



Thursday, December 18, 2014 SoulMedic and RescuePoetix™ went on location to Friggin' Fabulous Studios in the Journal Square Area of Jersey City NJ to catch up with voice over professional Nick Ciavatta.

A little bit about Nick before we get to the interview:

Nick Ciavatta is an experienced journalist and voice-over artist who has done work for Allegra, Pandora Radio, NBC, Charlie Rose, Sears, Bloomberg, Discovery Channel and more. His company, Friggin Fabulous Productions, does all kinds of Audio/Video production including Audio Mastering, Analog to Digital Transfers, Voice Over Lessons & Demos and more.

Friggin Fabulous Radio was started by Nick in 2000 and features interviews with interesting musicians, authors, poets, artists and other creative types and is available as an app in The Amazon App Store.

Nick is also an original musician who's band, Sea of Otters, has been playing around the New York/New Jersey area since the early 1990's.

Nick also promotes live shows at venues such as Mojo Lounge and Trolley Car Bar in Jersey City and Caffè Vivaldi in Manhattan. His Friggin Fabulous Open Mic happens every Wednesday at Trolley Car Bar, 328 Palisade Ave, Jersey City. Sign up at 8:30pm.

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As with all things live, the interview took on a personality all its own. Check out the archive and podcast for the live interview and Nick's performance on Just ADD Sound.



Interview conducted by RescuePoetix™

Just ADD Sound (JAS): Looking over the info on your website, you sport an impressive list of companies you've done voice over work for. How did you get started in this work? Did it start out with journalism or did journalism come after?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *That's almost a "Chicken or Egg" type question. I did some voice over work and deejaying for my college radio station, but one of my first jobs out of college was as a stringer for The Asbury Park Press and a Staff Reporter for The Wall Journal. The two really came together when I started doing a few in depth interviews at WHTG in the 1990's. In the early 2000's I worked as a Radio Reporter, Writer and Producer at Bloomberg Radio and continued in that vein with Friggin Fabulous Radio. I was the Staff Announcer at Bloomberg News until 2009, when I hooked up with an NYC talent agent and started doing commercial voice overs.*

Just ADD Sound: We've listened to some of your voice over work and I have to say I've heard you many times and didn't realize it was you. Do you get recognized by people for your voice acting? Is it proper to call it voice acting?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *I'll answer the second one first: It's absolutely proper to call it "Voice Acting" because that's exactly what it is. I've met so many people who say to me "Everyone says I have a great voice and that I should get in to voice overs." I always ask them how much acting or singing experience they have and some of them say, "None at all, but why do I need that? I have a great voice?" Whether you're doing a straight announcer voice or playing a stressed out housewife; it's acting. Another thing I like to tell people who think voice acting is easy is "Just because you have a piano in your house, that doesn't make you a concert pianist." You have to learn and gain experience like any other trade.*

And, believe it or not, people have recognized my voice without me saying anything and conversely people like my brother can never recognize my voice when he hears it on a commercial.



Just ADD Sound: In addition to working as a voice actor, you provide lessons. What are some of the basic things a person should have to even consider a career in voice over or narration? Is there a specific voice type that is better suited?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *As I said in my earlier answer, acting and/or singing experience helps, but isn't always necessary. Comedy Improv or stand up experience can also be very helpful. Poets and Spoken Word Artists tend to do well with VO's as well. Look, when you get in the vocal booth and the director cues you to start reading, you become a performer—plain and simple. And for most voice overs, you have to audition and compete against other people, just like any other acting job.*

I give private, intensive, one-on-one lessons that help the student develop technique and timing as well as well as the skills and info needed to hook up with agencies and get VO work. I also produce voice over demos, from start to finish. You HAVE to have a good audio voice over demo these days.

As far as the “the voice type” casting directors are looking for; I would say, a well-spoken person with good diction and no discernable local accent (neutral accent) for most stuff. In other words, if you have a really strong Jersey or Brooklyn accent, it may be tougher, but not impossible. I worked for a few years with a vocal coach to lose a lot of my “Juysey” accent. Part of what I teach is the correct way to say certain words, etc. I also recommend Speech Therapy for people who I think could actually lose their accent, at least for VO work.

Just ADD Sound (JAS): On top of doing VO work you seem to be involved in all aspects of media. Which one is your greatest passion?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *My original music is my greatest passion, for sure. I love to write and perform new songs and arrange them for a band or just do solo shows. My band, Sea of Otters has been around since 1989, playing all over the NYC area and making very little money, to be honest. You really have to love what you do to work as an original musician these days. I always tell people that my music keeps me from jumping off a bridge.*



I do a lot of media related things, including audio mastering, which I also love. Someone once asked me, “How would you sum up what you actually do?” My answer was “I make stuff sound good.” That’s pretty much my goal in life.

Just ADD Sound (JAS): Let's talk about the band for a second. Sea of Otters is listed as an alternative band. Where does the name come from and what does it represent for you?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): Well, my last name is “Ciavatta” and when I was younger, no one could ever remember how to pronounce it, so a friend of mine in High School came up with the mnemonic device “Sea of Otters.” It’s just an easy way to remember my last name. The actual Italian pronunciation sounds just like the bread you get with your sandwich “Ciabatta”, only with a “v.”

