

ACTORS' THINK TANK

NOTES FROM CONVERSATION WITH **Gus (Augustus) Butera & Valerie Petralia**

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Gus's thoughts on the ATT slates: Great. Conscious choice to get his attention. Good to use these slates as a calling card.

Per Gus & Val, his #2, the world is changing and commercials need actors; people who can live out the scenes. He is now shooting motion and stills on the same set. It is a dance between Gus, Val and the talent. Val will give the talent their markings. Talent needs to be peripherally aware and not self-conscious.

Examples of a shoot for Citizens Watch were shown which illustrated how important body language of the talent is – even if the photographer is behind you. He is looking for the most real moments. And, often it is the digital tech who sees the moments first.

The need for actors is real, not just models who can do model poses. The value of actors who can improvise is important. Talent has to be themselves, be “every person.”

If the talent is acting natural around the set, Gus will often just shoot. He is looking for normal life.

Recently, they had a shoot with 60+ people in pods, ie. Families, couples, friends. Gus was shooting organisms, not individuals.

Val became a Covid-compliance officer. At the beginning everything was a big unknown. They did more shooting outdoors. They would have talent bring their own props. Became much more open to non-actors, ie. Spouses, significant others. These individuals were not actors, so they sometimes were better able to check their self-consciousness at the door.

Gus is always looking for the unique. For example, he learned about the Girl's Auto Clinic in Upper Darby. Created a unique theme.

Gus wants actors to be part of the story. He loves to hear about talent's hobbies! If nobody knows, what good is it?

Think of ways to sell yourself. If he likes a headshot, he will look at the reel. Send photos, videos, resume (with hobbies) to Val. Add unique skills to your resume.

Ask your agent about search words and key words.

Regarding voiceovers, it is the producer who picks the voice. It is a tough job.

Gus thinks of himself as a voyeur, not a photographer. He is always looking for beauty in those seconds of light. The actors are works of art that he is trying to find the right light for.

He showed an example of a photo of three African women sitting on the sofa throwing back their heads laughing. Improv! See the photo on his website. He had very little time to take the photo because a movie was shooting at the same time, so he directed them very quickly and specifically. Great photo!

Gus's advice to actors: Let go of self-consciousness! Be in the moment. Make us believe. Just be you. Look in the mirror. Be in character. The more info you have the better you can prepare.

Build a rapport with your agent, so you can talk with them about what is going on in this shoot. What is the story. Start working on movements for your character. Might be a pain in the ass to ask, but you have to do it.

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