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## [Ice-T Interview: "SVU" Star, "I'll Be There Until Mariska Leaves"](https://smashinginterviews.com/interviews/actors/ice-t-interview-svu-star-ill-be-there-until-mariska-leaves)

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Image attributed to NBC



Ice-T began his career as an underground rapper in the 1980s and released his debut album *Rhyme Pays*. The following year, he released another album, *Power*, which would go platinum. He’s also released several other records that went gold. In 1990, Ice-T co-founded the heavy metal band Body Count, releasing its self-titled debut album in 1992.

As an actor, he starred as police detective Scotty Appleton in *New Jack City* (1991) opposite Wesley Snipes and Chris Rock. In 1994, he appeared in the action-adventure film *Surviving the Game* and continued to appear in small roles in television and other films throughout the 1990s. Since 2000, he has portrayed NYPD Detective/Sergeant Odafin “Fin” Tutuola on the NBC police drama *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.

**"I made a statement that I’ll be there until Mariska leaves. I think the show *is* Mariska’s show. I don’t think Mariska can be replaced, and fortunately, she’s still out buying shit."**

One of Ice-T’s latest projects involve being the brand advocate for My Legacy Voice, a new platform from VoCapsule, LLC, that offers voice banking and legacy management. My Legacy Voice is a new service that captures and protects a speaker’s voice until a designated recipient wants to access a replica – a clone – made with AI technology.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Ice, how are you today?

**Ice-T**: I’m here talking to you. I’m eating lunch. Is that okay?

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Absolutely! Let’s start by talking about My Legacy Voice. Tell me a little about it and why *you* decided to become the brand advocate.

**Ice-T**: Well, I have a business partner named Mickey Benson who gets a lot of offers for me to do lots of different things. Most of them I turn down because everybody out here has a bright idea. So he was telling me about this thing that’s a vocal clone. I’m very familiar with holograms and things of that nature, but I just didn’t believe it was going to work. I was like, “Nah,” But he was pushing it. He’s like, “Come on, man. Let’s give them a try because we *know* this is coming. I’ll just be a matter of who does it right.”

So I was still very skeptical, and they sent me a clone of my voice that said, “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” I never *said* that, and I’m listening to it, and it sounds like me. I sent it to my son. I let my wife hear it. I let some of my close friends hear it. They called me a liar. They said, “That’s *you*!” I’m like, “Alright. Now, they’ve got my attention. Let’s go.” So I met with the people, and we went in and did some more elaborate recordings. They were able to clone me even when I didn’t give them vocals and just taking it from different interviews.

So I went in and did a few hours of recording where they had different scripts they wanted me to read, one as happy, one as sad and one as angry. I just said, “Hey, I want to be involved this this.” I’m happy to get in on the ground level with them as they start. They basically have this done right. I think it’s the future. There are a lot of applications for it, so I’m just proud to be a part of something at the ground level.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Would this be a tool for actors or others in the entertainment industry?

**Ice-T**: It’s not really something that could be used for acting because acting requires you to be emotionally connected to different things. So that’s a little different. But it works for voiceovers. It will work for commercials. It will work for animation. I had a situation where I was on *Rick and Morty*, and they had animated me, but they weren’t able to get me personally to do it because I was in Europe on tour. If they had this, they could’ve put my voice onto the character, and it would’ve worked. It would’ve worked perfectly. People were kind of upset that I wasn’t the actually voice on the cartoon, you know.

So there are certain applications where they will work in video games and certain things where you just need me to read dialogue versus having to put any heavy emphasis behind it. I don’t think it will work for music yet unless they can figure out a way to connect it to autotune. But I think it’s just the *beginning*. Once they actually have your voice in their file, who knows what they’re going to be able to do with it.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Perhaps people can use My Legacy Voice to clone their child’s voice when they’re young in order to listen to it many years later. I can also see it being useful for those who have lost their voice because of health reasons.

