

Published by:

The PAGE International
Screenwriting Awards
7510 Sunset Blvd. #610
Hollywood, CA 90046
www.pageawards.com

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Letter from the Editor

The excitement is building, as the Quarter-Finalists in the [2015 PAGE Awards](#) contest will be announced on July 15. Here's hoping your script appears on that list!

For writers, one of the best ways to get in touch with top literary managers is eMeetings, our cutting-edge, one-of-a-kind social media program. Post a profile, listen to my podcast interviews with the participating reps, and then send personalized, targeted queries that introduce them to your most appropriate material. We are now accepting registrations for our [Summer Series!](#)

With summer in full swing, we offer an array of hot takes on the practice of screenwriting. This edition of the **LOGLINE** eZine begins with 2012 PAGE Award winner Frank DeJohn, who offers advice about taking meetings and developing projects with Hollywood professionals. PAGE Judge Heidi Hornbacher helps writers understand the true value of Judge's Feedback. John Truby, authority on all things genre, lauds *Mad Max: Fury Road* for coming close to *Seven Samurai* as an action classic. Dr. Format himself, Dave Trottier, talks time lapses and detail in description. Industry insider Marvin V. Acuna shares five mantras for successful screenwriting. The sun sets on this issue with three leads from InkTip.com.

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ The new action spec *Blood Drive*, by 2006 PAGE Award winner Christian Parkes, has taken one more big step towards production. Solution Entertainment Group has come on board to finance and distribute the film. *Blood Drive* will be directed by Brian Taylor and produced by Sentinel Entertainment and Permut Presentations. Christian is represented by Paradigm and PAGE Judge Jeff Belkin at Zero Gravity Management.
- ◇ The assassin thriller *The Accountant*, by 2008 PAGE Gold Prize Winner Bill Dubuque, recently wrapped production in Georgia, and *Variety* reports that Warner Bros. will be releasing the film on January 29, 2016. Directed by Gavin O'Connor, the movie stars Ben Affleck, Anna Kendrick, J.K. Simmons and John Lithgow. Bill is represented by PAGE Judge Eric Williams at Zero Gravity Management and Trevor Astbury at CAA.
- ◇ 2011 PAGE Silver Prize winner Joe Webb has been hired as a staff writer on the hit Fox series *Sleepy Hollow*. Joe is represented by Brett Etre Management and WME.
- ◇ Mitchell Peck of Peck Entertainment has optioned the 2014 Grand Prize-winning action/adventure script *Three of Swords*, by Matias Caruso. Matias is based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is represented by Jennifer Au at Untitled Entertainment.
- ◇ Chris Charles of Throughline Films has optioned the 2011 Silver Prize-winning drama *Second Glance*, by Sue Morris. Sue is a U.K.-based writer whose indie sci-fi movie *The Drift* was released earlier this year. Chris says: "We discovered Sue's script on InkTip. Having read PAGE Award winners in the past, I knew *Second Glance* was worth consideration. Contests like PAGE really help us identify the more talented and experienced writers."

2015 PAGE Awards Quarter-Finalists Announced July 15!

Welcome to Hollywood: Learning the Ropes

by Frank DeJohn

Like many aspiring screenwriters, my writing partner David Hedges and I struggled for years to get our work in front of the right people, without any success. Trying to break into the industry, our life was all about query letters, pitchfests and deafening silence.

Frank DeJohn and his writing partner David Hedges won a 2012 PAGE Bronze Prize for their script *Legion*. The script is currently in development at Di Bonaventura Pictures. Additionally, Frank and David were recently hired to write *The One*, about the life of young Jesus, for A&E. They are represented by Benderspink and UTA.

Then we caught a break. In 2012, we won a PAGE Award in the Action/Adventure category for our historical feature script *Legion*. That industry encouragement meant the world to us.

In 2013 our script was chosen as one of the winners of the Academy Nicholl Fellowships in

Screenwriting and shortly before the announcement, Jake Wagner and Daniel Vang from Benderspink drove up to Santa Barbara to meet us for lunch. We signed with them right then and there. The following week they set up meetings with the top talent agencies, and we ultimately decided to go with UTA. Finally, we had representation! It was surreal.

That's how quickly and profoundly things can change. That's why they say, "Never give up." One day we were writing in total obscurity, the next we found ourselves catapulted into the business of screenwriting. And it could happen to you too!

