

VOICEOVER



GURUS

The Secret to Voiceovers is to not “do” them

Have you always been told what a great voice you have? Are you an actor looking for more ways to get creative and make money? Does using your voice in a commercial simply sound like a lot of fun? There are many great reasons for wanting to learn how to use your voice in a commercial, so long as you remember not to sound like a commercial. (“What?!”)

The other day a man called me to inquire about taking voiceover lessons, and proceeded to perform for me over the phone. He went from one contrived voice to another, mostly sounding like a used-car salesman. He was very excited to show off his “voices,” so I waited patiently. When he was finished I asked, “Could I please hear your *real* voice now?” I knew he had a natural, beautiful, authentic voice hidden inside, just like everyone does.

What this man, and many other beginners forget, is that most commercials feature real-life scenarios with everyday people (or at the very least are trying their hardest to evoke that feeling), and so they call for an everyday voice – not a big, phony announcer, or a cartoon duck, or a candy that came to life, but someone more like your next-door neighbors. Let’s call them Ed and Susan. Ed and Susan have normal voices and normal characteristics. Sometimes they are friendly, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes silly, and sometimes argumentative. Ed and Susan don’t over-enunciate, and they don’t speak as if they already know what they are going to say before they say it. Ed and Susan laugh, cry, stutter, shout, whisper... Sometimes they speak quickly, sometimes slowly. The bottom line is that Ed and Susan do not speak perfectly, or sound like cartoons, or even have huge booming voices like those few guys you hear doing all the movie trailers. They sound pretty much like...Ed and Susan. What’s your name? Is it Ellen? Sound like her! Is your name Tim? Sound like Tim! This is the secret to about 80% of all voiceover scripts. Now, if you’re trying to work on the voice of one of the M&M’s, or the Aflac Duck, I take it all back. Or rather, 80% of it.