

# LOGLINE

The Screenwriter's eZine

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## Letter from the Editor

Did you enter the 2013 PAGE Awards competition? Find out on July 15<sup>th</sup> if you were fortunate enough to make the highly selective list of Quarter-Finalists, an increasingly prestigious honor for screenwriters! Every year we receive more excellent screenplays than the year before and this year's competition has been tougher than ever. This year's Quarter-Finalists deserve huge congratulations for their achievement.

However, you don't have to win the contest to meet some of the industry's leading literary managers. The Summer Series of [Writers and Reps eMeetings](#) is now underway. Sign up today to query managers seeking new clients and new material. Participating managers lay out exactly what they are looking for in EXCLUSIVE interviews available only to eMeetings members!

If you are spending summer vacation on the beach, put down that paperback and delve into the latest LOGLINE eZine! This issue is a sizzler. First, 2008 Gold Prize winner Tucker Parsons explains how writers can follow their creative compass AND successfully apply industry notes. PAGE Judge Collin Chang advises writers on how to craft characters actors want to play. Our scholar of genre subjects, John Truby, examines the evergreen "teen movie" and what makes it work. Soothsayer for scribes Dave Trottier fields four questions screenwriters often ask. Producer Marvin V. Acuna offers advice on what to present your potential rep. And finally, courtesy of [InkTip.com](#), find out what types of projects three prodcos are currently looking for.

Happy reading,



## Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ The new feature *Dear Eleanor*, by 2007 PAGE Gold Prize winners Amy Garcia and Cecilia Contreras, is now in post-production. The movie is a coming-of-age story set in 1962 during the chaos of the Cuban missile crisis. Directed by Kevin Connolly (*Entourage*) and shot in Colorado, the movie features Isabelle Fuhrman, Jessica Alba, Josh Lucas and Luke Wilson in starring roles. Amy and Cecilia are represented by 59 Management and ICM.
- ◇ The Warner Bros. feature *The Judge*, by 2008 PAGE Gold Prize winner Bill Dubuque, is currently filming in Massachusetts. Directed by David Dobkin (*Wedding Crashers*), the movie stars Robert Downey Jr., Robert Duvall, Vera Farmiga, Billy Bob Thornton, Dax Shepard, Vincent D'Onofrio and Leighton Meester. Bill's career has really taken off since his PAGE win, and he has several other projects in the studio pipeline. Bill is represented by Zero Gravity Management and Paradigm.
- ◇ 2010 PAGE Gold Prize winner Jimmy Lui was hired to do a rewrite of the script for the new Keanu Reeves action flick *Man of Tai Chi*. Directed by Reeves and filmed in China, the movie premiered at this year's Beijing Film Festival, then screened at Cannes, where it was picked up by the Weinstein Company's boutique distribution label Radius-TWC. Jimmy is represented by Silent R Management.
- ◇ Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed on to star in the 2010 PAGE Gold Prize-winning horror film *Maggie*, by John Scott III. Set to shoot this fall, John's script has been a Hollywood favorite since its 2010 contest win, scoring a "Triple Crown" on the 2011 Black List, Blood List and Hit List. John now has three major studio writing assignments and is represented by CAA. John says, "I couldn't have done it without PAGE. You guys are fantastic!"

**PAGE Awards Quarter-Finalists Announced: Monday, July 15**

## Navigating the Development Process

by Tucker Parsons

A while ago, I wrote a good thriller. Good, not great. It had some fun new twists. People liked it a lot. It won contests, got attention, got me representation, and – after many meetings and multiple (free) rewrites – went nowhere.

When a script goes nowhere, it wastes a lot of your time. This is an industry based on having lots of meetings for projects that are destined to go nowhere. Some people are paid to have those meetings. As writers, we aren't!

Tucker Parsons is EVP and Creative Director at Ignition Creative, a leading movie marketing company; however, he is currently on leave to write the sci-fi feature *True Skin* for Warner Bros. He won a 2006 PAGE Gold Prize for his script *Double Bind*, and his script *Whalemen* was recently listed on both the 2012 Black List and the 2012 Hit List. Tucker is represented by WME and Madhouse Entertainment.

