

## Scott Bakula Gives Fresh Voice to

# CATS DON'T DANCE

Scott Bakula didn't have to dress for this part.

But he did have to dress up his voice. Bakula, who starred in television's hit series 'Quantum Leap', is the voice of Danny, the purrfectly poised, star-struck feline in CATS DON'T DANCE. The \$37-million full-length animation film also features the talents of Jasmine Guy, Natalie Cole, Don Knotts, George Kennedy, Kathy Najimy and Randy Newman.

Being selected the top cat for CATS DON'T DANCE wasn't a simple process, but Bakula is accustomed to challenges. "Originally, I met with the key people involved in producing the movie and recorded one of the songs from the film because (Newman) wasn't available to meet with me at the time," Bakula said. "Randy is very particular about his music and everyone wanted to make sure my voice matched his style."

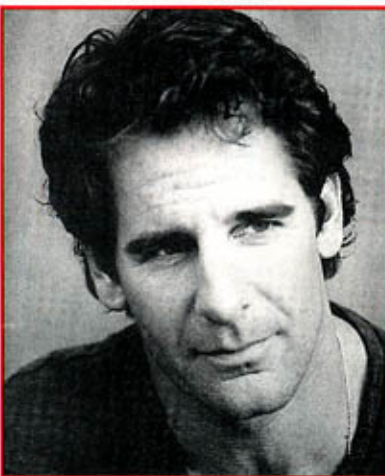
Having cleared that hurdle, Bakula next had to develop an idea of how Danny should talk. That also took time. "In the initial process you're kind of in the dark until you find out what people like. Obviously, you can do different kinds of voices. The catch is whether they like a particular one. But the chance to do the singing as well as the speaking part appealed to me," Bakula said.

Since both his parents are gifted musically, Bakula's singing ability is not a real surprise. The surprise came the day he announced to his folks that he planned to head off to New York and try his luck in the theatre. "It was a traumatic moment for them," Bakula said. "When you grow up in St. Louis, you couldn't just point to someone else's father, brother or sister and say, 'They're in the business, so why can't I be?'. It's different here in California or New York where almost every other person has a relative in the trade," Bakula said. "My decision was very hard for them because I was embarking on something they didn't have a lot of knowledge about. But I was just a 21-year-old kid with the attitude, 'Nothing can stop me'. I was very naive. Looking back, I don't think I could ever do it again."

More likely, there was something in Bakula that wouldn't let him fail. After all, he swept into New York and made his living in the musical theatre for ten years. Viewers of CATS DON'T DANCE can associate

some of Bakula's drive with Danny's determination. Fresh off the bus from Kokomo, Indiana, Danny is fascinated—not intimidated—by the Hollywood scene. He sings, "...with a little love, nothing can stop me". He commits one gaffe after another, ignores the putdowns, lets the insults slide off his furry back and, after a momentary loss of confidence, ploughs ahead until he not only achieves the break he's worked for, but shares the spotlight with an endearing cast of animal pals such as Sawyer (Guy), a lovely lass of his species, and Tillie (Najimy) a ponderous, but nimble-footed hippo.

Bakula said working on CATS DON'T DANCE was special for a variety of reasons. For instance, as a father of three children,



he has been compelled to watch every animated movie made during the last eleven years. So, he has become a *de facto* judge of their merits. "I found CATS DON'T DANCE to be very smart and clever with some really enduring characters," Bakula said, "and it's great for adults as well as kids. That's a big reason why I wanted to do the movie."

While he devoted "a fair amount of hours" to CATS DON'T DANCE, Bakula believes his time pales in comparison with the labor turned in by the director, producers and animators. "Their efforts are overwhelming to me," he said. "It involves a lot of time with little reward because we didn't get 'dailies' back to review. Once in a while you could see the pencil sketches of a sequence,

but they would be roughed in and you'd kind of have to use your imagination. It's quite an intensive art form."

CATS DON'T DANCE took five years to complete, in part because the studio changed ownership in mid-project. That posed a different kind of problem for Bakula. The new executives came in with fresh ideas about how some scenes should be played, and the slightest change in the format meant more work for Bakula and other cast members. "If they decided to re-write a section or two of the film, we had to re-record our lines," Bakula said. "It is difficult to be consistent when you're doing a voice that isn't your own," Bakula said, "and over a five-year period it becomes even harder. I'd think, 'How'd I sound five months ago?', but they'd play a tape back for me and I'd get a sense of what my pitch was and what I was trying to do with the voice."

Bakula has a good sense of where he's going in the business. His film credits include LORD OF ILLUSIONS, MY FAMILY (produced by Francis Ford Coppola) and COLOR OF NIGHT, opposite Bruce Willis. His fast-growing Bakula Productions currently is involved in film, television and legit theatre projects. "It's a whole different ballgame when you step on the other side of the line (as a producer)," Bakula said. "But it's gratifying to put together creative teams and watch them do their thing. One of the best parts of this business is working with people who are talented in areas I know nothing about."

He rubbed elbows with that kind of talent while working on CATS DON'T DANCE. The experience was both an education and a pleasure. "Some of the animated films that have come out in the last few years have sort of taken themselves a little too seriously," Bakula said. "They either are overly dramatic or have some moments I don't think are appropriate for smaller children. By contrast, CATS DON'T DANCE is great for kids and there is a lot of stuff that kids won't get, but adults will. It's an old-fashioned story told in a very contemporary way."

In other words, CATS DON'T DANCE plays as well in New York as it does in Kokomo. Or, as Bakula prefers, it plays anywhere kids can gather around a television set to be entertained.