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Letter from the Editor

The 2014 PAGE Awards competition is now accepting entries! Does your script have what it takes to go all the way? Enter your script by January 15 to take advantage of our very lowest entry fees of the year. And to make the most of your entry, order [Judge's Feedback](#). PAGE Judges are among the best evaluators in the business, and will provide you with practical, incisive advice about the strengths, weaknesses and future potential of your screenplay.

It's a new year and **LOGLINE** is here to get your 2014 off to a great start. 2013 Gold Prize winner Chris Molinaro breaks down the pros and cons of beginning a writing career from the East Coast. PAGE Judge Joe Riley explains how the notes you get from Hollywood will help you navigate the wilderness between writing a spec and selling one. Genre guru John Truby assesses the approach *American Hustle* takes to the comedic caper form. Format whiz Dave Trottier examines establishing shots and the use of "CUT TO:". Producer Marvin V. Acuna offers advice on what to do with that great movie idea. As always, we conclude with "hot leads" for writers with scripts to sell on InkTip.

Happy reading,



Latest News from the PAGE Awards

- ◇ Two PAGE Award-winning screenplays made the 2013 Hit List: the 2007 Gold Prize-winning Science Fiction script *Tranquility Base* by Dan Turkewitz and the 2013 Silver Prize-winning Sci-Fi script *Omega Point* by Cameron Alexander. And 2006 PAGE Award winner Sang Kyu Kim placed on the 2013 Black List with his new drama *The Line*.
- ◇ Three 2013 PAGE Award winners are now repped by Judges who read their scripts during the contest: Gold Prize winner Chris Molinaro signed with Jeff Belkin of Zero Gravity, Silver Prize winner Sage Mears signed with Zach Cox and Julian Rosenberg at Circle of Confusion, and Bronze Prize winner Kathryn Wood signed with Chris Cook and Carrie Isgett at Madhouse Entertainment.
- ◇ The original TV pilot *Alice in Arabia*, by 2013 Grand Prize winner Brooke Eikmeier, was picked up by ABC Family and Brooke is now writing the next five episodes of the show. She was also hired to write a book adaptation for Ellen Pompeo's production company, Calamity Jane. Brooke was signed by Circle of Confusion and WME.
- ◇ 2012 PAGE Award winner Zeke Farrow sold the series pitch for his Gold Prize-winning comedy *The Untitled Sarah Palin Sex Doll Project* to MTV. He has also written a new script for Escape Artists, which Will Speck and Josh Gordon are attached to direct, and a new TV pilot that is currently being packaged. Zeke is represented by Management 360.
- ◇ 2009 Gold Prize winner Rob Sudduth was hired as a story editor on the new CBS hit *The Crazy Ones*, starring Robin Williams and Sarah Michelle Gellar. He wrote the episode "Outbreak," airing January 16th. "Fun writing staff," Rob tells us, "great crew, and of course the cast is awesome!" Previously a staff writer on the network sitcoms *GCB* and *The New Normal*, Rob is represented by MetaMorphic Entertainment and UTA.

2014 PAGE Awards Early Entry Discount Deadline: January 15th

Confessions of a Newbie Screenwriter Living on the Wrong Coast

by Chris Molinaro

If the rap wars of the '90s taught us anything, it was this – in the end, it didn't matter who was from the East Coast or West Coast. Every voice had a place at the table, regardless of geography. However, my guess is that if you were a gangsta rapper living in L.A., you

Chris Molinaro won the 2013 PAGE Gold Prize for his comedy *Impending Dom*. He was signed by PAGE Judge Jeff Belkin of Zero Gravity Management and is now taking meetings and pitching his work to the industry long distance. Chris lives in Nutley, New Jersey with his wife and two daughters. Find him on Twitter @chrismolinaro.

enjoyed a significant advantage if you had a spec script you wanted to sell. Just one of many reasons why we'll probably never see Biggie's sci-fi rom-com come to fruition.

I'm from the East Coast. I live in New Jersey and work in Manhattan. I knew since I was a kid that I wanted to write movies and I probably should have

moved to L.A. in my early 20s, but for one reason or another, I just didn't... (Okay, I met a girl in New York.) Anyway, over the years I learned all I could about the craft, kept my head down and wrote. Of course, I was 3000 miles away from the people I was writing for.

