I've recently been casting a movie. It gave me the opportunity to meet with a wide range of actors. I hit all four quadrants, as they say—both sexes and an age range from the 20s to the 60s. It's been fun and fascinating.

The level of talent and skill that's out there, especially 40 years old and above, is simply amazing. It's an arbitrary age line, I suppose, but by that time the players really have learned their craft. They had to, in order to survive that long. Actors in their 30s are also amazing, although their skills at character work aren't as strong as those who have been doing it longer.

Then we come to the under-30s. It seemed to me there were more strong actresses than actors. Don't know why. Maybe girls mature earlier, while guys are still messing around. The category most in demand, naturally, is young beautiful actresses.

That makes sense, doesn't it? You can't have a movie without an ingenue. Beautiful girls who are young and can act are very much in demand. It's also the category which is the most highly paid in Hollywood right now. Excluding the few major stars who are left, the heat is all on the girls.

All right, now you want to know what's even in more demand than beautiful young actresses? Beautiful young actresses who are funny. There's been a sudden spurt in demand, what with the success of female-driven comedies on TV and movies like BRIDESMAIDS. If you're attractive, can hit your marks and get your words out and make people laugh, there's a place

for you in Hollywood right now.

I can't say the lack of funny, beautiful young girls is a surprise. Just putting the adjectives together is jarring. Anybody remember that beautiful girl in high school who was always cutting up, had you rolling in the aisles, couldn't stop cracking jokes, was big on whoopee cushions? No, I don't either.

What I do remember is the beautiful girl who wouldn't acknowledge my existence. This is John Hughes territory. Those girls wouldn't talk to you. Ever. They wouldn't talk to Carrie either, which was why she got so pissed (genre nod there, 'cause this is FANGORIA). But we've moved on from that now. Or we're in the process of doing so.

The beautiful girl is no longer the one we hate, or expect to be mean and stuck-up. No, now she is not only beautiful, but also approachable, someone you can pal around with. She is now nonstop funny. In fact, you can't shut the bitch up, because right now, funny, young women are big in the movies.

OK, so now we know there's a need. There are surely many beautiful young women—don't forget young—who would exert themselves to be funny, especially if it could get them into movies and make them rich and famous. In fact, I'm sure there are tons.

The only problem is, one can't choose to be funny. You can't teach it, you can't direct someone to get a laugh, you can't write funny dialogue for someone who doesn't have the gift and expect them to be hilarious. You can't do anything if the person isn't funny to begin with. Believe me, I've tried.

Actors either have a funny bone or they don't, just like real people. If the actor can do comedy, you can tell them where the laugh or the grin is in the dialogue and they'll nail it. Same with physical comedy: Show a comedian the funny in a slow burn, a double-take, a slip, a fall, a tumble down the stairs, getting run over by a car, they'll give it to you and more.

Simply, some people are funny and others aren't. Now throw in beautiful as a requirement, and

you have a very limited talent pool.

Do I have any advice for aspiring beautiful comedy actresses desirous of taking advantage of this momentary hole in the Hollywood acting pool? Sorry, no, but I will note that when I've looked at the résumés of those lovely young women who made me laugh, a number of them had theater experience.

Nothing teaches you how to get a laugh like a live audience. You learn quickly, because nothing's worse than a funny moment that doesn't get a response. You know it immediately with a live audience. It's called silence. Dead silence. Scarier than the scariest thing you've seen in any horror movie, especially if you're the person up there on the stage, or the guy who wrote the screenplay that just left an audience cold, or the director responsible. On the other hand, making people laugh is pure joy. There's no satisfaction quite like it. You're bringing pleasure to people. You're entertaining them. You can hear it. There's no stronger affirmation that something you did works.

Over the years, the demand for comedians, male and female, has surged and retreated, but it has never gone away. We all want to laugh, even while we're crying. Improv theater is suddenly hot again, comedy clubs not so much. Rom-coms, sitcoms and now female ensemble comedy don't require standup as much as acting orientation. Comedy for the moment is playing with other actors, in scenes, dialogue mixed with physical comedy.

Beautiful girls have always been the staple of Hollywood. It's just that at the moment, there's a demand for funny and beautiful. It's a grand old tradition, too. Look up Mabel Normand, Marion Davies, Carol Lombard, or think of Lucille Ball, Marilyn Monroe, right on up to now, with Kristen Wiig, Sarah Silverman and on and on. Or rather not so on and on, because you'll quickly run out of names in today's generation.

Too bad, too, 'cause beauty and laughs can go together. It's a special gift, an unusual combination. If you've got 'em, there's a need here in Hollywood.