

HOLLYWOOD OS®

"EXTRA" WORK for Brain Surgeons®

The Authority In Extras Casting Information™ Quarter Three Magazine, 2003

Monica Cooper Casting

Casting Director & Producer
Extraordinaire

Principal Work

The zen of casting
from CD Renita Whited

Getting Booked

Keep the CD's calling!

Wardrobe No... How!

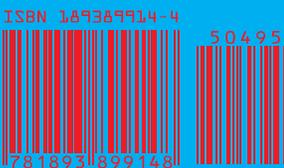
The inside scoop from
CD Tammy Smith

Plus...

Industry News

Includes shows in production,
new companies, Casting
Director updates & more!

\$4.95



9 781493 893148

the zen of principal casting

by Renita Whited, Casting Director

Renita Whited has been a Casting Director in Los Angeles for the last 4 1/2 years. Prior to that, she worked (on both the East and West Coasts) in many other facets of the Entertainment Industry including Film, Commercial/Music Video Production, Documentary Direction, and also as an actress in film, commercials and on stage. A life-long passion for any interaction that "ignites the movement and evolution of heart, soul and spirit" has led Renita to find great joy from the entire process of casting and collaboration with both actors and clients alike. For more information on Renita Whited Casting, please visit her website at: www.renitawhitedcasting.com

This Hollywood is an amazing town! Those of us who are lucky enough to live here, work here, and play here are blessed with a tremendous gift. I love living here. I love working here... and when I was asked by Carla and Angela to share some of my thoughts and advice on the Commercial Audition Process with the members of *Hollywood OS* and the *Extras Casting Guild*, I was delighted... I am delighted!

you just got the call...now what?

I know that many of you who are registered with *ECG* are getting called in (more and more) for PRINCIPAL ROLE auditions in commercials (and music videos). I also know that many of you are professional actors who signed up with *ECG* in order to supplement your income through extra work and therefore are no stranger to the Principal Audition.

But, I also know that many of you are new to this whole business, and have up until now, worked exclusively as an extra or background player. So, the first time your phone rings and it's a casting office calling you in for a "real" audition, it can be really exciting and scary all at the same time.

For the purposes of this article, I'm going to focus on an overview of The Commercial Audition. However, much of what I'm about to say can be equally applied to the music video audition as well. Perhaps, for future articles, we could have a question and answer section where I can address YOUR specific concerns ...so, please feel free to e-mail or write to me c/o *Hollywood OS* and we'll take it from there.

So, first things first:

PLEASE KNOW, I WANT YOU TO SUCCEED!

Before I begin to make some recommendations regarding the specifics of the audition process, I feel the most important thing I can tell you as an actor or an aspiring one, is that when I call you in for an audition, when I bring you into the room and put you on tape for my client, and when you are escorted into a callback room filled with clients and myself... I want you to "win"!

I don't ever think to myself (in fact, in my experience, no one bringing you in for an audition ever thinks to themselves): "Hah, hah, hah... let's see how uncomfortable we can make this actor. Let's see how bad

they are. Let's see how quickly they screw up!"

We want you to come into an audition and "kick ass!" We want you to be amazing! We want you to be the person we've been looking for! It makes our jobs infinitely easier, the process quicker and tons more fun, when that person we saw a photo of, that looks like they might be the actor of our "casting dreams" walks in and IS! Not to mention that when you come in (and, I, as the Casting Director who brought you there) and are exactly what the client is looking for... we both look like superstars - and that's the goal, isn't it? That way, we both continue to "book the job."

So, I'll say it again, I know it's nerve-racking. I know it can be intimidating. I know that when you have spent hours getting ready, driving in traffic and finding a parking space, that you can be inclined to walk in to an audition where the pace is rapid and the audition facility seems like an "actor ant-farm" and feel like "Oh my goodness is this all even worth it? I hope they don't think I'm 'wrong'... I hope I don't embarrass myself... they don't really want me to succeed anyway..."

... but, I'm telling you that's just plain NOT TRUE!

We want you to book the job! So, PLEASE, KNOW that! Prepare the way you've been asked to prepare, walk in, do your very best, and know that I am there (either in the room with you or watching you on a TV monitor in my office) hoping, praying and wanting you to completely "ROCK IT!" You and I are always on the same team!

