

# Gun stun

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## Student will die on a shocker 'Degrassi'

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**T**V's most controversial teen show goes Columbine tonight with a two-part episode on school shootings.

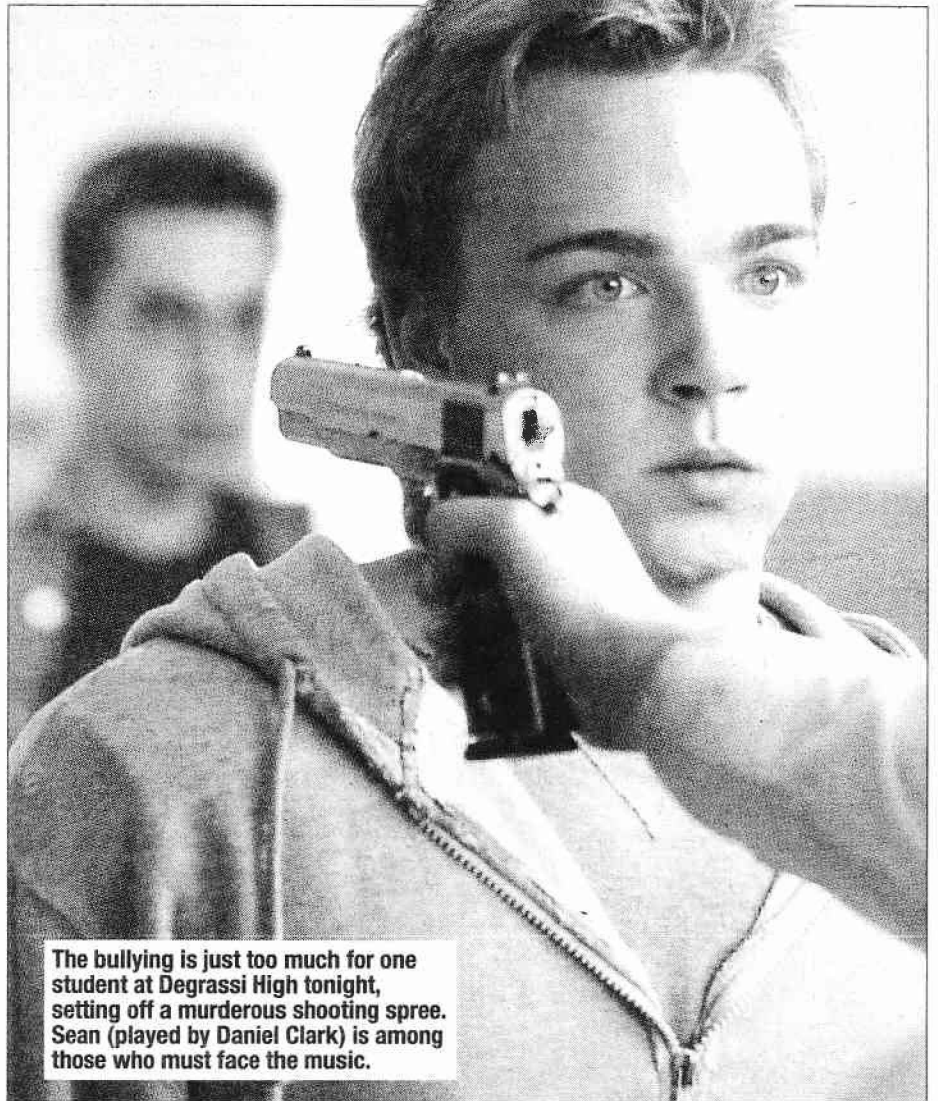
**"Degrassi: The Next Generation"** (8 p.m. on The N) ends a story spiral that's been developing for two seasons when Rick, a student with a violent temper, is bullied and humiliated once too often and comes back to school with a gun.

One student dies, another is seriously injured and "Degrassi" rocks the world of its still-growing, devoted young audience.

Executive producer and head writer Aaron Martin has been pushing to tackle this subject since the new "Degrassi" debuted four seasons ago. (It's the sequel to the '80s **"Degrassi Junior High,"** which broke ground for **"Beverly Hills, 90210"** and other teen dramas that followed.)

"It wasn't an issue when the original 'Degrassi' was on, and it's become much more of an issue in the last 10 years," says Martin, 33. "And with any teen shows, there are only so many issues you can cover, and new ones are harder and harder to find."

It's the latest hot-button



The bullying is just too much for one student at Degrassi High tonight, setting off a murderous shooting spree. Sean (played by Daniel Clark) is among those who must face the music.

topic given the thoughtful "Degrassi" treatment.

Earlier this year, the N's decision not to air an episode dealing with abortion made headlines, especially since the series has quickly become the signature show for the N and remains a primetime fixture in its native Canada.

Other topics it's tackled include alcoholic parents, abusive relationships and gay teens coming out.

But it's not all misery at

"Degrassi"; one memorable, recent plot had a kid using a penis pump because he felt inadequate around the older boys in the locker room.

For Aubrey Graham, who plays Jimmy, being at the heart of the shooting episode is a welcome challenge.

"I'm usually involved in the jock love triangle," says Graham, "which is always fun because the girls on the show are amazing."

In Canada, where the ep-

isodes already aired and scored the highest ratings in the show's history, fans have been traumatized.

"I'll be at the mall," says the 18-year-old Graham, "and people say, 'Oh my God, are you okay? What's going to happen? Are you going to die?'"

Those might be easier to answer than the questions Graham could be getting soon. Up soon for "Degrassi?" A two-parter on oral sex.