

boldly bow-wowling where no beagle has bow-wowed before

by Larry Nemecek

(March 2003—end of Season 2 Enterprise)

© 2003; © 2009 Mystar Media

He might arguably be the most popular character on *Enterprise*. He's certainly one of the biggest scene-stealers. And to top it all off, "he" is actually a *she*.

Meet Breezy, the three-year-old female beagle who for a year now has solely portrayed Captain Archer's faithful pet Porthos aboard the NX-01--the unofficial canine mascot of both the fictional starship and, by extension, the current Star Trek flagship series. Not since the frisky Monster and sedate Brandy doubled up as Spot, Data's cat in the waning years of *The Next Generation*, has a critter been so prominently featured as a Trek regular.

"She has a good aptitude, she's smart, she likes doing it—she looks *forward* to it," says Scott Rowe, Breezy's trainer for Performing Animal Troupe, owned by Kathy and Greg Pitman. "When we get there, she knows: 'Okay! We're in the studio on the stages!'"

Just as with infants on camera, Hollywood likes to have twins or near-doubles portraying its stars of the animal world--a routine hedge against moody or tired little performers. In Porthos' case, Breezy actually began

as a young back-up to Prada, the original canine who sold the role as a beagle--and helped out with a gender switch to avoid the visual “male problem.”.

“Kathy showed them Prada,” Rowe recalls. “On the cattle call [audition], my wife and I went in and took a border collie, a black and white Boston terrier, and a third dog; two other companies showed up too. They had it narrowed down to the Boston terrier until, I think, [producer] Brannon [Braga] made a comment, ‘Oh, he’s male--what do we do about the ‘equipment’?’ The other dogs were just too big for a starship—so, it was the beagle. They made the decision based on Prada.”

While Prada debuted the part in the “Broken Bow” pilot and early episodes, both the producers and animal handlers soon began looking for a double for her. “Prada was well-trained, but not as high-energy, and pretty stand-offish towards actors,” Breezy’s trainer explains. “It’s kinda tough to have a dog playing the part of having a relationship with an actor when it isn’t there.”

Enter the less-seasoned but up-and-coming successor. “As Breezy became more able to do the job, she worked her way in,” Rowe notes. “Prada pretty much carried the first few episodes, and then I started getting in Breezy in as I could, just on real easy stuff--like laying over there on the bed [in Archer’s quarters], where it doesn’t require much of anything.”

Actually, Breezy’s debut came in the outdoor scenes of the second one-hour episode after the pilot, “Strange New World,” and showed off what “won” her the role. “Her first appearance was coming out of the shuttlepod, ’cause Prada kinda meandered out, and they wanted [to look like] this was the first time this dog’s been on a planet in months, she’d been trapped inside—and boy, [Breezy] did it,” Rowe recalls. “She was too fast for the Steadicam guy and Marvin [Rush, director of photography] ended up doing a hand-held [camera] and just tracking back with her as she came out.”

Breezy has had the role solo ever since late in Season 1, when Prada last appeared in the Risa villa scenes of “Two Nights and Two Days.” There, Prada’s experience as “lead beagle” for the film *Cats & Dogs* came in handy for working opposite fellow *C&D* co-star Maggie, a Chinese crested who played Rhylo, the pet of a disguised Tandarman woman with strange designs on Porthos’ owner. “Those dogs lived together, they knew each other, they had worked together before—it was just easier,” notes Rowe, who worked the film with them as well.

While Porthos has been seen in 20 of *Enterprise*’s 51 titles so far, only a handful have been major appearances. The oft-seen moments of relaxation in quarters are not difficult, Rowe says, while a busy corridor scene from “Catwalk” is typical of tougher assignments for animal performers—and their trainers.

“It’s so crowded and there’s so many people in there,” Rowe explains. “There’s dialogue going on, and I’ve gotta try to keep her focused on where I’m at. And she got lost a few times and would end up over here on this side of camera, or she followed the guys down the hall one time . . .” But Breezy is, after all, only canine—and in the end she nails the shot.

The relatively simple de-con rubdown scene that opens “A Night In Sickbay,” with Breezy as Porthos on a bench and profile to camera, poses another problem with its tight, closed four-wall set. “Normally, I’m wherever they want the dog looking—either on the floor or out a door,” Rowe explains. “For that scene I had no contact with her--once the door closes on her, she’s on her own. I exited out that door, so that’s the last place she sees me and so hopefully she’s going to focus her attention over there, rather than looking out over at the camera. . . .Once I put her on the stand and backed out, I’ve got no idea what she’s doing. On a feature film, I would have asked for a monitor.”

Breezy's pep also served her well in Season 1's "Acquisition," when she was called on to pop out of a box after her master has subdued the ship-stalking Ferengi who had sealed her into it. "That was a little tough to prep, 'cause you're enclosing her into a dark area," her trainer says. "They wrote that she pops right out when he opens the lid ... With Breezy it doesn't take much at all. When I know something like that's going on I try to get there early and do my own prep."

