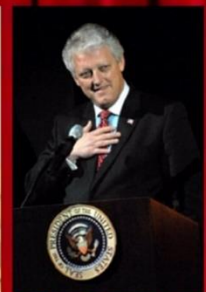
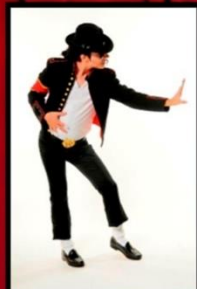


The Beginner's Guide To CELEBRITY IMPERSONATION

The Basics of working as a professional Celebrity Look A Like,
Tribute Artist or Impersonator



By Greg M Thompson

Producer: The Sunburst Convention of Celebrity Impersonators

INTRODUCTION

Many times, books are written on a subject with lots of personal experiences, anecdotes and other amusing stories. This is kind of another one. However, this booklet will mostly include a "How To" as a theme throughout. Please enjoy the information, stories and photos.

This book will take you step by step on what to do to begin and stay in the business of Celebrity Impersonation. It will take you from the "Hey, has anyone ever told you that you look like 'so and so'?" to getting a paycheck for just that. It will explain the difference between a Celebrity Look Alike and a Celebrity Impersonator. It will explain what the pay difference is and also assist you in what to charge for your services. Finally, it will explain what services your "act" will be able to offer...and what you should NOT offer.

Celebrity Impersonation is a multi-million (dare I say billion) dollar industry. There are unlimited opportunities for the look alike. These include everything from corporate work to live Las Vegas shows, to high end and medium-priced birthday parties. It all depends on where you want to be with your career or side hustle.

Read through the book carefully. Be sure to take advantage of the information. Also, make sure you have lots of self-awareness. An Elvis jumpsuit does not make one a good Elvis impersonator or look alike. There is a lot more to it than the costume.

I will also be referring to other resources that will assist in your career. Remember, it's called Show *BUSINESS*. It's a business. It's a profession if you wish. If you are to get paid like a professional, the clients expect you to perform and look like a professional.

You are on your way to working in this industry by reading this guide. For those of you who have been in the business for years, it is a great way to brush up on things you may have forgotten.

Also, please keep in mind, the advice and suggestions given in this book are the professional opinions from my wife, (Jackie) and me. These suggestions have worked for me and hundreds of others in our industry. Jackie and I produced what has become the largest Celebrity Look Alike event in the world and we've learned a lot over the years.

Break a leg!

All the best,

Greg M Thompson

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Chapter One

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU LOOK LIKE?

Most of us have heard it at some point: “Do you know who you look like?” or “Has anyone ever told you that you look like _____?” Maybe someone said it after you dressed up for a costume party and they were impressed. Hopefully, you took it as a compliment—though you may not always have. Either way, that moment may have sparked the idea of doing this professionally, whether full time or part time. You may also have seen someone in a movie or on TV and thought you would enjoy imitating them. Or perhaps you are already an entertainer and want to turn your impression into paid work. Every impersonator and look-alike started somewhere. Now, like they once did, you are ready to see where this path can take you—and what it takes to get there.

Self-Evaluation

Take a good look at yourself in the mirror. Do you see the resemblance of the person or character you would like to impersonate? Is the facial structure the same? Is the resemblance so strong that you freak yourself out?

Or will you need the costume, make up, wig, glasses, or whatever it takes to get you there? Do your friends look at you funny when you ask them “Do I look anything like _____?”. Or do they say “Heck yeah!”?

Be honest with yourself. Before accepting a professional gig as someone famous, make sure your resemblance will be well received. No agent or client wants guests saying, “He or she doesn’t even look like _____.” At a minimum, you need to look like the celebrity, then support that look with strong vocal and physical mannerisms. Audiences will often forgive a voice or movement that is not perfect if the resemblance is strong. But if the look is weak, even good mannerisms may not be enough. In that case, you may come across as a guest who does a decent impression rather than a bookable impersonator. To work as an impressionist, you would need a wide range of strong impressions. For stage performers, however, the opposite can be true: audiences will forgive a weaker resemblance if the voice and performance are strong.

Rich Little and Danny Gans have made a career out of that. Also, many impersonators pull it off very well like Sharon Daniels, Bethany Owen, John Truncali, and Jeff DeHart. They book themselves out as impressionists performing a one-person show and also perform as individual Celebrity Impersonators. They recreate such celebrities as Joan Rivers, George Burns or Tom Jones. That is a different topic that this book will only touch upon. We are going to discuss Celebrity Impersonation.

Getting Professional Opinions

Getting professional opinions is a must. Your friends and family are not necessarily professionals in this industry. Remember, a lot of friends and family will tell you what you want to hear. Many times, they believe it themselves. You should get the honest opinion of a professional in the business. Don’t ask your voice teacher, minister or best friend. None of them want to hurt your feelings and only want

to encourage you to do whatever you want. They want you to go for it and truly enjoy your impersonation.

