

# The Roanoke Times

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## Liberty High to Hollywood

Chris Ashworth plays Sergei on "The Wire."

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Liberty High School grad Chris Ashworth plays Sergei on "The Wire."

Reason No. 73 to watch "The Wire": For local boy Chris Ashworth.

The Bedford-raised actor plays Sergei, an icy-eyed Ukrainian thug, on the acclaimed HBO series. The character went to jail a few seasons ago, but returns Sunday night -- the start to the biggest week of the actor's career.

In the next five days, Ashworth appears as a corrupt DEA agent in the film "Love Lies Bleeding" alongside Christian Slater, due out Tuesday on DVD. Thursday, he plays a Marine lieutenant on the CBS drama "Without a Trace." And that same day, he heads to Utah for the Sundance Film Festival.

But the Liberty High School grad already has an adoring audience on "The Wire," a treat of a TV show in a lean winter season. Critics have applauded the show's novel-sized portrayal of crime and drugs, police and politics in Baltimore -- a Harry Potter for adults, said The New York Times.

Home for the recent holidays, Ashworth was shopping at a Best Buy in Lynchburg when a cashier told him he looked just like a character from "The Wire." "I think I've seen it," Ashworth joked, then delivered a line of dialogue in Sergei's thick Russian accent. The cashier was bowled over.

### About Chris Ashworth

- Age: 32
- Born: Farmville, Va.
- Family: Parents Mike and Pat, two sisters Lisa and Susan
- Hobbies: Muay Thai kickboxing, Jiu Jitsu, deep-sea fishing with his dad, working with youth, going to the movies
- Marital status: "Very single"

Before heading home to Los Angeles last week, Ashworth called from the airport.

### Q: What's the secret to doing a Russian accent?

I don't know where I picked it up. I grew up in the middle of nowhere, kind of like "Little House on the Prairie."

Even some Russians thought I was Russian. I ran into a drunk Russian in New York. [Switching to a Russian accent] "You bring great joy to Russia. Do not disgrace Russia." It was like, "Dude, I'm not Russian."

### Q: Why do you think you're getting parts for lawless characters?

I think it's based on "The Wire." ... I was a tough guy smacking people

- Role models: Denzel Washington, Will Smith, Robert Duvall
- On the Web: chrisashworth.com, myspace.com/chrisashworth

**"The Wire"**

- Sundays
- 9 p.m.
- HBO

around.

I'm a Christian, but I don't expect everything I do to be godly. Sergei, by far, you're not going to find him in church. I've never played a really, really good character.

**Q: Would you rather have a supporting role in a critical hit, like "The Wire," or a leading role in a flop?**

I would rather have a supporting role in "The Wire." People are constantly talking about what a great script it is, how great the acting is. When I was working with [actor] Anthony LaPlaglia on "Without a Trace," he was saying what a great show it is.

It's not a huge role, but it's so comforting. It's so easy to get down in this business. For every 99 nos, you might have one yes.

**Q: For fans of "The Wire," any hints about what we'll see on Sunday? Why is Marlo interested in Sergei?**

What can I say? Marlo and I have a little talk. That's about all I'll say.

<http://myspace.com/chrisashworth>

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