

CYNBYTHESEA

LA FEMME NIKITA

CynbytheSea Interview with Don Francks (Walter)



The world is ever changing, but the spirit in you does not. You are truly admired for your wisdom as well as your attributes. We are forever richer in knowledge and understanding for the kindness you have bestowed upon us, and the words of your solidarity that have made you who you are. We respect you, and we acknowledge that the world is a far better place with you, as a part of it...
From the members of CynbytheSea....

1.) Please can you tell us about working with Roy in The Last Chapter 2?

DON: Such Dedication - Such Perfection - Such Total Concentration... these are but a few of the qualities that I found when Roy Dupuis was

with me in any episode of "La Femme Nikita" and TLC 2.
He is an amazing, talented human being and I am fortunate to have
been associated with him on and off the camera.

2.) This is on for my daughter age 6, what is it like playing the role on
a comic character in "My Dad The Rock Star"?

DON: To be the roadie for Rockzilla was a joy! To be the one he could
always depend on and be the one the whole family could rely upon
no matter what the situation or how silly the challenge is...sorta like
life!

3.) Don, if you took anything with you from your experience of doing
the role of Walter for 5 seasons in La Femme Nikita, What would that
be?

DON: The Fans! Or friends as I call all of you. It is 2005 AD., and still
the base is mucho strong and you all have made new friends too!
"Our friendship" spans the planet and you now begin to realize why I
call myself "Earthling". The other thing I took with me was and is the
five short years of being with Peta, Roy, Alberta, Eugene, Matthew
and the score of other actors who added so much color: not to leave
out the crew, writers, directors and musicmakers, editors, wardrobe:
all those too numerous to get mentioned, but so appreciated.

Deb Schwartz ~ Michigan, USA

4.) "Lie With Me" is still in the filming process, how long does it
usually take for completion?
And can you tell us a little about?

DON: The timespan between beginning to end to release of a film is
never the same. There are so many circumstances that enter into it's
completion. It is impossible to predict any date.

"Lie With Me" is an independent motion picture directed by eminent
black artist Clement Virgo who directed my son Rainbow Sun in three
other of his films. It stars my new friend Eric Balfour who plays the
part of my son brilliantly. It will probably carry an "X-rated" category:
Discretion!

5.) The great role you played in "La Femme Nikita" I truly thought you
did an outstanding job, Can you relate to us any of the bloopers,

strange happenings or the day to day happenings for that long of a period that made it all worthwhile?

DON: I'm afraid bloopers, strange or silly, are not in my memory. Five years of LFN were filled with hard work, lots of smiles and laughter, but because of the demands of the great writing and it's many, many locations, there was not much time to play around and stay within the shooting schedule.

6.) I've watched your children in their endeavors in the acting world, what were their thoughts about Dad and his part in "La Femme Nikita" and did they give you any "pointers" on how or what to do in a particular scene?

DON: My amazing children Cree Summer and Rainbow Sun were both busy pursuing their own show biz careers which left them no time to give me "pointers". They did however express their admiration for the series and praised me for my role.

Sandy ~ Kansas, USA

7.) You are one of my favorite characters from LFN, did you decide how to play Walter or was it the producers?

DON: When I auditioned for "La Femme Nikita", I was given the lines of "Operations" to learn. I did not get the part but weeks later, I learned that Joel Surnow, the show's Executive Producer, gave me the role of "Walter". What a blessing!

8.) My kids love you in "My Dad The Rock Star". How is it like to work with Gene Simmons?

DON: Once again an audition was required and how happy I was when the show's Producers and Gene Simmons chose me for the role of "Skunk". The only time the cast got together with Gene was by TV satellite at the launch party held before the cartoon series was shown. What big fun! What a big tongue!

9.) How did you decide to become an actor?

DON: Sometimes it seems like it was decided for me. A wonderful woman called Muriel Davis saw me in a school production when I was almost eight years old. She was a teacher of "Elocution": This

word is rarely used or heard of these days...my dictionary gives this meaning."Elocution: The art of correct intonation, inflection and gesture in public speaking or reading. manner of utterance. Effective writing or diction. Eloquence"

We were a poor family, but Miss Davis asked my parents if she could become my teacher, because she was so taken by my performance in the play and money was not an issue. "Pay what you can", she said. Entering me in Elocution Festivals gained her many kudos and new students. Each time I won in my class her reputation soared. I was truly blessed right from the start. The rest is history: singing, dancing, writing, acting, composing, mime.etc., all followed almost immediately.

