Independent Entertainers

Breaking into the Entertainment Industry
On Your Own!

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Preface

One of the first things that would cross the mind of anyone reading this publication or attending one of my "Independent Entertainer" seminars is: "who is this guy and what makes him special?" After all, one would not want to invest their time to learn information that has no value, or that is based on no practical training or experience. Because of that, I will provide you with some of my credentials that qualify me to teach this information.

- I have been a performer (rap artist) over the past 10+ years, been a part of multiple independent groups, and been offered multiple recording contracts over this time period.
- I have written and produced my own independent CD, under my own label.
- I have written and published my own book of poetry, and have several other books in the works to be released soon under my own publishing company.
- I have done Feature Film work as a movie "extra" and competed in modeling competitions.

- I have written, starred in, directed and produced my own skits and movies under my independent publishing company.
- I have been public speaking for several years.
- Finally, I have done tons of research into the independent movie and music industries to provide a well-rounded base of knowledge on this subject.

I'm sure that the next question is concerning why I haven't become a "big time" movie star. The answer to this is simple: choice. I made a decision that the celebrity life (the paparazzi, stalkers, extortion attempts, etc.) is not for me, particularly since I've chosen the family life. In addition, it brings some conflict with my primary career path and calling. Yet, I do understand the desire for the rich and famous lifestyle, which is why I've put this seminar and manual together. I hope that through this, those that have the general desire, opportunity, and time to truly pursue this direction will be empowered with the knowledge that they need to succeed. I didn't have the time and commitment to pursue it, but I would like to provide assistance to those aspiring artists that do to help give them a jump start in their careers. And while I cannot guarantee any individual's success (because success of an individual is dependent upon that person's own personal commitment), I can guarantee that the information presented

here will be highly beneficial and provide a solid foundation for anyone that is serious about pursuing a career in the entertainment industries. With that, enjoy your reading.

Modeling

This is one of the shortest sections, yet is very straight-forward and provides foundational information to the section of entertainment that is often found in all of the other branches of entertainment. The first thing to understand about modeling is the nature of the job: what it actually is. A model is a person that is used to display a certain product for the product's creator. In theory, the model should not be seen, but exists rather to provide the platform for the product to be seen. The model should be appealing, however, in order to draw the consumer in so that once drawn in the consumer will notice the real product. These days, models represent all types of products from clothes to perfume to sports cars. All of these products have been proven to sell better when represented by a stellar model.

Types of Models

Clothing models are the most common types of models, and can be presented in print advertisements, commercials, and on the runway. While the classic image is the runway model, due to their general height, weight, and image requirement, they are actually the

“elite” minority of the modeling industry. The competition for runway models is the most extreme, yet the financial rewards are often the greatest. Most successful runway models are automatically featured in fashion magazines and receive the greatest recognition of all.

Print models make up the majority of models in the industry due to its need to portray “normal” people so that those normal consumers will be encouraged to purchase the advertised products that they represent. Print models come in all different shapes and sizes and range throughout all age groups. Generally, if you have a certain look that makes you stand out – while still being “normal” – there is a place for you in print modeling. Because of this, any that are aspiring to be in the modeling should not be discouraged for not fitting the runway model image, but be encouraged that there’s more opportunities elsewhere.

In addition to these types of models, and if you fit the mold for clothing models, you will often end up modeling other products such as perfumes, vehicles, cleaning products, etc. It is all about having an image that is convincingly acceptable for the type of product that is being sold.

Preparation

The first step to entering this field is to gain proper knowledge. This can be done through a variety of ways: traditional and/or online research, modeling schools, seminars, or whatever best fits your personality type and learning style. The recommendation would be to try a combination of these though because while research is good, hands-on experiential learning (such as that which can be obtained in schools and seminars) can be equally, if not more, beneficial as well. You would, however, have to consider the costs of such schools or seminars and how much it fits into your personal budget. At many good schools, photography packages will be included, but if not, part of your budget needs to include room for some high-quality photographs (headshots, body shots, etc.) that will become your "visual business card" to be left with every agency that you plan to work with.

