



Survivor Africa Preview: Going Gabon

watch

ESCAPE INTO ENTERTAINMENT

Nuked!

The love story that is rocking daytime television

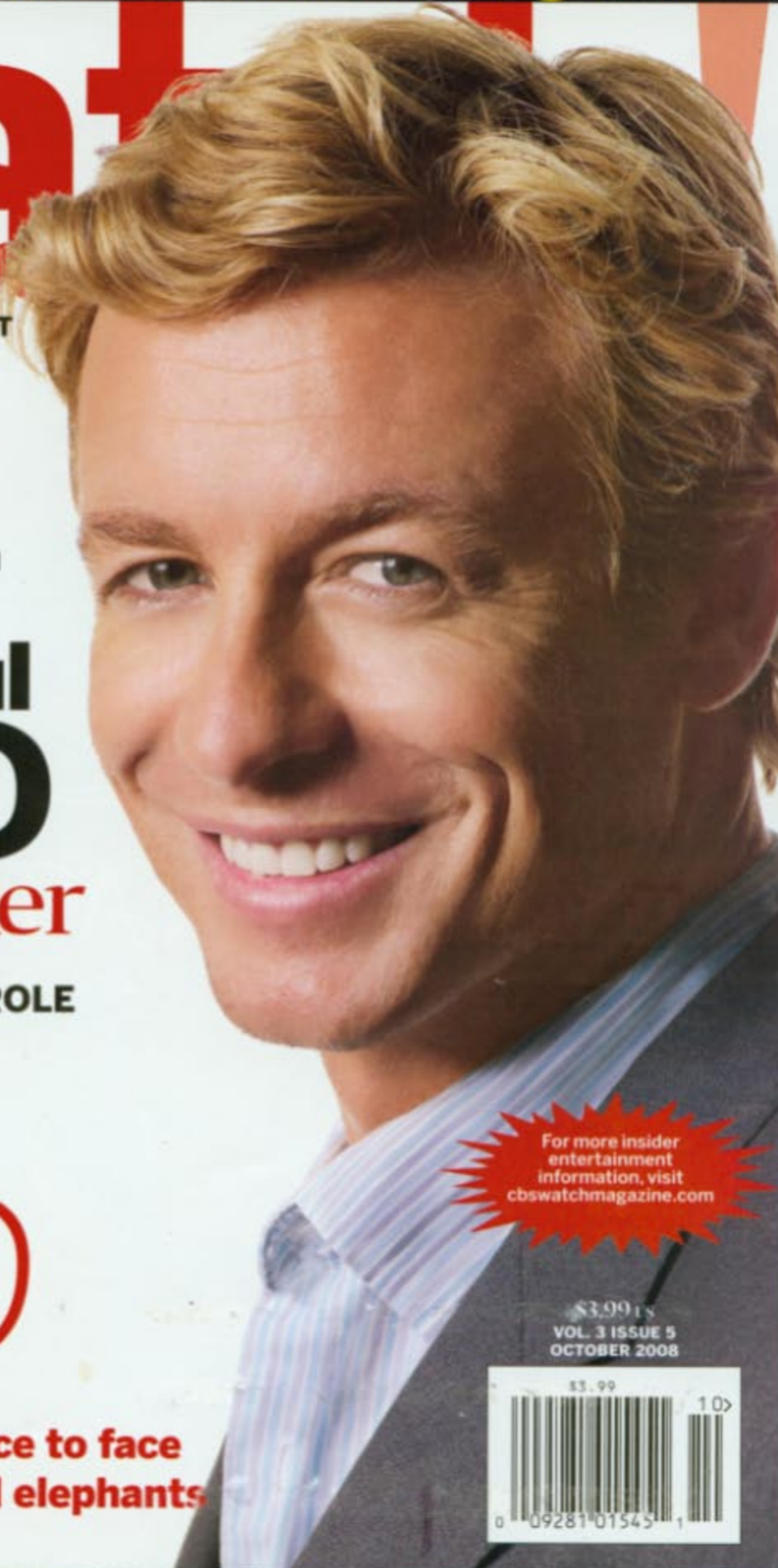
a beautiful MIND

Simon Baker

FROM *THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA* TO A STARRING ROLE AS *THE MENTALIST*

INTO THE **WILD**

WITHOUT A TRACE'S ERIC CLOSE goes face to face with lions, leopards and elephants



For more insider entertainment information, visit cbswatchmagazine.com

\$3.99 US
VOL. 3 ISSUE 5
OCTOBER 2008



Casting Call

By Jim Colucci



The new CBS lineup is chock-full of fun, sexy characters, from unlucky romantics to enigmatic crime fighters

If there is one word of description that the creators of all five new CBS fall shows tend to utter in common this year, it is this: fun. "Our audience has really responded to our procedural shows becoming more character driven," explains network president Nina Tassler. "NCIS, for example, continues to become a bigger and bigger hit with its combination of humor, suspense and action. And so, this year, we realized that no matter the show, you can have fun with your characters and still not undersell the drama." After a previous season sidetracked by a writers' strike, this fall CBS' debuting series are a carefully chosen mix of fresh and familiar faces, of adaptations of popular British and Israeli shows and a few grown right here at home. It's just the right schedule, Tassler says, smiling, to bring the fun—and yes, the sexy—back.

