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Letter from the Editor

The May 15 Final Entry Deadline for the 2012 PAGE Awards is close at hand. Don't miss this opportunity to kick-start your screenwriting career! And whatever stage of development your script is at – first draft or fifth – ordering Judge's Feedback gives you script-specific development advice from industry readers, helping you to identify where and how you can bridge any gaps between amateur status and the pro level. [Enter the contest](#) today!

Insight from Hollywood professionals is also what **LOGLINE** provides, every other month since 2008. This summer edition is no different. We begin with 2009 Gold Prize winner Rob Sudduth, who pulls back the curtain for a peek into an ABC dramedy's writer's room (*GCB*, Sundays). The importance of pushing the envelope and shocking your reader is the topic tackled by PAGE Awards Judge Jeff Miller. One of my favorite shows, AMC's *Mad Men*, is the subject of genre whiz John Truby's latest study of writing challenges and how to surmount them.

Unsure about what to put in a scene header? Don't know what a "secondary location" is? Never fear, Dr. Format Dave Trottier tells all! Industry insider Marvin V. Acuna introduces the Mastermind Group, a dynamic new concept for achieving collective career goals. As always, we close out the issue with three promising leads from production companies posting their script needs on InkTip.com.

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ The new feature *Memorial Day*, written by 2007 PAGE Award winner Marc Conklin, starring James Cromwell and Jonathan Bennett, had its official premiere on April 21, 2012, at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival. The movie will be released over Memorial Day weekend.
- ◇ 2008 Gold Prize winner Lee Arcuri has just landed a development deal with ABC to write an original drama pilot for the network. Shortly after his PAGE win, Lee was signed by PAGE Judge Joe Riley of Eyes on the Road Management, and he became a client of the Kaplan Stahler Agency last year.
- ◇ David Luna's 2011 Gold Prize-winning sci-fi script *Synapse* has been optioned by Rowena Li of IMA Productions, who discovered the screenplay through our co-sponsor InkTip.com. As a result of his PAGE win, David is also in active development on a new sci-fi feature for Torn Sky Entertainment.
- ◇ Christian Parkes' 2006 Silver Prize-winning action script *The God Bringer* (now titled *P.O.V.*) has been picked up by Nu Image/Millennium Films. The movie will be directed by Ric Roman Waugh (*Felon*, *Snitch*). Christian is represented by PAGE Judge Jeff Belkin of Foremost Films.
- ◇ 2011 Gold Prize winners Daniel Frey & Russell Sommer have been signed by one of L.A.'s top management firms. Dan writes: "It's been a busy and exciting new year for us. Madhouse Entertainment is now managing us, and we're working with them on our next project. Thanks so much for everything you do at the PAGE Awards."

The [2012 PAGE Awards](#) Final Entry Deadline is May 15, 2012!

“Dare to Suck”

by Rob Sudduth

When I was an actor, one of my favorite teachers told us that in order to advance in our craft, we had to “dare to suck.” We were instructed to go for it and make choices – even if they weren’t the right ones. A crazy mess of a performance is at least more memorable than a safe, middle-of-the-road one. Right? Well, I quit acting years ago to focus on writing, but this philosophy

Rob Sudduth won the 2009 PAGE Awards Gold Prize for his feature *Going to Gunn*, and he was subsequently signed by Metamorphic Entertainment and UTA. He is now a staff writer on Robert Harling’s new ABC dramedy *GCB*. For fun, Rob enjoys making limoncello, playing dodge ball and teaching his pugle to play dead.

always stayed with me. I was certain I’d be able to use it again one day. I just didn’t realize it would ultimately save my butt in a writer’s room.

Last May, I got staffed on the ABC comedy-drama *GCB*, starring Leslie Bibb and Kristin Chenoweth. It was a long journey to get there. Pounding the pavement with my manager, going on meetings, wondering why

those meetings were not producing a tangible job that made tangible money that I could use to pay my tangible bills. When I heard *GCB* was looking for a staff writer, I knew the job was mine to lose. I’m from Texas and the show is tonally up my alley. Everything pointed to this as my “break.”

