

FALL PREVIEW

JENNA AND **JULIANNA** ARE BACK ON PRIME TIME, **CHRIS O'DONNELL** AND **LL COOL J** PARTNER UP, AND THE HOSPITAL DRAMA GETS A RIVETING MAKEOVER. THE NEW TV SEASON IS BETTER THAN EVER ON CBS.

It's right up there with the changing of the leaves: the annual autumn spectacle (taking place on our small screens) known as the new TV season. This fall marks the start of the first TV season since the nation's economic downturn, and as CBS Entertainment President Nina Tassler explains, "All of our new shows really reflect what seems to be happening in our society." And as many of us have found ourselves facing some difficult

situations, she says, so have the new characters we're about to meet.

From the panic of an unmarried, soon-to-be mom in the new comedy *Accidentally on Purpose* to the hard, heart-wrenching work faced by the transplant team in *Three Rivers*, "all of our shows are about characters who, for whatever reason, have been dealt challenges in their respective lives," Tassler says. But the fun part, she adds, "is that we get to watch them triumph."





ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE

Airs Mondays, 8:30 p.m. ET/PT. Premieres Sept. 21.

Starring: Jenna Elfman, Jon Foster, Ashley Jensen, Grant Show, Lennon Parham

Synopsis: When Billie finds herself "accidentally pregnant," her charming 20-something one-night stand moves in.

Six years ago, at age 39, San Francisco-area film critic Mary Pols discovered that she was pregnant, the result of a one-night stand with a man a full decade her junior. By 2008, Pols—by then the single mother of 4-year-old son Dolan—had turned her tale into a best-selling memoir of raising the child she probably secretly wanted. She called it *Accidentally on Purpose*.

Hollywood soon snapped up the rights for the book, and cast comedy heavyweight Jenna Elfman as Mary's TV alter ego, Billie. As adapted for TV by veteran writer Claudia Lonow, the heroine of the series version of *Accidentally on Purpose*, who conceives in the pilot episode, "is full of contradictions, of confidences and doubts," Elfman explains. Billie may have carved out a successful professional life in San Francisco but, as the actress theorizes, "as a film critic, she has an inspired but slightly distorted view of romance, because movies are her frame of reference. So there's a lot Billie doesn't fully understand, and she doesn't

always have an exact plan. But she's confident enough at least to talk out loud about the things she doesn't know."

Elfman says the originality of Billie's comedic voice first attracted her to Lonow's pilot script. "I got the tone and territory of her wit, her style of speaking. It's very much how I like to bring forth comedy," she says, and very much in keeping with the unique delivery the actress developed in the TV role for which she is best known, as the first half of the title duo *Dharma & Greg*.

But for Lonow, any similarity to her star's former series is due to the sharp comedic skills Elfman honed there, and now brings to Billie. "The character definitely makes some decisions that aren't the most responsible," the writer notes. "But Jenna is just so inviting, so vulnerable, so real that you end up understanding exactly what Billie's doing and why. Jenna has got everything—she is gifted as a physical comedian, and she has a warmth that draws you in. She's like that in real life, and it comes across on screen."

Accidentally on Purpose surrounds Elfman with a comedic ensemble including Jon Foster as the 20-something, unintentional baby-daddy Zack, as well as Lennon Parham and Ashley Jensen as Billie's sister Abby and best friend Olivia, and Grant Show as James, Billie's boss and commitment-phobic former—and possibly future?—flame.

It's the relationships among these characters, Lonow emphasizes—not the eventual presence of some chubby-cheeked kid—that will define the show. After all, the writer says, she was attracted to the world Pols described because of its clash of cultures. With Billie a sophisticated career woman, and Zack and his friends barely out of college and still living the frat-boy life, the show is professional

versus slacker, it's older versus younger, it's men versus women—but it's not mommy versus baby.

"There's an undeniable bond that comes with having a child with someone, and so Billie and Zack are two people who are now going to be in each other's lives forever," Lonow explains. The resulting struggle, as the two new roommates and their friends navigate through two different worlds, is "adult, sexy and modern.

