

'CHICAGO P.D.'

Q&A: LaRoyce Hawkins brings honor, trust, what's right to 'Chicago P.D.' role, Chicago community

Behind the Screens with Joshua Maloni

The "Chicago P.D." showrunners couldn't have found a better person to play officer Kevin Atwater than LaRoyce Hawkins.

After all, it's only fitting a character described as "an honorable and trustworthy detective who stands for what is right and always puts others before himself" is brought to life by someone who, NBC noted, "spends his time off screen helping youth from disenfranchised communities follow their dreams and recognize their potential."

"Harvey was a tough place to grow up and Hawkins shares his experiences and knowledge with kids who share a similar background. Through spoken word and speeches, he empowers them to use their stories to grow beyond their environment and avoid getting caught up in the fast life. He has partnered with We Day, Covenant House, the Salvation Army and Kicks 4 the City to make a social impact on both a national and regional level."

Hawkins has brought his life experiences to this role, giving power and grace to a member of the intelligence unit who's had many challenges – both personally and professionally.

Atwater grew up admiring his father, but would later come to resent Lew (Erik LaRay Harvey) when the family patriarch is unexpectedly sent to jail – and denies family visitation. With his mother deceased, Atwater takes it upon himself to look after his siblings, Vinessa and Jordan.

When the effects of the job – and the threats of criminals – start to mount, Atwater sends his charges off to live with an aunt.

Things only get worse at work, as Atwater draws the ire of fellow officers upon refusing to turn a blind eye to corruption.

Pressing through, Atwater purchases an apartment building wherein he can provide safe, affordable housing to neighbors in need. ... As well as Lew, who's recently resurfaced with new details on his arrest. The two are trying to reconcile, but it's a challenge.

In the next episode of "Chicago P.D.," Atwater is doing handyman work inside his complex when an unspeakable crime is committed. In



LaRoyce Hawkins as Kevin Atwater. (NBC photo: Lori Allen)

the process of trying to find out what happened, he learns his father has ties to the victim and the offender.

Q: As a viewer, it's been interesting seeing this additional side of Atwater's backstory. As a cast member – as the person who brings Atwater to life each and every week – what's been interesting to you about this storyline?

LaRoyce Hawkins: The most interesting thing for me about this storyline was what it taught me. I had to learn how to embrace my imperfections. You know, LaRoyce had to learn that, and so did Atwater.

It's funny: Sometimes we can read these scripts, and we admire our character so much that sometimes we expect them to be perfect, right? And then when they're not perfect, I think sometimes the artist can make the mistake of wanting to make them perfect. And I almost went down a dark hole trying to make Atwater as perfect as possible in this episode; and I was thankful for the reminder that humans make heroes – and not the other way around.

Hopefully, in this episode you notice Atwater in landlord mode. You know, he's not the cop. He's the landlord that's doing his best to provide the best service that he can to his tenants. And to improve a neighborhood and a community that he knows can be better. And before you know it, something dark happens. And he's a little thrown off. And we see Atwater have a very human experience before we see Atwater warm up into the

hero that he has to be to solve the case and save lives.

This episode, for me, I just want it to feel real, and I wanted that journey to be evident – not to put the cart before the horse or play the end at the beginning. There's some things that we're still listening to Eriq La Salle, and picking up lessons that he was putting down.

Q: I appreciate you sharing that with me. You mentioned there's something that is very dark and troubling that happens at the beginning of the episode. Tell me about what Atwater encounters. You mentioned the relationship with his father, and the challenge he has as the building owner. Tell us more about what he encounters and what sets this episode off.

LaRoyce Hawkins: Atwater is a little spread thin, doing his best to maintain his building, to the point where we even see him doing repairs himself. We also know that his dad lives in that building, and he can keep an eye on his father – but at the same time, him and his father aren't in the perfect pocket where they communicate that much.

And so, you'll see not just miscommunication, but missed communication over time, that they have to navigate as Atwater learns more about his dad – as he's trying to figure out a case. To learn certain things on the fly can be a little weird and uncomfortable. So, I think there's also a dynamic between the unit and Atwater's father where he finds himself being caught in the middle, and not necessarily knowing how to communicate one thing one side to the next, in order to maintain balance. I think he struggles with that, as well.

Plus, there's lives on the line, especially the life of a young kid who he sees great potential in, but also knows that he's on his way down a very dark road, if he doesn't make certain decisions. And it's up to Atwater to help him figure that out.

"Chicago P.D." airs at 10 p.m. Wednesdays on NBC, and streaming the next day on Peacock.

•Read the full Q&A online at www.wnypapers.com.

'EATING OUT WITH ERIC & STEVE'

Behind the Screens with Joshua Maloni

It's too bad the expression, "Food, folks and fun" is already taken – because what a great title that would be for the new podcast cooked up by TV stars Eric McCormack and Steven Weber.

