

THE NEW TV SEASON

Agent Pride, and 'Men' without prejudice

At Thursday's Television Critics Association meetings in Beverly Hills, CBS chatted up some things old and new. From political drama *Madam Secretary* to *Two and a Half Men*, USA TODAY's **Robert Bianco**, **Bill Keveney** and **Gary Levin** report.



Tía Leoni and Timothy Daly discuss their show *Madam Secretary*, in which she plays the newly appointed secretary of State. Why not president? "Wait until Year 4," Leoni teases.



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PHOTOS BY FREDERICK M. BROWN, GETTY IMAGES

'NCIS' SETTLES INTO NOLA

NCIS star Mark Harmon and Scott Bakula are joining forces to push a third franchise in the law-enforcement drama, *NCIS: New Orleans*, into the spotlight.

Bakula plays the head of the New Orleans office for the agency, which investigates crimes involving military personnel. Harmon is an executive producer.

New Orleans will have the benefit of following *NCIS*, TV's most-watched show scripted series last season, and also the experience of Harmon and Gary Glasberg, an executive producer of both series.

Bakula recognizes the original's success. "The hope is, where we're going and with the characters that are being developed for us, that we can get an audience to invest with us." — **Keveney**

MEET 'MADAM SECRETARY'

In the new drama *Madam Secretary*, Tía Leoni will play Elizabeth

McCord, a newly appointed secretary of State. The show is produced by *Judging Amy*'s Barbara Hall and Oscar winner Morgan Freeman, and it co-stars Tim Daly as Elizabeth's husband.

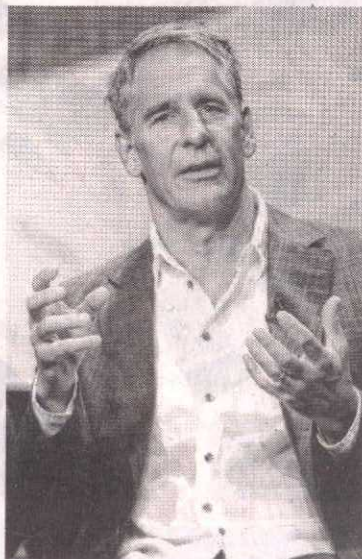
Why the secretary of State instead of the president? "Wait until Year 4," Leoni jokes.

To prepare, Leoni met with former secretary of State Madeleine Albright — thanks to Daly.

"Madeleine Albright is my White House Correspondents Dinner girlfriend," Daly says. "We meet every year and have become very close." — **Bianco**

'SCORPION' SMARTS

Scorpion is a procedural about a team of brilliant crime-stopping misfits. It was inspired by the life of Walter O'Brien, who actually runs a company called "Scorpion" and who, says producer Nick Santora, has the fourth-highest IQ ever recorded at 197



Scott Bakula will investigate crimes involving military personnel as Special Agent Dwayne Pride, aka "King," in *NCIS: New Orleans*.

Elyes Gabel stars as the fictional O'Brien, with Katherine McPhee as a non-genius waitress. If that setup, and the budding relationship between the genius and a waitress, brings to mind a caper-based *Big Bang Theory*, Santora won't mind. But it's not how he sees it.

"This show is a fun-cedural," Santora says. "We are going to have this heart and this humor in this world of geniuses." — **Bianco**

A NEW HITCH FOR 'MEN'

Two and a Half Men characters Walden (Ashton Kutcher) and Alan (Jon Cryer) aren't gay, but getting married is seen as a way to reach Walden's goal of adopting a child, CBS entertainment chief Nina Tassler says.

Walden "realizes it's very difficult to adopt as a single, straight man. So he decides, 'I'm going to propose to Alan. We're going to get married and adopt a child

as a gay couple,'" Tassler says.

She calls the potentially controversial plotline "a very positive statement" that reflects cultural developments. — **Keveney**

GILLIGAN'S UP A 'CREEK'

Dean Winters and Josh Duhamel star in midseason drama *Battle Creek* as mismatched Michigan detectives. The script for the comedy-infused drama was written by Vince Gilligan, before he went on to create *Breaking Bad*.

David Shore (*House*) is at the helm, and Gilligan is taking a back seat; he's working on *Bad* spinoff *Better Call Saul*.

Gilligan says that the fictional version of the city portrayed here "feels like a city of underdogs."

Creek recalls 1970s cop shows, and that's by design, Shore says. "In a way, it's the core of the show. There's a fondness. Despite the despair, there's hope."