



FILE 04 · THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Headshots, Reels & Materials.

Reputable NYC photographers, reel editors, hosting platforms, and the standards that get your materials looked at.

NEPA·PRO TALENT

talent.nepa-pro.com · 570-677-7971

Your materials are your interview.

Casting directors look at your headshot for between three and seven seconds before deciding whether to read your resume. Your reel gets between fifteen and thirty seconds before they click away. The math says: spend serious time and money on materials before you spend a dime on classes, branding, or platform subscriptions.

HEADSHOTS — WHAT YOU'RE BUYING

A professional NYC actor headshot session in 2026 typically runs \$400 – \$1,200 depending on the photographer and what's included. You should budget for hair and makeup (another \$150 – \$300), retouching (sometimes included, sometimes \$50/image), and printing.

Aim for: two to three different looks, both theatrical (more dramatic, slightly cooler) and commercial (warmer, smiling, friendly). Update every 18 – 24 months, sooner if you change your appearance significantly.

REPUTABLE NYC HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHERS

These are working photographers with established reputations in the New York acting community. Always check current portfolios, rates, and reviews before booking — and never pay full price to a photographer who can't show you a current portfolio of working actors.

Joe Henson

joehenson.com

Long-established. Editorial-leaning, strong with theatrical heads.

Jonathan Hsu

jonathanhsuphotos.com

High-end commercial and theatrical. Often hired by name talent.

Bjoern Kommerell

bjoernkommerell.com

Splits time between LA and NYC. Strong with character types.

Sue Coflin (Max Photo)

maxphotonyc.com

Commercial-friendly. Frequently recommended for new actors needing strong commercial heads.

Tess Steinkolk

tesssteinkolk.com

Long-running NYC headshot photographer. Theater-friendly.

Jordan Matter

jordanmatter.com

Best known for dance imagery; also does strong actor headshots.

Anita Shevett

shevettstudios.com

Family-run, theater-focused. Strong reputation across Broadway.

Murphy Made (Andrew Murphy)

murphymade.com

Modern, clean style. Works well for younger actors and commercial.

Marc Cartwright

marccartwright.com

Glossy commercial style; lots of TV/film actor work.

Stephanie Diani

stephaniediani.com

NYC and LA. Editorial sensibility.

Caitlin McNaney

caitlinmcnaney.com

Newer-generation but strong portfolio; theater and commercial.

Justin Patterson

justinpattersonphoto.com

Reasonable rates, theater-leaning, NYC-based.

Vetting a photographer: ask to see current work (last 6 months), confirm what's included (looks, hours, retouches, raw files), and ask three working actors who shot recently. Avoid anyone who pressures you to buy "packages" with classes, "showcases," or representation pitches attached.

PRINTING YOUR HEADSHOTS

Reproductions, Inc. — the long-running NYC standard for actor headshot prints. Borderless 8x10 lithographs are still the format.

Precision Photos — another reliable NYC option, slightly different price points.

Headshot Plus / various online — cheaper, fast turnaround, quality varies.

Order in batches of 100. They will go faster than you think. Get them now and you'll have them for the next eighteen months.

REELS — WHAT GOES IN ONE

A 2026 actor reel should be: under two minutes total, ideally under 90 seconds for most theatrical reps. Lead with your strongest work in the first 10 seconds. Identify yourself with a clean intro card (name, contact). End with a clean outro.

Each clip should show YOU, not the scene partner — close on you, listening and reacting as much as speaking. Three to five clips, ideally from different projects with different tones.

If you don't have professional footage, that's fine — many actors begin with self-produced reel scenes, where you hire an editor and partner to film a 1-2 minute scene specifically for the reel. Honest framing as a self-produced reel is far better than stitching together background work.

REPUTABLE NYC REEL EDITORS

Mark Glubke / Glubke Studio

glubke.com

Long-running NYC actor reel editor. Strong taste, fair pricing.

Joe Reilly / Reilly Reels

reillyreels.com

Active in the NYC actor community. Good with first-time reels.

Tom Tweedy

tomtweedy.com

Established editor; handles a high volume of working-actor reels.

DigiVision Productions

digivisionnyc.com

Full-service, includes scene production, not just edits.

House of Anu

houseofanu.com

Newer-generation; often handles content-creator-meets-actor reels.

WHERE TO HOST YOUR REEL

- Vimeo — the industry standard for actor reels. Clean player, no ads, no recommended-video distractions. Pay for the cheapest tier so links don't expire.
- YouTube — second choice. Use unlisted links and disable comments.
- Actors Access / Casting Networks — upload directly to your profile so it plays inline when CDs view you.
- A personal website (talent.nepa-pro.com style) — own your URL; it lasts longer than any platform.

GETTING REEL FOOTAGE WHEN YOU HAVE NONE

The chicken-and-egg problem of acting: you need a reel to get cast in good projects, but you need projects to build a reel. Real ways out:

- Student films at NYU, Columbia, SVA, The New School. Submit through Backstage and through their student film boards. Always negotiate a copy of the final footage in your contract.
- Web series and indie shorts through Backstage and Actors Access non-union breakdowns.

- Self-produced scene work — hire an editor and DP, work with another actor, shoot one scene specifically for your reel. Total cost can be \$400 - \$1,200 depending on quality.
- Theater work that gets archived — many small theaters have archival recordings; ask politely for a clip after closing.
- Background work that upgrades — rare but real. If you're upgraded to a featured background role, follow up about a clip.

YOUR RESUME — THE ONE-PAGE RULES

An industry-standard actor resume in NYC fits on one page (8.5x11), prints on the back of your headshot, and is organized by category — not chronologically. See File 12 for the full template, but the key sections, in order, are:

- Header: Name (large), union status, height/eye color, vocal range if singing, contact info or rep info
- Film: Title, role type (Lead/Supporting/Featured), production, director
- Television: same format. Keep co-star credits early in your career; drop them later
- Theater: Title, role, theater, director. List most recent / largest first within sections
- Training: school, teacher, technique. Be specific about teachers — CDs know teachers' reputations
- Special Skills: be honest. Anything listed is fair game in the audition room

Lying on a resume is the fastest way to never work for that office again. "Conversational French" is fair. "Fluent French" means they will read you in French. Don't list dialects you can't do, instruments you can't play, or stunts you can't execute on demand.
