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SEPTEMBER 1-14, 2014 • DOUBLE ISSUE

Fall  
**SNEAK PEEK**  
Issue

# NCIS: NEW ORLEANS

Scott Bakula hits  
the Big Easy

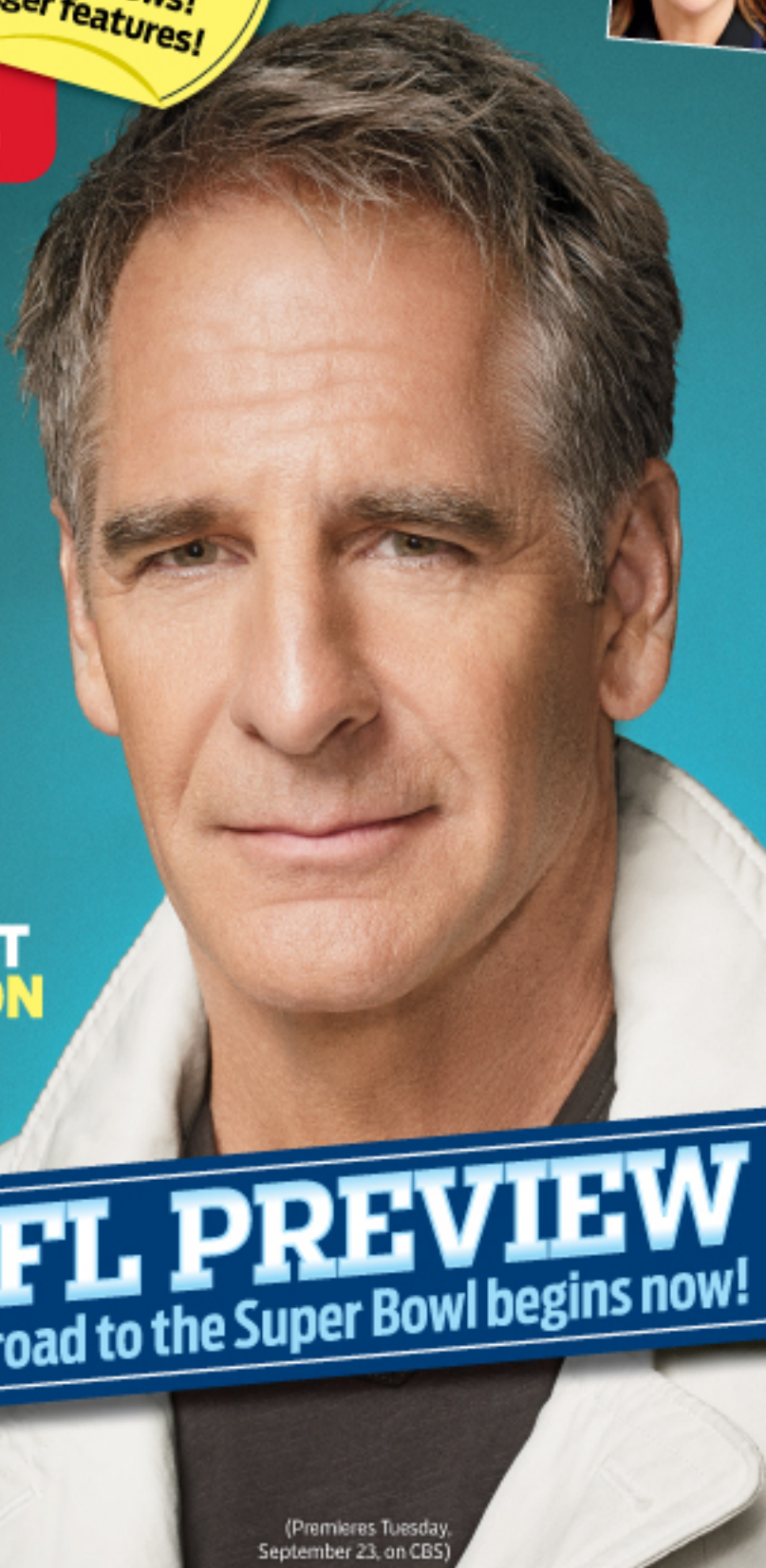
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(Premieres Tuesday,  
September 23, on CBS)



**SNEAK PEEK**

# “How’s Bayou?”

**Scott Bakula** gives a preview of *NCIS: New Orleans* and takes us on a tour of his show’s picturesque locale.

BY **CHRIS WILLMAN**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**SCOTT BAKULA**

IF YOU’RE SEEKING a metaphor for acting, you couldn’t do much better than the body-jumping premise of *Quantum Leap*. In the 21 years since that series went off the air, its star, Scott Bakula, has leaped into a striking array of characters, with an initial emphasis on more sci-fi (*Star Trek: Enterprise*) eventually offset by a turn toward naturalistic dramedy (*Men of a Certain Age*). But playing a cop on a network procedural? Inexplicably, that seemingly inevitable move had proven a leap too far.

This oversight has finally been rectified with Bakula’s role as the lead in *NCIS: New Orleans*, premiering on CBS September 23 in the coveted Tuesday time slot immediately following the franchise’s flagship series. When Bakula and his core costars—Lucas Black, Zoe McLellan, and CCH Pounder—were introduced in a two-part *NCIS* episode last March, it was clear the vibe in the spinoff would be looser and more localized, in the spirit of the setting. Dwayne “King” Pride (Bakula), a Big Easy cop turned NCIS agent, was established not just as an old friend of Mark Harmon’s stoic Gibbs but as an answer to the question: What if Gibbs were garrulous?



