

## Gregg Rainwater feels duty with 'Young Riders' role

Actor brings sensitivity to role as native American

By Mary Ann Townsend

Gregg Rainwater is an in tune with nature as his character Buck Cross on ABC's "The Young Riders."

Before moving to Tucson last year for the show, Rainwater enjoyed seeking out quiet, natural environments in and around L.A. They say the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, and that's the case with Rainwater. Now that he's in the serenity of the desert around Tucson, he has a new pastime.

"Right now I'm trying to understand this computer 'thang,'" he said, discussing the new computer equipment he had just bought. "I understand kindergartners are learning computers these days, and here I am totally computer illiterate."

But the Young Rider does have several other passions: his Humane Society adoptee, a chow malamute or husky mix named K.D. (after K.D. Lang), and involvement in the Earth Communications Organization. E.C.O. consists of members of the media who try to get ecological messages across through their work. An example he gave of how the group works is the episode of "Murphy Brown" in which the "F.Y.I." staff begins recycling.

One effort he made last year was to use china plates on the set of "The Young Riders" instead of the styrofoam plates provided by the caterer. Fellow cast members once thought him strange, he said, but this year the caterer offers a choice, and many cast members are selecting china.

"What this group is trying to do is to sort of weave environmental messages into the fabric of peoples' psyche through the media, through print," he explained.

The young actor takes that sensitivity about the world into his role as mixed breed Indian Buck Cross on ABC's "The Young Riders." Buck is the product of a Kiowa Indian mother and a white trapper father. He understands both worlds, but doesn't quite fit into either.

"I like his coming from both sides

-- the white part and the Indian part. He has a wider perspective than a lot of the other riders have. He's had to, he's seen both sides. He's actually more on the stabilizing side of the characters," Rainwater said.

Rainwater in real life is part Indian. The grandson of a Cherokee and Osage Indian, Rainwater believes he has extra responsibility to provide a positive role model through the character. His fan mail seems to suggest he is succeeding.

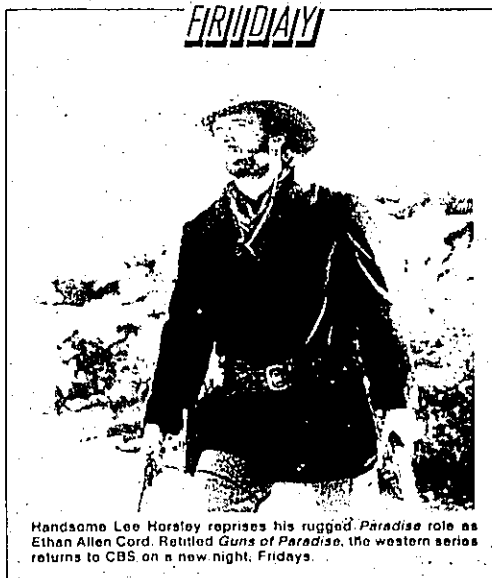
"It definitely will give you a boost when you read something about how somebody thinks differently because of a character you portray. People are seeing Buck and saying, 'He's a great guy and I just met another Indian guy who's just like Buck' or 'I never talked to him in school and

now I just found out he's a really nice person.' Things like that are great," the actor said.

The series has been noted for its authentic depiction of the Old West with an Emmy for costuming and an American Western Heritage Award.

Female fans of Rainwater's may be interested in knowing that, at present, he is not romantically involved. He's still looking for a woman who's more earthly than glamorous. "I've met many of them, but not her. That will come. Whatever will be will be," he said with an uncomfortable pause that lightened up with, "Right now I have a dog."

Gregg Rainwater stars as half-breed Indian Buck Cross in "The Young Riders," seen Saturdays on ABC. The actor respects the impact his role has on others, much like he respects the role he plays in real life.



Handsome Lee Horsley reprises his rugged *Paradise* role as Ethan Allen Cord. Retitled *Guns of Paradise*, the western series returns to CBS on a new night, Fridays.