

THE WAY THEY SPEAK IS KNOWN TO MILLIONS, BUT HARDLY ANYONE KNOWS WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE. UNTIL NOW...  
BY NICK MORGAN

**PANZEE**  
FROM CBEEBIES' *ZINGZILLAS*  
PENNI TOVEY

When aspiring actress, dancer and singer Penni Tovey recently saw a cloth monkey on a shelf in her local Early Learning Centre, she knew that, on one level at least, she'd made it. "I squeezed the doll and out came my voice," she says.

The 35-year-old from Reading has been voicing Panzee, a singing chimp in the hit CBeebies TV music show *ZingZillas*, since April last year. She'd heard about the part from her friend, CBeebies presenter and actress Sarah-Jane Honeywell, who plays Panzee's body (inside a large monkey suit).

"She told me the producers were looking for someone who sounded 'husky, enthusiastic, but a bit bossy and with the energy of a small child'. I thought, *That's me!*"

Penni, who also controls Panzee's animatronic eyes and mouth, has had a varied past. She's travelled the world as a dancer for the likes of the Spice Girls and Bon Jovi, and had a top-ten hit with dance act Ruff Driverz (1998's "Dreaming"). She's also a choreographer, and played Tinker Bell in this year's High Wycombe pantomime *Peter Pan*—alongside Steve McFadden (Phil Mitchell in *EastEnders*) as Captain Hook.

But she's happy to have found most fame among the under-fives. "I love Panzee and now have cupboards full of dolls," she says.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BURDEN

# THE FACE BEHIND THE VOICE



Mini-Me:  
Penni Tovey  
with her  
alter ego  
Panzee

## THE CHANNEL 4 CONTINUITY ANNOUNCER

### GARY TERZZA

You might not realise it, but Gary Terzza has probably played quite a part in your life. He's introduced you to *Friends*, shown you *Hollyoaks*, invited you to *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, and even told you about some *Desperate Housewives*. The 51-year-old from St Albans, Hertfordshire, has been a Channel 4 continuity announcer for 20 years—and he's on E4 and More 4, too. "I'm going out to millions of people, but in my head I'm talking to just one person," he reveals. "That's the only way I can do it."

Unlike voice-over artists, continuity announcers write their own scripts and watch the programmes as you watch them. "The idea is to be an unintrusive chum. You're not advertising and you're not the programme."

The big fear in continuity is talking over a show or commercial. "Knowing when to shut up is just as important as knowing when to speak," he says—and admits to once proclaiming, "Can anyone hear me?" over US sitcom *Different Strokes* in the early Eighties during an announcing stint at ITV.

But Gary, who also spent some of the Eighties as an ITV children's presenter and now trains others to do voice-overs\*, knows that he has a great job. "At the end of the day, I'm getting paid to watch TV!"

"AND NOW ON CHANNEL 4, IT'S TIME TO DROP IN ON THE *BIG BROTHER HOUSE*"

\*SEE READERSDIGEST.CO.UK/LINKS FOR WEBLINK



[[1L]]

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BURDEN (LEFT); BARRY MARSDEN (RIGHT)

## THE VOICE OF ORANGE

### RUTH GIBSON

When 29-year-old Ruth Gibson attended a series of auditions in 2006 to voice the Orange network's phone services, she was given the almost-impossible task of trying to appeal to very different people. The mobile giant wanted a voice that, on the one hand, sounded formal enough to appeal to businessmen yet, on the other, had a youthful credibility. But Ruth's sensuous, down-to-earth speech hit the spot—and since November 2007, when Orange's 17 million UK customers have turned on their phones, it's been she who says, "To listen to your messages, press one..."

Ruth, who lives in north London, is a stage and TV actress. Her roles include a jury forewoman in BBC One's *Judge John Deed* and a nurse in *Doctors*. She can also shoot, knows sign language and has a diploma in cordon bleu cookery. She works for Orange once every two weeks.

"I recently spent 16 hours reading the electoral roll for a voice-recognition system," she says. "The Orange voice isn't how I talk usually: I drop my pitch and round my vowels. But I feel for my husband. Not only does he have to listen to me go on at him in person, I'm there whenever he picks up his phone, too!"

"WELCOME TO ORANGE ANSWER-PHONE"



[[2R]]



## THE HONEY MONSTER

### GARY MARTIN

He grew up loving Looney Tunes characters such as Bugs Bunny. So it's fitting that Gary Martin has spent 23 years as a Sugar Puffs-obsessed creature who resembles a cartoon character come to life.

The 53-year-old landed the role—famous for the catchphrase, “Tell ‘em about the honey, Mummy”—after playing a man-eating plant in West End musical *Little Shop of Horrors*. That character's deep, rasping tones were just what the ad men were after. He's since played other characters in some 3,000 cartoon episodes—he was Pie Face in BBC One's *Dennis the Menace*—and his film-trailer voice-overs include *Saw 3D*, *Despicable Me* and *The Young Victoria*.

“People still ask me to call their mum as the monster!” he says. “I'm rather proud of that.”

## THE COMMERCIAL MAN

### JONATHAN KYDD

Forty-six-year-old Jonathan Kydd is one of the most prodigious advertisement voice-over artists of his generation. His tones have been heard plugging products on more than 4,000 radio and TV commercials since he broke into the industry in 1990.

