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Letter From the Editor

The PAGE Awards contest season is approaching its dramatic conclusion! We will soon announce our 2016 Finalists — on Sept. 15, to be exact. Conceiving, completing and then submitting a script into competition is a victory in itself, but these talented writers are taking the next step. Making this list puts them on the radar of the entire industry. Congrats!

It's hard to believe that this is Issue No. 50 of the **LOGLINE** eZine. It feels like just yesterday that we published our first edition in 2008. To celebrate this milestone, we devote the issue's **Judge's POV** to some of the best advice imparted over the years. Next, 2015 Silver Prize winner Rachel Noll shares the lessons she learned producing her PAGE Award-winning film.

This issue begins a two-part recap of John Truby's key insights about genre, his specialty. Format whiz Dave Trottier differentiates between scenes and sequences. Writing coach Lee Jessup, currently hosting a webinar on Stage 32, puts writers' fear of plagiarism to rest. And our 50th anniversary issue wraps up with promising leads for screenwriters, thanks to InkTip!

Happy reading,



Latest News From the PAGE Awards

- ◇ It's going to be a huge couple of months for 2008 PAGE Gold Prize winner Bill Dubuque! His PAGE Award-winning drama *The Headhunter's Calling*, starring Gerard Butler, Alison Brie and Alfred Molina, has its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 13, and his action/thriller *The Accountant*, starring Ben Affleck, Anna Kendrick and J.K. Simmons, will hit theaters around the world on October 14. Bill is represented by Trevor Robbins at CAA and by PAGE Judge Eric Williams at Zero Gravity.
- ◇ The thriller *The Last Bid* (aka *Storage Locker 181*), co-written by 2011 Bronze Prize winner Steven Palmer Peterson, had its U.S. premiere on LMN on August 7. The movie was produced by Creative Arts Entertainment Group and is being distributed by Lifetime Television and Daro Films. Steve also wrote the upcoming sci-fi feature *Replicate* and the action flick *Kill Ratio*, both of which are currently in post-production.
- ◇ The comedy heist movie *Supercon*, co-written by 2010 Bronze Prize winner Andy Sipes, was filmed this summer in New Orleans and is now in post-production. The movie stars Maggie Grace, Clancy Brown, John Malkovich and Mike Epps. Andy is represented by the Gersh Agency and 3 Arts.
- ◇ 2015 Bronze Prize winner Steven Canals, who is now a staff writer on the new Freeform horror series *Dead of Summer*, wrote episode #8, "The Devil Inside," which aired on August 16. In our last issue, Steven wrote an article about his experiences on the show. He is represented by PAGE Judge Jarrod Murray at Epicenter.
- ◇ 2006 Silver Prize winner Davah Avena, who was previously a staff writer and story editor on *Medium* (NBC) and *East Los High* (Hulu), is now co-producer on the Lifetime series *Devious Maids*. Davah wrote the recent episodes "Blood, Sweat and Smears" and "War and Grease." She is represented by Abrams Artists and Sheree Guitar Entertainment.

2016 PAGE Awards Finalists Announced: Thursday, September 15

Let the Process Be the Prize

by Rachel Noll

The impetus for entering a script into writing contests is often to get the project in front of people who will pitch it, buy it, or produce it. As writers, we are always looking for ways to get our work seen, and it can sometimes feel like the only way to do that is to get

Rachel Noll and her writing partner Joe Crump won a 2015 Silver Prize for their Family Film *The Storyteller*. They have just completed production on the film. Rachel is a multiple award-winning screenwriter and filmmaker based in L.A. and co-founder of the female-focused production company Emergence Films.

someone with the right connections to champion the script. But that's not the only way. My writing partner and I approached our script, *The Storyteller*, a little differently. We wrote it with an eye toward producing it ourselves which, after almost nine months of prep and pre-production, we did.

This is the second feature I have written and produced myself. The first time I did this, I was completely unaware of the magnitude of the task I had taken on, and I think that is partially why I was able to jump into it so eagerly. Producing a feature film is the best boots-on-the-ground education I have ever received. On the first film I produced, *Don't Pass Me By*, I was like a little kid thrown into the deep end learning to swim out of necessity. And I learned a lot.

