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3 Reasons Your Auditions Might Be Weak

By Lisina Stoneburner | Posted Aug. 19, 2015, 3 p.m.

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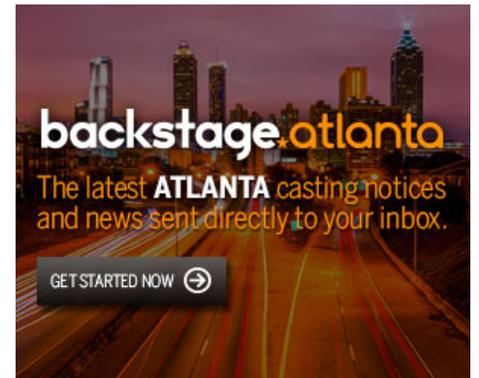
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Most actors strive to gain some form of insight and perspective on their auditions in the hopes of improving their process. I come across a lot of actors who ache for feedback on each particular audition. My goal for my students is to arm them with their own radar, their own sense for what is working or not, and their own inner guide to learn from their experiences, thereby continuing to improve their work over the years.

To assist in gaining some general perspective, here are three things an actor could be more aware of when auditioning that could possibly be contributing to a weaker audition.

1. Self-tape syndrome. While the self-taped audition has added a level of efficiency, and a way for many more people who might not normally be seen for an audition be considered, there is also, I believe, a few unwanted side effects.

Actors who have spent the better part of their careers live inside casting rooms have an advantage. They have felt organically when something is working or when it isn't. They have experienced how to read a room. They have had an opportunity to physicalize things and provide a three-dimensional character, who can live and breathe close enough to the other people in the room for them to potentially feel something from them. They have felt what it means to give it all on your first take because you might not get another. Self-taping has provided actors with a safe environment, typically with a reader they have worked with before, a chance to not only see their takes, but for many of them and choose and piece together the ones they prefer.

While those advantages seem like positive ones, I have actually seen them have the opposite effect and make actors complacent, cause lower energy in their pieces, and cause them to not work to connect with something or someone. We lost something genuine when we started relying on self-taped auditions as our primary way to see actors. My recommendation for actors who live in an area where they self-tape more than they go live is to be extremely cognizant of this potential weakness and seek out live audition experiences whenever they can.

2. Poor script comprehension. When you do not understand the who, what, where, when, why, and how, you will be less believable. Often you do not have as much information as you'd like, but

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you do have something. If you do not understand a phrase, word, or reference, look it up. You should be able to see the changes in a scene and identify the beats, the character’s objective, and find a pursuit of action. You should reference the character description and then what clues to the character are in the script. You should be able to identify relationships and behave accordingly. Knowing the words, but not knowing why you say them is a fatal audition flaw.

3. Being too polished. Sometimes, when I work with someone on an audition, I tell them to not continue rehearsing too much. Depending on where they are in their preparation and what the piece of material is, there is sometimes a point at which you can prepare the organic moments right out of something. Being able to feel something new and genuine and being open for something unexpected to fly through you is what living in the moment is. Whether taped or live, leaving yourself available to experience something new is what makes you, the character, living and breathing the material for the first time.

Each audition is different, and each actor has their own habits that contribute to the overall success of their auditions. It never hurts to get a fresh set of eyes on what you are doing. Find a coach who you haven’t worked with but respect in the industry to see some of your audition tapes, or do a few mock auditions with them to have someone give you a different perspective. Perspective is about learning; it’s not about condemning yourself. Never let these comments run you over or slow down your progress. Keep moving forward with knowledge, and let that knowledge give you the power to succeed.

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Lisina Stoneburner is an Atlanta-based acting coach, founder of the *Company Acting Studio*, and *Backstage Expert*. For more information, check out Stoneburner’s [full bio!](#)

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Sort by Top**Marci Liroff**

This is spot-on advice. You've covered so many important points.

This is very important, "They have felt what it means to give it all on your first take because you might not get another." I see many actors (in the room and also self-taped auditions) who don't warm up and connect until the very end of the scene. They start off stiff, unsure of themselves, and don't truly live in the truth until the very end of the scene.

Problem is, we've already clicked away or you've lost our attention.

There are a small handful of clever CDs/producers and directors who will see a seed of something in your audition and want to re-direct you and spend more time with you on your audition. A small handful.

Like Reply Aug 23, 2015 8:36pm

**Andrew Hyatt Masset III** · Works at Actor

Totally agree.. Sel Taping is , in my humble,.. a total loss of contact, interaction, feeling and spontaneity...Now the CD just whizzes past any one who doesn;t fit the 'look' they have in their minds...regardles of the audition. Sad and wasteful..

Like Reply Aug 24, 2015 6:53pm

**Drew Norton** · UNLV

sounds like good advice!

Like Reply Aug 22, 2015 3:24am

**Jackie Goldston** · Actress at Jackie Goldston

LOVE. LOVE. LOVE. I actually had the 'toxic taping box' epiphany today on the way home from an in-person. You are spot on, Lisina, as always.

Like Reply Aug 21, 2015 4:52pm

**Jeronimo Spinx** · Actor at Action Talent Agency

I experienced your number 1 Lisina, just recently, for the very first time!! As soon as I walked out of the room, I knew the reason it felted weak, I've been taping like crazy, which I felt made me lose that "edginess" that comes with live auditions...

Like Reply Aug 21, 2015 9:26am

**Marty Whittle** · Owner at Top Cat Farm

Super advice thanks !

Like Reply Aug 21, 2015 12:39pm

**Joni Bovill** · University of Southern Mississippi

Yes, great reminder to keep the energy up.

Like Reply Aug 21, 2015 2:01pm

**Johnny Avila** · California Polytechnic State University

Love It.

Speaking Words of Wisdom!!!

"Never let these comments run you over or slow down your progress. Keep moving forward with knowledge, and let that knowledge give you the power to succeed."

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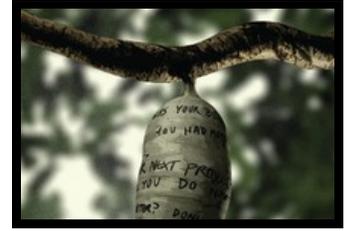
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