

Smooth Sailing

The Last Ship's Jocko Sims talks about season two and his projects

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I find Jocko Sims patiently waiting for me in the ornate lobby of the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York City. The handsome actor looks dashing in a black V-neck and pants topped off with a grey pinstripe suit jacket. After apologizing for not arriving sooner, (I hadn't noticed his text message letting me know he is 30-minutes early until I am on my way over) I settle into the velvet-draped couch and ask him, who is Poke Chop? "Really?" he asks with disbelief. "Who told you to ask about Poke Chop? I love that. Where'd you get that?" An amused smile spreads across his face. I tell him that his *Crash* costar Jake McLaughlin is a mutual friend and that he told me to ask how he is.

"I love Jake. Cool --that is random. Poke Chop is the nickname given to my childhood best friend, who lives in Houston, Texas... He's a country boy and the dude can cook. And he's single, ladies, so if you want somebody who will take care of you, is a good guy, best friend anyone could ever have, you gotta go down to Houston, Texas and ask for Poke Chop. Tell him Jocko sent you." The Texas-born, San Antonio-raised actor has those good ol' southern values too. And, he is single. "I'm a gentleman. I believe in opening a door for a lady, doing all that," says Jocko. "The one thing I didn't bring with me from Texas... I brought my appetite, but I don't cook. My mom, dad, Poke Chop love to throw down. I'm the best critic," he says of his food tasting skills. His favorite is Sauce Piquante, a Cajun dish that Poke Chop cooks. "It's a tomato-based sauce. We put in shrimp, chicken, sausage served over a bed of rice. It's excellent." (Hint, hint, ladies, you know what they say about the way to a man's heart.)

Jocko is currently starring in TNT's *The Last Ship* and is in town to promote the show during Fleet Week (when our interview took place, late May). Since he's been here, a Marine helicopter delivered him onto the USS San Antonio Navy Ship, and he was in the Parade of Ships. "I got to hang out with Miss USA [Nia Sanchez] all day. We were on the ship taking pictures with sailors. There's this big selfie with a sailor initiative that's happening right now through my show *The Last Ship*... and through TNT up until Memorial Day." *The Last Ship* is currently in its second season, and premiered June 21. Jocko plays

Lt. Carlton Burk, a "tough guy" type. "I have to be on alert and always have my weapon with me and have my tactical team. It's just a really cool character."

Jocko explains the premise to me. On a US Navy ship for four months with no contact with their families or anyone else, the team onboard thinks they are out in the Antarctic Ocean for top secret weapon testing. Also onboard is a scientist studying birds in the arctic. The ship comes under attack and they find out that the scientist is really there to be protected by them and to find the cure for a virus that has spread around the world over the last four months and killed billions of people, including most of their families and the President. In season two, they return to spread vaccine, which is also the cure. "Of course we meet some bad guys who want to stop us from doing that. It was the number one show cable drama last year on TNT. My character this season actually got a love interest. A girl comes along and piques his interest and we'll see what happens from there." He smiles.

Last summer, Jocko appeared in Showtime's *Masters of Sex*. "I played the brother of Keke Palmer, the babysitter to Mr. and Mrs. Masters. Something happened that was kinda racially motivated 'cause the show takes place back in the 50s and I show up to their house to defend my sister. This relationship sparks between Mrs. Masters and me. A couple of years go by and before you know it... There's some crazy, memorable sex scenes," he laughs, "It was a lot of fun too and definitely my most enjoyable and rewarding role I've had thus far in my career." Will you be returning next season? I ask. "I can't say," he says with a laugh.

Because he is recognized for his dramatic portrayals onscreen --including *Jarhead*, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, *Dreamgirls* and Starz series *Crash* - Jocko thinks fans would be surprised to find out that he's actually really funny. "I'm always joking around. People can go on my Instagram and see that I'm really silly..." Hungry for more comedic roles, Jocko was pleasantly surprised when he got a call to do *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*; however, he was unable to do it because he was filming *The Last Ship*. "I was really bummed out about that." He just finished up filming the comedy, *The Sweet Life* with Abigail Spencer. "I

played the husband of Maggie Siff --that was cool. I jumped at the opportunity to do it. That was a good change of pace for me to do a comedy. That should come out next year."

Music plays another significant part in his life. On *Crash*, Jocko played Anthony Adams, a chauffeur /hip-hop artist, where he performs the song, "Head Up." Instead of the show's writers penning the song, they asked him to write it. "I got to keep ownership of the song, put it on iTunes and the fans went nuts." This experience partly influenced his new project, he tells me. A few years ago, Jocko began writing a comedic movie-music-television project based off the rap group he's in called Some Azzholes. *All Guys Are Assholes* is "about guys trying to make it in the music business, like the music version of *Entourage*. It's got that *Think Like A Man* feel. We're having a ball. We have a feature film version of it, too. Look for that movie, series, and the music we'll be putting out." Then, there's his internet radio show *Apollo Night L.A.* (ApolloNightLA.com) he hosts with his mom, where unsigned artists submit music to them to be critiqued. "It's on every Monday night at 7 p.m. PST. We have other co-hosts, comedians, celebrity guests come in. We are always sipping some sort of alcohol Monday night #sippage." He smiles. "My mom loves doing it. It's very rewarding 'cause we get to inspire artists and it's a place for them to showcase their work."

Career Switch

In high school, Jocko was set on becoming a doctor or dentist, and even wore a ring with a medical symbol on it. During his first year at the University of Houston, he took a theater class and fell in love with it. He moved out to L.A. to live with his mom, who recently relocated there for a job, and obtained his B.A. in theater from UCLA. A natural, he booked his very first audition.

Tell Us More!

What are you watching on TV?

"I'm afraid to admit this, I'm a big *American Idol* fan. It started out 15 years ago, my mom wanted to watch and I was hooked. *Survivor*—I love that show. I always imagine going on, then I second-guess it. I love those shows, *Big Brother*—something about competition, that psychological."

Who are you listening to?

"I'm a big Pharrell fan. He's been my number one music idol for a long time... I really, really wanna work with him... I've always loved Red Hot Chili Peppers. I love the new Kendrick Lamar album. I just picked up Snoop Dogg's *Bush* album."

Who would you like to work with in TV/film?

"I might trip out if I'm onset with Johnny Depp one day, like that might be surreal 'cause I'm sure he'll be playing some weird-ass character. I think that as a fan that would be really cool. The actor's actor Denzel Washington, if I could do something with him, I feel like he would really push me to another level—that would be incredible."

Don't actors ever tell their agent, 'I really want to work with so-and-so, can you get me on that film?'

"You can say that all you want, but there's so many steps to getting into a film, as the common phrase goes, it's all political or at least partly. You can wish as much as you want. I do believe in affirmations, putting stuff out there in the air. Maybe you've inspired me to start saying that now. I'm going to have to hit up my agent now and say, 'I wanna work with Denzel.'"

Your agent will be like, 'Done, actually something just landed on my desk with him and you're perfect for it.'

"Yeah, that might be, then I have to give you 10%? How about I invite you to the movie premiere?" **ML**