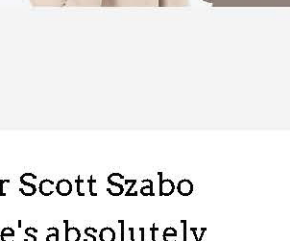


# How to Network & Build a Lasting Career in Entertainment: Part 2

Stage 32 Workshop

INTROVERTS: BREAK OUT OF YOUR SHELL

IMPROV WORKSHOP FOR WRITERS



Posted by Brad Rushing

My very good friend, composer and sound designer / mixer Scott Szabo said there are three kinds of work: Art, Craft and Rent. He's absolutely right. Art is the stuff you are proud to have your name on, and you showcase on a website or reel, promoting shamelessly on social media! Craft might, or might not, be something to hold out as an example, but it will call upon your advanced skills and challenge you. Rent ... well, you show up, do a great job, make the client happy, cash the check and get on with your life.

I'd never want to help bring a message into the world which I felt was harmful (don't call me for cigarette commercials, folks), or that was contrary to my values. But I have done plenty of things which weren't something I'd ever care to watch. It's not glamorous, or sexy, but it pays the rent .. and you might just meet someone who turns out to be very important in the long term scheme of things.

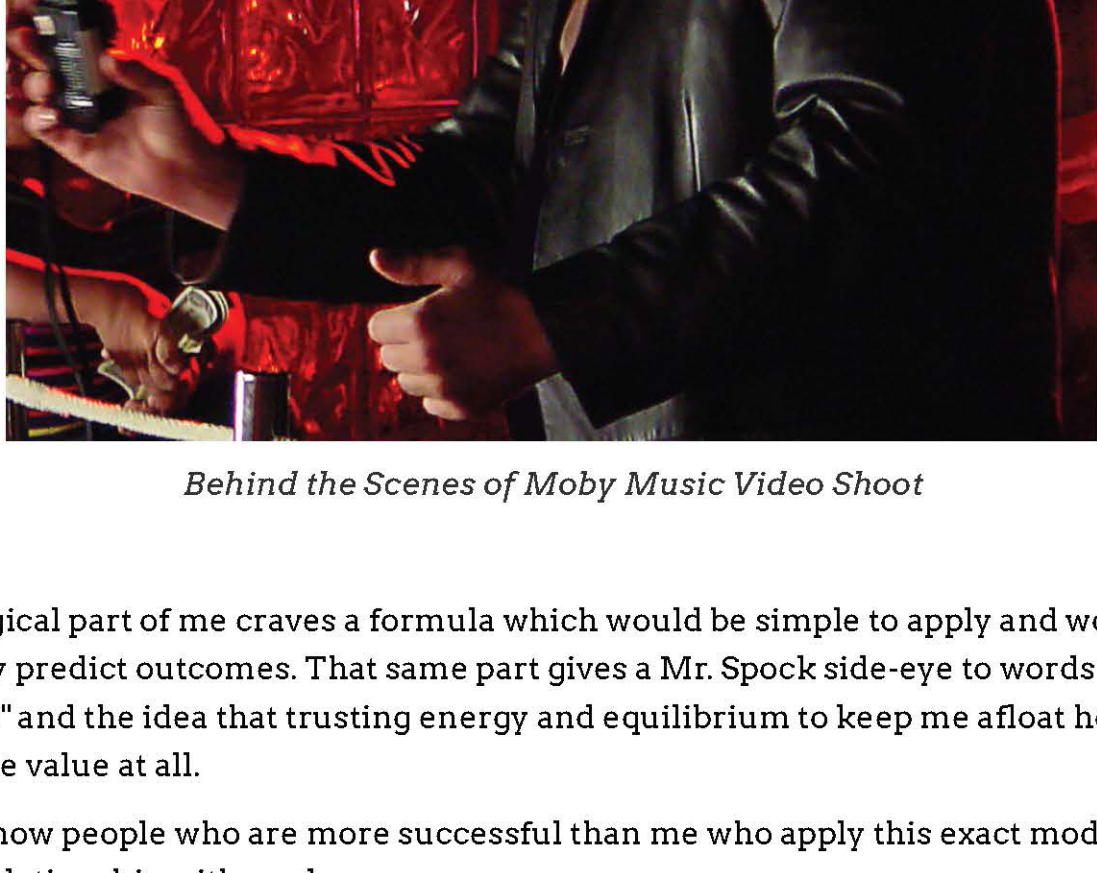
Saying "yes" and showing up don't mean agreeing to unsafe or uncomfortable work conditions. But it does mean staying engaged. Keep busy. Stay in motion. Go outside your comfort zone. Often times during protracted slow spells I reach out to friends to see who I can support by helping them with a pet project, like a spec, a sizzle or a short. This can also apply to my most talented, ambitious and hard working mentees. You get what you give.