There's only so much of that dance you can afford to do, emotionally and financially. So after I gave up on setting up that script, I looked closely at it and its strengths and weaknesses. I had to remember that I had conceived it as an exercise. It was not a passion project, not something I felt in my bones. Ultimately, it took you places you've already been. I had to admit that I didn't love it.

Soon thereafter, I had an idea for a historical adventure (not a terribly commercial genre) that connected deeply with me. My managers didn't like it, so I parted ways with them and wrote it. Three drafts later (as opposed to seven drafts of the thriller) I signed a five-figure option on it.

So what's the difference between the two scripts? I really cared about one and not the other. One was created to appeal to a market and the other was created because it meant something to me. In my historical adventure, I had a strong point to make. I knew where its heart was. And that's the one the market responded to.

It's easy to get cynical about Hollywood, but it's bad for your writing. It's easy to think that what you have to do is come up with a clever commercial hook – something that's just a bit different than some successful model – and let the rest of the script go from there. But it's not enough. If you don't care on a deep level about some key aspect of your story or characters, you should write something else.

When a writer sees a movie with predictable plot points and lame dialogue, it isn't just a couple of wasted hours – it's personal. "I can do better than that," he/she says. "Someone got paid to write that secondhand junk. I should just bang out a tried-and-true formula because that's what Hollywood buys."

And so the writer goes with a foul-mouthed romcom, a zombie cop movie, or perhaps a by-the-numbers

actioner with its clichés lightly disguised. And it gets sent around. After a bunch of nibbles and meetings, the writer starts hearing the common thread – words like "predictable," "underdeveloped," "on the nose," and "unoriginal" keep popping up in the passes. So the writer asks one of those truly imponderable Hollywood questions, "Why is it that crappy movies get made all the time, but nobody will give mine a second look? Why is their trash better than my trash?"

***"If you don't care on a deep level about some key aspect of your story or characters, you should write something else..."***

I don't really have an answer for that, only a few guesses based on my long life in Hollywood. In my day job, I make movie trailers and other movie advertising. I've been doing this for over 20 years. And when we work on high-profile tentpole projects, we get to see up close how the studio process works.

As soon as we turn in the first version of a trailer, it enters "The Process." Although it's different in some ways from studio script development, The Process here is also very similar insofar as you are working with execs, stars, filmmakers and producers – each with various levels of influence – and each with egos, styles, viewpoints and pressures of their own.

Whether it's a script, a trailer or the film itself, The Process is the road you take to the finish line. On big movies where there are three or four trailer companies competing, we liken it to riding a bull in a rodeo. Our job, above all, is just to hang on to the damn thing no matter what.

All too often, a fresh script with originality and zest goes through The Process and step-by-step becomes that cliché lame-itude the aforementioned writer saw and hated. (Although the truth is that The Process, as often as not, makes scripts better.)

Still, it's a mistake for any writer to think that all this means you can mimic a formula and get away with it. No serious buyer goes looking for generic material to produce, even if that's what The Process sometimes turns a script into. Imitating well-worn formulas pegs a new screenwriter as nothing special.

From my own experience, there are also practical reasons to write what you care about. You don't know if any idea will work and you never will. But writing something you can really **feel** gives you a compass. When The Process begins and you're getting conflicting notes, and the director shouts at you, and the studio guy is spinning you around and the bull is trying to kick you off and you're choking and blinded in the dust...the thing you need most is a compass.

Without a compass, it's very easy to let go of the bull. But write something you can feel, and The Process becomes a journey you can successfully navigate.

## How to Catch a Star

by Collin Chang

You may have heard this old saw: A Hollywood superstar marches into a studio with a phone book, slaps it down on the studio head's desk and says, "I want to make this!" The studio head's response: "When?"

Collin Chang has sold two scripts to major studios and has been hired on a dozen writing assignments. In 2006, his first independent horror film was distributed by ThinkFilm. In 2011, Collin sold a thriller to Seoul's Ocean Film with director attached and financing in place.

