

Karen Strassman

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Photo By: Paul Smith

There was a time when Karen Strassman didn't think she was good enough to be an actress. Thankfully she found her on-screen confidence and we, the audience, are better for it. The versatile performer and voice talent has enhanced the viewing experience of shows like "Silicon Valley," "Weeds," and most recently, "Preacher," bringing dimension to her characters and helping to flesh out the fictional worlds they inhabit.

We recently sat down with Strassman to discuss the wild reality of "Preacher," blending into a sea of over-the-top characters, and how her career in voice work started as a happy accident.

TrunkSpace: You recently appeared on AMC's "explosive" new season of "Preacher." It's not every show that you can watch an undead cowboy, Hitler and the Devil all in the same episode. What was it like stepping on set with such a unique cast of characters?

Strassman: Working on "Preacher" was delightful and exhilarating. No matter how crazy and "out there" the world of this show might be, and how "character-y" most characters are, it's done so well that it still feels so deeply real, human, and actually strangely grounded within its own wild reality. As I watched the series, I just completely bought the whole world and everyone's humanity within it. I got truly involved in the lives of all the characters, finding myself really caring about almost all of them. As I was preparing for my episodes, it was exciting to create a character that was really fun, quirky, and out there, but also wanted her to feel as real and believable as all the other characters on the show. That's such fun stuff for an actor.

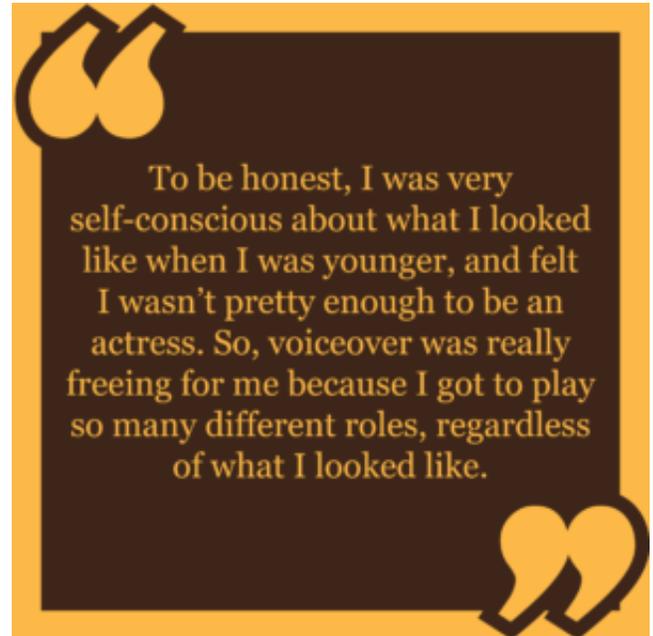
TrunkSpace: Were you a fan of the show and/or comic book before becoming a part of what many consider, one of the riskiest and original shows in the television realm?

Strassman: I had never watched the show before, and when I got the audition, I started binge-watching it and just couldn't stop. I was

momentarily shocked, offended, and confused during the first episode, and then by the end of it, I was like – this is brilliant! The story, it's implications, the gorgeous artistic photography, the acting, the wardrobe, the lighting, the music... everything! I don't know how this show wasn't up for a ton of Emmys. It should have been.

TrunkSpace: You play Dr. Lois Slotnick on the series. Though she is highly intelligent, we wouldn't exactly want her as our primary care physician! How did you prepare for your role of the Doctor? Was it daunting to create such a character among the other over-the-top characters?

Strassman: Yes, it was daunting! Like I mentioned, I think the most challenging part was to walk the line of letting her be very out there while keeping her as real and grounded as possible, so she would come off like a



real person, and not a caricature or too broad to be compelling or interesting. It really helped me to imagine the backstory of such a character and how she became who she is. I was very drawn to the evil German scientist in "Wonder Woman," and wished I could have played that role. I still think about her and what her backstory must have been, how she got to be wounded and vengeful. Interestingly, when I auditioned for Dr. Slotnick, she wasn't actually written the way I play her at all. She was supposed to be kind of a passionate, geeky, excitable scientist with no particular accent. I did one take kind of like that, but then, just for fun, I went ahead and did another take with a German accent, making her darker than she was originally written. I'm grateful that the show's creatives took a chance on what I did and hired me for the role!

TrunkSpace: Many of your scenes are with Tyson Ritter who plays Humperdoo. What was it like performing with Ritter?

