



JUNIOR JOURNALS

Working with Variety mentors, the newsletter staff for Looking Ahead (a program dedicated to helping young performers transition to adult lives) guest-edited these stories about issues affecting their peers.

The pros & cons of stage parents

KIDS' CHOICE

— Children should never be pushed to be in front of the camera, and many agents start by asking young would-be performers why they want to act. If their answer isn't convincing, it was probably the parents' idea.

+ When children genuinely want to act, stage parents can be their best advocate. While agents and managers are distracted with many clients, parents can proactively try to find auditions and opportunities for their own kids.

ONE LIFE TO LIVE

— Some stage parents seem to live through their kids, not recognizing when they are pushing too hard or being slow to adapt when their budding young star loses interest in performing.

+ Young performers can sometimes be too focused, and good parents encourage them to balance their lives by attending college, playing sports and pursuing hobbies apart from acting.

MONEY MATTERS

— In many cases, successful young actors are treated as cash cows for their parents' benefit.

+ If a child's earnings are properly managed, it can make their adulthood considerably more comfortable.

RIGHT ATTITUDE

— When the parents' happiness relies on their kids' success, it can put too much pressure on the child and possibly lead to emotional problems.

+ Parents who show they're proud of and love their children even if they aren't booking jobs.

— Rebecca Knight

OTHER ROLES AWAIT FORMER CHILD STARS

By PHILOMENA BANKSTON and CA'SHAWN SIMS

SHOWBIZ is one of the only businesses to hire children as professionals, but how many people can really be sure what they want to do with their lives at that age? And even if their minds are fixed, opportunities could dry up when their voice and body start to change.

"Puberty made that decision for me," says Jeff Cohen, who played Chunk in "The Goonies" and now works as a successful entertainment lawyer with Cohen & Gardner. His background helps him understand what actors need, and the new role allows him "to be an advocate for the rights of artists."

While many young performers eventually leave the business, Cohen is just one example of others for whom the same passion that brings them to Los Angeles in the first place can steer them toward other careers in entertainment.

When Chris M. Allport (who voiced Tootles in Fox Kids' animated "Peter Pan and the Pirates" series as a teen) transitioned into producing, he didn't see it as a change in career, but an "addition." Though he still acts from time to time, Allport enjoys the independence of filmmaking (he recently finished "The Bilderberg Club," which premieres this month). Instead of chasing down work, he now has the power of making opportunities for himself.

For 21-year-old Chris Rossi, moving from acting to publicity was a natural step. "Everybody said, 'Chris, you're so great at interacting with people in the industry, it's like you naturally just do the PR thing,'" says Rossi, who decided



SECOND ACTS: Chris Rossi, with Bailee Madison at the "Brothers" premiere, moved from acting to publicity.

to open his own firm, Rossi Public Relations, in May of this last year mainly because he felt like with his own background in acting, he could better relate to what the actor wants and needs from their publicist.

Though many young performers focus entirely on acting, as these success stories show, other entertainment jobs await for those who keep an open mind — and they needn't take the place of acting either. For Rossi, his new career actually makes auditioning easier. "Because I work with these people now, if the right part comes up, they will say, 'Chris, come in for that,'" he says.

LITTLE 'ORPHAN' ISABELLE

Young actress shares advice on how she aced a grown-up role

By COSIMA CABRERA

ORPHAN'S" unmistakably creepy image of a curly-haired brunette with ribbons around her neck and a uniquely morbid countenance is nothing like the effervescent actress who plays her, which might lead you to wonder how actress Isabelle Fuhrman, now 12 and distinctly mature for her age, was able to play a role that could have been emotionally dangerous for most children.

Following in the footsteps of "The Exorcist's" Linda Blair, Fuhrman worked hard to play an evil character with a dark secret. She acknowledges that at times the scenes were challenging, but that is precisely why she was interested in the part. Besides, Fuhrman insists, director Jaume Collet-Serra and the crew made sure the on-set experience was fun, not scary, for the actress and her kid co-stars, Jimmy Bennett and Aryana Engineer.

When asked what advice she has for other young performers cast in horror films, Fuhrman recommends, "Just try to be as crazy as possible and really leave yourself behind." Offscreen, Fuhrman is a genuine kid who has every Taylor Swift album, participates in Fun League sports at her school and is now writing a chick flick called "Days of December" with a friend for school. Unlike other kids, however, Fuhrman now receives fan mail and is eagerly anticipating her next role.



PAYING THEIR DUES: Auditioning is hard enough for adults. For teens it can be downright nerve-racking. I remember one casting director for whom I could never get my lines right when I auditioned. All my words would come out in a big garbled mess — embarrassing. Here are a handful of insights from other young performers that might make the process easier for others. — Compiled by Tanner Richie, "Nip/Tuck"



"When I was 8, I had my first audition. I had just gotten my new stage name and was practicing it repeatedly. I was so nervous! When

I got into the room, I slated the wrong name. I had to talk with the casting director afterward and say, 'Excuse me, but I forgot my name in the audition.'"

— Ashley Ann-Michaels, "The Next Movie"



"On the set one time, I had to dress up in a tiger suit and wear

red blush on my cheeks. The suit was hot and I felt embarrassed to walk around anywhere!"

— Eric Don, "Akeelah and the Bee"



"I've learned that if I don't get a part, it wasn't meant to be. Maybe I wasn't the right look or

height; it's nothing personal. I always remember that if I don't book a part, something better is on its way."

— Rebecca Knight, "The Bernie Mac Show"



"It is impossible for any audition to be a failure.' Looking past the end result of getting the job

and just focusing on having fun with your work can make acting more rewarding than you could imagine."

— Tyler Neitzel, "300"