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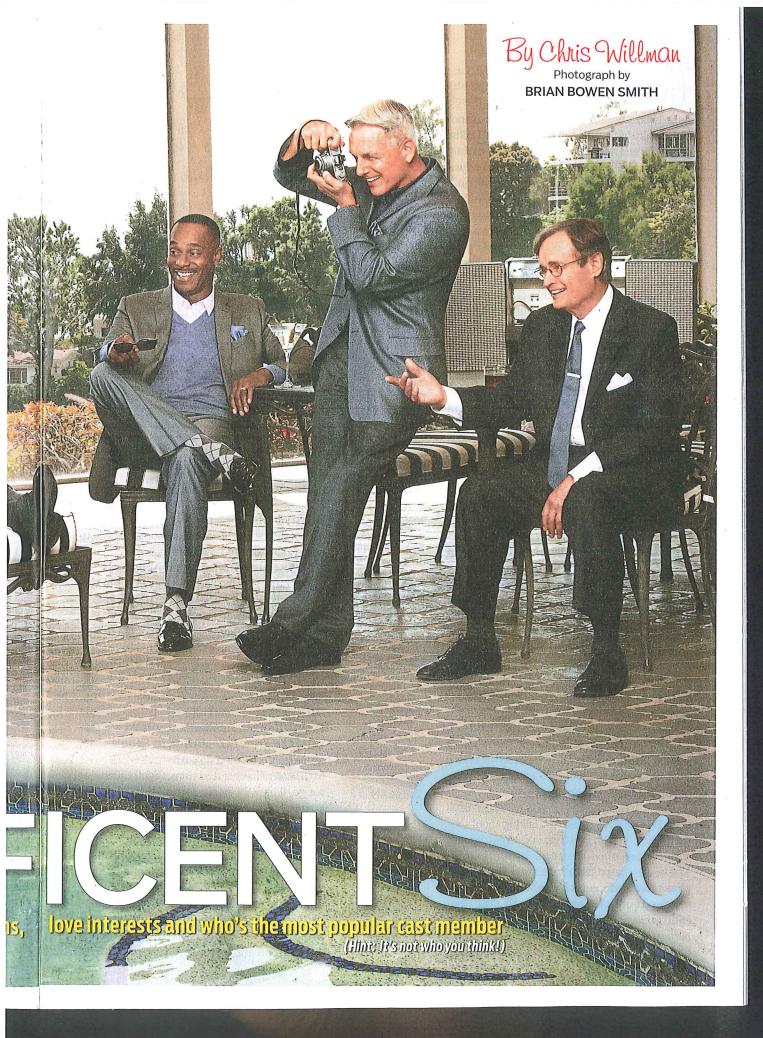
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ON THE COVER Mark Harmon, Sean Murray and Michael Weatherly photographed on April 10, 2010, by Brian Bowen Smith in Los Angeles. For the cover and the cover story on page 22: Harmon's and McCallum's Hair: CARLA Dean, Harmon's and McCallum's GROOMING; Helen Robertson/victoria's SECRET BEAUTY/CELESTINE AGENCY, WEATHERLY'S AND DIETZEN'S GROOMING: CAROLA GONZALEZ/CLOUTIER REMIX, STYLING: BECKS WELCH/THE WALL GROUP. STYLING ASSISTANT: TAYLOR BASS. PROP STYLING: STILLSETS. FOR STYLING CREDITS, SEE PAGE 26.





The men of NCIS

are on break from a Rat Pack-themed photo shoot in a swanky backyard atop the Hollywood Hills. The cigars and mixed drinks have been set aside, and the guys revert to their characteristic ways.

Rocky Carroll (Vance), who plays the only character with a nuclear family, has spread out a sheet on the grass for a picnic with his daughter. David McCallum ("Ducky"), who starred in The Man From U.N.C.L.E. during the shoot's era, picks up a 1960s TV Guide Magazine being used as a prop, maybe to see if he's in it. No-pretense Mark Harmon (Gibbs) has changed from a suit into a sweater and baggy jeans, but Sean Murray (McGee) and Brian Dietzen (Palmer) are still in costume, happy to be freed from prime-time dweebdom. Michael Weatherly (DiNozzo), as if to the Playboy manor born, is leaning against the sliding door of a frilly bedroom to have his portrait taken. Eyeing a comely production assistant, he asks, "Would you go lie down on the bed behind me and look devastated?" She demurs. "Come on! I'll give you \$200." No go.

"I like to think that these guys together encapsulate everything that's good and bad about men," says exec producer Shane Brennan of the characters. "You have the juvenile aspects to DiNozzo a lot of women recognize in their men: 'Men are so stupid and silly and crazy, but I love them? McGee brings that amazing sense of the guy who can fix anything. Women want men who can make the remote work. Gibbs is the guy who's utterly reliable and there for you, and he's strong and silent. It's fascinating that each of them brings something special, and we build this superman."