A professional, such as an agent who specializes in the celebrity impersonation business or another professional celebrity tribute artist, will more than likely be honest with you. If you have the potential, those of us in the look-alike business really want you to be good at it. We'll tell you. Trust a pro. You might be on the way to something fantastic. Or you may save yourself a lot of money, effort and heartache if you listen to honest opinions. But just like a doctor, get a second or third or fourth opinion. It's a fun business, but you must be good at it. Not all Marilyn Monroes in the business look like the real Marilyn...but then they wonder why they never get booked. If you've got it, go for it! If not, it's just a Halloween costume.

Chapter Two

PRACTICE, PRACTIC, PRACTICE

COSTUME

It is imperative that you have the right costume. Research the celebrity. Most of them have a specific look or style. Don't go for cheap. It will be obvious that you are an amateur if you go that route. Spend time and some money on getting it right. Some artists like Chris Chan (Barry Manilow) and Sherie Rae Parker spent two years getting the right costume and wigs together. And they still work on it. You don't have to go that far, especially if you already look like the character. But be aware that you are not coming across like someone who just came from a Halloween party.

For example, there is no specific "Joan Rivers" costume. However, she does have a look and hairstyle. Go for that. You also want to make sure that you are impersonating your celebrity at the point they are most recognized.

Anne Kissell (Roseanne Barr) has a waitress costume that is 'dead on' like the one Roseanne wore in her TV series. She also has a fur coat like the one Roseanne had been seen in a lot. Tina Turner has no specific costume, but her "fringe" mini dress gives a very strong impression of who you are supposed to be. It's her "Look".

MAKE UP

Some people (notice I say some) don't have to do anything to look like the person they are impersonating. However, MOST of us must make sure we highlight the features that make us resemble the celebrity to begin with. Remember, a lot of the actual celebrities don't even look like themselves until they get into make-up. (I hope that makes sense.)

Go to a make-up artist. This next suggestion may make some people weary. However, your local professional "drag queen" or female impersonator is a good place to start. Really! They must make themselves look like a female when they are a man. They know the techniques to recreate a look. Or, if you are fortunate enough to have a professional theatrical make-up artist in your community, you may want to go to them. Check with your local theatrical company, even if they are non-profit. A local salon is a good place, too.

If you "kind of" look like someone, they can highlight your features to bring that across. However, you don't want to be overdone or look like a drag queen when you are in make-up. It has to be subtle, unless you are ONLY going to be on stage with full theatrical lighting. Don't be too drastic in your make up in a "face to face" situation. It must look natural.

MANNERISMS, SPEECH AND EXPRESSIONS

A good look is very important in this business. If you didn't have a good look, you would not be reading this guide. But some very important features of your impersonation are mannerism, speech

and expressions. I perform as Austin Powers, Andy Warhol and previously Jack Sparrow (but I have now retired that character.) I am from North Carolina and have a natural Southern accent. However, I make sure that I sound like my celebrities...and it really impresses my clients. I have worked as an MC for a national dinner show for years and have the British accent down pat for Austin Powers and Jack Sparrow. I just needed to study the characters and get their mannerisms down pat. Fortunately, they were both easy for me. Andy Warhol is a bit of a stretch for me, but fortunately, I mostly just stand around and judge people. LOL.

Look for your characters "sound bites". Joan Rivers has "Can we talk?" and "Oh, grow up!". Austin Powers has "Yeah, Baby" and a dozen others. However, Cher has no sound bites, but a rather distinct way of speaking. So does Jack Nicholson. Work on it! Get it down pat! Your agents/talent buyers will notice.

Bettina Williams has "Whoopi" down to a "T". However, she was fortunate enough that she already sounded a lot like her. It's the same thing for Joe Manuella as Robert Dinero (RIP). It came fairly easy to them. But *you* may need to work on it. Get the vocals down pat and you'll get more bookings and can ask for more money. Jackie says the best vocal mimics are the ones who notice the little nuances of a celebrity's speech so much that an observer might say, "Oh wow, I never realized that did that with their voice."

If you get the expressions down, too...you are all good to go. What do they do with their hands? How do they stand? What is their reaction to surprise? Look in the mirror and practice. But remember; only do it when you're in costume or getting paid in public, not at a party. Otherwise, you might come across weird...trust me on this.

LOOK A LIKE OR STAGE PERFORMER? ... OR BOTH?

There is a difference between a stage performer and a look-alike, though some tribute artists may be both. For example, a Robert Redford tribute artist is usually hired as a look-alike because Robert Redford is not known for singing or dancing. On the other hand, a Barbra Streisand tribute artist may succeed both on stage and at meet-and-greet appearances. Neither role is better than the other. If you are good at what you offer, you can get plenty of work. The key is to understand your strengths and only sell the services you can deliver well. If you can do both, it is great. If you can do only one, that is great too.

LOOK ALIKES

Here are some examples of those who are look alike. Those performers who appear as Robert Redford, Sylvester Stallone, Richard Petty, George Clooney, Tiger Woods, Angelina Jolie, Tony Soprano. There are a lot. They don't have a stage performance. They don't sing, do comedy or dance. However, they are booked a lot because they look so much like the celebrity. People LOVE them. They don't have to perform on stage because the real celebrities are actors and not stage performers themselves.