When that time comes, hopefully you will have a great team of managers and agents to guide you through the looking glass, just like we did. They kicked open the doors for us and set up a series of "general" meetings. General meetings are an opportunity to meet producers and creative execs to discuss your script and to give them an opportunity to see if they might want to hire you, now or in the future, to write one of their projects.

When you go into a general meeting, the main rule, first and foremost, is to be yourself. Have fun. You worked your butt off to get to this place, so enjoy it.

Creative execs want to find a writer they can work with for the next six months, developing a story. You want to be that person. So before you go into the meeting, you want to find out as much as you can about the person and company with whom you are meeting, what they've produced, and what they are working on now.

While it's great hearing someone talk about the script you've written, in general meetings with a production company you want to take advantage of the opportunity to find out if anything on their horizon might be a good fit for you. We have liked (almost) all of the producers and creative execs we've met, and we've identified some fantastic people whom we look forward to working

with in the future. These are very talented **story people**, all dedicated to getting movies made.

Shortly after our first set of general meetings, we got the opportunity to try for an open writing assignment, a network movie about the life of young Jesus. There were a lot of steps to land this assignment. First, we took a call from the producers who would make the movie. They gave us a general idea of what the network was looking for.

Then we worked up our "take" on how we'd approach the story, and pitched it to the producers over the phone. The take was on target, so they set up a meeting at the network for us to pitch in person. We made our pitch and got hired on the spot. It was our first paying gig.

Next we set out to develop the outline, and this is when the producer notes began. Making movies is a collaborative process from beginning to end. A big part of the game is being flexible and objective — you have to be able to take criticism of your work. It's tricky stuff. While it's easy to accept an idea that clearly improves the story, not all suggestions appear workable at first glance. There can even be conflicting voices or viewpoints with which you have to contend.

When we came up against a note that was difficult to implement, or vague in its intent, we tried to look for the "note-behind-the-note" and fix the underlying problem. It's challenging for sure, but in the end, if the script improves, that's all that matters.

We've learned a lot in the last year and a half, and we continue to learn something new from each project we tackle. Knowing which assignments to make a play for is a whole new skill set. Fortunately for us, our agents and managers have been there to guide us to the right projects and steer us away from others less likely to lead to us to success. We've also improved our turnaround time on developing our pitches, which matters because other writers are often competing for the same assignments.

Another thing we've learned is that you may have a great take on a project, but in the end it simply isn't what they want. It's incredibly tough when you put in a lot of work developing a storyline, only to see it go nowhere. I guess what I'm really saying is that you have to have a pretty thick skin. Not everything goes your way. A promising opportunity can simply fade away with the changing of a studio head. A lot of it is out of your hands. In the end, you just try to do your best work. If you run into a wall, you have to let it go and move on to your next project.

We are still at the beginning of our careers and have plenty to learn about how this business works. Every step thus far has had new challenges and surprises, but honestly, that has been part of the fun. It's a total blast to work with creative people on a project, whether it's developing your own spec or working on a writing assignment. And I can't wait for the day when we see a movie we've written up on the big screen. Fingers crossed.

Taking Notes: Thoughts on Receiving Judge's Feedback

by Heidi Hornbacher

Months of pain and hard work. Maybe years. That's what it takes to craft a script you're proud of. You know there's something there. In fact, you're sure of it.

So you submit your script to a contest. Maybe you won't win, but at least they'll give you some feedback with ideas on how to make your script even more brilliant, like "you're missing a comma on page 47." You'll probably win though. The script is that good.

Heidi Hornbacher is an independent producer, director and writer with features, shorts and music videos to her credit. She was recently hired to write two features and has a series of novels in the works. A graduate of UCLA's screenwriting program, Heidi is a founding partner of the script consulting company [PageCraft](#). She has run retreats, workshops and classes with the goal of helping writers find their voices, and her coaching has helped a number of her clients win contests and find representation.

And then you don't win.

If you're like me, you go through a range of "pearls before swine" and "unappreciated in my own time" thoughts, experiencing righteous anger.

"Those judges don't know anything! They're just trying to be mean! Aren't they?"

Then, if you can take a deep breath and really look at the notes, you digest them. You see that maybe some of the

notes have merit. And you open up that script and start a rewrite.