In addition to formal training, there is a lot to learn from mimicking. Take the time to watch models in action. Look in the magazines, watch the modeling showcases, and copy what you see to the best of your ability. Don't simply rely on your own opinion of how well you do though, but gather the opinions of honest people about

how well you are doing in comparison to what the professionals have done. Critical feedback is very important, and it also helps to prepare you for the type of criticism you will face as you advance in the industry. Make sure to also continually practice your poise and articulation, as more often now models are expected to speak in commercials. Finally, be honest (not over-critical) to yourself in evaluation of your appearance. Remember that this is an industry about looks, so depending on what product you are seeking to represent, you must fit that look in order to be considered. For example, you cannot be out of shape trying to model for exercise equipment. You must also make sure that you portray great confidence despite any way that you feel because confidence is what sells you, pretty much in every aspect of your life.

Entering the Field

Once you have obtained enough preparation, the next logical step is to take action. Modeling, just as every other entertainment related field, requires for you to be seen and recognized in order to ensure and maintain success. Once you have been forgotten, or if you have never been known, your career no longer exists. As an independent model, often you have to create and maintain your own hype. Some suggestions to consider for building up your credibility as an aspiring model are as follows:

1. Take a variety – as in presenting yourself in a variety of different settings – of professional pictures and present yourself online on as many "credible" social networking and picture hosting websites as you can find (that you are able to keep up with).

2. Create some products such as calendars and posters, and publish them for sale. It would be best to create a personal website that you feature these, as well as general pictures, itinerary (work on building this through casting calls), and contact/booking information.

3. Audition for modeling casting calls, as many as you can. There are many places where you can find information on casting calls for free; take advantage of these.

4. Network! Make sure that you are always “on cue” (looking your best) and attend social events where possible connections exist. Have some good, quality business cards and “comp cards” (cards with a headshot on the front and body shot on the back, showing your contact and/or agency information at the top or bottom) on hand and promote yourself by word of mouth as often as possible.

By taking these steps you will help to develop a base of awareness about yourself. Because modeling is an area of the industry that is virtually ALL about IMAGE, the more that you are seen as a model, the more successful you can become.

Music

The second section of this manual will cover the music industry as a whole, though the main examples will be based on the rap industry. Just as the modeling industry is about being seen, the music industry is more about being heard. Also, just like other areas of the entertainment industry, the music industry is highly competitive and has become much more competitive since the introduction of the internet because the internet provides an opportunity for every want-to-be artist to have a platform.

One thing to ask yourself before pursuing any career in the music industry is what path you want to go, and how far and how long do you want to do it. The music industry has many paths. Some different career paths in the industry include: jingle writing for commercials, soundtrack/theme music composing, talk show bands, bar/club performers, mainstream musicians (those on the radio that sell their CDs in the stores), and completely independent artists. There are also support positions in the mainstream music industry for producers (people who create beats/music) and writers (those who write lyrics). Our focus here is going to be independent and mainstream artists. These are connected because usually the path to becoming a

mainstream artist begins with being an independent artist. Let us begin then, by focusing on preparation for this career.

Preparation

Because the music field is so competitive, it's not as easy to find work in as modeling. Modeling is easier because in print work, there is always a need for practically EVERY type of look, yet in music there must generally be a genuine talent (learned or natural) and radio stations and labels are looking for a certain sound that is familiar before being ready to invest in you.

The first step, therefore, is obtaining the proper talent for the genre of music that you are entering. If you are a band, or a part of a band, you must learn how to play the particular instrument that you wish to use. You can learn as a child by getting into band class at school, you can take private lessons, or you can teach yourself. If you want to be in a genre that requires singing, such as R&B, country, or pop, you need to learn how to sing. Learning to sing may require singing in a church or community choir or taking private singing lessons. When learning to sing though, make sure that you have a

“support system” that is going to be completely honest with you about your talent, and that you don’t rely on how you think you sound in the shower. We’ve all watched enough “American Idol” to know that there are many that think they can sing, who really can’t. Likewise, if you want to rap, make sure that you take time to study arts like poetry, as well as lyrics of other successful rappers to test your skills. As an aspiring rapper, a good way to get started and develop your talent is to enter local cyphers (freestyle rap competitions that are held anywhere from school yards to clubs). Ciphers will require you to hone your skills because if you enter one and are terrible, you will be embarrassed and walk away with hurt feelings due to the nature of the competition in them. Whatever the genre though, make sure that develop your talent until it becomes as good as, and relevant to, the quality of the current “successes” of the industry.