STAGE PERFORMERS

This is easy to figure out. There are those who pay tribute to Elvis, Cher, Madonna, Tina Turner and the like. There are also those who created an "act" like any politician, Lucy, Jack Sparrow and more. But if you are performing a stage show, please make sure it is very entertaining. Your audience will be expecting to be entertained. What is entertaining? Sing the songs that the audience is most familiar with. If you do Neil Diamond, you will have to perform '*Sweet Caroline*', '*America*', '*Cracklin' Rosie*' and the like. If you perform one of Neil's obscure songs, you will leave the audience going "What?" Even if you hate the most popular songs that your celebrity performs, you will have to ignore that and perform them anyway. You want to make the audience happy. Do that! That's what they came to see.

If you are a look alike yet can't sing... but you want to do a stage performance, you must lip sync. But you must inform the client that you are lip syncing. It's standard practice.

This is a side note to the two statements above. If you are a look alike a famous singer, but you can't sing and don't want to do stage performances, there is still a lot of work for you as a meet and greet look alike.

CHAPTER THREE

GETTING STARTED: Tools of The Trade

PROMO PACKAGE

Your promotional package is a must. You can't be taken seriously in this fun business unless you come across as a professional. You must have a good promo pack (some call them a 'press kit') in order to get started.

PHOTOS

Get a great photo! Seriously, this is extremely important. A snapshot will not do it. Many people take snapshots of themselves and send them out to agents to see if the agent is interested. Then they proceed to get professional shots done if there is some interest. I can't recommend against that idea, but...it's best to get professional shots done right away. That shows the agents you are serious. Otherwise, you may come across someone looking to make an easy buck just because you happen to look like someone. Let the agent know you are serious.

A snapshot might be fine. An agent might think your look is so strong that they can sell you from your snapshot. But why not invest in a hundred bucks to start your career to make thousands? And for God's Sake, if you are going to go the route of a digital snapshot, PLEASE do not take a photo in front of a door and send it in! At least put a sheet or something on the wall and take the photo! PLEASE!!! Side Note: If you are at the Sunburst Convention, we will have a professional photographer there! Use them!

BUSINESS CARDS

Get good business cards. You can order 1000 business cards from www.pressexprint.com or www.clubflyers.com for \$40. That's if you design them yourselves. Worst case is \$125 for 1000 if they design it for you. That's full color, front and back! They'll put your photo on them, too! It makes you look 100% professional. Making them yourself on your computer is fine, but for the money, have them professionally done. Use

BIO AND WRITE UP

Write up a great bio about yourself. Don't include everything you have ever done. Be general. Include: "This performer has entertained all over the Southeast with her professional impersonation of _____. She is consistently a crowd pleaser at corporate events and public performances both on stage and very personable with one-on-one encounters. Her mannerisms and expressions give the guests an experience they will remember for a long time." Keep that kind of thing in mind. BUT...don't oversell yourself. Don't put down things that are not going to happen at any booking. Don't include the VFW or Karaoke contests unless that's the route you want to take.

VIDEO

Video is an important part of your promo package, especially if you are a singer or comedian. Many look-alikes can book work from photos alone, but video helps sell your appearance or performance. If you do a stage act, video is essential. If you work only as a look-alike, include a short meet-and-greet clip for clients or agents. Add any strong footage you have—on stage, emceeing an event, or simple B-roll—to your promo package. It does not have to be complicated: use a video recorder or camera to film about 60 seconds of yourself talking to the camera. A good video can sell you much faster than photos alone.

WEB SITES

These days, a web site is very good to have. It's a must in today's world. You can make it agent friendly or not. (We'll get to "Agent Friendly" in a moment.) A web site will show several photos of your impersonation and make you look more professional. It will have your bio and perhaps your appearances listed. Some agents don't like web sites, but like I said...these days, you'll miss out on some bookings if you don't have one. TikTok is **NOT** a professional web site. It's good to have but does not come across as professional.

For many agents, a TikTok account is just not professional at all. If you are just starting out, it's okay. However, plan on having a professional web site soon.

I personally like a VERY simple web site with some photos, a couple of videos and a description of the act. SIMPLE!

EPK

An EPK stands for Electronic Press Kit. This is something that is great for agents to book you these days. It can be emailed. It should include a 300dpi jpeg of your best professional promo photos, a Bio/description of your act, your "rider" *, and a video. *A "rider" is a list of things you need to perform. Some riders might state, "a private, secured dressing room, bottled water, light snacks, a mirror and a full-length mirror." But don't go overboard with the old "M&Ms" with the green ones taken out" aspect. They will pass on you. Trust me on that. Ask me why.

ONE SHEETS

A one sheet is basically a large business card with more info on it, like an "Act Description". It is the size of a regular sheet of paper. You can do it with all of your info on the front page along with your photo or... put your photo on the front and an "Act Description" on the back. You can make a PDF of this and email it to your agents. Make it agent friendly....unless you are giving it directly to the agents....like at a convention or other showcase.

