

Destined for the screen

Huntington native finds success in television, film

By ANGELA HENDERSON BENTLEY
For The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON — It's rare to know exactly what you want to do with your life at the age of 3. But it's even rarer to know at the age of 3 and then grow up and actually do it.

But that's exactly what's happened to Huntington native Joshua Harto. Harto is an actor who has appeared in dozens of television shows and movies, including "The Dark Knight" and "Iron Man." This year, Harto added television writer and producer to his resume with "Memphis Beat," the TNT drama he co-created with his wife, Liz W. Garcia.

Beverly Holley, Harto's mother, said television was all her son ever wanted to do. "I was a big TV fan, so he spent a lot of time watching TV," she said. "He would memorize everything, even commercials."

Holley, who now lives in Florida, said that Harto declared he was going to be in television at the age of three. "He really did do it," she said. "How many people get to do what they wanted to do their entire life?"

Harto was born in Huntington, but he and his mother moved away when he was 4 years old. However, until the age of 12, Harto returned to Huntington every year to spend the summer with his grandmother. He still has a lot of fond memories of the Tri-State.

"I love Huntington," he said. "The way people relate to one another there. It's part of who I am."

Some of Harto's fondest memories are from spending time at the Proctorville farm of his great aunt, Lois Hedrick, who still lives in Proctorville, though no longer at the farm. "Tons of us kids spent all day playing on the farm," he said. "We didn't have video games, just make believe. We'd make up stories and lives. It was like a big play. It's probably why I'm an actor and writer today."



Courtesy of TNT

Huntington native Joshua Harto talks to "Memphis Beat" star Jason Lee on the set of the show. Harto co-created the TNT drama with his wife, Liz W. Garcia.



Courtesy of Beverly Holley

Joshua Harto and his grandfather, Denver Holley. Holley helped inspire Harto's co-creation of the TNT drama, "Memphis Beat."

When Harto does make it back to the Tri-State, he makes sure to visit Hedrick, as well as his 90-year-old grandfather, Denver Holley, who lives in South Point. Holley still plays in the country band, The Country Good

Times, every Friday at the Milton fire department. It was Holley who helped inspire the creation of "Memphis Beat." "He introduced me to all this amazing music," Harto said. "And I realized it was coming out of

Memphis. It's the perfect place to set the show."

"Beat" stars Jason Lee as a quirky police detective with a passion for blues music. It airs Tuesdays at 10 p.m. on TNT and will air its season finale Aug. 24. George Clooney, who Harto said is "great to work with," is one of the show's executive producers.

Harto said "Beat" has been "an amazing experience - the greatest of my life. It's also the most exhausting experience of my life," he said. "But that's how you know it's something worth doing."

According to Harto, his experience as a writer has really helped him as an actor. "It sort of informs one another," he said. "Being a writer has made me a much better actor. And being an actor has allowed me to become a better writer."

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The biggest project on Harto's acting resume is the blockbuster, "The Dark Knight." Harto played Coleman Reese, who fans of the movie will recognize as the man who went on television to reveal Batman's true identity. Harto said he spent the first several days of shooting feeling like he didn't belong. "I thought I was going to get fired," he said. "I thought they had made a mistake. I had never worked on that big of a movie. It was so huge. But

it turned out to be one of the most pleasurable experiences of my life."

Harto said the nerves went away when he realized how relaxed and calm everything was. "[Knight' director] Christopher Nolan is a genius. It was like making a movie in your backyard with your friends."

Although his "Beat" experience has been a good one and Harto has enjoyed being behind the scenes, he said he'll get back in front of the camera once "Beat" wraps its season. "I could never give up acting," he said. "I miss it. I'm ready to go see what's out there."