

# **The Art of Voice Acting**

**by James R. Alburger**  
**www.VoiceActing.com**

## **Lani Minella on Celebrity Voices**

(unpublished)  
by Lani Minella  
www.

**LANI MINELLA**  
**www.audiogodz.com**

Lani has been voicing and directing video games since the early 1990s. Her range and versatility have landed her performance and directing jobs with the top game companies in the world.

It's unfortunate for us voice talents who are not Hollywood name stars to have to continually compete with the marquis value that marketing puts on hiring Cameron Diaz to be in *'Shrek'* or Ben Stiller in *'Madagascar'*. What makes these on-camera actors able to get away with passable voice-acting is the level of animation that brings their voices to life. If you close your eyes when watching a Disney movie, chances are great the voices won't seem as lively or interesting.

Instead of hiring unique new creative character voices, many producers rely on remembering who they liked in some movie or TV show and we end up doing a sound-alike of some nondescript voice of a famous actor or actress. On the plus side, this means you have more of a chance to get hired sometimes if you do impersonations, but whatever you do, don't say, "This is my Arnold Schwarzenegger impersonation," and do a mediocre one. Instead, file that impersonation under "Arnold" in your own brain and you can create a new character from that basis.

There's nothing worse than someone labeling a weak impersonation, because it proves how bad someone is. In voice acting you don't get the benefit of the Groucho glasses or Mad TV make up artists to sound like a real celeb. It's all in the voice. And even though Rich Little was able to impersonate a lot of stars, the real talent is when the impersonator can hold a total conversation in the celeb voice, instead of some rehearsed one liners:

"Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore."  
"What a dump!"  
"How'd ya like to come up sometime and see me?"  
"Hasta la vista, baby."  
"Play it again, Sam."

It's a lot easier to practice a few recognizable phrases than to be able to pull off the entire persona for a conversation with totally new words in a script. Comedians suffer the same misfortune. They have their rehearsed shtick, but if you try and get them to be funny impromptu, with ad-libs or funny comebacks in a live interview, it's a totally different catastrophe.

Voice actors have to be chameleons, able to stay in character, switch to a different character or version of that character if the producer decides to change what you auditioned with. As far as whom I prefer working with, it's talent who has NO trumped up attitude, who can take direction, who can cold read well and who can act or at least maintain their voice and delivery without losing energy, focus or natural conversationality.

So my best advice to anyone who wants to excel in voice acting is to practice cold reading, experiment with body and facial gestures which will alter your voice inherently and start making your own mental library of voices you find yourself coming up with, either by imitation or messing around.

The more voice control you have, the easier it is for you to be that chameleon and find more opportunities in the voiceover business.