

sound advice

the most complete voice-over demo service

April 2005

“Advertising is supposed to entertain and engage.”

--Donny Deutsch, CEO Deutsch Advertising and the host of “The Big Idea”

Hello, hello!

As many of you know, our own **Kourtney Vahle** will be heading off to warm, wonderful Italy to marry our own **Brooks Ralston** on May 5th and from there they will be honeymooning in sunny Greece! We wish them love, happiness and a great many wishes fulfilled!

Now, what this means to all of you Sound Advice-ers, is Kourtney will not be available to you for your quick-Kourt fix so many of you have come to rely on (including me!) from mid-April on! Instead our dear **Lynette Venturella-Maas** will be filling those rather sizable (albeit lady-like) shoes. Lynette is a force that I promise will scratch your Sound Advice itch. She will be our Studio Manager, Administrator, et al. She’s fully trained and knowledgeable and happens to be a highly respected Certified Speech Pathologist. On top of everything else, Kourtney is training her up to take over as we speak. Send her a hello, if you get the chance. She’s here to help you. Her e-mail is: lynette@sndadvice.com. If we have to lose Kourt, we’re lucky to have Lynette there in the wings, prepped and ready to go.

In fact, if you’ve been out of the loop for a bit, it would behoove you to schedule a little one-on-one with Lynette (again, she’s a highly skilled Speech Path), to tune up your chops and create a vocal warm-up specific to your individual vocal needs! She’s a miracle worker. Give us a call to get scheduled ASAP.

An E-Mail from Mr. Schropshire

Dave Shropshire has been a professional VO for most of his life and he’s been tapping into our workshop since the beginning of the year from his studio in Davenport, IA. He’s become something of a mystery to the rest of the Monday night workshopers who have only come to know him over their headsets. Here’s what Dave had to say recently after gracing us his actual (as opposed to virtual) presence by coming to Chicago for the workshop.

Great Workshop .. It's almost like a family reunion to finally meet everyone in person that I've done ISDN sessions with .. (Two of the gals) asked me last night .. " are these the workshops that came with your demo ? " I said "No " and they were like .."well what are you doing ? " ..My response.."I take these to keep my chops up "..you always have to be ready . Every agent and production company I have signed with have all said ..it is up to the talent to stay prepared...ready to perform at the top of their game and constantly work on their performance skills. Of course ISDN is convenient but sometimes I just need to get out and play with others (workshops) .

BTW : Newsletters : are you still working on those ? I know you are going to be sending them out via email . The latest Newsletter I have is December 2004 .--Shrop

Reply: That’s ‘Sound Advice’, Dave! Thanks!

If you have NOT been receiving our MONTHLY Sound Advice Newsletters on-line, *please* CALL US and give us your updated e-mail address so we can be sure to include you. You can’t find this data anywhere, so be sure to contact us if you want to continue receiving them or forever hold your peace. Next month, it’s back to solely e-mailing the lot of you a link to the Newsletter. We’ve been posting them on our website for the last three months and making them available to only the few and the brave (namely, YOU)!

Newsletters can always be found at www.voiceoverdemos.com/newsletters.

Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced

Every talent is essentially on the same level playing field when it comes to landing the work, which is precisely why at Sound Advice we don’t promote ‘beginning, intermediate and advanced’ classes. I don’t believe in it. It doesn’t exist in the field—why would it exist

in training when what we are trying to recreate here is practical application training for the talent? I consider everyone I work with a professional and expect them to act as such. So, if it doesn't exist in the field—it has no place in training.

On the session, we are *all* held to the very same professional standards regardless of experience level.

There's no litmus test out in the field used to keep a newcomer from landing a principal role in a film over a career veteran. In fact, you're very likely to be cast opposite children who have far more experience than you and older talent who have never done a thing. If the talent is correct for the part, they make themselves available to the work and they're cast—there ya go. No beginning, intermediate and advanced categories to go by. Think of it, if these classifications were in play when Laurence Olivier was working he would have had no one to play off. It's ridiculous.

