

Heeere's Alfie

By MICHAEL GILTZ

IF the stiff, unloved animated cartoon "Space Ghost" can be turned into a drolly amusing talk show, there's no reason why hand puppet Alf — star of his own wildly successful, albeit short-lived, sitcom — shouldn't get to host his own talk show, too.

It debuts tonight at 10 p.m. on TV Land, and he's even got Ed McMahon out of cold storage to serve as a sidekick.

An instant pop cultural smash when it debuted in 1986, "Alf" spawned an animated cartoon of its own, books about the life of Alf (an Alien Life Form from the planet Melmac) and all sorts of merchandising. It peaked in the Top 10 and then disappeared.

But Alf, a comic with a borscht belt sensibility, found a second life as an advertising pitchman, and now he's hosting "Alf's Hit Talk Show," talking to Dennis Franz and fellow washed-up sitcom star Drew Carey — with special appearances by Henry Winkler and Joan Rivers.

In other words, it's an entire show devoted to proving that in America everyone gets a second act.

We chatted with him by email this week:

Q: Choosing to do interviews only by email is pretty Garbo-esque of you — have you become a bit of a recluse?

A: Being a recluse has nothing to do with it.

Semi-intelligent life form tells all about talk show

Truth is, my phone got shut off. Now that I'm back at work with this new talk show, I'll be correcting that problem. Is there a number I can reach you at?

Q: Your age — you're now 247 years old, right?

A: Honestly, I stopped counting after I hit the big 2-0-0. Joan Collins gave me that wise advice over 80 years ago. I'll always remember it.

Q: Any problems of being an illegal alien in the U.S. or were you naturalized a long time ago?

A: Let me set you straight on this. In the United States, there's a big difference between being an Alien from Outer Space and an "illegal" alien. The illegal aliens get medical and educational benefits. I get nothing.

Q: How will your approach be different from other TV talk show hosts? Sarcasm seems the coin of the realm in late night these days.

A: I think sarcasm has run its course. It's way overdone. I hope to raise the benchmark on talk shows and substitute

sarcasm with slander. Haaaaa.

Q: Which talk show host do you most admire and why?

A: It's a tough question, but if I had to pick one, I'd say that Sally Jesse is still doing a good job. That woman never fails to make me laugh.

Q: I'm sure you're quickly becoming aware of the booking wars on talk shows. How can you gain an edge on your opponents?

A: I am opposed to any kind of war ... especially booking wars. Violence is no way to settle things ... especially with talk shows. I'd like to see a DMZ zone for talk show guests. It would provide a safe haven for whatever choices they make regarding television appearances. I mean seriously ... can't we all just get along?

Q: Will there be cats available for snacking in the Green Room?

A: A lot of shows have been serving cat-based snacks in their green rooms for years without anyone knowing. C'mon, what do you think is the main ingredient in the famous "Tonight Show Pate?"

Q: Any grudges against celebrities who loved you when you were on top but wouldn't return your calls lately?

A: As you

know, Hollywood is a fickle town. Erik Estrada and I talk about this all the time. I would love to give you the names of all those two-faced, backstabbing, insincere celebrities who shunned me ... but now that I have a show to book, I wouldn't want to upset them.

Q: Normally, we don't deal in tabloid rumors, but the reports about your stints at Betty Ford and claims that it was just an "addiction to painkillers" have been so widespread. Want to talk about these rumors?

A: I think you're confusing me with Courtney Love, although in the mid '80s I did have an addiction to cotton. Thankfully, I was introduced to Rayon and other synthetic blends, and I can honestly say that as of this day I am completely cotton free.

Q: Any activity in your love life?

A: Are you referring to activity that I don't have to pay for?

Q: Do you have a feature film in the works?

A: I don't want to jinx it, but I'm up for the lead role in the Herve Villechaize story.



Alf, the '80s sitcom star, has landed his own talk show.