



Photo: Randy Tepper All Beauty & the Beast Copyright 1989 Republic Pictures TV/CBS

Money Isn't Everything

As multi-millionaire Elliot Burch, Edward Albert found something more precious than gold in "Beauty & the Beast."

By DESIRE GONZALES



Photo: Wynn Heston

If *Beauty & the Beast* had survived (on CBS), so would have Elliot Burch (Albert), as a man Catherine (Hamilton) never knew.

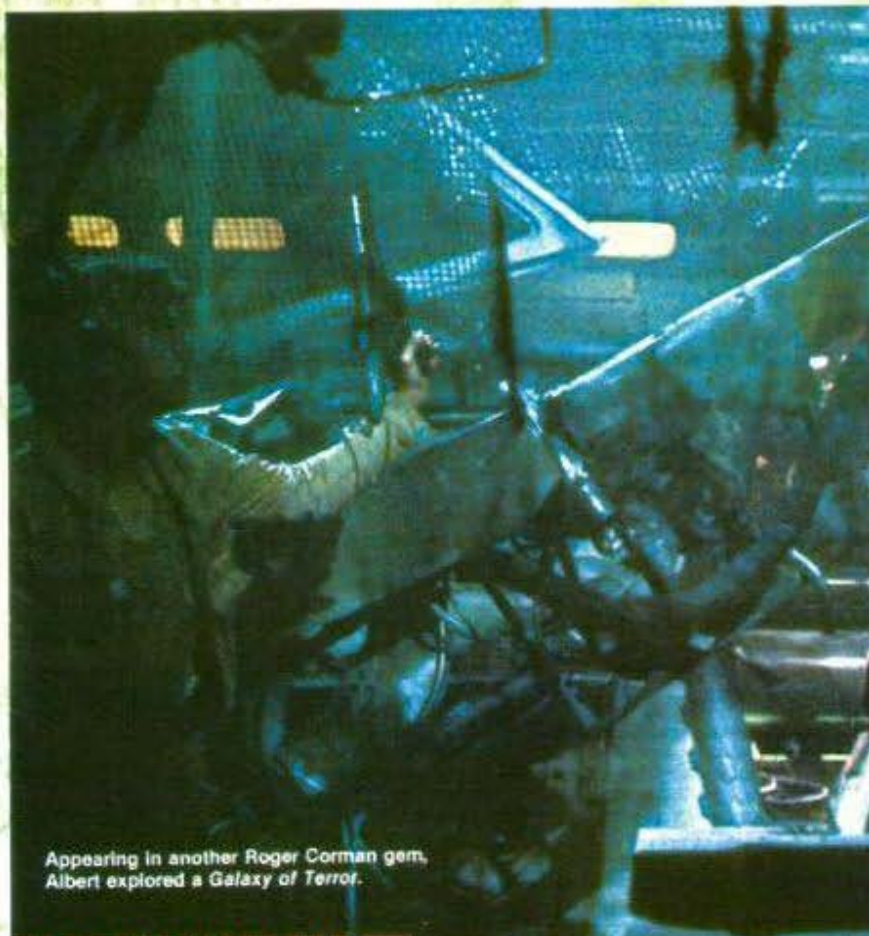
The truth of it is...love. Love does conquer all. The commitment to romantic love—when it's the most passe thing in the last decade—touched a chord in people. It touched a chord in me. There's a lot of fascinating, magical stuff in all that. On top of which, to finish a show with a quote from Percy Shelley or John Keats or William Blake can't be all bad."

In the Sandcastle restaurant in Malibu where mega-contract deals are the norm, Edward Albert passionately talks about *Beauty & the Beast*, his character and his career.

