



fanboynation

A Lasting ‘Shelf Life’

by R.C. Samo, Editor-in-Chief, January 28th, 2013

Monkey Kingdom Productions began in 2004 by the husband and wife team of Yuri Lowenthal and Tara Platt. Their vision is to bring to life independent film making while paying tribute to eastern philosophies, extending beyond social boundaries, forcing their audiences to step outside their comfort zone.

Lowenthal and Platt, are the creators, writers, producers, directors and stars of the hit series, “Shelf Life,” which is entering its fourth season. They are also accomplished voice actors, who find time to voice various video game and animated projects.

We asked the couple to share their views on voice acting, producing and working together in a fickle industry.



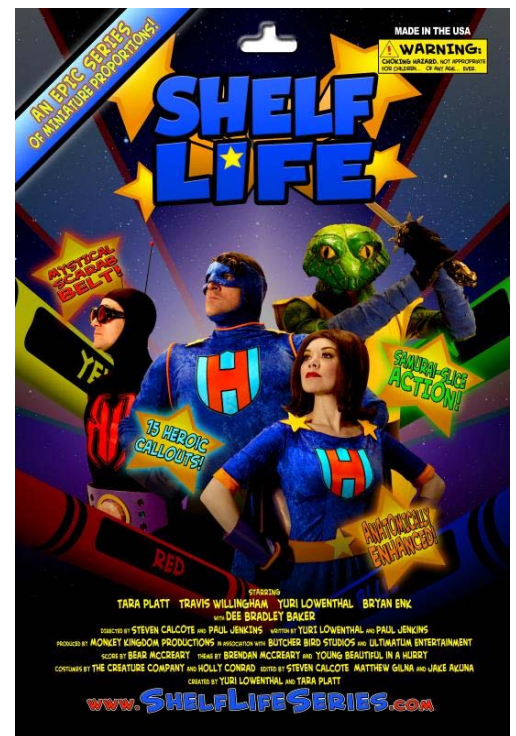
1. Your book, “Voice-Over Voice Actor: What it’s like Behind the Mic,” is considered one of the definitive guides to getting into VO work. How were you able to step outside of yourselves as performers and take on the role as teachers?

Tara Platt (T): Thanks so much, we are quite proud of the book, and of course thrilled that it has gotten such a wonderful reception by fans and fellow VO professionals. I think it was less about us consciously stepping outside of our roles as actors and more of just wanting to convey the information in the easiest way (i.e. the way we would have wanted to get it). Also, I will admit that I am an avid fan of learning and I think it works in reverse – once you have learned something it becomes a joy to share the knowledge and information with another!

Yuri Lowenthal (Y) : I just love that you called it “definitive!” We were being approached by so many people with the same questions about voice acting that we felt it might be easier to put it all down in one place and make it as easy and fun as possible. And it’s made our life easier, too!

2. As you have been kind enough to put together a guide for voice actors, who were your mentors and inspiration in getting into voice-over work and why were they such an influence on you?

T: You know I am not sure there is a list per se; there are truly so many talented actors and creators who have gone before us and are still inspiring us to push farther. The whole story of us getting into VO was less about having been inspired (though I will say that growing up with the amazing talents that did the old Hanna Barbera and Disney work couldn’t have hurt 😊!!) and more about us falling into it. We were both actors already, working more in stage and screen and then when we moved out to LA we needed to supplement our income and were looking for other avenues within the acting spectrum and landed on voice-over, and have been blessed to work in it steadily ever since.





Y: I've been a nerd about this stuff that we now work on for so long that the list would be too extensive. I was watching anime since before I knew the term "anime" and scoured the credits of shows so I'd know who people like Rob Paulsen and Maurice LaMarche were. One of the biggest thrills for me still is walking into the room to work and seeing who's there to play.

3. *You both executive produce, write and star in "Shelf Life." What is the sensation you feel when a pet project takes off and for a lack of better terms...has a long shelf life?*

T: Wow. Tired?! Ha ha, no really, producing, acting and writing on a single project is definitely a feat in itself and I can honestly say that we are beaming with pride. Not that we think our show is the best thing since sliced bread, but because we have the firsthand knowledge of having seen something thru from creation to fruition and all the hard work and energy it entails (and favors and teamwork!). There is nothing quite like the buzz you get when you bring something into existence that wasn't there before – its exhilarating! The fact that others respond to it in a positive way and the show has gone on to have a life of its own and has even won awards is nothing short of reaffirming. But it

isn't entirely up to us, we have found a team of extremely talented and hard working folks who luckily are as passionate about the show as much as we are, and we couldn't have done it without each of them.

Y: Yup. What she said. As actors you rarely get to choose the kinds of roles we'd like to play that it's extremely empowering to create the kinds of projects we want to be in. Now to crack the "how do we let everyone on the Web know about our awesome show" nut...

4. *Season Four of "Shelf Life" is in the can. What are some spoilers you can provide us with?*

T: Well, as it will begin airing fairly soon you won't have to wait too long, but I can say that there will be a lot more guest characters. Since the foursome get off the shelf this season (thanks to our IndieGoGo supporters) they find themselves in a variety of locations that action figures may roam and interacting with a slew of fun new (and scary) action figures. There is a "big bad" character that figures into the plot line of the season and several recurring characters that pop up. One of my favorite episodes to shoot takes place in the bathtub – ooh, is that too much of a spoiler?!

Y: Yeah! Cool new guests! Cool new sets! And a storyline that will reward people who watch the whole season instead of just one-off joke episodes. Can't wait for you to see it!

5. *Tara and Yuri, you've been married for what is going on 12 years now. In Hollywood, that is nearly platinum status. How are you able to not only work together, but maintain a marriage in an industry that tugs at your from a million different directions?*

T: Ha. Yep! It is amazing to think we have been married over eleven years already, and our production company is already almost eight years old – that's crazy! But luckily I guess we really like each other, cause it hardly feels like any time at all. And thankfully we are each really good at certain things that tend to balance the other one out so neither of us is stuck with all the work, we really are a team and get to face challenges and celebrate wins together. I think the thing that stays constant is that we love to see the other one happy and we bring a sense of play to everything we work on.

Y: Well it's not ALWAYS wine & roses... One of the problems it actually CREATES is that we rarely take a break because we're so invested in our projects and sometimes we get a little burnt out. We have to force ourselves to take breaks and get away sometimes, even if it's just for a day. There are times I wish we had 9-5 jobs and when we got home after work we didn't immediately start working again. Then I remember how awesome our jobs are and punch myself in the face.

Find out more about Monkey Kingdom Productions at <http://www.monkeykingdomproductions.com/> Follow them on Twitter @MonkeyKingdomPR and be sure to watch Shelf Life at <http://shelflifeseries.com/>