There's already overlap with the "kind and generous" part. See how that works?

Literally between me typing out Part 1 of this series and starting Part 2, a terrific mentee of mine called to relay a commercial job offer. I never support folks with the intent I should be owed anything, nor with the expectation of personally benefitting. But if you are investing in the right kind of people, with values and energy which match your own, karma will balance things out.

Remember my buddy Noel? I kept that relationship alive for 5 years with no return in terms of career. In fact I had written that hope off and just enjoyed his company, which is what I should have done from the beginning.

If I had been cynical or greedy, I would probably have forgotten him, and moved on. Then the thread starting with the WWII movie and leading to all of those wonderful people and opportunities, including the #1 movie on Netflix worldwide holiday 2020 would have never come my way.



Behind the Scenes of Moby Music Video Shoot

The logical part of me craves a formula which would be simple to apply and would reliably predict outcomes. That same part gives a Mr. Spock side-eye to words like "karma" and the idea that trusting energy and equilibrium to keep me afloat holds any true value at all.

But I know people who are more successful than me who apply this exact mode in their relationship with work.

It's a scary place for me: faith of any kind. I prefer empirical evidence. But I am learning, as we all do, that what I "know" is relative and I certainly do not know it all, nor ever will.

The final piece of this puzzle is promotion.

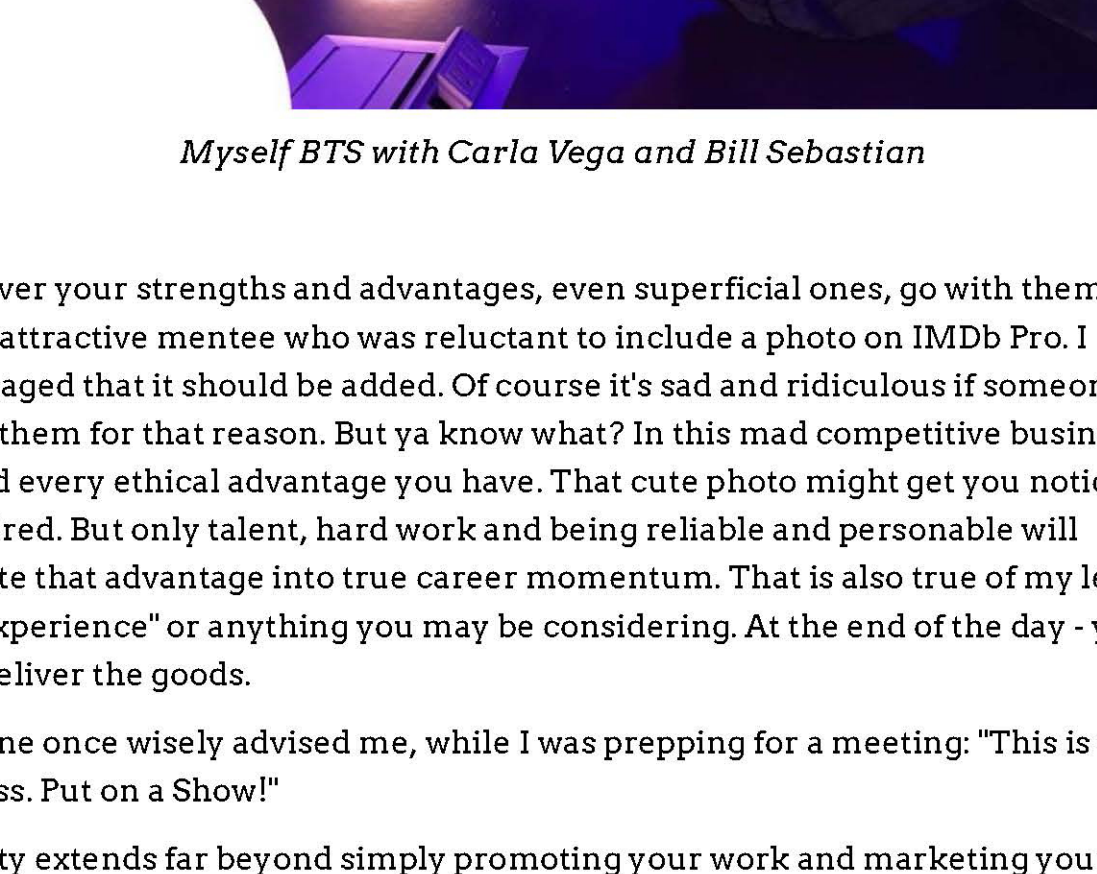
So many creative people, including myself, are not accustomed to self promotion. It feels impolite, immodest, boastful and arrogant. We are artists and in a perfect world that art will speak for itself, while we humbly retire in the shadows, gratified that our expressions are valued and appreciated.