"And I would not call it all that girly," the writer says. With the strong male voice of Zack and his friends, *Accidentally on Purpose* should fit in well amongst its testosterone-heavy Monday night CBS neighbors. "So if you ever do hear us talk about something like morning sickness," Lonow adds, "it's going to be in a way you never heard about it before."

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THE GOOD WIFE

Airs Tuesdays, 10 p.m. ET/PT. Premieres Sept. 22.

Starring: Julianna Margulies, Josh Charles, Christine Baranski

Synopsis: Alicia Florrick's life is turned upside down when her high-profile husband is imprisoned in the wake of a humiliating scandal.

During a press conference in the spring of 2008, Silda Wall Spitzer remained at the right hand of her husband, Eliot, as he quit his post as the governor of New York amid accusations of sexual and fiscal misconduct. Four years earlier, New Jersey's first lady Dina McGreevey had appeared at a press podium next to her husband, James, as he both resigned from office and announced his affair with a man he had put on the state's payroll.

Like the rest of us watching these and other recent, publicly cuckolded women literally stand by their men, Julianna Margulies wanted to know: *Why?* And so when the actress first received Michelle and Robert King's script for *The Good Wife*—in which title character Alicia Florrick is put in the same unenviable position by her state's attorney husband Peter (Chris Noth) in the very first scene—"it had me at hello," the actress says enthusiastically, "because I wanted to get inside her head. Right from the start, I cared about this woman."

As Margulies fashioned her portrayal of Alicia, a lapsed lawyer with two teenagers who must re-enter the workforce, she scoured the Internet for real-life role models. ("If you see pictures of these women six months before the scandal, and then a month



ALICIA FLORRICK IS NOT JUST A CUCKOLDED WIFE – SHE'S INTENDED TO BE A RELATABLE SURROGATE FOR ANYONE STRUGGLING TO REINVENT HERSELF IN A SOUR ECONOMY.



after, it looks like they have aged 10 years,” the actress says.) She won't reveal from whom she borrowed Alicia's self-effacing murmurs or soft, forgiving mannerisms. But she, and the Kings, marvel at the plethora of embarrassed officeholders' spouses they had from which to choose. “So many of them happen to be exceptionally intelligent, high-powered attorneys,” Michelle King says.

But apart from the indictments and scandals, the couple elaborates, *The Good Wife* also had a second inspiration. Recently, Robert's sister decided to return to the workforce, opening her own firm as a defense attorney to help provide for her family. And so as Alicia resumes her career, now as a lowly junior associate at a prestigious Chicago firm, she is intended to be a relatable surrogate for anyone struggling to reinvent herself in a sour economy.

“I find people who discover later on in life that they can remake themselves very interesting,” Robert King says, noting the recent rebirths of Elizabeth Edwards as a best-selling author, Spitzer as a hedge-fund manager and, of course, Hillary Rodham Clinton as a secretary of state. In Alicia's

case, he adds, the challenge will be to prove herself on several fronts at once—as a worthy competitor to her young, hungry co-workers and as more than just a party hostess and attractive accoutrement to those who knew her before merely as “Mrs. Florrick.” And as she works her own cases, and is inevitably involved in her husband's defense, Alicia will find herself similarly torn between two courtrooms: in one as a lawyer and in the other as the family of the accused.

Last season, Margulies appeared in a short-lived legal show on Fox, *Canterbury's Law*, in which her title character was an angry alcoholic attorney. Alicia Florrick, Margulies says, could not be more dissimilar from Elizabeth Canterbury—and also from the Emmy-winning actress herself. “Because Alicia has seen what being a wife and mother is like for 13 years, and then weathered the hurt that comes when you find out that whole life was a sham,” says the former *ER* star. “Right now, Alicia is in survival mode, just trying to hold her family together. And what I love about the character is, you never know what you would do until it happens to you.”

NCIS: LOS ANGELES: Cliff Lipson/CBS

NCIS: LOS ANGELES

Airs Tuesdays, 9 p.m. ET/PT.
Premieres Sept. 22.