For *The Storyteller*, I was able to give myself the time and tools I didn't have the first time and master elements of the process that were not part of my vocabulary the first time around. I come off of this project with so much more knowledge and confidence, and I'm sure the next film I produce will teach me even more. Like anything, it's a series of steps taken one after the other, and a commitment to continue taking them even when things feel impossible. You ask for help, make mistakes, learn and fumble and do it totally wrong, only to come out the other side and take what you learned and do it again.

It's a big undertaking, and as creative beings, our hearts are on our sleeves, so the fear of failure and criticism can be crippling. If I were to give any advice on taking the plunge and producing your first film, it'd be this:

Think of the first film as educational. As your personalized film school. Let go of the need for the first project to be perfect.... or even for it to be good. Let the process surprise you, and be kind to yourself as you are learning. Shoot it on whatever camera you can get your hands on and find a DP who is a whiz with using natural light. Get a friend's band to do the score. Cast actors you love to work with. Ask your relatives and friends to throw some money your way, or find an investor who believes in what you are doing. Keep it small. Tell a story. Maybe it will be terrible. Maybe it will be amazing. Either way, you will have made your first film, and once you've done the first one, it's never as scary to do it again.

It all starts with the script. We wrote *The Storyteller* knowing we were going to produce it ourselves, and so immediately we were thinking small in terms of locations and cast. We wanted to figure out how to fit a larger-than-life story with magical surrealism elements and all kinds of ambitious ideas into the framework of a micro-budget indie.

How do you create magic on a low budget? My personal opinion is that the magic comes to life within the characters themselves. When you root the magic in the truth of the characters, even the cheesiest effects can feel earned and appropriate. Make the small budget work for you. The beauty of a character-driven story is that it can be told in any time period, in any location.

Joe, my writing partner and the director of *The Storyteller*, wanted to set the story in his hometown of Fishers, Indiana. So we wrote with locations in mind that he had access to (houses, local businesses, parks, schools). We were able to shape the world of the story around locations where we knew we could film. That's a big first step. Do yourself the favor of writing your script utilizing a handful of simple locations; challenge yourself to create a compelling story within those parameters. Restriction and limitation often breeds creativity. Limit yourself and see what your creative imagination comes up with.

The story we wrote was something we both felt deeply connected to, and when we began to share it with people, it seemed to touch something in them, too. Placing in the PAGE Awards emboldened us to send the script to bigger actors, more experienced crew, and to ask for things we previously thought we could never get – and we started getting yesses. The story was the connective tissue that drew everyone together. When you only have \$100 a day to offer people, there has to be something that inspires them to come on board. If you write a story that speaks to you, and you have the courage to share it, my experience has been that it will find the people who resonate on your same wavelength, and those are the people you want on your team. When you have a team fueled by passion, the goal becomes infinitely more manageable.

It's a step-by-step process. Keep your eyes on the next step. Okay, I have the script, now what? Okay, let's find the creative team. Now I need a cast. Let's reach out to some actors. We need locations. Let's lock those down. We need to determine shooting dates. Okay, next summer. How much will this cost? We need a budget. Got that. Now we need our funding. How much do we need? Do I know ANYONE who might be able to help me? Who can I ask? Who might have advice? Who has done this before? Okay, we got the money. Now we have to go into prep. We need a schedule. We need to hire our crew. We need to feed people on set...

Step by step, the job gets done. Don't be afraid to start, and be gentle with yourself as you go. Enjoy the process as much as you can. The process is the gold. Let that be the prize and whatever ultimately happens with the film, you will come out a winner.

6 Terrific Screenwriting Tips From Our First 50 Issues

by John Evans

Since we began publishing the *LOGLINE* eZine in 2008, there have been 50 installments of *The Judge's P.O.V.* This column exists to allow entrants into the PAGE Awards to hear, straight from the proverbial horse's mouth, what our Judges are looking for when they read a spec script.

