7.

WE GET A CORE CAST
The X-Men Find Their Voices

Our Team Comes Together!
(original art, courtesy of Will Meugniot)

It took some extra time, and many, many versions of recording the pilot script, but finally we had the *X-MEN:TAS* cast to whom we owe so much of the success of the series. Some people were right the moment they opened their mouths (Wolverine, Rogue). Some people had to work hard to make the mass of concerned executives say yes. Poor Alyson Court – who had starred in a series for Fox Kids TV and Sidney Iwanter as Lydia in the popular *Beetlejuice* series – had to struggle for days to get Sidney to "hear Jubilee and not Lydia" in her voice.

Even with the right cast in place, Sidney and Marvel's Joe Calamari and voice director Dan Hennessey recorded the two-part pilot *four times*, not accepting it until they all agreed that they had it right. The voice-over actors appreciated the extra-hours pay, and they were surprised and pleased at the care taken and insistence at getting the series' tone, pace, and feel right before they were allowed to go on to the next episode. This care carried on throughout the series. (You can get to know many of them better in Chapter 17, Talks with the Cast.*)*

Of the dozens of actors who lent their talents to our show, some of the principals were:

WOLVERINE ("Logan"): Cathal J. "Cal" Dodd

Wolverine's first true interpreter (courtesy of Cal Dodd)

Canada's finest (Fox Kids Network promo, '95)

"Cal" Dodd is a jazz singer who in 1992 was new to animation work and the X-Men. Casting director Karen Goora called Cal on a whim. But once we heard "that voice," we had our Wolverine. Cal continues to live in Toronto and has released a great CD of jazz standards. Please check his website (caldodd.com) and buy a copy if you'd like to hear Wolverine sing *Fly Me to the Moon.*

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ROGUE: Lenore Zann

Rogue conquers Nova Scotia
(courtesy of Lenore Zann)

Pity the poor Sentinel
(Fox Kids Network promo, '95)

Lenore Zann, our unforgettable Rogue, is one of the few cast members who doesn't live in Toronto. She's out east in Nova Scotia, where she is a member of their legislature! (Rogue as lawmaker: Do *not* cross this woman or she'll throw a bus at you.) Lenore is originally from Sydney, Australia, but moved to Canada when she was eight. She almost didn't try out for the show. It wouldn't have been the same without her.

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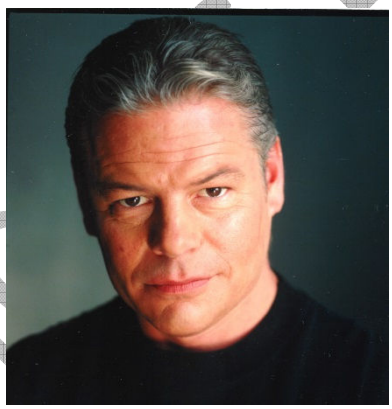
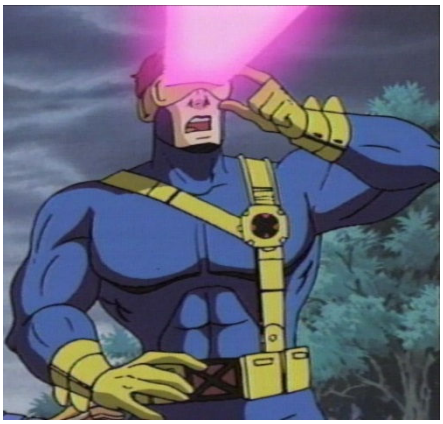
CYCLOPS ("Scott Summers"): Norm Spencer



CYCLOPS ("Scott Summers")
Norm Spencer



His power unleashed
(Fox Kids Network promo, '96)

Norm Spencer, by all accounts the funniest actor in the cast, was given the "responsible" role of Scott Summers. Norm had been the voice for Chrysler Motors ads in Canada – before Cal Dodd snagged the gig!

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JEAN GREY: Catherine Disher

Thoughtful Jean Grey
(courtesy Catherine Disher)

Jean in action
(courtesy Will Meugniot)

Catherine Disher, our Jean Grey, breaker of Wolverine's heart, was actually married, in real life, to our Professor Xavier, Cedric Smith, and had their baby late during the first season! Now a major figure in the Canadian actors union (ACTRA), Cathy looks after thousands of her colleagues: a fitting responsibility for Jean Grey.

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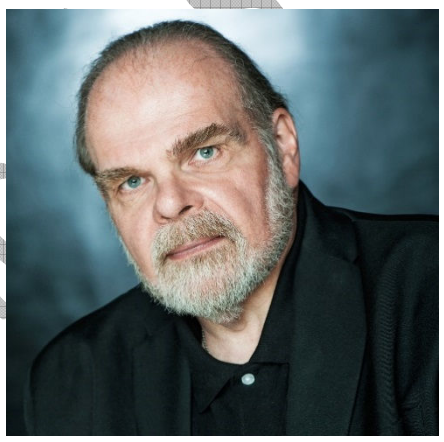
BEAST ("Dr. Hank McCoy"): George Buza



Giant of a man
(courtesy George Buza)

Beast, as Jean makes her great sacrifice, ep 33, rough storyboard
(Author's collection)

All the other actors say George Buza *is* our Beast: massive, thoughtful, articulate. George was the lone *X-MEN:TAS* cast member to grab a role in the first X-Men movie (he was a truck driver in an early attack scene). He captured Hank McCoy's tender soul.

