

# A Few Minutes With...

# LORI ALAN

**W**e are revving up to embark on yet another amazing installment of our continuing lecture series, *Inside The Voice Actor's Studio*, with a guest who exemplifies the often over-used idiom "a force of nature", quadruple threat Lori Alan: voice and on-camera actress/comedienne/writer/producer whose decades-long career nearly checks off all the boxes in the entertainment industry! Her credits include *Family Guy*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Animaniacs*, *Futurama*, *Inside Out*, *Toy Story 3*, *Wall-E*, *Despicable Me 2*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Ray Donovan*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Law & Order*, not to mention hundreds upon hundreds of commercials. We tried to harness this whirlwind of a woman for just a brief moment to get a glimpse into what we can expect when she rolls into town on September 8th...

**Voicetrax:** *When you were a little girl, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

**Lori Alan:** Exactly what I'm doing now. My parents were actors, they actually still are. To this day, I can never get my mother on the phone because she is constantly in some play or directing something. They were theatre majors, with a minor in radio. My dad went off into advertising, directing, writing commercials and singing jingles. My mom was an actress and then broke into voice-over doing promos during a time when women barely did any voice-over at all. I saw them doing it, so it wasn't abnormal to me. I think if I'd come home and said I wanted to be a lawyer or a doctor, it would have been weird.

**VT:** *So basically you went into the family business?*

**LA:** Yes, I never thought about it in those terms, but I guess I did. I remember from a very young age there being cast parties at my house. I have very vivid memories of feeding my mom lines or watching my dad down in the basement splicing tape together with a razor blade. He would hire me and my sister for whatever little kid roles he had in the spots he was producing. It literally never occurred to me to do anything else, it was just a matter of what part of the entertainment business was I going to be in. My thighs were too big to be a dancer, so I thought... I'll be an actress!

**VT:** *Often kids rebel against following in their parents' footsteps, so what was it about what they were doing that drew you in?*

**LA:** They were always storytelling, they were always having fun creating and they brought me into the fun. I didn't see any other kids at home doing that with their parents. They just didn't seem to be having as much fun as we were. Now granted, we were a little dysfunctional and a little kooky, but we were enjoying the creative process. There was a true sense of freedom. And a little glamour in there too. I remember the nights when my mom

was getting ready to go the theatre with her slip on, primping at her vanity table and I'd be cuing her for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf*. Being a part of a community of creative people I felt included and accepted. I found a place to belong.

**VT:** *Your career spans so many facets of the entertainment industry, but what is it about voice-over in particular that you love so much?*

**LA:** In voice-over you can't use physical cues like raising your eyebrow or putting your hand on your hip to get your point across to the audience. It's all got to come from your heart and through your voice. I feel like voice-over is the highest form of acting and storytelling. You have to feel some way about whatever product it is that you're talking about, by having an opinion or revelation or an experience (basically having a relationship with the product) so that it really connects with the audience. I always have such a feeling of accomplishment when I truly capture the essence of a script. I love the challenge that voice-over presents.

**VT:** *Exactly! We constantly remind our students that voice-over acting is about acting and not your voice and that you have to work without the crutches of props, costumes, other actors, an audience...*

**LA:** But you have your imagination. You have the fact that you've lived on this planet and that gives you so much of what you need to bring a script to life. Of course you need training to be competitive in voice-over, but you also need to go live a rich, full life. Go experience life and meet people. The world is full of fascinating people that you can draw on when you need to create a character.

**VT:** *It's clear to anybody who's around you what a hard worker you are and it's obviously been a major factor in your tremendous success. Where did that come from?*

**LA:** I saw it as an example from my parents and the people they hung around, not necessarily as a means to an end, but just making a commitment to what you've decided to do and enjoying the process. I also think keeping busy keeps you out of your head and away from that "actor neurosis". Acting can be a very narcissistic pursuit, but keeping busy, volunteering, spending time with family and friends gives me a sense of purpose and keeps my perspective in check. And that ultimately leads to that full, rich life which in turn makes you a better actor. As a voice-actor we get hired and fired every day, and are so often isolated from the world in our booths. And I'm such a gregarious, extroverted person, I need to be fed the human connection. And even if you're introverted, if you're truly an artist you need that sense of community.

**VT:** *Funny, that's exactly how we feel about what we have at Voicetrax...*

**CA:** It's a beautiful thing. We are all each others' teachers and there is always something you can learn when you are amongst a group of artists. I can't wait to come meet everybody and learn from your students!

*Suffice it to say, Lori, the feeling is mutual! We are fired up for Lori's visit and you should be too! Come join Lori on Friday, September 8th for Inside The Voice Actor's Studio and check out her one day lab, Invitational Mistress Of All Trades, on page 9.*