John Evans worked in film and TV development and business affairs for several years, with tenures at Amazon Studios, Kopelson Entertainment and ABC. He has been a PAGE Awards Judge since 2005 and the editor of *LOGLINE* since its second issue. John is also a freelance copywriter, copy editor and story analyst.

Here are some of the most striking and essential ideas to be advanced over the last eight years. All of these issues are still [available on our website](#) and I encourage you to read the full articles.

1. SEDUCE US WITH YOUR SPEC SCRIPT

In our July/Aug. 2014 issue, [Lauren Waldron](#) explains why specs (essentially, any script

you write before being paid to do so) should not use camera angles and overt references to editing transitions, music cues, credits, etc.

"Specs actually read better than shooting scripts because they focus on the story instead of how the writer would like the story to be shot. When a spec is peppered with shooting references, reading it can be like watching the movie being shot... rather than being emotionally invested in the characters and their circumstances."

As an aspiring writer, your goal is not to show us that you understand technical aspects of filmmaking. Your goal is to seduce us with the power of your story. In this sense a spec is more like a sales document or work of fiction than it is a blueprint for a movie; write for the reader, not the D.P., assistant director, editor and music supervisor.

2. LEAVE A TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS

In May/June 2011, [Karen Craig](#) discusses the danger of plot developments that are not set up, making them seem arbitrary and contrived for the writer's convenience. She mentions the rule of thumb that each script gets "one coincidence" but makes the case that a writer can always find a way to logically justify what started out as a shortcut to get the story from Point A to Point B. Judges roll their eyes when writers rely on luck and chance.

"The last thing you want a reader to think is, 'Huh? Where did that come from?' Be subtle in your execution, but add small beats to foreshadow what lies ahead in the plot and character development. Think of this as a trail of breadcrumbs to lead readers where you want them to go."

3. FIND YOUR VOICE

[Collin Chang](#) addresses the always-elusive notion of a screenwriter's "voice" in our Nov./Dec. 2011 issue.

"Some [great] writers' voices flow like smooth jazz, while others' are discordant and staccato, yet both achieve the same thing: they suck you in... Your voice tells us you're in charge. We're in good hands. And we're in for a fun read."

Citing examples from Tarantino and Shane Black, Chang showcases description that is unmistakably theirs. If your voice is unique and pitch-perfect for the material, even jaded industry readers will sit up and listen!

4. PUSH YOURSELF TO THE ELEVENTH IDEA

In our July/August 2012 issue, [Sherri Sussman](#) challenges writers to push themselves when developing a scene.

"Your first five ideas are probably ones you've seen before. With the second five, you'll often try to do something that is the opposite... The eleventh idea is most often the original idea that fits the best."

It's easy to settle for something that seems to work, but what's possible if you devote the time and energy to crack out 11 alternatives? This also mirrors the professional process, where writers must routinely come up with multiple takes, either in the TV writers' room or responding to notes with a film script in development.

5. KEEP RAISING THE STAKES

Two of our Judges, [Jennifer Barbee](#) and [Scott Levine](#), take different approaches to the same idea – you can make any story better by finding ways to raise the dramatic stakes. Barbee says that the ingredients are "1) A compelling goal. 2) Heavy consequences for failure. 3) Obstacles to success." And Levine writes, "For us to feel for your protagonist, she needs to be fully engaged in a world that offers three 'c's': challenge, conflict and consequence."

Both Judges use great examples to illustrate these points in action. The gist is that you must make it vitally important that your protagonist accomplish each smaller mission within the larger story, while making it very difficult for him or her to do that. This invests the audience in the outcome while making us wonder how success is even possible. Therein lies palpable tension.

6. TRY "THE BIG LIE"

[Nick Sita](#) identifies a concept put to use in great TV shows that writers can apply to any medium: "The Big Lie."