When Sea of Otters first started, people were having trouble figuring out how to label us. We blend a few different styles of music, so like every other band back then that was hard to compartmentalize, we got branded “Alternative.” The best compliment we ever got in the press was years ago when Chris Barry (God rest his soul) started his Aquarian article with “I usually start this piece by comparing the band I’m reviewing with another band, but in this case I can’t do that. These guys are as original as they come...” I thought that was one of the best compliments a band or artist could receive.

*Sea of Otters can be found on Reverb Nation, My Space, You Tube, etc., and here:
<http://www.seaofotters.com/>*

Just ADD Sound (JAS): Sea of Otters has been around since the 1990s and you have quite the following right here in JC. Have you toured with the band? Where can we see or hear SOO?

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *We’ve done a bit of touring around the USA, but except for a solo gig I did in Amsterdam, not at all on other continents. I would like to do that someday, though. I like to say that we’re a local “Tri-State Area” band. We actually started in Asbury Park, NJ, and are planning on doing shows this Spring at The Stone Pony, Wonder Bar, Saint, etc. It*



will be good to get back there. We are a big part of the Jersey City scene and there are so many amazing bands and artists here! It's an honor to be a part of it.

I host and play a brunch show every Saturday at Caffe Vivaldi, 32 Jones Street, NYC, and host an open mic in Jersey City at Trolley Car Bar, 328 Palisade Ave, and Sea of Otters will be playing again at Mojo Lounge, 130 West Side Avenue, Jersey City on Friday, January 23rd.

I'm also planning on going in to the studio to record a new album in April or May of this year.

Just ADD Sound (JAS): *In addition to working together in the studio (Nick is my voice engineer & I record at FF studio) we seem to be in similar paths. You run an open mic in JC and have a radio show. Tell us a bit about those.*

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *The open mic is such a great vehicle for showcasing local talent. We get a lot of singer/songwriters, comedians, poets, spoken worders and sometimes people who just want to tell a story about their life. It's a very chill atmosphere and a whole lot of fun. I've been running open mics for many years and I've seen many successful bands and relationships form at the open mics. Gary Van Miert and Malcolm Marsden hooked up and became The Sensational Country Blues Wonders after meeting at one of the Friggin Fabulous Open Mics. It's so much fun that it's almost criminal!*

You and I most certainly share a passion for art and music and know how to host a good interview! I started Friggin Fabulous Radio in 2000 and it was actually one of the first podcasts on iTunes. I interview bands, artists, authors and other creative types and post live performances from some of the shows that I promote. There's also a "Booze News" segment which features craft beer related interviews and more. Carole Zimmer from NPR radio recently did an interview with Linda Danz, author of "A Birdhouse in Brooklyn" for Friggin Fabulous Radio. I also recently interviewed Helene Stapinski, author of "Five Finger Discount, A Crooked Family History", one of my favorite memoirs, which happens to be, in part, a history of Jersey City corruption going back to the 1600's.



This January marks the 15th anniversary of Friggin Fabulous Radio and I'm asking everyone to check it out and vote for their favorite segment. I'll be putting together a "Best Of" show in the Spring. Friggin Fabulous Radio is an app for Android and Kindle in The Amazon App Store and Podcast Box for iPhone and iPad. It's also a free podcast on iTunes and Stitcher Radio. Here is the main link: <http://www.frigginfabulousradio.com/>

Just ADD Sound (JAS): *With everything you do and being a music professional, what's your take on the role of streaming services in the life span of the independent artist?*

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *Streaming music is a bittersweet pill, in my opinion. I personally love Spotify-the fact that I can stream almost anything that was ever recorded is amazing! I'm discovering a lot of new bands and re-discovering a lot that I forgot about. The down side is that Spotify, iTunes and other similar services pay very little in artist royalties. It's kind of a joke when you get a check from CD Baby for like \$8 when you know hundreds or thousands of people are clicking on your songs. The internet has become so ubiquitous and is for the most part, still like the Wild West. I think artists, managers and labels need to come together and demand higher royalties! Unfortunately, most consumers don't want to pay more for their music, even if it helps out their favorite artists.*

Just ADD Sound (JAS): *What bit of wisdom would you share with someone new to the music business and all its moving parts?*

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *My advice it to hit as many open mics as you possibly can and go support live music! Trust me, musicians and promoters really appreciate it when you come check out their shows and it's a good way to get known and get a gig. A little loyalty goes a long way! And don't be afraid to intern in a recording or mastering studio, if that's what you really want to do.*

Just ADD Sound (JAS): *What's next for you, the band and Friggin Fabulous Productions?*

Nick Ciavatta (NC): *I'm planning a trip the Fifth Moon of Jupiter, actually. Not really. As far as the band goes, I'd like to tour more in the Spring and record a new album. As far as*



Friggin Fabulous Productions goes, I'd like to do more music mastering, more live event production, voice overs and emceeing.

I was actually the emcee for the FIT Graduation at The Javitz Center in NYC last year and will be doing that and possibly the Steven's Institute ceremony in 2015. You hear that, Rutgers and NYU-I'm ready when you are!

Keep connected with Nick Ciavatta and Friggin Fabulous Studio

Nick Ciavatta

Google+: <https://plus.google.com/103674749256167342230/posts>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nickciavatta>

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Friggin Fabulous Productions

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Sea of Otters

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