Another aspect of preparation is developing an image. While your sound and talent are vitally important, it is very pertinent to create, or carry, an image that “fits in” with the current styles or trends of the genre you are entering. This maintains that ever-so-important concept of relevancy. Sometimes, image is more concerned with the underlying principles than the outer appearance. By example, Kanye West didn’t have the same “gangsta” look as most in the industry, but his image did consist of the deeper quality of “cockiness” that the rap

industry is fueled with, thus making him easy to accept, especially since his talent also was greatly fine tuned. Understand also that the most popular types of audiences don't have to be your audience; Weird Al's image and sound caters to a smaller, more specific audience, but they are faithful to supporting him and enjoy his music. Your image, only needs to be relevant to the audience that you are going after, and your sound must be a part of who you are (what you naturally identify with) if you want any type of longevity in the industry. Otherwise, you will be considered "fake" and ultimately be rejected becoming at most, one of the classic "one-hit wonders" that VH-1 does a special about.

Finally, as an aspiring music artist you need to take the time to teach yourself, or learn from others via mentorship or business school, about the legal side of the industry. Too often in history there have been groups or artists that had everything going for them but ended up losing everything because of their ignorance in how the industry works. You need to take the time to learn about the basics of music contracts (standard percentages, royalties, etc.), marketing, copyright/ownership laws, and management so that you will be prepared to make wise decisions about the things that will come your way as you progress. Once you have prepared yourself, the next step is to take action.

Entering the Field

The grassroots method is usually one of the most powerful methods to making a name for yourself big enough to go into the mainstream. Even most independent artists have some desire to become mainstream artists, yet give up on that dream because of the challenges or fears of being ripped off or having too much responsibility (having to follow other people's rules). There is also the concern in the mainstream music industry of having to lose artistic freedom in order to fit in the mainstream's norm. Nevertheless, just like in the other fields of entertainment, you have to put yourself out there before being able to be counted among those worthy of the success you are seeking.

Once your talents have been developed and you are ready to compete in the industry, you need to create a product to compete with. At this point, it is time to record a demo or independent CD project. An aspiring career artist should not take this step lightly. Put forth your BEST efforts to create the best possible product. If that means buying quality beats/music from someone, renting professional-grade studio time, buying high-quality equipment and/or software to record it

yourself, or whatever, do this to ensure that your product can compete with the others out there. Then, record some good music. Please note that no matter how good your music is, there will always be some that will criticize it, but just make sure that it is actually good in terms of the genre and sound you are creating it in. Your demo is equivalent to your "comp card" in modeling, and is something that you should always have available to present to potential fans and business contacts. When you finish recording this product, consider some of the following suggestions as well.

1. Create a profile on as many credible social networking sites as available so that others can hear your music. There are very many out there.

2. Make some of your music available for free and distribute it to as many people as you can so that as they play it, others will hear and want it too. This will create more buzz about you. Be sure to also submit these free songs to radio stations; most popular stations have local artist spotlights, which will provide you with more opportunities to showcase yourself. (The quality must be high, as in mastered, however, for most stations to play your music.)

3. When you develop a good product, start selling it like crazy. One of the most amazing stories of coming up from the bottom was by the group, Wu Tang Clan. They sold CDs out of the trunks of their cars and everywhere else they could, developing a large, solid following. You can take it a little further these days by selling your product on sites, using a purchased barcode, like "CD Baby" so that Soundscan can track your sales. (Many bigger labels look at independent sales as a guarantee that your music will sell, and therefore is worth investing in and will produce profit.) This is the process of building your own "hype", and in these days is very important. This is also what many of those that have entered refer to when they say that though you're just now hearing them, they've been "grinding" in the underground for years. Remember also not to limit your potential market to one group (or the demographic that normally buys your genre of music), but offer it to as many as will hear. You'd be surprised at how many that you wouldn't expect to like it, will.