*"The midseason cliffhanger for **Breaking Bad** ends in a similar fashion as many of its best episodes, by milking tension and suspense from the idea that a mild-mannered high school teacher has a secret identity as a drug kingpin. 'The Big Lie' boils down to this: Apply pressure to your protagonist, create and exploit uncertainty, and set your character free."*

Essentially, Sita is saying that characters with a secret are compelling and their efforts to keep that secret generate tension at every turn. At the same time, these secrets give them a freedom and power that allows them to become their true selves. Audiences love to watch characters who are actualizing their full potential!

These are all advanced-level principles that can help you elevate your screenplays to an unmistakably artful level.

For more helpful and valuable advice, keep reading! In each issue of *LOGLINE*, our insightful Judges weigh in with actionable advice for screenwriters.

Truby's Take: Secrets of Genre

by John Truby

(This article originally appeared in our November/December 2010 issue.)

What's my genre? That's the single biggest question you should ask yourself when that great premise idea first pops into your head. Why? Because of the **First Rule of Hollywood**. Most writers work at a tremendous disadvantage because they don't know this rule, which has to do with what producers and studios want to buy.

Hollywood doesn't buy and sell movie stars, directors or writers. The First Rule of Hollywood is that **Hollywood buys and sells genres**.

If you're not selling them what they want, you're out of luck.

"Genres" are different kinds of stories, like Action, Detective, Love and Thriller. They are the all-stars of the story world that have been popular with audiences for decades and sometimes centuries. That's why Hollywood buys and sells them, and why you need to know not only which genres you're using in your script, but also how to write them well. Many writers wrongly believe that they are competing against the 100,000 scripts written every year. In fact, they are competing against the other scripts in their genre. Which is why you have to know your genre cold.

Mastering your genre seems like it should be easy, since these are forms we have all seen at the movies since we were kids. Unfortunately, each genre is a complex story system where all the crucial elements exist under the surface in the structure. Each genre has a unique hero, desire line and opponent, asks a key question, uses a specialized storytelling strategy, and expresses a highly detailed set of themes. Most importantly, each genre has anywhere from 8 to 15 unique story beats that must be in your script or your script will fail. And you have to twist each story beat, writing each in an original way so your script stands above all the others in your form.

But here's the good news: all the techniques required for a great genre script are very precise and can be learned. There's no reason you can't become a master of your form and write a script that presents your genre to the Hollywood buyers in a fresh new way.

I'd like to give you a brief look at some of the most popular genres in the entertainment business. They make up about 99% of Hollywood films and television. Of course this won't begin to cover all the techniques you need to know to master your form. I teach an all-day class in each genre, and even that doesn't cover everything. But this will give you a sense of which form you're probably working in.

Perhaps the most popular family of genres in film and television is Detective, Crime and Thriller. But you have to be careful when choosing one of these forms. While they all involve a crime, they are very different forms with very different structures.

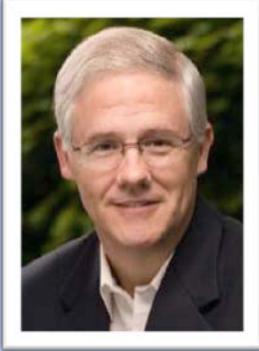
Detective stories (*L.A. Confidential*, *Chinatown*) are about searching for the truth, so you need lots of suspects who could believably have committed the crime. This form also has more reveals than any other, and many writers have trouble sequencing these reveals, since they normally occur in reverse chronological order. Detective is the genre most popular on TV.

Crime (*The Usual Suspects*, *No Country for Old Men*) is a genre that places less emphasis on detecting the criminal and more on the cat-and-mouse beats of catching him. This pushes Crime toward the Action genre, and means the opponent is best when he is some form of master criminal.

Thriller (*Michael Clayton*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Silence of the Lambs*) is the most popular of this family of genres in the feature film world. Like Detective stories, Thrillers involve detection but there are typically far fewer suspects, and emphasis shifts to the detective being an average person who enters extreme danger. Thrillers are surprisingly tough to structure because you have to coordinate two opposing desire lines: the hero wants to uncover the killer while also escaping intense attack.