I've been teaching screenwriting since 2008. I love it. I love the opportunity to help shape writers and their work. I love seeing that spark when they get why something isn't working and suddenly make it work. But I get in-person time with them and we develop a rapport. They know that they can trust me and that their success is my goal.

With contest judging, I don't see you and you don't see me. I read your work and I work hard to give you useful, critical notes that could help you take your work to the next level. But I know how we are. I know how tempting it is to curse the faceless jerk who had the audacity to overlook your inherent brilliance.

One of the trickiest parts of being a writer is taking notes. I don't mean writing down what Robert McKee says about how to structure your second act. I mean absorbing and processing constructive criticism, even when the advice seems completely insane. Notes are not usually what we want to hear, and depending on the source, they can be downright insulting.

The thing is though, ALL notes can add value to your writing. Whether or not you agree with a specific note, people are giving you that note for a reason. They're bumping on something.

If your protagonist was compelling and relatable, with clear goals and something at stake, the person giving you feedback would probably not have suggested that you change her into a chimpanzee. This means that something in your script isn't working.

As vindicating as it feels to discard notes you don't like – believe me, you will always want to – there is value in looking for **the note behind the note**.

Chimpanzees are probably not the solution to what ails your script – or they might be the perfect fix – but try to turn that annoying note into a valuable one.

Try to figure out why this person thought monkeys were a good idea. What might be missing in your main character's dialogue, way of being, actions and/or choices that made the reader think "what this needs is a chimp!?" Because I guarantee you that if this person bumped up against it, others will too.

The most important thing is staying open to notes. I recently worked with a writer who'd experienced a fair measure of success as a journalist and came to screenwriting with a cavalier "I'm a professional writer, so how hard can this be?" attitude. The answer: much harder than you think. This writer dug his heels in and became unwilling to accept any notes other than "your script is great," despite the fact that the protagonist's motivations made no sense and goals were non-existent.

As writing coaches, we only ever give notes to help. We don't gain anything by making you feel bad. It may be hard to hear, but if you can develop a facility for hearing the harshest notes, you will only grow as a writer.

Of course, this requires setting the ego aside and that can be a big challenge...especially for those who think they should be a great screenwriter on the first try. Personally, I spent a decade getting humbled.

Most of the writers I know who've been doing this for a while have learned to crave the tear-down. Your mom will tell you your script is great. That doesn't forward your work. Look for colleagues and trusted readers who will find the holes in plot, character motivation and dialogue, then tear them apart. And learn to embrace the destruction!

Find sources you respect. But also learn to respect notes from sources you wouldn't choose, but have to accept...like the exec who might be able to forward your idea to her boss. Ultimately, learning how to take notes will make your plot, characters and story stronger. And stronger sells.

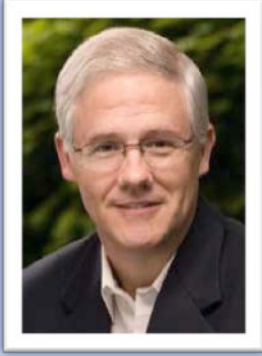
My hope is that with each set of feedback I send into the ether, the writer will move through any anger and resentment quickly, understanding that we can all do better. Our work can always be tighter, sharper, funnier, scarier, more heartbreaking, more human.

My hope is that you hear the feedback in the supportive spirit in which it was written. My hope is that in some small way it strengthens your writing, and maybe someday you'll look back on a long career and say, "I once got some feedback that was tough to hear at the time, but it made a difference and I'm a better writer for it."

Because at the end of the day, that's why you seek feedback and that's why we give it.

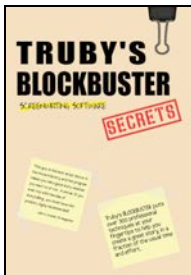
Writing the Action Film – *Mad Max: Fury Road*

by John Truby



John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his 22-Step Great Screenwriting and Genre courses to sold-out audiences in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Sydney, Rome, Toronto and other far-flung locales. Over the past 20 years, more than 40,000 students have taken Truby's 22-Step class and rave about the insights and direction it has given them. He is also the author of *The Anatomy of Story*. *Booklist* declares, "Truby's tome is invaluable to any writer looking to put an idea to paper." To learn more about John Truby's classes, screenwriting software, and story consultation services, please visit www.truby.com today.

