

SO YOU WANNA BE IN PICTURES?

Working as an Extra

Imagine sitting in a movie theatre surrounded by family and friends and seeing yourself on the big screen. Sounds pretty exciting, doesn't it? For most of us, movies bring to mind an air of glamour and visions of famous movie stars. Working on a movie set, however, involves much more than the actors and actresses in the leading and supporting roles. It also involves the "extras", and maybe, just maybe what you really want is "extras" work on a feature film coming to your area. Working as an extra is just that—you are an "extra" addition to a shot or scene in a non-speaking role. When extra work is available, it is advertised on the radio, television, flyers around town, and/or the newspaper. The Montana Film Office hotline may also contain information on working as an extra when work is available: (406) 444-3960. As an extra, you will more than likely sit around most of the day waiting for your big moment. You definitely won't be eating lunch with the stars, but you might learn a thing or two about filmmaking and have a grand time doing it.

If you are looking for more regular work as an extra, actor/actress, or model, then your next step should be to contact a talent agency or a casting director.

Terms You Should Know

Actor: Any person, male or female, who plays a role in a film.

Extra: An actor hired to appear in a crowd scene or as an incidental figure in a film without speaking any lines.

Casting Director: The person hired by a production company who chooses and negotiates contracts with the actors and actresses playing various roles in a film.

Talent Agency: An organization that represents various kinds of entertainment personnel in seeking employment and in business negotiations.

There are a handful of talent agencies and casting directors in Montana and many of them are listed in the Montana Production Guide and on the Montana Film Office website at www.montanafilm.com. They all have experience with film productions. However, Montana does not have a licensing or regulating body for talent agencies or casting directors, and as a state agency, this office cannot recommend one over another. So to all those aspiring actors out there, be careful, use common sense, and use these suggestions to make the most of your new career. Good luck!

Suggested Do's and Don'ts

1. The difference between a legitimate talent agency and one that might not be legitimate is that a legitimate talent agency does not charge a fee payable for registering you, for resumes, for public relations services, for screen tests, for photographs, for acting lessons, or for many other possibly suspect services. As a general rule, if you are signed as a client by a legitimate talent agency, you

will pay such agency nothing until you work and then 10 percent of your earnings as a performer – **but nothing in advance**, as this is against the law in most states. Most legitimate talent agencies do not advertise for clients in newspaper classified columns nor do they solicit through the mail.

2. Do not pay money in advance for things such as postage, advertising, registration, categorization or filing fees, which is an illegal practice in some states.
3. If interested in personal or business managers, you should know that there are well-established firms in the business of personal management but such firms, as a rule, handle established artists and they do not advertise for newcomers, nor promise employment.
4. Before signing a contract or release, read all of the information very carefully.
5. Determine if the company/person actually has jobs available or if it's just a ploy to enroll you in a training course or to sell you photographs of yourself.
6. Determine whether the agency has an established reputation with creditable retailers, advertising agencies and other persons in organizations who would be knowledgeable in this area.
7. In the entertainment industry there is no such thing as a guarantee, so always be suspicious!
8. Never assume want ads for actors or models are legitimate because they appear in a newspaper or you hear about them on the radio.
9. If someone promises membership in a performer's union, check with the union first. Never send or give money to anyone making that claim.
10. Be wary of opportunities that sound too good to be true—once in a lifetime or no experience required—because they usually are.
11. Listening to your instincts could save your life as you follow your dreams.
12. Do not go to the audition/interview alone if you are unfamiliar with the agent, producer or photographer.
13. Never interview in apartments or hotel rooms.
14. If for any reason you are uncomfortable with an interview, leave! There will always be other opportunities.

Note: This information was derived from material originally distributed by the Los Angeles Office of the Consumer Protection Division of the Federal Trade Commission, the Georgia Film & Videotape Office, *The Complete Film Dictionary*, and Erik Joseph's *The Glam Scam*.

Other Good Resources

The Glam Scam

by Erik Joseph
Lone Eagle Publishing
www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com

Your Film Acting Career

by M.K. Lewis and Rosemary Lewis Gorham
House Publishing www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com

Your Kid Ought To Be In Pictures

by Kelly Ford Kidwell and Ruth Devorin
Lone Eagle Publishing
www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com

Screen Actors Guild internet site

www.sag.com/wannabe.html

How to Be a Working Actor (3rd edition)

by Mari Lyn Henry & Lyn Rogers Back
Stage Books www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com

The Camera Smart Actor

by Richard Brestoff Smith and Kraus Books
www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com

