

TV **Thursday**



"I've never been the critics' choice," says Paula Abdul, "but that's who I am."

Paula will 'kick butt' (not yours, Simon)

By MICHAEL GILTZ

AMERICAN **I**dol! hasn't just discovered new pop stars — it's brought back to life an old one.

"Idol" judge Paul Abdul and Tamyra Gray — the upbeat Atlanta gospel singer many thought should have been in last night's finals — are being signed to new record deals.

Abdul confirmed backstage that she's ready to put out a new CD and take another shot at a career that included a string of hits like "Rush, Rush" and "Forever Your Girl" while selling 36 million records.

Meanwhile, "American Idol" Svengali, Simon



Tamyra: Signed up

Cowell, confirmed that his company, S Records, would be giving a contract to Tamyra to record an album.

"Obviously, we're not going to let that one get away," he told The Post.

On the flipside, Cowell

also said he had decided not to sign Christina Christian, the West Indian beauty he admitted he had a crush on.

"Idol" contestants signed contracts when they tried out for the show agreeing to record for Cowell's record company, if asked, for a pre-determined fee.

Abdul at first hemmed and hawed when asked by The Post if she'd been approached by any labels.

"It leaves me tongue-tied," said Abdul, who described what it's like to hear her songs on the radio again, not to mention the screams of fans.

But has she been approached by record labels?

"Yes," she admits. "I am recording. I am writing

again. I'm going to do a kick-butt dance record."

An official announcement about which label landed the suddenly high-profile Abdul will probably wait till after "Idol."

But you can rule out one company — Cowell's S Records.

Cowell laughed when asked if he'd been trying to sign Abdul.

"I'll repeat what I've said before," he said. "It's about quality. Does that answer your question?"

"I've never been the critics' choice," says Abdul about her light, pop ditties that sold tons of copies but rarely garnered a kind word from reviewers. "But you know what? That's who I am."