Okay, even if that's an exaggeration, there's a kernel of truth in every whopper. In Hollywood, it's no longer "who you know," it's "who's attached?" The one and only sure-fire way to get your script made is to attach an A-list star. Period. Nothing gets a movie set up faster than the participation of an actor or actress who ensures the movie will "open."

Nicolas Winding Refn, the writer/director of the indie sleeper *Drive*, tells this story. He's in a fancy Thai restaurant trying to sell Ryan Gosling, a rising star, on the lead for the movie. It was a hard sell because all the lead does is wear a cool bomber jacket and drive a fast car. Umm... That's been done. Like, about a hundred times.

Dinner ended uneventfully, without Gosling signing on and with little promise that he ever would. In fact, Winding Refn felt a distinct rift between him and the star that all the pad thai noodles in the world couldn't bridge. On the drive home, an immense gulf of silence loomed between them. Uncomfortable, even suffocating. So Winding Refn reached for a CD he'd left between the seats. It was an '80s compilation featuring Tangerine Dream, Thompson Twins, etc. As he played the CD, he noticed Gosling getting into it. And that's when it hit him:

The lead in *Drive* would listen to '80s music. That was his way into the character. It was the missing piece of the puzzle for the character's psychology.

Gosling loved this little hook. By the time they reached the star's hotel, he was in. Winding Refn didn't know it at the time, but Gosling was a big fan of '80s music. If he'd done his research and discovered his star's likes and dislikes, he'd have closed the deal sooner and with a lot less stress.

So, what's the secret to attaching a star to your script?

### FIND OUT WHAT MAKES YOUR STAR TICK

Create a wish list of bankable stars. Stars whom, if attached, will get your script fast tracked. Then do your research. Find out what your top wish-list star loves. Not just likes. LOVES. Jennifer Lawrence loves elephants? Write a script about a female vigilante who lives along the African Veldt and poaches the poachers. Katniss Everdeen in a loincloth — Boom! Sold. (I'm making that up, but some A-list actress must love elephants and be dying to shoot her next film in Africa.)

With all the entertainment shows and publications out there, plus your friend Google, it's easy to do this kind of research these days.

### GO TO WAR AGAINST TYPE

Have you ever noticed the most buttoned-up girls in the office often dress the most provocatively on Halloween? That's because Halloween is the one night of the year you can "come as you aren't." And scores of women do.

Sometimes, an actor simply wants to play "come as you aren't." This is especially true of A-list superstars who are dying to show the world they aren't just a one-trick pony.

Here's a timeless anecdote. In 1974, with the release of *The Godfather: Part 2*, Al Pacino was pretty much the biggest star in the world. In *The Godfather* movies he played Michael Corleone, the son who is forced to become the ruthless crime boss his father was before him — a merciless mobster who's even willing to murder his own brother to keep his family in power. Pacino played the role to the hilt. But do you know the next role he chose to play? Sonny Wortzik in *Dog Day Afternoon*.

Here's the logline of that film, according to IMDb: "A man robs a bank to pay for his lover's sex change operation." Yes, Al Pacino played a gay bank robber. The film became an instant classic and earned Pacino yet another well-deserved Oscar nomination. Why did he choose that role? He didn't want to be typecast as someone who only played gangster tough guys.

### WRITE GREAT DIALOGUE

Actors love great lines like "I coulda been a contender!" and "Show me the money!" A great line of dialogue can live forever. Some scholars believe that struggling actors actually paid Shakespeare an extra farthing or two to pad their lines. This might be how Macbeth and Hamlet got their long-winded soliloquies. Every actor longs for the chance to speak words that are memorable!

### WRITE A TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE

I mean this literally. Give your A-list star an opportunity to put on 60 lbs. the way Robert De Niro did to play Jake LaMotta in the Scorsese classic *Raging Bull*. Or the opportunity to play ugly and monstrous, the way Charlize Theron did in her career-defining role as the prostitute-turned-serial-killer Aileen Wuornos in *Monster*. Both De Niro and Theron won Oscars for these performances.