Starring: Chris O'Donnell, LL COOL J

Synopsis: The Office of Special Projects within the L.A.-based division of NCIS is a tight-knit team of highly trained agents that uses advanced technology to infiltrate and expose the country's most elusive criminals.

This past spring, during the week ending May 10, *NCIS* was the top scripted TV program in the Nielsen ratings, drawing nearly 17 million viewers. That's no surprise: The show may be starting its seventh season, but continues to grow in popularity and has become a bona fide phenomenon worldwide. But the episode that aired that week—“Legends, Part 2,” which sported two new leading men in Chris O'Donnell and LL COOL J—was not your typical episode of *NCIS*.

Executive producer Shane Brennan says from the moment he took command of the show two years earlier, he knew he wanted to create a spinoff depicting a whole different side of life within the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

In the flagship show, he explains, “characters had gone undercover—but maybe only two or three



NCIS: LOS ANGELES

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times in some 140 episodes. And yet, undercover work can be very intense, very dramatic and for the characters' point of view, very traumatic. Because the work forces these agents to get close to someone, to lie to him, and then ultimately betray him. It's a natural area to mine great storytelling."

The writer set his second show in Los Angeles to further contrast its sexy, tech-savvy spy work with the *NCIS* world of political intrigue in Washington, D.C. So while the *NCIS* team is involved in forensics and procedural crime-solving within the Navy and Marine Corps, their West Coast counterparts may find their work spilling over into the civilian world. They'll even have a warehouse of cool spy gadgets, tended by Oscar-winner Linda Hunt in a role reminiscent of James Bond's Q.

But there's one thing both shows will definitely have in common: their sense of humor. That's only natural, Brennan says: "Whenever you put people together in an extreme situation and they become very close, humor follows."

In creating *NCIS: LOS ANGELES'* ensemble of espionage agents, Brennan says he concentrated

first on the central character of Callen, whom he envisioned as a haunted and enigmatic loner. "At the core, it's Callen's story," he says. "And then he has his relationship with his colleague Sam Hanna that will become very powerful and emotional."

Brennan made a wish list with some of the top male names in Hollywood; when he then saw a photo of the famously clean-cut O'Donnell sporting stubble and a crew cut, he knew he had found his Callen. The new show, he says, "will show a side of Chris O'Donnell that a lot of people haven't seen."

Casting LL COOL J as Sam was an easier process, Brennan remembers. "Sam is a former Navy SEAL, and so he had to both be physically powerful as well as possess, as Callen's protector, warmth and inner strength. In just a few minutes after meeting LL COOL J, I could see the character sprung to life."

The actor, whose TV credits include '90s sitcom *In the House*, was excited to step up to the challenge of a TV drama. The role of Sam, he says, "appealed to me, because I love to work out, and so I can pump up and still it's OK, because it makes sense for the

character. At the same time, I love that Sam has a great techie mind, so he's not all brawn and brute strength."

"I can honestly say that the moment I looked at the first daily footage from our first episode [within *NCIS*], I realized, 'OK, this is going to work. We've got a series here,'" Brennan says, noting his two stars' instant chemistry. "These guys feel like they've been together for a long time. That's very rare to find in the first scene of a pilot."

LL COOL J noticed it, too, as the two men shot a scene full of banter set in a restroom. "We come from two different backgrounds, and yet we really complement each other," the actor explains. "Chris is a great guy to work with. He already likes to tease me about how I talk in quotes, but as I've said to him from the start, and he agrees, 'Teamwork makes a dream work.'"



FALL PREVIEW



THREE RIVERS

AS THE TEAM RACES AROUND WITH ORGANS WITH LIMITED WINDOWS OF VIABILITY, THE SHOW HAS A "TICKING CLOCK" ELEMENT THAT WILL KEEP IT EXCITING—AND KEEP VIEWERS GUESSING.

Airs Sundays, 9 p.m. ET/PT. Premieres Oct. 4.
Starring: Alex O'Loughlin, Katherine Moennig, Alfie Woodard, Daniel Henney

Synopsis: The emotionally complex lives of organ donors, recipients and surgeons overlap within a Pittsburgh transplant clinic.

