



# PLAYHOUSE WEST QUARTERLY

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## Editor's Letter

Dear PW Members,

It is with great pride that I welcome you to the premiere issue of *PW Quarterly*, our new school newsletter, and I hope all of you will find it stimulating enough to look forward to each future issue. The primary goal of the Quarterly is to enhance the way we communicate with our members about the school, the class work, our theater and film projects, and what our students are doing in the business as well as other issues in the industry.

It is my hope that the *Quarterly* will not only be informative, but that you will also find articles that engage your hearts and minds, educate you on the various problems and issues within our industry and about our craft, and ultimately encourage and inspire all of us to reach a little higher and strive a little harder.

Enjoy!

Tony Savant

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## Playhouse West Film Festival to Mark Its 10th Anniversary

The 10th Annual Playhouse West Film Festival will be held this year on July 14, 15 and 16. The three day festival, which begins on a Friday evening and runs from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, will for the second year in a row, be held at the beautiful and historic El Portal Theater on Lankershim Boulevard, right in the heart of the NoHo Arts District.

As with our previous Festivals we will be exclusively screening short and feature films that Playhouse West students, current or former, have either written, directed, produced or star in. Official Submission Forms for PWFF 2006, and all the pertinent information on how to submit, can be downloaded from our Festival website,

[pwff.net](http://pwff.net). The deadline for submissions is Friday, May 19th, but the Festival Committee will begin accepting submissions as early as March 20th. Last year we received a record number of 109 submissions, and in the last three years we've received over 230. So, get your films in as early as you can!

There will be a few changes with this year's Festival, the primary one being that it will be the first time patrons can purchase tickets online with credit cards. Full Festival Passes (for \$70) go on sale June 10th. Tickets for individual events will go on sale June 24th.

As usual, PWFF 2006 will present several special guest speakers (T.B.A). However, the real joy and inspiration of



The El Portal Theater

the event is getting to see the work of fellow PW members, and hearing how they made their films. It is the most educational and inspiring event of the year, one you will not want to miss. So mark it on your calendar!

### PWFF 2006 LOOKING FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Anyone who may be interested in being on the 2006 Film Festival Committee, please email Festival Director at: [tonysavant@pwff.net](mailto:tonysavant@pwff.net).

Committee members screen all films, help organize the event and must be able to work the entire Festival weekend.

## Disney's *Annapolis Stars* Five Playhouse West Members!

The theater darkens and we fade in on a boxing match between the film's star, James Franco (*Spiderman, etc.*) and Jim Parrack (*his movie debut*). They trade blow after blow until finally Franco knocks Parrack out. It's an audience-pleasing scene, one of many in this "guy-from-the-wrong-side-of-the-river tries to make good" movie. It also happens to be one of many scenes fea-



Annapolis Stars & PW Members Roger Fan, James Franco and Jordana Brewster

turing one or more of the five Playhouse West members starring or co-starring in the film.

*Annapolis*, directed by Justin Lin and released by Dis-

ney, is an amazing testament to the work ethic and training instilled at Playhouse West. Literally, there is a PW actor in every single scene in this movie, and there are some scenes with only three characters, and they are all PW people!

James Franco heads the cast that include fellow PW members Jordana Brewster, Roger Fan, Jim Parrack and Katie Hein (also making her film debut). All PW members should go out and see this film and study the excellent work of our students.

## What's the Scam?

By Robert Canegie

The great actor, Steve McQueen, had a favorite expression. He was "from the streets" as the saying goes, and was therefore not naïve about human behavior. He knew most people he would run into, especially in Hollywood, were out to get something from him. And so he would say, "What's the scam?"—meaning, "what con game is being run on me now?"

Recently one of the actresses in our classes showed a sudden decline in the truthfulness of her work. Upon inquiring, the teacher discovered she had been taking one of the numerous "audition classes" that are offered in Hollywood. Another one of our members complained to me about another class aimed at audition techniques, which had undermined her confidence and made her question herself in a very destructive manner.

Sandy Meisner had a favorite expression, which he got from Bernard Shaw, the playwright and critic. It is, "It takes twenty years to make an actor." The importance of that phrase is that it puts the acting profession in perspective. It is not a light or superficial endeavor.

