

DEREK'S

There are over 50 London model agencies alone listed in the Model Journal directory, some of them specialised in fashion, glamour, beauty, catwalk etc. But the most specialised and perhaps the most unusual model agency in the entire country has to be DEREK'S; this agency caters almost exclusively for hand models.

Derek's is named after its founder and owner, Derek Wayland, and is based in Acton. More particularly the agency office is a cubby hole, a mere 12 feet by 6 feet in the lounge of Derek's tastefully decorated ground floor flat. Model Journal visited Derek at work/home and asked him how he came to start the agency and about hand modelling in general.

DEREK

Dressed casually in jeans and denim shirt, at the age of 50 Derek still has the enviable physique one associates with male models. He is slightly extrovert, and his impeccably good manners are a sign of good breeding as much as anything else. At 18 he did his National Service ("oh my God, I'm that old!"), spending 21 months in Libya, which was then still a monarchy. On being demobilised he went straight into the Merchant Navy, where he spent a further 18 months. At that time the last thing on his mind was a career in modelling, and like many men, he started in the business by accident. When he was 21 or 22, (he can't remember exactly), he began singing in groups doing cover versions of Everley Brothers songs. He was with one group called Focus, (not THE Focus) and another group call The Sapphires.

Though his singing career kept him busy performing in clubs and the like, neither of his groups was a chart success, so he did other day jobs. One of these was working for Hepworth's the one-time menswear and tailor's shop, now part of the Next retail chain.

MODEL CAREER

After a while he was considered suitable material for management and decided to pursue this as a career. He was working at the Kensington branch where the models were measure for Hepworth's advertising campaigns when one day one of the models went sick and he was asked to stand in. When he was a child he had taken dancing lessons, (against his father's wishes), but apart from that he'd done nothing remotely relevant to modelling. Something about him must have impressed the ad agency though, because at the



time they were looking for a "Mr Hepworth", and when they met Derek they stopped looking.

SCOTTIES

The end result was that at the start of the Swinging Sixties his picture appeared both on Hepworth's carrier bags and on advertising posters the length and breadth of Britain. He was soon signed up by Scotties, at that time the largest model agency in London, and the combination of good looks and long dormant dance training led to him working in America, Japan and most of Europe. Derek says he enjoyed every minute of his modelling and showbiz career, certainly it was a far cry from managing a tailor's shop.

He did fashion shows, photographic work and commercials. Acquiring an Equity card, he also starred in an ITV thriller series, Department S, with Peter Wyngarde, and two films: North Sea Hijack, which starred Roger Moore, and Silver Dream Racer with David Essex.

Silver Dream Racer was about the last thing he did; prior to that he had been the milkman on TV for 2 years, and doing a lot of "dad" parts. Suddenly he was forty and working next to twenty year olds so decided to make what for many has become a natural transition, from model to model agent.

ORDINARY AGENCY

For two years he worked for another agency, virtually managing it, then left to start his own. At first, Derek's was an ordinary agency; he began with about twenty models and built it up to

about thirty-five or forty, which is quite small. Then after 4 years he took the bold decision to specialise. He explained the rationale behind this move saying that the business has changed dramatically since the 60s. Then there were only four agencies in the capital and all the models knew each other. Today there are over forty, and the competition is cut throat; there are too many agencies and too many "would-be" models chasing too little work. It is also very difficult for a small agency to compete with the big boys. They can afford to groom a particular model for stardom. He says if a small agency does this, once the model becomes known she leaves for one of the big agencies. (Now where have we heard that before?)

SPECIALISED

Derek's is now firmly established as THE Hand Model Agency, although one or two others are beginning to model hands too.

The agency is still small and is not likely to expand much; "it's an ideal one man business", he says. Derek has a part timer who helps out with the books, and a locum or two to run the show when he wants to get away. Altogether he has about 45 models on his books: 22 are regular models; of these, girls and men are split about two to one. The others are "character hands", who are used only occasionally for special jobs. These include navy and manual workers hands, hairy hands for Father Christmas and old hands. A few years ago he recruited his mother, now 76, to do a Mr Kipling commercial. As with ordinary modelling there is not that much work for black models but he keeps black and Asian hands in his speciality file along with the hairies and grannies.

WELL PAID

Hands modelling is very well paid. Derek's charge models 20% commission, which is standard, and "the models get paid as soon as we do." The rate for photographic work is £80 per hour; £300 a day for commercials. A commercial day is ten hours, and although hand models needn't be Equity, Equity rules apply when shooting for TV. All fees are negotiable.

EXTREMELY HIGH STANDARDS

If this sounds alluring, hold your horses! Because the agency is so small, Derek seldom takes on new models and in any case, the standards for hand modelling are extremely high. "Female hands have to be beautiful; skin tone, the whiter the better." This means totally unblemished: no scars, moles or blotches and of an even texture throughout. Fingers must be straight and have a good nail shape. "Black skin is not easy to photograph." While

men's hands don't have to be beautiful the standards are no less exacting. Occasionally a face is needed: the agency also models legs and does some work with feet, but again, the slightest blotch or imperfection will rule the potential model out.

60% of Derek's work is for TV; 40% photographic. For girls, about 50% is beauty: cosmetics, jewellery, hand-cream etc, and the other half is good housewife, including a tremendous amount of food work. Men can model anything from Guinness to car phones.

Though Derek himself is informal and easy to work with, he does have strong views on certain subjects. One of these is late payment by clients; another is rip-off agencies. Of the former he stresses it is always the big agencies who are the slowest payers, and the bigger they are the slower they are. All London agencies now levy a ten per cent service charge. "We have started doing it too, but we are the only agency to deduct it if paid within 30 days." So far it seems to work about half the time.

WARNING

Of rip-off agencies he warns they open and close every year, and that no would-be model should be taken in, parting with large sums of money on spec for a portfolio of test shots taken by a third rate back street photographer. He has even written a pamphlet, "How to become a model" which covers the dos and don'ts of modelling, including how not to be taken for a ride. Although it sounds rather expensive at four pounds for a mere sixteen pages, a quick flick through it could save many times that in wasted fees. It also gives the aspiring model some sound advice about how to assess her true potential, something no girl should have any illusions about. Derek Wayland is clearly a man who believes quality is far more important than quantity. In spite of the sharks, he is satisfied with the way the model business is run, and policed. He has been visited himself by government inspectors

who checked out his premises and examined the books, something about which he has no complaints.

Although he is fifty, Derek has no intention of taking early retirement. If and when he sells the business he says whoever takes it over will probably use the name to move back into mainstream modelling. In that event he plans to do a bit more acting, having kept up his Equity membership, and perhaps write a humorous novel based on the modelling business.

...YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE THAT SOMETHING EXTRA - STAR QUALITY...

Of modelling as a career he warns it is short and there are numerous pitfalls for the unwary, as well as the perennial problem of constantly chasing work. He says also: "...you've got to have that something extra - star quality, and very few people have for it." But he adds, if your mind is truly set on it, give it a whirl, because you can earn a lot of money in a very short time. "Having a second string to your bow also helps; dancing, for example, as today so much modelling is choreographed.



Model: RAY SUMBY for MAUNA LOA
Photograph: COLIN CLARKE



Model: ENNY LIYONS for ABACUS

16 RAY SUMBY



DEREKS' HANDS



6 JENNY WILL



Good Legs



6 JENNY WILL



Good Legs

