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January 2007

"Time is what we want most, but what we use worst." -William Penn

"You know, when I first went into the movies Lionel Barrymore played my grandfather. Later he played my father and finally he played my husband. If he had lived I'm sure I would have played his mother. That's the way it is in Hollywood. The men get younger and the women get older." -Lillian Gish

Time on Your Side

Just when you thought you were about ready for the glue factory, a little heart-warmer such as this appears over the AP. I included it here because it happens to be precisely my experience, if I go by my own bookings in the past year. So, have at...

Study: TV's Youth Obsession Backfiring

by DAVID BAUDER, AP Television Writer

A study conducted by Harris Interactive suggests that the television industry's obsession with youth is backfiring. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they believe that most TV programming and advertising is targeted toward people under 40, the survey said. More than 80 percent of adults over 40 say they have a hard time finding TV shows that reflect their lives.

A significant number of baby boomers — 37 percent — say they aren't happy with what's on television, according to the study. "The amount of people dissatisfied with television overall was a pretty big eye-opening thing for us," said Larry Jones, president of the TV Land cable network, which commissioned the study.

The theory among advertisers is that it's important to reach young people as their preferences are forming — get them hooked on a certain toothpaste or soda early and they'll be hooked for life. Advertisers will pay a premium for young viewers: \$335 for every thousand people in the 18-to-24 age range that a network delivers, for example. Viewers aged 55 to 64 are worth only \$119 for every thousand, according to Nielsen Media Research.

That's why ABC and NBC conduct all of their business with advertisers in the 18-to-49 demo. From a financial standpoint, if you're 50 or over, you mean nothing to those networks' executives. "They've just never changed or haven't realized that the population has moved on," said Randy Berkowitz, vice president of research for Combe Inc., which makes health products and beauty aids.

Some advertisers have responded to the aging population. TV Land's Jones is already using the survey in his business. The results have convinced him that, more than ever, his network of mostly classic TV shows should be boomer-centric, he said. He also comes armed with the survey when he meets with the Madison Avenue types who buy advertising time.

Jones is pushing the idea of a "middlescence," about 40-to-59-year-olds who don't feel young anymore but don't feel old, and have plenty of discretionary income.

With the continued carving of the television audience into smaller slices because of all the networks on the air, the chance for advertisers to reach particular niches increases, said Evan Shapiro, who had his own marketing firm and is now head of the Independent Film Channel. Shapiro said he senses that marketers are slowly waking up to the potential in older TV viewers.

We Get Mail

First, one from our old pal Dave Shropshire...

"Another tale from the VO booth...Did a Sunsetter ISDN session a couple of weeks ago. Then last week the agent called me and booked another. My thought, "Cool. Repeat business".

So in the middle of the session, producer tells me "You are replacing another actor, we just weren't happy with their read." I of course was like "I'm sorry to hear that." This producer is very sharp so I could see how some talent might have trouble molding the script to his exact specifications. It was a great session and he seemed quite pleased. Which brings me to the workshop this week. Your story about the talent that stopped herself just as she was starting something great in her performance. On about the 5th take for some reason I started having trouble with the word "retractable." After flubbing it...I just automatically stopped...Said the line again...This time I thought I had flubbed but I kept on going. When I finished, we listened to the take and 'Voila', 2nd time I had NOT flubbed it...So when you say don't stop, you are so right !!!" -Shrop

Now here's an exchange I had with the great Barry Wightman...

Hi Kate and Colleen...nifty (December '06) newsletter, as usual. I took the tip and signed up on voice123 (I also did the voicebank premium thing so my links are starred)... do you also recommend putting the voice123 link on one's website? Got a series of mailings underway at the moment, bought Jimmy Carrane's book a month ago... good stuff... - Barry Wightman

You can add the voice 123 link *if you like*, but typically I don't recommend doing that because it could very well confuse the issue with potential agents. There's so much volume to be had from voice123 that it's often considered synonymous with dreck, to some degree and that it could lower how a would-be talent agent/producer might view of you. I want them to see you in higher echelon immediately -that's where you belong! -k

that's kinda what I thought re their link...but you know, I do have Arlene Wilson's logo up there [on my voiceover website] at their request...that makes me a bit uneasy... vis a vis new agents. -b

Well, it's kind of a trade-off.

I really love that agency and they requested it and are most likely to get you the most work, so... it's cool. You're hedging your bets with that—but, yeah, technically, I wouldn't normally include it.

I don't have Stewart Talent Chicago (there's a Stewart Talent NYC, too) on mine and I've been exclusive with them (in Illinois) for nearly ten years. So there you are. -Kate

thanks....I gotta get a Chicago agent.... B

If you do, you do. If you don't—don't sweat it.

