

The Hunt Begins

INDIAN IDOL 5

SONY
MONDAY - THURSDAY, 9 PM
RATING ★★★

WHAT'S IT ABOUT? The fifth season of the Indian adaptation of *Pop Idol* has just taken off. The auditions, which had sent judges scouting for talented singers across the country, are over. After much drama and speculation, the 13 finalists have now been selected. With this, the hunt to discover *desh ki awaz* (voice of the nation) has become more intense and entertaining. Of course, it's good news for the Indian viewers for whom drama and melodies work as a potent combination.

WHO'S IN IT? Anu Malik, Sunidhi Chauhan and Salim Merchant are at the centre by virtue of occupying the judges' seats. Since all

three of them have a sound background in music, their presence lends credibility to the show. However, of them, Malik is probably more entertaining, thanks to his antics. He also comes across as a contrarian's voice at times—the desi Simon Cowell. But this only adds to the drama, and who doesn't love that. A svelte Chauhan looks stylish in her one-shoulder dresses which she wears often enough on the show. Merchant has the most pleasant personality. Even when he pulls up a contestant, he manages to appear friendly.

The trio now has company in the hosts Hussain Kuwajerwala and Abhijeet Sawant. And if the early episodes are any indication, then the trend of roping in Bollywood

faces to boost TRPs will be a regular feature this time around too. Already the teams of *Housefull* and *Badmash Company* have made their appearances, blatantly promoting their movies. The viewers probably don't mind that as long as they get a sweet-talking

Shahid Kapoor in the bargain, and not a blabbermouth Sajid Khan.

WHAT'S HOT? The lineup of contestants for this season's title is very impressive.

Singers like Swarup Khan, Manisha Karmakar, Bhumi Trivedi and Vishwas Rai give the feeling that the competition will be tough this time. Since participants like Arpita Khan and Tia Kar—with their sweetness and propensity to get emotional—are

on the show, the use of hankies might just shoot up. And, of course, when someone like Yashraj, brimming with over-confidence, is on the show, then one can be sure of lots of drama too—scripted and otherwise.

WHAT'S NOT? The scripted twists are minor irritants for seasoned viewers. Though they are supposed to add to the suspense, one can do without them.

SHOULD YOU BE WATCHING IT? Those who never cease to be amazed at the power of Indian music and the huge talent-pool in the country, will surely find themselves following the progress of these contestants. It's another matter that once the show is over, the contestants will become distant memories within a few weeks.

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