

Just wanted to let you know about the current O1 status for actors as I saw that you doing another casting symposium and I have met several actors here recently that didn't know the situation with the TV networks and Film Studios and they have obviously been very disappointed when they've arrived – it is now not as easy as it once was yet Brits are so popular here and used in so many shows that its very frustrating to discover. It's also a minefield my US agent wouldn't know for example this info – it's simply not on their radar so this info has been gathered from many Brits in LA over the past year as well as several Casting directors and immigration lawyers. There are also alot of British people charging actors a grand plus to come over here meet casting directors etc.. for a week and sign up for O1's with certain lawyers without telling them the limitations.

It used to be that an actor could work here easily on an O1 visa (which is typically a three year work visa) on many different shows. The only limit was American Equity Theater – any venue larger then 99 seats. Due to the frustrating Equity exchange program one would need a Green Card to do this and in fact to join American Equity so it goes back to the old exchange program with an American actor and UK actor swapping Broadway for the Westend etc..for a specific duration and specific part/show.

Over the past year it has got steadily worse – There are now NO major TV channels that will accept it or even Daytime Soaps. I have met one exception a Norwegian man who could do a specialist skill for an episode of Bones but even then it almost didn't happen and the legal team worked overtime.. I have met two great actresses here who've worked extensively in the UK, one got offered the lead in a new NBC show was told the O1 wouldn't do and couldn't get her a Green Card processed through in time so lost out and a few months ago a great friend of mine secured a brilliant role in LOST only to have her bags packed and be on the way to Hawaii when again the O1 visa wasn't accepted!

There are some small to mid budget films prob under the 1 million dollar mark that will take them along with some commercials and voiceover's. But if the master financing is from one of the main studios then its a NO and this even includes webisodes as often they will be part of some larger packaging deal! Casting Directors will note "Not Legal" next to your name if you turn up with an O1 visa it's that bad. There are a handful of cable channels and

production companies for example shows like "I didn't Know I was pregnant" and anything on the Discovery Channel. But it is now really limiting. An actor can also only work as an actor on an O1 visa so it would be hard to then get the money together for the Green Card whilst they are here as they are so few jobs for them to work on.

So what can an actor do? Go for a Green Card as a person of extraordinary ability. Now depending on the actor's credits and profile they may still have to get an O1 first – it's a good stepping stone for a younger/newer actor. The Green Card application involves press and awards, facts and figures – great if you just won a BAFTA etc., also acceptable that you get out on the Indie circuit and are in films at the festivals – doesn't have to be Cannes but a professionally organized festival where your work is judged and appreciated by your contemporaries. the O1 visa requires reviews, letters of recommendation and some press. Both are around \$7000 each with lawyer fee's – the actual filing fee's are closer to \$1000 but that would mean an actor doing it blindly themselves which is possible but I have met Brits here that the process has taken them 10 years to complete – not recommended!

The good news is there are some excellent immigration lawyers in LA that specialize in foreign actor Green cards and they are getting them processed within 2 months!!

The other good news is that an actor doesn't have to be famous or super rich to do it either. Sure if you are..... then hire a publicist no joke! and get some press together and away you go – money makes everything much simpler in this process and each case is always a subjective offering. But I as a regular jobbing actor did a ton of short films and Indie features that got out to festivals. Working in UK theatre matters too it still has a reputation and if you have played a leading role in a Shakespeare play in a paid production it doesn't have to be the RSC that counts – keep reviews, programs and do local radio/press when in town.

From my experience British actors are not so great at drawing attention to themselves–many shows even regional tours/good fringe will have a press person even if they're doing another job too so if you think you might want a Visa/Green Card then take every opportunity to get your show and you're personality out there –

local radio interviews and ticket giveaways etc.. or if its Indie films then the Film-making magazines will almost certainly be interested. Be each other's publicists. There are lots of online journals too.

Another great opportunity to get a big bunch of press and raise one's profile is the Edinburgh Festival – again hire a publicist – expensive if you're a one-woman/man show great if there's a group of you and you've got a great product.. Working with charities/schools and offering your services as an actor and give them free publicity.

Actor's should know it's possible at any stage in their career to realistically go for it and work in America and there are so many more opportunities here even in a recession. My warning would be that auditions are so quick here 1 min in and out sometimes and you should be off-book, excellent at cold-read and able to drop/pick up the accent at a moments notice that you would want to be fully prepared for the experience and have good training.

So just wanted to fill you in as I am meeting people here every month with an O1 that are so disappointed – I have my Green Card on file now and wish I could've gone straight for it originally.

Let me know if this is helpful or if you need anymore or links to lawyers/cd's etc.. that have helped with the info..

One thing to note with the O1 is the sponsorship issue is an actor can take a trip over and do a go see where they find a manager or agent to sponsor them as it may bring the price down – the technical issue though with an O1 is that you are officially working for that manager or agent and thats what the studio's etc.. use as their reason for not hiring you – catch 22! Also if an actor has an O1 visa in process then they should also make sure their lawyer is processing it through SAG –some will put them through the variety guild and an actor will end up with actor/singer/dancer etc.. on their visa and it is just not as credible. Although even with all this done correctly its still not going to help as much as a Green Card.

There have been stories circulating about people photoshopping themselves on the front cover of magazines and some people have been refused entry so its important to do it properly.

If an actor is Irish/Australian/dual nationality they should already be in the Green Card lottery. It does seem to be hardest on the Brits as we have no lottery system.

Sorry for the mouthful but there is no info on this anywhere and i think its important for the jobbing actor to know all this

Best Wishes

Amy