Genres are a big mystery to most writers, but you can use them as a secret weapon to stand above the crowd.

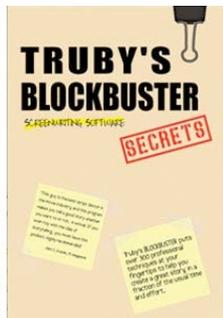
Next issue: More genres dissected, including Action, Horror, Comedy and Science Fiction.



John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his Anatomy of Story Masterclass to more than 40,000 students worldwide. He is the author of *The Anatomy of Story*. To learn more about Truby's classes and screenwriting software, please visit www.truby.com.

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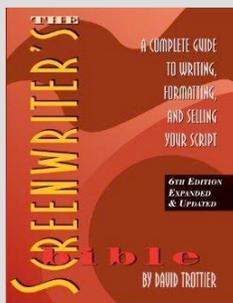


Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for The Walt Disney Company, Jim Henson Pictures, York Entertainment, On the Bus Productions, Hill Fields and New Century Pictures. As a script consultant, he has helped dozens of clients sell their work and win awards. [The Screenwriter's Bible](#), 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.

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Sequences, Scenes and Cross-Cutting

by Dave Trottier

READER'S QUESTION:

What is a sequence in a screenplay? How many sequences will there be in a screenplay?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

A sequence is a dramatic unit made up of more than one scene. It is usually about 10-15 pages in length (but can be more or less) and has its own beginning, middle, and end. You can think of car-chase sequences from movies as examples.

Movies are composed of acts, which are composed of sequences, which are composed of scenes. Well, not always... but generally that's true. There is no magic number as to how many sequences should be in a movie. Some movies, by their nature, will have more or fewer sequences than other movies.

READER'S QUESTION:

So what's a scene?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

A scene is a much shorter dramatic unit than a sequence. Technically, a scene changes when any one of three scene elements change: camera placement (INTERIOR or EXTERIOR), location, or time (usually DAY or NIGHT).

Those three scene elements can be found in a master scene heading:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

This means that technically, a scene can be a fourth of page or less. However, most often, people use the term **scene** casually when referring to a spec script. They usually mean a short dramatic unit that may technically consist of a scene or several scenes, but isn't long enough to be called a sequence. Keep the above in mind when you hear the term **scene** and try to get a sense of what type of scene is being referred to.

READER'S QUESTION:

What is cross-cutting?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

Cross-cutting is a film editing technique whereby the film editor cuts back and forth between action happening at two different locations. Thus, it is possible to cut back and forth between two sequences. That's essentially what a screenwriter does with an INTERCUT — he or she bounces back and forth between two locations, as in a phone conversation.

When a screenwriter uses the term cross-cutting, he or she is referring to cutting back and forth between two lines of action, just like a film editor. That usually means a scene of Action A and then a scene of Action B, then A, then B, and so on. The two lines of action are usually related, but they don't have to be.

One reason I recommend that screenwriters read a lot of screenplays is so they can gain a better sense of how acts, sequences, and scenes work together. Good luck and keep writing!



Lee Jessup spent more than six years as director of ScriptShark.com. Author of Michael Wiese Productions' *Getting It Write: An Insider's Guide to a Screenwriting Career*, Lee is a career coach for screenwriters, with an exclusive focus on their professional development. Her clients include WGA members, Golden Globe and Emmy-nominated screenwriters, writers who have sold screenplays and pitches to major studios, best-selling authors and contest winners, as well as novice and emerging screenwriters.

To learn more about Lee and her services, visit leejessup.com.

Leave Your Mistrust at the Door

by Lee Jessup

While most emerging writers who do their research and keep a level head come to screenwriting with a clear understanding of how the industry works, it does happen that a new writer will arrive on the scene with his or her mistrust put broadly – if not proudly – on display. After all, there have been stories (rare but memorable) of screenplays being stolen, as well as story credit and payment being withheld and successfully sued for, writers seeing their original idea suddenly fully realized by others and up in lights, or writers being pushed out of a project that was originally theirs.

