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At Home with Sharon Feingold

Voiceover actor records her international work in a vintage Asheville flat

SEEN AND HEARD

Voiceover actor Sharon Feingold resides in an elegant historic apartment in downtown Asheville

By Maggie Cramer
Photos by Tim Robison

Sharon Feingold is a storyteller and a saleswoman, yet she's neither a writer, nor marketer, nor clerk. She's a voiceover artist who delivers messages and pitches for major clients, including HGTV. She is also *the* interior navigational voice for the busiest airport in the world: Hartsfield-Jackson in Atlanta. And she does it all from her chic apartment in downtown Asheville.

"We're in the digital age of voiceover now, so most jobs can be done via home studio," she explains, noting that she's been able to work with clients as far away as Singapore and Bahrain.

Feingold didn't cut her teeth here, though. While earning an MBA, she took a voiceover class from the late Paul Armbruster in Atlanta, where she grew up. It reignited her teenage dream of an acting career, and she was hooked. She got a voiceover agent, moved to the Big Apple, and did what every actor does: go on audition after audition after audition, while holding down a day or night job — in this case, a 9-5 position that happened to be in another state.

"It was in Newark, New Jersey," she says. "I sometimes had two auditions I had to go to per day, and I would go back to the city, then back to Newark, then back to the city, then back to Newark."

Using her business acumen, she decided to go it on her own in 2005, quitting all non-voice-related part-time jobs. She had made vital connections in New York: "That time

was very crucial to my career,” says Feingold.

Meanwhile, though, the South was beginning to boom. When she decided to move in that direction, she settled on Asheville for its proximity to her native Atlanta, for its natural beauty — her frequent travel had made her appreciate mountains and waterfalls — and for its small but thriving Jewish community.

Soon she relocated, without even visiting first. “It was the weirdest thing I’ve probably ever done in my life,” she reflects.

What started out as a month-long experiment has turned into three-and-a-half years of putting down roots. She’s now entrenched in the local acting community, teaching voiceover and business at Asheville’s acting conservatory, NYS3.

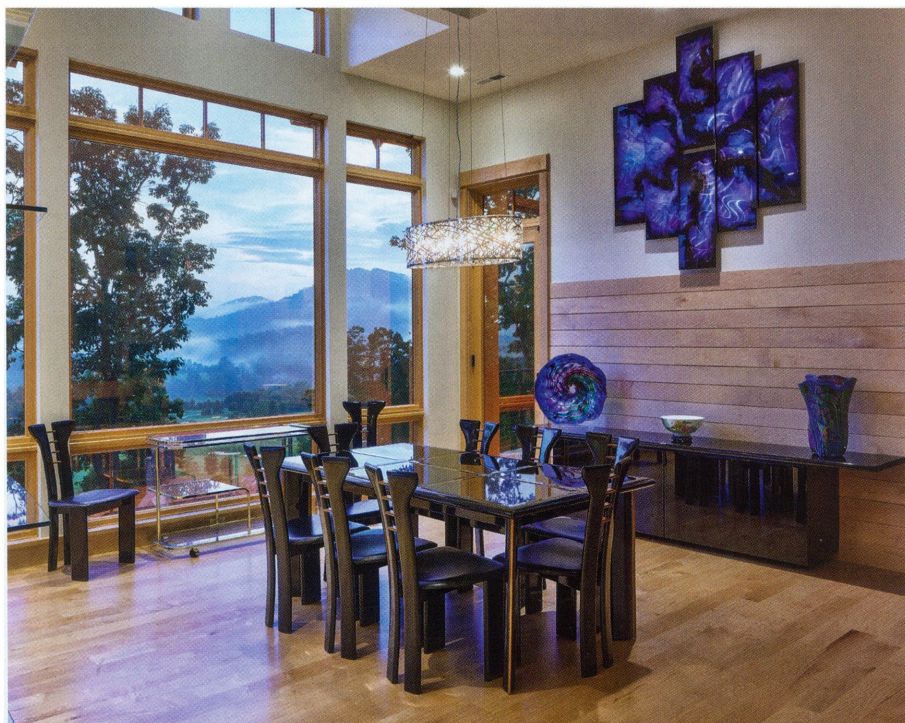
Carolina Home + Garden visited Feingold to learn about the woman behind the voice. The actor lives in a high-ceilinged, downtown 1920s flat, one of four in a stately, pastel-stone building that received an award-winning architectural renovation in 1995.