Okay, so that said, let's get on to some "practical" information, yes?

"We want you to be amazing! We want you to be the person we've been looking for! It makes our jobs infinitely easier..."

so, you're new, eh?

As an extra performer, I know that there are usually no auditions. Your photo is on file with *ECG*, someone picks you from your picture, you get a call asking you if you are available to work; and once that answer is "yes", you are given the "where, when, and what to wear." You show up, do your job and get paid. End of story (well, pretty much) right?

Well, with Principal Auditions getting "picture-picked" is only the beginning.



When you get a call saying that a casting office would like to see you for a Principal Player audition, there are several things you need to know:

First, when you are asked about your availability for the job, it does not mean you are booked. It means that we simply want to know if you were to book the job, that you will be in town and available to do it. After all, it doesn't make sense for our clients to "fall in love with you" and then not be able to have you! So, please make sure you are TRULY available for the job dates AND THE CALLBACK date(s) before you say "yes" to the audition - or please discuss any potential restrictions with us at the time we call to book the appointment to see if we could work around them.

Though you are not booked by agreeing to be available, we do then count on you keeping your calendar open for our job until you find out whether you are truly booked or released (or that you will call us if a conflicting job offer comes up and give us the opportunity to work around your other opportunity or "release" you). So, when we call you in for an audition, and check your "avail" you are not definitely booked on the job, but if you audition and get it we want to make sure you're "all clear" to do it.

Get the details and then let us "go."

When we call you with an audition, we are usually calling anywhere from 10 to 100 people for that very same role. So, in the course of a business day, with lots of other things going on in our office, that's a lot of phone time. We, of course, want to make sure you have all the details you need in order to prepare for and do the best job you can at the audition. But, please be conscious of our limited ability to stay on the phone and "chat." Please don't ask us questions that aren't directly related to your audition.

Some examples of "not so appropriate questions" might be: "Oh, are these those commercials where the spokesman is that really funny guy with the buck-teeth who

how to... audition for commercials

the zen of principal casting



rides the purple cow...?" Or, "okay, so when you say wear a knee-length red skirt for the audition does that mean it should be A-line? And what kind of fabric do you prefer...? I have this skirt I wore to my high-school reunion... it's really pretty, with a..."

And please do not ask us for directions to the audition studio. Please get the full address including the zip from us and then use your trusty *MapQuest.com* or *Thomas Guide* to find your way.

You catchin' my drift on all of this?

Good, I thought so! Help us get you the information you REALLY need and then let us go on to our next phone call.

Oh, but please do really LISTEN to the details we ARE giving you.

Find out the name of the role you are auditioning for, where the audition is, what time you need to be there, what you might need to "prepare" ahead of time, how to dress for the character, and so on. Make sure we DO go over the callback dates and the shoot dates with you and that they "agree" with your calendar... and then, we'll see you at the audition.

Oh, one more thing... if you are not able to answer your phone when we call to give you your audition, we will usually leave an extremely detailed message on your answering machine and ask you to call us back to confirm your appointment. When you do call us back, if you get OUR answering machine and need to leave a message, please DO NOT ask us to call YOU back to confirm that we got your confirmation. If you are all set, have no time conflict with being there and have every other detail you need at the time, then please leave us a confirmation and trust that we will get it.

Again, we are usually on the phones and busy during the day and purposely left YOU a detailed message so we didn't need to call you twice. Of course if there's a problem with the audition we've given you, or the person leaving you the message was having a "low blood sugar moment" and forgot to tell you where the audition is or something like that, then by all means call us back and ask us the question. But, again, please be conscious of how busy a casting office can get.

Make sure to get the SIDES.

oh my! what the heck are sides?

"Sides" is a fancy little word for the audition script! When someone calls you for an audition and tells you that sides are available and to please come prepared, that means that there is a script available to you ahead of time and we'd like you to get it, and practice it. We don't often require you to be "off page" (able to do the audition without your script) by your appointment... but, the more comfortable you are with the material and the more naturally it flows when you're in front of the camera, the better. So please get your sides!