CONTRACTS

Get a good contract. It's not that hard. Write to me and I'll send you a blank copy of mine. You just need the general details. **MAKE SURE** you put down pricing and how/when you are getting paid. **MAKE SURE** their contact information is on there like email and cell number. Make sure you have a signed contract before you do the gig. Ask for the signed contract to be returned to you within 72 hours of sending it out.

AGENTS

Best advice. Pick your favorite agent and have them handle the details. If you don't have an agent yet, but you get a booking, just pick one you are familiar with and comfortable with. **NEVER** quote a client your rate if you are going to let an agent handle it. Tell the agent how much you want to make and they will add their commission to it. Also, **NEVER** give out your personal cards when booking through an agent, unless you got the gig directly and handed it over to the agent.

EQUIPMENT

Getting the right equipment will make your life easier.

No one does a lot of regular mailings anymore as far as contracts go. Save regular mail for sending hard copy promo packs. Here are things you will need as far as equipment goes.

1. Computer! It is imperative that you have a computer these days. Get an email address and stick to it. Don't change it. Keep that email address forever. Yourname@gmail.com is easy to use and you will always have your name.
2. Phone! It makes no difference anymore if you don't have a home phone. But keep a cell phone number and make sure everyone has your number. Especially if that is the number agents should call to book you. **AND ANSWER YOUR PHONE DAMN IT!**
3. If you need music for your act, you **NEED** to have it as a file so you can put it on a media drive (thumb drive) and/or email it to your event. **DO NOT SHOW UP AT A GIG TO PERFORM AND TELL THE CLIENT YOUR MUSIC IS ON YOUR PHONE/TABLET. THAT SUCKS!**

AGENT FRIENDLY PROMO

~Any promo that is Agent Friendly is good promo for the agents to sell you with. However, it is a big subject that many entertainers and agents discuss. **TRUST ME.** Agent Friendly is the way to go!

What is Agent Friendly?

An "Agent Friendly" anything, whether it's a web site, promo package or 'one sheet' is very important. "Agent Friendly" means there is **NO** contact information on the item that is being presented to clients. (Don't confuse Clients and Agents. However! You can give whatever you want to a client.) You

cannot have your phone number, email address, Facebook, TikTok, Insta info, or web site anywhere on any "Agent Friendly" material. Social media accounts are not agent friendly. Anymore, if it is an agent friendly anything, you CAN have your first and last name on the web site. It's the same thing for Agent Friendly promo shots and videos. Agent Friendly means NO CONTACT info whatsoever! Give contact info to the agent separately.

The reason for Agent Friendly promo materials is that the agent is going to send your promo to their *client*. If the agent sees "Billy as Neil Diamond", they know their client can go online and find you through Google, ChatGPT or social media in about a minute. The agent has spent a lot of time and effort on promoting you.

Agents want to be able to book you without having their client find you directly. The clients will think they can get you cheaper! Make sure you have NO contact info. I know I just repeated myself but it's worth stressing.

You will probably quote yourself cheaper than an agent will. They will try and beat you down. If you have an "agent friendly" web site, an agent can send any client to that site without fear of them "going around the agent" to book you directly.

How do we fix the problem of having the client call you directly, when the agent turned them onto you in the first place? Most agents will not (or cannot) call every artist to tell them when they are being proposed. It's a lot of work. However, there is a solution. This is very important.

You need two rates. One for when a client calls you directly. Let's call this a retail rate. Then, have one for when an agent calls you. Let's call this a resale rate. These rates will vary from job to job....but make sure you quote the **retail rate** to a direct client and the **resale** rate to the agent for the same gig. In the end, the client is paying the same rate whether they book you direct or go through the agent. If the agent calls you and tells you they are sending a client to your web site and the client calls you direct, you can refer them back to the agent. That is the ideal situation. It's fair.

In my opinion (as both an entertainer and producer myself), it's always best to go through an agent. They will handle the details, air fares, riders, etc. etc. You won't have to do these things. If a client calls you first, quote them your retail rate. You can still refer them back to your favorite agent (giving the agent your resale rate) and ask the agent to add no more than 20%. After all, it's YOUR client. This way, the client pays the same whether they book through you or the agent. That agent will then start calling you more when they get a call for your impersonation.

On the other hand, if the agent presented you to the client first, they could add whatever they want to your asking price. After all, you don't know how much time, energy and money your agent spent to get this client to book you in the first place. Please keep this in mind. It's fair.

IMPORTANT INFO HERE.....

Finally, let's not confuse promoting yourself as opposed to handing over your bookings to an agent. Agents generally don't have time to promote you. They have hundreds of acts in their "stable" and just don't have the time. They will be making their money by handling the details of your contract. They will go to bat for you. They will make sure you get what you want and make sure you get paid. If they are promoting your act as well, that is a whole different situation.

