

# CULTURE

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## A Mighty Heart

Jada Pinkett Smith fills a new prescription for prime time

In the nearly two decades since she portrayed a round-the-way Hillman College coed, Jada Pinkett Smith has breathed big-screen life into an animated hippo, a conflicted bank robber and a Bantu-knot-sporting warrior. She's even written, directed, and starred in a feature film of her own. This summer the 37-year-old actress returns to her prime-time roots and picks up where Diahann Carroll left off with *Julia* by taking the lead in TNT's new drama, *HawthoRNe*—playing, well, a registered nurse. According to Pinkett Smith, who's also on board as executive producer, the fictional Christina Hawthorne, a recently widowed single mom of a teenager (played by newcomer Hannah Hodson), has a lot more on her plate than simply keeping tabs on her patients.

"Christina hasn't yet learned how to 'fall back,'" Pinkett Smith says with a laugh. "She doesn't know her place, so she's constantly stepping on everybody's toes, even when she's trying to be helpful." Flaws aside, though, she fesses up to feeling a certain kinship with her new character. "My mother was an R.N. and a single mother," she explains. "I was drawn to this project because the show pays homage to everyday people who do extraordinary things. In hospitals, the nurses are the unsung heroes."

We had to ask this mom of two young actors with hubby Will Smith whether the clan will make it onto *HawthoRNe*. "They might. My daughter's like, 'Why can't I be on the show?' and I said, 'You're too young, Willow [to play my daughter],' " says Pinkett Smith. "She's like, 'I can act like a teenager' and I said, 'That's for sure, but I need you to be 8.'"

—REGINA R. ROBERTSON



Pinkett Smith leads new medical drama *HawthoRNe*.

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ENTERTAINMENT EDITED BY CORI MURRAY  
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JULY 2009 | ESSENCE 53