

Carey show taping is a homecoming for other cast, crew

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Prime-time TV series seldom travel far from their sound stages in Los Angeles, New York or, these days, Vancouver, British Columbia. When they do, it's usually to get background shots of a place like Chicago or to film a few brief scenes.

That's why the four-day shooting in Cleveland for the Sept. 29 episode of "The Drew Carey Show" was so notable.

The ambitious effort, concluded yesterday, brought dozens of cast and crew members to town. They booked hotel rooms, rented a staggering amount of equipment, catered meals and hired more than 400 extras for scenes that will make up more than half the episode.

It happened because Old Brooklyn native Carey wanted it to, and because he is a big enough star to go way over budget.

"But it's cheaper than China," he said with a chuckle, referring to the show's trip last year, and the ratings will be better."

They'll be better in Cleveland, anyway, where more than 10,000 fans served as unpaid extras at the new Cleveland Browns Stadium on Sunday. For some of Drew's Crew, the setting made for a real homecoming weekend.

Among the crowd was Carey's brother Roger, a software engineer from Hudson who brought their mother, Beulah, and his own family.

"It's a chance to see Drew," he said. "He works all the time."

Carey demonstrated that from the moment he arrived Thursday night at a client party for WJW Channel 8, which will carry his show in syndicated reruns starting Sept. 13, immediately asking general manager Mike Renda how commercial sales are going.

"They're going great!" Renda said.

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DREW FROM 1-E

At the end of the evening, Free-way Lanes owners Glenn Gable and Dave Patz unveiled a special Carey tribute that takes up an entire wall in the bar area — a giant caricature of the comedian. The pleased guest of honor added his signature to the portrait.

Speaking of caricatures, TV-8 distributed lens-less Drew glasses to guests. Reporter David "Mossman" Moss wore his and a bowling shirt, for a story from the scene on the 10 p.m. news, but looked uncannily like Mayberry's Floyd the Barber on "The Andy Griffith Show."

Carey arrived at the stadium before 8 a.m. Sunday, did his eight scenes, helped entertain the crowd through the day and was shooting promos with them for "Monday Night Football" until 7 p.m.

Afterward, he traveled to Oakwood to bowl with Anita Royer of Solon, national winner of his show's bloopster contest. Bowling with Drew was her grand prize — along with the check for \$100,000 he gave her.

Carey's was not the only homecoming.

Writer-producer Terry Mulroy, originally from Wickliffe, noted that his mother, Pat, and sister, Maureen Zalina, were among the extras in the stadium for Sunday's shooting.

Also in the crowd, from Lakewood, was the mother of actor John Demy. He is the stand-in for John Carroll Lynch, who plays Drew's brother, Steve, and he moved from Cleveland to Los Angeles in 1968.

Demy said he decided to get into films while working on the audio-visual club at Rocky River Junior High School — where the late Browns announcer Nev Chandler, a year older, trained him on the carbon-arc projector.

Tina Kerr, the extras casting director and crowd coordinator for the stadium shooting, is based in Los Angeles but grew up in Ravenna. Her mother, who still lives there, joined her support crew Sunday.

Kerr's biggest help on Sunday, however, came from a couple of crowd specialists: DJ Dan Beach and emcee Ben Amick, who stood on the field in an orange Browns hard hat all day, keeping fans entertained with everything from giveaways to a Big Butt Contest.

"I won't do one of these without them. I take them everywhere I go," said Kerr, who used Beach and Amick for the football movies "Waterboy," "Varsity Blues" and the coming "Any Given Sunday."

While most of the dialogue in Sunday's scenes was inaudible only a few rows away, Drew's nemesis Mimi (Kathy Kinney) supplied a notable exception. Her scripted shout of "Security!" probably startled any nearby small craft on Lake Erie.

"So nice!" director Gerry Cohen said, as he did repeatedly through the long day.

How would the scene compare to shooting in Hollywood?

"Oh, please — you can't compare," said assistant director Keith Richmond, who used to appear onscreen as the "stage manager" on "Full House." "This is where Drew's from. Good Cleveland folk."

Carey said the Browns leaving Cleveland sapped his enthusiasm for football, but the team's return has him pumped: "It's really exciting. I was so down on the NFL after they left. I never watched football except to watch Baltimore get beat. It's better now. I can really get excited."

He originally wanted to bring his show to town a week earlier, but delayed the visit because of the Aug. 21 Ku Klux Klan rally downtown.

"It was really disappointing," he said. "You know, 44 Klansmen and I can't do a show. But I'm a big believer in free speech. The best thing against bad speech is more speech, not banning the bad speech. More speech is the only remedy. . . . Every idiot should have his say. And the more they speak, the more they turn people off. So talk all you want, dummy . . . because they don't make any sense. They'll lose every time."