Also, (this is a suggestion) if you want to promote yourself and handle the details, that is completely up to you. It's perfectly legal and makes you no less the entertainer. It does, however, make you look more professional when an agent handles your details. And...that agent will take more notice of you and promote you more. Personally, I prefer an agent to handle the details for me...even though I'm an agent myself. Less worries. SIDE NOTE: If an agent consistently tries to "beat you down" on your price...maybe you don't want to work with them. It's perfectly normal business to give "breaks" now and then, but don't let anyone take advantage of you! AND...be reasonable on your price for what you do.

In the end, make sure your promo material is agent friendly, so the agents are more likely to book you. In my opinion, a one sheet is the way to go now. They are easy to email. Then, when someone is interested in booking you, send them a complete press kit or EPK.

But, never, ever stop promoting yourself, no matter what. Don't wait for an agent to do it. They don't have the time. Do whatever it takes to get your info out there. Then let an agent handle the gig details for you...if you want.

Chapter Four: THE NEXT STEP

Getting Out There

MORE ABOUT AGENTS

Agents are people who spend their time acquiring clients to present their talent options to. These folks are generally not entertainers, but many of them are. They have contacts and information to handle your bookings and to promote your act. They will present you to their clients. But don't confuse them with Personal Managers. Personal Managers work only for you and maybe a few other entertainers. They contact agents and producers for you.

CLIENTS

Clients are the people who are receiving the entertainment. They are the ones who call the agents or who are calling you directly. They may be individuals who are having a social party, or they may be a meeting planner, DMC or party planner.

WHO DO I CALL?

You should first call or email every agent, talent buyer, producer and entertainment agency that you can find. Write up a professional letter to send to them. **MAKE IT PROFESSIONAL!** Write their name on the letter. Don't send out **MASS EMAILS** unless you know and have worked with every person on the list. Simply describe who you are, where you live and what you do. Here is a bad example of a mass email:

Subject: marilyn monroe

Message:

available for bookings. Visit www.imthebestimpersonatorintheworld.com for more info.

Now, here is a great example of an introduction letter. It can be done in an email, too

ANDY GRIFFITH IMPERSONATOR

Micheal Thompson
www.MichaelasAndy.com
910-209-8819

To: JD Shaw
Entertainment Director
Big Time Productions
1234 Five Street
Orlando, FL 86753

Dear Mr. Shaw,

My name is Michael Thompson, and I am a professional Andy Griffith impersonator and look alike. I live in Wilmington, North Carolina and have performed all over the US and Canada. I perform a live 45-minute comedy show and am also available for 'meet and greets' as my improvisational skills are highly regarded.

I am very interested in sending you my promotional material with the hope that you would be interested in listing me with Big Time Productions. I have included a photo and bio along with two letters of reference from former and current clients.

Please review my information. I will be contacting you soon for your response. Thank you for your time.

With best regards,

Michael Thompson

HOW DO I GET AGENT'S CONTACT INFO?

There are many ways to do this. The easiest is to become best friends with someone who already has it and ask them for it...but that would be very tacky. So don't do that. Go online and Google talent agencies in every town. Go to conventions and meet them in person. There is no specific way to do this. Look them up on social media. It just takes work.

HOW DO I FOLLOW UP?

After you have found them and sent them a letter or email, simply call or email them back to find out their interest. Ask them if you can put them on an email list to announce your public bookings. Be nice. Make sure you are brief and to the point. Don't take up their time. They are busy. If you get a voice mail, leave a pleasant and short message. **Don't talk to them in your character voice or announce yourself AS your character.** Don't go into detail about how great you are. Let your Promo Pack speak for itself.

SHOWCASES

Showcases are a great way for you to be seen by the right people. You should only showcase when you have your act together. Many times, agents will ask you to showcase your act at an event where many of their clients will see you. It is very common that you perform at showcases with no pay. After all, this is an investment in time and will only benefit you in the end. If you decide not to showcase because there is no pay, then you will receive no bookings from any of these clients.

CONVENTIONS

As most people in this industry know, I produce The Sunburst Convention of Celebrity Impersonators in Orlando, Florida. So, it is no wonder that I highly recommend that you attend a convention and showcase. But I recommend this because it's a good idea. We invite dozens of talent buyers to our convention. You will not only meet loads of talent buyers, but you will network, meet other artists, learn a lot and have a fantastic time. Ask anyone who has attended Sunburst and see what they say. Visit www.SunburstConvention.com for all of the information. THIS is the way to get work in this business.

FREEBIES/EXPOSURE

Many times, throughout your career, you will be asked to perform at charities, fund raisers, fairs, festivals and so much more at no charge. They will all claim that they have no budget, but you will "get a lot of exposure." This statement has become a joke in our industry. What you get from these events is not so much exposure as you get asked to do more freebies.

Now, I suggest you choose your favorite charity and perform a couple of times a year for that cause. Don't charge them. It's just something we all should do to give back to the community and it's good

karma. But you can't do them all. However, at the beginning, it's good practice and they can't complain about the price.

Now, many people will throw out that "exposure" word. Here's the deal. They are trying to get FREE entertainment. Don't be fooled. Check out the event. If you can TRULY get good exposure, then do it. But most of the time there is no exposure and you just end up performing for free.