I called in countless favors to get my script moved to the top of the showrunners’ reading pile and finally landed an elusive meeting. Thirty minutes after walking out the door, I had a job offer and a life-changing opportunity in my hands. I was all set to step into that writer’s room and use my breadth of Southern experience to make a big impression.

Except I was kind of terrified to open my mouth.

I’m not a shy person. I can hold my own at a party. Plus I’ve done a few keg stands in my life, so I have stories to tell. But succeeding in a writer’s room is all about how and when you tell them. On the first day, after meeting everyone and settling in, we gathered in the room. Basic rules and housekeeping were dealt with, then **bam** – we’re off to the races. Ten people are talking. Not at once, but building off of each other, taking ideas in different directions, laughing when jokes are good. And they **were** good.

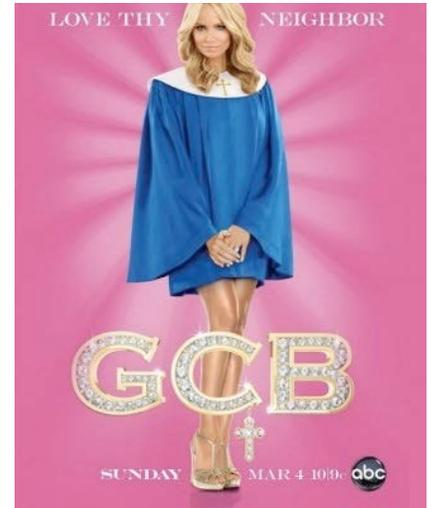
Me? I’m just trying to find a place to jump in. As a staff writer, you want your bosses to value your suggestions, but you don’t want to talk so much that they start imagining you with a muzzle. So I pitched. A little.

But I wasn’t giving it my all. I wasn’t daring to suck. In those first few weeks, I spent a lot of time in my head. It’s a normal, cozy place for me as a solo writer, at least when I’m forming thoughts. Unfortunately, TV rooms have little use for silence and hesitation. I needed to step outside my comfort zone and stop worrying about whether or not my pitches were perfect.

So I started going for broke. It didn’t matter if my idea

got laughs or went over like a lead balloon. I was in the trenches and contributing to the team. When you’re writing by committee, you can’t be precious about your thoughts. At the end of the day, they’re only useful if they drive the momentum of the group forward. Sometimes they actually drive the group in the opposite direction. And that’s okay. In fact, it’s great if it’s what eventually provides a break in the story.

As the season went on, I relished the concept of being a cog in the wheel. And it came in really handy when I got my own episode.



One of the most difficult things for staff writers to endure is the rewrite process. It’s odd seeing your jokes get cut or watching your scenes be rearranged. Instead of obsessing about how much the script changed, I focused on the parts of the story that stayed intact or the lines I wrote that made it to the final draft. Eventually, after weeks of exhausting 12-hour workdays, I was finally on set watching one of our stars get launched into a stained-glass window, and I was pinching myself. That was all that mattered.

I learned this past year not to be so hard on myself. So I occasionally suck. Fine. I look at scripts I wrote 10 years ago and wonder how I ever had the audacity to send them out. Then there are the times when I re-read scenes I wrote five minutes ago and think, “holy crap, that’s bad.” But that’s writing. You have to throw a bunch of stuff against the wall to see what sticks. Otherwise, you’ll be plotting and planning scenes all day. You’ll never get to the juicy dialogue and nuanced beats that your characters are so desperate to deliver.

I heard David Sedaris, one of my favorite writers in the world, once say that he tosses roughly 80 percent of his work in the garbage. Hey, if a three-time Grammy nominee can have a bad day, then so can I. As writers, it’s our job to come up with our own rating system of what’s fantastic and what’s worthy of the trashcan. Unless you work with a partner who will flat out tell you that your pitch reeks, all you can rely on is your instinct. My first season of television has taught me once again to count on mine.

We’re on hiatus now, anxiously awaiting word of a Season Two. No matter what happens, I know that at some point I will be in a completely different writer’s room with a whole new set of personality dynamics. Maybe the room will be mean (ours was nice). Maybe my bosses will be insane (ours were not). All I know is that I’ll have to embrace my inner suckage once again. Only this time, I’ll be ready.

