

Transcript of Interview with Michael Gough

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Thecowking: Hey everybody, this is thecowking from PurePandemonium.com and today I'm on the phone with Michael Gough, world renowned voice actor, actor and musician. Thanks for talking with us today Mike.

Gough: Well, uh, you're welcome. Thanks for the glowing intro!

Thecowking: I want to talk about your background a little bit. According to your website MichaelGough.com, you've worked with Disney, DreamWorks, Lexus, Pepsi, NBC, ESPN...my question to you is who or what inspired you to become a voice actor and how did you get into the business of voice acting?

Gough: Well, I think I may have been inspired a long time ago when I was sitting in my room as a kid watching TV and kind of mimicking things and just amusing myself by using my voice. It wasn't anything that I ever thought that I would do for a living...not even acting in general really. I went to college and originally I was an English major and I also did a music thing. I was also an athlete. I got this little Athletics scholarship to go to college at UC Santa Barbara. I was a shot-putter and discus thrower, actually. Just before I was about to graduate from college not really knowing what I was going to do, around campus I saw these signs that were "original one-act plays". I thought, that would be kind of fun to do before I got out of school. So I tried that and I got into one of them and I guess the 'bug' kind of bit me! I have always enjoyed reading out loud and the acting thing really seemed like a normal path to follow once I got a taste of it. I stuck around in college and ended up getting a Masters degree in theater. Then I came to Los Angeles and tried to make it as an actor, and I would get a few things here and there, film or TV parts...but they were few and far between. So I was working doing odd jobs...and the voice over thing is something I thought would be fun and was something I thought I could do. Actually some friends of mine who had a local radio show on the weekends has asked me to do some commercials for them...and that was fun and they turned out pretty well and I thought this is something I would really like to look into, at least. I took a voice over class and that helped a lot. I learned what was going on and that led to me getting a voice over agent, which is something you really needed to do. It just kind of went from there and I started getting auditions and getting work and making a living. I thought, 'well, this seems like where I am actually going to be able to pay the bills and I enjoy it.' It's fun.

Thecowking: Yeah, it does sound really fun!

Gough: Yeah, sure beats digging ditches or whatever ya know? It's a lot of fun, ya know, the voice over world, like I said, you get to use your imagination a lot...especially with animation and video games. When you get to be or play things that you would never get to in the quote-unquote, 'real-world'. So that's kind of the short-long version of my life.

Thecowking: (laughs) When you're doing a job such as voice over work for a video game, does that something where you just kind of go in and record it and then you're done? How much of an intimate level do you get with some of your jobs?

Gough: It's usually that. Sometimes you get the material ahead of time, a lot of times you don't...you don't see it until you get there. If it's an on-going thing like an animated series or something, then you get to delve into it and experience it over a long period of time...if you are recording something every week. Video games are typically done in big chunks. If you have a lot to do it may take you a few days. It's pretty much all done in one shot...a lot of times you don't know what the rest of the game is like. Sometimes they will give you a sneak-preview of what the game is going to look like...and of course they (the directors or producers) explain to you what is going on. Some of these scripts for these video games... I mean, I can't believe how these people come up with this stuff. They have these volumes that are just like 4 to 5 inches thick, just stacked!

Thecowking: Yeah, the amount of background information they can come up with is unbelievable.

Gough: Yeah, and a lot of times, just speaking for myself, I don't really know everything else that's going on in the world of this game, but you're given a pretty good amount of information and direction about your specific character or characters...sometimes you are given more than one. A lot of times they don't want to give you any more information than they have to...they don't want anything to leak out.

Thecowking: How did you come up with the voice for Deckard Cain? I mean obviously you had to come up with some sort of old, raggedy man...and as a side note, what steps do you normally take when creating a voice for a certain role?

Gough: I'll just answer the first part of the question first. The Deckard Cain voice was, if I remember correctly...they sort of had a vague idea that he was kind of an old, wise character and that he might sort of have like a Shawn Connery thing about him. Ya know, (Deckard Voice) "which is kind of the way it"...If I'm remembering right, and it's been a while ago but actually coming up with the voice didn't take too long. Like I said, older, sage, wise, kind of character...and this is back before anybody really knew...ya know, it was just all really new...and maybe a hint of a Sean Connery thing...so (Deckard voice)"So it just sort of happened naturally."...To answer the second part of your question, you have an ear of things and you use your imagination. In this case there was no picture, no visual or anything. Sometimes you get a picture of a character ahead of time, and that gives you a hint as to what it might sound like. Otherwise you kind of look at the description and you play around with it in your head and with your voice...if it requires some sort of accent or something you can play around with those. And yeah, Deckard Cain just kind of fell into place pretty quickly I think as far as the sound of his voice. His personality...that kind of evolved. He sort of became...not that he's a comical character...but he does have a certain humor about him...just the fact that sometimes he gets impatient and he's kind of cranky sometimes. Luckily it's just a voice that's right in my "wheelhouse" so to speak. A lot of times with video games you have to do things, like if you are screaming a lot, or if there is a lot of battle, or mutation going on...you're really taxing your voice and you have to do it over and over again for many different takes. I've definitely damaged my voice with some video games. Deckard Cain is great because I can keep it sustained for a long time...and it's a great character. It's fun, and apart from having a certain humor about him he also has a deadly seriousness too when he's getting into worrying about the great evils that are coming, or the dark forces and all of that. (Deckard voice):"So it just sort of became...it just sort of evolved into who he is...rather quickly I would say!"