Earlier this spring, former *Jericho* and *Swingtown* executive producer Carol Barbee and producer/director Curtis Hanson were preparing to pitch a new medical pilot about the inherently dramatic field of organ transplantation.

The show would boast an innovative structure, telling each week's story from the three separate points of view of donor, recipient and the valiant doctors who procure parts of the body and give them life anew.

The only thing they didn't have yet was a setting. Barbee picked up a list of the world's top 10 transplant centers, with the Pittsburgh Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center at No. 1. "That's when Curtis said, 'I filmed *Wonder Boys* there. It's a great city,'" Barbee remembers. "And then what he wanted to get to was all the city's bridges, because he had used them as visual symbolism.

"But what he actually said was, 'There are three rivers that meet in the heart of the city.' And then he kept talking—but I wasn't listening anymore because I saw the perfect metaphor for our show, with its converging points of view. I interrupted him: 'Did you hear what you just said?! Three rivers! That's the name, and we're setting it in Pittsburgh.'"

By then, Barbee had put out feelers to clinics around the country, and she and the series' star Alex O'Loughlin had been invited to observe a Cleveland-based team led by Dr. Gonzalo Gonzalez-Stawinski, aka "Gonzo." "I just fell in love with them," the writer says. "This particular team was made up of some very interesting, funny characters. And so a lot of what I ended up writing"—including O'Loughlin's character, Dr. Andy Yablonski, based directly on Dr. Gonzo—"was informed by them, their relationships and experiences."

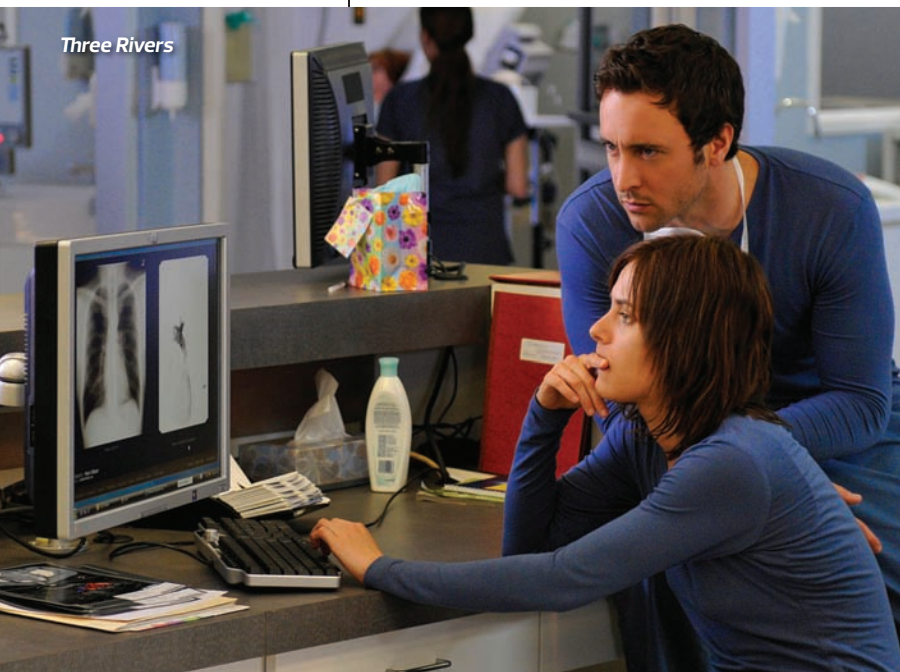
In depicting the diverse geographical settings of each episode's donor(s) and recipient(s), whose storylines meet at the clinic in the show's second act, *Three Rivers* is different from prior medical shows set in a single hospital. And as the surgical team races around with organs with limited windows of viability, the show also has, Barbee notes, a "ticking clock" element to keep it exciting—and keep viewers guessing. As Yablonski muses in the pilot, "Somewhere out there, somebody's getting up to go to work, and they have no idea they're going to become a donor today. And that somebody they've never met is going to live because they've died." And so thematically, "*Three Rivers* is about the randomness and interconnectivity of life, and how we all can save each other," Barbee explains.