Among other features, the spacious apartment’s highlights include a picturesque, Mediterranean-style front terrace with a view; a light-drenched living room; glassed built-in cabinets in a walk-through pantry; and a formal dining room. Feingold’s minimalist, neutral-toned interiors cede to the building’s full charm.

I don’t see microphones and cords strewn about your apartment. Where do you record?

I affectionately refer to it as “Closet Studios.” Basically, unless you’re going to buy an actual standalone booth, most voiceover people are at the mercy of whatever closet they have in their house or apartment. This one is tiny.

Ironically, in New York, my apartment had this huge walk-in closet, which is a dream for a voiceover actor. But [the apartment] was half the size of my current apartment, it was railroad style, and I had a roommate. There was no central heating or air conditioning.



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I treasured those years on the Upper West Side and my apartment was full of character — some of the original Muppeteers were said to have once lived there. But it's kind of hard to believe what I was willing to put up with to live in Manhattan!

What are your favorite Downtown Asheville haunts?

During the workday, I bring my computer with me, and I go through stages: the Green Sage stage, the Battery Park Book Exchange stage. I've even worked upstairs

on the double-decker bus on Biltmore [Avenue]. That's one of my favorite things about my life: being able to take my little MacBook Air with me and mix it up depending on the week and depending on the moment.

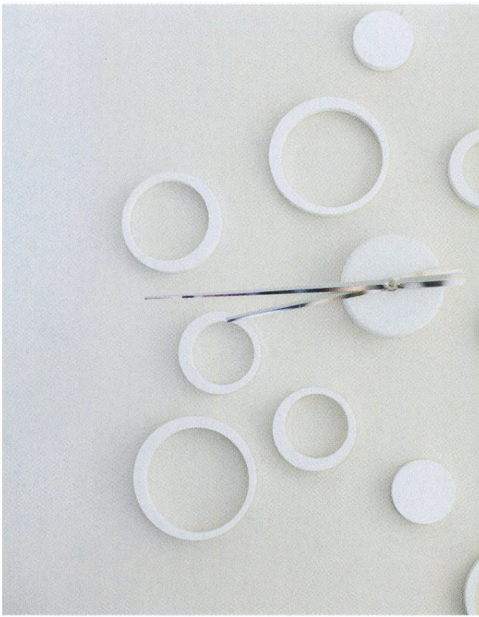
Gotten some strange job offers and voice requests?

I was on a cartoon once called *Mew Mew Power*, and I played a character named Megan. She was just a regular teenage girl. But one day, I went to record my lines and they said, "Oh yeah, in this

episode your character gets turned into a bird, so we're going to need you to squawk." I had never done that before, so I had to instinctively dip into whatever acting database in my head existed.

Do you find yourself analyzing strangers' voices?

I never really picked voices apart until after I trained to be an American Accent coach. [She now runs Babel Consultants, together with experts throughout the region.] We consult with people with foreign and regional accents and teach



them how to dial down their accent to sound more accent-neutral. It's sort of a little-understood, little-known area of communications, but it's incredibly effective and beneficial for those who just don't want to struggle with people saying, "I'm sorry, what did you say?"

With your theater background, I know you also sing and love music. What's the last album you downloaded?

Eddie Vedder's *Ukulele Songs*. If you were catching me in my most embarrassing moments, I'd be listening to Broadway music and *Frozen*, singing at the top of my lungs.

Have you sung for a voiceover?

I've done some jingles, but I often make my own recordings just for fun, or for my friends' kids. Last year, I recorded a cover of "Santa Baby" and it aired on different Christmas playlists on radio stations across the country. I'm looking forward to seeing which new stations air it this holiday season.

You voice so many characters. Who's the real Sharon Feingold?

Somebody who can't commit to one personality!

Sharonfeingold.com, Babelconsultants.com

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