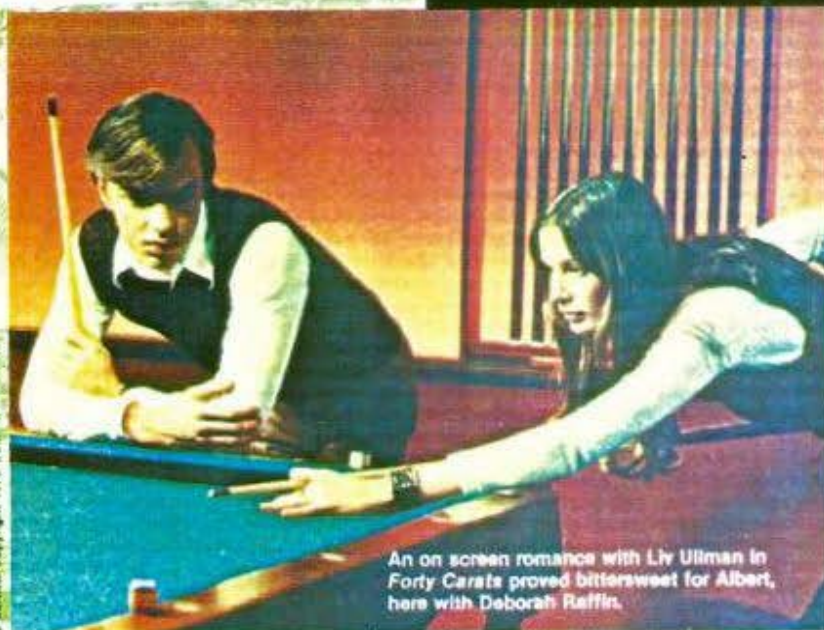
His beginnings with the show were a little unusual. Albert was invited to read for the role of Elliot Burch by casting agent Joyce Robinson. Albert went in and was asked to play it as a heavy. "I did and it just wasn't happening. I went down three flights of stairs, across the lobby thinking, 'Should I pick up some fish on the way home?' Joyce comes running up—I've never had anyone do that before, come running after me—and says, 'Now, can you play it like a good guy?' Now I understand. The guy's tough but with a heart of gold."

Once committed to the recurring role of Elliot Burch, Albert jumped into his premiere episode, "Siege," and immediately saw a problem.

"There's this scene where I'm on the phone and I'm saying, 'I don't care how you do it, just get them out of there!' I thought, if I made that call, there would be no chance for this character to come back. Come on, I'm trying to kick old people out of their



Appearing in another Roger Corman gem, Albert explored a *Galaxy of Terror*.



An on screen romance with Liv Ullman in *Forty Carats* proved bittersweet for Albert, here with Deborah Raffin.

home!" Albert went to series creator/executive producer Ron Koylow suggesting that Burch's lawyer make the call. That way, Burch could go to Chandler and say he knew nothing about it. "His only sin would be picking the wrong people."

In the third season of *Beauty & the Beast*,

Albert's character underwent enormous changes. Everything that he holds dear, Catherine Chandler and his empire, is gone. "Except, think back to what he was, Stosh Kazmarec," reminds the actor, "the son of a Polish garbageman. In his own eyes, he couldn't fly as a caterpillar. So, he invented

Elliot Burch. The thing that has always been wonderful about Burch is that there's a goodness in him, a commitment to doing the right thing. There's also a constant ferocity of commitment to his dream. Now, all this is stripped away. The storyline we had spoken of, is him coming back as Stosh, and becoming cohorts with Vincent. They were going for it and suddenly they didn't this [third] season. If the show [were to come] back, Elliot [as Stosh] comes back."

Close Quarters

Throughout *Beauty & the Beast*'s first two seasons, Albert's character never interacted with the tunnel world, although at times he had a direct influence on it ("Shades of Grey" and "Ozymandias"). He only had eyes for Linda Hamilton's Catherine Chandler.

"She was wonderful," comments Albert. "Linda has a wonderful sense of camera.



She's a very talented, strong woman who wanted to be somewhere else. She was in a very difficult situation. It wasn't her. It truly, truly was the situation. There is no blame. There is no judgment."

Finally, as part of what was released of the 12-part arc, Albert was able to work with Ron Perlman and Jay Acovone, two actors for whom he has great respect.