With face transplants in the recent headlines, and the first successful double hand transplant having been achieved at the real Pittsburgh Clinic earlier this year, *Three Rivers*' subject matter could not be more timely—or for O'Loughlin, more interesting. "When you walk into a room and see a human being's chest open, and all the organs doing their thing, your faith and notions of mortality all come into question. The world that opened up to me is incredible."

Of course, *Moonlight* fans might find some irony in that show's hunky former vampire now becoming so passionate about organ transplantation—a field that, Barbee notes with a laugh, is often nicknamed "vampire work" because of its late-night hours. But both on and off the set, it's an area O'Loughlin is eager to sink his teeth into. "The amount of people who survive because others are donors is astounding, and I'm really just as excited about getting involved in philanthropy," he says enthusiastically. And Barbee agrees.

"I've become fond of saying that I'm not going to judge the success of the show by the Nielsen ratings, but rather by how many people we inspire to sign up as organ donors," she says. Then, after a perfectly timed comic beat, "And then, of course, I'll care incredibly much about the ratings."

Three Rivers





The Good Wife



Three Rivers



Accidentally on Purpose



NCIS: LOS ANGELES



New Columnist
John Tomkiw
Is Hooked On TV.

Early Editions

A TV Fanatic's Dream Come True: A Sneak Peek At CBS' New Fall Shows

★ **I was always a bit different.** While my friends were trading baseball cards, I was trying to complete my Titans of Television collection—I'm still looking for a Philo Farnsworth rookie card. And Christmas? That was for the other kids. Me, I looked forward to that one special day of the year when magic was in the air and all was possible: the upfronts.

For the uninitiated, "the upfronts" is the yearly ritual in which a network lays out its fall lineup to advertisers and the media. For a TV junkie like me, it is, in a word, nerdvana.

So when my editor waved a handful of series preview DVDs at me, I cleared my busy schedule for a blissful few days of tube-watching.

FIRST UP: THE GOOD WIFE, starring Julianna Margulies and her hair. Seriously. Those lustrous locks should have supporting credit and their own trailer. Or at least an assistant.

Margulies plays an attorney thrust back into an unforgiving workplace after her husband, a state's attorney caught in a corruption and sex scandal (complete with video!), is sent packing to the hoosegow. That leaves "the good wife" to juggle breadwinning duties and shield her teens from kids sending links to YouTube videos of Daddy doing the nasty. So much for the old days when teens passed notes in the hallway.

Hallways figure prominently in *Three Rivers*, a drama about organ transplants set in Pittsburgh. Since it's a hospital drama, there are lots of scenes of people in scrubs running down hallways. The show's like a "dead pool" in reverse: You gotta guess which of the folks needing transplants will get one before the last commercial break.

IN ACCIDENTALLY ON PURPOSE, Jenna Elfman plays a cougarlicious exec whose boy toy accidentally gets her in the family way. Hilarity—and breast pump jokes—ensue. It's good to see Elfman finally bringing her crack comedic timing and double-takes back to network TV. It seems like only yesterday that I was watching her flit about on TV as LL COOL J's "Mama Said Knock You Out" blared in the background. Ah, the '90s. Good times.

The artist formerly known as Ladies Love Cool James plays a prominent role in *NCIS: LOS ANGELES*, the spinoff to the mega-smash series. And while the episode I saw was riveting—Chris O'Donnell goes down in a hail of hot lead—I fully expected J to look at the camera over his shades, bite his lip and start some rap to the round-the-way-girls in the audience.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO the last DVD—the DVD that made me cry. No lie. Undercover Boss is a reality show that takes the big muckety-muck CEO of a major corporation out of his ivory tower and onto the front lines, where he toils anonymously alongside the hoi polloi. Much learning and sharing occurs, then said CEO scampers back to the boardroom to effect change for the better. They could've renamed this *Touched by a CEO*, for all the good deeds that happen. And in these days of business mistrust, a show that makes you feel good about a guy who probably earns more than the GDP of a Latin American country is quite an accomplishment.

Now where are my DVDs for the midseason series?



Undercover Boss