4. Network! Just like in other entertainment industries it is important to make strong connections. Link up with other artists at different music venues and events, and whenever you get the chance, collaborate with others so that people will hear you on their music too. Pass out business cards, ask for the

opportunity to perform wherever it presents itself, and go after it will your best shot.

5. Finally, remember to be your number one fan. You have to be the most excited about your product if you expect others to become excited about it. Sometimes it may get discouraging if things are not progressing as fast as you'd like it, but maintaining your steam and excitement is very important.

Ultimately, finding the opportunities for success is not impossible. It does take some patience and hard work, but if you stay committed to this goal and follow basic principles such as those presented here, it will come to you.

Film and Stage Acting

The final area that we will be discussing is one that could probably be referred to as the “cornerstone” of entertainment. Drama is an art that generally captures the best of all worlds. Whereas modeling focuses more on the visual and music focuses more on the audible, acting combines both visual and audible elements along with some of the most creative support imaginable to produce an overall experience of which nothing else can compare.

Types of Acting

When most people think about acting, the first image that comes to mind is the big screen: film. Film acting generally has the most fame and notoriety because of the overall availability of its mass media nature. When a film has been created that goes to the movie theatres, generally the entire population of the nation has convenient access to it. That doesn’t mean that everybody will go and see it, but nearly everybody does have the opportunity to go see it if they have a small amount of money available. Movie theatres for films are found in just about every city in the USA and the prices most often are less

than $10 for an individual ticket. Because of such wide availability, actors in these movies are also easily seen and find it easy to gain wide recognition and credibility for their art.

Within film acting, actors will generally fall into two main categories: featured and extras. Featured actors normally have speaking parts, but even if the actor doesn't speak at all, he/she will often be presented in a way where he/she "stands out" in the movie with some sort of significance. These featured actors often will have their names indicated in the movie credits as well.

Films are also filled with extras, the secondary category. Extras are used to make the situations presented appear more genuine. After all, people are always everywhere though you only pay attention to those connected to your particular situation. Therefore, to make a movie more realistic, there also need to be people everywhere, even though the audience will not pay any real attention to them, but focus on those that are connected to the main story. Extras often number in the hundreds or thousands, and make up the "background" of a scene's true action.

Stage acting has several differences from traditional film acting, as the entire script is normally acted out on a single stage before a live audience. Because of this, several other factors apply:

1. The acting must be much more animated, with stronger vocal projection, so that the audience can hear and see the performance clearer on the stage.
2. Stage acting requires much more preliminary practice because the performance is live and mistakes cannot be just edited out like in film.
3. Stage acting involves performing the same show over and over again, each time an audience pays to see it, rather than making the movie only once and replaying it over and over for the different audiences.
4. There are many strategic scene changes, often done during brief breaks where the stage is darkened, where the actors may change wardrobes. Because of the inability to film in different areas during the production, all of the different sets and props must be available backstage during the performance.

5. The play can only be performed in locations where there are actors present to portray the parts, unlike movies which can be shown “everywhere” simultaneously.

6. Tickets to see plays are often much, more expensive than tickets to a movie theatre to cover all of the costs of live production. Though films put up a large amount of money to make the movie, they can recoup their costs from licensing and royalties over longer periods of time instead of having to recoup costs and make profits all at once.

7. Due to the production nature of stage versus film acting, actors have the potential to make much more money in film (in particular, big screen) acting than in stage acting.

Preparation

Just like with anything else, practice makes perfect. The difficulty in the acting field is that not only do you have to be comfortable in front of an audience (even in film acting you are surrounded by crew members), but you also have to be fully convincing of the role that you are trying to represent. Your expression has to appear natural in front of the audience and the camera. Unfortunately for many, this is not always the easiest task.

There are many real-life situations that can help you prepare. One method to hone in your skills is via relay. You can find others that are actors/actresses by joining social drama groups, starting one of your own, etc., and taking time to practice with them so that you can help build each other up. You can also help develop your ability through personal "relay." You would do this by practicing in front of a mirror on a regular basis, filming or voice recording yourself performing various dramatic pieces, and then reviewing your own work so that you can learn and experience it. When you see how you sound, look, etc., from an outside viewpoint, it will help you to determine what you need to do to really improve on your ability. This is very important and helpful because most people never take the time

to really discover their own strengths or weaknesses. The perfect example of this is found in people who cannot sing hearing themselves for the first time on a recording. In the same manner, it is important for people who act to get the opportunity to see their own work to learn out to get better.

