

sound advice

the most complete voice-over demo service

October 2006

“Getting ahead in a difficult profession requires avid faith in yourself. That is why some people with mediocre talent, but with great inner drive, go much further than people with vastly superior talent.” -Sophia Loren

Careful what you wish for...

E-Mail: Hi Kate, I recorded two auditions last week for a freelance producer (who happened to be an acquaintance of mine). One spot was really short and one was a :60. I've included the mp3s of my auditions and the talent that they inevitably cast, as well as the producer's comments on my audition. I'd love to hear any comments/advice/feedback you may have if have a minute to listen. Thanks! -Talent X

“Pitch is not inflection. Your personality (point of view) and imagination impact your inflection most and will always be your greatest assets to set you apart from everyone else. They are senior to everything else when it comes to performance. Keep your attention fixed on those two items and you will have your eye on the ball in play during every take.” -Kate

From: (the producer)

Thanks for your efforts in putting together the auditions. You did a nice job.

(As I mentioned to your engineer) every VO has a unique register strength. Your goal should be to find your strength, focus on it, hone it and make it unique. Very few talents have the register range to be great at more than one or two genres. I think those that think they can do "anything" (or set out to do everything) never become truly great at their core strength.

I think you could have done a good job, however, I think you will hear that there was a special register that's required to make it stand out. This piece also demonstrates that specialty thing I was talking about. I used two voices for the narrator on this piece. They have are a similar natural register and you may think that one could have also done the other role, I would not have used the other (talent) for the opposite (character)—it just wouldn't have worked.

In the case of woman is doing (the other character), you will hear a uniqueness to her particular register. It's at the high end of the lower.

This enables her to bring a very rich sound and emotion to her read but not be too low. -(the producer)

My e-mail: Gee whiz, I don't know about you but my head is spinning. What the heck is he talking about? (By the by, 2 voiceovers the producer mentioned he cast are both Sound Advice clients. I love that! And they're both absolutely awesome--as are you!)

Okay, I think most of what this producer is saying about your voice and delivery pertain to pitch *rather than performance*. Frankly, *pitch is not inflection*. Inflection contains expression.

Now, the primary lesson in all this is ultimately producers (on narration) and copywriters (on commercials) are not all that skilled in giving you direction, so don't count on it. .

Case in point: what the heck is he talking about? He wants a "unique vocal register"?

Sounds to me like 'he'll know what he's after when he hears it'—which is perfectly valid.

He wanted a quality that was textured yet professional. Okay. Got it. Could that have been you? Absolutely. That's why you were included in the audition in the first place.

You have to learn to self-direct (which is where our coaching comes in handy). And once

you've done an audition, even for a friend—you have to move on. Let it go. (On the average, you only hear back about the gig if you book it.) Now, did the powers that be (including the producer) prefer someone else over you? I'm afraid so.

So it goes.

As I've mentioned in the past, if you ask for feedback—whether it be on an audition, regarding your demo, your graphics or what have you—*careful what you wish for*, you might just get it.

The fact is, it puts the guy in an awkward position. He *wants* to be helpful, but instead it seems like he's flailing around a bit trying to explain why he chose someone else *over you*.

Ouch. Squirm, squirm, squirm.

No one wants to be put in the position to reject you—even if they love you. Actually, **ESPECIALLY** if they love you. In addition, try not to read the producer/director's mind—as if he/she knows *exactly* what they want. They honestly *don't*. If they did, they'd do it themselves and you'd be out a job.

Generally, they only know what they want *when they hear it or see it*. Otherwise there would be no reason to audition you at all—they'd simply hire you, no questions asked. You're expected to supply your own imagination, personality and point of view.

This is precisely why YOU, the talent, are the greatest variable in the production equation.

As a talent, what you bring to the table is uniquely yours.

It may have some similarities to this person or have shades of that one... but at the end of the day what you do cannot deny WHO you are and what you bring to the table. Celebrate that. Embrace it fully! That's where your most success will come from. And as you continually work your skills, you'll gain greater faith in your abilities.

Lastly, never assume those directing you are there to feed you every nuance or turn of a phrase. That's not their job. It's yours. *You're* expected to deliver a read packed with all that imagination, expression and joie de vivre you've been sitting on all these years.

Ultimately *no one will animate the read quite like you*. Thank goodness! So enjoy your self—it reads. -Kate ☺

While we continue to encourage our clients to be independent—we're happy to make our studio available to you to record your auditions, especially during your first year or so in the field to insure you submit the best possible quality auditions possible. This will allow you to focus on being the best talent you can be rather than the best possible 'techie'.

Call Colleen or Priscilla for rates and studio availability.