John Truby's "Action" Audio Class



Want to Write an Action Script That Sells?

Action is what film was invented for. Action is the epic hero, the one who changes a nation, who wins the day, who succeeds in life.

This course shows you exactly how to write the most highly choreographed of all movie genres, from the various action heroes to all the beats of the major story forms. Don't miss this detailed blueprint for success.

[Click here](#) to learn all about it.

Now available at [The Writers Store](#).

Mad Max: Fury Road is nuttier than a fruitcake. It's also the second best Action movie in history, behind *Seven Samurai*, which happens to be the best movie ever made. *Fury Road* doesn't have anywhere near the scope or complexity of *Seven Samurai*. But its narrative drive (literally) is off the charts, with 120 minutes of almost non-stop, hand-to-hand combat on top of a speeding bullet.

The artistry of *Fury Road* comes from the script, which uses a modified Buddy Picture structure, in this case between a man and woman (Max and Furiosa). As in the classic Love Story, these characters begin their relationship with a fight, and it's a really good one. We know going in that Max, as embodied by Tom Hardy, is a first class warrior. After this fight, we know Furiosa is too. And Charlize Theron is every bit as believable as Hardy.

Buddy pictures, when wedded to the Action form, are all about the action dance between the two friends. The dance is the key beat in the Love Story because it shows us love played out in action. The same is true in Action Buddy films. Through necessity, Max and Furiosa create a partnership, not a friendship. Once that partnership takes form, the rest of the film is one frenzied dance where these two take on an army.

If there is a better 2-person team of warriors in film history, I can't think of them. The fact that one of them is female just makes it better. The male-female distinction allows us to watch the mutual respect slowly unfold between them, and the payoff is sweet. The fact that, as a great warrior, Furiosa is fighting for women, who couldn't be more abused in this animal hell, just makes her more complex and appealing.

For writers of the Action form, the question arises: is there one technique that makes all of this possible? Not surprisingly, it's in the story structure. *Fury Road's* structure is simple and classic Action: a straight line run and back. And I do mean run. This simple spine is crucial to the power of the film, because it supports all the amazing action set pieces, the spectacular story world, and the slowly developing relationship between the leads (for all the techniques of great Action writing, see the [Action Class](#)).

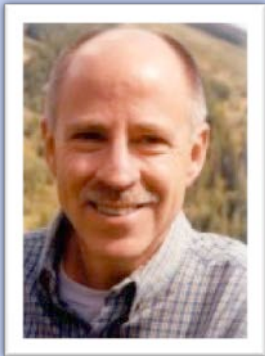
One of the basic principles of story, true in every genre, is: the more you want to "hang" on the story, the simpler the structure must become. An element you hang on a story is anything that doesn't move the story forward, that doesn't contribute directly to the hero's desire. Action set pieces, which are all about appreciating the warrior's physical skills in the present, are a perfect example. So is exploring the story world, which has become one of the most important trends in worldwide popular storytelling.

Weak plot is probably the biggest flaw in most Action films. It's not a problem here for a few reasons. First, the narrative drive is so intense the audience doesn't have time to grow bored. Second, the writers excel in micro plot, coming up with infinitely new ways for the opponents to attack the heroes. Third, instead of the repetitive plot we often get with the classic Myth story, where the hero overcomes a succession of unconnected opponents on the path, here the plot develops organically because the heroes battle the same opponents in an accelerating punch-counterpunch.

Fury Road is the best depiction of dystopia in film history. That's saying a lot. From *Metropolis* to *Blade Runner*, from *Lord of the Rings* to *Hunger Games* and so many more, there have been some great dystopian visions, which no medium can express as well as film can. *Fury Road's* vision of hell shows the land, people and technology badly out of balance. An arid wasteland is populated by human savages competing to the death for scarce resources like water and gas. A ruthless tyrant enslaves the masses. Women especially are degraded, used as "breeders."

All of this is beautifully realized, but we've seen it many times before. So why is this vision of hell the best? Because this is hell expressed through story, at top speed. Those other dystopian visions we can watch from the comfort of our seats. But in *Fury Road*, we're living that hell ourselves. No escape. We are Max chained to the front of that vehicle in a war that never ends. The story is constantly demanding: tell me, how does it feel?