**Bakula’s rollin’ on the Mississippi River; Michael Zinberg (in white cap) directs an episode; Bakula with guest star James McDaniel.**



# SNEAK PEEK



Makeup artist Laura Gorman and costumer Dena Metrenga try to keep the star cool.

Bakula will also be returning to his role on HBO's *Looking* for a second season, somehow squeezing in that San Francisco-based cult show despite his virtually nonstop location shoot in Louisiana. Doing two series at once in different states: That's a feat that defies even *Quantum's* physics.

The 59-year-old actor spoke with us from the *NCIS: New Orleans* set at the beginning of August, just six days into a production schedule as fevered as the local humidity.

**Given how well-suited you seem for it, you're not known for playing cops or doing crime shows.** No, I'm not. And I'm happy to be doing one, because I enjoy procedurals as a viewer, going back to *Perry Mason*. I mean, what was better than that? I'm not the only person in the world who could have done [this role], so I'm extremely grateful that they even considered me, because I don't have a wealth of this kind of acting history. **And you're going to keep doing *Looking* at the same time. How can that work?** I wanted to give them the opportunity to write me out of *Looking*—I'm not a contract player there—but I'm a big fan of that show. So I said, "If you choose to bring me back, maybe we can work something out." Logistically, it's going to be crazy and involve some Saturday shooting, but they'll work around me. **Here you are, playing the gay older boyfriend in back-to-back HBO roles, *Looking* and *Behind the Candelabra*, when you could have just become that guy who spends the rest of his**

**life signing autographs at science-fiction conventions.** After *Quantum Leap*, a lot of sci-fi things came my way and I had to say, "I can't do that right now." But then there was *Lord of Illusions* and I was like, "Man, Clive Barker! I have to!" Then *The Invaders*, a mini-series based on a series from the '60s, and I was like, "Oh, man, I've gotta do this too." I was thinking I really had to say no to any more sci-fi...and UPN called [with *Star Trek: Enterprise*]. As soon as they said it was [set] 100 years before Kirk and Spock, I was in.

Years later, I got asked to guest star on *Boston Legal*, and I thought it would be funny just to be on the same show with William Shatner. Ironically, I didn't see Bill the whole time, so we never had the opportunity to walk by in the hallway, stop and turn, look at each other, and keep walking.

**Since the pilot for *New Orleans* was an *NCIS* two-parter, were there any surprises when you came back to start work on the actual series?** The biggest change has been that it's just us right now. In the embedded pilot, there were very few scenes where we weren't sharing screen time with somebody from *NCIS*. I treated that as being a guest on their show. I certainly wasn't coming in saying, "I think my desk should be over there" or, "I think Harmon's desk should be over there! That would work better for me." Now it's just us—although our good fortune is those folks from that show are going to be popping in and out down here.

We had a moment yesterday where we were talking about our office and our director said, "Who's got keys?" And I said,

**"The producers' determination that New Orleans should be a character in this show wouldn't work if we filmed exterior shots once every two months and cobbled those together for five different episodes."**

—Scott Bakula

"I like my character's joie de vivre," Bakula says. "He loves his food, loves his music, loves his city—and he likes getting the bad guys." Right, from top: With guest star Steven Weber on the first day of shooting; Lucas Black gives the SWAT team a thumbs-up; Bakula with one of the city's culinary staples; Black, McLellan, and the star unwind in the cast trailer.

"Well, I do, and Lucas does, and Zoe does." And he looked around and said, "That's it?" I made a joke as I was exiting and yelled, "Did somebody lock up?" The whole feel of the show down here is so different and small, compared to the D.C. world of *NCIS*. ***NCIS* has a lot of terrorism plots, and the other spinoff, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, is all about undercover operations. But it doesn't appear that *NCIS: New Orleans* will involve as much secret-agent stuff.** My character is definitely not undercover. He's got relationships with the politicians in town or the cop on the beat that he worked with 15 years ago, when he was with the New Orleans police department, before joining *NCIS*. Pride has a certain amount of notoriety in New Orleans, so when he walks into a bar, people turn and say, "Hey, Dwayne" or "Hey, King." That's part of his—no pun intended—pride, doing what he does for the city and caring about it.

**Are you happy the decision was made this summer to shoot on location?** I had issues with it at first. When I heard about the show, I thought, "Great. They shoot *NCIS* in Los Angeles [doubling for D.C.] and it looks fantastic. Gary Glasberg is running both shows, so we'll get a stage in Valencia next to theirs! And if we've got to shoot in New Orleans, *ER* used to hop on a plane and go to Chicago for a week here and there, so that'd be manageable." But the more I got into it, they said, "No, no, no. We're going to New Orleans!" I said, "OK, hang on, because this is not what I thought it was going to be in the beginning." My son is starting high school, and uprooting my family wasn't an option.

But being down here now, I see it's a no-brainer. We shot alongside the Mississippi two days ago, with the huge military ships and barges going past. Their determination that New Orleans should be a character in this show wouldn't work if we filmed exterior shots once every two months and cobbled those together for five different episodes. So I talked with my family, and they're all on board with the idea that I'm going to be gone a lot and home as much as I can.

**The first scene in the embedded pilot showed Pride in bed with a woman who turned out to be his estranged wife. Was that a clever way of leaving the options open for making him a single or married guy?** Certainly, if his wife says, "I'm outta here," that opens the door for other relationships. Or they'll struggle and get back together. But I don't think they've spent a whole lot of time tracing that arc of my character yet. It's incumbent upon us at the beginning to not scare people away and to let them know that we're "the same but different" with a lot of the procedural stuff. We're still scrambling to get a show on the air on September 23 that's not dripping wet and being run over at the last second and thrown in the machine!

**NCIS: NEW ORLEANS, Series premiere, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 9/8c, CBS**