After I won a 2013 PAGE Award in the comedy category with my script *Impending Dom*, I signed with a manager. Thanks to PAGE, I was finally on my way. My manager really liked my newest script, *Babymoon*, which was inspired by a terrible vacation taken with my wife (the aforementioned girl) before our first child was born.

The script got a good amount of interest from producers and I was able to score some meetings out of it. (The irony is not lost on me that the script that got my foot in the door never would have happened if I'd moved to L.A. and hadn't met my wife in New York.)

Over the last few weeks, I've had a bunch of meetings over the phone and here is what I've learned as a newbie writer getting his first taste of Hollywood, if only from afar.

NOT LIVING IN L.A. – THE PROS

No L.A. traffic: The number one complaint of Angelinos? The terrible traffic. So if you're not in L.A., be happy that you don't have to lose all those hours you'll never get back sitting in your smelly car on the way to meetings (albeit in beautiful weather).

The time difference: If I lived in L.A., in order to get to meetings I'd have to take off from work on short notice and at odd times. From New York, that's not a problem. I have a day job and don't want to take phone meetings during work hours, so I use the three-hour time difference to my advantage and schedule the calls for after I get off work. That works out nicely.

Cheat sheets: As a total noob, my first meetings were more than a little nerve-racking. I was all cold sweats and stomach aches. I had waited my whole life to get to this point. But since the meetings weren't in person, I made myself a three-and-a-half-page cheat sheet with

my bio, loglines, and any other important information I wanted to keep handy during the call. I even had my kids' names and ages ready, in case I really froze up.

Taking notes: I have a pretty lackluster memory, so phone meetings enabled me to take copious notes about everything that was said. That way I didn't miss a beat and the next time we speak, I can refer back to my notes. Oh, Joe Producer said his daughter just got into Northwestern? Guess what... Next time I talk to him I'm asking how his daughter is enjoying life as a Wildcat.

NOT LIVING IN L.A. – THE CONS

Training wheels: Taking phone meetings while reading loglines from my cheat sheet and scrawling notes, I realized this was the Hollywood equivalent of training wheels on a bike. I wasn't forced to commit my loglines (or my kids' names) to memory. Thus, my in-person meeting skills are still unproven – potentially a major detriment to anyone hoping to make a career out of screenwriting.

Short shelf life: Producers are busy people, constantly reading scripts and meeting countless writers. It's hard to stay on their radar even if you've met face to face. My expiration date in their minds is much sooner, since we've never actually seen each other. A voice on the end of the phone is a far cry from actually connecting with another person in the physical realm.

The experience: I'm only guessing here, but after years of toil, finally walking into a producer's office must feel pretty phenomenal. Not having experienced that, I feel a little disconnected, almost like none of this is really happening.

THINGS I LEARNED

Go in prepared. Research the companies, producers, and their credits beforehand, so you know exactly who you're dealing with and what they've done in the past.

Have new ideas ready with rock-solid loglines. I thought I knew how to write loglines. My new manager politely made it clear to me that I didn't. They are their own beast and will go further in selling your screenplay than any other tool at your disposal.

Write more scripts. I didn't have that many scripts ready to go when I unexpectedly won a PAGE Award. Now my foot is in the door, but all I have to give these producers are ideas for new scripts. I don't have a stockpile of finished work that they can read right now. See my note above regarding expiration dates. The clock is ticking for me.

Know the lingo. Read the trades. I like to think I keep pretty up-to-date on the goings-on in Hollywood, but several producers mentioned names and terms I'd never heard. Fortunately, over the phone they couldn't see the blank look on my face.

Don't tell a producer the reasons why other producers have passed. Just don't. Yes, I made this mistake. Once.

Finally, when they inevitably ask you why you never moved to L.A., have a better reason than "fear." And once you've given your reason, consider moving to L.A. anyway. I hear the weather is lovely.

Script Notes: Your Compass in the Wilderness

by Joe Riley

As a writer, your commodity is the written word and oftentimes your soul is laced onto your pages and into your stories. Your characters' fears are your fears, their dreams your dreams.

