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**KATHARINE
McPHEE**
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STING TO *SCORPION*

Katharine **the Great**

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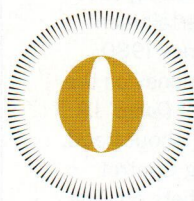
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TRUNK ARCHIVE

By **Scott!**

Scott Bakula on all things NOLA
and being a wanted man



Oh, boy!" was **Scott Bakula's** star-making catchphrase each time he "leapt" into a new body in the late-1980s time-traveling show *Quantum Leap*. That phrase also defines the St. Louis-born actor's new supersmash, *NCIS: New Orleans*. Filmed on location in the Big Easy with Bakula as local NCIS head Dwayne "King" Pride, this second spinoff of the world's most popular TV show finds the Golden Globe-winning star hitting his all-time ratings jackpot, with more than 19 million viewers every week (with live-plus-seven-day lift). "I've never experienced anything like this on television before," says the 60-and-still-superhot star. "I'm one ridiculously lucky guy."

Watch!: Being from Louisiana myself, I've got to tell you that your New Orleans accent in the show is aces.

Scott Bakula: Thank you! I've never been anywhere where people care so much about how you sound representing them. There are radio commercials here that go, "You know you're from New Orleans if it bothers you when people say 'New Or-leens.'" And yet the other day I had a woman telling me she so appreciated me *not* doing an accent. [Laughs.]

Watch!: And here you've worked so hard on it. Oh, well—tell us, what's the incredible pull of the *NCIS* franchise?

Bakula: It's an amazing phenomenon. I don't know if you can put your finger on it, exactly. But the core of it is that they're all mysteries, and mysteries have been beloved by audiences for centuries. Then you surround it with quirky characters, a bit of high-tech and a little jazz here and there—

Watch!: Literally jazz, in this New Orleans iteration—it's music-packed. Like yourself, the character plays the piano. Besides

that commonality, what else do you dig about Dwayne?

Bakula: I love that he's not by-the-book and not a perfect guy. He's got a few little secrets hiding around the corner, and I think we're going to start getting into some of that this year. I love that he's fun and has an unguarded passion for his city, its food, its people and for his family. So often—especially men in this world—we're careful at work and play it close to the vest.

Watch!: He's got *joie de vivre* and so do you. You're a real-life song-and-dance man, having begun your career in musicals.

Bakula: Theater is my first love, period. There's no rivalry there—it's where I hope to end my career. I still take voice lessons every week, so it's hard not to break into song and dance on the streets of New Orleans. When you're working in the French Quarter with a band in every other building, it blows your mind. The musical influence of the

city and how it's influenced everything we listen to today is stunningly magnificent to me.

Watch!: And then there's the food.

Bakula: Oh, yes. My youngest son [Bakula has four kids, ages 15 to 30] is in town right now and he's already informed me that Sunday morning, we're going for beignets—everybody's crazy for that powdered sugar!

Watch!: The better to see ghosts with, because NOLA is crawling with 'em—*real* ghosts. Seen any yet?

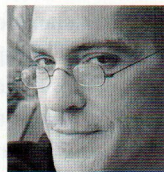
Bakula: I haven't, but we've shot in a few places and been told that they're there. So I'm very aware that this town is dark and mysterious. As we get further along in our journey, I'm hoping we'll get more into all of that.

Watch!: OK, let's talk hotness. Beginning with *Quantum Leap* through your *Star Trek: Enterprise* years into your Emmy-nominated *Behind the Candelabra* turn and your spa-a-licious *Looking* performance to *NCIS: New Orleans*, you remain full-on man candy.

Bakula: That's funny! Well, I'll tell you that in that spa scene I looked like that because I'd just shot a movie in India and lost a bunch of weight over there. I came back and thought, "Man, this is a new diet I'm gonna stick with!" But, no, I do like to stay in shape and it doesn't happen accidentally as you get older, so I look after it.

Watch!: Clearly. Okey-dokey, when you look back at your glorious career, what do you see?


Bakula: I'm delighted I've been able to do so many things. I went from St. Louis to New York just to see if I could possibly make it in the theater, and now I've been able to continue my theater life and make movies and TV shows that'll be around forever. I've had some good fun. It's nice to be wanted! **U**



BRANTLEY BARDIN
➔ Veteran entertainment journalist Brantley Bardin has made a career of chatting up a veritable army of celebs for a roll call of international publications. Currently a contributing editor at *InStyle* and *Playboy*, the native Louisianian keeps shooting for the stars from his hillside home in Los Angeles.

• NCIS: NEW ORLEANS •

airs Tuesdays at 9 p.m. ET/PT on CBS.



*“It’s hard not
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