**Ice-T**: Sure. There are tons of ways it can be used outside of professional applications. Once you have the intelligence and the ability to do it, no telling which way it can go. But cloning a voice is cool. You can have your *parents* talking to you at different ages. I was just concerned with security. I’m like, “Who gets access to this?” They go, “It’s locked in for only you and the people that you allow a key.” So I’ll be able to give this to my wife.

I remember we used to watch Stephen Hawking. He’d try to talk, but he was using a computer. It would’ve been nice to actually hear his true voice. When I worked with Quincy Jones, he gave me a quote. He said, “If you want to lose a battle, fight the future.” So I’m not here to fight the future. I’m trying to get with it.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Is this the first time voices have been cloned, or has it been tried before?

**Ice-T**: There have been voice duplication services provided before, but the folks at VoCapsule and My Legacy Voice believe that theirs is the most realistic voice clone available. They provided a number and say the realness is 98 to 99 percent, and they warrant that their voice cloning is the most accurate.

I’m sure that this clone at My Legacy Voice would probably be able to do it on a phone eventually. They are all about having it secured, having it authorized, having it *of* the person and having that person *only* have control of it.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: How important would it be for you to still have your voice heard when you’re gone?

**Ice-T**: That’s honestly an interesting question because I just think it’s all about the right person having control of it. I think that’s what it is because right now, I have control over what I’m saying, and I’m here. If I’m gone, I wouldn’t want my voice saying a bunch of bullshit that I wouldn’t normally say. So I think if it’s handled correctly, it could be a beautiful device posthumously when someone’s gone.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: You’ve said you were skeptical in the beginning, and others may be also. As the frontman, how do to persuade those people who are still uncertain of the product?

**Ice-T**: I think one thing about Ice-T is that I maintain my integrity, and I’m pretty honest. Other people in the entertainment industry will probably say, “Ice is doing it. It’s probably legit.” I want my friends to try it out. It’ll blow their minds. So, yeah. I thought it was something I could get in front of. I’m known for my voice. I’m doing lots of voiceovers and stuff like that. So it just fit. Like I said, anytime you can get in on the grassroots at any tech business, it’s smart.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: You did an ad for the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression. After all these years, are you still having problems with music censorship?

**Ice-T**: Not me. They kind of gave up on me, you know what I’m saying? But it’s more about the whole topic and the whole *subject* of censorship and people trying to say what you *can* say and what you *can’t* say. Over my career, I came up with the conclusion that we all have freedom of speech, but you’ve just got to watch what you say because there *will* be ramifications for what you say. I think *that’s* the penalty that you pay.

I don’t think there should be laws or anything that outlaws certain speech. I just think that if you say it, then you have to be ready for the people, or wherever you’re using this speech, to attack back. I learned that when I did “Cop Killer.” I can’t get mad that the cops got mad. I mean, I went at them. They came back at me. So I just tell people that if you *need* to speak about something, you can’t get upset with the blowback. It’s gonna come. If you’re willing to accept that, then go ahead. Speak freely.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Some people believe they have freedom of speech on social media, but that’s not true.

**Ice-T**: The only place you *truly* have free speech is if you go up and stand on top of a mountain. But if you need someone else’s vehicle to share your music or your voice, the have the right to control it because now, every magazine has an editor. Every newspaper has an editor. So if you want to come to *my* channel to speak, I have the right to control it. You don’t *own* social media. But there’s a dark web where there’s no rules.

I always tell people, you may not even have free speech in your own house. If you want to say something your wife doesn’t like, she might be like, “Whoa! Watch that language!” Where free speech truly exists is where only you can hear it. I always tell guys you can’t come home and say, “Honey, I slept with your sister.” You know, you’ve got to be prepared for what happens after (laughs). So you just have to watch what you say and think about what’s going to happen after you make those statements.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Ice, you got an idea for “Cop Killer” from the song “Psycho Killer” by Talking Heads. Were you a fan of the band?

**Ice-T**: Talking Heads was signed to the same label as me. I was signed to Sire Warner Bros. So they were label mates. When Talking Heads came out, that was part of that whole MTV thing. Back then, whatever was on MTV became your playlist. So you’re wired into them. You’re wired into David Lee Roth. You’re wired into all the different music.