I ask them to make sure I get a couple of newspaper interviews, a radio interview and a TV interview. If they can't promise that and make it happen, then they owe me my regular rate. Put it in the contract.

BUDGETS

The big question is "What is your budget?". The big answer is "Um, we don't have a budget yet...what do you charge?" **DON'T BE FOOLED!**

This is usually a client trying to make sure they don't pay you more than they think they need to. They won't give a budget most of the time. You might quote a reasonable amount for a 1-hour gig...then find out it's for Microsoft!

Ask plenty of questions before quoting a price: Who is the event for? Where will it take place? What is the occasion? Is it a trade show, convention, VIP party, or something else? How many guests are expected? Will there be dinner or cocktails?

Here's the way I used to do it:

Greg: What is your budget?

Client: Oh...um, we don't have a budget. What do you charge?

Greg: \$10,000

Client: Oh my God! We don't have that much money!

Greg: How much money do you have?

Client: Like \$1200

Greg: I'll take it!

CHAPTER FIVE

Professionalism

GENERAL RULES

There are a lot of “rules” in this profession. This is one of the few publications out there that will list most of them for you. However, it’s nearly impossible to list all of them as many of them are just common sense. You will be able to use your best judgment in many situations after learning the general thoughts and practices.

The Do’s

1. Always be a little early. The old saying is that if you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, then you are late. It impresses the heck out of most clients when you are early.
2. Always give out the business card of the person who booked you on the event, like the agent. If you don’t have their cards, make some up on your computer. Or get **their** card to give to your agent.
3. Make sure your costume is clean and free of B.O. Look your best.
4. Ask the client enough questions about the gig to make a good impression, but don’t go crazy asking for too many details.
5. Make it easy on the client. Be easy to work with, but don’t let them take advantage.
6. Follow up with the agent who booked you. A quick phone call or short email to let them know how things went at the gig will do fine. If it went poorly, let the agent know right away.
7. Be nice. Being nice will get you a long way in this business.
8. Give them a little more than they expected. *A little!*
9. Clean up your dressing area before you leave. Entertainers, for some reason, are expected to be messy. If you leave a clean dressing room, it’s impressive.
10. Be nice and congenial to the other entertainers. Don’t be ‘stand offish’. You never know when you are going to work with these folks again. PLUS, they are likely to give you a thumbs up or down to their own regular clients. Entertainers refer entertainers all the time!
11. Make sure your sets are what they are supposed to be and not a minute less.

The Don’ts

1. Never, ever give out your own business card or contact info at an event where someone else (like an agent) booked you. You will soon find out that said agent and others like them will not book you if you give out your own card. Everyone knows everyone and word will get out. Give out the card of the person who booked you. If you booked yourself, have at it.
2. Don’t eat food from the buffet. If you need food at your event, put it in your rider. Otherwise, DON’T EAT the guest’s food. If they offer, it’s ok. BUT it *may* come up later that you “ate their food”. If they provide food in your break area, okay. But don’t even take a mini tart from the buffet.
3. Never, ever drink on the job. **NEVER!!!!** Got it? Even if the CEO of the company insists you have a drink with them, **don’t!** Tell them that you don’t drink or that you quit 10 years ago or that you are in AA. Just don’t drink on the job, no matter what. It **always** leads to bad things.

4. Don't drink with the client afterwards. Same thing as above. It will lead to bad things. Generally, they will call up your agent and tell them that you were drunk at the event (whether you were or not) and do not want to pay the bill. I've seen it repeatedly...but not with me!
5. Don't argue with the client. If something comes up that you are not sure of, call your agent.
6. Don't slam other entertainers. It makes you look unprofessional. If you have seen something that another entertainer did, tell the agent, not the client. BUT...make sure you saw what you saw.
7. Don't get too familiar with the client. Familiarity breeds contempt.

KNOW THESE THINGS:

- Some clients are tough to work with. Remember, they generally don't really know entertainment as a business.
- You may or may not get a dressing room, even if it's in your contract.
- You will mostly get paid on time, but not always.
- Expect NOT to be fed. If it's in your contract, you will be fed 95% of the time, but sometimes, they just forget or don't care. Tell your agent. If you booked yourself.... tell them AFTER the gig.

CHAPTER SIX

Marketing- How To Get More Gigs

EMAIL

Email is a wonderful tool, but it is not to be abused in this business. It's a great way to let others know what is new with you, your availability and a way to remind everyone that you are still here doing what you do. These days, it's a must to communicate with everyone. **Check it often.** Don't let a gig slip by you because you did not check your email every day.

However, it can be very tempting to abuse. If you become a pest on the internet, you could find yourself being reported as spam or even banned from sending email to certain potential clients.

Always make your email blasts short and sweet. Just let folks know what you are up to and that's all. Opinions on message boards are good to an extent, but it's best to look like you are easy to get along with.