There are only so many stories to tell, and some ideas are in the zeitgeist, while others, whose time have come, are in the national consciousness. Never was this more abundantly clear to me than a few years ago when *Bridesmaids* came out. I must have talked to half a dozen writers who told me that they had that exact script developed in their arsenal. The concept was not unique.

There have been countless advice columns and blog posts written about why writers, so long as they copyright their work and do their industry diligence, shouldn't worry about being ripped off. But still, with some, the mistrust persists. And so I wanted to shed some light on why coming from a place of mistrust is – on almost all occasions – not going to serve the writer.

When I interviewed my friend, manager John Zaozirny, for my upcoming book *Breaking In: Tales From The Screenwriting Trenches*, he talked about writers who question the importance of release forms: "If you don't want to sign a release form, you're probably not somebody I want to work with, because you're coming at it from a position of mistrust. I understand that 'people have to protect themselves,' but that's what copyrighting your screenplay is for."

John and I went on to discuss the importance of the release form, which most production companies and managers require the writer sign prior to accepting his or her unsolicited material. "There's very little to gain on my end for reading some random screenplay unprotected; there's much more to gain for the writer. Because if you are querying me then I'm probably in a more established position than you are. It's all downside for me if I read the script without the release."

But what is the release form protecting the manager or production company from? "If I do not like your screenplay and then later on I develop a screenplay that has any similarities to it – and Lord knows there are only so many stories under the sun – then I've opened myself up to a scenario where you could sue me for stealing your idea," John said. "So if I want to develop a script about an ambassador on the run for a crime he didn't commit and you sent me a screenplay years ago about an ambassador who was investigating the murder of his wife, you could argue that the two things are the same."

Logically speaking, it makes no sense for an agent or manager to read a screenplay, find it market-viable, and rather than take the writer – or at the very least the project – on for representation, instead feed the concept to one of their writers to write it on spec. "If I read a screenplay and I thought there was something good in it, why wouldn't I just develop it with you?" Zaozirny told me. "Why would I go and try to back door something? What's the upside?"

The smart decision for any rep working on commission would be to book their proven writer out on assignment work, while attempting to sell a spec from a new writer who is not yet able to easily book assignment work. The end result would be double the income for the rep. At the end of the day, a successful spec sale means the rep would then be able to start sending the new writer out for assignment work as well. So, more established writers, more paying work.

No one is going to feel the void left by new writers who won't share their work. It's the screenwriter's journey to a professional career that is affected. So, there are two things you can do: Either find a way to leave your mistrust at the door or seek out another path to writing, one in which you will not constantly feel the threat of others aiming to steal your work.

STAGE 32

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Company B: Seeking Character-Driven Drama Scripts

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

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Company C: Seeking Romantic Comedy Scripts

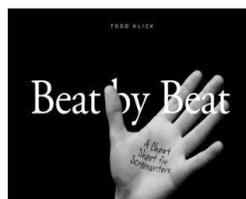
We are looking for completed, feature-length romantic comedy scripts.

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

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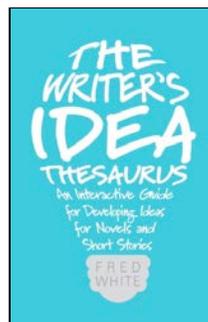
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BEAT BY BEAT: A CHEAT SHEET FOR SCREENWRITERS

This groundbreaking guide describes six different popular movies and genres (*Skyfall*, *The Avengers*, *The Hangover*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Conjuring*, *Gone Girl*) and shows screenwriters how they all follow the exact same 120 Universal Story Beats minute by minute. The book also reveals the top 10 archetypes they use, and where and why the Inciting Incident, Act 2 & 4 Quests, Midpoints, and the other five main Turning Points happen in all successful movies.

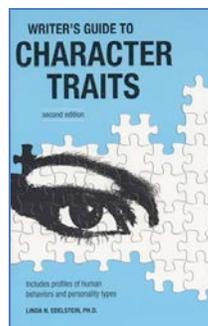
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