So yes, I knew about Talking Heads, and I was singing “Psycho Killer” when I walked into the studio. My drummer said, “Man, they need a cop killer.” I’m like, “Why?” He said, “These cops are out of pocket, man. They’re shooting motherfuckers. They’re judge and jury in the street out here.” That’s when my brain started thinking like, “What if somebody went after them based on police brutality like *that’s* what made someone snap, and they went after the cops?” I didn’t know this guy would become a hero, and that’s where all the shit began.

But as an artist, you get triggered by different things. Somebody might tell you, “Man, I was fighting with my girl,” and now, you’re making a song about that. So that’s how we get triggered. So yeah, that song was the seed to “Cop Killer.”

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: What are your influences in heavy metal and rap?

**Ice-T**: Early rap, my influences were Melle Mel and groups like Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Then when Public Enemy came out, they made me understand that I had to be conscious. I had to say something in my music. When I got off into Metal, I grew up with my cousin, and all he listened to were the rock stations. He thought he was Jimi Hendrix. I used to listen to KMET and KLOS in LA. So I knew everything from J. Geils Band, Traffic, Mott the Hoople and Edgar Winter.

But I started getting into the heavier stuff like Black Sabbath, Blue Oyster Cult and groups like that. When we did Body Count, I kind of mashed up Suicidal Tendencies with Slayer with Black Sabbath, and I said, “This will be the *sound* of the record. Then I’ll sing about the similar stuff I rap about, but I’ll just do it in a rock format.” I was familiar with New York hardcore, and they basically were yelling. I said, “I could do that.” (laughs)

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Las year, you won your first Grammy in 30 years. What did you think about that?

**Ice-T**: I honestly think that the political climate around America got us in that Grammy zone because the year before, we were nominated for “Black Hoodie.” That was the song about somebody getting shot by the cops just because they had on a black hoodie, kind of off the Trayvon thing, you know. I thought that was the last time we were ever going to be mentioned or heard of at the Grammys. But last year, we won Best Metal Performance, same category, and we won for “Bum-Rush.” But I think it was the climate. This was the time of George Floyd and people in the streets. Our video kind of showed the energy of the people that weren’t asleep anymore and were woke.

So I think not just the fact it was a good metal track, but it had a lot to do with the timing. I think that the Grammy people, whoever voted, said that this song is really hitting the nail on the head at this *time* versus just a normal metal record that might be singing about who knows what. We were very timely and poignant, and we won.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: So after all of the music, who knew you’d be playing Detective/Sergeant Odafin “Fin” Tutuola on the longest-running primetime US live-action series in the history of television, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*?

**Ice-T**: Yeah. It’s the longest running show in history. I’m actually the longest running male actor outside of Bart Simpson. Mariska has me by a few episodes. You know, they call women actors now. They don’t call them actresses. They don’t want to make the difference. But we’re all actors. Mariska beat me by a few episodes. But I love Mariska to death.

It’s interesting because for my first real acting role, I played a cop in *New Jack City*. So it was kind of like you go against character. You put me in as a gangsta or street cat, kind of normal. So you make me a cop or make me a schoolteacher, and what you get is a cop with a very interesting dynamic. What I *do* know is that the cops, when you get into it, act more like gangstas than some gangstas. They have this edge on them. They’ve got a gun. So it kinda works. So when you see me on the show, I don’t have to do much acting. I just happen to have a badge. I always had a gun. Now, I’ve got a badge. So there’s no difference (laughs).

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: (laughs) I think that Fin needs a storyline. Last season, there was romance.

**Ice-T**: Funny thing about the romantic storyline. When we came back from Covid, they said, “You’re getting married.” I’m like, “To who?” They said, “Phoebe.” I’m like, “Didn’t she tell me hell no two years ago?” They said, “Yeah. Well, you guys are getting married.” I’m like, “How?” “You guys hooked up over Covid,” they said. I said, “Do the fans know that?”