Well... in our capitalist, modern society that is also a fever dream. Remember all those "popular kids" in school? Homecoming kings and queens, "Most popular" and "Most likely to succeed"? Yep. Those are the folks at the controls, guarding the gates and running the machines of commerce. They don't love or get your art any more now than they did when you won that ribbon in the art contest in 7th grade. (Belated congrats, by the way)

It all comes down to value. What value can you bring in terms of moving the needle for the other person? Even a fellow artist, like a creative producer or a director, while they may appreciate your creativity, that is not their paramount criteria in evaluating if you are right for the job. Will the client, studio or artist be impressed? Will hiring you make them look good to the people who hire them? Is your work on-brand? Is it hot and "edgy" (I hate that nebulous word)? Do you have sexy name recognition? ("Oh, that's the person who shot so and so ... !").

It doesn't matter if you are new, or established, nor what your gender, race, skill set or anything else may be - we ALL have something to promote. We each possess advantages we can lean into. I may not be the new kid on the block by a long shot. I also don't check any diversity or inclusion boxes. But what I do have is TONS of experience. I have worked on a wide variety of sets, with different crews and different budget sizes all over the world.

In all those years I never had a job I could not deliver on time and on budget, cheerfully and with a great look that pleased the clients and impressed audiences. That's what I lead with. I am also calm, compassionate, empathic and get along with almost everyone.



Myself BTS with Carla Vega and Bill Sebastian

Whatever your strengths and advantages, even superficial ones, go with them. I once had an attractive mentee who was reluctant to include a photo on IMDb Pro. I encouraged that it should be added. Of course it's sad and ridiculous if someone were to hire them for that reason. But ya know what? In this mad competitive business use any and every ethical advantage you have. That cute photo might get you noticed, or even hired. But only talent, hard work and being reliable and personable will translate that advantage into true career momentum. That is also true of my leading with "experience" or anything you may be considering. At the end of the day - you must deliver the goods.

Someone once wisely advised me, while I was prepping for a meeting: "This is SHOW business. Put on a Show!"

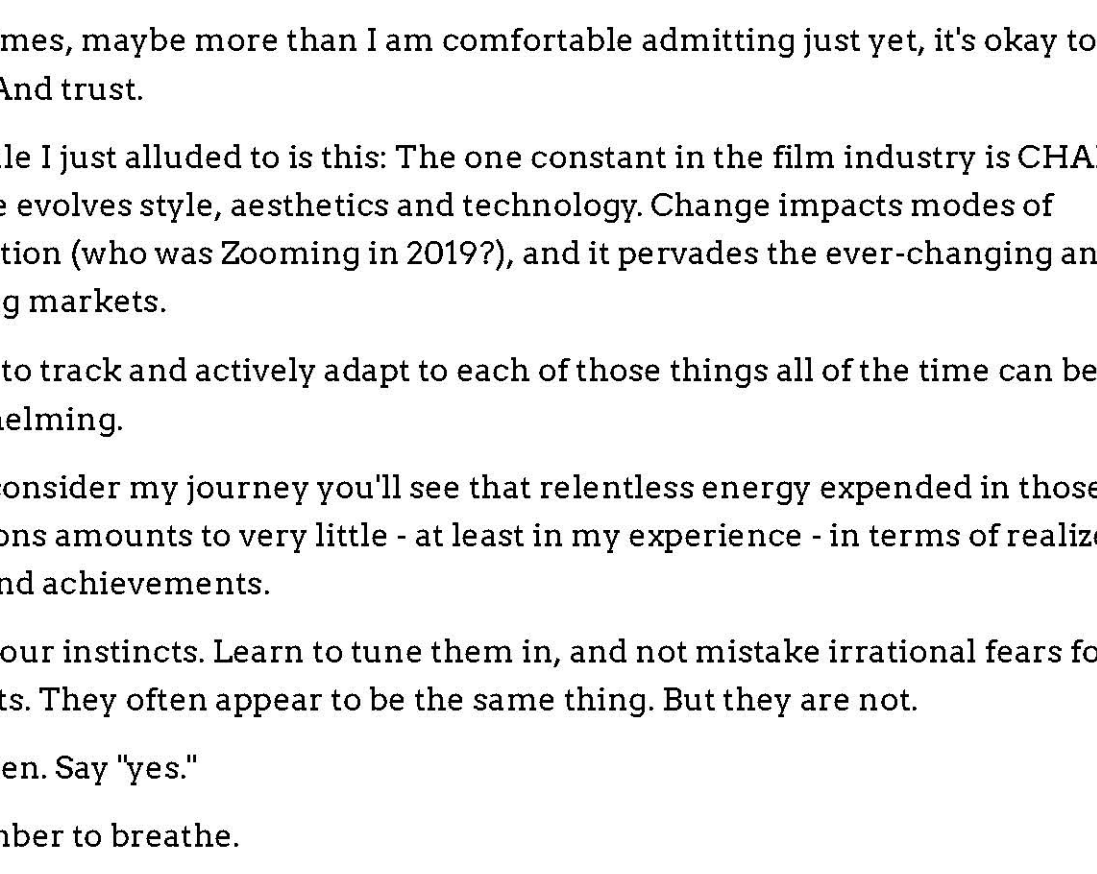
Publicity extends far beyond simply promoting your work and marketing yourself. In the 21st century we are all "brands." Consider your social media engagement. What are you sharing? Do you present as a person you would be excited to hire? Informed, reasonable, easy going, ambitious, reliable, etc.? Do you make yourself available for, and even seek out, interview opportunities. Are you comfortable and natural when you speak and write?