==========

STORM ("Ororo"): Alison Sealy-Smith

Alison, born in Barbados, brought the regal touch we needed for Storm. She

Our Barbadian-Canadian
(courtesy Alison Sealy-Smith)

The amazing African
(original art, courtesy Will Meugniot)

had the additional tough job of coming in after two other actresses had already recorded the first season (please see: "Seventh Crisis: The Tale of Three Storms").

==========

GAMBIT ("Remy LeBeau"): Chris Potter

Chris was the one character from our Canadian *X-MEN:TAS* cast who chose to make a long-term career down here in Hollywood. His credits include many made-for-TV movies, a long run on *Silk Stalkings*, and a dozen episodes of *The Young and the Restless*. Unfortunately I was unable to get in contact with Chris for the book. Maybe next edition.

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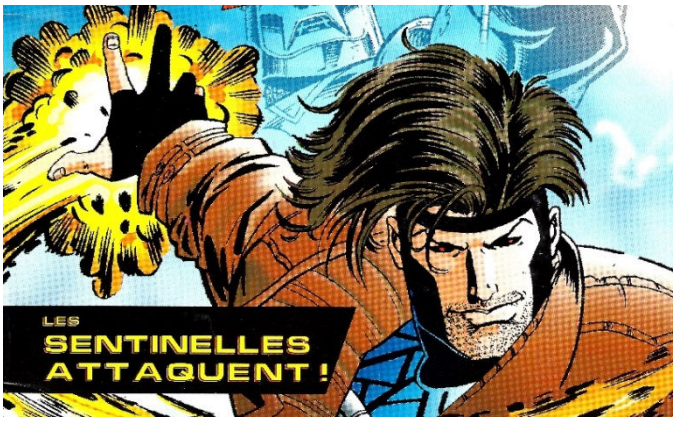

Our Cajun on the cover of the French version of an *X-MEN ADVENTURES* comic, #4, 1996, based on the stories from our series (Author's collection)

==========

JUBILEE ("Jubilation Lee"): Alyson Court

Our Teen X-Man (courtesy Alyson Court)

Jubilee discovering the X-Men's world (Fox Kids Network promo 10-2-1993)

Alyson was 18 when we started *X-MEN:TAS*, so she, like Jubilee, was a teen among raucous adults. Yet by the time she won the chance to play Jubilee she was a veteran actress having professional credits beginning at age 11 (Malani on *Ewoks*). Starting when she was 15, Alyson had in fact starred as Lydia in the Emmy-Award-winning animated series *Beetlejuice* (eventually for Sidney and Margaret and me at Fox Kids).

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MORPH: Ron Rubin

Morph at his leisure
(courtesy Ron Rubin)

Morph scared by a premonition of his death - cut scene from ep 1 – early storyboard (Author's collection)

Ron Rubin was hired to play the wild and loveable guy who gets killed off in the opening story. Somehow, he got around that. Ron in person seems *more* manic than Morph, so I imagine the voice director Dan Hennessey probably had to tone him down for the part. We needed audiences to believe that he was "the only person who ever made Logan laugh," and Ron made it happen.

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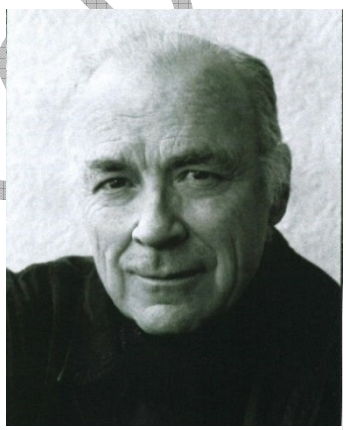
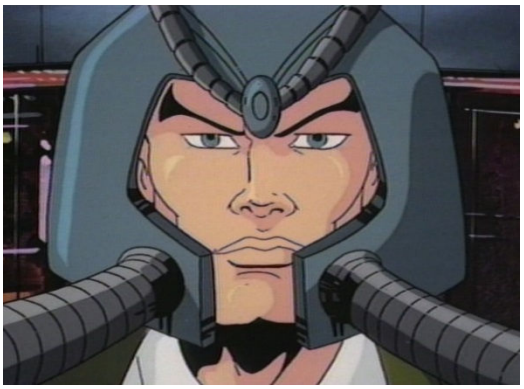
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER: Cedric Smith



Our mutant idealist
(courtesy Cedric Smith)



Xavier, searching for mutants
(Fox Kids Network promo – 10-11-93)

Cedric Smith was our Xavier, our father to a crazily varied family, our voice of ultimate authority. His performances needed to convey great compassion for his team and that he was deserving of their trust and love. Cedric was also stuck with a lot of idealistic pronouncements on the nature of human-mutant relations, which, through his skill, he made seem natural.