In "Eating Out with Eric & Steve," the two longtime friends and charter Character Actors Dining Society members "yack and snack with their favorite show biz friends to share behind-the-scenes stories of their lives in entertainment."

The Hazy Mills-produced podcast debuted April 5 with guests LeVar Burton ("Roots," "Star Trek: Picard," "Reading Rainbow") and Richard Kind ("Spin City," "East New York"), who joined McCormack ("Will & Grace," "Travelers") and Weber ("Wings," "Chicago Med") in tales of starting out, breaking out, striking out and, of course, eating out.

Additional season one guests include:

- ✓ Bryan Cranston and Julie Bowen
- ✓ Tony Shalhoub and Peri Gilpin
- ✓ Lucy Davis and Alfred Molina
- ✓ Rob Morrow and Noah Wyle
- ✓ Rachael Harris and Yvette Nicole Brown
- ✓ Jason Alexander
- ✓ Rachael Leigh Cook and Kevin Pollak

"Eating Out with Eric & Steve" is a delicious dish of "inside baseball" industry workings with a sizeable side of access into the lives of some of Hollywood's hardest-working actors. The stories in episode one were interesting and funny, and the hour breezed by – as it often does when friends get-together to catch up.

New episodes debut every other Wednesday on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and anywhere podcasts can be found.

Weber said, "I have to say that Eric is the one that approached us, and he was approached by ('Will & Grace' co-star) Sean Hayes, who produces this and does 'SmartLess' and 'HypochondriActor,' among others.

"I mean, the appeal was that we like to talk; we like to eat; we like to talk to each other, and talk to our friends. And, you know, everybody had a podcast. So, we thought 'Eh, why not get into it?' But the more we talked about doing it, the more we wanted to do something a little different. And it kind of evolved into 'Eating out with Eric & Steve.'"

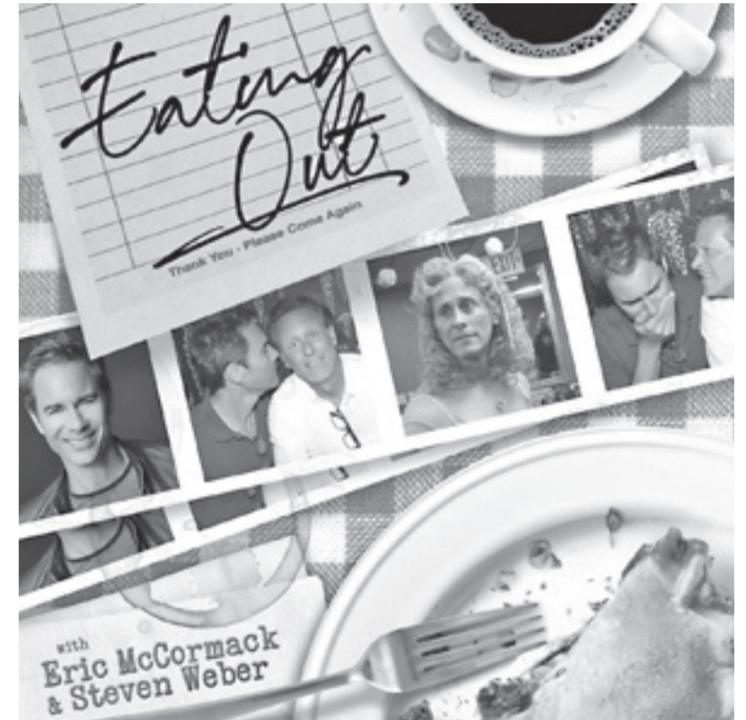
McCormack said, "And also, like so many podcasts, it evolved out of the lockdown. We were missing our friends. We were missing restaurants. We were missing any kind of experience that was not just, you know, heating up TV dinners in our own homes, and washing them first in dishwashing liquid. So, it was a bit of fantasy. For me, it was like, 'I just want to sit down with the guys that we used to go out with.' And we'd do it over Zoom, but it was not the same. And so that's why the title evolved. It's like, 'We just want to eat out again.'"

"And we have this wonderful group of men, two of whom were on that first episode – Richard Kind, LeVar Burton – that we have the greatest times with, and the most hilarious conversations over a meal in a restaurant."

He added, "We have two actors on – four actors are talking – and the stories that come out are stories that I want people to hear. We're not selling our latest product. ...

"It's almost the act of saving something for posterity, these stories: how Bryan Cranston got into it, or how Julie Bowen got 'Modern Family.' I love these stories. And I think people that love the shows, and are sort of our age, will love it. But young people hearing older actors talking about their experience, I think, is really valuable, too."

•Read the full Q&A online at www.wnypapers.com.



"Eating Out with Eric & Steve" graphic courtesy of Lippin Group

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