MAILINGS

Even though things are "electronic" these days, there has always been a wonderful tool known as direct mailings. Get as many regular mailing addresses as you can. Do "mail blasts" by sending your promo out. A lot of times, you can just send a postcard to remind folks you are out there. Remember, "Out of sight, out of mind." Just remind the folks that you are here. Also, it's a great way to introduce yourself to potential agents and clients. It costs more, but most of the time, it's worth it.

NETWORKING

Networking is a must! Visit whatever shows and events that you can. Meet as many people as possible. If you can, join organizations like the Chambers of Commerce. Join civic groups or business socials. Community Centers are great and go to every fair, festival and major event that you can. Always take business cards but never oversell yourself. It's annoying to a lot of people. Drop your business card in every "Free Meal" drawing there is. Networking is a must. Go to conventions! Meet as many people in the business as you can.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Join as many Facebook Groups as you can. Get a lot of Instagram and TikTok Followers. **MAKE CONSISTANT and ENGAGING POSTS.... DAILY!** Make the posts **ENGAGING!** Like: Which costume do you like best? - What's your favorite song by this artist? -What is your favorite movie by this actor?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Final Thoughts

I hope this information has proven helpful to you. Please keep in mind, this is not the end all, be all to the profession of Celebrity Impersonation. It is a general guide to help you along the way.

Continue learning. Continue working on your character. Even one year from today, you will find that you are better than you are right now. That goes for everyone. Study your character, know your character and enjoy your career or part-time performance as a Celebrity Look Alike and/or Impersonator.

All the best,

Greg M Thompson: Impersonator/Entertainer/Producer

- Producer of The Year/ 2004 & 2008- The Entertainment Network Artists Choice Awards
- Most Outstanding Industry Ambassador/ IGCITA Cloney Awards 2005 & 2006
- Most Professional Entertainer– REEL AWARDS/ 2009

Here are some great resources:

INSURANCE

www.SpecialtyInsuranceAgency.com/ Get \$3,000,000 worth of liability insurance for only \$295 per year. A LOT of clients require you have this.

PRINTING

www.ClubFlyers.com/ Very inexpensive printing company for business cards.

www.PrintPelican.com/ Great for mass printing

Attend The Sunburst Convention of Celebrity Impersonators in Orlando. Visit www.SunburstConvention.com for the next convention. All details are listed. There are workshops and seminars, plus tons of networking with artists from all over the US, Canada and Europe.

On the last pages, you will find several examples of a “One Sheet”. After that, you will see some great advertisements.

★ *Billy Buchanan* ★

as

the PIONEERS OF ROCK 'N SOUL



Little Richard



Sam Cooke



Ray Charles

★ BillyBuchanan.org/Tributes ★



Chuck Berry



Stevie Wonder



David Ruffin (Temptations)

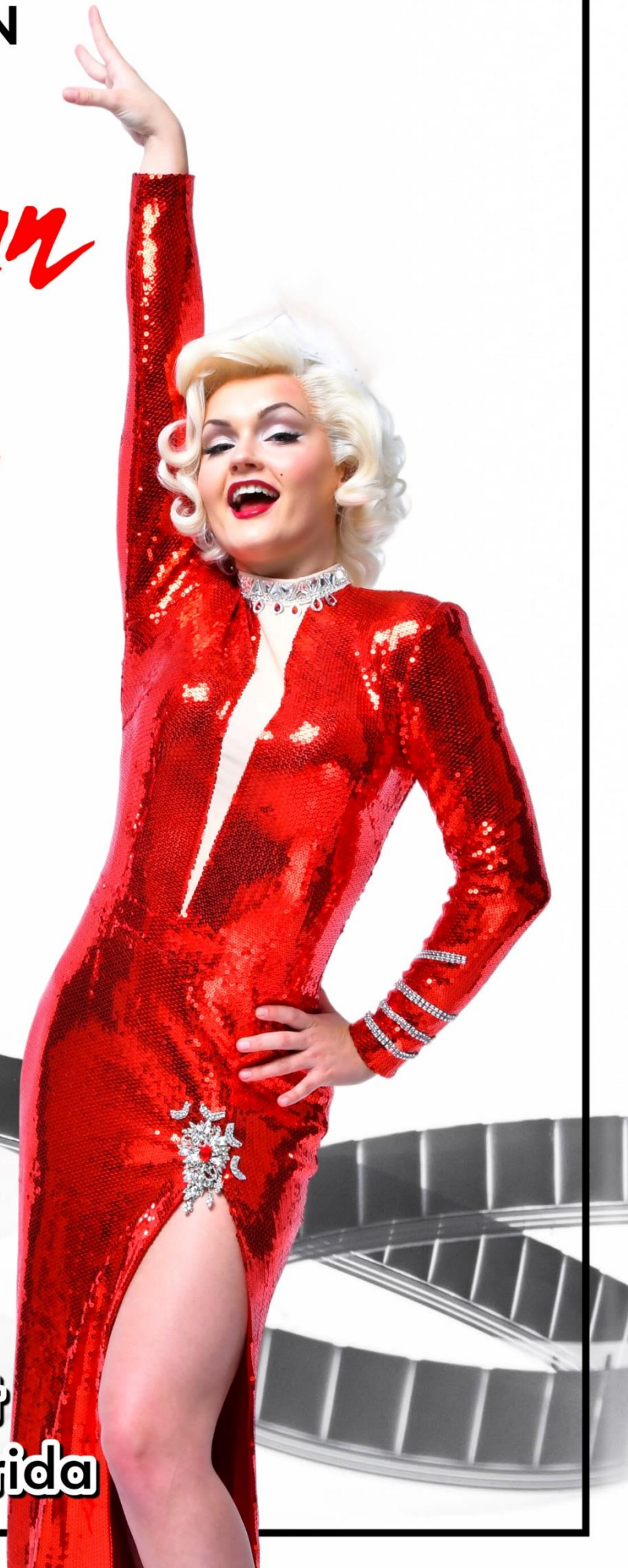
There's more! Also, see Billy as himself, Jackie Wilson, Otis Redding, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix, and James Brown!