"Much of what Ron says, you can't hear!" reveals Albert, laughing. "Which is fine if we're doing a scene close. But, when he's on the boat and I'm on the dock and it's 3:00 a.m. and the wind's blowing..." Albert mouths dialogue as if he is Perlman and then he takes on a puzzled expression and mouths, "Is it my turn? I can't hear you." "Jay's great because he's like me in

Caught in a ghostly love triangle, Albert was possessed by a samurai spirit in *The House Where Evil Dwells*.

the sense of 'Let's rehearse. Let's heave ideas.' That's the best part! Actually, both Ron and Jay, although we're only professional friends, (they don't even know this) are on my top five list of male friends.

"I loved everybody," says Albert warmly. "See, I was brought up with crews. I feel more at home in a camera truck, or a grip truck than I do in this restaurant. So for me, all the best times [working on the show] were with the crew." The actor pauses, then shares, "One of the things that I love about what I do is that a crew is an extended family. You have people you would never say a bad word about; you would stop a bullet [for them]. That's how I am with crews."

Explains Albert, "Usually in features, I'm the lead. I consider the director the captain, but I consider myself the first mate and it's up to me to keep in contact with the heart of the crew. They're crucial to me. If I don't feel that they're relaxed, I'm not relaxed. All the little things they do—'hello, how are you'—things they may not feel. And, when they go out of their way to be nice to you, it means a lot. It's the glue that binds this industry together."

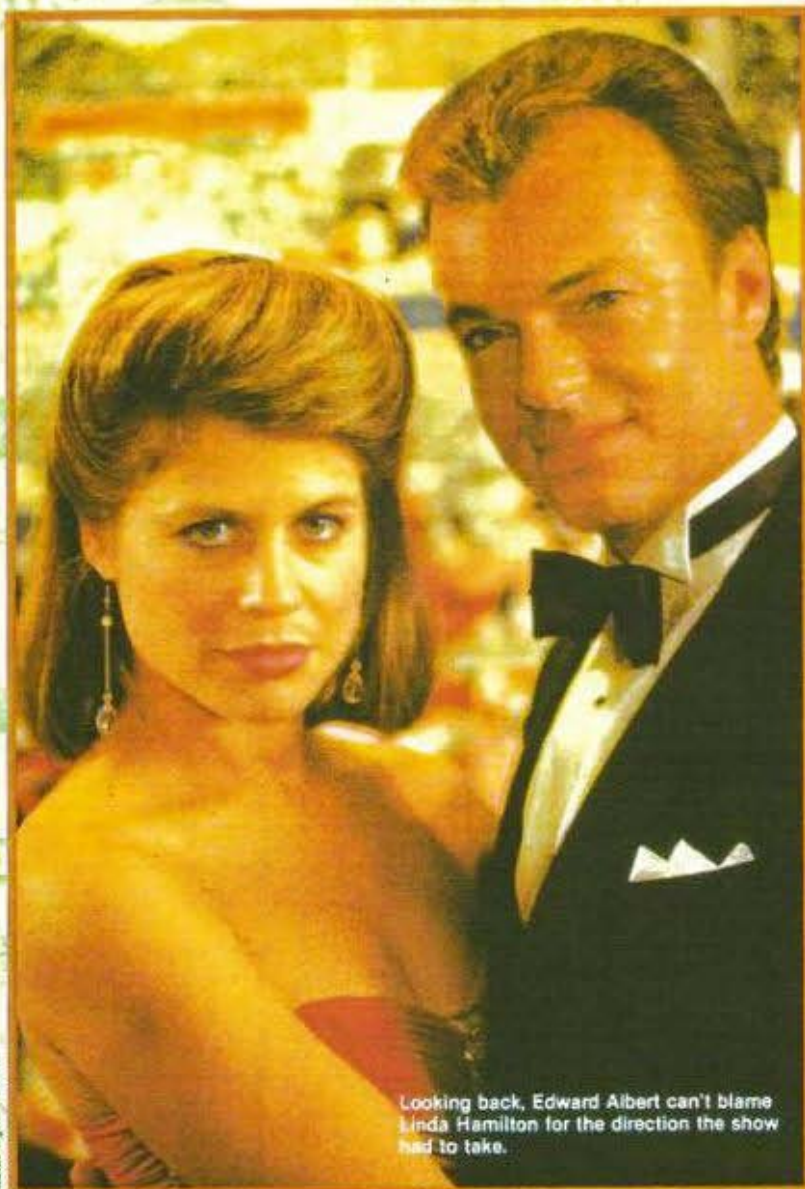
Born February 20, 1951, Albert appreciated the closeness of the industry from the beginning. He is son to famed actor Eddie Albert (nee Edward Albert Heimberger) and the late actress Margo Albert (formerly Maria Margarita Guadalupe Bolado Castilla y O'Donnell). He and his sister Maria were raised, "in a tight, warm Hispanic family."

