

coverstory
BY JAY BOBBIN



Lisa Kudrow lends her voice to the animated comedy series "HouseBroken," premiering Monday on Fox.

Lisa Kudrow gets "HouseBroken" as an animated poodle

Even a cartoon poodle has to have friends, as Lisa Kudrow realizes.

With one of television's most enduringly popular sitcoms to her credit – "Friends," of course – along with "The Comeback" and "Web Therapy," the actress-producer tries something different in returning to weekly humor. She speaks for the central character in the animated Fox series "HouseBroken," premiering Monday, May 31.

Kudrow's Honey leads group therapy sessions for neighborhood pets and strays, most of whom reflect traits also likely to be recognized in humans. While counseling such peers as a commitment-phobic tortoise (voiced by Will Forte) and an OCD-afflicted terrier ("Veep" Emmy winner Tony Hale), Honey has her own troubles via her arranged marriage to a St. Bernard (Nat Faxon). Sharon Horgan ("Catastrophe") and Clea DuVall, who voice other characters, are among the show's executive producers.

"I just saw the cast and said, 'Yeah! I want to be in that group,'" the pleasant, lively Kudrow explains. "It was just such a funny idea, pets getting together to have therapy. Honey isn't qualified to be a therapist, but her human is one." Noting her "Web Therapy" past, Kudrow muses, "I'm going to be typecast."

As for "HouseBroken" animals mirroring real-world situations, Kudrow cites one whose "humans are separating, so he's going back and forth between them, and he's

anxious." Kudrow was a bit anxious herself in determining how Honey should sound, and she allows she made what she terms "the wrong choice" initially.

"I had to go back and re-record," she says, "because I thought, 'Oh, that would be really funny.' And then, it wasn't. She sounded a little too superior; maybe I was bumping into what I did in 'Web Therapy.' The thought was that she's a poodle and thinks she's a little better than everybody else, but it didn't work at all. I had to adjust."

Kudrow agrees "HouseBroken" is an ideal job in the time of the coronavirus pandemic. "We got to do table reads over Zoom," she reports, though she laments that in mostly recording by herself, "You don't get to chat or exchange moments while getting coffee. Nat Faxon and I got to record together ... and good luck to whoever is putting that together, because I just laughed every time he spoke! Clea also came to some sessions and read with me."

Reunited recently with her "Friends" colleagues to record a long-awaited HBO Max special, Kudrow has been a guest voice on such other animated series as "The Simpsons" and "King of the Hill." She notes that with the timing of "HouseBroken" specifically, "it was helpful to know, 'Oh, I have something I have to do.' It was really nice to be busy with something."

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