

LOS ANGELES - Boardman, OH native Ted Humphrey is co-producer and writer on the upcoming new ABC series "The Nine."

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The hour-long weekly drama about nine people who were held hostage for 52 hours during a bank robbery debuts Oct. 4 at 10 p.m.

Humphrey, 37, said he always knew he wanted to work in Hollywood, writing and directing movies, but didn't know how to go about doing it. As a child he loved movies and would spend hours in front of the television watching Big Chuck & Lil' John, late-night movie hosts on WJW in Cleveland who would typically show horror, suspense and action films.

"I was hooked on horror movies," said Humphrey, "and I would stay up way too late watching them."

Humphrey grew up in Boardman, attending St. Dominic's elementary school in Youngstown and then Western Reserve Academy in Hudson. After graduating from WRA, Humphrey attended Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., majoring in history and government.

After graduating from Georgetown, Humphrey was at a loss as to what to do next. What he came up with was a far cry from his Hollywood dreams.

"I did what most people do after they finish school and don't know what to do next - I went to law school," Humphrey said, laughing.

After graduating from the University of Virginia School of Law, Humphrey worked for two years as a lawyer before deciding it was time to pursue his real dream. At age 26, he packed up his belongings and drove from Washington to Los Angeles, where he slept on the sofa of the only person he knew there: Jeff Schaffer, a good friend who had also attended Western Reserve Academy.

Schaffer, a writer for the sitcom "Seinfeld," was instrumental in helping Humphrey start his Hollywood career.

Humphrey's first break in the business came when he was asked to write a movie for Warner Brothers. The movie was never made, but Humphrey said that isn't unusual. "I would say that about 90 percent of the movies that are written are never actually made," he said. "You still get paid, but it is very frustrating because you don't get that creative fulfillment."

At this point Humphrey decided to get into writing for television because, he said, "TV writers actually get to see their work produced." Humphrey wrote for several television programs, including the 1999 CBS series "Now and Again," which required him to move to New York for a year, and the 2004 CBS drama "Dr. Vegas," starring Rob Lowe and Joe Pantoliano. He also wrote some FX television pilots for filmmaker Ridley Scott's production company, Scott Free Entertainment.

A television movie Humphrey wrote, called "The Triangle," a thriller about friends who find a haunted ocean liner while lost in the Bermuda Triangle, aired in 2001. Humphrey said he had the opportunity to write a pilot for the ABC show "Paradise" last year and that experience led him to his current job writing for "The Nine."

"I had a great experience writing a pilot for ABC last year - "Paradise" - about police corruption in Miami, and after that ABC went out of their way to get me to work on one of their shows," he said. Humphrey is one of eight writers on "The Nine," including the show's creators, siblings Hank and K.J. Steinberg.

Most television series have six to 12 writers because of the pace and pressure of putting out so many episodes.

"It is very labor-intensive," Humphrey explained. "We sit in the writers room all day long working together to come up with ideas and then one person writes that episode [using the group's ideas]."

Humphrey said writing a television show is a creative process in which the writers know the main story line of the show, but must brainstorm the details. "You tend to know the big things that are going to happen and where you are going with them, but along the way you discover the little [plot] twists," he said.

A movie that Humphrey has written is scheduled to begin production this spring. Titled "The Code," it's a thriller starring Morgan Freeman and directed by John Avnet ("Fried Green Tomatoes," "Up Close & Personal").

Humphrey's parents, Marian (Shutrump) and Ted, moved to Florida five years ago, but both grew up in the Youngstown area, where they reared their family. Humphrey's wife, Stephanie, is a fine-art photographer and is expecting their second child. Their son Danny is 2 years old.