Don't Be Afraid to "Go There"

by Jeff Miller

As a judge reading hundreds of screenplays, I still pick up each new assignment with anticipation and hope. I am always on the writer's side when I start reading a script, hoping that this story will be a hidden treasure and a new talent is about to be discovered. I am especially excited

Jeff Miller has written over 100 documentaries on film history for Passport Productions. In addition to providing script coverage and consultation services for numerous production companies, he has written for *Filmfax*, *Midnight Marquee*, *Mad About Movies* and *Television Chronicles* magazines. This is Jeff's first year as a PAGE Awards Judge.

when the script's premise offers something new and unique or suggests a story full of surprises.

Naturally, it's frustrating when promising screenplays do not fully exploit the possibilities their premise offers. Sometimes screenwriters squander the opportunities at hand or shy away from delving deeply into their material. But these days, writers must develop their ideas for all they are worth and strive to explore uncharted territories in order to stand out. As judges, industry professionals and audience members, we always

hope for **something new**. A great concept is not enough — the premise has to be developed fully with an engaging, unique story. As a friend of mine often says, "You've got to put the mustard on the hot dog."

Exploiting Your Premise

I use the term "exploit" quite often in my Judge's Feedback. Outside the screenwriting contest milieu, the term "exploitation" sometimes has a negative connotation. But I use the term "exploit" in a positive way, meaning for the writer to get the very most out of a script's concept. Too often, there are ideas left unexplored that, if properly exploited, could add so much more emotion to the writer's story. If it's your concept, why be afraid to fully delve into it? It's like mining for gold then ignoring a giant vein right in front of you.

Although this advice applies to all scripts, there are two genres in particular where I notice the most story underdevelopment — comedies and horror films. These are two difficult genres to master. Comedies are only successful when they make the audience laugh and horror films are only successful when they make audiences afraid. Recent films in these genres have upped the ante by continually crossing over into areas once considered taboo and by creating elaborate and memorable set pieces that remain with the viewer long after the film is over. Quite simply, great filmmakers are no longer afraid to "go there."

Comedies

In my opinion, the comedy genre changed with the release of *There's Something About Mary*. Seeing it in the theater, I remember laughing until I was crying when Cameron Diaz discovers a new "hair gel." I was a bit shocked but loved the fact that a boundary had been crossed and something entirely new was happening.

That scene became the most memorable one in the picture, and from then on it seemed as though every major

comedy included a unique "break-out" scene that made light of subjects previously untouchable. *American Pie* had the apple pie masturbation scene, *The Hangover* had the Taser, and *Bridesmaids* had the bridal shop sequence.

Each year sees new comedies mining laughs from new avenues while also getting crazier and zanier with their stories. So if you're writing a broad comedy today, you better be prepared to "go for it" and cross some lines. For example, I recently received a script that had four friends attending a sporting event. The logline promised that these four characters would end up having the wildest night of their lives. Much to my disappointment, nothing in that story was remotely "wild" and nothing truly interesting ever happened to the characters.

The premise the author came up with offered multiple opportunities for crazy situations, funny sight gags and zany mix-ups. But if you are going to promise a wild comedy, then you better deliver. It's important to be aware of what audiences find funny these days. You can't be afraid to go over the top. It's much easier to tone down the story later than to have to go back after it's written and come up with ways to make the script stand out from the pack.

Horror Films

Horror is another genre that is always pushing boundaries. Special effects have opened the door for all kinds of new ideas. Even mainstream films from the *Saw*, *Final Destination* and *Paranormal Activity* series dream up new ways of killing off characters, at least. A script that promises new twists in the genre has got to deliver.

I've read too many scripts where an innovative monster menace is created only to have it pushed to the background and not used to its fullest potential. It was strange to have to give the note "more people need to die in your script," but the advice was applicable. Why go to all that trouble to create a terrifying new monster if it never does anything to strike fear in the audience?

