

SHOULD I JOIN SAG•AFTRA?

If you want to work in TV, film and union contracted commercials that pay residuals to actors, yes. Actors get conflicting advice here, but we can use common sense together to arrive at the most practical answer.

It's often easier for actors starting out to get a commercial agent before a theatrical agent. Most commercials are non-union now. Therefore, commercial agents advise their actors to stay out of the union as long as possible, even if they are eligible to join. Once you join SAG•AFTRA, you can no longer accept non-union commercial work. However, you probably **really** want a good theatrical agent. It makes sense they would want to sign an actor who is already in SAG•AFTRA, since the TV shows and films they will be submitting you on are SAG•AFTRA projects.

Producers are reluctant to hire non-union actors for a union show. The actor has to promise to join SAG•AFTRA and pay within 30 days when hired. If the actor doesn't follow through, production gets fined. No one likes to pay penalties, even networks! Viewed through a business lens, a non-union actor is less viable to a theatrical agent and TV/Film producers. Some non-union actors will say they still get called in by casting. That's true. But casting doesn't hire actors. Producers do.

Do what feels right for you, but consider this: Writers, Directors, Producers, Technical Crew and all the other cast members of a union production are members of a union: SAG•AFTRA, WGA, DGA, PGA, IATSE. They can hire a guest actor who is also a union member or one who has yet to join. Which do you think they would choose?



ACTORS **C**OMEDY **S**TUDIO