That said while the industry is always in the market for new voices the goal is certainly to become known and one of the "tried-and-true". No matter your ability, you're either known or you're not. Certainly producers and copywriters will stick with the talent they've had a fair amount of success with when they are in a pinch. Wouldn't you if your career depended on it? Of course you would. THAT'S the talent we all aim to become, regardless your experience level. And you can achieve this with dedication and persistence. If you make yourself accessible to the work—continually...not just for three months or six months or eight, but rather if you dedicate yourself to this as a profession, then you *will* work.

You can't compete if you don't rise to the occasion on a professional scale. You must have the proper materials to represent you well when you're not there. That means you must have a competitive demo, current headshots (if applicable) and a proper web page that will rise above the din!

With Fond E-Mails

Hi Kate, In your February newsletter, you mention agent [Studio City]. I can't seem to find them on Voicebank. Do they go under another name? Also, where do you find Canadian talent agents for VO? Also, should one send their CD to the Independent production agencies listed on Voicebank? Warmly, Barbara (Marden)

Reply: It's Studio CENTER (my boo-boo) based in Norfolk, Memphis AND Vegas--they are listed under the Non-Union agencies. Also, check out studioVoices (non-union) in Columbus. Impact (Union) is the another division for voiceover at CAM Talent in Columbus. As for the Canadian agencies, you can search AND sort by location on Voicebank. These agencies are scattered through out Voicebank. Look down the list...there's Toronto and Vancouver agencies listed among the states and the UK listings.

And, YES, I suggest you send a CD to Indy production STUDIOS--not agencies--listed. However, I'd e-mail first and find out who handles talent at each or if they have an in-house producer you should address your demo to. ;) -Kate

I JUST HAVE A LITTLE QUESTION FOR YA. IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN, I AM PREPARING TO MARKET TO THE AGENTS ALL OVER AND I WAS JUST WONDERING IF THERE WERE ANY CONTACT CHANGES IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS? DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS OF AGENCIES I SHOULD BE SURE TO CONTACT? SO FAR, I AM REPRESENTED BY LORI LINS, LTD AND JENNIFER'S IN MILWAUKEE, AND LILY'S AND SHIRLEY HAMILTON HERE. I AM NOT GETTING MANY (IF ANY) AUDITIONS AND I REALLY WOULD LIKE TO EXPAND MY EXPOSURE TO THE WORK. ANY SUGGESTIONS YOU HAVE WOULD BE APPRECIATED. --JEANNE JONES

Reply: These are all really good agencies, locally (Chicago). Have there been many agency changes in the last few months? ABSOLUTELY!!! Including at every agency you just mentioned.

First question: what are you doing to remain on their A-list of talent?

Considering every agency has their own policies regarding 'checking-in', you have to ask the agents (and their right hand people) you're listed with what they expect from you and what you can do to become one of the primary talent they think of and call when they have voiceover auditions.

You can't really go at this once every three to six to eight months. Not if you want develop a relationship with these people. (And you do, remember?) This takes a continuous effort every week. Do they like e-mail or repel it? Do they want to stop by or mail a postcard or demo in as a reminder? Additionally, we have to get you represented in multiple markets--the Northwest, Texas,

Minneapolis, Ohio, Florida, the East Coast. Again, pummel 'em and keep after it until you get the response and representation you want.

Once they agree to rep you...you inevitably have to move up to the next level toward steady auditions. The goal is five to ten auditions a week.

Look at it this way-- you've never been closer so don't peter out now.

If you come in to Sound Advice for an hour consult, we can determine what you did last and what you're doing now, how much time you're leaving between auditions or even basic contact with your current agents and who to target next. The question is: could you be auditioning more?

Give us a call and let's give you a fresh game plan for this season. We're here for you. -Kate

Recording from Your Home Computer

In our constant quest to keep you up-to-date and independent, our trusty chief engineer, **Jim Frazier** has discovered a decent mike that you can plug right into your computer (Mac or PC) so you can record your auditions at home (if you haven't already been doing so) and e-mail them on to your talent agents both near and far as mp3 files! This mike is called the 'CO1U - USB Condenser Microphone' and it costs about \$79 at most Guitar Center's or Sweetwater. (Hint: look on-line as well.)

Until now, the mikes Erik Martin and Jim were suggesting for a small recording set up ran between \$200 and \$350.