Concerning the educational background, there are many successful actors with little or no professional training, yet many others that do have it. Acting is really just one of those fields where raw talent can ultimately go a long way. To be honest, good networking will also take you a great distance even if your acting skills are not the sharpest but you have to have some decent ability either way. Yet, it is recommended to gain some sort of formal training (even if it is not a college degree, or if it is only a high school drama course) to provide you with the foundation of industry terminology, philosophies, and standards, which will be extremely helpful as you begin to start your career and are in and around this environment.

Entering the Field

Once you have properly prepared yourself for this field, it's time to get noticed. The standard practice for actors and actresses that are trying to build a career is to first work on building your resume. This is important just as a corporate resume is important in getting hired for a corporate job because people want to know what experience you have (what you can do and have done) before hiring you. For instance, if you've never experienced being around "big stars" and a casting director is looking for extras at a film that will be surrounded by "big stars," he or she may not readily desire to put you in that scene out of concern that you're going to act like a fan (fainting, asking for autographs, etc.) when you see the established stars. Being an extra, however, is a great place to begin your journey.

In order to be an extra you have to first find casting calls. There are several websites that are on the Internet where you can find available auditions, and most of the auditions that show up are looking for extras. (Be careful as there are also a lot of scam sites that ask you to pay tons of unnecessary money.) Most of the time, you can just go to the websites, or do searches online to find open auditions, and chances are you'll find something. As you get more and more of these

“Extra” roles, be sure to add them to your resume to build your credibility and marketability, and when you are doing those background roles, always try to stand out somehow more than the others (provided that the producers advise that it is okay). Extras are often paid from absolutely nothing but credit (being able to list it on your resume) and a copy of the production (more often with smaller productions), to being paid in the low hundreds per day, and the days are often 15 or more hours of filming, especially in feature films. This is part of where the term “starving artist” comes in, from doing so much work with so little pay in comparison.

Outside of this type of work to help “get your feet wet” in the industry, you’ll often find local plays and student film projects as you are searching for opportunities. Don’t be so quick to turn your nose up at these because there are often other and future benefits that come along even if you are not being paid money. Often these lower budget (or no budget) films and projects will get some sort of local or regional, if not more, attention. Also, it is not uncommon for these directors and writers behind the small projects to one day get successful, and by building strong relations with them on this level, they will often remember you for paid gigs in the future when they grow in their businesses. Connections are connections. In addition, each entry on the resume still represents more experience and make

you more appealing to the future casting directors that you will go before as you pursue this career. Finally, you'll be more likely to get actual speaking roles with these smaller productions, versus mostly non-speaking roles as extras, which not only make you more marketable, but also provide you with more practice and self-development so that when those bigger opportunities happen, you'll be better prepared for them.

If you still want to start out larger and have an entrepreneurial spirit, consider writing and producing your own movies, commercials, skits as well. It is best to get some sort of training in the production sides of theater and film as a start though, IF YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL in it rather than just doing it for a hobby. If you are willing to really work at it, though, and handle everything involved in the business side including the extra expenses of fronting your own production, this may be another viable option for you. Any combination of these will help you though to really begin to make your mark in this field.

Final Thoughts

I'm going to leave you with this to consider: often what makes or breaks someone from achieving his or her goals is not the lack of talent or knowledge, but rather the lack of persistence and aggressiveness to follow through. I hope that this short book has been very helpful for you in providing you with quality information to get started in your entertainment career. This book is not intended to serve as an exhaustive resource but rather to be straight to the point and provide a basic foundation to build upon. This book is also designed to go along with the seminar by Kelvin N. Broadus of the same name, as an expanded guide.

On that note, if you'd like to bring this seminar to your organization or hire Kelvin N. Broadus for personal coaching, motivational speaking, or training, please contact us using our website: www.kelvinbroadus.com. Please also stay tuned to the website for new products, information, and services that are constantly being updated. Thank you for your purchase.