Claudia Conde ~ Argentina

10.) I have read some of your poetry and I enjoyed it. One of my favorites was "I Breathed Out". Can you tell us what was the inspiration for it?

DON: My dearest wife Miss Lili left me to do a major role singing, and acting in the musical "Sweet Charity", starring Juliet Prowse at the Prince Of Wales Theatre in London, England. This short period of aloneness made me write many moments in my blackbook. I couldn't take it! Soon, I flew to her side (I would have walked on water) and we were engaged to be married..to this day..we are lovers.

11.) You and Matthew Ferguson have crossed paths even before La Femme Nikita and were very close in the show. Any good memories of your friendship with him that you could share with us?

DON: I met Matthew on the set of "La Femme Nikita", and we immediately became close friends and still are. We constantly learned of many things form each other when we weren't needed on the set. Music and sailing ships and cabbages and Kings....smile...I have not been in contact with "Birkoff" for awhile, so perhaps with this writing, I will call him soon.

12.) You are a multi-talented artist and I admire all of the things you do. One of my regrets for having missed the CSQs, was not hearing you sing.

Are there any musicians that you consider as your mentors, or that you'd like to work with in the future?

DON: Listen to all music's of the Earth. Listen to the music in your heart. don't be afraid to sing even though you don't sound like a superstar! Johann Sebastian Bach is beyond, beyond! He is truly a master to learn from. Jazz improvisation is such a gift of freedom of expression. It's like flying on the wings of a song, I believe it was Confucius who said. "if you want to know about the people, listen to the music... My mentors are many, many. What a joy music is..how blessed I am to be able to hear it!

Dana Vrajitoru ~ Indiana, USA

13.) I have recently begun acting lessons. Is there any good advice or pearls of wisdom you can share from your extensive experience that would help me in becoming a good actress?

DON: I can only hope that you're music teacher is fun and full of inspiration and will open your mind, freeing it of fears, bigotry and things you have been told are truths since you were very young. Lots to unlearn! Acting will help you sing...singing will help you dance... dancing will help your comedy....comedy will help your drama.... drama will help you're writing....writing will help your mime...mime will help your acting: and so on and so on. Try preparing an offering of an hour or so, that you can perform in front of an audience of word and music you like, which show off your abilities and diversification and your joy of life.

14.) How did it feel to go and meet your fans at the LFN conventions and realize that there are so many of us around the world who admire you and your work?

DON: I am amazed at the love showered on me and I can only hope that the fans/friends receive this precious love back from me twicfold! Thank you all for allowing a dreamer to be part of your lives!

Natalie Helmig ~ Edinburgh, Scotland

15.) How much leeway did you have in creating the charisma of Walter's personality and lines that gave such life to the series?

DON: Walter was, for a long time, a very small part of Section One who, like topsy, just grew and grew. the first time Walter met Peta, or should I say "Nikita", the viewers knew immediately he was a

lecherous old man. I ad libbed and called her "Sugar". I was told not to call her that, but I continued and very quickly the writers were putting it in the moments Peta and I were on screen. Walter, then became her close friend and confidant, and that went on/off camera too. I wish Walter had been given more to do on the series but I am thankful for the five years!

16.) Has the Red Road inspired your acting, besides your personal life?

DON: Walking the Red Road barefoot can present a dichotomy sometimes. There are those times the learning of the old ways of living, healing, medicines and tribal family values is all you wish to be a total part of and then the chance to share, communicate, and create globally with others is so inviting in this technological or technoillogical era where double-speak and mis-information abound, force-fed to us all, that you find yourself walking barefoot surrounded by cement and big business! "Ying-Yang"

Mary D. ~ Rome, Italy

17.) In some episodes on La Femme Nikita, you said a few words in Spanish, do you speak Spanish or was the writer's idea?

