

# **The Importance of a good Headshot**

Comments from a professional photographer

## **Choose the right photographer for you**

Choosing the right photographer for you and your child can be daunting, but go with your instincts. You will know when you have found a good match. Start by looking at examples of their work. Does their previous work jump out at you? Have they captured a sense of that child and the glint in their eyes? If the answer is yes, pick up the phone and have a conversation. It is so important to have a good rapport with the photographer and to feel confident that they will get the best out of your child.

Another key consideration is selecting a photographer that specialises in actors' headshots, rather than family portrait work. It is a very specific style and art form, so consider someone with the right experience. I have done many shoots with young performers because of agents who have insisted on reshoots, as parents have chosen a poor photographer in the first instance. Save yourself time and money by really researching your options.

## **Manage your expectations**

Children are by nature unpredictable. This needs to be both embraced and managed to create a fun, relaxed environment on your shoot day. As a first port of call, make sure your child is well rested and hasn't consumed three tubes of Smarties and a bottle of fizzy pop before arriving. Don't underestimate the impact of a good night's sleep and good food on the success of a headshot session.

When booking in a shoot, especially for younger children, I would really recommend a weekend or school holiday slot. You would be surprised how many parents bring children to a shoot straight after a swimming lesson – when they are exhausted and have dripping wet hair! It all comes back to being calm and ready to work. Think of it as an audition or a day on set: you are setting your children up to work in the professional performance industry. A headshot session is your child's first step on this journey.

I often get asked about sibling shots. If your children are happy to cast together this can be a great back-pocket image for parents and agents to send out for any relevant family castings. If you, as the parents, are also happy to get in on the action, then we can always get a whole family shot too. Aside from group shots, I always recommend that parents give the kids some space on a headshot shoot. I find that I get the best work out of children when they do not feel under the watchful eye of mum or dad.

## **Think carefully about styling – please see other document too.**

When deciding on hair and outfit choices for your shoot, start with your child's playing age, colourings and personality as your guide. Keep the kids involved and excited by letting them help you decide on what they wear on the day. If they are comfortable and happy, it is going to shine through in their images. Dressing your child to look their age, or younger if they can play down, is my top inside tip. If you

have a 10-year-old that can still play 6, embrace that. Plaits and bunches can be a great look here. For teenage performers between 14 and 17, I would say it is a great idea to go for a really youthful look as they will be competing for jobs against very young looking actors of 16+ who do not need a chaperone or a licence. If they can realistically play down in age, that will work in their favour. I'm not suggesting a pinafore and hair bows, but fresh faced and vibrant is great. I would not suggest make up for a headshot session for children and young performers, but a touch of lip balm or some clear mascara can be a great addition.

Colour headshots are the preference of most industry professionals, so dressing in vibrant colours works well, especially on younger children to bring out their personality and youthfulness. Choose block colour tops, as writing, logos or distracting patterns can take the focus away from the face. A great headshot is all about the actor, with the focus on the sparkle in their eyes, and outfits should complement and enhance this. Arrive with two or three different tops - sleeved options work best for all ages and I find that a denim jacket is a great addition! For teenage and young adult actors, neutral muted colours give a more mature angle on the final images. Another great tip that is often overlooked is to iron all your clothing and arrive with them on hangers - a crisp outfit really does make a strong image.

### **Keep it fun and relaxed**

Ultimately, the key to getting the best headshot is by ensuring your child feels at ease and looks as natural as possible. Working in a very relaxed environment and trying to build a rapport with each individual actor is vital. It is your shoot and it should be specifically tailored to your child's personality. The aim of the shoot is to have fun and capture your child at their best.

We want just enough intrigue to draw casting directors and agents in and still leave them wanting to find out more about your child. Headshots get castings. We want to give your child the very best opportunity to be seen.

### **Select photos with purpose – we, as your child's agent reserve the right to select the photos for Spotlight, but we are happy to know your choices in case we've missed one.**

After your session you and the agent will receive an emailed contact sheet of the best images taken, which is when the fun begins – choosing your favourite shots to be edited! Most packages include one to four edited images. (Jonathan Lyons offers 3/4 edited images.) When making your selections, take as much time as you need and get as many impartial opinions as you can. If your child is represented be sure to speak to their agent, as they will know exactly what is needed to get your child in the audition room. The images that you as a parent like best may look beautiful above the mantelpiece at home, but they are not always the best shots to get your child into castings. Agents are professionals and they know exactly what casting directors are looking for, so work with them and trust their judgment

Finally, and most importantly, I say to all young performers relax, have fun and be yourself!