Studying the Medium Made Simple

Haven't caught the latest episode of "Medium" since its debut—if ever? Want to study the *medium* (the tellie, that is) without having to pore needlessly over scads of TV you'd rather *not* watch? Yes, we have a solution, but you're going to have to upgrade to broadband. C'mon. dial up is for sissies. Check it out...

Web search: A TV commercial break

Randy Salas, Star Tribune

A new TV season is begun. You know what that means, right? More people (are) watching TV and (advertisers have stepped up with) the accompanying barrage of big-buck, prime-time commercials. But the ads aren't all bad. Sometimes, pitches can catch viewers' fancy. These websites come in handy when you want to know...

Where can I see that ad (Kate was talking about at last week's workshop)?

The Cliquand database (www.cliquand.com/tvcommercial.html) contains information, including many video clips, of TV commercials. If you just feel like browsing through some commercial winners, check out TBS' Very Funny Ads (www.veryfunnyads.com). Of course, if you want a particular ad, look no further than the ubiquitous video-sharing site YouTube (www.youtube.com), which has more than 49,000 entries listed under the keyword "commercial."

Why doesn't X big-name actor do commercials?

Chances are that he or she does, just not here. Big-name actors such as Arnold Schwarzenegger (before he became California's governor), Jodie Foster and Harrison Ford hop a flight to Japan to hawk products such as noodles, energy drinks and cosmetics. You'd never see the commercials if it weren't for archival sites, such as Japander (www.japander.com), which says Arnie's goofy prepolitics ads are the most popular on the site.

Whose voice is that?

If the voice-over in a TV commercial sounds familiar, chances are that it is. Many celebrities, including Julia Roberts, Kiefer Sutherland and Gene Hackman, regularly provide uncredited narration for everything from AOL to Apple Computers to United Airlines. A comprehensive online database that details who has said what for whom has eluded me; send me an e-mail if you've found one. Meanwhile, you can see many major voice-over pros by taking the Voice Over Resource Guide's Celebrity Challenge (www.voiceoverresourceguide.com/la/vorgspeak/article_celebchallenge.html), in which you must match the celeb with an audio sample. Also try looking through the extensive credits at the Internet Movie Database by using the Search for a Word function in the Biographies Section (www.imdb.com/Sections/Biographies). Type in the word "commercial" and the name of the product. □

Well now, who sez you don't have time to study the medium and bone up on the latest commercial styles? In addition to these (and probably even more importantly) check out www.erroldmorris.com as well for some of the most graceful, well-produced commercials (in my opinion) ever aired.

No more excuses. You can thoroughly study the medium online even if you don't watch much TV. So, get busy. Your career depends on it! ☺

Some Correspondence Worth Noting

Just started reading Patrick Tucker's "*Secrets to Screen Acting*" * I am amazed at how much film vs. television parallels commercial voiceover (union: national /regional) vs. radio (local non union). I can expect to do a minimum of one hour in the studio on Union commercial voice over. Where in with radio I have one hour to get as many as 5 commercials done (last night for instance!!) Just finishing my latest Chicago mailing. I think I am going to do another Midwest mailing. I believe my last may have helped me shake loose those *Culver's* TV and radio (spots). I figure there's more where that came from... :) -Shrop

*I highly recommend reading "*Secrets of Screen Acting*" by Patrick Tucker. If you could learn to act for the camera by reading a book, then this is that book.

Way to go, Shrop! Well done on maintaining a steady diet of *training and promotion*. That sort of persistence can only breed success! Well done! -kate

I'm actually new to the whole voice over thing. I attended Columbia College and wanted to get into radio broadcasting, but after graduating and finishing some internships, I found out that really isn't what I wanted to get into. I'm very interested in getting a voice over demo done to get an agent and get some gigs.

- "Tahlulu Talent"

As much as we LOVE radio as a medium, the business of radio generally doesn't love us back. In fact, I consider it to be far more brutal than acting for *stage* because I've known more people to be successful on Broadway than in radio. And of the folks I've known to succeed in radio—their time 'in the sun' was so short-lived, it hardly could be said to have sustained them, I'm sorry to say. Now, that's probably one of the best-kept secrets in academia. Imagine all those young people supposedly "trained" in broadcasting and then foisted upon the industry year after year. Ugh. And all they want to do is earn a living using their vocal prowess and their personality. It can be done. But that's where we come in. -kate ☺

'Til Next Time...

Smell that air? Man, I *love* this season.... The colors are changing. Apples are falling from the trees. Carve a pumpkin. Sip some cider. Take in some Hitchcock and read those back issues of the Newsletters. Listen to our podcasts of past workshops—they're meant to inspire and keep you on top of things. Continually work your skills and promote.

We're here when you need us, but it's up to you to keep the ball in play.

And 'til next time... *live* a little! -Kate & crew ☺