So they tried one, and it didn’t work. We got close to marriage, but we broke up. But Dick Wolf will be the first to tell you that this show is not about us. It’s about the stories. He’s not too much about getting into our storylines. It’s not a soap opera. It’s a show based on the crimes and the different characters that come in, and it has worked. You know, 24 years? I’m cool. I just come to work and chase the perps.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Kelli Giddish’s last episode airs December 8. Anything else you can say about this season?

**Ice-T**: No, not really because we don’t know. We know Kelli is leaving. She’s doing nine episodes. Don’t ask me why. It’s like they just stack the deck. This is how you keep a show on. They just say, “Hey, we want to put new people in and move some things around." But I love Kelli. We worked together for 10 years solid. I told her to go get an Oscar. Go do something else. One thing about acting is every actor doesn’t get into it to play the same character for the rest of their life. One thing *about* acting is you get to do this, you get to do a period piece or whatever. That’s the fun thing about that job.

I don’t have a problem staying on the show because I’ve already *had* a career. I’ve already maxed out music. I’ve had a 20-year rap career. You know what I’m saying? So to get into this, I’m comfortable. I’ve done a lot of movies. I’m not that person that feels like, “Oh, I’m missing something by doing this. But we’ll see. I don’t know what’s happening in the next script until I get it. I’m just going for the ride. There’s a theory that we *know* what’s happening. No, we don’t.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: So you can see yourself staying until *SVU* ends?

**Ice-T**: Yeah. I made a statement that I’ll be there until Mariska leaves. I think the show *is* Mariska’s show. I don’t think Mariska can be replaced, and fortunately, she’s still out buying shit. So as long as she keeps spending money, I think I’ve got a job (laughs). If Mariska starts saving money and liquidating, I’ll start getting worried. I’ll be like, “Okay. We’ve got to book a tour. We’ve got to get on the road.”

It’s funny, though, because to survive as a musician, you have to do like 200 tour dates a year. You’ve got to really get out there and get it. But with this show, I’m able to do shows on the weekends. On hiatus, I go on tour and do 30 or 40 shows. But I don’t really have to *grind* like that. I have the ability to be home with my wife and my family and see my daughter every day. So I really appreciate that at this point in my life.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Are you doing a new animated series, Ice?

**Ice-T**: Yeah. We’re working on an animated series called *Tehk City* with one of my friends. He’s done a couple of Body Count videos. He’s called Tommy the Animator. I met this guy, and he lives in Harlem. He still lives in the projects. He had one laptop computer and another computer, and he was doing animation. I was just *amazed*. Being from hip hop, I *know* you can find somebody who’s doing a lot with nothing. Give them some stuff, and they can take it to another level. So we started this animated series called *Tehk City*.

I’ve got all my friends involved. Snoop is in it. Dr. Dre is doing the music. Busta Rhymes, Mike Epps, all the rappers and my friends are involved because we’re just asking them for a few voiceovers, and then we’re animating. We also have a comic book that’s coming out called *Death for Hire*, which is the origin of *Tehk City*.

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: Will we be hearing new solo music from you in the near future?

**Ice-T**: Treach and I just bought a recording studio in Jersey. I haven’t had a studio in a while. Now that I’m in the studio, more than likely there will be a project. I have a project I’m supposed to be working on before Christmas which will be called *The Legend of Ice-T*. It’s a compilation of *all* my raps I’ve made over the years that were stories and narratives and adventures because I’m known for that. I’ve got five or six unheard tracks on there, too. So stay tuned for *The Legend of Ice-T*.

We call it legend because legends are made of truth *and* fiction. So a lot of things people think about me are really part of the legend. Remember the time Ice was in that club, and he knocked five guys out with one punch? You know, that type of shit (laughs).

***Smashing Interviews Magazine***: (laughs) One last thing, Ice. How does Chanel like first grade?

**Ice-T**: You know, the funny thing with Chanel. She went to school for two days, and she says, “I’ve got to go tomorrow?” I’m like, “Yeah.” She goes, “This is *every* day?” (laughs) Melissa, thank you so much!

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