In recent years, he's featured in adverts for Actimel, Lemsip, Anglian, PG Tips, Yellow Pages and L'Oréal. But his most famous commission was playing the male parts and providing the commentary for an infamous 1993 Ferrero Rocher advert. It was Jonathan who uttered the immortal words, “The ambassador's receptions are noted in society for their host's exquisite taste,” and, “Excellenté!”

His voice ranges from manic wackiness—a recent Duracell Bunny commercial had him as an excitable football commentator—to the more subtle tones used in the L'Oréal ads (the director's instruction was “be sincerer”).

“To have a good advertising voice you need to have a good ear,” says Jonathan, from London. “If you can't pick up a tone or accent, you can't copy it. Then you've got to deliver the work fast—studio time costs big money, so you need to give the perfect line in the second or third take.”

He makes a good living from his job, but not the millions some think. “I work for one of the best agencies in the country, but I get £200 for a studio session, then sometimes a small repeat fee when the commercial is aired.”

“THE AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTIONS ARE NOTED IN SOCIETY FOR THEIR HOST'S EXQUISITE TASTE”





**“STAT MAN” FROM THE WEAKEST LINK**  
**JON BRIGGS**

Aged 15, Jon Briggs visited BBC Radio Oxford and fell in love. “They let me behind a microphone to do a mock news bulletin during an open day. I instantly knew that broadcasting was for me,” he says. “That was the start of a 30-year affair.”

Jon was helping out at the radio station by the time he was 16, had his own show as soon as he left school and was Britain’s youngest breakfast-show presenter at 20. He became a reporter on Radio 4, was a newsreader on Radio 2 between 1993 and 2000, and has presented numerous other radio and satellite TV programmes.

When the call came from Jon’s agent saying that a new daytime quiz, presented by Anne Robinson, needed a scores announcer, the 46-year-old from Marlow, Buckinghamshire, wasn’t excited by its prospects. “But we first aired in 2000 during the Olympics and anybody who hated sport found us. From there, we grew and grew. The show’s part of the fabric of popular culture now, and I love that.”

Jon can also be heard on Garmin satnavs, *National Geographic* documentaries and King’s Cross station announcements. He runs talent agency Excellent.

**NOODLE FROM GORILLAZ**  
**HARUKA KURODA**

Many youngsters seek rock-star status but, for Haruka Kuroda, the star found her. Back in 2000, she’d just left the Guildford School of Acting when her agent called. “There’s a new band forming and they want the voice of a Japanese girl,” he said. The role was that of an 11-year-old nicknamed Noodle—largely because “noodle” was the only word she could speak in English. She was part of the experimental new cartoon band Gorillaz, created by Blur frontman Damon Albarn.

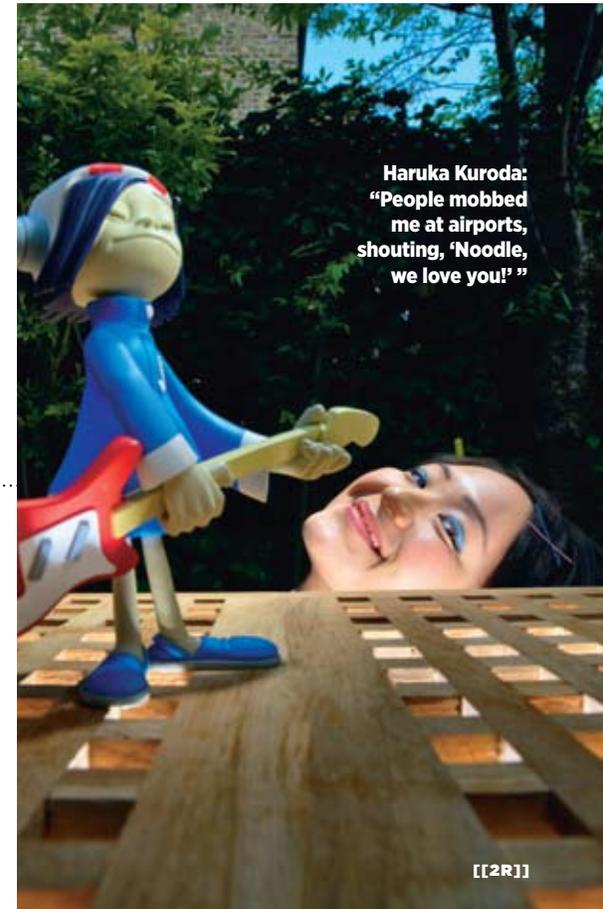
“I was shown a drawing of her, then I just came out with a string of schoolgirl Japanese punctuated with ‘noodle,’” says 32-year-old Haruka, originally from Kyoto. She recorded speech for some promo videos and prerecorded “interviews”, then forgot about Gorillaz. But three months later, she was in Top Shop in London’s Oxford Street, when she saw Noodle on a huge screen, “She was in a video [for debut single ‘Clint Eastwood’]. I thought, *This could be big.*”

Gorillaz have now sold more than 20 million records. Haruka performed on the videos for the first two albums and went on a world tour with the “band”, talking between songs and doing backing vocals. “The musicians and I were behind a screen on which the cartoon group was projected. The audience could just see our outlines.”

Haruka can be seen in the flesh as Yasuko in BBC Three sitcom *Ideal*. ■

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARC BURDEN (2)

**“IN A TENSE FIRST ROUND, FRED IS THE STRONGEST LINK”**



**Haruka Kuroda:**  
**“People mobbed me at airports, shouting, ‘Noodle, we love you!’”**