Aim for IBE (In Both Ears) in Portland, DB Talent or Actors, Etc. in Texas, Moore Talent in Mnne., Earworks in Virginia Beach, or even Stewart Talent, Atlas or Paradigm in NYC, and Vox in LA. Keep in mind, the sun doesn't rise and set on the corner grocer. Set your sights on markets outside your own. You need a variety of sources in order to glean more work. -k

right....I have actors (texas) and moore (mnne) but moore's gone quiet....those others are targeted in my next talent agency blasts.... although I did receive a nice note from Joan: "Thank you for your interest but we have a very full roster of men and aren't able to offer you representation. - Joan Sparks, Stewart Talent, Chicago"

I love that Joan takes the time to let you know where you stand. (Stewart is my primary agent and has been for nearly 10 years.) She could leave you to your own devices, left wondering whether or not your promo is falling on deaf ears. This email deserves an acknowledgement in and of itself. I'd send her a thank you note—so she knows you know, y'know? Resubmit to Stewart again in 4-6 months.

And finally, from Alan Zachary...

Hi...Thought you'd be interested in knowing that I did my first audition, recorded at home for delivery this morning to Arlene Wilson Milwaukee.

Do I do any follow up? Ask any questions? Or just let it be and assume they'll call back if interested?

Thanks to you both as always for all your help, encouragement, advice... Sincerely, Alan Zachary

Hey! That's terrific, Alan! And very good question, too...but no, no need to ask them anything, like "did I get it or not?" You only hear about that spot again if you land it. Then you'd hear more about when and where it records and what the rate is and so forth.

I love Arlene Wilson Milwaukee—they're an awesome team up there. Keep pursuing the talent agents in order to secure more work from a greater variety of sources. -Kate



No Time Like the Present

January is typically *the* month to make resolutions—so if you haven't made yours yet, we have a few suggestions. If you've been a client of ours for some years now, you might be interested to learn how much we've streamlined our one-on-one coaching. Schedule a tune-up—I think you'll be very pleased with the results. We record them to CD so you can get the most longevity out of the session. Additionally, our Monday Night Workshops have never been more fun or effective. In fact, every Tuesday we post the recording of the previous night's workshop to soundadviceclients.com so you can listen in—whether you were that session or not. That's an especially nice feature if you have cold feet or if you're low on dough. It's remarkable how much you can learn from observing (or even *listening to*) others.

Every 4-6 weeks, we now include a two-week Voice-to-Picture segment in our workshops where you audition for a "real" spot, view the commercial that 'aired', then get another crack at it while attempting to sync your voice to the image on the monitor—just like in an actual (TV) commercial session. These sessions are a blast and allow you to study the medium in an unprecedented fashion. However, seats are limited and we only accept ONE missed class per 5-week cycle—simple enough. I promise you there is NOTHING even remotely comparable to this class anywhere in the country, the benefits and challenge we astound you. Additionally, no other workshop offers this much on-mic time anywhere. I wish I had access to this much practical application of the profession. It's precisely why we offer it!

You need to get in here and participate in this workshop. Call us right away to schedule either a one-on-one coaching or a four-week workshop. I'm more confident than ever that they will help *your game* and jumpstart whatever it is you have going! See you soon.

"How Many Auditions Does it Take Before I Start Landing Work?"

by Colleen Archer, Esq.

I hear quite a bit from talent about how frustrated they are that they haven't gotten a gig yet. "I've had five auditions! I should be booking by now!" No matter how many times Kate and I have said, "It often takes 50-100 auditions before most people will even book their first gig (double that for New York or L.A)," the "five-audition freak out" will inevitably rear its ugly head. So, I thought I'd get a little anecdotal, in hopes that my experience will resonate more than just repeating "it takes a solid 50-100 auditions before you book a gig!" (Though it does bear repeating).

After my first audition, I felt great. I did what I had been reminded to do: my very best job, and then promptly stopped thinking about it as soon as I walked out the door of my agent's office. After all, it was only my first one, and I was never expecting to get it. The second one went the same way. And the third. And the fourth. Then somehow, I got the idea that I was not "new" anymore (ha!), and if I was any good at all I would book this gig. "Wouldn't that be exciting? I could call everyone I know! A national commercial would be great right now." The expectations were building, and though I can't remember for the life of me now what it was for, I thought about that audition for the next three days straight until I realized I didn't get it. I came to the conclusion I would circle around to several times since that day: maybe Kate was right. Maybe this would take a little persistence.