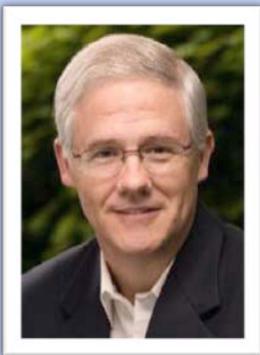
Sometimes writers take an old idea and place it in a new setting, creating a dazzling new premise. But you can't shy away from what the new setting has to offer. I once received a script where zombies were running amuck in Las Vegas. Placing zombies in Sin City's flashy neon setting offers great story possibilities. Yet we never see zombies overrunning a casino. This would make a natural thematic comment by comparing the living dead to gamblers as they mindlessly throw quarters in slot machines. It seemed like a no-brainer!

A successful screenwriter takes full advantage of what a tantalizing premise offers. No matter what the genre, don't stop with an interesting concept. Boldly go where no writer has gone before. Think it all the way through and cover all the bases.

Trust me, a screenplay that offers something new will get attention and will get noticed. Professional readers are just as excited to experience something original as you are to write it. When you wonder if you might be going too far, then you are probably on your way to a great script.

Story in Television: Part 3

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 30,000 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.

The reason the vast majority of shows in television history involve cops, lawyers and doctors is that these characters all have a clean, quantifiable desire line – solve the crime, win the case, save the patient. Desire, the hero's goal in the story, is the object of measure in any television episode.

But *Mad Men* is set in a business. So what's the desire for the episode, or, for that matter, the season? The goals in the ad business are ever changing, and all the major characters have their own personal, often hidden, agendas. Don Draper's goal from one episode to another is never the same. Instead of repeating the same story every week, *Mad Men* makes every episode totally new, its own work of art, through a complex story weave of multiple characters with ever-changing goals.

This is great for story and character complexity. But it wreaks havoc on narrative drive. Instead of a single, propulsive force, a *Mad Men* episode is a crosscut among ten or more storylines, all happening simultaneously. The more you crosscut, the more you move sideways, and the less narrative drive you have. Result: you lose huge chunks of your potential audience.

Without a unifying desire line, the show's creator, Matthew Weiner, has created a totally new TV story structure, one based on the contrast between American ideals and reality. Don and his fellow mad men (and they are almost all men) are in the business of creating and selling the American Dream. But when they go home to their suburban families, we see an actual life not filled with freedom and promise but defined by limits and lies.

The story challenge for the writers is, first, to set recognizable frames for each season, based not a clean desire line but on how each of the major characters moves between slavery and freedom in modern America. Within each episode, the trick is to come up with a story sequence that highlights the contrast between the Dream these characters sell and the harsh reality they live.

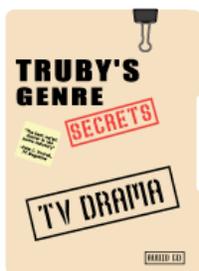
These are just a few of the myriad story challenges writers must solve when working on a writing staff today. Make no mistake: for show runners, it's all about the story. TV drama is the most exciting game in entertainment right now because the medium has finally found itself as an art form.

If you want to play in this high-speed, high-stakes game, you have to show that you have mastered the craft of the TV story. Then everyone will be begging you to play for their team.



The cast of AMC's award-winning drama *Mad Men*.

John Truby's "TV Drama Course" Audio CD



This course is designed to make you a professional TV writer able to work on the staff of any show. It teaches you how to break down a show and write a great spec. You also learn the different story beats for the various genres of one-hour TV, how to include Emmy-caliber elements in your story, how to write on staff, when to break the "rules," and more.

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

Now available at [The Writers Store](http://TheWritersStore.com).

Scene Headings and Secondary Locations

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

What is the most common formatting error that you see?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

Oh, that's easy – scene headings (also called slug lines). As a script consultant, I often find myself saying while reading a script, "Where am I?" For example:

INT. DONNA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY - DAY

"Donna's Birthday Party" is not a location. Where am I? Here's another goof.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Jack plays on the beach.

LIBRARY

Jack reads a book.

How can a library be part of an ocean, and how did we get from an exterior camera placement to an interior camera placement?