DON: Muy Poco Seniorita! I have always longed for an international language so everyone on this most fragile yet strong planet of wonder and unhappiness could fully understand each other. Just because Esperanto didn't fly all over, doesn't mean we cant come up with a beautiful way of communicating. I have thought of a great deal on this dream and have devised a way of it coming true... Its so much fun to dream about those things that could possibly benefit mankind!

18.) When did your passion for jazz music begin?

DON: As a child in Vancouver, British Columbia, the music of the 1930's was very much Jazz influenced. Then, renowned composers, players, lyricists and singers were cutting records, playing on radio and appearing in movies and Jazz was a large part of everyday listening, along with Blues. The songs I sung on the radio at the age of 10 were so well written and challenged the singers ability to do it right. Buying 78RPM records in the second had stores for a dime allowed me to study and love this phenomena called Jazz. the rest is history, on-going. I dearly love Astor Piazzolla!

Ana Maria -Rosario ~ ARGENTINA

19.) As I did some research on your bandana's for the CynbytheSea site, I'm curious; just how many ways can you fold a bandana to make it look different?

Did you have a favorite one? (besides the one the fans sent you)

DON: It depends on the design and which part of that you wish to display centered or off-centered. I have always loved headbands and the gift of colour or color they afforded me, when some men are quite content to be drab. They have been a part of my life for a great many years and often come in handy for other things and uses when taken off and utilized immediately with astounding results! many people say "Hi Willy..." I'm glad he saw me wearing my headbands and liked the look so much!

20.) The name "Iron Buffalo" how was it given to you and what does it mean?

DON: I had been to Red Pheasant Reserve in Saskatchewan in the middle 1960's when I was the spokesperson for a CBC TV Series called "Other Voices". A young First Nation boy had been murdered near that area and we wanted to investigate why the white men, everyone there knew, had committed the crime and were never brought to justice. Upon completion of the filming, I met a man who would become and still is a large part of my life, even though he has departed this sphere. Kingbird Baptiste invited me to be a part of a medicine ceremony in a Tipi that started at sundown Saturday night and ended sunrise on Sunday morning. A few years later, I surprised Lili by whisking her away to the reserve to be married there by, the then Chief, Kingbird, with a drum and singers and dancers and family. Kingbird named Miss Lili "Red Eagle" at the wedding and my Indian name "Iron Buffalo" ..strong like iron. Like the buffalo who knows where to go, is a good provider and good for his family. We celebrated our union and spent our honeymoon in a Tipi with twenty others singing and being part of a powerful medicine meeting.

Sandy Metzong ~ Columbus, OH

21.) Hello, Mr. Francks, Thank you for your time, and the opportunity to ask you my hearts desire! Please tell me what it is in a script that catches your attention enough to draw you into taking a part?

DON: Hello to you! Please call me Don. One of my blackbooks possesses a simple statement I penned when I was doing a Broadway show in NYC, as follows: "When all seems wrong, look to the writer, but when the writing's right: Rest Not! First there is the word, and now we can proceed, it is and always will be the prime requisite. Sometimes writers do not get all the praise and recognition they deserve. What a portrait I paint of myself..such honour or honor...such dignity...oh oh the rent must be paid...suddenly all is forgotten and becoming mercenary and act in anything! *smile*

April Guzman ~ Spokane ~ Washington,USA

22.) You've worked several times with another of my "heroes," David McCallum. You appeared with him in "A Man From UNCLE" episode, on stage in "The Flip Side", and in the movie "Terminal Choice". Which of these three genres do you prefer, and why?

DON: I just saw David McCallum a day ago on a TV show playing the part of an aging Archeologist, and was glad to see he is still working. Our three genre association was all good and he is fun to act with. As far as which medium I like to work in is concerned, it depends on the writing, the choice of Director, the Cast and Crew. If there is a lack of laughter or humor while rehearsing or working, then any genre can be a total drag.... Ladies and Gentlemen: No fun! Otherwise when all is well, one genre.. but enhances the other!

23.) You and Matthew Ferguson ("Odd Job Bob") are both doing cartoon voice-over work ("My Dad the Rock Star"). You've also done voices for video games. How is that different from what you've done before? Have you watched yourself as a cartoon/game character? What did you think?

