

Agency Spotlight: Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency

March 09, 2007

By **Bruce B. Morris**



Pam Grimes

In the City of Angels, there are many talent agencies, but only a few offer the personal touch needed to get an actor's career off and running. The Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency, founded in 1991, prides itself on offering services akin to those of both a talent agent and a personal manager. It's that way because both owners, Marsha Hervey and Pam Grimes, were personal managers at one time. Ross Reports recently had the opportunity to talk to these two seasoned professionals and find out what they expect from their clients, as well as from actors they might consider representing.

What is the general philosophy or guiding purpose of the Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency?

HERVEY: Our general philosophy is we are here to get you work. We love what we do, so our clients should absolutely love what *they* do. We're working hard for them, and we expect our clients to do the same. If we give 100 percent, we expect our clients to do 200 percent. As actors, it's their job to be the actor and be professional. That means everything from going to classes and getting the proper training to getting your pictures to us on time. We're here to have fun. We're not here to nag people, so you better do what you're supposed to do.

GRIMES: We view our association with actors as a partnership. We at Hervey-Grimes are your *business partners*. Our goal is to work together on your career and get you where you want [and need] to be. So when we make one phone call to them to do something — to get pictures,

whatever — we don't want to have to keep calling them. It's a partnership, and we expect them to do what they expect us to do.

What areas do the Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency specialize in?

HERVEY: We specialize in television, commercials, feature films, and voiceovers. We're a boutique agency, so we don't have a slew of clients. We cherry-pick our people for our categories and represent only actors that are working. By that I mean we select and represent actors we can totally pitch. We deal with children to adults. There's no specific type we don't handle.

GRIMES: We also have a print department, and a lot of our clients work in theatre. In fact, the ones that perform in theatre have done some prestigious productions. We specialize mainly in commercials, film, TV, and voiceovers. We represent everyone from infants to 90-year-olds. We also like to give new people a chance. If somebody walks in and they're just so wonderful, we'll jump on it — especially if they're the age we're looking for. In terms of the types of talent that we're looking for, we're pretty much open to anything. We don't have a lot [of clients] in each category, so we'll see anybody, and if they fit, it doesn't matter if they're 10 or 90.



Marsha Hervey

How do you find new performers? Do you attend showcases in search of new clients?

HERVEY: We receive a lot of submissions from actors who have been recommended by agents or by some of our clients. Casting directors call us all the time saying, "Oh, would you do me a favor? I have this really great person I would like you to see. They're really fabulous and wonderful."

GRIMES: We still see actors from their submissions they send to us, but a lot of meetings we take now are referrals from acting coaches or from casting directors. I don't attend showcases as much as I'd like, but we usually send somebody from the office to scout.

When you receive a headshot and resume from an actor, what do you look for?

HERVEY: We look at their resume first and see if they're in direct conflict with any of our existing clients. We see what their background is, if they've done theatre. But we have to say that feature film and TV credits are the most important here in L.A.

GRIMES: A lot of the big casting directors we've come across that cast the big films look at theatre on the resume. If an actor has done New York theatre and/or distinguished productions, that shows us they're accomplished at their craft. Most of the people you see out here have some kind of theatre [on their resume]. I personally love to see somebody's resume with theatre on it. I love it!

The casting directors also seem to pay a lot of attention to Broadway or national tours. I used to look at some of the productions of Joe Papp's theatre [the Public Theater] and some of the smaller theatres that I knew when I was back in New York. We look to see TV credits, film credits. They don't have to be guest stars; they can be co-stars. Mainly we look at the resume, the look, and the age, and, as Marsha said, to see if there's a conflict with any of our clients.

What other qualities besides talent are you seeking in order to take on a new client?

HERVEY: Talent is No. 1. There are a lot of great people, but we never take on anybody we don't like. Pam and I trust our gut feelings about people. We enjoy working, and life is too short to be aggravated by clients who are hard to get along with. When we meet someone we feel comfortable with, chances are this is an actor that will be relaxed in the casting office and easy to work with on the set.

GRIMES: We've seen some people with some really great credits and resumes, but their attitude is something we don't want to deal with on a

daily basis. As Marsha said, it's not worth it. So another factor we definitely look for is *likeability*. Talent and likeability. Keep in mind that we have to know that when an actor walks into a casting director's office, they'll like them as well. Likeability is very, very important. It's not uncommon for an actor to get a part based on their likeability. No attitude. We don't do attitude. If we don't take it from our kids, we're certainly not going to accept that from a client. It's the truth that we're really good friends with some of our clients. We get invited to their weddings. So it's a business: We're not looking for friends, but if we find them, that's great.

If you meet with an actor and feel that he or she could be more marketable with some changes, would you help that person through the transformation or make strong recommendations?