Begin a scene with a **master scene heading**, which names the master (or primary) location; for example, EXT. SMITH HOUSE - DAY. Other locations (such as BEDROOM or HALLWAY) that are part of the master location are called **secondary locations**; the resulting heading is called a **secondary heading**. It's also okay to add a secondary location to a master location in a master scene heading.

To demonstrate, we'll begin with the master scene heading that includes a secondary location and then move to other secondary locations.

INT. SMITH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

John slams the front door and races down the

HALLWAY

and into his

BEDROOM

where he dives on top of his bed and sobs.

The above is correct, but this is equally correct:

INT. SMITH HOUSE - DAY

LIVING ROOM

John slams the front door and races out.

HALLWAY

He runs past pictures of his family.

BEDROOM

He stumbles in and falls on his bed sobbing.

As you can see, any number of secondary headings can follow as long as the locations are part of the master (primary) location. Once we change the camera placement to an exterior location or to a location that is not part of the master location, we must create a new master scene heading.

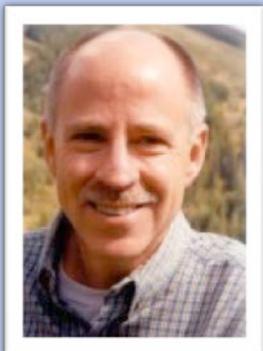
Another common formatting fumble is including description in the scene heading.

EXT. WINDY NIGHT WITH A PALE MOON SHINING THROUGH THE TREES

That should actually be written as follows:

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

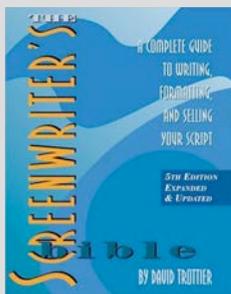
A pale moon shines through trees buffeted by a stiff wind.



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

Dave Trottier's

"The Screenwriter's Bible" Fully updated fifth edition



- A screenwriting primer for both aspiring and professional scribes
- Offers a comprehensive overview of all facets of screenwriting
- Includes worksheets, samples and more
- An essential text for any screenwriter's library

[Click here](#) for all the details!

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A Mind Greater than the Sum of Its Parts

by Marvin V. Acuna



Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He is currently in post-production on 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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Do you know what a Mastermind Group is?

In his immortal self-improvement book *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill describes a Mastermind Group as "Coordination of knowledge and effort, in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people, for the attainment of a definite purpose."

And I'm a huge proponent of the Mastermind Group principle. Why? Because my personal participation in a Mastermind Group resulted in the creation of the BOSI community! It's the Mastermind Group's spirit that challenges, inspires and advises me to ensure that the BOSI is innovative, dynamic and affords its community invaluable tools to propel careers forward.

I urge you to experience the benefits of a Mastermind Group for yourself.

What is a Mastermind Group?

A Mastermind Group is a group of like-minded individuals committed to the attainment of a definite purpose. We've all heard the saying that "two heads are better than one." Well, it is not the mind of **one** of the group members providing solutions, it is a mind that exists only as a result of all members working together. A group mind... a Mastermind. Each member contributing to the Mastermind can receive benefits far greater than could be generated from the same efforts if everyone was working by themselves.

What are the benefits?

While there are innumerable benefits derived from a Mastermind Group, I'll focus your attention on just a few:

- Ability to leverage the group's expertise
- Constructive feedback
- Emotional support
- Inventive solutions
- Accountability

How do you put a Mastermind Group together?

If you already belong to a writers' group, that's fine. But that's not a Mastermind Group. To put one together, start first within your personal network. Rather than concentrating on the profession of the people you select to be part of your group, go with their personal attributes. Will they offer the benefits listed above? If so, they're probably a good match for the group. It doesn't matter if they're actors, insurance salesmen, attorneys, high-powered business people or other screenwriters. If they are dedicated to helping your career and you are dedicated to helping theirs, that's all that matters.

In fact, you'll be shocked at how these different, non-Hollywood perspectives will help you in your screenwriting business and open up new orbits in your brain!

Important point: Bring new members in slowly, but be quick to throw out non-contributing members. You'll feel the energy shift when someone is not in alignment with the group's purpose.