Worst Week

Premieres
SEPT. 22



Mondays, 9:30 p.m. EST/PST

Life, theorizes writer Matt Tarses, is measured in big events, "and we can end up making the days leading up to them fraught with things that can be surprisingly and fabulously bad." This is the core tenet of *Worst Week*, Tarses' adaptation of a short-run British series about a young couple's quest to get married, have a baby and just survive a Christmas at home.

Other networks had tried and failed in the past to capture the magic of the original show—"before anyone had played around with how to depict time," Tarses explains. "24 didn't even exist yet." Then, last fall, the writer reconceived the show for CBS, deciding to center its first season on how a young Washington couple would reveal both their engagement and their pregnancy while visiting for her father's 65th birthday party.

Unfortunately for lead character Sam Briggs, disaster seems to follow him around. So, the days leading up to the party are destined to be among Sam's worst. But, Tarses warns, we shouldn't take the show's title too literally; Sam will actually have a series of bad weeks—only the first of which will lead up to this party. Then, as the season progresses and new big life events arise, Sam will continue to miss his aim—sometimes literally, as in the pilot's uproarious scene involving a basting turkey. That moment in the kitchen is one example, the writer says, of the farcical "giant set pieces" in *Worst Week*, which will certainly have audiences buzzing. "But what I like about the show," he explains, "is that in between Sam's great hijinks, there are quiet times between this young couple

"I had written the part for a Woody Allen-ish nebbish," Tarses remembers. "But Kyle came in and read the part with this strange, attractive confidence. Now I realize that that's the only way the character is going to wear well, by not being the guy who always says, 'I'm such a loser,' but instead 'OK, we can fix this.' I wish I'd thought of it myself."

where you see their real problems. I'm just as excited about those."

In adapting the series, Tarses says he consciously chose to change Sam's character to make him more lovable, relatable and forgiveable. "There are only certain mistakes he can make before you think he's too much of an idiot," Tarses says. And the show's success would also rely heavily, its creator realized early on, on getting just the right actor to fill Sam's often-in-his-mouth shoes.

Luckily, there was Kyle Bornheimer, who caught CBS comedy chief Wendi Trilling's attention with his funny series of commercials for T-Mobile. "I had written the part for a Woody Allen-ish nebbish," Tarses says. "But Kyle came in and read the part with this strange, attractive confidence. Now I realize that that's the only way the character is going to wear well, by not being the guy who always says, 'I'm such a loser,' but instead 'OK, we can fix this.' I wish I'd thought of it myself."

Bornheimer, harking back to a particular conversation-killing joke that he once told to his own future father-in-law, says he can definitely relate to Sam. "Ironically, it's in his attempts to be really considerate of people and spread harmony where he can overdo it and end up making a situation awkward," the actor says with great enthusiasm. Bornheimer looks forward to the chance to play all sorts of moments as Sam, from tender to witty to broadly physical. "I want Matt to put me through the wringer, with crazier and crazier stuff," he says, laughing. "But I'm going to have to do some leg stretches beforehand. I'm not a kid anymore."

The Mentalist

Premieres
SEPT. 23

Tuesdays, 9 p.m. EST/PST

First there was *CSI*. Then came the *Ghost Whisperer*. Now, get ready for *The Mentalist*, a new CBS drama debuting this fall that just might combine the best elements of both. According to the show's creator, Bruno Heller, the idea for his central character, Patrick Jane—a former fake psychic who uses his acute observational skills to become a modern-day Sherlock Holmes—arose from his ongoing disagreement with his wife over the legitimacy of so-called clairvoyants. "It's a debate that happens in a lot of households. My wife is a firm believer, and I'm a skeptic," explains the writer, best known for creating HBO's critically acclaimed series *Rome*. Heller decided to take issue with what he sees as "a moral and philosophical divide present on TV, because in all these shows about psychics we're always expected to take for granted that they're real."

