

Avoid Scams in the Film and Television Industry: October 4, 2007 Release

Whenever the Film and Television season heats up, various companies emerge offering services to performers for a cost while providing little or nothing in return. These companies range from Talent Agencies to Workshop Providers and they all have one thing in common:

They are Scam Artists. BUYER BEWARE!

Modeling and Talent Scouts

While we won't come outright and say that these activities are all scams, think about how many people out there actually paid the fees for entering these scout competitions, then paid the fees to go and visit their far-off headquarters to receive training, etc. And now think about how many stories you have heard from either celebrities or local performers who "made it" or got their "big break" due to these types of activities? If these really had the type of impact on peoples' careers that many of them claim, don't you think that recognizable celebrities would be endorsing them...? Save your money and your time, get a reputable talent agent and earn your chops working and making money rather than funding these types of organizations.

Talent Agencies

If a Talent Agency charges an exorbitant "sign-up" or "administration fee", they are already making money without having to actually find work for performers. Talent Agents should make their money by charging only the industry standard commission rate, 15% plus GST, on work they procure for you in the film and television industry. Also, an Agent should help you with your resume and give you pointers on headshots; you should not be required to use a particular photographer/ make up artist, etc. If they force services on you, the Agent is likely making more money off of an unsuspecting performer. If an agency guarantees you work, or tells you that they are working with a particular production, these are likely false claims. If an agency forces you to take workshops through them or their partners as a condition of representation, that is also a reason for you to seek out other representation opportunities.

Workshop Providers and Film Schools

If you are going to invest your valuable time and money on improving your resume and developing as a professional performer, take the time to investigate the providers of these workshops and film schools first. Does the person providing the workshop have a professional reputation in the industry? Are their credentials real?

Have they ever actually worked as a professional in the film and television industry? Questionable activities by Workshop Providers include the “one-stop shop” mentality; that is, providing workshops as well as casting services as well as production services (ie. “We not only teach you about film, we make them!”).

One of the more notorious scams goes something like this: You hear a radio ad for a local workshop provider who is bringing up a Casting Director from Los Angeles or New York to tap into the local talent base. You are asked to attend an “open call” where someone will “assess” your look and your abilities. Based on what they see and hear, they will offer you a “Call Back”, or a “Second Call”. For your Call Back, you will be asked to visit the office of the workshop provider, who will tell you how wonderful you are and that by enrolling in \$2000 to \$6000 worth of courses with their organization, you will get work in the film and television industry. If this story sounds familiar to you, protect your hard-earned money!!!

The reality is that these Scam Artists see performers as an easy target; and since the film and television industry is so alluring, they have virtually a never-ending well-spring of victims. ACTRA hopes to help curb some of this activity by bringing the issue to light.