

FOURTH JUDGE READY TO FACE 'IDOL' MUSIC

by: Christina Kinon

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Kara DioGuardi becomes a decider today at New York's "Idol" tapings.

Fourth judge ready to face 'Idol' music

By CRISTINA KINON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

"AMERICAN IDOL'S" newest addition to the judges' panel, singer-songwriter Kara DioGuardi, might be angling to be a nicer Simon — or a meaner Paula.

"I'm just somebody who's really honest and gives my opinion. If I feel I need to be hard with someone in order to get that across, I will," DioGuardi told reporters yesterday. "And if I feel I need to be softer and more nurturing with the contestants, I'll do that. It all depends on the situation."

DioGuardi will join "Idol's" judges Simon Cowell, Randy Jackson and Paula Abdul in the coming season, which begins in January. She gets her start today in New York as contestants who passed the early auditions face the big judges for the first time.

"I just know that I'm supposed to have my makeup done by 11 o'clock," said DioGuardi, who couldn't comment on the seating arrangements or how tie votes

will be broken.

Adding DioGuardi is the latest twist in the hit singing-contest show. It comes after a season that saw some audience erosion and barbs from critics that the format had grown stale.

"We are turning the heat up on 'Idol' this year and are thrilled to

welcome Kara to the judges' table," creator and executive producer Simon Fuller said in a statement.

DioGuardi is no stranger to being around budding pop stars. Her songs have been recorded by performers like Gwen Stefani, Ce-

line Dion, Taylor Hicks, Carrie Underwood, Pink, The Jonas Brothers, Britney Spears, Jewel and Hilary Duff.

It won't be the first time the producers have tried to add a fourth judge to what has been a very successful show. In the second season, New York radio deejay Angie Martinez was put in the mix, but soon left, saying she couldn't be critical of singers who had a dream to hit it big.

DioGuardi, however, doesn't

see her role that way.

"I don't think it's criticism," she said. "For people that are on the show, it's a part of their journey. If they're going to become a huge artist or not, they're there to learn something, and no matter what, the experience is going to help them."

"Kara is going to be right in your face if she has to be," said her dad, former GOP congressman Joseph DioGuardi of Ossining, N.Y. "She knows how to be tough. Some of that comes from her family's history. Her Italian grandparents immigrated to the Bronx. But she certainly knows how to be tactful, too."

Abdul told Phoenix's 104.7 KISS FM Johnjay & Rich radio show yesterday that she was excited about DioGuardi coming on board, but added: "I am concerned about the audience and acceptance. Time will tell. We'll see."

DioGuardi, who says she's worked with Abdul in the past and considers her a good friend, said she understands Abdul's concerns.

"She's on a big, big show," said DioGuardi. "She's probably pondering what could and couldn't happen."

with Nancy Dillon
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Kara DioGuardi on 'Idol' criticism: 'For people that are on the show, it's a part of their journey.'

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"I'm just somebody who's really honest and gives my opinion. If I feel I need to be hard with someone in order to get that across, I will," DioGuardi told reporters Monday. "And if I feel I need to be softer and more nurturing with the contestants, I'll do that. It all depends on the situation."

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