

A rebel with a cause

Published Thursday July 23rd, 2009

Bernard Robichaud, better known as 'Cyrus' on Trailer Park Boys, has come from an interesting and unusual background.

A7 Jim Lavoie

You know what it's like when you run into an athlete in public and in street clothes they look different "" that headhunting linebacker for the TiCats looks like an accountant and is not at all like you imagine him to be. The same thing goes for a lot of celebrities, politicians, and actors. But this is definitely not the case should you have a chance encounter with 'Cyrus' of the Trailer Park Boys. He looks the part almost all the time "" minus of course, the leather, guns, girls on each arm and making life hell for the TPB gang.

 [ENLARGE PHOTO](#)



At 6'1", 205 pounds, Bernie Robichaud is intimidating enough in casual attire, and creates space by just being there. He carries himself with a carriage of confidence and coolness that comes with the knowledge and experience of handling a given situation. It's easy to see how he was cast as the character Cyrus just by conversing with him.

He can articulate with the best of them but to emphasize a point he reverts to his street roots and is apt to conclude a discussion on complicated regulations by saying "Bullshit! That's crap and you know it!"

He listens intently to what he's being asked, seems to be measuring the question's worth before answering and stares directly with an intensity that is almost a glare. You get the feeling that if he wasn't working a lot as Cyrus on TPB and life had turned just a bit he could have ended up exactly the same, only as the real deal.

So the secret to success is to develop a character based on your life, pitch it to a hit TV show and you're in, right? Wrong! Robichaud's road to obtaining recognition is so unorthodox it's hard to put any sort of label on. The first indication of this is the fact he took up acting at the age of 25 after spending a transient, troubled adolescence to say the least.

Robichaud was born in Boston and grew up in Halifax where he attended J.L. Ilsley High in Halifax. Life at home was turbulent with an alcoholic father, who at one time had been a top-ranked hockey player and expected more from his son "" so much so that he spent the last couple of school years living with friends.

Like his father, Robichaud was a gifted athlete and excelled in hockey, basketball and golf.

"I learned at a young age that nothing would be just given to me so I had to work for everything and go get it," said Robichaud. "It was tough on me, but like the times you rolled with the punches, picked up street savvy and made do."

This period of his life resulted in the highly-acclaimed play Kitchen Sports, which essentially was memoirs by Robichaud.

At this point in his life, outside of his passion for sports, there was no real role model or source of motivation that was pointing him in any particular direction.

"I would have to say that a couple of athletes caught my attention for similar reasons. They both were very successful in their respective sports against all odds. One was Nate Archibald, (who had an) NBA star-studded career despite being considered too short and Phil Esposito, hockey scoring wizard despite his awkward style and lousy skating as deemed by hockey experts."

He decided to forgo university to look for a job and while working as a male model in Toronto he was told by an agent that he is missing his calling and should be an actor.

"I told him 'sure, me and 10 millions others,'" laughs Robichaud. "But it played on my mind and I thought 'why not?'"

So it was off to Dalhousie to study theater and he was accepted into first year by Patrick Young, who felt Robichaud had raw talent but not to count on acting as a profession.

"A month into university, my voice teacher Dorothy Ward, who had taught voice at Stratford, took me aside and gave me the direction I really needed," a grateful Robichaud recalls. "She said I was wasting my time in university and should have been placed in second year at the very least."

Taking her advice to heart, Robichaud took private voice lessons and subsequently dropped out before the second term. Ward arranged for a job for him at the Neptune Theatre's second stage where he was

mentored by award winning director Tom Kerr.

"This man taught me everything, every little detail, and I soaked it in," said Robichaud.

The following year Robichaud got a real break when CBC producer Sudsy Clarke asked him to play a major role which was in fact two major roles.

"I was the voice of Robert/Becky in a radio drama Becky's Name. It was obvious my voice training paid off as I was able to cover a wide range of different voices, accents and dialects," said Robichaud. "In fact, I impressed Mr. Clarke and award-winning playwright Kent Stenson so much with my voice versatility that they wrote ACTRA lobbying on my behalf for union affiliation. The end result was I was working as a professional a year and a half before the rest of my class graduated." Prior to rocking the scene with Cyrus, Robichaud has had a very active career, which now spans over 25 years. He has shared screen time with Hollywood Icons like James Caan and Kathy Bates. His movies are numerous with many lead and co-lead roles included. His Trailer Park Boys adventures include The TPB 2008 special, the new TPB feature in theatres this fall playing the recurring role of Cyrus.

The last two years has brought film work for Robichaud in New Brunswick on two separate feature films through Global Universal Inc. First with Blue Seduction starring Billy Zane and Estella Warren where he played the role of Stanley Miles, Zane's close personal friend. He has just wrapped American Sunset starring Corey Haim, Frank Molina and Angela Cullins. The feature film is a thriller extraordinaire and was shot in Fredericton and Moncton.

"Bernie has that dangerous and evil aura surrounding him that is essential to making him invaluable to my productions," said producer Jackie Giroux.

"It doesn't get any better than this, I live in Moncton, and shooting here and in Fredericton was great, bring em on," states Robichaud.

Robichaud is encouraged by the inroads being made into attracting more production to New Brunswick.

"With forward-thinking producers like Giroux and veterans like Steve Mayhew seeing the great locations available and the expertise behind the camera and in technical capacity being available locally we are on an upswing," he says. "But we lack the number of actors needed, if the powers to be would lift the restrictions and perhaps form a Maritime actor's pool which would allow actors to work in each other's provinces, align this with the tech expertise already in place and producers would be more willing to come here and film ... Build a quality studio sound stage in Moncton or Fredericton and they will come! Infrastructure of this nature would benefit any production that comes to the populated major centers."

While Robichaud awaits yet another Global Universal Inc. production later this summer he has his eyes fixed squarely on overseeing the ongoing screenwriting adaptation of his play Kitchen Sports. Tentative plans call for shooting to begin the fall of 2010.

"This is like a baby to me," says Robichaud. "It's my story and many others whose kitchen was the birthplace of myth, legend, disaster, just about anything you can think of. Here in the east, the kitchen symbolizes family harmony, discord, music, feast or famine, dreams built up or knocked down.

"Many a game has been replayed from many a vantage point with varying opinions depending on the pecking order or who happens to be in the room," he says. "But is this thing we call sports but a metaphor for life? You will find out next fall!

"Now f*ck off, I got work to do!"

Please **Log In** or **Register** FREE

You are currently not logged into this site. Please **log in** or **register** for a **FREE ONE Account**.

Logged in visitors may comment on articles, enter contests, manage home delivery holds and much more online. Your **ONE Account** grants you access to features and content across the entire CanadaEast Network of sites.