



DEEP BLUE SEA Ted Danson and Keith Addis, working partners who've become co-advocates, in Malibu, California.

THE PARTNERSHIP

## THE ACTOR AND THE MANAGER

When Ted Danson faced a professional crisis Keith Addis stepped in, allowing their very different working styles (one's laid back, one's terribly tenacious) to mold Danson's career and to help them further their commitment to what has become a shared passion

**W**HEN TED DANSON MET KEITH ADDIS IN 1994, he was most famous TV star in the world. Starring on *Cheers*, he was an actor blessed by a defining success and cursed by a defining role. Addis was an agent turned manager who had guided the careers of everyone from Whoopi Goldberg to Sting. As Danson struggled to envision life post-*Cheers*, Addis saw him as the perfect addition to his talent stable, and was eager to take on the challenge. 19 years later, with Addis Danson has achieved something few could have predicted, consistently working in television while also evolving his image and fan base. On *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, he was endearingly

self-deprecating and with *Damages*, he mastered playing a villain. This year he took the lead role on *CSI: Las Vegas*, juggling it with his role on HBO's *Bored to Death*. Danson's the rare example of an actor with true cross generational appeal, an icon to the older *Cheers* fans with the respect of *Bored to Death*'s young acolytes.

When he took on Danson as a client, Addis felt he needed to woo him. Aware that the actor had been an environmentalist since his youth, Addis thought that could be his ticket. In 1987, Danson had helped create the American Oceans Campaign, now known as Oceana, and Addis threw himself into working with the organization. Now the world's largest international

ocean preservation organization, Oceana has become Addis' passion project. He serves as President, while Danson's a board member and a most earnest celebrity advocate. The shared interest has brought warmth to the men's relationship and grounded it in something far more lasting and meaningful than the typical, 10% give and take between manager and client.

A position on a philanthropic organization, particularly an environmental one, carries a trendy cachet in Hollywood and very often requires little to no actual work. Danson's been building this movement since far before it was hip and Addis has become his devoted partner.

*By Stinson Carter*

## ADDIS ON DANSON

**H**E'S NONCHALANCE, I'M CHALANCE. Ted doesn't like confrontation--more than dislikes it--he disappears from it. It's probably safe to say that I enjoy confrontation; that I somehow thrive on it. He doesn't have any enemies—I do.

When I started working with Ted, he was already starting to think about his transition beyond Cheers. I'd met him a couple of times superficially on movie sets where I had other clients, but there was one opportunity where I really had a chance to connect with him and we decided to work together. I've never had a contract with any client. It was a handshake.

The truth about why I first got involved in ocean conservation is heartless and completely Machiavellian. I had just signed the biggest television star in the world, and I thought it would be really smart for me to ingratiate myself with him in an extra-curricular way. But what got me excited about it is my fascination with underdog issues. When I joined American Oceans Campaign, Ted was almost its sole funder. Seven figure a year sole funder. Just about the time each of us was looking

at each other, secretly thinking, "this isn't working," we got a call from this startup in DC called Oceana, who had no idea that we were in dire straits. We played it totally Hollywood: "I don't know, we need to think about this—how many board members, it's probably not a good fit"—and meanwhile we're going, "OH MY GOD, WE HAVE TO CLOSE THIS DEAL IMMEDIATELY!!!"

I am the Agent Provocateur in our show business relationship and at Oceana. I am—I'm sure they would tell you if they were candid—a difficult board member. I'm always excited to find a challenging mess that needs to be sorted out.

I knew out there in the ether that they were looking for a lead on CSI. Ted made it clear that he would only do it if HBO agreed to continue to let him do Bored To Death. Ted has more goodwill out there than almost anybody I can think of, and everyone roots for his success. On set, he's the United Nations peacekeeper, the mediator of all problems. Whenever there's friction of any kind—and that's not all that often for someone like Ted—but when there is friction to deal

with or shoving to do, he doesn't have to do any of it. I have had many other clients who have done most of the shoving themselves and they've paid a price for it.

