

## Linda Evans, Tom Skerritt star in "I'll Take Romance"

### Skerritt not always in leading ladies' shadow

By CHRISTY BERGSLIEN

Tom Skerritt is the kind of actor who is frequently cast opposite strong leading ladies. He's not a household name, but his co-stars frequently are. Skerritt portrayed Shirley MacLaine's low-key husband in "The Turning Point." In "Poker Alice" he co-starred with screen queen Liz Taylor. "Miles to Go" saw him cast opposite Jill Clayburgh. TV audiences, though, are most likely to know him as wealthy Evan Drake, Kirstie Alley's love interest on "Cheers."

On Sunday, Nov. 25, Skerritt will once again co-star with one of Hollywood's most notables—lovely Linda Evans—in "I'll Take Romance" on ABC.

Skerritt believes that quite often actresses are not given the chance to play strong lead roles, and he's happy to see it happen and to support them when it does.

"I'd rather play opposite an important actress than take second or third star billing in another kind of

film," said Skerritt. "It's a much meatier experience."

Apparently it's paid off. Skerritt's other film roles have, for the most part, been good. In the 1986 hit "Top Gun," Skerritt was cast as a commanding officer. In "Alien," another box-office hit, he convincingly played the captain of the doomed space freighter.

Said Skerritt, "I've been fortunate enough to not have to make movies that I wouldn't pay five bucks to see myself." (OK, we'll concede that, perhaps with the exception of "Poltergeist III.")

At 5 feet 8 inches tall, blonde, beautiful and recognized the world over, Skerritt's co-star in "I'll Take Romance" has an undeniable strong screen presence. Off-screen, however, Linda Evans strength has only come through the years.

After a promising beginning with a role alongside Barbara Stanwyck in "The Big Valley," Evans quit working for 10 years at her then-husband's (John Derek) request.

Jay Bernstein, the manager who credits himself with the discovery of Farrah Fawcett, claims Fawcett was only his second choice: "I came to Linda and told her she could be the woman of the 70's...She said, 'Thanks, I appreciate your enthusi-

asm, but I just want to go home to John."

Years later, of course, Derek left Evans for the 16-year-old who was to become Bo Derek. It was a terrible blow, said Evans. "Not only had Bo been a friend, but she was a younger version of me. I asked myself, 'What do I do now? How do I survive?' I knew there was no going back. I knew I had to create a new life for myself."

And that's what Evans did. After a divorce from her second husband, real-estate magnate Stan Herman, in 1979, she went back to work. From 1980 to 1989 Evans found her home on the set of "Dynasty" where she played Krystle Carrington.

"The show helped me discover my independence, finally, and I was able to give up the idea of needing a man, or anyone else, to take care of me. 'Dynasty' was an answered prayer. Now," said Evans, "every day I wake up smiling."

That's a change for Linda Evans. As for Tom Skerritt, in "I'll Take Romance," he won't completely take the back seat to Evans. This time around he'll be the center of attention, playing a weatherman pursued by a group of female suitors. And that's a welcome switch too.

**MONDAY**



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