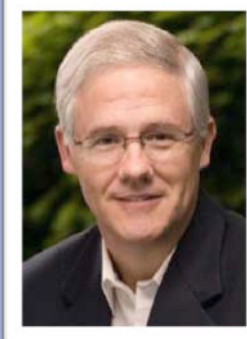
When Sir Anthony Hopkins was approached by the producers of *The Silence of the Lambs* to play Hannibal Lecter, he leaped at the opportunity. Hopkins explained later that he wanted the challenge. It wasn't so much that Hopkins transformed his body for the role. Rather, he channelled his highly civilized, reserved persona into the civilized but cunningly cannibalistic doctor. He won the Oscar for Best Actor that year. See the pattern?

The best actors want to stretch themselves. Giving them the chance to play a character that demands a physical or mental transformation is like dangling a ball of string in front of a kitten. They can't help but reach out and grab it.

Nothing gets a movie made faster than the involvement of a star, and the process of getting one attached to your script begins the moment you start writing.

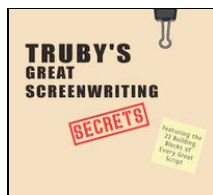
## Writing the Teen Movie

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](http://www.truby.com) today.

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The first thing to understand about teen movies is that they aren't actual genres. They are stories about a major kind of character change. In the [Great Screenwriting Class](#), I talk about the five great character changes in storytelling, and this particular one is known as "coming of age." Here someone changes from child to adult – not physically, but emotionally and morally. All fiction asks the basic question: how do adults grow? Teen movies focus on the first stage of becoming an adult, which usually involves learning how to break free of conformity and become an individual.

What's changed over the years is the nature of that conformity. In the original teen movie, *Rebel Without a Cause*, it was the conformity of the parents' world, the 9-5 job, the man in the gray flannel suit. *The Graduate* (a teen movie though the hero is a college grad) continued this contrast, with the parents' world even richer and more morally bankrupt ("plastics"). *American Graffiti* was a turning point. Within the strict confines of small-town America, the conformity changed to being primarily among the teens themselves.

This opposition of individual vs. conforming teens was then codified in *The Breakfast Club*, still the model for teen films today. There conformity among the students was pushed so far that even the few differences that existed within the student body were themselves stereotypes and categories: the jock, the nerd, the princess, the bad boy outcast, the bad girl outcast, etc.

You might not realize that the teen story form is as old as storytelling, going all the way back to the myth stories of the boy becoming king and the girl becoming queen. Teen movies are always connected to some genre, usually comedy (*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *American Pie*) or romantic comedy (*Superbad*, *Juno*, *Clueless*, *Risky Business*), but also straight drama (*Rebel Without a Cause*, *Romeo and Juliet*) and even horror (*Carrie*) or fantasy (*Back to the Future*, *Harry Potter*).

The foundation of all these teen films – what connects them all – is the fairy tale form, one of the major variations to organic story structure (see the Great Screenwriting Class for the 10 special story beats of the fairy tale). In the teen movie, the kingdom is high school. The ball is the prom where the new king and queen are crowned. Because teen movies are about crossing the threshold into adulthood, the prom is nothing less than the archetypal rite of passage. Especially for high school girls becoming women, the prom is like a practice wedding, with the dress taking on almost magical, talismanic powers.

Applied to the modern life experience of high school, teen fairy tales show that even in a democracy, all people are not created equal. Some students have great beauty, wealth or athletic ability. Most don't. But the first lesson in teen fairy tales – the hero's self-revelation – is that while people aren't created equal in talent, they are equal in rights, including the right to be treated with decency and respect.

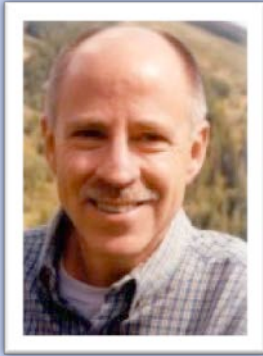
The deeper lesson of these stories is how one learns to become a unique and moral individual. This element is easiest to see when the teen movie is done as a romantic comedy. The male hero's goal is often sex, preferably with the prettiest girl in school. But his need is to learn to leave his male friends and their reptilian views of all women behind and form a new community with one woman, who will show him the power and value of intimacy and actually help him find and take pride in his true individuality.