Editor's Note: These lovely puppies known as sides can most often be found through LACasting.com or Showfax.com; otherwise the CD or producer of the project you will be working on can inform you where to

"When people get nervous, one of the first things I've noticed that goes out the window is their listening comprehension."

find them for a particular project.

once you're there

Okay, so you got your audition appointment, you know your sides pretty darn well, you look fantastic and are having a great hair day (or even if you're not!)... what now?

Please bring us a headshot (if you have one). If you do not have professional headshots, then you may bring us a snapshot. But only do so if you feel it's a great photo that really represents you as "right" for the role. Otherwise, skip the snapshot.

Leave yourself plenty of time to get to your audition, but if you do run a little late, please call our office to let us know you are on the way (you'd do it for a friend, please consider us your friends too!)

Once you get there, you'll usually need to sign in, fill out a "size card" and then have your Polaroid taken.

I know this may sound super-silly, but I don't believe that actors really understand the value of a Polaroid! So often... SO-O-O-O OFTEN... a director will make final casting decisions based on looking at an actor's Polaroid photo. I know it may not be what you want to hear, but it's the truth and I'm here to tell it! Now, I know that you do not ultimately have control of how you will look in a Polaroid if the person snapping your picture is a completely inept bozo, but, most of the time, casting assistants (the ones taking that Polaroid) have done it so much that they are quite proficient at it - so, please do your part too!

Don't run in the door, with your coat still on, your purse or knapsack over your shoulder, sweaty and out of breath because you are running a little late, and eyes half bugged out of your skull from the stress of the entire episode and then hop in front of the Polaroid camera.

Take a second, take a deep breath and

THEN take your Polaroid!

If the casting assistant is rushing you and you need an extra moment, please tell them so. Be reasonable about it, of course. If you're the one who is late we shouldn't have to wait that long for you, but please do YOUR best to look relaxed in your Polaroid. Oh, and please wear your hair, make-up and outfit EXACTLY like you will be when you come into the audition room to go on camera. Your Polaroid should match your audition tape. For instance, don't have your hair down around your face for the Polaroid and then put it up in a ponytail for the audition (unless the Casting Director asks you to change it once you're in the room in which case we will usually have you take a new Polaroid as well). You may feel like I'm going on and on about something that could be deemed very small in the scheme of an audition, but trust me, I'm not. Polaroids are important. Please don't stress over them, but practice a nice smile in your mirror at home and take the best photo you know how to take.

in the room

Okay, so the paperwork is finished, your Polaroid has been taken and you are finally ready to go into the room to be put on tape. My biggest word of advice?

Listen!

Huh?

Listen!

What?

Yup... LISTEN!

Before the camera actually rolls, you will be given an explanation of what the Casting Director (or session director if the Casting Director is out of the room) would like you to do once you hear "action." Sometimes we will call actors in groups to give this information. Sometimes it will be explained to you (and your audition partner(s)) once you have entered for your "turn." Either way, to go back to my main point in writing this article - I WANT YOU TO "WIN!" So, please, please, please, pay attention to the directions we give you during this explanation! When we explain where to stand, where to move to, who to look at etc., please listen.

When people get nervous, one of the first things I've noticed that goes out the window is their listening comprehension. So, be sure to take extra notice of this.

If you're nervous, it's okay... that's fine! Acknowledge to yourself that you're nervous, thank yourself for the information, but also realize that being nervous is natural at times and then LET IT GO and listen anyway - it's the difference between you booking a callback or not!

Oh, and just to jump a little bit ahead here for a second. Remember to listen to anyone you are auditioning with as well. I'm not talking about listening to their personal accounts, stories, and "advice" in the wait-

the zen of principal casting



ing room (unless of course you really want to and feel like they're really helpful). I'm talking about listening to your fellow actor when your audition involves a scene between you and another person or a group of people. Acting is about listening and then authentically responding to the person you are in the scene with. So, if you are listening, really LISTENING you are sure to do well!

So-o-o-o-o, it's your turn. You're in the room, you have REALLY listened to the directions you were given... and the camera begins to roll.

The first thing the camera operator says is "slate your name."