Strassman: It's so funny that you are asking about Tyson. I just saw the new movie, "Peppermint" this weekend, and I sent Tyson a tweet to tell him how wonderful he was. He played a very interesting homeless man in the film. And in "Lodge 49," which I sometimes do ADR on, he plays another really interesting character. He's really brilliant. He's a no holds barred kind of actor, and just dives into the character like a kid. Here he is this incredibly handsome rock star, and once he's all decked out as the Humperdoo, with his fake nose, fake teeth and disturbing contact lens in one eye, he is unrecognizable. He will totally go there, wherever his character needs to go. The sounds and stuff he was doing on set when I was there – it was so disturbing and funny I had to work really hard not to laugh. Brilliant!

TrunkSpace: Beyond "Preacher," are there any additional comic book worlds and/or characters you would like to take on?

Strassman: Well, as I mentioned, I would love to play the evil scientist in "Wonder Woman," if they were to ever re-cast the part, or do a new "Wonder Woman" television series. I really find the disturbed villains so fascinating. I think there are such moving backstories that go into making them who they are. Like The Joker, for instance, and I thought Betty Buckley was beyond superb in the role of Grandma in "Preacher." I learned so much from watching her. Her work was so multi-dimensional. Another animated project I would love to be a part of one day is an anime series I actually starred in a few years ago. It's called "Monster," and it's my favorite anime I've ever done or even seen. It's quite disturbing and real, but absolutely brilliant. Guillermo Del Toro was said to have bought the movie rights for this project, and was talking about directing it. I'm too old to play the character I voiced in the series (Anna/Nina), but I would love to be a part of this project in any way I could if Del Toro or anyone else ever made it happen.

TrunkSpace: You have done a ton of voice acting throughout the course of your career. Was that always part of your personal plan or did that portion of your career happen as a happy accident?

Strassman: It happened as a happy accident when I was living in Paris when I was 20 years old. Someone offered me a job doing voices for a cassette tape that went with a magazine to help teach French kids English. I had never done it before, so I just jumped in blindly like a kid, and it turned out I was pretty good at it. That little job led to some jobs dubbing big French films into English, which led to a whole world of animation that opened up to me, and then video games, and anime commercials. I was the English voice for Air France for a while and things like voice-guided tours of The Louvre and the Musee d'Orsay. I was the English voice for French actresses like Juliet Binoche, Emmanuelle Béart, and Vanessa Paradis. I lived in France for 16 years doing TV, Film, Theatre and Voiceover work. I was just really, really lucky. To be honest, I was very self-conscious about what I looked like when I was younger, and felt I wasn't pretty enough to be an actress. So, voiceover was really freeing for me because I got to play so many different roles, regardless of what I looked like. It was indeed an amazing happy accident and a gift.



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TrunkSpace: Air France and The Louvre! Is it surreal to think that more people have probably heard your voice than some of the biggest “stars” of today?

Strassman: (Laughter) Yes it is.

TrunkSpace: Obviously it seems like anything can happen in “Preacher,” but when it comes to animation, that truly is the case. There are no budgetary limitations when storytelling for animation, which must put you in some very unique circumstances by way of the characters you inhabit. With that being said, what is one of the more unusual scenes you’ve ever found yourself performing in?

Strassman: Well, one of my favorite characters is in a series called “Persona.” I play a robot named Aigis who is an amazing fighter and machine, but all she wants is to become human and experience what it is to love. She ends up giving up a lot of her powers so she can experience what it is to have emotions and feel love. I play an endearing gnome-like character named Chromie in “World of Warcraft” who can travel in time and turn into a badass dragon. That’s pretty cool!

TrunkSpace: Do you approach inhabiting a character in animation the same way that you do with on-screen work? Where are the similarities and where are the differences?

Strassman: Yes, in many ways the process is very similar. It’s sometimes tempting to cut corners in voiceover and just “do a voice,” but in the long run, just doing a voice comes out as two-dimensional, and never ends up being that compelling to an audience. It’s not until you really have a feel for your character – where they came from, what they want, some intimate details about their life – that they really come to life. It’s much more fun and fulfilling to work that way.

TrunkSpace: Your resume is vast and very diverse. That being said, what is something you still hope to accomplish that you have yet to tackle? What is on your creative bucket list?

Strassman: Ahhh, there are so many characters I’d love to explore. I played Helen Keller when I was a younger girl, and I’d love to play her as an older woman. I love playing characters who have handicaps or challenges to

overcome, whether it's physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. I'd also love to settle in to a juicy regular role on a compelling TV series with a wonderful cast and crew for a while. There is something so magical about being able to stay with a show over a certain period of time and evolve with the everyone in it, like being part of a moving circus or being on a tour with an ensemble. You become a family and can really dive into your characters and the storyline together. That's definitely high on my creative bucket list.

“Preacher” is available for streaming at AMC.com.

Wrapping Up Preacher Season 3 | Behind the Scenes

