

The digital diaries

by Patricia McCutcheon
Digital Media Organizer

I'm excited to be filling in for the next year for **Jill Rosenberg** as ACTRA National's Digital Media Organizer while she is on maternity leave. In Jill's last article for *InterACTRA (Fall 2005)*, she described the digital industry as the 'wild west'. So I guess that makes me the new sheriff in town! During my term you can look forward to articles like this one to help keep you informed on what's going on and happening in the 'wild west of digital media' and how that can translate into great opportunities for you as a performer.

One of my first tasks was to attend *NextMEDIA* in Banff and the *Vancouver International Digital Festival (VIDFEST)* in June. These stimulating conferences focused on where the digital industry is right now and what direction it is heading in. The main message was that broadcasters are asking for more digital content and that can only mean great things for ACTRA members.

'Multi-platform' was the buzz term used at *NextMEDIA* on a regular basis. This term refers to combining traditional elements such as TV series and films with a whole gamut of extras and specialized content that can be delivered in new ways, for example on mobile phones, the internet, iPods, videogame consoles, etc. Broadcasters and film distributors are looking for ideas that can be spun out into an exciting entertainment package, transforming the average TV show or movie into a multimedia experience.

Let's take an animated TV show for kids for an example. When I was a kid, we had

to watch whatever was on the channel that wasn't fuzzy! These days with digital technology kids can demand a lot more. In addition to having a really amazingly animated TV show to watch, there are now websites featuring their favourite characters that they can manipulate through on line video games and they can download a choice of animated shorts onto their video iPods to show their friends at school. What is cooler than that?

So how does this affect you? These 'multi-platform' shoots are happening all the time and translate directly into more opportunities for work. Sometimes additional footage needs to be shot for these various digital projects. This can happen at the end of a shooting day or the director will require a few extra days of shooting. If you are on a shoot and you're asked to do some extra work for 'extra content' and you aren't quite sure, please call your ACTRA branch immediately. There's a good chance you might need to be paid for it!

A good example of a multi-platform production is *ReGenesis*. This TV series has an internet element that enables the show to have 'extended reality'. Fans are able to interact with the show by visiting various fictional websites, gain clues and solve a mystery related to various episodes. Check it out at www.regenesis.com

At *VIDFEST*, content for mobile phones was one of the major focuses. How can it be created, how can it be viewed and who will see it? According to the various workshops, it is very easy, it is here and it is growing at

a rapid rate. There are already awards shows popping up featuring these 'made for mobile' films.

Degrassi 'mobisodes' are another example of digital content that has used the talents of ACTRA members. Everyone knows *Degrassi: The Next Generation* is an amazing TV show. Did you know that the folks at *Degrassi* also created mini-episodes with new content that viewers were able to download to their phones? These mobisodes are a great way of reaching *Degrassi: TNG* fans around the world... and you know how they love their cell phones! www.degrassi.tv

ACTRA is being approached on a daily basis by producers who want to produce various digital projects of all types using members like you. This is a great indication that ACTRA members have a place in the 'wild west' of digital! Stay tuned for more updates from the new sheriff in town!

Digital media jargon deciphered:

Multi-platform – the new buzzword from broadcasters. Means that they're looking for programs and films that they can spin-off into different formats. i.e. make a console or online game out of it, make a short version for mobile phones and iPods, have a website with extra video and 'diaries' of characters etc...

Mobile content – anything that you can get on a mobile phone: ringtones, graphics, games, movies, TV shows

Mobisode – a short mini-episode of a series meant for downloading and viewing on your mobile phone.

Internet content – anything you watch or listen to on the internet. Whole episodes of TV shows, teasers, extra 'behind the scenes content', diaries written by characters, movies, on-line games, etc.

Podcasts – programs that can be downloaded and listened to or watched on your iPod. Pretty much ANYONE, anywhere can create a Podcast and make it available around the world. They can be as simple as just an audiofile, like a radio show, or can be visual.

