

Coast guard crew in off-guard mode

SET LOCALLY: Steve Bacic plays a quirky captain who has a great sense of humour

Series premiere

The Guard

When and where: Tonight at 10 on Global

BY GLEN SCHAEFER
MOVIE AND TV REPORTER

Vancouver actor Steve Bacic has seen a lot of ships, in character, but his latest vessel is the closest to home.

The 42-year-old journeyman's six-foot-plus frame strode the decks of the title interstellar craft for five years as one of the ensemble on the TV sci-fi series *Andromeda*, and more recently, he was one of *Odysseus'* handful of sailors in the upcoming mythological special-effects adventure *Odysseus and the Isle of the Mists*.

His latest, airing tonight, has Bacic as the captain of a Canadian Coast Guard crew on the new TV series *The Guard*.

"The common theme here seems to be no dry land for me," says Bacic, who came to Vancouver in 1990 from his hometown of Windsor, Ont., seeking an acting career and finding all these ships. "Growing up, it was the Detroit River, this totally polluted river. I maybe went fishing once."

The Guard is set at a fictional Howe Sound port and filmed in Squamish. The real 47-foot Coast Guard lifeboat *Cape St. James* is renamed the *Cape Pacific* for the series, much of which involved Bacic and castmates in action on the water. Eight one-hour episodes were filmed last fall before reality bit into fiction with some wicked weather, and five more episodes are to be filmed starting in April.

"I'm looking forward to doing



Steve Bacic, with the beard he grew for *Odysseus* and thought he would have to lose for *Coast Guard*, is still furry. He is with co-star Claudette Mink.

more of that," says Bacic. "On a beautiful day, the backdrop is incredible. That's our backyard, we're so lucky to have that."

The show alternates its on-water action with the complicated personal lives of its crew, including co-stars Zoie Palmer, as a rescue specialist who — in the pilot episode — wakes up in a stranger's houseboat after a wild night out, and Jeremy Guilbaut as another specialist traumatized by a failed rescue.

Bacic's captain has his quirks as well, surfing porn sites in the pilot episode when he's away from the waves, then settling into a pattern of non-committal dating.

"The characters are great, we've all got our stuff, our skeletons," says Bacic, married with three children in real life. Miro, *The Guard's* captain, is "sort of an aware gigolo. He's a charming guy but he's very honest with a woman about what he wants, because he doesn't want to

hurt anybody.

"I'm having a blast, [Miro] has a really good sense of humour about life so, hopefully, the public responds and we go on for a few more years."

Doing *The Guard* has meant learning about the real coast guard as well. Bacic found out that the dress code and hairstyle guidelines weren't the regulation-military he was expecting when he showed up for shooting with the beard and shaggy hair he'd grown to play one

of *Odysseus'* crew.

That earlier show had filmed on a soundstage ship set, with blue-screen digital effects to be added later. When he met Duke Snider, the coast guard's bearded director of Pacific operations, Bacic realized he wouldn't have to shave.

Which goes to show that, for the working actor, ancient Greece and modern-day Howe Sound aren't that far apart.

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Directors Guild deal jump-starts talks with striking writers

12-WEEK DISPUTE:
'A fight between the rich and very rich'

BY ALEX STRACHAN
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Leave it to Hollywood's TV and movie directors to call for action.

Last week's last-minute deal between the Directors Guild of America and the major studios represented by the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television producers — after just five days of negotiations — has jump-started stalled talks

between the studios and striking writers.

Talks in the 12-week dispute, which has shut down virtually all TV drama and comedy production and some movie sets, are expected to resume this week, perhaps as soon as today. Talks broke off last month over the formula used to compensate writers for use of their work in new media, such as online downloads and live streaming over the Internet and cellphones.

The strike has affected many below-the-line workers, such as make-up artists, set decorators and caterers, who depend on the movie

and TV industry to earn a living. As the strike enters its fourth month, public sentiment seems to be turning against both sides in a dispute many have described as a quarrel between the rich and the very rich.

Traditionally, once one of the major Hollywood unions reaches a deal with the studios, the other unions use that agreement as a blueprint for their own negotiations. The directors' deal may fall short of the writers' hopes, however. That's because many writers rely on residuals more than directors do.

This week's talks will be watched closely by another Hollywood

union, the Screen Actors Guild, whose contract expires June 30. The actors share many of the writers' concerns, which is why many actors are refusing to cross the writers' picket lines, even though they're not on strike themselves.

The directors' agreement was reached in part because the union commissioned a \$2-million study of the financial impact of new media, before the talks began. Some analysts believe the writers' strike hastened the deal, though, by encouraging both sides to reach a deal quickly.

There has been speculation that

the writers' union may try to use the Feb. 24 Academy Awards as leverage in their negotiations when talks resume this week. This year's Golden Globes ceremony was cancelled after actors refused to cross picket lines. The writers are also expected to picket the Feb. 10 Grammy Awards ceremony, which is scheduled to air live from the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

In a group e-mail over the weekend to Writers Guild members, *ER* executive producer John Wells, a former president of the writers' union, urged his fellow writers not to dismiss the directors' deal out of hand.