

PostCARDS from HOLLYWOOD

A heart-to-heart with entertainment industry stars and insiders who are citizens of Cardinal Nation

By JESSICA RADLOFF

Cedric the Entertainer has never considered himself as just a comedian.

"When I began performing in St. Louis, I didn't have enough material to fill up the entire hour, so I would sing and dance in addition to my comedy routine," he says. "I was always introduced as a comedian, but I would say, 'No, introduce me as an entertainer.' The first time I was introduced as 'Cedric the Entertainer,' I had a great show, and that's how I got the name. I'm an entertainer."

Cedric Antonio Kyles, 48, has added producer to a resume that includes film and television star, voice-over artist and philanthropist, but being a Cardinals fan might be the title he's most proud to wear (after being a dad and husband, of course).

Known for his roles in "Barbershop," "Be Cool," "Madagascar," "Intolerable Cruelty," and "The Steve Harvey Show," among many, Cedric was born in Jefferson City, Mo., but considers himself a hometown St. Louis boy – he went to high school in the northern suburb of Berkeley. "I wear my Cardinals hat around L.A. all the time. We're the champs!"

That sentiment has carried over to his three children, whom Cedric insisted be fans of Cardinal Nation. "They have to be," he stresses. "My oldest daughter (Tiara), who is 23, is a diehard fan. The two younger ones (son, Croix, 12, and daughter Lucky Rose, 8) grew up in L.A., but I tell them they have to root for the Cardinals. Red just looks better on you than blue, and it's better to be a 'Bird than a Dodger."

Maybe soon Cedric will share the Redbirds love in his role as Reverend Boyce "The Voice" Ballentine, an R&B superstar-turned-minister who takes over as preacher of his father's church in St. Louis on his freshman sitcom, "The Soul Man," on TV Land.

During its first season, the comedy featured several St. Louis references, and in the future, hopefully some Cardinals



The Cardinals played the role of entertainer for Cedric in 2003, inviting him to throw out a ceremonial first pitch at Busch Memorial Stadium and bestowing a jersey, courtesy of then club president Mark Lamping.

cameos are on the way. Cedric recently sat down with *Cardinals Magazine* to talk dream co-stars, losing Albert Pujols, and the one job he'd love to have more than anything.

Because you grew up a few hours away from St. Louis, what was your first memory of really spending time in the city?

Cedric: After Jefferson City, I spent most of my young age in Caruthersville, Mo., and we would always ride into St. Louis from down south, which as a kid coming from a rural town, seeing this huge metropolis was amazing.

When did you attend your first Cardinals game?

Cedric: I was about 9 or 10 years old. My dad and his brothers were huge Cardinals fans. They would tailgate at

the old Busch Stadium, and I remember everyone in red. The field seemed so huge, and it was so cool to go inside the park and have this whole experience. I was a pretty good Little League player at the time, so I loved watching the big hitters.

Who were you most excited to see at the ballpark?

Cedric: I'm from that era where Ozzie Smith was just the man. He came out and did the flips, and was so exciting to watch as a shortstop, whether he was diving or throwing. Also, Vince Coleman and Willie McGee – those guys were really fun to watch.

And then who would have thought that kid would one day throw out a first pitch in that same ballpark, Busch Stadium II?

Cedric: I know! It was great, but my

pitch was (just) OK. It was not my best pitch. It was a little high and outside.

"The Soul Man" is set in St. Louis. We'll go out on a limb and guess you had something to do with that.

Cedric: It wasn't exactly my decision. I developed the show with (Suzanne Martin), the creator of "Hot in Cleveland," so when my character was first introduced in that show, he was in Cleveland. Suzanne said, "Is this show going to take place in Cleveland (too)?" And I was like, "No, no, no, no! My hometown would go crazy if I did that. It has to be St. Louis." And she was like, "I love that." We use the opening shot of the Arch and St. Louis. We also make a lot of cool references to St. Louis throughout the show, like Schnucks and White Castle. I love putting that stuff in, and people know exactly what I'm talking about.

Your character has worn Saint Louis University attire and a Mizzou hoops jersey. You've gotta give the Cardinals some love on a future episode!

Cedric: Yeah, we just had to get approvals with the network and the league to make sure everybody signed off on it. We got Cardinal approval at the end of the year but had already finished taping (season one). So in our second season, I'm definitely going to wear some Cardinal stuff.

Any chance you could get some of the Cardinals to come on the show?

Cedric: Oh, that would be fun. When we taped our first season, the Cardinals were in the middle of theirs, so it made it hard. When we come back for season two, though, it should be right before spring training, which would be a good opportunity for some players to show up.

Who would be your dream Cardinals guest star?

Cedric: I would like to have Ozzie as my old-school pick. David Freese would be fun. But I'd love to have Carlos Beltran. That would be hot for the show.

What kind of feedback do you hear from friends and family in St. Louis?

Cedric: Everybody has a suggestion about what I should talk about, and what streets I should mention. But people love the fact it's based in St. Louis ... it just feels authentic to them. My mom told me that some people really believe I have a church there, and they want to go visit it on Sundays.

Your TV wife, Lolli (Niecy Nash), spent some of her childhood in St. Louis.

Cedric: She still has a lot of St. Louis connections. I didn't know that until I



Cedric's new comedy, "The Soul Man," is uniform in its St. Louis tone, from his choice of locally themed apparel, to his wife in the show, Niecy Nash, who also has a Gateway City connection.



started this show with her! It was quite a surprise. A match made in Cardinal heaven.

You were recently a guest analyst on “SportsCenter.” What was that like?

Cedric: Oh man, that was really cool. For any sports fan growing up, whenever you get to go to the ESPN campus, that’s like going to the mecca. It was really cool to be part of that environment and give my opinion on sports topics. I want them to do a “JokesCenter” and then I can go on that every week.

You talked a lot about Albert Pujols’ decision to leave St. Louis for Anaheim.

Cedric: I thought it was actually a smart move for the Cardinals. Albert had been there for 11 years and proved he was at the top of his game. But for our team and all the other players we had, I couldn’t see offering somebody \$250 million to stay in St. Louis. I thought, here we are coming off a championship season and showing what a great team we are, and we would attract other great players who can help (fill that void).

I didn’t see Albert playing 10 more years in St. Louis and being obligated to that. There are certain players you would love to see retire as a Cardinal and always be a Cardinal, but I never really saw Albert like that. I thought he was great to have on our team, but I just felt that for where baseball is, and for what’s going on right now, it was a good move.


OK, “Mr. SportsCenter,” what are your thoughts on Mike Matheny’s first year as manager?

Cedric: He’s done a great job. Again, you have an exciting team that’s fun to watch and plays well together. Even when the chips are down, they have the ability to win, and do just enough to make the other team lose. He’s fitting in well with the team. I like that. We have a lot of pride in Cardinal baseball.

How do you follow the team during the season?

Cedric: I have a sports alert app where I keep up with the standings, and “SportsCenter” is my big thing for watching highlights. My doctor has box seats for the Dodgers, and he always gives me his seats when the Cardinals are there. So usually I get to see them play a couple of times while I’m in L.A.

Of all the Cardinals championships you’ve witnessed, which was the most exciting?

Cedric: ’82! I was a freshman in college at Southeast Missouri State. They win it, everybody goes crazy running around the campus, and then at least nine of us decided to drive up to St. Louis that night. We were that hyped up. We jumped into the car in the middle of the night and drove two hours to St. Louis to hang out at Busch Stadium. Last year was exciting because they were so far back before they made the playoffs and that improbable run, so that was fun. That Game 6 when we kept going back and forth ... man, that was the most awesome game ever. 

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