



Interview with **EMILY DEAN**

FOUNDER AND AGENT AT THE MOCAP AGENCY AND VOICE FOX

The world of Mocap is a fast growing area of the entertainment world. Alan Shires recently caught up with Emily Dean, founder of a brand new agency for Mocap actors to find out what is happening and how she is helping to change things in a very positive way.



Emily Dean

Founder and agent at The Mocap Agency and Voice Fox

ALAN SHIRES:

What made you start The Mocap Agency?

EMILY DEAN:

It's a bit of a long story really and it all happened a little bit unexpectedly, it certainly wasn't something that I had planned to do. What I had done prior was purely voiceover and running Voice Fox, a voiceover agency based in the UK.

It came out of an event I was at where I was talking to a few actors. One actor was telling me excitedly how she was doing a motion capture course and how she was enjoying it. Later, another actor was telling me about a time when he had been working on a video game doing performance capture and full likeness. He absolutely loved it and wanted to get more work in that field.

He'd come away thinking 'how am I going to get more work in that field'? He Googled mocap agencies

and nothing came up which made him realise how hard it is to get work in this part of the industry.

Me just being me, my passion is helping actors find work and fulfilling their dreams and passions, so that conversation was when the seed was planted in my head.

I got home that night and I started researching and listening to various podcasts of actors talking about their work in motion and performance capture.

Quite often they were talking about how there aren't any agencies out there.

Having an agent would benefit them because the agent would be looking after the business side whilst the actor focuses on the creative side. An agent would also help with negotiating the terms and the fees.

That fed my passion even more, thinking this is something that really, I'm getting quite excited about. So then I arranged to have a meeting with Spotlight, because obviously it's quite a new thing, I didn't know if I was actually able to do this or if there was a reason why no

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By Alan Shires

Voice Artist and VON Business Development Manager

*Above:
Jordan Whitby & Jadey Duffield

one had done it before. Spotlight were really excited about the idea and were really supportive! They thought it was a brilliant thing to do. The more I looked into it, the more I got excited by it.

Then I felt that my missing knowledge was the technical side, obviously I know about being an agent, but I wanted to learn about the technical, so I organised a meeting with Phil Stilgoe who is the CEO of Centroid; I told him about this idea and I wanted to get his perspective. Again, he was really excited about the idea and was telling me that they've got their in-house casting team, which they'd always tended to use the same actors purely because they came to trust and rely and know them, but also, they just didn't know how to find other actors. They weren't able to go on to Spotlight themselves and advertise.

There were a few general acting agents that they had tried working with in the past to get new talent but they found it was quite frustrating because they didn't really understand the technical side of motion capture. There was not an understanding of how important things like gait analysis and physicality is. They were really excited about this idea of an actor's agency dedicated to motion performance capture, and they wanted to support it, in the hope that it would bring new, fresh talent into the fold and just basically give lots of people the opportunity to be part of this growing industry.

ALAN SHIRES:

You had a collection of artists already with Voice Fox. How much of the voiceover stuff was translatable over to the mocap stuff?

EMILY DEAN:

This I was worried about, I didn't want it to affect what I've got going on with Voice Fox, I wanted it to work together and I'm really lucky to find that it does work really well together. There is a crossover, especially in gaming. Quite often, clients who need a voice for a game character,

sometimes they'll book an actor to do the voiceover part and then it can actually turn into a performance capture role. In terms of that, the two are quite interchangeable, especially when performance capture comes into play.

ALAN SHIRES:

You briefly touched on performance capture there, so Voice Fox is focussing on voiceover is The Mocap Agency doing full performance capture as well?

EMILY DEAN:

Mocap or Motion capture is a word used to sort of describe everything. You've got the motion capture, which is just recording the physical movement, and then the performance capture with all the facial expressions and the fingers and such. Then you've got full performance capture with voice and likeness as well. So, it all feeds into the same camp if you like.



My passion is helping actors find work and fulfilling their dreams and passions, and that was kind of when the seed was planted in my head.

ALAN SHIRES:

You mentioned Spotlight very briefly, now I'm on Spotlight, my acting agents on there, if I was one of your clients at The Mocap Agency, could I have you on my Spotlight also?

EMILY DEAN:

This is one of the things that I wanted to make sure of when I spoke to Spotlight.

