



TiVoThis

For some frothy, revenge-fantasy fun, dig into USA's **The Starter Wife**, based on Gigi Levangie Grazer's best-selling 2005 beach read. **Debra Messing** (above right, with **Anika Noni Rose**) headlines the six-hour miniseries about a woman whose husband, the president of a movie studio, leaves her for a starlet. We'll let the tabloids decide whether Grazer, who separated from, then reconciled with, megaproducer Brian Grazer (*The Da Vinci Code*), was writing from personal experience (May 31).

Law & Order godfather Dick Wolf lends his magic producer's touch to HBO's **Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee**, based on Dee Brown's 1971 book. Impassioned performances from Aidan Quinn, Anna Paquin, and Adam Beach bring immediacy to the tragic fate of Native Americans during westward expansion (May 27).

You've heard of a little show called **American Idol**? That this month's finale could solicit more votes than the past three presidential elections combined distresses us. Still, we'll tune in for the guest performances, which last year included Prince and Mary J. Blige. That kind of star power could get the most apathetic among us to the *Idol* polls (Fox, May 22–23). —RACHEL BERTSCHE

Sweeps Stakes



IT'S SWEEPS TIME! AND ONCE AGAIN THE QUARTERLY, monthlong free-for-all—when the networks stop at nothing for ratings—will inspire scriptwriters to abandon all common sense in their bid to dream up “The. Television. Event. Of. The. Season.”

Our suggestions for how the big shows might just blow our minds...

Desperate Housewives

The gimmick: Presumed-dead character is really alive!
The scenario: Series narrator Mary Alice returns to Wisteria Lane to rescue her husband, Paul, from prison. Turns out she staged her suicide to avoid arrest for murdering her adopted son's biological mother. And her omniscient voice-overs? She's been doing the *Rear Window* thing from an attic chamber in her old house.



House

The gimmick: A main character dies!
The scenario: A patient with mysterious symptoms—delirium, fever, spontaneous orgasms—stumps Dr. House. By the time he learns the disease is fatal, and contagious, it's too late. The show loses the cast member who tests worst with the target audience—to be revealed in next season's premiere.



The Office

The gimmick: A new baby!
The scenario: After resident prig Angela's pregnancy test turns up positive (she's having secret office-romancer Dwight's baby), Michael does a PowerPoint on the mechanics of childbirth, mispronouncing the names of female organs and offending everyone on his staff.



Ugly Betty and Grey's Anatomy

The gimmick: The hit-show character crossover!
The scenario: In Seattle for a *Mode* shoot on the rebirth of grunge, Betty gets in a car accident and is rushed to Seattle Grace. As the inspiring patient of the week, she stirs the catty surgical clique to reevaluate their idea of beauty. Seriously? Nah. —R.B.



NUGGET

“For a man, having a job and a family is normal; people feel sorry for him if one or the other is missing. For a woman, wanting both a job and a family is wanting too much. As the media reminds us frequently, a ‘working mother’ will need to juggle and sacrifice.... Her husband... may ‘pitch in’ and ‘help,’ but she’s the conductor who orchestrates the arrangements. It’s still her job to help her husband deal with the stress-filled battlefield of work—never mind that she may be mired in her own.” —ELLEN BRAVO IN *TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS: OR WHY FEMINISM IS GOOD FOR FAMILIES, BUSINESS, AND THE NATION* (THE FEMINIST PRESS AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK)

IF YOU HAVE ONLY...



1 hour: Make like forensic expert Gil Grissom at the May 25 opening of *CSI: The Experience* at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. (The show starts touring in the fall.)