

Notes for Actors' Think Tank

August 25, 2021

Sheri Anderson Thomas - Writer

Notes -

Three-time Emmy-winning writer - lives in LA

Shows written include *Days of our Lives*, *General Hospital*, *Santa Barbara*, *Guiding Light*, *Another World* and primetime's *Falcon Crest*.

Developed numerous TV and film projects domestically for Spelling Entertainment, NBC, Sony Interactive and Nelvana, and internationally with Bavaria Films (Germany), Spectak (Australia) and Franz Marx Films/MNET (South Africa)

Her husband is from Chestnut Hill around Philly (go to CAKE - best croissants you'll ever have)

Most her career was in daytime - she started as an assistant (you got to start at the bottom in anything)

Managers are much more hands on and take care of you in that way

Sheri is in LA, also works as a manager now

People want to work with likable people

Head writer is the equivalent to an executive producer and has a final say in casting

Your goal when going into an audition is to make friends with the casting director and be memorable - getting the job is a bonus

Daytime is so fast - hit the ground running

A lot of writers give their power away but as a head writer for TV you have a lot

52 weeks a year they are acting pumping it out - its a very fast process

Generally they don't like to hear from the actors - the studio, editors, writers and producers make the script better

She reads everything out loud before sending it to the actors -

In primetime you get paid for developing new characters, not in daytime though

On GH, rule that the actors were not allowed to speak to the writers

Once an actor called and said I'm only in once this week how can you write my story - was a big turnoff for her in writing her character

When Brad Pitt first came to Hollywood - he would deliver scripts - read him for roles and he was not good - he worked in a chicken suit to make money to act

It's never about you - it's about the show or the script

Your job is auditioning - you gotta enjoy it - learn to love it

If you don't remember what you did, it's great bc you were so in the character

Professionalism - being early, prepared, listens to agents & managers, don't ask for extensions, have the right headshots, don't show off

It's the assistants you are trying to impress - people are looking at you the moment you leave your car, first few seconds on your tapes

Leave it to your people (team) to get you opportunities

Sheri called an agent to say the client did an amazing self tape and he was their second choice after the celeb they were offering to if there were issues - this is very rare though (to get feedback)

Daytime knows 1 year at a time if they will get picked up/renewed

Feature scripts should never be over 105 pages

Minor things like spelling mistakes, formatting mistakes etc. - your story probably won't get picked up no matter how good it is

She feels her job used to be more fun

Your first instinct is the best if you go with your head you're dead, go with your heart.

When Sheri has writers block, she goes for a drive to look somewhere else rather than her screen

Get out of the environment you are in and go for a change of scenery

When you get an audition/project research the directors writers etc and see what they are doing - what genre this will inform your acting decisions

Billie Reid on days of our lives is the favorite character she developed bc she shifted some of the story with that character

Tip: when you are writing, make sure there is plenty of white on the page - don't try to show how clever you are - you should focus on subtext. 3 word sentences often mean more than monologues - those take the story away - you want subtext and secrets. Don't just say everything you got to draw it out of people !

When you are not saying words people are still looking at you - you want to add to the scene not be a stick figure standing there - they want to see your reactions

Her writing process - she writes herself emails sometimes uses them sometimes not - characters must be distinctive and different - don't repeat the same dynamic - gives the audience something different - actors must give dynamics just like writers

When Thao makes comments or notes its about the show as a whole not him personally

Her agent came to her about a project in South Africa - make sure you like the person/people you are taking on projects with - its a long process so you want satisfaction - devo project is tough

She is developing a project right now - you must commit to what you think

Nicole Kidman & Keith Urban's personal trainer wants to be an actor - an old client of hers

Write with your gut and act with your gut.

Fall in love with the projects you like - write what you love too

We are all human and all need feedback

When she first met the head TV writer from days of our lives she was so intimidated then she became that job and realized - its only just a person!