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# Unions

Like funions, but less delicious.

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# What is a Union?

Union is a set of workers in an industry who join together to negotiate contracts, fight for worker rights and organize things like protests and walk-outs against unfair treatment.

These unions govern themselves and often entail things like union fees, health insurance, exclusive contracts, regulations and joining requirements.

There are unions for all kinds of jobs: Bus drivers, welders, Disneyland workers, teachers, contracts, etc.

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ACTORS'  
EQUITY  
ASSOCIATION 1913



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# Theatre Unions

In theatre, there are a few unions you will run into often:

- International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE): Union for crew and designers.
  - Actors Equity (AE, Equity): Union for actors and stage managers.
  - Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA): Union for film, television, radio and voice over actors.
  - Teamsters: A general union of blue-collar jobs. Generally, we'll deal with them as truck drivers.
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# IATSE

IATSE is broken into many smaller unions known as “locals.” Each local serves a different purpose or area and has different rules and requirements for entree. There are hundreds of different locals.

Los Angeles is kind of an odd case. Mostly, locals serve just a region, and the local has members that do any job. In LA and some other areas, each local specializes in one field.

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# How IATSE works

IATSE has a list of members that they call to work on contracts OR there are contracts that only IATSE members can participate in.

IATSE bids on movies, theatres, concerts, etc, to be the providers the labor for them.

There are also certain venues that, no matter what show comes in, is staffed by IATSE members



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# Joining IATSE

Most locals have an “overhire list.” When a show comes to a IATSE run theatre, or when they acquire a contract, the local will first attempt to fill in all the labor from their ranks. If they are unable to, they call people from the overhire list.

Some locals treat the work an overhire does as kind of an interview. As you work with a local and prove your worth, they may ask you to join their ranks.

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# Joining IATSE



Another method of joining is acquiring “days.” Sometimes you’ll have the opportunity to work on an IATSE run film set or stage without being a member. Some of these jobs will accrue you “days” with the local. After X many days, you’ll be allowed to join the union.

The strangest method of joining is being on a production that “flips.” You’re working on non-union film, tv show or theatre piece that then becomes a IATSE contract. Certain crew members will become IATSE members.

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# Working in IATSE

Once you're in IATSE, you can take both Union and non-Union work. Some locals will call you to offer you IATSE jobs to work on, others simply unlock the ability to work on productions that you couldn't even apply for before.

On top of your initial joining fee, locals will also have "union dues," or membership fees every 1-2 months.

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# Notable Locals

Here are a list of notable locals:

- Local 1: The main NYC stagehand local.
  - USA 829: Special local for designers and artists
  - Local 33: Los Angeles general stage crew
  - Local 800: LA Art Directors
  - Local 705: LA Costumers
  - Local 44: LA Props
  - Local 728: LA Lighting
  - Local 695: LA Sound
  - Local 80: LA Grips, medics, warehouse and crafty
  - Local 122: San Diego Stagehands
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# Actors Equity



The Union for Stage managers and actors. Why both? A huge part of the stage manager's job is guarding the actors rights, breaks and safety. Holding both the actors and the stage managers in the same union makes that far easier.

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# Joining Equity

The most common way is by getting a contract. In general, the principles of a show are Equity actors, with chorus and other parts being not-union. When you negotiate your contract, you can sometimes work it to be an equity contract. There isn't really a steadfast rule to when it can be offered to you.

For SMs, it's the same process, but typically you start as an ASM.

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# Being in Equity



As an equity SM or actor, you can not work on non-equity shows. If one does, there are penalties from a fine to expulsion from the union.

Actors and SMs can get pardons from equity and they are generally granted, but they have no obligation to.

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# Equity Benefits

So why join a constricting union?

Equity guarantees certain things like, oh, pay and breaks as well as certain safety regulations.

A non-equity place has no rules. They can run a 12 hour rehearsal with no breaks and the only thing stopping them is the willingness of the actors.

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## General Union Benefits

Many unions including IATSE, SAG-AFTRA and Equity will have certain benefits, such as health insurance.

To get these benefits, one typically has to work X many hours or days in a month.

There's also a bit of job security with having more and better work available to you. Even if you do eventually leave the union, having been in it looks great on the resume.

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