

A&E greenlights drama pilot

'Sugarloaf' stars Matt Passmore as a Florida state cop

By Nellie Andreeva

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A&E has greenlighted "Sugarloaf," an hourlong pilot starring Matt Passmore.

The cable network also has tapped Jeffrey Nordling, John Heard and Michael Arden to co-star opposite Radha Mitchell in its other drama pilot, "The Quickening."

"Sugarloaf," from Fox TV Studios, centers on Jim Longworth (Passmore), an ex-Chicago cop who gets kicked off the force after being shot by his ex-captain, who wrongfully accused him in having an affair with his wife. After receiving a payout, Longworth, an observant detective with a sly sense of humor, moves to a small Florida town and joins the state police.

Clifton Campbell wrote "Sugarloaf" and is executive producing the pilot with Gary Randall. Peter O'Fallon is directing.

A&E had been high on the project for a while but didn't want to commit to a production order until it found the right lead actor.

"It was such a great script with such a unique character who is very good at what he does but also has a sense of humor," A&E senior vp drama programming Tana Nugent Jamieson said. "When Matt walked into the room, we knew we had the right guy -- he is so charismatic and so likable."

At the time, Passmore was tied to the 20th Century Fox TV-produced pilot "Masterwork," in which he played the lead. He was released from that project this week, leading to a quick deal for "Sugarloaf."

Passmore, a TV actor in his native Australia, is repped by WME, Roar and RGM there.

"Quickening" is toplined by Mitchell, another Australian, who plays Maggie Bird, a homicide detective demoted to a desk job after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

On the FtvS-produced pilot, Nordling will play her former partner, an ex-cop who left the force to run a detective agency after Maggie took a bullet for him and saved his life. The APA-repped Nordling is a regular on ABC's "Desperate Housewives" this season and co-starred last season on Fox's "24."

The Gersh-repped Arden ("Kings") will play an enthusiastic doctor assigned Maggie's evaluation. Heard will play Maggie's boss.

"Sugarloaf" and "Quickening" will vie for a summer launch, with A&E looking to pick up one or both to series, Nugent Jamieson said.

After a six-year hiatus, A&E re-entered the scripted-series arena with recent dramas "The Cleaner" and "The Beast," which have wrapped their runs.

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