The film industry is primarily a relationship business and folks want to hire people who are inspiring, reliable and authentic. If something goes sideways the person who hired them is going to ask why the hell they chose to hire you. Give them confidence that there are loads of good reasons, not by telling ... but showing through your actions and who you are publicly, on social media and in interviews. And then of course ... make sure the job does NOT go sideways.

There are rules in life that, if I stop to think about it, I know them to present as true. But often in the momentum of getting from here to there, my eyes fixed on the prize, I lose track.

Want to arrive sooner? Pedal faster! Makes sense. But sometimes it's better to stop the effort - and coast. Sometimes there is an imperceptible downward sloping grade that you won't recognize is imparting free momentum until you stop and surrender. Let that word and the context speak to you. Listen.

Be mindful and intentional, never lazy or distracted.



Myself and Scott Szabo recording

Sometimes, maybe more than I am comfortable admitting just yet, it's okay to stand down. And trust.

That rule I just alluded to is this: The one constant in the film industry is CHANGE. Change evolves style, aesthetics and technology. Change impacts modes of interaction (what was Zooming in 2019?), and it pervades the ever-changing and evolving markets.

Trying to track and actively adapt to each of those things all of the time can become overwhelming.

If you consider my journey you'll see that relentless energy expended in those directions amounts to very little - at least in my experience - in terms of realized goals and achievements.

Trust your instincts. Learn to tune them in, and not mistake irrational fears for instincts. They often appear to be the same thing. But they are not.

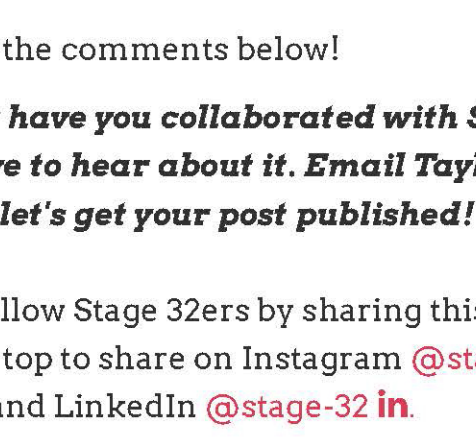
Stay open. Say "yes."

Remember to breathe.

And remember to enjoy your journey. Every day.

That entire voyage is your life, not merely the handful of hoped-for moments of glory which may or may not ever come and, if they do, may not arrive in the way you expect.

## About Brad Rushing



Born and raised in Houston, TX, Brad Rushing is currently based in Los Angeles, CA. Beginning as a fine art major at Houston's High School For The Performing And Visual Arts, Brad eventually switched his focus to filmmaking in college. And his career in Los Angeles shooting films for Roger Corman's Concorde New Horizons, the indie producer and studio that gave first breaks to some of today's biggest names.

Brad photographed some of the biggest music videos of the early 2000s, including Britney Spears' "Toxic," Eminem's "Without Me" and Moby's "We Are All Made of Stars" for which he won the MTV VMA for Best Cinematography. Currently he shoots many commercials and tv promos, while still occasionally taking on a music video or independent feature film.

A lifelong animal lover Brad is a vegetarian. He is also a dual U.S./Canadian citizen and a full member of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. In his spare time he is a musician and avidly follows astronomy and space exploration.

## More Stage 32 blogs from Brad:

How to Network & Build a Lasting Career in Entertainment

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