Wary of the effect of all this testosterone, we gave Pauley Perrette and Cote de Pablo the day off to let the boys talk amongst themselves.

TV Guide Magazine: Shane Brennan said you all add up to the perfect man.

WEATHERLY: Hydra. The six-headed man. McCALLUM: I wouldn't want to be married to any of these characters!

HARMON: Hear, hear.

WEATHERLY: CBS has been talking about seeing if we can absorb Jon Cryer and Angus T. Jones and make Seven and a Half Men. It has a ring to it. There are fans who latch on to certain characters and get mad when they aren't serviced enough. Or fans who like the procedural aspects and could do without the

CARROLL: I got a really good piece of advice



"I like to think that these guys together encapsulate everything that's good and bad about men"

> -Shane Brennan, exec producer

when I joined the cast. I'd said, "You know, there's a lot of discussion boards." And someone said to me, "Don't wade too deep into that water."

WEATHERLY: The fan forums serve as entertainment. It's like fan fiction—which is fantastic. I've heard about NCIS fan fiction and have

been a little scared to look.

MURRAY: It depends what level of fan fiction you go to. I have seen a site dedicated to Tony 'n' McGee fan fiction. The first story I started to read, I had to go away from there.

WEATHERLY: "McGoney!"

DIETZEN: Look out, Tiva.

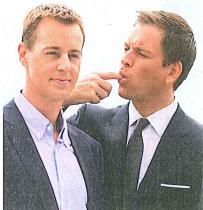
Do you think the audience wants your characters to grow? Or shrink, in Sean's case, since he's trimmed down?

MURRAY: The characters have slightly altered as we go. There's certain formulas in place for scripts, but when we go down there on the floor and play with it, it's like a little dance we do....

WEATHERLY: The script starts wide and then drives us towards those turns that usually happen in autopsy or in the lab. Then, all of a sudden, there's a directive from Vance and things winnow down until we discover that it's the red herring, and, of course, we were wrong! And then we go to the Act 2 "Phoof!" [Laughs] Not that there's a formula! Sometimes it's the Act 3 "Phoof!"

romance and humor.







DIETZEN: You just wrote an episode!

Old TV GUIDE MAGAZINE

difficult to pin down

with Dietzen. "It's

the year."

I was at the PaleyFest event, where NCIS was honored recently. Not to make it competitive, but during the introduction, I did notice one guy getting slightly more applause. I'm wondering if you know who. WEATHERLY: David McCallum.

Right.

WEATHERLY: It's earned.

McCALLUM: I've got the 80-year-olds and the 90-year-olds. They have to humor the old guy.

HARMON: Bulls--t! You want to know why the big applause? Because he's the role model. No one prepares harder; no one spends more time on his character. His preparation is impeccable.

DIETZEN: Every time David and I have a scene together, I can show up 20 minutes early and David's waiting there and he says, "Here's my idea..."

There is a definite part of the fan base that distinguishes between Jimmy Palmer episodes and non-Jimmy episodes.

HARMON: [Laughs] We're gonna straighten that out next year.

MURRAY: We don't like it when Jimmy's not in our episodes.

But then you are the one guy who gets an on-screen girlfriend.

MURRAY: I had one, but she turned out to be an

A PRANKSTER
WEATHERLY gives
Murray a wet willie.
Such camaraderie
means "You can
pass the ball
anywhere," says
Weatherly.



Check out the behind-thescenes video from our "Men of NCIS" cover shoot at tyguide magazine. com!

international killer.

DIETZEN: Yeah, we're on No. 2. I told the actress there's a mark on her head, because my last girlfriend on the show took six to the chest from a woozy Gibbs.

It seems safe to say that if this show runs as long as Gunsmoke...

CARROLL: Hey, I like that.

DIETZEN: I like that, too! Keep going with this! ...that no one besides Vance will ever have a wife or serious girlfriend. It's important to keep the flirtations going. David, you had an off-screen girlfriend for two episodes.

McCALLUM: And then she put Mother's silver in the dishwasher!

WEATHERLY: It's like "On Her Majesty's Secret Service." If you're going to marry any of the characters off, that probably means they're gonna get killed. We were actually listing the fallen the other day. It's the most dangerous place to have ovaries, the set of *NCIS*.

McCALLUM: Well, in the old days, the [studio] loved you to have girlfriends and go out, but they didn't want you to get married. You had to be available to the public. And it's the same with you two [Weatherly and Murray].

WEATHERLY: Yep. McGoney. It's not sticking, is it? Tagee? McT? Tuggy?

MURRAY: Yeah, when you were talking about flirting, I assumed you meant Tony and me.

