

Mary Erickson

Makeup ♦ Hair ♦ Wardrobe Stylist

951 J Avenue, Coronado CA 92118 Toll-Free 1-877-242-6878 Web: www.TheMakeupArtist.com

TIME FOR PRINTS

You can't get work because you do not have a portfolio, so how do you get a portfolio if you can't get work? Test or on the internet, sometimes called TFP (Time For Prints). This is the most common way to obtain prints for your book, but watch out for the very common pitfalls that come with this practice.

A typical scenario:

You get a call or email from a photographer who is coming to your area from out of town to shoot models. The photographer needs a makeup artist, but has no money to pay for one - and of course everyone is working free for prints. This is what we call in the industry a 'test' or TFP (Time For Prints). This is how most new artists get their portfolios started, and many artists do it throughout their careers because they have more artistic leeway, and can have more control over the shots and what ends up in their books. Usually the photographers are local, have a good reputation, and all is well. The problem is usually with out of town photographers or the ones you are not familiar with.

In my experience, the chances of getting good shots from an out of town photographer (working TFP) are very poor. I have had a few photographers skip out on me, never to be seen again, and some that just were not good photographers. I came back with nothing usable for my book, and at one time or another this has happened to just about every artist I know. This problem can be avoided by following some very basic guidelines.

I recently saw a post from a photographer on a makeup bulletin board, which I am including for you here along with my reply. These are the questions all makeup artists should ask, and take note - if you follow these guidelines, you are in a win-win situation - and you will either get paid for your work or you will get the photos you were promised. If you do not follow these guidelines with out of town photographers (and even some local photographers that are new to you) there is a good chance you could be wasting your time.

This is the post that I responded to:

I am a northern California photographer coming to the San Diego area 11/27 to 11/30 and need a makeup artist/hair stylist for my photo shoot(s) TFP only. If interested please email me asap.

Here is the letter I sent to the photographer:

Hi xxxxxxxx,

I am a San Diego artist, I am not interested in doing TFP at this time but I have a few assistants that need prints for their books and they may be interested. Please let me know what you are shooting and I can find you a good artist that will work for free. I need to give them the following info:

1) What is the shoot for, a models portfolio, or an ad?

The reason I asked this is that if it is for an ad then there should be a budget, and perhaps the artist should be getting paid.

2) What type of photos will you be shooting? Close up headshots, partial nudes, mostly body shots?

A lot of TFP is nudity, is that what you want in your book? Do you want shots that are distant and do not show the face and hair? This is up to you, but I would not put nudes in a portfolio I am showing to potential clients unless that is what they are looking to shoot as well.

3) Are you using a professional model or an amateur?

If the photographer is using a professional model (Agency Model), that is good, as she will make your work look better. If this is an amateur then you need to see her before you agree to do the shoot, you would need to approve any model before you shoot, but your best bet is a great model. If she does not have a good look (if she has lots of blemishes, etc.) then you probably do not want her in your book. Keep in mind that your idea of beauty and that of the photographer may be worlds apart.

4) Do you have any samples of your work that I can look at?

You cannot be really picky about the photographers you work with when you are a new artist, but you should make sure the photographer has the ability to shoot the kind of shots you want in your book. No matter how good the makeup and hair look, the people looking at your book will sneer at a photo that is considered bad photography. A photographer that is not good with lighting can make your work look bad.

5) Will it be all location or in a studio or both?

You need to know if you will have access to electricity to do the hair. Will you be out in the freezing cold or melting heat trying to make this model up? These things can affect the way your photos turn out.

6) How many prints if any will you get for your book at no charge? What size will they be? Black & white, or color? If I want to buy extra shots, what would my cost be?

Very important to know this and have it in writing up front, for obvious reasons.

My assistants are very good, and have been properly trained. The artists take a \$100.00 deposit from out of town photographers until they receive the agreed upon photos. The artist refunds the money when her or his photos arrive. If this is ok with you I will help you find you a good artist.

This is the most important part of the negotiating if you don't know the photographer you are dealing with. You must have a deposit! If the photographer will not or cannot come up with a \$100.00 deposit then he or she is not someone I would even consider working with.

Consequently I did go to this photographer's web site and found that his use of lighting was poor, the models he worked with were not professionals and his photos looked very amateurish. I didn't tell him that in my opinion his work was not good enough, because someday it may be, and I don't want to burn my bridges - but for now his work is not sufficient for a good portfolio, so I passed on this opportunity in a polite fashion.

Take control of your time and your work situation!

To sum it up

1. Work with only good photographers
2. If you don't know the photographer get a deposit
3. Work with only good models
4. Make sure the photographer is shooting things you need for your book
5. Be specific about what you expect out of the shoot and then deliver what others expect of you. Get it all in writing if you can so there is no question later about what was agreed upon.

Good luck!