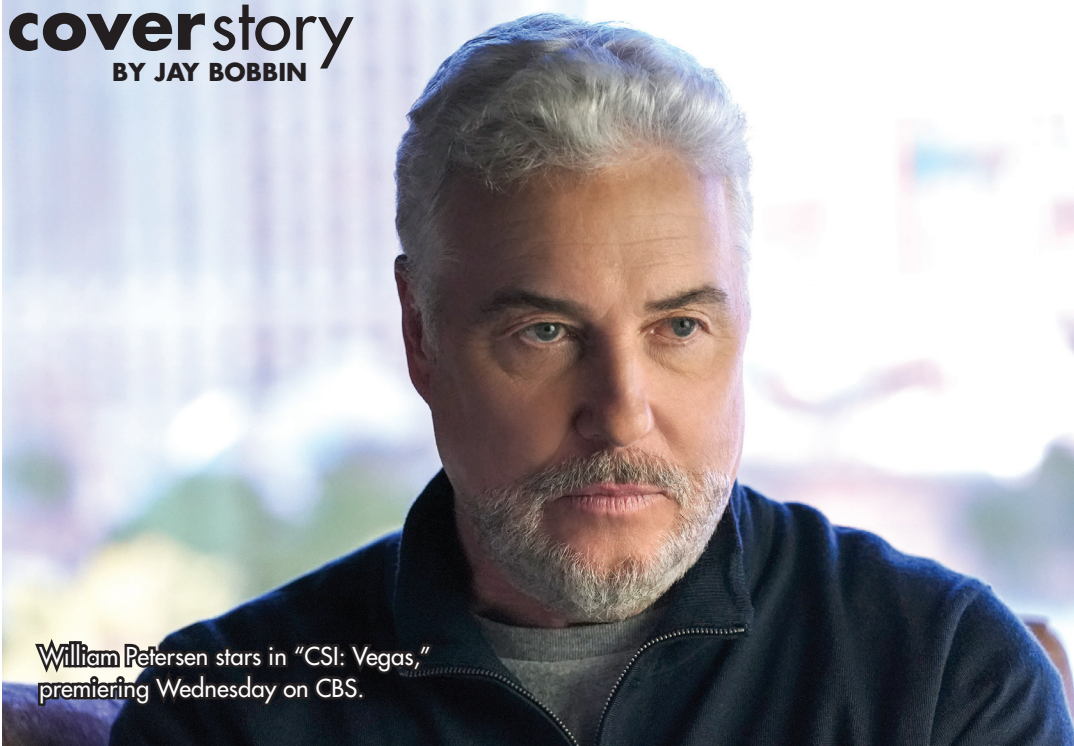


coverstory
BY JAY BOBBIN



William Petersen stars in "CSI: Vegas," premiering Wednesday on CBS.

'CSI: Vegas' gives a long-popular crime drama new life

If a new series has you thinking it's 2000 again instead of 2021, you can be forgiven.

When creator and executive producer Anthony E. Zuiker's Las Vegas-set "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" launched 21 years ago, it quickly became a bigger hit than many anticipated ... establishing a long-running franchise that also came to encompass the spinoffs "CSI: Miami," "CSI: NY" and "CSI: Cyber." Now, what's old truly is new again as CBS revisits the initial location and welcomes back some of the original cast members with the premiere of "CSI: Vegas" Wednesday, Oct. 6.

A sequel to the first show, the latest iteration reunites William Petersen (also an executive producer again) and Jorja Fox as romantically linked – in fact, formerly married – forensic detectives Gil Grissom and Sara Sidle. Other returnees who'll be familiar to the "CSI" faithful include Wallace Langham as David Hodges and (in multiple episodes) Paul Guilfoyle as Jim Brass. Paula Newsome also stars as the crime lab's current leader, and Matt Lauria, Mel Rodriguez ("The Last Man on Earth") and Mandeep Dhillon are among additional cast newcomers.

"I think that between Las Vegas, 'Miami,' 'New York' and 'Cyber,' we did hit a sort of audience exhaustion," Zuiker allows. "It was always in the back of our

minds that this would probably come back, because 'CSI' was such an iconic show and it was mystery-based, it would make perfect sense at some point. I believe we made the crime genre white-hot, and it's still pretty hot to this day, and I think the timing is interesting because the world has changed."

Indeed, then-cutting-edge forensic techniques were a big part of "CSI's" appeal ... and they still appeal to Petersen, who's an executive producer as well as a star of the new show, as he was the first time. "I sort of jumped at it," he says, "because of the idea of revisiting Grissom and Sara, to see who we are now. Plus, it's a different world than it was 20 years ago. The idea of being able to come back into the land of science, I thought, was really a great opportunity."

While allowing that "we had to diversify the cast, based on the times," Zuiker feels "CSI: Vegas" has a strong suit in presenting principal actors from the original run again.

"It wasn't that difficult" to get them back, he maintains. "It was really just sitting down with Billy (Petersen) first at a diner in downtown Los Angeles, much like when we sat down at a cafe in 1999. I expected much more of a struggle, but I think he saw enough familiar faces who had been around from Day One to say 'Yes.'"

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