And at that moment, the first time audi-

having a mug-shot taken, but I would recommend smiling during this process and not flipping off the camera at any point (again, unless you've been asked to flip off the camera)!

But seriously, when someone says "slate your name" that's all they are asking you to do. I also like it when an actor starts their slate with a simple greeting by saying something like, "Hi, I'm... insert name here".

It's the "little things" really!

and, cut!

You did it! You just "wrapped" your commercial audition. Polaroid, Slate, Scene... you did your very best and had fun doing it!

Once the person "in charge" tells you "thank you" or "okay, you're all set" please leave the audition room as quickly as possible. Remember, we usually have someone we need to bring in as soon as you go out.

So, as much as you might want to chat with your fellow scene partner about how funny he was when he did that "thing" just now, please tell him outside the room. Help us keep our day moving.

If there is something that you really feel like you need to discuss with the Casting Director or Session Director, please ask if they have a moment of time to discuss something with you - and then be willing to hear their answer. Usually, I will say "yes, what's up?"

But, if I don't, and ask if we could leave the room to discuss it or if we could discuss it later (depending on the subject) please trust that there is a very good reason. After all, your job is to act and mine is to deliver a tape of fantastic actors to my client via FedEx or Belair before the "shipping cut-off." You help me, I'll help you!

And my last piece of advice to you, my wonderful actor person, regarding your commercial audition? Once you have come in and done your best - LET IT GO!

Try not to worry, replay what you could have done better or differently over and over in your head, or obsess in any way about the potential job.

I'm going to get a little "new age" on ya here for a second... but, do your best and then turn it over to the UNIVERSE!

If the job is yours, it will be yours!

Worrying does nothing but make you feel worried. And for those of you who believe in the power of subconscious thought (as I do) know that worrying actually only makes something stay away longer... not come nearer.

So, please don't worry (oh, and for heaven's sake, don't worry about this subconscious mind information and whether you are keeping something away because you worried about it!). Just BE!

Oh, and once you have auditioned for a commercial... you DO NOT NEED TO CALL US TO SEE IF YOU GOT IT! That old cliché is in this case very true - Don't call us, we'll call you!

PEACE OUT!

I know that I did not even begin to discuss anything "technique-oriented" in this article. I guess we'll have to save that topic for a later date. But, I hope that you have found this information helpful or at least somewhat amusing... and if all else fails, I hope that this magazine also doubles nicely as a lining for your parakeet cage (be kind, put my photo face down)!

I look very much forward to seeing you at an audition soon!

Sending you blessings of every wonderful kind... now and always.

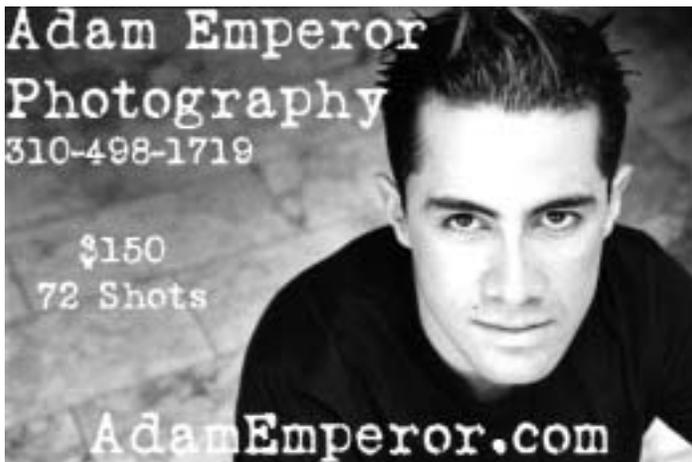
"your job is to act and mine is to deliver a tape of fantastic actors to my client..."

tioner thinks in their head: "Uh, uh, yeeeeeee, uh-oh... huh?"

what the heck is a slate?

No, "slating" is not an elective course you could have taken in high school instead of wood-shop or home-ec.

Slating is simply telling us your name (first and last) and sometimes telling us your agency (in your case *Extras Casting Guild*) and turning to show us the profiles of your face. Yes, this profiles part is sort of like



how to... audition for commercials