HERVEY: Well, there is always something to improve. There isn't anybody I know of that doesn't have something about themselves that could be made better.

GRIMES: That would be something we would do for clients who aren't getting callbacks or if auditions are just not coming to them. They're slipping through their fingers when they're in there. Marsha will call them and say, "You guys, come on, get into a class, get some coaching."

HERVEY: "What's going on here that you're not getting your callbacks? You're perfect for the part." Honestly, if you get a callback, everyone who has been in that room — whether it's four or more people who are in front of the producers, whatever — truly everyone is right. It really boils down to who is the more right person for the part. If you're getting callbacks, that's fine. [But] you can only get so many callbacks until it gets to the point of "Why aren't you booking?"

GRIMES: If somebody comes in to see us who isn't our client and we feel that they don't have enough experience, we'll say to them, "Look, you need to go take a commercial course," "You were very weak in the commercial read," or "Where are you studying?" If the actor's pictures aren't really good, we'll always recommend photographers to them. This way, they can see their work and get better headshots. That's where we do a lot of recommendations. Now, if their theatrical read was bad, we usually just pass on them. But if there's some glimmer of hope there, we'll say then, "You need to get into class." We've actually had people come back after a year and say, "I've got my SAG card; I've got three or four

credits now. Can I come to you?" And usually we take them — if they're good.

Are there certain things that actors should avoid that might make you not want to represent them?

GRIMES: Cigarette smoke. [Laughs] That's the first thing that turns her [Marsha] off. She says to me, "Did you smell smoke?" Anyone that walks in to us with that smell, it's offensive. If you walk into casting and these people are smoke-sensitive, it's turning them off.

HERVEY: We had a client whose headshots were stored at Pam's office. His pictures stunk [literally]. We had to air them out.

GRIMES: The pictures must have been in the back seat of his car or something, and the smell was so bad, and I had asthma and it was killing me.

HERVEY: And then finally, thank God, he just stopped smoking.

GRIMES: It's hard enough to come in and impress agents when the actor's nervous, but they should avoid offensive odors at all costs. We actually got a call from a casting director about a client who had an offensive odor.

HERVEY: We have meetings every six weeks or so. We give everybody commercial and theatrical sides, and we actually read them. If they're not prepared when they come in to meet us, this certainly isn't a good sign that they'll be prepared for casting.

GRIMES: Just like you wouldn't buy a dress without trying it on. If the actor doesn't want to read for us, don't come and see us. We want to see what they're going to do in a casting office. So, No. 1, if they're not prepared, that's a problem. And, of course, the odor. But we also don't want an attitude. You can weed through the actors with this problem. We make the actors feel as comfortable as possible. But you can really tell who is nervous and who has an attitude. We're very friendly people.

HERVEY: Pam and I have been in this business about 30 years and we're not impressed with people who are name-droppers. It's not necessary. Not with us. We just want to see how you act.

GRIMES: If we ask you who recommended us, that's a different story.

HERVEY: But if they start going, "Oh, yeah, we went to dinner with so-and-so..." that's a turnoff. If they know so many people, why aren't *they* helping them.

GRIMES: We don't need to be impressed.

What are some of the common mistakes you see actors make when auditioning for roles?

HERVEY: When they're in the casting office and they don't stick to the choices they've made, they get in trouble. My advice to them is make a choice and stick to it.

GRIMES: I don't like someone to come into the room in the character. I want to get to know them first and then let them get into character. I want to see that they can do that. I like to get to know them and then say, "Okay, would you like to read?" I also think they should avoid going to these photographers that shoot these artsy pictures — you know, like where the actor turns to one side with a shadow. That doesn't tell me anything about the actor. They look nothing like them. Get a picture that looks like you. Simple is so *much* better. You don't know how often Marsha and I are excited that someone is coming in and it's just the look we're seeking, [but then] they walk in here and there isn't even a resemblance of this person standing in front of us. That's so depressing. That is a *big* thing to avoid. Get pictures that look like you, please! Pictures to us are very, very important.

HERVEY: Dress appropriately for the part you're being auditioned for. Don't look like a call girl when the part is for a high-class attorney. That shows that you're not paying attention and you didn't do your homework.

What are some of the success stories of your agency in finding new talent?

HERVEY: Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency was established in 1991 after five years of being managers together. Pam managed her son Scott [Grimes, of *Party of Five*], who's now on *ER*. I managed my son Jason [Hervey, of *The Wonder Years*], and Jason is now producing. The first series we put an

actor in was *Tour of Duty*. Every year since we've been in business, we've had at least two to three people in series. I think the best success story is that after all these years, 99 to 100 percent of our actors are working all the time. You can't turn on the TV without seeing one or two Hervey-Grimes actors in each show or on commercials. To me, that's the success story.