Every week, take turns so that each member reviews his or her goals in front of the group. Set weekly and monthly milestones. Offer suggestions, see how each other's networks can help the attainment of group goals, and most importantly, let the energy and ideas flow! Be fair but firm with each other. This is how steel sharpens steel. This is the essence of a Mastermind Group.

Consider this: Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford all had Mastermind groups. The American Declaration of Independence was the result of such a group. So was the first powered flight and our landing on the moon. In fact, nearly every great achievement or massive fortune in history has been the product of a team of minds united in achieving the same definite purpose. Why not put this incredible power to use in your screenwriting business in 2012?



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

Street Justice Films

[code: wxhche1gvc]

We are looking for completed feature-length comedy scripts that start out with comedy on the first page and are completely out of the box. Must be high-concept material that can be pitched in a sentence or less and is completely non-derivative – as insane as possible, preferably R-rated, and in the vein of nothing you've seen in a comedy before. Target audience is the 18-35 demo.

Budget will not exceed \$1 million. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *FDR: American Badass*.

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

Scorpio Studios

[code: kednk749c]

We are looking for completed feature-length completely unique found-footage scripts like *Cloverfield*, *Chronicle* or *Quarantine*, but with stories that are non-derivative and completely different from the premises of those films. Please submit through this form even if you're an agent; no phone calls please.

Budget will not exceed \$1 million. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *The Derby Stallion*, starring Zac Efron.

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

Stalia Productions

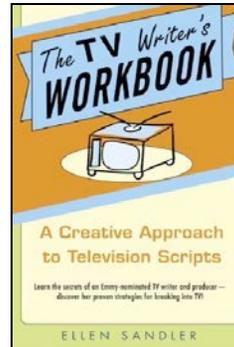
[code: yr8amgu3dp]

We are looking for feature-length animation projects featuring young human characters, i.e. something in the vein of *Spirited Away*. Please note we are not looking for stories or projects featuring animals as lead characters. Submissions will ideally be for projects with illustrated treatments available, as we prefer a 15-20 page illustrated treatment to a completed, feature-length screenplay.

Budget will be around \$20 million. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Planet 51*.

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



THE TV WRITER'S WORKBOOK

In this unique hands-on guide, television writer and producer Ellen Sandler shares the trade secrets she learned while writing for hit shows like *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Coach*. She offers concrete advice on everything from finding a story to getting hired on a current series.

Filled with easy-to-implement exercises and practical wisdom, the book outlines the steps for becoming a TV writer, starting with a winning script. Sandler explains the differences between "selling" and "telling," form and formula, and theme and plot.

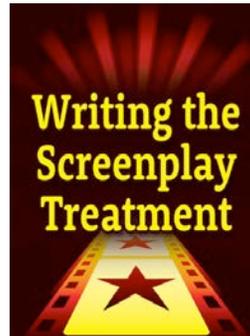
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WRITING THE SCREENPLAY TREATMENT

This course shows you, step-by-step, how to create an electrifying treatment that is sure to spark a Hollywood bidding war on your script!

- Intensive course on the principles of writing a screenplay treatment
- Guides you through the entire treatment process, from structure to format
- Gets you up to speed on this essential selling tool

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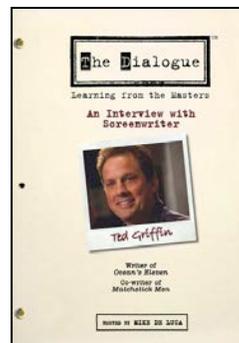


THE DIALOGUE: TED GRIFFIN

An enlightening interview ranges from the film and TV writer's early work on *Ravenous* and *Best Laid Plans* to the unexpected pitfalls of trying to direct his first film, *Rumor Has It...*

- Learn the pros' work habits, methods, inspirations, trade secrets and business advice
- Writers discuss their filmographies and break down the mechanics of one of their favorite produced scenes

[Learn more...](#)



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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



The Great American PitchFest & Screenwriting Conference returns for its ninth exciting year, **June 1-3, 2012** at the Marriott Burbank Hotel & Convention Center (2500 N Hollywood Way, Burbank, CA 91505) with more options than ever:

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