Still, *The Mentalist* doesn't take sides; the show's writing staff, Heller notes, consists of scribes with widely varying personal beliefs on the subject. But all agree on one thing: Real psychic powers or no, a mentalist—that is, someone skilled in a specific, time-honored set of techniques for categorizing and often pretending to supernaturally "read" human behavior—is by definition the perfect detective. "The tools that some people use to fake being a psychic are in many ways more amazing and fascinating than the skills they're pretending to have," Heller says with admiration.

CBS agreed, instantly snapping up the show after only a two-sentence pitch, the writer recalls. Then, this spring, Heller began to flesh out Patrick

Jane. The show's pilot, flashing back to the "classic comic book origins story" of the murder of Jane's wife and child, explains how the formerly profit-motivated faker transitioned into public service as a consultant for the California Bureau of Investigation. "Most consultants are playing chess with their opponents," Heller says. But, wearing his Serious Crimes Unit badge, "Jane is playing poker. His technique involves guesswork, and then aggressive backing of that guesswork with a bet."

Through years of research, Heller has learned that it takes years of apprenticeship to acquire and perfect a mentalist's skills. So how will the show's writers channel an understanding of Jane's tricks in a matter of mere months? "The ability to read what other people are thinking is a power that everyone has to some degree," the writer says. "At what point do those skills become 'psychic'? It's a fun and fascinating subject—and that's really what I think will get people talking about this show."



Gary Unmarried

Premieres
SEPT. 24

Wednesdays, 8:30 p.m. EST/PST

With its stars Jay Mohr and Paula Marshall signing on at the last minute, it was a bumpy road to completion for the pilot of *Gary Unmarried*. Just as it is for so many divorces.

Gary's creator, Ed Yeager, is himself a married man. "The show is not my life," he says. "But *Gary* is a combination of people I know, including one friend who is currently going through an awful divorce."

A former writer for ABC's *Roseanne*, Yeager has experience adapting some brutally honest moments for the sitcom format. "I found my friends' divorces sad but fascinating," he says. "And the more I thought about how widespread [divorce] is—everybody is either divorced or knows divorced people—the more I realized that this was a show."

Yeager recruited a writing staff with quite a bit of experience on the subject—and quite a few stories to tell. "This show gives them the opportunity to sit in a writers' room and purge some of this stuff, so they're ecstatic. It turns out, divorced people have a lot of pent-up rage." But, he stresses, although his main characters, sparring exes Gary (Mohr) and Allison (Marshall) may be annoyed with each other, *Gary Unmarried* is not about abject hate. "Divorced people tend to continue to have the same frustrations with each other as when they were married, but now they



don't have to make up at the end of the day," he says. "So although they continue to harbor their little resentments, most often, in the end they realize that they have to work together for the good of their kids."

Of course, even if Gary and Allison do tend to resolve their differences, that doesn't mean their audience can't enjoy some voyeuristic fun watching them battle it out along the way. "It's going to be really raw and honest, and fun to watch," Yeager promises. "Hopefully, amid all the anger, people at home will see these two characters as having something to say that's real." And, he says, they're bound to relate to Gary, who, having been burned by his breakup, seems scared to commit too quickly to new girlfriend Vanessa, played by Jaime King.

The challenge in the series' pilot, Yeager and Marshall agree, was to ensure that, as the ex-wife, Allison remains likable enough to keep our sympathies evenly matched between the quarreling pair. "What's funnier than a complaining ex?" Marshall muses. "I know that—I have an ex-husband. But the pitfall for me was not to have everyone hate Allison. You do need to see why they're not together anymore, and so what I tried to show is why they got together in the first place."

It was a tough process, Yeager says, to cast his leads. Marshall, for example, nearly had to turn down Gary because of scheduling conflicts with her recurring role in Showtime's *Californication*, but he feels that fate intervened to bring him two actors with undeniable chemistry together. "The best thing that can happen will be that the audience watches and says, 'Wow, these people are perfect for each other.' But like Sam and Diane or Will and Grace, they're not destined to be together. That's fun to watch."

Eleventh Hour

Premieres
OCT. 9

Thursdays, 10 p.m. EST/PST

Late this spring, with the writers' strike just concluded, CBS found what is likely to become its next big procedural hit literally at the *Eleventh Hour*.

It was *CSI* director/producer Danny Cannon who first brought a DVD of the four-episode British miniseries to Jerry Bruckheimer TV, the company behind many of CBS' highest-rated hours of television. "*Eleventh Hour* was right along the lines of what we love to do," says Jonathan Littman, the Bruckheimer company president. "We love mystery, and this was a truly unique way to tell a mystery that wasn't necessarily about crime but about something different, something larger."