**MATTISEN THOMPSON
AS**

*Marilyn
Monroe*

**MEET & GREET
LIVE SHOWS
PHOTO OPS**

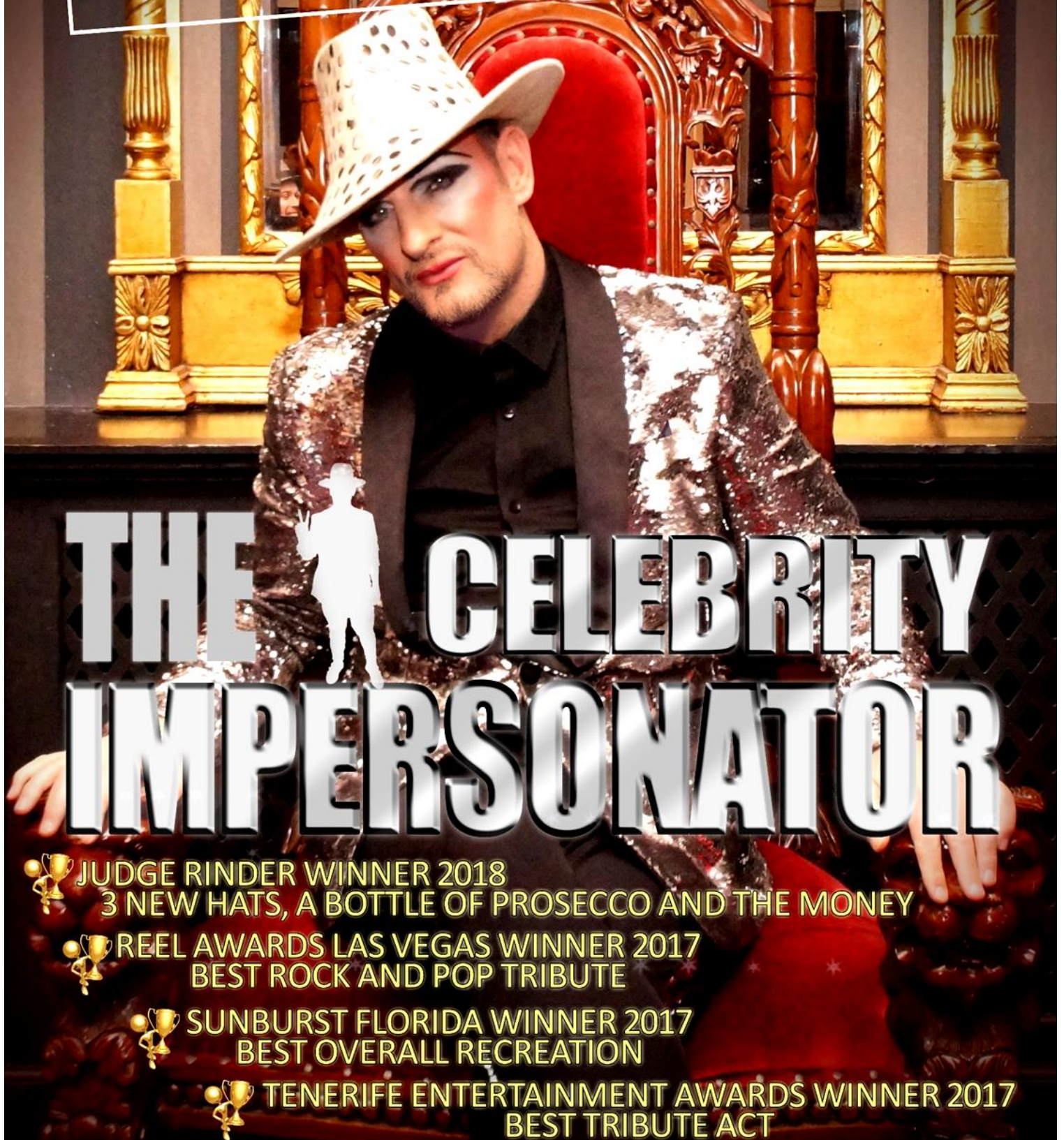
**4 Years as Marilyn at
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