashion maven Carson Kressley was more likely than any other celebrity endorser to have a positive influence on their shopping decisions.

Jericho Communications, a New York-based public relations firm, conducted the survey of 2,654 shoppers at malls in Boston, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington and suburban Philadelphia. Shoppers were asked which of 32 potential celebrity endorsers — ranging from Kressley to Michael Jordan to Bill Clinton — whose products they would be most and least likely to buy. Respondents could also write in their own favorites.

Kressley led the "most likely" category with 15 percent of the votes. Movie star-turned-California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was next with 13 percent. L.A. Laker Kobe Bryant, who's facing a sexual-

assault charge in Colorado, was a surprising third, followed by Ashton Kutcher and, in a tie for fifth, Ben Affleck and Paris Hilton.

"Bachelorette" bride-to-be Trista Rehn was the least likely to have a positive effect on a product, getting

13 percent of the votes in that part of the survey. That can't come as good news for the long list of sponsors featured on ABC's "Trista and Ryan's Wedding." (*Zap2it.com*)

Apted building 'Rome'

Michael Apted, who has directed James Bond and Jennifer Lopez movies in recent years, is set to tackle Julius Caesar next.

Apted ("The World Is Not Enough," "Coal Miner's Daughter") has signed on to direct the first three episodes of "Rome," an HBO series set in the time of Caesar and the rise of the Roman Empire. The series, a co-production of HBO and the BBC, is scheduled for a 2005 premiere.

The series, which is set to begin filming in March, will chronicle the lives of two Roman soldiers and their families. HBO calls it "an intimate drama" set against the epic backdrop of the Rome circa 51 BC. Casting hasn't begun yet (*Zap2it.com*)

Comedy Central drops 'Busey'

A wise man once said: "What's failing? F-A-I-L-I-N-G. Finding An Important Lesson Inviting Needed Growth. That's what failing is; it's a good thing. In fact, you don't fail, you find a better way to do it."

That wise man, Gary Busey, dropped out of reality a long time ago, but now Busey (an Oscar nominee for 1978's "The Buddy Holly Story") is being dropped out of reality television as well. Comedy Central has opted not to pick up a second season of the quirky, but underwatched series "I'm With Busey."

The half-hour series, which premiered in June, featured the enigmatic character actor simply going through life as mentor to "The Man

Show" scribe Adam De La Pena. Busey gave his young protege the wisdom of his years in the entertainment industry. (*Zap2it.com*)

Marriott hosts game show

Sorry, David Smith. There's only one real "Joe Millionaire" and he's branching into the lucrative world of game show hosting. Evan Marriott has signed on to host "Fake-A-Date," a new relationship show for the Game Show Network.

Set to premiere in March 2004, "Fake-A-Date" finds a lucky contestant going on dates with two sexy singles. At the end of their dates, contestants have to make a choice. The twist is that one of the singles is actually on the market looking for love, while the other is a faker, trying to win a luxury vacation with his or her real significant other.

If the contestant picks the true single, he or she will win a grand prize. If contestant chooses the great pretender, it's a lonely journey home, empty-handed. (*Zap2it.com*)

Channel surfing

Fox has canceled "Wanda at Large"... Syndicated talk show "Ellen" has been renewed for a second season ... USA Today reports the manipulative "24" character Sherry Palmer, played by actress Penny Johnson Jerald, will return to the series beginning Jan. 13. (*Rob Owen, Post-Gazette TV Editor*)