GRIMES: We represented Eddie Cibrian, who last year was on *Invasion* [and this season appeared on the Fox series *Vanished*]. He still sends people to us. Nice, nice, wonderful kid. When he came to us, he had not done anything. And one of the nicest, nicest guys in the business. Just a sweetheart. We stay close to, like, 90 percent of our clients. We're very lucky!

HERVEY: We've had a lot of success putting people on soap operas. Pam's granddaughter Camryn [Grimes] was on *The Young and the Restless* from age 6 to 16, and she was the youngest person to ever win an Emmy.

HERVEY: We represented an actress, Martha Madison, who came to Los Angeles and her biggest dream was to be on *Days of Our Lives*. She's now the contract player Belle.

GRIMES: That's how Eddie [Cibrian] basically started, on soaps, and then he went on to *Baywatch* [Nights], then *Sunset Beach* and *Third Watch*. We helped find him his manager. A lot of our clients have left and come back too! Because when they go, they find they don't get the personal attention that they got from us.

HERVEY: We're not suits; we're people you can talk to and we'll listen. That's something you don't get at a lot of agencies.

GRIMES: Because our sons were in the business, we want our clients to be treated the way our sons were treated. If you help to create a client's career and you move them up the ladder step by step, they'll never forget what the agency did for them. Actors may leave, but they'll never forget their positive relationship with our agency. We've been very lucky, and that goes back to picking people that we like.

What are some of the challenges facing actors these days, and how can performers better position themselves in an obviously crowded talent pool?

HERVEY: It's the same as it's always been: It's survival of the fittest. I don't care if it's now or 20 years ago. You have to be able to do *it all*. Actually, there's really more work, in a sense, in that there's more cable, there's more film, the DVDs. There are a lot of outlets for actors. The truth is there's a lot more low-budget and ultra-low-budget in a lot of venues. More work, less money.

GRIMES: Another factor is that you're getting a lot of film stars and other big names who are coming down and doing the guest spots. That, unfortunately, is a problem, because [for] some of the people who were always doing guest spots, there's not quite as many guest spots as there used to be. For a lot of the film stars, there are not enough films out there, so they're doing a lot of guest-starring roles, which is wonderful for the viewers. That, I think, is a hard thing for some of the actors who want to move up from co-star to guest star and are struggling to get those coveted guest-star parts.

HERVEY: It is a shrinking business. Well, we already took a big bite from reality TV. Pam is a big fan of reality TV. The truth is, for every half-hour of reality, it puts 20 people out of work. My son is a producer of reality shows, so I'm happy for him. But reality will just be another one of the genres, like the half-hours, the hours, or the MOWs. It will always be part of the entertainment business. People are fickle. People get tired of things, so it's an ever-changing industry. I think actors really need to be able to do improv, comedy, drama, and have skills for virtually every type of project or role. One kind of show that's missing from today's landscape is a show like *The Love Boat*, *Fantasy Island*, etc. They had the ability to not only serve as a platform for young talent, but also as a means of keeping veteran actors performing.

GRIMES: You're right. That's true.

HERVEY: You know what show was like that, and it went off the air? The series with Heather Locklear at the airport.

You're referring to *LAX*, or *The Hub*, as it was known in the pilot.

HERVEY: It was like *Hotel* [the 1983-88 ABC series] but set in an airport.

GRIMES: *Hotel* was a perfect example, where they have guest stars all the

time on that show. You're right, there is nothing like that, and there should be, I think, because so many more actors would be working.

Based on your experience, what is the best way to succeed in the entertainment business?

HERVEY: Get another job. [Laughs]

GRIMES: We actually have a client whose survival job is as a doctor, an oncologist. If I was his mother, I would be so upset.

HERVEY: Actually, he just shot a movie with Jack Nicholson called *The Bucket List*, and he played a doctor!

GRIMES: The best way to succeed is to put your heart and soul into it.

HERVEY: Work as hard as you would at any other job. Be proactive. There's one thing that an actor has to be: his own PR person. He has to make it happen. He has to be absolutely so in love with what it is he's doing, just like it is in any other profession. Who knows if you're ever going to make it in any other profession? At least as an actor you'll have the opportunity to catch that golden ring. There's a lot of opportunity out there. If you were in another industry, there's only one person who has the opportunity to be the boss, but in the entertainment industry there are many stars, and hopefully you'll have the opportunity to become one and receive all of the gratification that comes with that success. But you better be strong and have the ability to roll with the punches.

Hervey-Grimes Talent Agency
10561 Missouri Avenue, #2
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(310) 475-2010
(818) 340-8402
Marsha Hervey, Pam Grimes