DON: Voiceover work is one of my favorite things whether it be a cartoon or a documentary or even a clever commercial. In 1950, I started working in radio and that training along with Elocution and Concert shows, where I would do impersonations helped me do what was required and more for cartoon/Game character work. A voice director loves it when an actor can bring forth a creative approach to a character from a drawing. In the days of no television, the radio actor was able to hold the listener in rapt attention allowing the imagination to completely take over. I dig watching cartoons I've voiced. A DVD of "Rock & Rule", has just been released and I am happy with my work voicewise as "Mok".

Diane Whitehead ~ Indiana, USA

24.) If you could change but one thing in your life.. would you?
And what is that one thing...if there is something?

DON: Of course I would like to change something! Being a dreamer, I would like to change this world with all its woes, with the help of other dreamers like me, during my short life span. As John Lennon sang... "you may say I'm a dreamer..but I'm not the only one.. I hope someday you'll join us...and the world will be as one....."

Brenda Allison ~Missouri, USA

25.) How has it been to work with Paolo Virzì director of "My Name Is Tanino" and before working with him have you documented on the kind of film which he had already directed?

DON: "My Name Is Tanino", was one of the best movies I ever worked on. The passions, love, humor, warmth and friendship on the set was a big change from working on a lot of American, English and Canadian pictures. Paolo, my director, will remain one of my best memories, which means I would adore to work with him again. The main crew heads that came with him were fantastic and the general feeling while working was one of love, for what we were doing! I got the role by sheer accident, The bigtime actor who had been cast and accepted the part, pulled out at the last moment which was a shock but Paolo found me and that was it!

26.) What do you think of the new Italian cinema? Do you have a director or favorite Italian author?

DON: I must confess my knowledge of new Italian films is very limited. Here in Toronto, we have a very, very large Italian community which is fondly known as "Little Italy", and we are fortunate to have an annual Italian Film Festival, which I try to see a few offerings. I am rather old school and love to see Fellini's masterpieces when I can.
CIAO!

Hildita ~ Italy

27.) You've entertained for a long period in your life, What is the most

gratifying experience you've had in your films?

DON: It is so child-like this acting...this entertainment. Like a child mimics that which is all around, so do I. There are those who can change their visage, gait, stance, speech, pattern and tone and dialect; to the point where it takes a moment or awhile for those in the audience to realize who is playing the part under that make-up, wig, moustache, glasses.etc.. Oh yes, there are some actors who spend their entire careers playing every role as themselves but to me, it is most gratifying to be able to portray whets written!

Chrissy Langeveld ~ Netherlands

28.) Of all the Earth and its infinite beauty, what especially draws you towards it?

DON: It is my home, although I must admit it is a broken home. This Earth is a great mystery, so amazing, so unpredictable. We may know a few things about this big blue marble, but not much really, in the grand scheme of things. We certainly know how to destroy much of this Earth Home, on an ongoing basis. Not too many know the Declaration of Interdependence, practice bigotry and have no universal common teachings. It is my home.... and war is a way of life. We have such a penchant for pain, on others or self-inflicted....it is my home. Fur, Fin and Feather, Hot rooms, Cold rooms, Sandy places, Wet realms, Treed lands, Rocky domains, Hot blooded, Cold blooded, creature great and small... it is my home... A Yin Yang of plenty and of starvation...where greed is camouflaged by Patriotism, Tradition, Religion and Might; and covered with a gloss of blatant misinformation and false promise....it is OUR Home.

29.) When I walk away from this interview, with all the wisdom you know in life, is there something you can teach me I can walk away with?

DON: I know so little about anything. I am not ignorant or rich enough to have opinions. I observe everything I can. Observations can change when you stop, look and listen. There are truths that are beyond all argument. They are so basic one might take them for granted. Watch out for imposed truths given to you at birth, beliefs you might give up if you take off the blinders and observe. Once again I reiterate, "A vast wealth of unlearning awaits the tired mind" Such audaciousness for me to even attempt to answer this question... all we can do is....share.

Cynthia Wilkerson ~ Texas, USA

SPECIAL COMMENTS:

Lovings....Don Francks

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