

N'daba Divine... Got the Part!

When On Location Casting ran a notice in June seeking extras to play juvenile detention inmates in the film *Gridiron Gang*, N'Daba Divine, who moved to L.A. from New York two years ago, was initially reluctant to submit. But there was something about it, "something in the back of my head [that] was just saying, 'You know what, just go give it a shot; you never know,'" he says.

When his photo crossed the desk of casting director Tina Kerr, she considered him for *Gridiron Gang* but then noticed that he had a little singing and dancing in his background, as well as "a great look," so she called him in

on another project, *American Dreamz*, which stars Hugh Grant, Mandy Moore, and Chris Klein. The film involves an *American Idol*-type show, and Kerr "knew that the performers that they were bringing in as featured extras...were being upgraded, because I knew that they were going to be given direction and asked to perform. So I kind of weighed the two out and went, 'Okay, he has a better look for this, and he has the skills that are more applicable to *American Dreamz*.'" Kerr considers the ability to judge a look a developed instinct, honed by 14 years of flicking through headshots. "The right person jumps out at you," she says. "It's not something you can teach." Director Paul Weitz apparently agreed, and Divine was called in.

Divine was hired as a featured background performer, which would have given him his first SAG voucher. After conversing



with Weitz, however, he was upgraded, given several speaking lines, and put under contract. He is now in the film as one of the finalists who goes up against Mandy Moore's character. And

as an additional highlight, he was invited to the wrap party at the Music Box in Hollywood.

His agent is advising him against getting his SAG card just yet, which leaves him available to work nonunion and union jobs. In the meantime he's marketing *Asunder*, which he filmed while studying at the American Musical & Dramatic Academy, to various casting directors and producers, and he's continuing to audition around town. Despite his trepidation at submitting to a cattle-call audition, Divine has learned, "Never think any audition...is beneath you. We're all up-and-coming actors, and any audition, no matter what it is, is an experience that can only lead to something better."

Has Back Stage West helped you get cast in the past year? We'd love to tell your story. Be in the new weekly column by calling (323) 525-2358 or emailing bswcasting@backstage.com with "I Got the Part" in the subject line.

**SAG-Eligible
Actor**