Especially in teen romances of the last 10 years, the heroine erases the classic distinction between the smart outcast and the pretty bimbo. Instead, the outcast and the pretty girl are one and the same. Most prominently in *Legally Blonde* (a teen movie even though it's set in law school), the lead is both smart and pretty. This girl embraces her great looks and femininity and is proud to use her unique strengths as a woman. The beautiful girls opposing her are petty, jealous and lack a trait the lead has always had – compassion.

Teen love stories are often about the difference between true class and false class. False class comes from looks and money. True class comes from character. These stories say it is okay to want beauty and money in life and to try to get them, but you have to go about it in a decent way.

If you want to write a coming-of-age movie, focus on modernizing the fairy tale form. Connect the story to one or two genres to pay the genre dues that Hollywood demands. But as you can see, the teen movie has a long history, so you must tell your story in a unique and transcendent way in order to stand out from the crowd.





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](http://www.keepwriting.com)

## Pitching, Pen Names, Structure and Sequels (Four Questions and Four Answers)

by Dave Trottier

### 1. Realistically, how many pitches can one do (or even begin) in five minutes?

In most pitching situations, you will know about what is expected in terms of your time limit for each pitch.

If you don't know ahead of time what is expected, then begin with your "elevator pitch": that is, deliver your hook and story concept in about the same time that it takes an elevator to open and close. If your listener's eyes look happy or encouraging, then amplify. You should always be ready with a concise pitch and longer versions of the same pitch just in case.

In most pitching sessions where the producer or agent wants to hear several ideas in a short period of time, then spend about a minute or two on each pitch. Given that guideline, you should be able to fit in about three pitches in five minutes.

Keep in mind that the listener may interrupt and ask questions or want you to tell them more. You are in a selling situation, so be prepared.

Finally, it's usually best not to memorize a pitch. If you can deliver it "from your heart" but not "by heart," that is the ideal. If you need note cards to guide you, that's okay, but never read a pitch. Let your passion come through when delivering the pitch. If you get a positive reaction, consider leaving the listener a one-sheet with your contact information on it.

### 2. I want to use a pen name. Do I register it or file some legal document? Will a pen name mess up a writing contract?

Once you sell your script, the attorneys will know who to write the check to. The contract will be made in your legal name, but request a paragraph in the contract that stipulates that the writing credit shall be in your pen name.

### 3. How do you find the fine line between creating a script that is "overworked" or "over-structured" versus one that is too "loose" or "under-structured"?

It depends on the nature of the project and what the story wants to be...

Action movies tend to have a lot of structure. I usually recommend to my clients that they do as much as they can to develop and deepen their characters, even though those characters may not be as well developed as those in a character-driven story.

Likewise, I usually advise writers of character-driven stories to strengthen subplots, make sure all loose ends are tied up, and place more emphasis on the action/visual elements of the screenplay, even though these stories will not be as structured as the action screenplays.

The key is to find the structure that works best for your particular story.

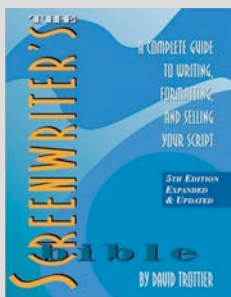
### 4. Is it permissible to write a screenplay using a character from another screenplay if you intend on only using the screenplay as a "sample script" submitted to the company that owns the rights?

As long as you understand that you can only use the script as a sample, then it's okay to write it. However, most companies will want to see that you can create characters from scratch.

Keep writing!

### Dave Trottier's

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## Advice on Approaching Reps

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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Many of the questions that arrive in my inbox pertain to finding a representative. Here are my answers to two questions that screenwriters often ask.

*"I've written 17 screenplays and have tried to find an agent or manager, sending emails to more than 50. The few who have replied are not taking on new writers. How do I find those who are looking for new writers?"*

No one I know of in the entertainment industry is looking for a new writer. I don't know whether you will find an individual seeking new writers regardless of whether you write 50 emails or 50,000 of them. The truth is that everyone is looking for **great material**, whether you are a first time writer or whether you are a veteran with multiple pieces of material now in the marketplace. So if you receive replies suggesting they're not interested, I would read that as they're not interested in the ideas you are presenting.

