

LYNDA LAGER

Making A Name For Herself As Washington Becomes A Filmmaking Capital

By Jeanne Nickerson

WHEN THE EDITOR of the *Hill Rag* decided to do a fashion feature earlier this year, she knew that she simply didn't have the staff or the time needed to pull everything and everyone together. So she called in an expert—Lynda Lager, president of T-H-E Artist Agency in Georgetown.

T-H-E Artist Agency is well equipped to handle production needs in photography, film and video. The agency helps advertisers, film companies and photographers coordinate everything necessary to produce a first-rate project. Ms. Lager and her staff coordinate hair and make-up artists, set locations and designs, fashion and wardrobe stylists, food stylists and even special-effects makeup artists. The one-of-a-kind agency has been so successful that she has recently added a new division for casting models and talent.

Business has more than tripled in the sixteen months since its inception. T-H-E artists have worked on many big projects including several magazine covers for *Washingtonian* and *Dossier*, and on the national level, they worked on the cover of *Ebony Men (EM)*, which featured Ray Leonard and his son and on the TV movie *Liberty*, which aired on NBC in July.

Ms. Lager, a petite woman from Georgia who bears a strong resemblance to Victoria Principal, is no stranger to hard work. A former freelance hair and make-up stylist, she founded her agency with experience gained from a number of creative pursuits including singing, acting and modeling. She recognized what many newcomers to the area are fast discovering: Washington is a relatively untapped gold mine for advertising and film pursuits.

In March of this year, the *Washington Business Journal* reported that "the making of motion pictures in the Washington metropolitan area is a \$100 million industry." Besides major movies such as *Heartburn*, *Power* and *Spies Like Us*, numerous documentaries, training films, TV commercials and videos have been filmed in DC. In 1979, Mayor Marion Barry established the Office of Motion Picture and Television Development, headed by David Simon. That office estimated that \$3.2 million was spent by filmmakers in DC in 1979. Last year the sum was \$30 million, and Simon predicts that the figure will rise to \$50 million this year. The *Journal* also reported that of all the groups involved in this process, the local production companies are benefitting the most.

"As local advertising agencies become more enamored with the quality of work, attractive costs and convenience of local production, more



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and more of their business is remaining in Washington, rather than being shipped out to New York or Los Angeles," reported Sewell Whitney for the *Journal*.

The success of T-H-E Artist Agency bears this out. "It was like a snowball," Ms. Lager said about her success in a recent interview. The ad agencies and production companies started to realize that local companies could produce a quality product for a quarter or half the price.

Ms. Lager claims that convenience is also a key to her agency's success. Instead of having to coordinate and pay

a dozen or so people for a project, her clients deal solely with T-H-E, which handles the individual fees and services and presents the client with one package and one bill.

In addition to helping clients, Ms. Lager has worked very hard to improve conditions for stylists and models in the area. She represents her artists and models on an exclusive basis, and therefore, she limits the number she represents in order to keep her services personal. She advises them on their strengths, helps them put together good portfolios, and most importantly, she pays them on a regular

basis.

When she first started her business, her colleagues all offered their enthusiastic support. However, some people told her that an agency such as hers would never make it in DC. After all, DC is not New York, right? Absolutely. In many ways it's even better, and Lynda has had the foresight to establish a production-related company in what increasingly seems to be a hot spot for the nation's filmmakers. She's dedicated to helping make DC the nation's leader (capital, if you will) in this exciting and fast-moving industry. ■