But now, for the first time ever, voiceovers who record auditions directly to their home computers have a simple, affordable way to capture high-quality vocal performances and auditions. Seamless integration was the idea, and it was obtained by creating a studio condenser microphone that can be plugged into any computer with no in/out boxes, no expensive computer pre-amps, just a USB cable (that plugs directly into your computer). The CO1U works with digital audio software such as 'sound forge' (pc) and 'sound studio' (mac), should be compatible without problems...and yes, 'garage band' the more inexpensive programs perfect for auditions.

This mike immediately solves a huge problem for users of many laptops, many of which have no other input method for audio devices. The USB connection cable (to plug into your computer) is even included.

Even though we have not tried it out here at Sound Advice first hand yet, as Jim put it, "It is very interesting, regardless, and I'm glad that you find it to be a rather exciting development, as do I." I find even your phrasing interesting, Jim!

Besides, anything that saves you money and makes you more accessible to the work interests me immensely!

More terms from our Updated 'Encyclopedia of Voiceover'

Anyone who has coached with us over the past 15 years has known our basic premise here at Sound Advice is, "Never aim to do the *exact* same thing, twice." To further illustrate this point may I present a few terms, defined.

inflection—According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary an inflection is 'the way in which the sound of your voice changes during speech for example when you emphasize particular words: *His voice was low and flat with almost no inflection* ' It's not generally well known but as a talent we are actually *expected* to vary our inflection just slightly and within the parameters of the piece with every take This is what's known as 'giving them a few options' With each delivery the inflection *not the pitch* noticeably changes allowing each read to be fresh and spontaneous and therefore more conversational and genuine (See 'matching')

matching—When you are trying to *recreate* the timbre emotion inflection phrasing volume/proximity and tempo of a delivery to make a slight adjustment or to correct a minor error in the initial read Also if at a session the client preferred a specific take and simply wants to change a line or phrase they may have you 'punch in' the corrected line This requires you 'match' the original delivery as much as possible Notably actors (both novice and 'established' alike) often harbor the *misconception* they are expected to deliver one perfect read and therefore attempt to 'perfect' a single delivery repeatedly take after arduous take as if they were trying to *match* a read

The truth is there are only three circumstances in which only one specific delivery is required from you:

- a When you are understudying a role on stage According to Actors' Equity you are expected to recreate the original actor's performance as closely as possible
- b When you are in a professional touring company of a stage production (such as "The Producers" or "Hairspray") These productions are very strictly choreographed in every way because a very specific product is being presented and the original show is the blueprint for the touring company which is often followed to the letter Additionally these productions are often heavy 'tech' shows and straying from the program could increase the risk of injury to cast and crew
- c And when adding or correcting a line in a voiceover or on camera production Other than that *matching* is not the desired goal as a talent it's a tool and nothing more

In fact the real objective of a professional skilled talent *in every medium* is to deliver a variety of deliveries with every single take all within the context of the scene character and circumstance That takes a great imagination and agility Mastering the art of variety takes courage and the willingness to truly risk That gives you an awful lot of rope to hang yourself with which is why it can be a very scary notion at the onset But continually building that agility and engaging your imagination fully is forever the requirement of a clever creative individual So never underestimate the demands of the profession

But if you have always thought all that was required of you was to match your initial take again and again and again you have thought acting was simply 'matching' until now

Again you're expected to deliver a limitless number of 'perfect' reads eight to ten takes of this one over here eight to ten of this one over here and eight to ten of this one over here is the norm Our job is to give the director (or whoever hired us) options (See 'punch in')

punch in—When a line or phrase needs to be replaced in a chosen take occasionally you may be asked to 'punch in' the corrected phrase They will play the take back for you minus the segment they want you to correct Your job is to correct the line while matching the emotion tempo proximity and so forth or the original delivery Generally they will play the cue line followed by a blank space for you to drop in the take three times in a row allowing for spontaneity and variety within the framework of what's being asked of you

Until the Showers End...

This is a great month to pursue agents, to promote your demo and your demo web page.

We've seen a dramatic increase in the amount of work being generated out there so it's best to get a move on. Spring always brings new work and the rush to get things done so that you can take some time off this summer!

If it's been a while since you've promoted your demo, contact Kourtney (or Lynette) to get an updated mailing list!

Until then, enjoy the changing weather...the blooming buds and the April showers! The longest winter in recent memory is nearly gone for good.

-kate and crew