

## HEADSHOTS AND DEMO REELS



Davis Nguyen poses for photographer Sara Corwin.

## Snap Judgments

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jacket," she says. "I hate doing what I call costume shots. I think it's insulting to everybody. I like doing shots where you're still showing the truth and the essence of the person, but you're just helping the idea of what they're going for a little bit."

And of course, don't try to play a part for your headshot that just isn't you or seems forced. Casting director Richard Hicks — who worked on the recent film *Shall We Dance?* — says it's best to avoid "something that looks like you don't know what else to do, so you're trying to fit into some image of what you think I'm going to like."

Hicks, who once was an actor, uses himself as an example of this. "Although I was clever and funny, I used to think that serious acting was better than comic, clever acting, so I would usually pick the serious, meaningful picture," he says. "But in a way, that wasn't playing to a strength of mine. Therefore, my headshot could have been better."

While capturing the essence of someone is a concept that's hard to put into words, there are things you can do going into the shoot to help your true self come out. For one thing, getting headshots is important, but it shouldn't be treated as a life-or-death situation. "To me, there's nothing worse in a headshot than a person who looks stressed out or angry," says Corwin. "Even if you're going for a moody look, it should still have a relaxed essence to it." She says she can tell how the shoot's going to go by the attitude the person has walking in. "I know it's not going to be a good shoot when someone has built it up so much in their mind, and they make it that their headshot is the most important thing in the entire world, and somehow their whole life hinges on this headshot," she says. "They bring so much tension and stress into the session that it's impossible for them to be natural and relaxed."

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**— Sara Corwin**

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Of course one element of a good headshot is a good photographer, one who can put you at ease, one who you will trust to capture you. Once you've found that, it's important to hold on to that trust as you're being photographed. "Assuming they've had a couple of meetings, and they've really seen the work, and they've seen the space the photographer shoots in, I'm assuming when they choose me after all of that, they trust me, and they like my style," says Corwin. "Therefore they should bring that same trust into the session. I'm on their side. My job is to get them the picture that's going to get them through the door."

Adds Gregory, "Remember it's supposed to be fun. This isn't supposed to be like you're in a dentist's chair. This could be a time to express yourself, to have your close-up, to get your shot."

### About Face

There are some basic things you can do to ensure that your headshot is a good one. For one thing it's important to remember what CDs and the like are looking at: your face. Manager Darryl Marshak of The Marshak/Zachary Company expresses frustration regarding those shots where you just can't see the person's face clearly — for example, when "someone is so close up all you see is eyes and nose and mouth, or someone has their hand in front of their face," he says. "This is not a coffee table book. What we're doing is looking to procure a job, and we have to give the buyer — the casting director — as much information as we can."

And much of that information, say many industry professionals, should come through in the actor's expression. "Every time you look at a picture of someone's face, what is the first thing you look at? It's always the

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