## HANDOUT - Casting Information

Don’t wait for anyone to tell you how to play the part. Come up with your own take on the character. Sometimes the breakdown or casting director will have some new information for you, sometimes you’ll be given that information just before you read. It’s not often the case in Hollywood, however, that you get really good, really specific information. That’s okay, because the less specific the role appears, the more you’re able to invent. Come up with something interesting. Anything is better than nothing. Bring something to the role that makes you stand out, even if it is just a single take on a word or a line. Let them know that you’re an imaginative, enthusiastic, inventive actor.

This is very useful in sitcom pilots. Some write-producers of sitcoms are open to tailoring a role to a specific actor if he or she brings something to the role that they hadn’t thought of. The development process continues well into the first season to settle on well-defined formats and characters. Take a look back at the pilot of any very successful show. You’ll see the characters still feeling their way. Good writing inspires actors, but actors – especially in a developing series – inspire good writers too.

Commercials also leave you a lot of room. Take it. Commercial directors generally encourage an actor’s contribution. There’s more time to shoot, and they love to go into the editing room with a lot of choices. Let’s keep this to ourselves (writers hate to hear it) but the facts, not all scripts are great. Bear this in mind, however: Bad writing isn’t wrong. It’s just shallow. All you have to do is add depth to your character by making a few acting choices. There are, after all, hidden layers in all human beings. Dig up a few.

In other words, show them how the part should be played. Make strong choices. Be fully committed to your ideas. The worst thing that could happen is that you’ll be nothing like what they want. You won’t get the part. You won’t get most parts, anyway; that’s the business of acting. On the other hand, the best that could happen is that you’ll crystallize the role for them. Suddenly the character that was only partly there on paper has come alive. Now you’re way ahead of the competition.

*Example 1*

*“We were auditioning for a tough and obnoxious professor on Dawson’s Creek. One actor came in with a completely different take on the character, he played it as an aging surfer. He didn’t change one line of dialogue nor did he change the intent of the character – it was an unusual interpretation and it worked. He got the job.”*

*-Paul Stupin, Executive Producer ‘Dawson’s Creek’*

*Example 2*

*The Broadway musical Pippin was casting the role of the “Leading Player” (head of a band of roving players who were the theatrical framework for the story) as an old white actor. Due to his audition they ended up with a young black dancer. (Ben Vereen, who went on to great fame because of that extraordinary performance) He came in and, in a bravura sequence he had prepared of scene, song and dance, simply showed them how the part should be played.*