You say you want a superstar?

Cleveland is the city that has the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, so naturally its baseball team should have someone with “rock star” status in the game.

Grady Sizemore: female favorite, all-world talent and skills, highlight-maker on a nightly basis with his glove and his slugging tendencies, and high marketability.

Sizemore didn’t and never will want that type of attention though. He may be a star in Cleveland (injuries aside, he still is) and that is all well and good for a franchise to market to their fan base when they are trying to sell seats by giving away Sizemore bobbleheads.

But the club still needs someone the club can identify with. You often don’t look towards closers because they are pitching one inning a game and the very best at that job is overshadowed by

several other megastars in the city that never sleeps.

Call me a little loopy, but Chris Perez can be that guy.

Not necessarily that guy, the face of the franchise, the player people think of when they think of the Cleveland Indians. But he can be *that* guy.

Alright man, what are you talking about?

In a way, I don't really know, but in another way, I do. Chris Perez is lively, he has a persona, he's willing to talk, and the fans are taking a liking to him.

He's becoming a cult-favorite. He's the Office Space of the Indians right now, making people laugh the first time they see his movie, but eventually being so entertaining, you can't help but watch over and over again.

Last Thursday night against the Athletics, I could see Tim Belcher calling Scott Radinsky in the bullpen with one out in the eighth inning.

"Uh yeahhhhh… Scott, I'm going to need you to have Chris come in early today. Kay? Thaaaaanks!"

One media reference aside, Perez actually resembles fictional relief pitcher Kenny Powers, portrayed by actor Danny McBride in the HBO series *Eastbound & Down*. The long hair flowing out of the back of his cap, facial hair, and a fastball ready to knock you down, Perez is Powers before he was forced into becoming a substitute gym teacher.

In the television series, Powers is a tough-nosed former major league relief pitcher who wasn't

scared of knocking down a hitter and then cursing him out. While I think Perez is a little more polite in his verbal actions, he clearly doesn't fear any hitter. He also brings the attitude one needs to be a closer to the table, one that isn't going to let you disrespect him.

Some, including myself, thought it was foolish for Perez to bad-mouth Howie Kendrick's game winning bunt earlier this season in Anaheim. With the game tied and a runner on third base, Chris Perez was called upon to come into the game and get one out to extend the game into extra innings.

Kendrick wasted no time and with the infield pulled back, dropped down a bunt that got past Perez, reached safely, and Torii Hunter scored to end the game and give the Angels a win. Needless to say, Perez wasn't happy losing the game in that fashion and went on to call Kendrick's bunt "a bad baseball play."

That "stupid play that just happened to work" won the game for the Angels and while Perez shouldn't really shoulder any of the load for the loss (he came in and made one pitch) you can tell by his comments he didn't feel good about it. His comments were met with criticism from media and fans for being a poor sport about losing, but as we stand here now, it all makes sense.

Chris Perez is going to speak his mind, right or wrong. He is going to tell it like it is and all he has to say is in defense of his team. Was it emotionally dumb? Probably, but Perez speaking up only goes to speak what kind of player he is.

Part of the Closer Character that is being created with Perez is the fire and energy he shows out on the mound when he's closing games. That's something any ninth inning man needs, or at least can benefit from having.

What started as simply a comment from catcher Chris Gimenez has now turned into a full-blown comedy routine
on twitter.

Gimenez stated that Perez shows "Pure Rage" when he's on the mound. Quickly after that, "Pure Rage" became a nickname and soon after that, a twitter account that claims to be what Chris Perez would say if he were on twitter.

Perez is actually on twitter, isn't a frequenter, and wasn't even using it much until "Pure Rage_Perez" appeared on his radar. But only as the real Chris Perez could, he has embraced the alter ego. So much so, he did a dual interview with "Pure Rage" for Anthony Castrovince, MLB.com writer for the Indians.

If anything, the alter ego only adds to the intrigue with the Indians closer. It may not really be him tweeting these hilarious comments about nailing hotdog vendors with his fastball or talking about his love for grape Gatorade, but it aids in building a following for the real Chris Perez.

If anything, more people know about Chris Perez after the production of "Pure Rage" than before. And now more people can learn about who the real Chris Perez is. I mean even now, we know Perez isn't a fan of Yankees outfielder Nick Swisher for his pre-at-bat song and dance.

So here is my plea to the Indians marketing department.

PUSH PEREZ!

At this point, they have to be running out of free things to put Grady Sizemore's mug (There's an idea, a Sizemore mug!) on and you can only produce Don Johnson Miami Vice Suit-Wearing Shin-Soo Choo bobblehead once in a lifetime. Make Chris Perez one of your faces. He's got attitude on the mound, talent to go with it, and he may have an enormous amount of staying power.

He's young and already entrenched as the Indians' closer of the present and future. Plaster that full-bearded face and long flowing hair all over your promotional schedule in 2011.

Put up a cut-out standup of him next to your pitch speed station encouraging little kids to try and beat Perez's 95 MPH fastball.

If anything at all, sell a Chris Perez hair and hat combo in the team shop, giving fans the ability to not only purchase a Chief Wahoo cap, but one that has hair extensions.

This is as close as the club will get to having Rick "Wild Thing" Vaughn on their real life team. He's marketable and he is creating a persona.

On the field, this is nothing but a good thing and the reasons don't even need to be documented.

A talented closer can change a bullpen. Look how well the pieces have fallen in line with Perez at the back-end things. Since the day Perez became the full-time closer when Kerry Wood went down on July 17, the numbers have been good. All numbers are prior to Thursday's game against Seattle.

Chris Perez: 2-0, 9/10 Saves, 19 IP, 2 ER (0.95 ERA), 8/22 BB/K

Rafael Perez: 3-1, 6 Holds, 20.1 IP, 7 ER (3.13 ERA), 6/11 BB/K

Joe Smith: 0-1, 7 Holds, 14.2 IP, 8 ER (4.91 ERA), 10/7 BB/K

Tony Sipp: 1-0, 1 Save, 3 Holds, 18.2 IP, 8 ER (3.86 ERA), 10/18 BB/K

Frank Herrmann: 0-1, 2 Holds, 19.2 IP, 12 ER (5.49 ERA), 5/6 BB/K

Combined: 6-3, 11/14 Saves, 18 Holds, 92.1 IP, 37 ER (3.61 ERA), 39/64 BB/K

With the right-handed Perez handling closing duties, the left-handed Perez has stepped up to be more of an anchor in the seventh and eighth innings and he's been up to the task. Joe Smith and Tony Sipp have also been relied on to produce and they've done just that. Up until the last few days, the numbers were much better, but a few bad spots from Smith and Rafael Perez have in some ways, ruined stellar numbers.

Perez's stability at the back end has given the rest of the crew the stability they need. Unfortunately as of late, the starting pitching has either been bad or the offense hasn't given them enough support to have a lead.

But as was examined not too long ago , help could be on the way for Perez to make his band a little stronger.

Wild hair and a strong personality, Perez is what this club needs. He isn't a bad boy or an attention seeker. He doesn't have Milton Bradley or Brandon Phillips qualities, but he does bring a certain level of attitude to a team that lacks such. Cleveland targets the same types of character guys, but in Perez they found a rare breed that includes a good level of character.

Here's your poster child Cleveland. Embrace him for all he is. He may not speak Spanish in Italian or have an awesome training video (view it at your own risk), but he's proving he can be a shutdown ninth inning arm worth putting a lot of stock into.

-

You can follow Nino on Twitter @ TheTribeDaily where he often tweets about his parties with Andy Marte and sometimes about the Indians.