The miniseries featured lead character Patrick Stewart, who was, Littman says, a "science cop," policing the possible misuse of emerging advances in medical and other scientific technology. "That was so fresh to us," Littman says, "that we jumped all over it."

And so did CBS. Littman recalls that network president Nina Tassler said yes to his brief pitch for an American adaptation of *Eleventh Hour* "before our feet even hit the couch." The next step: to find just the right actor to headline what would surely be one of TV's highest-profile new fall series. At the time, British actor Rufus Sewell was appearing on Broadway in the Tom Stoppard play *Rock 'n' Roll*. "Rufus is such an intriguing and unique actor, and there's a little bit of quirky in there," Littman says. "There's just something about his personality that really takes you in."

Bruckheimer and Littman flew to New York and presented the actor with a character who, Sewell says, showed a lot of potential. "My character didn't have to be reliable, square-jawed and possibly dull," he says. "There was room for some charm, a bit of danger, some eccentricity. And I could see in the coupling of my character with Marley Shelton's Rachel, as my bodyguard, the potential for a screwball-comedic, slightly light touch in the midst of this procedural structure."

Because the show features two agents investigating phenomena, Littman acknowledges that there have already been some comparisons to the long-running Fox hit *The X-Files*. And considering that that show was a "monster" success, the association isn't completely unwelcome. But where *The X-Files* traded in the supernatural and government conspiracy, *Eleventh Hour* will depict science fact, Littman says. "I got asked when we did the original *CSI*, 'How many stories can you get out of this?' My answer was that as long as people keep killing each other, we can keep doing stories. We feel the same way about this show."

Sewell says he looks forward to brushing up on the dialogue he'll be spouting for the show. "It's going to take a lot of work," he admits. "Until I see scripts, I won't get the picture of the breadth of knowledge coming my way. That's the advantage of [being] an actor. You learn more than you would if left to your own naturally lumpen devices."



The Ex List

Premieres
OCT. 3



Fridays, 9 p.m. EST/PST

Bella Bloom is a woman looking for love. Little does she know she already has it—from her alter-ego, actress Elizabeth Reaser.

From the moment she received copies of episodes of an Israeli series called *Mythological Ex*, Reaser was enamored with its lead character, Bella, a 30-something woman convinced by a bachelorette party psychic that she has only one year to find her true love hidden somewhere among men from her past, lest she remain alone forever. When CBS picked up the show's American adaptation by Diane Ruggiero, who had previously created the beloved 2000-02 CBS series *That's Life*, Reaser knew she wanted on board.

The actress says she was immediately attracted to the lighthearted tone of the new series, a refreshing departure from the heavier roles in *Saved* and *Grey's Anatomy* for which she is best known. "It's really fun for me to explore someone who's really smart, who's really happy," she explains. And yet, as Bella's reaction to the psychic's prediction proves, there's something missing in her existence as a flower shop owner and surfer girl in the town of Ocean Beach, Calif. "Bella has cultivated an amazing life for herself," Reaser says. "She's surrounded by a great group of friends; she's a great sister and a great daughter. But her luck with men? Maybe not so much."

It's a contradiction to which Reaser says she can relate. "Most women I know are single, successful

"Most women I know are single, successful and have so much going for them. But at the same time, they want to have a relationship, they want to have sex, they want to have fun. It's not a pathetic or weird thing to want a man in your life. ... Any woman who's 33 has probably had boyfriends since she was 12. Remember, The One could be some boy from kindergarten."

and have so much going for them," the actress says. "But at the same time, they want to have a relationship, they want to have sex, they want to have fun. It's not," she adds, commenting on the show's postfeminist plotline, "a pathetic or weird thing to want a man in your life."

And boy, has Bella had her share of men. Of course, to maintain the momentum of the series, Bella will have to have had a lot of past dates. So, does Bella ... er ... get around? "I think any woman who's 33 has probably had boyfriends since she was 12," Reaser says in her character's defense. "Remember, The One could be some boy from kindergarten. But no, I don't think Bella has been a nun, I'll put it that way," she adds, laughing. "She's had some fun in her time."

The fun, she says, is having this chance to play a character with vulnerability, "who's willing to put herself out there. This is not a cynical or ironic thing, but a true search for love. And to me, that's the heart of the show, and the whole point." As Bella ticks men off her list, Reaser realizes, "she has to seduce her way back into these guys' lives, often after not having seen them in years. And sometimes she gets stomped on—that's when it's hilarious. She's not a hero, but someone who continues to screw up. She can be a bit of a jackass, and I love that. After all, who wants to see someone who's really got it all together? That's the most boring thing I can think of." ❖