But, I got busy with life. I kept auditioning a few times a month, but didn't pursue any more representation or do any mass mailings. Needless to say, I was starting to doubt my ability to succeed in this business. But thanks to a little "push" in the right direction from Sound Advice, my agents, my husband, and myself, I re-decided to pursue this with gusto....the same gusto I had when I was producing my demo. I did a mailing, and three weeks later got cast right off of Voicebank.net for a union radio gig. Output equals input.

The moral of this chapter of Colleen's autobiography: this business takes persistence. Of course there are great success stories of people who book from their fifth audition, or even their first. Many of them are our clients. If this is you, then you should be extremely excited. But for the rest of us, no matter how much talent you have, without promoting and persevering, the ball will simply cease to roll. Keep pursuing representation across the country—the more auditions you do per week, the faster they add up! There is not a high failure rate in this business, rather, a high *quitting* rate. If you can make it past the fifth audition with your chin still up and ready to work when the opportunity comes your way, 50-100 auditions later—you'll be happy that you did. (You didn't seriously think I wasn't going to repeat that, did you?)

Predictions, Past & Present!

Here's an article of interest...

It's official: Hollywood has run out of original ideas.

By NIKKI FINKE, LA Weekly, Tuesday, December 19, 2006

If you thought 2006 was bad, just wait. In 2007, the studios will give up on birthing blockbusters and concentrate instead on cloning them to knock off lame sequel after lame sequel after lamest sequel. Familiar titles will be followed by so many numbers that filmgoers looking for a Friday-night flick will need a calculator just to figure out which of the threequels and fourquels they want to see — if any at all.

Oh, and if the year of living sequentially doesn't destroy the movie biz, then the expected labor strike (also a sequel) will. Trapped in a horror of its own making, Hollywood is scared witless by the looming prospect of negotiating not one but two labor contracts in 2007: the Writers Guild of America, whose gangsta refusal to begin negotiating early with the studios already foreshadows a reread of the disastrous 1988 walkout (which shut down production for 22 weeks and cost the industry about \$500 million) and the Screen Actors Guild, whose bargaining may begin as soon as January but could still end in a walkout. Both writers and actors are still bummed over being stiffed by the studios during the DVD era and are determined not to be bullied again in this downloading age.

As for next summer's sequel orgy, both *Hannibal Rising* (the fourth Hannibal Lecter pic, this one a prequel) and *The Hills Have Eyes II* will get the foreplay started, followed by *Spider-Man 3*, *Shrek the Third*, another *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Hostel: Part II*, *Fantastic Four 2*, *Evan Almighty* (a follow-up to Jim Carrey's *Bruce Almighty*, this time starring Steve Carell), *Live Free or Die Hard* (Bruce Willis as John McClane for the fourth time), *Transformers* (a live-action sequel to the animated original), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (fifth in the series), *The Bourne Ultimatum* (No. 3, which is actually No. 4 if you count that cheesy Richard Chamberlain version from 1988) and *Rush Hour 3*. Then, the sequel frenzy climaxes at the end of the year (get that Marlboro Ultra Light ready) with *Resident Evil 3*, *Mr. Bean's Holiday* (Bean II), *The Golden Age* (a.k.a. *Elizabeth 2*), *Alien vs. Predator 2*, *National Treasure II* and *Halloween 2007* (too many to count).

And those are just the ones I know about.

See, it simply takes too much moola to create awareness for new product — in marketing parlance, this is known as "audience creation." It's a given that with franchises and remakes, the awareness for under-25 males — the most coveted category of moviegoers — approaches 100 percent. But with original stories, that awareness level drops below 60 percent. And, when the average cost to make a movie (as of 2005) stands at \$96.2 million, and marketing costs at \$36.2 million per pic, it stands to reason that studios are loath to gamble on unproven concepts.

Decide What You Want

Have you decided what you want to get out of this year yet? Did you make a list and assign deadlines for each? I did. In fact, I do it every year. Why? 'Cuz it works. And it doesn't matter how high flung, at first blush, that aim might seem. One of the great perks of having a New Year every year is you get to start *fresh*. Aim for things you want in your life and you'll see them come to fruition. It's amazing, the sense of accomplishment. Even if your goal is to simply sit in the sun and read a book for an hour once a week throughout the month of July. Just once a week. For a single hour—*uninterrupted*. Try it. Sounds easy. It was probably the hardest thing to accomplish. But I did it. And I'll do it again, too! This time I'm aiming for August though, 'cuz I have a lot planned for July. Besides that, I have seven whole months to plot and plan in the interim.

January is the beginning of the next chapter. Make the plot thicken—in a good way. This is your story you're writing here. Entertain yourself and you'll find your audience.

Wishing you dreams fulfilled. Now...and always! -Kate & crew