Joe Riley is a producer and literary manager. He is a founding member of Velocity Entertainment Partners. Before becoming a manager, he was a development executive for Michael Douglas' Furthur Films, where he worked on such films as *One Night at McCool's*, *Swimfan* and *Wonder Boys*. He has served as a Judge for the PAGE Awards for the past six years and has signed several past winners as clients.

Given this emotional connection to the work, many writers find it difficult to accept feedback or suggestions. Some even view any alternative discussion of their work as "criticism." Over the years, the development process has come to be viewed as "development hell." We've all heard writers refer to development executives as "the enemy."

Far from the enemy, a good development executive is your ally. Keep in mind that none of the overworked executives in this town will bother to give

notes on a script they don't appreciate on some level.

Not only are development executives an important part of the process, they can provide clear-headed feedback and fresh ideas for your project. Remember, they want your script to be as good as possible — after all, it's a feather in their cap if/when it goes from the page to the screen.

As a writer in the trenches, it's sometimes hard to maintain perspective on your work. I liken this to a hiker who has been out on the trails for weeks. Down inside the heavily wooded forest, you come upon forks in the trail at regular intervals. Much of the time, you are able to make solid decisions as to which path to take, based upon an understanding of the general direction you are trying to go and the internal compass that informs you of your position on the planet.

However, if you've done a fair bit of hiking you know that there are always points along the hike (particularly the long ones) where your internal compass is a little off, or the path that appears to head south actually turns back west once it goes around that bend you can't see from where you're standing... The only way to know for sure is to gain a higher-altitude view of not only the choices in front of you, but also of the path you've already blazed, AND the paths behind you that you didn't choose. In other words, you need a map.

A good development executive can help to provide that map. He or she can drop in at various intervals along the hike, hand you a bottle of water and an energy bar, then point you in the write (pun intended) direction. But only if you're open to the process.

This doesn't mean that every note you receive is correct, or even useful. However, most times it does mean that you need to take a look at that area of the script from the perspective of the note. The most seasoned writers have

an innate ability to read into and understand the underlying meaning of notes. This is often developed over multiple meetings about multiple rewrites of multiple projects, with notes from a slew of different executives, producers and representatives.

You should begin to exercise this muscle as soon as you can. Whether you agree or disagree with an industry professional's ideas, you should challenge yourself to mentally play out each note. How does this new idea affect that character, this scene, and the script as a whole? It may not work the way the note-giver meant it, but you may learn something about your character or your script that you can use elsewhere. AND, just as importantly, the more you engage in this process, the more you will gain a deeper understanding of where any particular note is coming from.

Many writers never develop this ability and are forced to rework their script by rote, taking each note literally. This is unfortunate, for the very best writers are those who read into notes their own interpretations, infuse their own ideas into the execution of the notes, and come back with an even better solution than anyone expected.

Remember the old adage "writing is rewriting." The notes process is not about criticism, it's about help. Once you develop a deep understanding of this process and how to "own" the notes you receive, you'll have a big leg up on your competition.

Who says you have to live in Hollywood to make it big?
Not us.

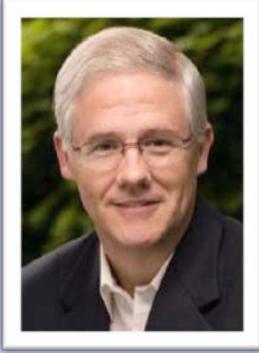
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From the creator & co-founder of Final Draft

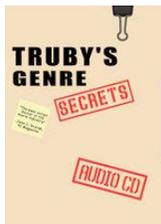
Writing the Caper Film: *American Hustle*

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.

John Truby's "Comedy Writing Course"



Comedy writing is very hard, and is done well by relatively few writers. That's actually good news. But only if you can master the professional techniques. This course is among the most popular at Truby's Writers Studio because it gives you all the techniques of this perennial favorite. This course covers comic characters, movie comedy structures, all the beats of the major comedy story forms, comedy dialogue and much, much more. If you are serious about your comedy writing, get this course. [Click here](#) to learn all about it! Now available at [The Writers Store](#).

