

Regained sight testing actor's talents

There's good news around "Little House on the Prairie" — Adam Kendall is about to get his sight back. Linwood Boomer, the young actor who plays the up-until-now-blind husband of Mary Ingalls on the show, is excited about the two-part episode, which will open up new paths for both his character and his reputation as a performer.



LINWOOD BOOMER

Asked whose idea it was for Adam to regain his vision, Boomer reveals that Michael Landon (the series' star and producer) wrote the script. "I found out about it at the beginning of this year, right before the (Screen Actors' Guild) strike."

Boomer admits that the change has had its hairier moments. "It's a little scary at first, because you develop the blindness. The

blindness of the character gave me a lot of really nice actor's crutches to use, the cane and a lot of technical stuff that's easy to hide behind. Losing that was a little disconcerting at first." The filming schedule required Boomer to play Adam as a blind person one day, then as sighted the next.

"Initially," he continues, "I was also worried about losing a credit that I kept from people who have never even seen the show. A lot of people who have never seen my work hear that I play a blind person, and they instantly assume that I'm a good actor on that criterion. I think I am a good actor, but now I'm losing that automatic credit. But I've been going to the dailies and watching the film we shot the previous day, and the stuff is all just terrific!"

The actor readily stands behind the wholesome image that his popular program has created. "I think there are a lot of shows that take (the term) 'family show' in vain. 'Little House' doesn't do that; it's one of the few that's a family show, not a children's show."

Boomer's work on "Little House" has left him little time for outside projects, although he greatly enjoyed playing a young electronics genius who turned jewel thief in one of the final segments of "Hawaii Five-O."

He's not worried about typecasting, though. He recalls: "There were some people doing a series on a blind person, and I instantly got a call for that, which you might expect. Now, that one thing is sort of a moot point. The character (Adam) isn't blind anymore, so I don't need to worry about that."

With a dramatic change in his character on "Little House," Adam Kendall will be able to actually see a new horizon — and with the acting challenges that poses, so will Linwood Boomer.

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