"It was a very magical upbringing, the quality of feeling special and people treated us special. You tried real hard to remember all the normal things, so you didn't get twisted. I think they managed to bring me up well when Hollywood was very Hollywood. I'm obviously unusually aware of second generation people in the business. The statistics are appalling! There are only about three percent successes."

Albert has brought the closeness he knew as a child to his own family. He is married to actress Kate Woodville (STARLOG #132), who portrayed Natira in the *Star Trek* classic episode "For The World Is Hollow and I Have Touched The Sky." "So, we're like a speculative fiction duo!" laughs Albert. Together, they raise their nine-year-old daughter, Thais, at their spacious Malibu ranch.

Prudent Investments

The story of how Albert met his wife is something straight out of a B movie. "What happened was a friend of mine was coming over to visit and he asked if he could bring a friend. I remember opening the door and the instant I looked into her eyes, I knew I would marry her and I knew we would be together forever. I remember exactly what she was wearing. I spent the rest of the night doing my damndest to enchant her without making my present girl friend jealous or stepping over the bounds of ethics, which I think I managed. At one point, Kate mentioned she was looking for a place to stay. I said, 'I'm sure the manager can find you room.' Kate moved in soon after that. I



Looking back, Edward Albert can't blame Linda Hamilton for the direction the show had to take.

never went to see her. I felt I was still in the other relationship. We saw each other that year in the lobby maybe three times. The minute my relationship was over, I hung up the phone and without letting go, dialed Kate's number. I asked, 'Can I come over?' And she was sort of, '...OK,' because we had known each other now a year and I had never asked to come over. Knocked at her door and she answered with her red hair and big blue eyes and a little sky-blue terrycloth robe and said, 'Is there anything I can do to help you?' 'Yes, you can kiss me.' I kissed her and we have been together ever since. That's exactly how it happened."

And so, it was the romance of *Beauty & the Beast* that attracted Albert to the series, but the fantasy element intrigued him, too,

having also had a long love affair with science fiction. "Since I was a little kid," says Albert. "You grow up reading Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov. Then, you get into the lustier, weirder stuff. Occasionally, you find something like J.R.R. Tolkien or Robert Heinlein. You wade through a lot of *Tiger King of Mars* in your teens, and hopefully work your way up to Arthur C. Clarke and rediscover Asimov. That's what my chronology has been."

Suddenly, Albert launches into an appreciation of Rutger Hauer. "His death in *Blade Runner*! I've seen such things... And, all of these memories will be lost in time, like tears in the rain. Time to die." And Ridley Scott! What editing! What shooting! I want to be in that kind of film! It's frustrating when you're not. *Beauty & the Beast* seemed like it was going in that direction, but it didn't. It had but within the parameters of television."

Although he's usually not offered "that kind of film," co-starring instead in such fare as *When Time Ran Out*, *The Greek Tycoon* and *Midway*, Albert has appeared in two genre entries. One was *The House Where Evil Dwells*. As for the other, he relates, "I did a Roger Corman movie; I liked the premise. It was called *The Quest*. Before the ink was even dry, the title was changed to *Galaxy of Terror*. We worked in sets that were literally built the night before so we couldn't touch anything. They used McDonald's cartons for the walls and milk carton crates for the floors."

