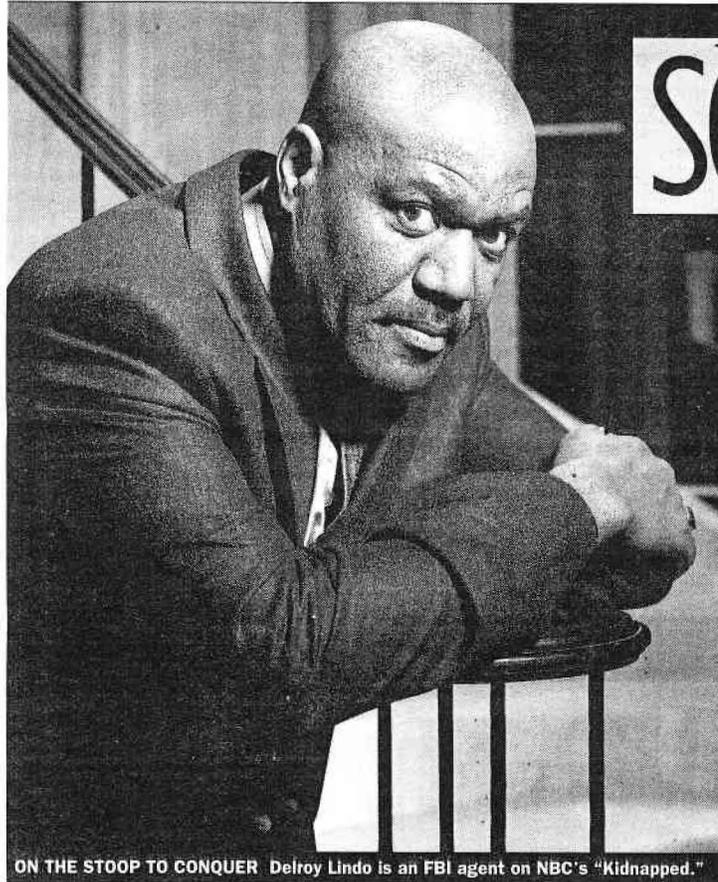


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ON THE STOOP TO CONQUER Delroy Lindo is an FBI agent on NBC's "Kidnapped."

VIRGINIA SHERWOOD/NBC

SCENE STEALER

Film and stage actor Delroy Lindo is 'Kidnapped' by NBC BY MICHAEL GILTZ

Heading into the Silvercup Studios in Astoria to tape an episode of the new NBC series "Kidnapped," Delroy Lindo says seeing the New York City skyline energizes him.

"It's fantastic!" says Lindo, who plays FBI agent Latimer King in the serialized drama beginning Wednesday at 10 p.m. One week from retirement, King is drawn into a complex kidnapping plot involving the wealthy and powerful Cain family (headed by Timothy Hutton and Dana Delany).

"I feel really good about being back in New York and working. I don't feel good about being away from my family," says Lindo, who lives with his wife and son outside San Francisco.

"My little boy just started kindergarten, and I just went back to California this weekend so I could be there for his first couple days. So it's not good being away, especially at this point in his life. But it feels really good to be in the city."

Many New Yorkers remember Lindo, 53, from the theater he did here in the late '70s and early '80s. He scored major triumphs in Athol Fugard's "Master Harold and the Boys" and August Wilson's "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" (which got him a Tony nomination) before moving on to film.

He also had memorable turns in Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" and "Crooklyn," the comedy caper "Get Shorty" and the drama "The Cider House Rules." His rare appearances on TV include his depiction of baseball player Satchel Paige in 1996's "Soul of the Game," and the recent Emmy winner "Lackawanna Blues."

Committing to a series is a new challenge for him. But seeing the cast fill up with talented actors like Hutton, Delany, Tony winner Audra McDonald and his old friend Mykelti Williamson made the leap easier, he says.

"The show has a lot of really strong people, and that's very exciting," says Lindo, who admits he has never watched much TV. (His own list of Must-See TV includes stuff like 1978's "I, Claudius.") "I wouldn't say that gave me more confi-

dence in committing to 'Kidnapped,' but it certainly made the idea of working on the project that much richer."

Lindo is looking forward to fleshing out details of Agent King as the season progresses, rather than knowing exactly where his character is headed, as when he does movies and theater.

"Was I intrigued by that process or challenge? I actually didn't think of it in those terms," says Lindo. "But that's absolutely the case. And to be honest, I'm still figuring out how to work on this. There are lots of things I don't know about Latimer King."

Lindo has directed plays and has optioned the book "Damaged Goods" to develop into a movie. He also stars in the film "Wondrous Oblivion," a British film about Jamaican immigrants in the U.K. that opened July 21 in the United States.

He's on a new show, but doesn't watch much TV.

"Wondrous Oblivion" was special for me. I wanted to do it very much for my mother and those of my mother's generation who caught all kinds of hell in England," says Lindo, whose mother was Jamaican and worked as a nurse and raised Lindo on her own. She died in 1996.

Partly as an homage to his son, Lindo — who was born in England and raised there and in Toronto before studying at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco — worked over the last few years to earn his bachelor's degree at San Francisco State University while juggling the responsibilities of his career and family.

"I'm hugely proud of that achievement," says Lindo. "Over the years I thought it would be nice to finish and actually get the piece of paper."

"Becoming a parent influenced my decision. When I speak about the importance of education to my son when he is growing up, I guess I wanted to be as legitimate as I could be." ♦



A STAGE IN HIS LIFE Lindo, with Duane Boutte, played Scott Joplin in Off-Broadway's "The Heliotrope Bouquet" in 1993.

MARTHA SWOPE