My advice to you is to take a close look at your query letter. The information included in your query letter may seem generic. It may not feel very personal. It may feel as though you're simply broadcasting to anyone who's willing to listen. Avoid the "throwing spaghetti at the wall" approach. You spent three months, six months, nine months, maybe even a year or more in developing your screenplay. It makes no sense to spend just 10 or 15 minutes developing your query letter. Take the time to tailor it for the recipient.

Put some thought and care into your logline, as well. It's the first signal to anyone (producer, agent, manager or executive) that you are a good writer. Your logline must be precise and clear as it communicates what your story is about in just a couple of sentences. If you create compelling loglines that immediately attract attention, you will compel someone to want to read more!

*"Do you value an idea for a script as much as a complete script? For example, if a writer comes to you with a pitch that includes the synopsis and the treatment of the story that you really think is marketable, will you represent that writer because you know you can sell the writer's idea without having the writer create the script?"*

I would say that the reality of it is no. Selling an idea in Hollywood requires a tremendous amount of good faith from the buyer. When Revolution Studios went under, its executives attributed its failure to the fact that they had accumulated so many pitches that did not amount to anything beyond an interesting idea. In essence, they were unable to execute these good ideas, nor could the people they acquired them from.

Most studios are not in the buying-ideas mode anymore. When you hear about a pitch selling in the studio environment, a majority of the time you come to learn that there is an "element" involved (talent or a director). And what that means is that the studio has a burning desire to be in business with that element, and therefore takes the leap of faith on the story.

In essence, if Vince Vaughn walks in to a studio with a writer and an idea, it's very likely they'll acquire the idea because they want to be in business with Vince Vaughn. If Allan Loeb walks in to a studio and presents an idea, more than likely the studio acquires it to be in business with that writer. They may buy that idea, but they have another project they really want him to execute. Now that they're in business with him, they've satisfied him and can engage him in something else. This may seem diabolical, and almost like a conspiracy, but the reality is that there are a multitude of reasons as to why a buyer acquires a pitch. It's not just because it's a good idea.

Now, if you're a screenwriter who has no credentials, then the likelihood of your pitch selling isn't great. You have no historical evidence of executing the idea and so there's no real ability to measure what the potential outcome would be. So whether you have an idea, a synopsis or a treatment, this is insufficient. You must have a completed screenplay. Therefore, if you are thinking about an idea and believe it to be great, then I would encourage you to go forth and execute.



## 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](mailto: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

## Eclectic Pictures

[code: hthd6pcv1u]

We are looking for feature-length Miami-set action scripts. Scripts should rhapsodize and glamorize the whirlpool of violence, corruption, and power struggles that characterize Miami. Reminiscences of *Miami Vice* and *Scarface* are encouraged as long as they favor innovation and reinvention. Girls, guns and "go-fast" elements are what we're looking for.

Budget will not exceed \$80m. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Lovelace*, *Playing for Keeps* and *As Good as Dead*, among others.

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

## Priority Pictures

[code: 24t5m541s0]

We are looking for completed, feature-length, family-friendly rom-com, comedy or drama scripts. Only PG-rated material, please. We prefer repped writers, writers who've won contests, or scripts with good coverage. If your pitch meets this criteria, please say so in the personal message space.

Budget will not exceed \$500k. WGA and non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *A Christmas Tree Miracle* and *The Pledge* (AKA *Doughboy*).

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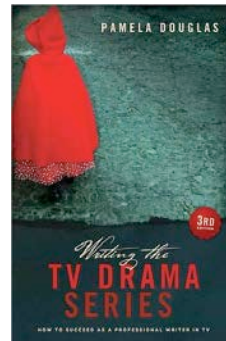
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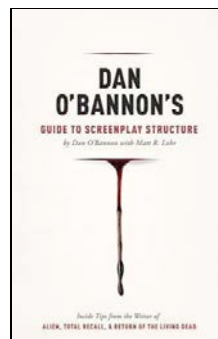
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