

BACKSTAGE west

THE ACTOR'S RESOURCE

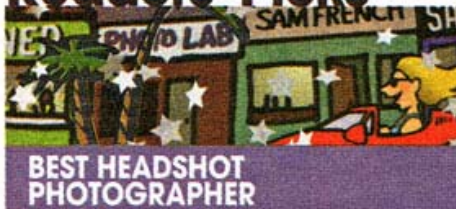
135 Casting Notices

JAGO



BEST OF L.A.

Readers' Picks



Sara Corwin

“What makes a great headshot is to see someone extremely relaxed and open and that their eyes are really communicating something to

the camera,” says Sara Corwin, an L.A.-based headshot photographer with 12 years of experience.

“Relaxed” is a word Corwin uses frequently during our interview, and it’s an appropriate word to associate with her. That’s how she hopes actors feel when they pose for her. “For me, the single most important thing is for the [client] to be prepared but to be relaxed. Actors who make the session the biggest thing in their life and weigh everything on it end up sabotaging their session, because they’re so nervous that they’re not getting the shots that they really need, which are where they’re relaxed. My favorite clients are people who show up on time, show up without any drama, have their clothes pressed, and are just ready to work together and have a good time.”

One way she hopes she can help actors relax is to offer a stress-free environment when they arrive at her West Hollywood studio. “We really try to make this as painless and as supportive as possible, because the industry is difficult, and we like this part of it to be fun. We do work very hard, but we keep it in perspective,” says Corwin, who considers her hair-and-makeup artists, Tara Hal-sana (weekday artist) and Renee Lee (weekend artist), essential collaborators on her team. Corwin’s most popular package (\$525 including tax) allows the actor four hours worth of studio time, unlimited digital exposures, up to five clothing changes, and hair and makeup. “My hair-and-makeup person is here the entire session, so she can change the hair and makeup to go with each look if needed, and there are always four eyes on the client instead of two. I think that really makes a difference. If I miss something, she picks it up, and vice versa,” she says. The package also includes an online proof sheet that’s available for two months and a disk with high-resolution images.

Corwin also credits her move from film to digital photography with helping the actor to relax and get the shots

they need. “I have to admit that I was really one of the last people to jump on the digital bandwagon, but what I like about it is, because you don’t have a set number of pictures you have to take, I can allow the actors to take a lot more chances in the photos,” she says. “We can try things, and if they don’t work, it’s not a problem, whereas in film you couldn’t really be as loose because you needed to have proof sheets that looked really good. In the past, you wanted to give people really great-looking sheets so they walked into their agent and the agent felt like, ‘You have every picture on this sheet I could use.’ And so you didn’t take chances as much. Believe it or not, I’m more relaxed, so I can allow them to be more relaxed.”

Corwin observes that headshot photography has gravitated over the years toward what she considers a much more laid-back style. “Shots now are more ‘lifestyle’ shots,” she says. “I remember looking at headshots from 15 years ago where everything looked very posed and very ‘studio’ and not really natural. I think one of the reasons that my style did well for me is I’ve always had a very natural style, and I feel it’s gotten even more so. Headshots have become almost like candid, in a way. They’re much less formal and much less glamorous than they used to be.”

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Even with the shift in style from overly posed to more natural, Corwin finds that too many actors today make the mistake of getting a glamour shot instead of a photo that represents who they really are when they show up at auditions. “I think possibly the biggest mistake is that people don’t recognize that their headshot is supposed to market them as exactly who they are,” says the photographer. “They get confused and think it should be more of a glamour shot, and the thing is that if they’re not going to walk in and look like that picture, then the shot doesn’t do them any good. It’s not going to get them work.”

Sara Corwin can be reached at (323) 655-5705. For more information or to view her work, visit www.saracorwinphotography.com.

Runners-up in this category are Alan Ascher, Paul Smith, Theo & Juliet, Blake Gardner, and Alan Weissman.

—Jamie Painter Young



Sara Corwin