To see how a film works, we have to begin by looking at its genres. *American Hustle* is a crime caper done as a black comedy, with a number of advanced story techniques thrown in for good measure. This is a great mix of genres, but the writers don't want or don't know how to execute either genre the right way. So all kinds of potential is lost and we have a good movie, but not a great one.

A caper film, also known as a heist film, is one of the most plot heavy of all genres. Not here. Yes, there is some complicated scamming going on, and some surprises at the payoff, as any self-respecting caper must have. But supposedly, co-writer and director David Russell has said he was interested in character, not plot. If so, he is making one of the biggest mistakes in story, thinking you can separate these two sides of the narrative coin. It ends up limiting both. Recognizable plot is missing from large portions of this film.

Black comedy, along with satire, is the most advanced of comedy sub-genres (see my [Comedy Class](#) for the story beats of all the sub-genres, including black comedy). It is the comedy of illogic and destructive systems, and it can be a profound form. But, for many reasons, it is very difficult to pull off. First, the characters are all trapped in a system, which can make them reactive and anti-dramatic. Second, you have to define the details of the system, which is the true opponent of the story, while maintaining narrative drive.

American Hustle feels like *Goodfellas* lite, and while it is funnier, it loses the comparison in almost every other way. Like *Goodfellas*, *Hustle* uses the storyteller flashback structure, but does it incorrectly. This structure, when done properly, begins in the present, just after the biggest dramatic event of the story (typically the battle scene). The moment triggers a flashback where we return to some point in the past and see the events that led up to the dramatic event. Here, there is no obvious reason that this event – the first time the leads try to entrap the mayor – would trigger a flashback. So there is no reason the past events should lead back to this moment.

While *Goodfellas* has a single narrator whose memory of the events will inform his character in some way, in *Hustle* we have three narrators: con man Irving, his girlfriend Sydney, and FBI agent Richie. Playing with POV is one of the main features of advanced story, and is a standard technique in the novel. Its main advantage is that it shows how human beings are not all-knowing but in fact are deeply prejudiced and act with limited knowledge. And that is very appropriate for these three main characters, who are all con artists, including FBI agent Richie, and are all to some degree incompetent.

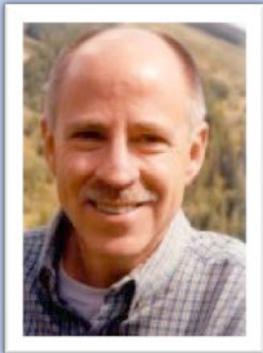
The writers try to avoid this problem early in the storyteller opening by focusing on the love that brings Irving and Sydney together. This love is designed to be the foundation of the entire film. But these people are so obviously incompetent and silly that their love is not believable. And because they are con artists, we're never sure if even the love between them isn't a con as well.

Using Irving and Sydney as the driving force of the film comes to an abrupt halt when Richie busts them. He takes over as the main character because it is his goal – catching the big fish – that tracks the rest of the film. But he is a buffoon and a con man too, and the story immediately flies off in all kinds of directions.

Thematically, *American Hustle* had tremendous potential. Any time you include the name of a country in the title, you are doing an epic. An epic is a story in which the fate of a nation is based on the actions of a single person or family. Arthur Miller, author of *Death of A Salesman*, told us that the salesman is the quintessential American job. These salesmen are selling nothing but a fake promise. It's the dark side of the American Dream, where success is all about making money.

In this version of the American Dream, you can be whoever you want to be, as long as you can make money from it and as long as you don't get caught. It's a powerful theme and it should ring true with audiences who see their own scams and schemes to get rich quick and think they'll live happily ever after. But there's a big problem in a story where everything is fake – you can't make the emotion between the characters believable. And when the characters are laughably dumb, even while saying some of the wackiest dialogue in years, it makes the problem even worse.

The verdict for *American Hustle*? The comedy is often quite funny, but the serious drama doesn't work.