This apparently simple script accomplishes the first requirement of popular storytelling today, in all genres and all media forms: intense narrative drive. Study it to see how that's accomplished in the writing. It will give you useful lessons for anything you write.

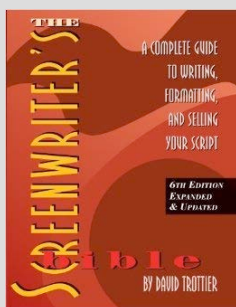


Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), Dave's primer for both aspiring and professional scribes, is perhaps the most comprehensive industry guide on the market.

To learn more about Dave Trottier's books, classes and mentoring services, visit: www.keepwriting.com. For \$20 off a script evaluation done by Dave, email him at dave@keepwriting.com.

Dave Trottier's

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The Devil Is in the Details

by Dave Trottier

TIME LAPSES

READER'S QUESTION:

I'm stumped. I want to show a time lapse from day to night for a story reason. A character, Jimmy, parks a Chevy automobile next to a building; someone is locked in the trunk (established in an earlier scene). I want to focus on the Chevy while everything around it changes. Jimmy will stand by the car, then disappear. The sequence will end in a light rain for the next scene. How do I format that?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

The fact that you have a "story reason" for this time lapse is what prompted me to respond. I would use a format similar to the MONTAGE. How about something like this, which follows the basics of formatting what we see?

TIME LAPSE

The Chevy stays in the same place as everything around it changes.

-- Jimmy disappears.

-- The day evolves into night as lights go on, then out, in the building behind the car.

-- Two teenagers gather around the Chevy, then disappear.

-- A light rain drizzles.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

The only sound is the rain on the Chevy. And then the usual sounds of morning become apparent.

HOW MUCH DETAIL?

READER'S QUESTION:

After watching movies like *The Ring* and *Identity*, I was wondering how much of the script actually turns into the visuals we see on the screen. My main question is when writing, how much description of key actions can the writer use throughout the script if it is relevant to the story?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

If an action moves the story forward or adds to character, then write it. A spec script should contain specific details, but only those details that are important to the story or which reveal character.

For example, here is a small detail from a script.

Selma picks up her cup of coffee.

Normally, this incidental detail is unnecessary. It's not important enough to keep. On the other hand, if there is poison in that cup of coffee, then it is a key detail that should be in the script.

If there is a fight scene, describe the scene so that the reader can visualize it. You don't have to choreograph the fight, but you need to describe blows and tumbles. What the director chooses to use or not use is up to him/her.

Remember, your job is to give readers goosebumps, tense their muscles, make them laugh, or bring tears to their eyes. You can't do that with general or vague details such as "They fight" or "They make love." At the same time, don't add unnecessary details. Remember, the more you write, the more you will get a sense of how much detail to add. So keep writing.



Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He recently produced the features *Chez Upshaw*, starring Kevin Pollak and Illeana Douglas, and *Lovelace*, with Amanda Seyfried, Peter Saarsgard and James Franco.

Previously, he executive produced *The Great Buck Howard* (starring John Malkovich) and *Two Days* (Paul Rudd, Donal Logue), among other films.

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Five Powerful Mantras for Success

by Marvin V. Acuna

Want to know how to make your ambitions a reality? Here are five powerful mantras for screenwriting success.

Mantra #1: Know Yourself

Have a deep understanding of your strengths AND weakness. By doing so, you're able to better communicate who you are and what value you can contribute to other people. Listen – we all have weaknesses. Recognizing your weaknesses allows them to serve you, rather than harm you.

A simple example: You have the ability to craft great characters and dialogue, but struggle with developing original commercial ideas. In this instance it serves you to seek out source material such as books, articles, or to partner/collaborate with someone that is a great idea person, but struggles with really fleshing out characters. See how that works?

Mantra #2: Personality Is Your Unique Selling Proposition

Your unique selling proposition is what makes you different from every other screenwriter in Hollywood. Fortunately, your personality can help you do just that. Your personality is what makes you STAND OUT. It cannot be copied. So don't wait until you become comfortable to show people your true colors. There are literally thousands of screenwriters vying for their shot in Hollywood. Many will go unrecognized because they simply blend into the herd like sheep.

If you are unclear as to what makes you unique, ask trusted friends and family. Because you are not just selling screenplays, you are selling yourself too.

