

Unscripted - A Blog for Actors - Backstage

Under the Catwalk

This Tuesday October 25th, Last Man Standing, starring Tim Allen, will air it's fourth episode on ABC, and yes, I'm on it!

Check out the make-up and hair!

Having done a wee bit of stand up comedy, I get it.

A sit-com is a twenty something minute teleplay composed of killer jokes, that are played throughout a situation driven plot line, by an array of archetypal characters, seen through a multi-camera perspective.

I grew up on sit-coms; The Cosby Show, Night Court, Cheers, Growing Pains and ironically, Home Improvement.

I still want a taste of that white frosted strawberry cake Doctor Huxtable gave Claire on her 49th birthday.

The American sit-com was one of the ways my parents spent time with us. It also helped them understand the social culture of a country they did not experience in their teenage years.

I know, it sounds very *Leave it to the Boob Tube*, but it will be satisfying to see another great sit-com bring today's post-modern families, who are insatiably distracted by multi-media, together. Face to face, breathing the same air at the same time.

I'm excited. I'm scared. I hope...I wonder...I think...I feel, so many things. And I learned so many things, under the catwalk.



For example, the sit-com is rehearsed and shot in one week's time.

Wed morning table read, Wednesday afternoon rehearsal.

Thursday and Friday, all day rehearsal.

There are notes at the end of each rehearsal day, just like in theater. Weekends off, but sometimes not.

Monday, all day and night cold taping (no live audience). Tuesday day, taping whatever you didn't finish on Monday. Tuesday night, taping whatever you can in front of a live audience.

This can last up to four hours and is quite a rush, with a curtain call! Then Wednesday morning at 10am, back again, to another table read of the next episode, and on and on. The writers *work*.

In theater, as an actor, you have a minimum of two weeks to cultivate your character and the story, before performance time. And you have the entire run of the show, for that one show, to keep growing and growing. In TV, you have one show per week.

That's one of the many reasons there are as many as twenty people at the table read, on the floor during a rehearsal, a taping, shuffling back and forth, watching the actors, discussing each moment, sussing out which

jokes work and which jokes do not.

And if you only have a week to do it, and three days to rehearse it; the more perspectives available, the more discoveries made, the more you can layer in the short amount of time given.

Rewrites can be daily, hourly. Sometimes in the shooting draft, which means you won't have a rehearsal day for it.

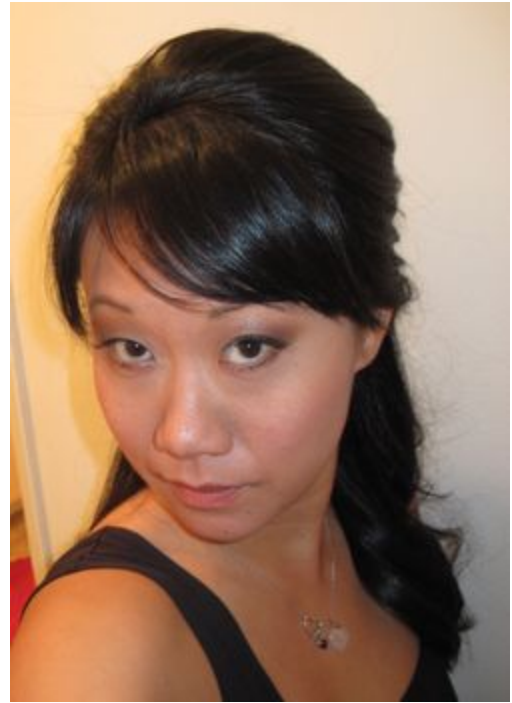
Then there are some practical things, which I also garnered from my years working in New York.

You will be going back and forth to your dressing room, to make-up, to the set, *a lot* throughout the day. And the set is 'air-conditioned' cold.

So, always bring a hoodie and comfy shoes you can easily slip on and off. Bring comfy pants too. Sometimes I wonder, 'who needs a boyfriend when you have sweatpants?'

Bring a book, another script, knitting, your guitar, your iPod, an elixir spray, gummy vitamins, something to keep you refreshed, because there is a lot of waiting. A lot. And that can drain your energy.

Or, stay on set, and watch and learn from the sidelines. However, if you are the kind of actor who can take a nap and then snap right back into character upon awakening, then by all means, nap in your dressing room. The couches are very comfortable.



There is also a lot of food on set. A LOT. And it's good food, but not always good for you. Donuts, muffins, soda, chips, yogurt parfaits, finger sandwiches.

I walked into craft services one day and saw chicken fingers with ranch dressing in the hot pans. Dinner? Oh no, that was just the snack *before* dinner.

I understand now, why stars have treadmills and gyms in their trailers and dressing rooms. I would too. It's kind of hard to not eat the food that is there, simply because *it is there*.

All in all being on set feels like home. Everyone on the show sparkles with talent and generosity. They are welcoming, down-to-earth, kind and professional. Everyone.

I am really proud, grateful, and excited to have been, even a small participant, in the beginning stages of a fantastic new show. And I'll be watching, learning, breathing, and laughing, hopefully the same time as you.

Thank you.

(photos courtesy of Kim, Troy, craft services, yours truly and the catwalks above us)

Yours Truly -- Ann Hu

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I saw this late so didn't get to watch it, but congratulations!

Posted by: [Justine](#) | [October 26, 2011 at 08:17 PM](#)



Mmmm... Craft services...

Congrats on the TV gig!

Posted by: [Angela Sauer](#) | [November 19, 2011 at 05:33 PM](#)

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