

Just Short of Giving Up

After sparse offers, Ashlander gets job on CMT sitcom 'Working Class'

By ANGELA HENDERSON
For The Herald-Dispatch

There's a saying that when you stop looking for something, that's when you find it. And that's exactly what happened to Ashland native Steve Kazee, who was ready to give up his acting career in Los Angeles and come home to the Tri-State.

"I wasn't getting jobs. It was disheartening," Kazee said. "I'm very passionate about politics and world events. So I started to think I was in the wrong field. I informed my agent and manager I would be going home soon."

But then Kazee got an audition for a comedy pilot that went really well and he decided to give his career one more shot. It turned out to be a good decision because that audition led to a starring role in CMT's first scripted series, "Working Class," which premieres with back-to-back episodes Friday, Jan. 28, at 8 p.m.

"To get a pilot is one of the hardest things to do. To have it picked up is even harder," Kazee said. "To have my first one picked up is like winning the lottery. I'm so blessed."

"Class" stars Melissa Peterman ("Reba") as Carli Mitchell, a single mother who's struggling to provide for her three

children. Kazee plays Nick, Carli's brother, who lives with her and tries to help out with the kids.

"He's got this Peter Pan thing going on," Kazee said. "He definitely wants to be a famous musician. He's got rock star dreams on a cover band budget."

Peterman said she knew instantly that Kazee was the actor she wanted to play her brother.

"It was like we had known each other for years," she said. "You hope you get that lucky in a casting process because it needs to look like we grew up together."

"You should be very proud of your hometown boy. He's phenomenal," she said. "He is so funny in this role."

A graduate of Fairview High School, Kazee received his bachelor's degree in theatre

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Courtesy of CMT
Ashland native Steve Kazee stars in the upcoming CMT original series "Working Class."



Courtesy of Ron Jaffe/CMT

Ashland native Steve Kazee, right, and Cameron Castaneda star in the CMT original series "Working Class."



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from Morehead State University in 2002. Kazez then moved to New York, where he was one of only 18 people admitted to New York University's Tisch Graduate Acting Program.

"That changed my perspective on my life," he said.

Broadway was Kazez's next stop, where in 2006, he won the role of Sir Lancelot in "Monty Python's Spamalot." Then he went back and forth between New York City and Los Angeles, before moving to the West Coast permanently in 2009. He booked several TV guest star roles in such popular shows as "NCIS" and "CSI," but Kazez was looking for something more substantial.

"The problem with a guest star

appearance is that it's one episode and that's it," he said.

Now Kazez has a regular role in "Class," and he is eagerly awaiting its premiere.

"The show is about real people stressing through their real problems," he said. "It's really relatable to people. They can see themselves. I feel like it's a good show. I'm really happy with the finished product."

Kazez still has lots of family in the Ashland area and he returns home whenever he can.

"I'm very proud of being from the Tri-State area," he said. "I wish the entertainment capital of the world was in Lexington or Charleston so I could be closer."

And while most people dream of retiring to some exotic location, Kazez said he has other ideas.

"I'd like to retire in Kentucky," he said.