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Herding Cats for Hollywood

By [MICHAEL CIEPLY](#)



Sparta, a California cat known for his “Mean Kitty Song.”

LOS ANGELES — You’re making a Hollywood movie. You see some funny cat videos on YouTube. Those cats would love to be in pictures, you think.

Not so fast.

The producers at [Waterman Entertainment](#), known for big-screen blockbusters like the “Stuart Little” and “Alvin and the Chipmunks” films, got a lesson in contemporary feline star power over the last few weeks as they set out to cast supporting roles in their planned “Heathcliff” movie.

[Grumpy Cat](#) has a great movie scowl, like Al Pacino in “Scarface” only furrier, for instance.

But his representative, [Ben Lashes](#), was busy with a cat client’s toy deal and a pop-up store in Times Square, and could barely squeeze in a call.

“I thought I was talking to a guy who would be just thrilled that we wanted him,” said Tucker Waterman, who is a managing partner of Waterman Entertainment, along with his brother Cooper and father, Steve. “I found out I was 25th on the list.”

So an appearance by Grumpy Cat or a rights deal for Keyboard Cat — a piano-playing feline — also managed by Mr. Lashes, are still up in the air.

Mr. Waterman has also been talking with an agent about [Maru](#), a Japanese-owned prankster cat who is only a little funnier than Seth Rogen.

But Maru, noted Mr. Waterman, is possibly the most famous cat on the Internet, having been viewed some 160 million times. Deal terms remain to be settled.

“I’m waiting to be asked, ‘How many scenes is he going to be in? What about his trailer?’ ” said Mr. Waterman.

Sparta, a California-based cat known for his “[Mean Kitty Song](#),” is in. But that took a holding deal, meaning money up front, against a full fee to be paid when the “Heathcliff” movie is released, probably in 2014. Mr. Waterman said he had also been talking with Sparta’s owner, Cory Williams, about getting the cat to record a new music video for the film.

Over all, said Mr. Waterman, the plan is to have actors, famous or otherwise, give voice to the Internet cats. The movie will be part animated, part live action, like “Alvin and the Chipmunks” and its sequels. (And any deceased felines, like the original Keyboard Cat, will be fully animated.)

Asked how much you have to pay a Web cat star these days, Mr. Waterman declined to be specific.

“More than I thought,” he said.

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