



The Don LaFontaine Voice-Over Lab

by Rufino Cabang

Those of us fortunate enough to have known Don LaFontaine will always remember his kindness and generosity, as much a part of him as his legendary voice. He nurtured careers, gave freely of his time and shared his expertise with many of today's top voice-over artists. That same giving spirit is being honored in both deed and name with the Don LaFontaine Voice-Over Lab, a first-of-its-kind technical, creative and learning center dedicated to the art and business of voice-over, currently under construction in Los Angeles.

The Lab started as an idea brought to the non-profit Screen Actors Guild Foundation (www.sagfoundation.org) by three of the industry's most respected talents, Paul Pape, Joe Cipriano and Don LaFontaine's personal engineer, George Whittam. The Foundation, which provides career-, life- and community-enhancing programs to actors and their families, opened the popular Actors Center in L.A.'s Museum Square business complex, and looks forward to opening this latest addition this summer.



Building on the Actors Center's success as a one-stop location for Union actors seeking workshops, computer resources, classroom, screening and networking space, the Lab will add voice-over to a thriving location (Back Stage awarded the Actors Center "2009 Readers' Choice Favorite Actors Hangout" last year). SAG, AFTRA and AEA members will be the first to benefit from the Lab's services at no cost, but open events, classes and rental opportunities will also be offered to non-Union voice-over actors and students

The Lab's imminent completion will present voice-over's first studio outfitted with a classroom, an environment which emphasizes the instruction as much as the production of quality voice-over work. Two recording booths increase the space's versatility, with the self-engineered solo booth allowing individuals to work on their own audition sessions while the larger main booth accommodates up to six actors comfortably for group reads.

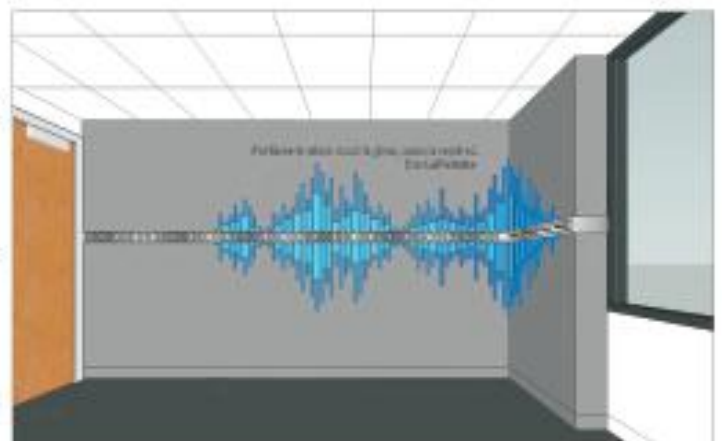
Working to picture with the main booth's large plasma monitor will add convenience to both learning and working in promos and ADR. The inner workings of both booths will be observable through expansive studio windows from the adjacent classroom, a laptop-friendly space with available power and wireless connection. In development is a substantial lineup of valuable seminars and workshops with established voice-over artists and teachers, sharing the most current information and techniques to enhance career and craft.



Future plans include reaching beyond the physical walls of the Lab, with the entire Closed Circuit- and ISDN-capable facility taking advantage of video streaming technology to bring its wealth of knowledge to students everywhere via special online events.

The Don LaFontaine Voice-Over Lab will also give technical-minded actors a proving ground they won't find anywhere else: a hands-on showroom where they can sample from an assortment of industry-leading equipment to find their own perfect fit in terms of pricing and sound accuracy. Upwards of twenty microphones representing such world-class marques as Neumann, Marshall MXL, Sennheiser and Manley will be on hand for self-starters to assess their needs, letting them decide whether they need to spend two grand or two hundred to sound their best. Equipment donors and sponsors are invited to demonstrate their products at the Lab, giving the manufacturing world a much-needed forum for addressing inquiring minds and voices.

If the project sounds costly, it is. The SA Foundation is a completely non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and funding for all of its programs and services (which include career events, college scholarships, emergency financial assistance and children's literacy efforts) comes directly from grants and donations (not Guild



membership dues, as the SAG Foundation and SAG are two separate organizations). Monetary and in kind contributions continue to help make this extraordinary project a reality, and the names of all individuals and organizations giving over five thousand dollars toward the Lab will be displayed on a prominent Donor Wall.



The SAG Foundation has been able to push this groundbreaking project forward with the instrumental guidance and support of Founders Cipriano, Pape and Whittam as well as Advisory Board members Townsend Coleman, Joshua Daugherty, George DelHoyo, Kevin Gershan, Vanessa Gilbert, Stew Herrera, Adam "Aejay" Jackson, Ben Patrick Johnson, Nita Whitaker LaFontaine, David Marc, Bill Ratner, Tony Rodgers, Rino Romano, Scott Rummell, Jim Tasker, Steve Tisherman, Randy Thomas and Beau Weaver.

For further details, including how you can make a donation to the Don LaFontaine Voice-Over Lab, please visit www.sagfoundation.org/actorscenter/LaFontaine. Your contribution to the Lab is a gift to the entire voice-over community, a terrific way to honor industry greatness... and greatness-to-be!