Show

From Page 5B

and maybe died bad, too. From a TV perspective, stasis is preferable because it means the hit show can return year after year. Flux implies an endpoint.

Gilligan made his hero/antihero a chemistry teacher slogging through one whale of a midlife crisis — bereft, broke and facing a terminal illness (lung cancer, even though he had never smoked). And even though Gilligan knew nothing about chemistry, that would be the guiding metaphor.

"Chemistry is growth, then decay, then transformation!!!" White enthusiastically told his students in the series' opener. They sniggered, then turned away. Walter then decided the universe, and God, had sniggered and turned their backs on him, too.

There are comic as well as cosmic touches here, in a "the gods must be laughing" kind of way. But Gilligan always had a tragedy in mind, and a puzzle he didn't have a solution to: Was Walter born bad or did he become bad through the choices he made? Gilligan and his stable of writers knew from there it was just a short hop to one of the enduring puzzles of the nature of evil. Do people "break" bad — or are they born bad?

"I can't ultimately tell you what the point of it all is," says Gilligan. "But we do strive to keep him recognizable despite how dark he is. With each episode we chip a little more away at his soul. But we always try to make him human. Maybe it's a cautionary tale, or a 'there but for the Grace of God' one, but he's a character who has fascinated me from day one."

Does even Walter White's creator know how he will meet his end? Gilligan won't — or can't — say.

Songs

From Page 6B

Minutemen's "Double Nickels on the Dime." Only vinyl can break your heart.

12. "Springsteen," Eric Church. Country bad boy Eric Church is at least as slick as he is tough, and smart enough to keep this namedropping No. 1 hit relatively understated as it mentions song titles by a guy from New Jersey whose melodies bring back memories of bygone glory days.

13. "Sixpack," Jeff the Brotherhood. Speaking of Nashville, these Southern garage rockers are loaded up with ice, brewskis, and fuzz guitar hooks.

14. "Ruin," Cat Power. Chan Marshall, aka Cat Power, is coolness incarnate on this keyboard-driven departure from the old-school soul moves of her last proper album, 2006's "The Greatest." From Sun, due Sept. 4.

15. "No One Like You," Best Coast. Classic girl-group yearning from songwriter Bethany Cosentino, whose band is often mischaracterized as "surf-rock." Summery, but not conducive to

hanging 10.

16. "Under the Westway," Blur.
Lovely and languorous piano rumination by the much-loved, reunited '90s Brit-pop band fronted by Damon Albarn. It's one of two new songs debuted Beatles-style on a London rooftop earlier this month. Please, sirs, can we have some more?

17. "Next to Me," Emeli Sande. Black Scotswoman Emeli Sande's first name is Adele. Fitting, since the big-voiced belter seems well suited to step into the void left by the Grammy-dominating singer's forthcoming maternity leave.

18. "Come Into My Head," Kimbra. Angular funk from New Zealand singer who's also heard on her Belgo-Australian buddy Gotye's megahit "Somebody That I Used to Know."

19. "Heaven," the Walkmen. Hortatory title track to the excellent sixth album by the three-fifths Philadelphian indie band fronted by Hamilton Leithauser.

20. "Psychotic Episode," Royal Headache. One among many two-minute doses of friendly fury from this Aussie quartet's winningly aggressive debut album.

gressive debut album.
21. "Younger Us," Japandroids.
"Remember saying thing like 'We'll sleep when we're dead' / And thinking this feeling was never going to end?" Young Vancouver duo remembers what it was like to be younger still. From the aptly titled "Celebration Rock."

22. "Tallulah," Allo Darlin'. A ukulele-plucked song references the Go-Betweens' "Tallulah," in which Elizabeth Morris thinks about how much she loves pop music and worries that she's already heard all the songs that will tell her who she is. From the altogether fab sophomore release Europe.

rope.
23. "Sweet Dreams," Rhett
Miller. Roots-pop songwriter nods
to Patsy Cline, and kisses a couldhave-been love affair goodbye as it
strolls off into the summer sunset.

Dan DeLuca: deluca@phillynews.com

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