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

Establishing Shots and Transitions

by Dave Trottier

LET'S ESTABLISH ONE THING

READER'S QUESTION:

I have searched all the books and cannot seem to find the right camera angle/direction for this shot. I have an establishing shot focusing on a parade. The camera must rise above the parade to an aerial shot of the city. The camera will move over the city and lower to the main location in the film. The film begins in the present and immediately flashes back to 1974. The aerial shot is used as a time transition. What do you suggest?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

The reason you are having difficulty finding this camera direction is because it is not used in spec scripts. I assume you are writing a script on spec and that you have not been paid to write it. If so, you want to AVOID camera angles and editing directions.

However, that doesn't mean you can't direct the camera WITHOUT using explicit camera directions. If you absolutely must have this shot and it's for a strong dramatic purpose, just write it out in narrative description:

We move up from the parade and over the city until we descend into Central Park.

Now, past readers will jump on me because I generally advise against first person directions, such as WE SEE, WE MOVE, WE HEAR, etc. So keep in mind that the above example is the exception that proves the rule.

THE FIRST CUT IS THE DEEPEST

READER'S QUESTION:

Do you really believe that using "CUT TO:" in your spec scripts really hurts your chance of being taken seriously? And if so, why do I see "CUT TO:" throughout every script I read? For example, look at *The Conversation* by Francis Ford Coppola.

DAVE'S ANSWER:

Let's take the second question first. Virtually every screenplay available for purchase is a shooting script, but you are writing a spec script. Don't assume that spec style is the same as shooting style (which is filled with technical directions). It is extremely difficult to get your hands on a sold spec script — they are rarely circulated. So I'm guessing that the scripts you are referring to (such as *The Conversation*) are shooting scripts.

Also, writers who also direct or produce don't have to please anyone but themselves. You ought to see a Woody Allen script — it's not even close to correct format.

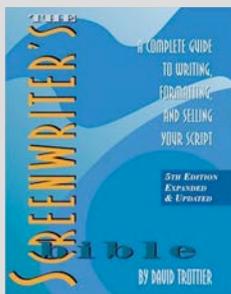
Now, the first question. Obviously, if your script is wonderful but contains a few CUT TOs, it is not going to be rejected for that. But readers, agents, and producers who read dozens of scripts a week will glance through a script (before they begin reading it) to see if it "looks right." The little things add up to make a good or bad first impression. Naturally, just one thing is not going to make a difference. But if you know better, why push it?

As an additional comment, not every Hollywood type reacts the same way. There are probably many who are not that focused on form and could care less. But generally, people look at scripts the same way you and I look at the want ads — to save time, they're seeing how many they can eliminate or screen out immediately.

Keep writing!

Dave Trottier's

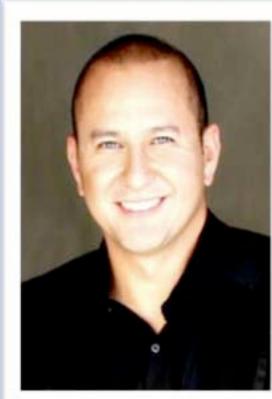
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Marvin V. Acuna is an accomplished film and television producer. He recently produced the features *Chez Upshaw*, starring Kevin Pollak and Ileana Douglas, and *Lovelace*, with Amanda Seyfried, Peter Saarsgard and James Franco.

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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A Great Idea Is Only the Beginning

by Marvin V. Acuna

"Will someone steal my idea?"

I get asked this question pretty frequently, so I thought I'd take the time to answer it today...

I understand that a great idea could turn into the next great feature film. As a screenwriter, I know that at some point a great story idea has struck you like a bolt of lightning. I bet you've even taken some of these "lightning bolt" ideas and transformed them into entire screenplays.

Great ideas can come from interesting and sometimes random places. Sometimes it's a news article, a magazine clipping, a children's book or even a passing conversation that causes a great idea to hit you.

Many screenwriters I know have been in the shower when a brilliant idea forced them to stumble, sopping wet, to the nearest pad of paper to scribble down some notes. In fact, I know a writer who was once driving on the freeway when she was struck by such a great story idea that she immediately pulled over to the side of the road, just to jot it down.

Long story short, I get it when screenwriters are wary about sharing their story concepts with others.

But is this a legitimate concern?