Even moreso, for "A Night In Sickbay" Rowe asked for a practice mock-up of the deep immersion tank so the short-legged dog could practice the desired leap, well before she had to do it on cue with cameras rolling. "By the time we went in on that one day to prep on set with Scott, she was jumping out of it into my arms," Rowe says, "but I had to make sure she's going to jump out and do it into *Scott's* arms."

Paws down, though, Rowe says Breezy's toughest challenge came when scenes of an unconscious Porthos in Phlox's isolation chamber in the same episode required her to *throttle* all that energy. "She had to stay in there with her head down and not be distracted," he recalls, "during some very long Phlox-Archer dialogue." A prop "stunt dog" was used at times, but scenes up to and including those where the actors petted her inside the tank via isolation gloves really tested Breezy's mettle. "That was hard because of all their movement," Rowe said, "and she's supposed to be basically comatose until that final time--and in the master shots, too, when Scott wakes up later."

The trainer has nothing but praise for the *Enterprise* staff and crew, much less Breezy's main "co-star." "Scott [Bakula] obviously loves animals, and he's very professional," Rowe says. "And he thinks on his feet—if I miscue the dog, or the dog misunderstands, he picks it up and carries the scene. He doesn't just freeze and end the take; he tries to continue through. In many ways, he's the energy of the show; when he shows up, the energy goes up."

Like her human co-stars, Breezy begins her performing days with the canine version of a make-up call—actually, the day before—to blacken the nape of her neck and match Prada’s original look, a relatively minor change and one that becomes less needed as her hair naturally darkens with age.

“She’s on a padded coffee table inside the house—we do it here before we go down to the studio,” Rowe explains. “We use a dye that’s hypo-allergenic—it’s permanent hair dye for humans; we picked one that has no ammonia, nothing really bad in it.” The gel is worked up under the hair, deep down to give it more staying power, and then rinsed off after a 20-30 minute set.

Breezy also gets pampered a little bit on call days: “I get up early--she sleeps in for an hour or two after I get up,” the trainer adds with a laugh, “and then I let her outside to ‘take care of business.’ ” The trip down to Paramount Pictures in typical Los Angeles traffic can take anywhere from 40 minutes to two hours, depending on the time of day, so the van is fully equipped with added air conditioning in addition to Breezy’s travel box. Dog and trainer then retire to a nearby grassy area at the lot between takes, since there usually is no need for a pen nearby.

“If it’s going to be a long scene, like ‘A Night in Sickbay,’ I had ’em create a little pen for her nearby so we didn’t wear her out coming and going,” he explains. “It’s going to burn her energy up--the further she has to walk, the less energy she has on set. [This was] nice and quiet and dark—she could go in there and relax.”

And what *does* Breezy do to relax? Well, there’s food, for one thing—good healthy vittles that come in handy for positive reinforcement in training. From pineapple and cantaloupe—“Some dogs won’t eat fruits and vegetables, but she does,” Rowe says—to even barbecue, and almost anything with garlic: chicken, beef, or pork loin. “Most dogs like that smell and taste,” he adds. “I tend not to use hot dogs and stuff like that to train with—I figure we’re making enough money, I can get out and buy

meat! The hot dogs—they have a lot of salt, and ’way too much of everything in ’em.

And Windy *can* relax, too, with no real competition breathing down her neck. Rowe says everyone would like to have a back-up dog besides the older Prada, now almost 6, but two-year-old Windy--the original heir apparent—got a little spooked during a simple tryout in “Catwalk” when carried by her “master.” “As soon as I put her in his arms she just started quivering,” the trainer recalls, “and I said ‘OK, we don’t want to do this.’ Scott didn’t like it himself, and I didn’t like it. So we just have to socialize her a little more, and she may warm up; she’s just not ready yet. And we are still looking.”

Meanwhile, even Breezy is still learning—right along with her trainer. To cap off that extensive sequence in “A Night in Sickbay,” Porthos not only leaps from his isolation tank but shows how much better he feels by eagerly licking his master. Breezy is as friendly as they come, but her resistance to being *that* friendly proved a puzzle until they realized: the makeup! “She’s a beagle, she has a very sensitive nose—it stinks, to her,” Rowe says. “And anytime she wants to do those kisses, its real tough.” The answer? Pending more training, it’s garlic, or course: juice from garlic chicken bits brought along as reward treats... and smeared on the target.

“I don’t think any of the actors like having anything put on their face like that,” he adds, praising Bakula’s patience, “and the makeup people absolutely hate it, of course.”

Just all a part of a dog’s life on the ol’ NX-01.

§ § §

First published in Communicator 146