Mantra #3: Be Consistent

Whenever your genre is brought up in conversation, people should say, "Oh that's something (YOUR NAME) does." The more people can associate you with something, the more your name will get out there through word-of-mouth. It's important that you become the go-to person for something. Do you write in a style or genre that is "familiarily different?" Does your unique view of the world offer a fresh written perspective to an old idea or theme? In essence, what is your brand? Are you Doritos, or are you generic, run-of-the-mill potato chips?

Mantra #4: Passion, Expertise, and Support are MUSTS

Passion. It will fuel you when times get rough...and I promise you, they will. Everyone, and I do mean everyone, has challenges from time to time. And it's your passion that will power you through when things seem bleak and hopeless.

Expertise. You must become an expert in your business. This separates you from the pack. You may even become a pack leader! If you're not an expert you become like everyone else, and that's NOT a good thing in this business.

Support. You need a core group of trustworthy people who can serve as your support system. But let's be clear, this does not mean that they serve as your venting and whining group. It should be a group of people who simply remind you of your successes and the bigger picture, or maybe point you in a new direction.

Mantra #5: Do More Than the Minimum

Doing the bare minimum creates minimum results. This business requires tenacity, perseverance, sacrifice, and simply put – hard work. I promise you this: you will get what you put into this business. I understand that you may find yourself exhausted after a long day of work. We all have duties we are bound to. But if you neglect the short-term responsibilities (creating fresh inventory, mining market intelligence, and networking) of your screenwriting business, then you simply won't generate the long-term results you desire.

I hope this list was helpful to you. I urge you to follow these five mantras and achieve the screenwriting success you desire and deserve.



Sell Your Script

Hot Leads from [InkTip.com](http://www.inktip.com)

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER!

Please submit your work only if it seems like a **perfect fit** for these companies' needs. If you aren't sure your script meets their criteria, please check with jerrol@inktip.com before submitting it. **Do not contact the production company directly.** Thanks!

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR SCRIPT:

1. Go to <http://www.inktippro.com/leads/>
2. Enter your email address
3. Copy/paste the corresponding code

iMark Films

[code: 752n8j8vk1]

We are looking for completed, feature-length buddy action comedies with a lead role for a middle-aged tough-guy male. As such, we are interested in comedic action scripts with an unlikely pair of leads who spend the majority of the film together (scripts in the vein of *Midnight Run*). We are especially interested in stories set on the East Coast, particularly New York or New Jersey.

Our credits include *Life's Passing Me By* and the series *The Invaders: Angie's Logs*, among others.

Budget is TBD. WGA and non-WGA writers may submit.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

Status Media & Entertainment

[code: a45bwsrta5]

We're looking for high-concept thriller and crime/thriller scripts. Note that by "high concept" we mean projects that can be pitched in a very short sentence.

Budget will not exceed \$5M. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Checkmate* and *Decommissioned*.

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!

Arnold Leibovit Entertainment

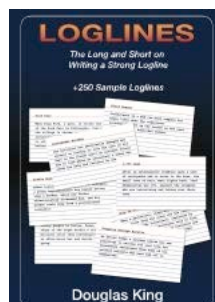
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We're looking for "pathos and humor" scripts, by which we mean scripts in the vein of Nora Ephron or Ron Howard (wit, humor AND stakes). No hard dramas – we want tears and tearjerker moments, but from life-affirming moments, not tragedy. Material should have a positive ending but not be holiday stories, family-friendly kiddie fare or Hallmark Channel-type material.

Budget TBD. Non-WGA writers only, please.

Our credits include the forthcoming *I Want My Baby Back* (script found on InkTip).

Please submit your work only if it fits the above description exactly. If you aren't sure, email jerrol@inktip.com. Thanks!



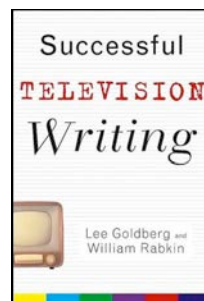
LOGLINES

The importance of a strong logline cannot be underestimated. Many times the logline is the only exposure a writer may have to producers, agents, and managers.

In 35 to 45 words, writers must be able to distill down the very essence of their film story, including protagonist, antagonist, setting, inciting incident, conflict, and jeopardy. (Describing a logline just took 33 words.)

This quick reference guide offers step-by-step instructions to learn the art and craft of writing the all-important logline.

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