

## Star Paws interview

# Better the feline you know..!

Many of us can hum '90s pop group Steps' songs, but did you know one of the members is also a huge cat fan?

Here [Ian 'H' Watkins](#) tells us all about his love of felines.

When 'H' – otherwise known as Ian Watkins, member of hit-making '90s pop group Steps – spoke to *Your Cat*, he was waiting to welcome a third feline into his family. Last year Ian took part in a highly successful Steps reunion tour and he has also starred in the stage musicals *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'* since the break up of the band. But, for now, his cats are a priority...

"I just love Exotics and was looking for the right cat for a long time," he says. "Now I can't wait to get up to the breeder in the Midlands and bring her home! She is just adorable, a silver spotted tabby shorthair. We think we're going to call her Megan as all our animals have Welsh names but we'll have to see if it suits her when she moves in!"

H was brought up in the Rhondda Valley and says that animals have always been part of his life. "I love anything with a heartbeat," he admits. "I have two brothers and my Mum never knew what sort of creatures she was going to find in the house, including a bath full of frogspawn!"

"We did have a family cat and also a Labrador called Ben who was like another brother, as well as rabbits and guinea pigs – oh, and I had a pet tarantula at one point..."

As a member of Steps, H became involved in some charity fundraising for The Mayhew Animal Home when the magazine *'Smash Hits'* ran a 'Name the Puppy' competition. After visiting the Mayhew, H fell in love with two of their cats, one black and one white, called Dylan and Hugo, and adopted them.

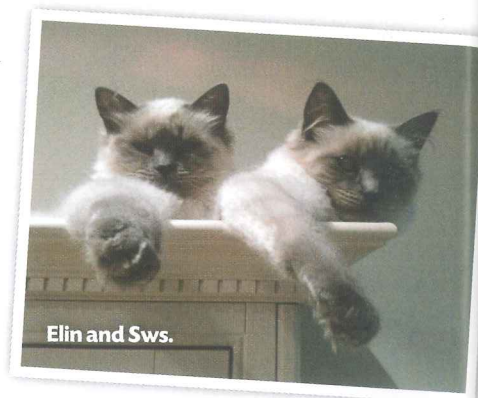
"I had a garden then, but later I moved

to a flat without one so Dylan and Hugo had to go to Wales to live with my Mum and Dad. Then, four years ago, I moved to the country with my partner and we have surrounded ourselves with animals. We have horses, dogs, chickens and ducks – and we now have two cats as well.

"I did some research into cat breeds and their temperament and decided to look for Ragdolls because they are so affectionate – real lap cats. Our two are called Elin, after my partner's Gran who sadly passed away, and Sws (pronounced suss) which is a Welsh word meaning kiss or cuddle.

"They came from the same litter and look very alike, though they are quite different in personality. Sws likes to rub her nose and cheeks against mine and is very vocal, telling us to love her all the time. Elin is quieter and will sit on my lap purring, and then lie on her back with her paws in the air to have her tummy tickled. She is the supermodel type, like a feline Cindy Crawford.

Sws is more of a comedienne, beautiful but also funny like Anna Faris [actress]. They get on well with each other and with the dogs, in fact all four animals will sleep in a basket together! We



Elin and Sws.

fitted a cat flap to the utility room door and we feed them in there; otherwise the dogs would eat everything. They're not fussy eaters or on special diets, they just eat everyday cat food. I am a vegetarian but I know you have to feed meat to cats as they need the minerals it contains."

H is in no doubt about the advantages of cat ownership. "They are such good companions," he says. "And quite low maintenance for people with a busy lifestyle. They have each other and when I'm away, either my partner is here or we have really good friends and neighbours who will pop in and make sure everything is alright.

"If you get the right cat you are guaranteed unconditional love. They are so calm and relaxing but at the same time, ours are playful too. They will follow the light of a laser pen

and can't understand why they can't catch it!

I can't imagine not being surrounded by animals and can't wait to see how our new kitten settles in with the family. And, who knows, I've rescued cats in the past so there may be more in my life one day!" ■



H was talking to  
Jill Eckersley.

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