Thecowking: (Laughs) Nice! What's it like to...you know you've done a lot of work for radio broadcasting and television and cartoons and what not...what's it like to hear your own voice?

Gough: I tell ya, if I hear my own voice as a character, an extreme character...maybe like Deckard Cain or some of the cartoon things like the Gopher from Whinnie the Pooh...(Gopher Voice): Sssomeone who ssspeaks like thissss". Those things are kind of fun to hear, because it doesn't necessarily sound like me. If I just hear my normal speaking voice...sometimes I just kind of cringe...

Thecowking: Exactly, yeah. (Laughs)

Gough: (Laughs) So ya know, I kind of enjoy it most of the time. Just sometimes when I hear myself and its usually just me in my normal voice and I think, , like "uh, God, we should've done that over again!" But in general, it's kind of a hoot. Like I said with kind of the character-y stuff...that's the stuff that's the most fun and it's where you really get to play. Any work you can get is good so I really wouldn't complain...

Thecowking: Is there any difference previously when you had worked with ex-Blizzard North crew led by Bill Roper compared to now with Jay Wilson on the D3 team?

Gough: Yeah, it's uh...(long pause) hmm...The older stuff was a while ago, but I will day with the D3, everything seems to have taken more of a serious turn. Even the look of the game from the preview footage I've seen...it's just pretty amazing. And you know, even though Deckard Cain retains his personality, everything's a little more serious, a little more grave, and dark maybe? I would say that overall the tone, I mean it's still fun and everything, but everything has taken on more of a weight. Maybe they know that it's been a while and this is going to be a big thing so we have to do it right. I wanted to say "So do we get to do another "Cain Rap?"

Thecowking: (Laughs)

Gough: But so far, uh...(laughs)

Thecowking: Nothin' yet huh?

Gough: Nothin' yet...and unofficially I was in it that when they did the "Cain Rap" it was just on a lark, ya know...supposed to be kind of a joke. I did probably come up with at least half the lyrics, I must say. They had stuff written out and they said "Yeah, if you can think of anything else...let's throw it in there..."

Thecowking: Well it definitely turned out funny! (Laughs)

Gough: Yeah it's (laughs) pretty funny...some of the pop references are getting a little out of date.

Thecowking: Yeah I would say so.

Gough: Ya know with "Who let the Barbarians out..." (Laughs) but yeah, it's pretty funny!

Thecowking: You talked a little bit about the look of Diablo III and I'm not sure what you've been hearing about online there's a bunch of petitions going around about "change the art style for D3, it's

not dark enough, it's not gritty enough, it looks too much like World of Warcraft...I personally think it looks great and I can't wait to play it. What do you think?

Gough: Gosh, it's hard for me to say. I'm not really that familiar with the way everything looks...ya know the cinematic stuff I've seen on the preview looks really great. And the gameplay stuff...maybe that's just a look that Blizzard likes to use. I mean, it looks good to me! Whether or not it looks too much like World of Warcraft? I'm not really that much of an expert to know but...it would be cool if Diablo III had a look that everybody would instantly recognize, and maybe it will. It's kind of hard to say when the game hasn't come out yet...

Thecowking: Right. I think...they've only shown 20 minutes of video that we have so far. I think there are plenty of other environments that they will release that will calm people down as far as the "too much bright color palette" and things like that, so...

Thecowking: Is the Deckard Cain (and I don't know if you can answer this) but is your work for Deckard Cain in D3 finished, or do you still have more recording left to do?

Gough: Yeah, that's a good question! That would be great if there was more. It seems like what we did was pretty much all that there was, at least at that time. Maybe the game is still evolving a little bit, but as far as I know, what I've already recorded is *it*. I mean, I haven't heard anything since then. But yeah, that would be great...the more the merrier. More work is better (laughs) than less work.

Thecowking: Yeah, I hear ya!

Gough: So if they (Blizzard) call and they need some more stuff or even we have to redo some things...yeah, that'd be great!

Thecowking: Well, that's actually all the questions I had for you.

Gough: Well, yeah all I can say is I've been lucky enough to do different characters over time and different things and Deckard Cain is definitely one of the favorites, I mean, he's a great character...and...I hope he survives! (Laughs)

Thecowking: (Laughs) I do as well!

Gough: I hope he makes it to Diablo IV!

Thecowking: Yes, yes indeed!...umm...If I were to give you a slogan...would you be able to recite it back to me in Deckard Cain's voice?

Gough: Sure! Hit me!

Thecowking: Ok, it's "Pure Pandemonium, your source for Diablo III news".

Gough: Okay! (Deckard voice): "Pure Pandemonium, your source for Diablo III news!"

Thecowking: Excellent, excellent (both laugh)

Gough: (Deckard voice): "Stay awhile and listen...to Pure Pandemonium!"

Thecowking: (both laughing) I'm speechless man that was great!"

Gough: Ah, well...you're welcome!

Thecowking: Ya know, and again I appreciate this. Obviously I'm not some huge website with all these sponsors and all this stuff and I really appreciate your willingness to interview with me today!

Gough: Well, you know...hey no problem! My pleasure, I'm grateful to be able to do it and the fact that there are fans...it's great so it's fun for me too, so thank you!

Thecowking: Alright! Well, I will let you get back at it! Best of luck to you in the future and hopefully I'll talk to you again soon!

Gough: Alright Phil, well...same to you! Take care and good luck!

Thecowking: Alright, thanks Mike!

Gough: Alright, See ya! Bye!

Thecowking: Buh-bye!