Mark, I think a lot of people love the interaction you have with the guest characters played by Rena Sofer and Dina Meyer, though some fans feel very protective of Gibbs. The female characters might like flirting with you, but Gibbs is a character who doesn't do flirting.

WEATHERLY: For good reason!

HARMON: I think it's great that the audience out there cares enough to have an opinion and like it or not like it. In both of those instances, to some degree, what people have seen was misread. They aren't in bed anywhere. You don't know where that went. That was left up in the air. It's great our writers keep people guessing and certainly keep us interested. I'm playing new things all the time. WEATHERLY: We're in the penultimate episode, shooting right now, and just got the script for the final. I see you doing stuff that I haven't seen in 160 episodes, which is interesting.

Some of the most intriguing moments go against character, whether it's Tony being unusually serious or Gibbs grinning.

MURRAY: Especially after seven years of the characters, we still learn more of them as we go. I had a conversation with Pauley last week about

that. There was something she thought was very out of character, and I said, "What makes it so great is that it is so out of character." People do that in real life. It may be different if it was in the first couple seasons, where you're really setting a tone. But we're at a point where we can do some things you wouldn't expect from the characters.

WEATHERLY: As long as it's not sappy or melancholy, I'm all right. [Laughs] I don't like that stuff. [He breaks into an R.E.M. song.] "Everybody hurts..." [Murray joins in in perfect harmony.] "...sometimes." Harmon knows that sometimes I'll have some visceral "What?" response to something in a script. And then I've learned that means it's an opportunity to be interesting. You don't want to just groove the same rut over and over. Although I have rutted a pretty deep groove! [Laughter]

MURRAY: It's interesting to me that in Year 7, there's no one phoning it in.

WEATHERLY: Unless it's a phone-call scene.

Success can breed different reactions, whether it's "We can coast now," or "Boy, people like this—we better keep it up."

HARMON: "People like this."? We like this.

DIETZEN: Everybody here is actually a fan of the show, which is kind of cool.

McCALLUM: Ilove watching the reruns. Not the current ones... [*Laughter*] Only because, you know, we just did that!

Mark has said this is a show where nobody hates the character they're playing.

WEATHERLY: I think my wife might hate my character. [*Laughter*] You can ask her.

MURRAY: Mark has said this before many times: No one is looking to play anyone else's character. DIETZEN: I would like to be Vance once in a while. I'm sorry, I'm just putting it out there.

HARMON: Rocky's playing of this character has helped this show immensely in the last couple years. It's changed all of us.

MURRAY: I still feel weird you only joined two seasons ago. I feel like you've been here longer.

CARROLL: Thank you. You guys made it a very smooth entry.

Is Harmon a leader or just a fellow member of the team to the rest of you?

HARMON: Can I get out of here?

He makes it seem as if he doesn't wield much power on the set. Can that be true?

HARMON: I'm not aware of wielding anything, to be honest with you.

McCALLUM: There were a couple of times in the past when he wielded power on our behalf, and very successfully, and we all benefited from it. I just think of him as a mother hen, and we're



ON * THIS WEEK'S NCIS

In April 27's "Moonlighting," McGee's biggest female fan, polygraph operator Susan Grady (Jackie Geary, above right), returns and the rest of the staff at her security company are mowed down. McGee is again taken aback by her romantic aspirations, but a friendship begins to develop that might rile Abby. "It's a fun episode that has an unexpected outcome for McGee," says Brennan. "And Grady puts Gibbs in the hot seat." Meanwhile, Jimmy is feeling pressured by his girlfriend, which leads to advice from...Tony. Uh-oh.



Brennan teases another episode: "It's road-trip time for Abby and McGee before the end of the season"; When Gibbs gets hooked up, can we handle the truth?

all his chicks.

That's not Rat Pack-like imagery!

CARROLL: We are spoiled beyond our wildest dreams, because in Harmon we have a guy who literally has been a field leader. There are the leaders who are on the sideline, too. One of 'em just walked in now. There's [exec producer] Chas. Floyd Johnson....

WEATHERLY: Oh, I thought your wife was here. [Laughter]

CARROLL: You've got to have somebody who is actually playing and calling who can see the field. We're all a part of the same team, but we've got one guy who has vision saying, "This is where we're going." It's not a hierarchy thing. And you can go to any set in its first season, maybe second season, and you'll see a respect and camaraderie. But if you go back to that same set in its sixth or seventh season ...

MURRAY: People won't be in makeup chairs with you.

CARROLL: They won't do the interview together. You'd have to interview them separately.

WEATHERLY: Try running lines with them! **CARROLL:** You wouldn't get this [group interview] for a lot of shows.

McCALLUM: That's their misfortune. See what they're missing?