

# A VOICE OVER THE REST

*Terri Apple Tells How She Came to be the Talk of the Town*

## FEATURE

### TERRI APPLE

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I started in voiceovers when I was 16 years old. Born and raised in Kansas City, I was always interested in the entertainment business and spent quite a few years acting, dancing, singing, etc. People told me that I had a deep voice. But no one really did voiceovers back then, at least not in Kansas City. I bought a book called *Word Of Mouth* (which I still highly recommend) and read how to break into that world. I put together a homemade demo tape with an old recorder and went around to local advertis-

me, listens to the "homemade" tape and says, "Ever thought of being a secretary?" Obviously, I didn't listen. And that was the beginning.

I started booking jobs slowly, but surely. "Under the table" jobs, as they were called. I worked for 50 bucks here, 30 bucks there, but I did get to keep copies of the work, have the opportunity to work with sound engineers, work on a real mike and have lots of fun. This is the best way to learn your craft and build up your first tape. When you start, it's hard to put together a tape, but I'll discuss that later. Anyhow, I worked pretty consistently in Kansas City and did some regional jobs too — Colorado, St. Louis, Missouri. There also was some stand-in work for Jo Beth Williams and Barbara Harris (when the occasional film crew would come to town, which actually was pretty rare), some runway, industrial acting in theater, basically, anything and everything I could get into.

The next logical step was Hollywood. So, I headed there, broke, with the '71 Cutlass, voiceover tapes in hand, and did a lot of praying. I didn't do any voiceovers those first few years. I looked at the old tapes every once in a while, dusted off the plastic cases and ventured on with the camera. Finally, I decided that voiceovers definitely beats waitressing so I began to pursue agents. An agency called Abrams, Rubaloff and Lawrence took me on. Basically they "pocketed" me because I had no union cards. (Which is why it's also great to take the "under the table" jobs; you don't have to be union). They started sending me out and I began to book. I kept up with my other 1,2,4 jobs at the same time (depending on the month) along with

auditions and the occasional acting at a talent agency, sitting there at 5p.m., I got a call from my voiceover agent who wanted me to go read for something called Homeclub. A new campaign, they had seen everyone in town from Nancy Cartright to Julie Kavner — all the biggies. So I lied to my boss, slipped out of the office early and drove an hour in L.A. traffic (the worst) to read in the Valley.

I read for the job and left thinking it was the worst audition I had ever done. I read really flat and slow and my work always had mostly been announcer or high energy. I guess the rest, as they say, is history. I got the Homeclub which is now Homebase and have been working ever since. The weird part is to go on auditions and have the copy say, "Terri Apple type." I hope we don't get to the point where they'll just want the type and not me!

I am pretty lucky. I get to do so many different types of characters and commercials that I don't get pegged into one specific role. I was lucky enough to have California Care and Pontiac, Michelob, ATM Explorer, Surf, Kallag's, and others so that I wouldn't just be known for the "flat read." But I have a blast doing it.

Somewhere in my career, I decided that teaching would be great. So many people had come up to me and asked how to break into voiceovers that I decided to teach at the Learning Annex (in California) I highly recommend their class. It's inexpensive (around 40 dollars), and if the teacher is a current voiceover talent, you will gain a lot of information on the proper steps to take. I

as well as teach you how to work on a microphone. A demo tape, when you have one put together (if you don't have the benefit of doing any jobs) should run anywhere from \$250 to \$400. Anything more than that, I think, is too much. I had the unfortunate experience of sitting in on a voiceover class some years ago and they tried to tell me I needed a new tape — for a mere \$850. Good thing I know a scam when I hear one.

So, that's it. You should be well on your way to putting together what should be a really good tape. I always say the point of this business is to make money, not spend it. Voiceovers can be expensive to get into, but well worth it. It's not so bad getting up, throwing on sweats and working 10 minutes for a paycheck.

Good things can come out of the voiceovers, too. I became known from them and it's leading to more on-camera work. Besides a featured role in a TV film last year with Angie Dickinson, Lindsey Wagner and Grant Show, Arsenio Hall's production company found me from listening to me all the time. They're writing a sitcom for me to star in. (Still waiting with crossed fingers). I did an episode of *Duckman* with Jason Alexander and the opportunities just seem endless.

Most of the time, you are working with well trained professionals and really great advertising people. The ad world is so exciting and there is so much to learn.

Never stop trying to achieve your goal. You can't. One thing I learned is to never give up. That job around the corner, that audition that