==========

MYSTIQUE: Jennifer Dale

Our conflicted villainess (courtesy Jennifer Dale)

Would-be assassin, ep 10, rough storyboard (Author's collection)

Jennifer played several roles on our show, but the one she will be most remembered for is the mysterious shapeshifter, Mystique. No one had more hidden connections (Rogue, Nightcrawler) and more personal baggage. Many of our characters had long-term friendships; Mystique always seemed to be alone.

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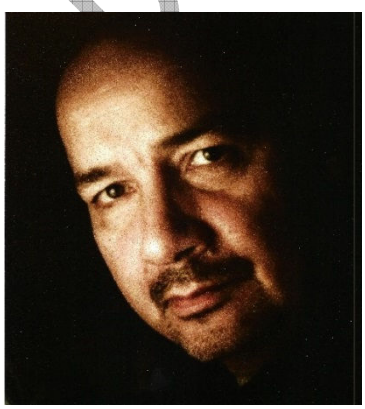
CABLE: Lawrence Bayne



Dark enough for you? (courtesy Lawrence Bayne)

Rebuilt fighter, ep 7, rough storyboard (Author's collection)

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Lawrence was also a "utility player": an actor we could count on for a major recurring role like Cable, but someone who could also become Captain America, Erik the Redd, or Fabian Cortez when we needed him to. He famously came in a close second to Cal Dodd for the Wolverine part (did we flip a coin?), but he ended up working almost as much.

==========

BISHOP: Philip Akin

Bishop, the artist
(courtesy of Philip Akin)

Bishop the warrior,
ep 12, rough storyboard
(Author's collection)

Philip, as Lucas Bishop, gave us our connection to the future. In all four of our big, multipart, time-travel stories, starting with "Days of Future Past," Bishop pushed the action. We built what was to be the finale of the series, "Beyond Good and Evil," around him. Philip brought immediate authority to a crucial recurring role.

==========

NIGHTCRAWLER ("Kurt Wagner"): Adrian Hough

Lonesome, hunted
(courtesy of A Hough)

Demonized, misunderstood:
ep 53, rough storyboard
(Author's collection)

Adrian's character only spoke in three episodes, but he made Nightcrawler memorable. A specialist in accents, his German convinced me (son of a German-American immigrant) and charmed viewers with its vulnerability. It's not easy to help Wolverine find God.

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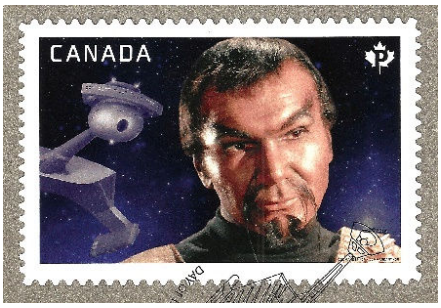
APOCALYPSE: John Colicos



**John Colicos as Kor,
Canadian stamp
(Author's collection)**

**Apocalypse,
ep 10, rough storyboard
(Author's collection)**

To my ear, the late John Colicos had the most extraordinary voice for which I have ever written words. John died in 2000, so I was unable to thank him for his performances as our Apocalypse. No matter how many other performers play this role, I will always hear him.

John's Apocalypse had a special resonance for me. My first serious fan addiction was to *Star Trek: The Original Series*. As a child, I saw the first broadcast (Sept. 1966) on the night before we moved a thousand miles to a new home (from Minnesota to Tennessee). My life was doubly changed. Throughout adolescence I memorized the 79 *Trek* episodes, and one of my favorites was "Errand of Mercy," guest-starring the very first Klingon ever seen: Kor (see above). This was John's only appearance on *Star Trek:TOS*, yet it has stayed with me forever. I cannot say the word "ve-ge-ta-ble" without thinking of him threatening to turn Spock's mind into one. I got to write for *that voice*! Nineteen episodes! Until I started this book, I had never put the two together. It's been over 50 years since John appeared on that *Star Trek* episode, and millions of others and I will keep the memory forever. If there are moments in our series that can provide anything near such pleasure to a few of our viewers, it will be as humbling as it is gratifying.

==========

Now that the stories and voices were set, every other aspect of creative production leapt to a new level. We writers could hear the actors' voices in our heads as we wrote dialogue. The quality and understanding we felt coming through the snail-mailed audio-cassette recordings gave us confidence to continue writing the

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kind of serious stories we had been trying to create (against much resistance) from the start.

With the cast voices in our heads, we couldn't wait to see how an episode would look. We couldn't wait to see the first storyboard.

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