I wanted to make sure that I didn't tread on anyone's toes in terms of any acting agents thinking 'who is this person coming along, taking my actor away from me in offering this service?'. So, I made sure actors could list The Mocap Agency on Spotlight. The reasons why I chose The Mocap Agency as a name for our agency was not only because, obviously it says what it is on the tin, but also because it identifies us as Mocap and that is solely what we look after. We don't look after any other acting elements other than motion performance capture. So, when someone's looking at our clients Spotlight profile, fortunately it's kind of obvious. They've got the general acting agent at the top, then voiceover agent and then The Mocap Agency underneath that, so there is no confusion there. That took the stress and worry away from general acting agents who could be thinking 'are people going to start approaching The Mocap Agency for other work as well?'



MARTA SVETEK



JADEY DUFFIELD

ALAN SHIRES:

Tell me a little bit about the last 12 months then what success have you seen with The Mocap Agency? What happened with COVID? Were there any delays and what are all the successes?

EMILY DEAN:

Well, what a weird year 2020 was. With me, when I'm working on something new, I tend to get obsessed with it. I'm a little bit like a child, I want everything to happen now and I intended to have the site there with a roster of actors within a couple of months. I wanted to launch it at the end of January beginning of February time. But because of the whole lockdown situation it basically didn't happen, which actually I think was a good thing in hindsight, because then I was able to take my time building up a bigger roster of actors and develop the website further. Having that extra time was really valuable and we launched at the end of June. We did this countdown with the actors performing a number descent from 10 to 1 for social media, and then on the day of the launch, it worked really well. We actually did get our first job in lockdown, obviously under a very safe environment. A few weeks later after launch we got work coming in and it couldn't have gone better really.

ALAN SHIRES:

What sort of credentials does a performer need to end up on your books?

EMILY DEAN:

If I had it my way, I would literally take everyone on that I thought was talented and I would be getting everyone as much work as I can. I guess my predicament is, being the only agency at the moment of this kind, everyone's like, "I want to be on her roster because she's the only person that's doing this".

So, I feel constantly guilty that I just can't take everyone on. I guess over time what I look for changes, which is in terms of skill sets that are maybe missing on the roster that I have currently.

First of all, I would look at someone's acting reel, can they act? Sometimes I take performers on because of a particular skill, such as I've got people who are amazing at parkour, and certain skills that really sort of lend themselves to motion capture. A lot of games have got superheroes and they require certain skills like parkour. The performer could be jumping off certain things and landing properly without hurting themselves. So it is really good to look at the skills reel as well as acting reels.

Recently I've been looking for a wow factor really, because when you're looking at reel's day-in, day-out, there

were a lot of really talented actors out there, and there were a lot of really talented specialists' reels. So, for me, it's kind of just stumbling across someone and just going "wow, this is amazing! This person is so talented in every way!" and I think having that then enables me to get excited about them and enthusiastic, and hopefully that comes across when I'm putting them forward for jobs to a client. I am excited and think they are amazing and I want everyone to see this person! I think that is important, making me go "wow, you are really amazing". It helps if they've got experience, whether it's on-the-job training, performance capture or whether they've done a course, because I think that it also shows that someone's really hungry and they really want to do work in this area. That means a lot to me because what makes me happy is seeing actors succeed in what they want to do. So, if I feel their energy it helps!

Sometimes I see actors who say "I am an actor and I like to do a bit of motion capture" but it might not really be their passion. I like to help and support those who really want to do mocap. If they've taken the time out and put their money into it - it's really hard as a struggling actor to pay for all these things - then the fact that they've saved up to be able to do these courses is proof to me that they really, really want to do this. To have some kind of experience is important, whether it be through a course or to try and find ways of getting that experience, whether it's approaching studios direct saying, "Hey, look, can I come down and do a test day with you? I'll do it for free just to gain that experience". Think outside the box and approach companies out there who don't have big budgets to be able to pay for actors, they might be looking for people that are just starting out who need experience. So that is another way in and I think when people think outside the box and drive themselves forward to get that experience themselves, that can become something else I look for when signing someone.

Also, we have just launched the new TMA platform where clients can search our roster of performers using our easy-to-use search facility

www.themocapagency.com/roster/actors

