

## TOLEDO'S 'SUPERNATURAL' CONNECTION

### Sylvania area native gives city a role in his TV series

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Perhaps you've noticed something eerie about the CW series *Supernatural*. No, not the demons and monsters running amok on screen. The *deja vu*. Something about it seems strangely familiar, at least it should for Toledoans.

The truth is out there, and it's much more obvious than you might think. Look a little closer, or just ask the show's creator and executive producer, Sylvania Township native Eric Kripke.

"I'm throwing in Toledo references all the time," he said. "Every street mentioned anywhere in the entire pilot is a street in Toledo. We've had episodes set in Toledo. I'm always kind of making references to names of ... Toledo stores and businesses and things that I remember growing up."

The television show that begins its fourth season Sept. 18 has always been a cross between the *X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and thanks to Kripke, 34, it's done so with a uniquely Midwestern attitude.

"Very few writers out here get a chance to make a show, and when they do there tends to be a bias towards Los Angeles or New York or at least the coasts," he said. "It was really important to me to say I really want a Midwestern sensibility."

One simple way to do that was the soundtrack.

"I grew up listening to all the Toledo classic rock stations," said Kripke, who now lives in the Los Angeles area. "I demanded from the beginning that my show had a classic rock soundtrack because I wanted it to sound like the radio stations I grew up with."

#### INTERVIEW

[Hear Kripke talk about his show's origins](#)

When the network said *Supernatural* needed hipper tunes — not AC/DC, Foreigner, and Boston — to appeal to a young audience, Kripke put his foot down.

"I said if you try to change my music I quit," he said.

Standing firm on details like these is something the 1992 Sylvania Southview graduate didn't do on an earlier series, the short-lived, modern adaptation of *Tarzan* that debuted on the former WB network in 2003 and only lasted eight episodes.

"I let myself get bossed around," Kripke said, adding that isn't the only reason the series went south.

"*Tarzan* was going to be a crappy show no matter what," he continued. "Once I wrote the pilot, I didn't really stop to care if there was a good series behind it. ... I was really careful when I was creating *Supernatural* to create a structure or an engine that could lead itself to sort of a limitless amount of stories. ... We'll get canceled long before we run out of ghost stories."

*Supernatural*, which debuted in 2005, follows two brothers who travel around the country in a 1967 Chevy Impala battling evil paranormal creatures. Last season ended with the cliffhanger of one of the characters being sent to hell. He manages to get out this season, Kripke said, but the mystery is how and why.



Eric Kripke, left, on the set of the show he created, 'Supernatural.' (WARNER BROS. TELEVISION ENTERTAINMENT)

Locals who remember Kripke from his youth may have trouble reconciling their memories with his show's dark fascination with urban legends and horror stories.

"If anyone remembers me from high school, it's probably as kind of being a clown or telling jokes," he said.

"Sometimes my siblings or old friends of mine from Toledo will call me after seeing an episode and they say: 'What is wrong with you? Growing up we never thought there was so much wrong with you and clearly there's a lot because that is some twisted stuff you're doing.'"

One thing that was never a joke for Kripke was his desire to be in the film industry. The son of Larry and Joan Kripke made home movies as a youngster before going on to study at the University of Southern California.

In 1998, he had a short film entry at the Sundance Film Festival, and his 16-minute film, *Truly Committed*, about a couple that will kill to be together, received the audience choice award for best short film at Sundance's across-town rival, Slamdance. Then came a deal to write screenplays for DreamWorks and years of writing projects that went no where.

"I believe every failure I had taught me a lesson that got me to *Supernatural*," he said.

Now he's a driving force behind a program that averaged 2.5 million viewers for the CW during the past broadcast season, more than *Gossip Girl* or *Reaper*, according to The Nielsen Company. For those who missed it, the third season of *Supernatural* is scheduled to come out on DVD on Sept. 2.

Kripke works on everything from scripts to production. He even directed an episode and he plans on doing it again this year. It can be a grueling pace.

"You're running from one episode to another," he said. "You're always under deadlines that you can't fail."

Along the way, the father of a 1-year-old has done his best to stay true to his Toledo roots, trying to recreate on the show the feeling he had growing up here.

"It's about monsters and everything, but it's also really personal to me because ... the setting and a lot of the characters and a lot of the tone is sort of what I remember and appreciated growing up," he said.

Kripke has done more than simply create a musical vibe or sneak in a few street names. He happened to include a Toledo actress in the show as well, having met Whitmer High School graduate Adrienne Palicki on another project and discovered their similar backgrounds.

"I just loved her work on that particular pilot. And so when a part came up in *Supernatural*, I immediately thought of her, and she did great work for us," he said.

Now, she's moved on to a role in the critically acclaimed television series *Friday Night Lights*.

Kripke's plans for the future, once he's done working on this season's episodes, are pretty clear: more monsters.

"We have five seasons planned out. It's my intention to pull the plug after that," he said. "It's better to go out on top than to be on life support. ... We're trying to avoid the seasons of the show where you start going to Hawaii and having weddings and adopting precocious little children."

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