I've encountered screenwriters who absolutely refuse to share their ideas with ME, a Hollywood producer and someone who could open a lot of doors for them, out of the fear that I would steal the idea!

Interesting, eh?

Sure, there are horror stories of unethical executives tricking gullible screenwriters into giving up their story ideas, then turning around and passing the concepts off as their own. So I understand when writers are hesitant about revealing their best ideas.

But how do you handle this scenario then? How do you know who you can trust? And who SHOULDN'T you share your brilliant premise with?

Here's the truth of the matter.

Great story ideas are a fantastic first step, but they're fairly common in Hollywood. I'm telling you this as a Hollywood producer with 20 years of experience in the business. Sorry if that crushes your belief that YOUR idea is the greatest idea that Hollywood has never heard of. But guess what?

What's extremely rare is a great idea that's executed originally.

You can spout amazing ideas until the cows come home, but unless you can write a jaw-dropping script around that idea, then you're just putting lipstick on a pig.

The truth is that there just aren't that many writers who can promise greatness in their logline and then deliver greatness in their script.

So the bottom line is this – I wouldn't be too worried about sharing your killer ideas with others. I would be more concerned with making sure that the execution of your idea is congruent with what you promise in your logline.

Once you can do that, you become one of the rare writers in Hollywood who can turn your thoughts into gold.

And that's a skill that can NEVER be stolen!

"Be sure that the execution of your idea is congruent with what you promise in your logline."



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

Company Name Withheld

[code: tujrvqye0]

We are looking for completed, feature-length werewolf screenplays.

Budget yet to be determined. WGA or non-WGA okay.

Please note that to protect this company from receiving unsolicited calls and emails, and because this lead is exclusive to InkTip subscribers, we are keeping their name anonymous.

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

Company Name Withheld

[code: tf0d9u2qdz]

We are looking for completed, feature-length exorcism screenplays.

Budget yet to be determined. WGA or non-WGA okay.

Please note that to protect this company from receiving unsolicited calls and emails, and because this lead is exclusive to InkTip subscribers, we are keeping their name anonymous.

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

Status Media & Entertainment

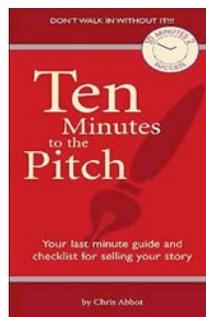
[code: 862nzanumg]

We are looking for completed, feature-length sci-fi scripts where the entire story takes place in a spaceship.

Budget will not exceed \$1 million. Only non-WGA writers should submit at this point in time.

Our credits include *The Devil's Dozen* and *Beyond Justice*, among others.

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

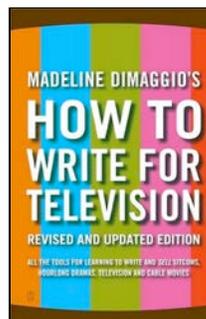


10 MINUTES TO THE PITCH

A guide to selling your script, story, or idea to the powers that be. Compact and comprehensive, the book gives you all the info you need to prepare for your pitch.

Then, when it's time to perform, the last minute checklist settles you down, gets you focused, and puts you in a position to knock 'em dead. This slim but indispensable volume is full of insider advice, secrets, and tips from a writer/producer who has successfully pitched – and been pitched to – thousands of times. When the time comes, you'll be ready to put your best pitch forward.

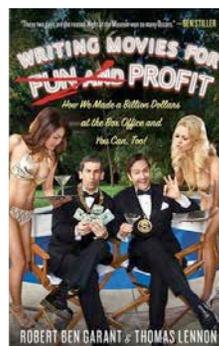
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HOW TO WRITE FOR TELEVISION

In this guide for every student of the small screen and every scriptwriter dreaming of breaking into the business, writer-producer Madeline DiMaggio hands you the tools of the trade. With dozens of examples from today's hit shows, as well as perennial classics, DiMaggio walks readers through the scriptwriting process, from learning how to watch TV like a writer to developing your script, pitching it, and eventually sealing the deal. DiMaggio answers the questions on every aspiring television writer's mind!

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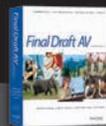
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