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Stunt School

with Ray Anthony

How to Audition for Film-Fighting

Professional stunt man, martial artist and fight-choreographer Ray Anthony has been to hundreds of auditions in his time. Here, he gives a few tips for those of you thinking of taking your high kicks and trying your hand at the film-fighting & stunt business.

As a professional stunt performer, martial artist and fight-choreographer in the film industry, I'm constantly being asked to audition actors and martial artists for various roles in movies — often support roles like 'thug number two' — for directors and casting agents.

My role as a fight-choreographer is to supply the best performer for the job. That doesn't always mean choosing the best martial artist, however. For example, when we auditioned for the Matrix movies, we had close to 300 martial artists and stunt performers and specialists from all over Australia. With the stunt coordinator there overseeing everything, we soon realised who

was good and who was not. For most of the martial artists that we saw, we realised that while their skill levels were very good, the realism and safeness of their reactions and falls were very bad. For many of the trained stunt performers, it was the opposite: their reactions and falling abilities were generally good, but their skill level was not.

As you can imagine, when you're dealing with someone's ego and skill, it's not easy telling them that they were average. However, it's better to be honest than lead them on. That way, if they are really keen, they will use the criticism to better themselves as performers. This where mental preparation for an audition becomes especially important.

MENTAL PREPARATION

Always come to an audition with a positive and open attitude. Don't ever walk in with your ego on display. As my Brazilian Jiu Jitsu instructors, Anthony perosh and Elvis Sinosisic, would say, "leave your ego at the door". Don't walk in and think that you're the one, because you never quite know what the directors are looking for in a character. Always have a routine ready — about one minute is good — and show your best abilities. If you have good flexibility, show it; if you have strong kicks and punches, show it, and if you have good jumps, do them. After years of auditioning myself for roles, I've come to realise that it's almost impossible to predict what the directors are after. Don't take it to heart, as you could have all the

right skill, but just be too tall or short, too white or dark, too big or small, etc.

Always remember that it's not the only movie out there. To give yourself the best chance to begin with, you'll need the right equipment:

EQUIPMENT

To get an audition, you must pay attention to the following:

Resumes – keep them updated, write down what you can do and what you're skilled at. (Don't lie, as you might get caught out and be asked to demonstrate!)

Photos – use 10x8 size. Head shots should be current, not 10 years old, and body shots must also be current (not taken when you were 18 and in top shape)

Showreels – put your best moves on DVD or VHS tape. Keep your showreel under five minutes, but show everything. Don't assume that because they know you're a martial artist they will think you can do it all.

Clothing – always wear loose clothing. Don't get caught out like I did when I went to an audition in jeans and they asked me to show my some stuff — big mistake!

Other important elements in getting chosen for a part involve your look; are you suitable for the character or type of character they're looking for? For example, whether you're clean-shaven or rough will depend on the character, so try to find out as much as possible about the part. Don't go clean-shaven if the role they're casting is 'thug at the train station #1', or vice-versa for a clean-cut character.

COMMON MISTAKES

I have auditioned hundreds of fighters for casting directors, for productions and pilots and martial arts movies. Some mistakes to be avoided during an audition are exemplified by the following incidents I witnessed:

One fighter tried to demonstrate some Brazilian Jiu Jitsu techniques on the floor, by himself, and it looked silly. Don't do ground-work or throws unless it's called for.

Another was trying to explain vocally to the director some aikido throws and the director had no idea what he was talking about. He spent his entire audition just talking to the camera.

One fighter came in and needed 10 minutes to warm up and stretch — huge mistake! Usually you only get two minutes if you're lucky. Ensure you warm up before you're called in.

Another guy kept moving and kicking out of frame, so the camera missed most of his actions. We told him three times to stay in frame and hit his mark, but he made the same mistakes over and over. Most auditions are held in a room with a camera and casting director, and you have limited space, so you must hit your mark. If

Get your choreography and routine down pat.



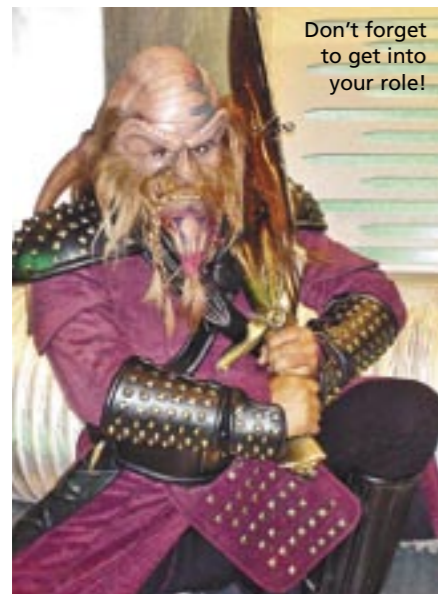
you can't take a direction at a casting audition, it will look like you don't know what you're doing and make you less employable.

CONCLUSION

If you've never been to a real audition, do some audition classes at an acting school and prepare yourself mentally and physically. Don't forget to walk in like you own the room and give them something to remember you by, so you get a call-back. Always warm up beforehand and be attentive and on

time. Learn some film terminology too — it will help you understand the directors and show them that you've had on-set experience. In the end, don't despair if you don't get a role — there'll be plenty more so you just need to persist and refine your audition skills.

Ray Anthony has 19 years of experience in martial arts, gymnastics and dance. He has worked on over 60 productions, including *Star Wars II*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Mission Impossible 2* and the *Matrix* trilogy. **ATKD**



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