The suggestion sold to actors that there is a way to slick an audition and get a job by simply learning "audition technique" instead of really mastering one's craft is patently absurd. It makes as much sense as trying to convince a violinist or concert pianist that there is a special audition technique for musicians. Imagine opening up a magazine aimed at those in the music profession and finding an ad, "Cold Reading Technique for the Violin." Or imagine a special audition

technique for body-builders, instead of spending years in the gym. Or for doctors or lawyers. Sadly, only actors could be sold on the idea that one can avoid years of dedicated effort and arrive at the pinnacle of their profession by taking special classes on how to get a job, instead of learning how to really do the job.

Many of the classes are taught by those who work in various capacities in casting offices. This verges on an ethical problem. In essence, young actors are being coerced into paying for auditions, because the person in the office would refuse them under normal conditions. What could be more humiliating or degrading than having to pay for an audition? And even after paying, still not being called into the office for a role?

While most actors understand they are paying to be seen, and that is probably all they want, that does not prohibit those offering these classes from attempting to teach acting. So they dutifully throw in their pointers, the result of which can be an undermining of what might be a very sound working technique which is not seen or perceived by the auditioner. Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds were both fired from Universal on the same day—there is no guarantee that anyone will see or perceive talent or potential, no matter how high up one may go in the Industry.

It should also be borne in mind that casting directors do not really cast. That job is normally reserved for the director, and sometimes the producers, and sometimes in the case of very important leading roles, the Studio itself. So the casting directors are at best intermediaries, and important only insofar as they can either usher you in to be seen for a role or bar

you from it. It would be interesting to get a statistic from those who use their casting position to set up classes as to what percentage of those who pay to be seen are ever brought in for any roles.

When all is said and done, those who audition you are looking to see if you can act, because they are going to hire you to act. Just like a secretary on a job interview is tested as regards their typing and secretarial skills, so an actor is tested when going for a job as regards their acting skills. Just as there is no special technique class to audition a typist, so there is no special trick to auditioning as an actor. You simply go in and act the part. It is easy to ascertain by studying the auditions available on DVD's such as *The Notebook*, or even *Jeepers Creepers*. That the actor who got the part did the same thing in the movie as they did in the audition—they acted the part well.

It would be nice if there was some magic answer to auditioning that helped us all avoid the demands of learning our profession. However the integrity and demands of the profession prohibit such a notion. Actors sometimes thank their teachers when they win awards or do interviews. Brando was generous in his praise for Stella Adler and Elia Kazan. Robert Duvall would credit Sandy. We're happy to say a number of our working members have gone public over the years crediting Playhouse West for helping them. It is difficult to conceive of such statements being made by serious actors about audition classes.

So the next time you're approached with the latest short cut to success in a profession that has a twenty year apprenticeship, just do what Steve McQueen would do. Ask, "What's the scam?"

## STUDIO TWO BECOMES A SCREENING ROOM

In February, the PW staff fulfilled a goal of turning Studio Two into a screening room. A high quality LCD projector was installed and now hangs from the ceiling, as well as an 120"x 90" electronic projection screen.

Our goal is to use this new screening facility to host regular movie events, such as screening student projects, classic films, as well as using it as a teaching tool to better illustrate points about quality acting, writing, directing and filmmaking. We believe this will be an excellent adjunct to the class work, and a way to continue, year-round, the educational and inspirational nature of the Playhouse West Film Festival.

These events will be produced by the newly formed Playhouse West Film Foundation, a non-profit organization and new sponsor of the Playhouse West Film Festival. Some of these events will come with an admission price, with proceeds benefiting the Theater Company and other extra-curricular events.

## Industry News

You can currently catch several PW students weekly on the tube. **Kathy Morris** is in her 3rd season starring on CBS' *Cold Case*; **Josh Cooke** stars in the new NBC sitcom *Four Kings*; **Wentworth Miller** and **Marshall Allman** star on Fox's *Prison Break*; and **Sean Astin** has joined the cast of Fox's *24*. On film, **Scott Caan** is in post production of *The Dog Problem*, which he wrote, directed and stars along with Don Cheadle, Giovanni Ribisi, and PW classmate **Ali Pomerantz**. **Mark Pellegrino** is currently filming *The Number 23*, starring PW alum **Jim Carrey**.