



Hearing Diane

Her credits include: Darkest of Days (Xbox 360), Puzzle Chronicles (PS3), Kezza Bee Farm Adventures (iPhone app to be released later in 2010) and the Tweet Defense (iPhone game) promo.

News

Cracking into Voice Acting

Inspired by issue three's Cracking into Games feature, one of Australia's local voice acting talents, **Diane de Zylva** approached us and offered to share her insights into breaking into a different side of game development.

Actors Score \$500K for Video Game Voice Overs: Googling 'gaming and voice over' this is the first entry that appears for me, closely followed by a slew of companies offering to train you and to help you break into the industry, online marketplaces and talent rosters. With pay packets like that, who wouldn't want to be a voice actor, right? Unfortunately for those of us in Australia who talk for a living, that kind of fee is often likely to be at the celebrity voice talent end of the scale.

Take a look at some of the big Hollywood names. George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Tom Hanks... they all bring animation, audiobooks and other projects to life. Mark Hamill – the force is strong with him – is a great example of an actor that is now also one of the foremost voice talents in Hollywood. From The Joker in Batman Arkham Asylum to a range of animation, gaming and anime projects with hundreds on character voices in his repertoire.

But despite such stiff competition, voice acting is a career I recommend. I now have a few voice credits for gaming and animated apps to my name and it's true that it is fantastic to get to 'play' at your job. From Civil War battlefields on one day, to being a blue Scottish dwarf in a quest through an imaginary kingdom the next, entering weird and wonderful worlds, creating a sound and bringing to life characters that are not even human the next... it's a dream come true.

So, how do you get started? You may have been told you have a 'nice voice' but, surprise, surprise; there is a lot more to it than that. There is a tremendous amount of skill involved in bringing characters to life.

Training in acting, improvisation, vocal production and breath are all right up there at the top of the list. Why would you need acting lessons when you're not on screen? Because it helps you take on the character you're portraying, and you can really hear the difference when someone is just reading the lines as opposed to becoming the character. Some of the best audiobook narrators totally transport you into other worlds just by the sound of their voice, totally suspending your disbelief (as one director described it to me).

You also need versatility and the ability to cover a range of voices as you might be asked to voice multiple characters in a session. Good microphone technique, breath control, understanding how to interpret the copy, ability to take direction and adapt, persistence and a good dose of humour helps too. If you took every knock back along the way personally, you'd never get out of bed.

Finally, it doesn't hurt to be in good shape either – it may sound surprising, but some long sessions can be pretty intense and exhausting. I've literally had sweat pouring off me with the effort and concentration.

There are a range of great resources online: books on training, things to consider to establish your business, find an agent and, importantly, cut a demo – you'll need to have one if you're going to sell your sound. Be aware though, I've heard a number of teachers say that the biggest mistake for beginners is making a demo too early before they've done enough training.

Don't forget YouTube – there are a plethora of very funny clips showcasing the best of some extremely talented voice actors, as well as plenty

of instructional stuff on how to set up your own home studio, which is a much more affordable proposition these days. If you have problems finding links, books and video insights you can also check out the resources section of my website www.bluegumstudios.com.

I'm getting to live a bit of my dream. I've gone from wearing a suit and suffocating in an office tower, to this very competitive but very exciting new world working and experiencing a good variety of great creative projects. From telling stories, to letting you where to go on a GPS program, to voicing animals for kid's iPhone apps. It's never too late to make a start. ♦



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