Albert didn't always want to be an actor. "I had done a film when I was 11 [*The Fool Killer*]. Wonderful film. Bad experience. I decided, the hell with it, I would go to school, make a life and maybe act." Albert attended UCLA where he was a gymnast. Also during this time, he was a photojournalist covering Southeast Asia and Europe. Then, he received a scholarship to Oxford. "But, regrettably, got kicked out. I thought my life was ruined. Went to London and got a job playing drums in a club just off Piccadilly. Had the best six months of my life."

Soon after, Albert decided to pursue acting. "Just on the strength of my parents being in the business, they would get a script a year—'Does Eddie [Edward] want to act?' Then, the script for *Butterflies Are Free* came and it was such a good script. My parents said, 'If you want to be an actor, this is the thing to start with.' I hadn't studied any acting in school, except at Oxford." With only his natural talent, Albert plunged headlong into his debut. "I was an unknown that the film depended on. You gotta know that those guys [actress Goldie Hawn and director Milton Katselas] did everything they could to make me look good. Yeah, OK, I did my best, too," a best that garnered him a Golden Globe Award for Most Promising Male Newcomer.

Big Bucks

The actor then went directly into the production of *Forty Carats* where he worked with Gene Kelly and played the romantic lead to Liv Ullmann. "I was totally in love with her," says Albert. "She was going through her own pain because she had broken up with Ingmar Bergman. When you have a crush on somebody, any way they'll accept you, you'll be. She wanted a companion, a confidant. So, I became her confidant when in reality I was writhing with lust and love."

Albert's unrequited love was perhaps a portent to disaster. "The first day of shooting had me riding a motorcycle. They kept saying, 'Listen, no sweat. This stunt-double is the European champion.' But he looked so different from me that we couldn't use him. They wouldn't let me wear a helmet and they kept telling me to go faster. A rock bounced out under the front wheel and I lost my gyro. The crew was lined up in front of me so I knew I had to lay the bike down or kill people. I threw the

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DESIRE GONZALES, California-based freelancer, profiled Jay Acovone in STARLOG #152.

Albert

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bike down, dove and went into a somersault. Landed on my feet, went straight up in the air and tried to tuck into another somersault. Didn't have enough momentum. Came straight down on my head and shoulder. Broke my collar-bone and my shoulder in like six, eight places. This is the first day of shooting! I worked the rest of the day."

He promptly passed out at the day's end and was taken to the nearest hospital 90 minutes away. Once there, he was told that he should be in a cast and not move for two months. "Obviously, I couldn't put myself in a cast and the next day, I had a love scene in the water with Liv!" Albert suffered through each day's shooting without the aid of painkillers. "Literally, the director would say, 'Cut,' and I would take the morphine and the crew would take me home and lay me down and I would be unconscious until 5:30 the next morning." Albert gives a wry smile and says, "And that's why we love this business we call show."

Another part of the business that comes with the territory are fans.

"I've not had much contact with *Beauty & the Beast* fans, per se. Obviously, we owe the fans." Albert pauses thoughtfully, then continues, "We're not actors so much as entertainers and you can't be an entertainer unless you have somebody you're entertaining. The fans are the ones who are the most entertained. So, we're real happy to see them."

"In my teens, Dad and I were driving a long way across Florida. We were hungry so we pulled up at this little town. We sat down and before we had even settled, the entire next table—maybe eight people—got up and sat at our table and started talking to Dad about *Green Acres* and movies he had made. And I was a total jerk," he admits. "When we got into the car later, Dad said, 'Listen. That was real special to them. If that's the kind of thing that bothers you, you're in the wrong business. But if you train yourself so you're open and gracious, it will leave you with something nice.' One of the best pieces of advice I've ever had."

Albert returns the conversation to *Beauty & the Beast* fans. "The thing that amazes me is the fans have no idea how much power they have. One fan wrote one letter and there were three network meetings on it. One letter. They [CBS] figure one letter [represents] 50,000 people who thought the same thing but didn't think of writing. So, one letter to them is a big, big deal."

Edward Albert then adds his own piece of advice. "If fans like the show, they should write and tell CBS. If they like the storyline, they should write and tell CBS. Conversely, if they don't like any of the above, they should write and tell CBS." The actor smiles, "Except if they don't like Elliot Burch, then they shouldn't write. Think it, don't write it." ☆