We've also made choices that didn't work. It's impossible not to, because we're making subjective decisions about the future all the time. When you look at a pilot script and the people involved in it, the roll of the dice is incredibly challenging. To wonder what's that's gonna be like 9 episodes out, 14 episodes out... and with a movie, the stakes are even higher.

When we're together, we're really together. You can see our relationship just by being in a room with us. But I never have to be on the set just to be there. It's not important to him, it's not important to me. When he does talk shows, I'm not in the green room helping him feel comfortable, holding his hand.

I have been through very difficult personal times and very difficult professional times with him and he is the real deal through thick and thin. I have never seen him get angry. I get angry about 15 times a day; that's a lot of my battery, a lot of my energy. There are people who are naïve optimists because they don't know anything about what's going on in the world. But he is a perennially intelligent optimist. Always optimistic about the impact that smart people can have on challenging problems. And that's a very inspirational energy for me and for everybody around him.



## DANSON ON ADDIS

**Y**OU KNOW HOW CATS SEE SO WELL IN THE DARK? They see movement. If they look at something still, they have trouble seeing it, so their eyes vibrate to create movement so they can see it. That's Keith Addis. He sees things almost better in chaos. He will agitate sometimes to make things visible to him so that he can fix them. He can get things resolved in the midst of chaos. I can't. I want to be mellow, I want to be happy, I want to be laughing.

We started working together during my last year of Cheers. I was a little panicky about what life would be like after that, and I was introduced to Keith by someone who liked him a lot—an actor. Keith brought the adult side of the business with him, and I represented the kid side. I get to be the emotional voice and he gets to be the adult who hammers on studio heads and network heads. I want to be in the moment, which is my job as an actor. But if the world depended on somebody like me, improvisational and in the moment, the world would suck. Keith plans, thinks, asks questions, stirs the pot, and to be partnered with somebody like that is wonderful to me, it's a gift. I don't have to watch my back, wonder what's happen-

ing in the business, or how I'm being perceived. One of the reasons why I love Keith genuinely—not Hollywood love—is that he has spent so much time, effort, energy, capital, real sacrifice on ocean issues and when I've started to drift and think, "this is too much," he's grabbed me and pulled me back. I have never thought about leaving him—19 years—and I have never been worried that he would leave me.

There are times when I am out of work, and need some work, and I'll be getting a series of phone calls from my manager Keith Addis, which for most actors your heart would start to pump and you'd go, "Maybe this is it, maybe I've got a job." Well, when I get a phone call from my manager Keith Addis, my heart doesn't go "pump," it goes, "Oh shit, I'm about to have to go do something for Oceana," which I think is one of the best things that's ever happened to my career. I haven't had a lot of fear and worry in my career because I put all my fear and worry into other things. It's a little healthier to be worried about oceans than about yourself.

We both are pretty philosophical in that when you're hot you're hot, when you're not you're not. If you put any emphasis on what you did right and what you did wrong, it'll make you crazy. You'll never know why you get a job and why you don't. My job is to stay up and engaged and enjoying life, period. The rest of my career with handle itself, and God bless Keith, he does a lot of hard, crappy work; talking to angry, sad, pissed-off, fearful people to help me in my career but that ain't my job and it's not my job to put anything on him, ever. I got the greatest job on the planet, CSI, and I'm being paid lots of money and it's thanks to him.

Keith and I don't "hang out." I don't hang out with guys. But that's true of everybody in my life, that's true of my Cheers friends. My father was kind of absentee to some degree, so women have always had the key to life, for me. But I love to work with men. It's relaxing; guys are simple.

I have four kids, so I've been to hell and back. I know life is messy and I know life can be dark. But if I want to get something done, I like to be calm and have a sense of humor about it. I can afford to be calm because I know Keith can absorb the chaos. We are so different as people, but there's this unspoken thing, we know we love each other. I never worry about whether he has my interests at stake and whether he's doing everything he can for me. I know he would never hurt me, and that's pretty neat.

