LOGLINE

The Screenwriter's eZine

Letter from the Editor

Have you entered the 2015 PAGE Awards yet? With the next entry deadline looming, I just want to remind you how many careers have been launched by the contest. Take a glance at the news items below to see some of the exciting things past PAGE winners are now doing! Our Late Entry Deadline is Monday, March 16th, so now is the time to finish that last polish and get your script in the running for this year's $25,000 Grand Prize!

We usher in the springtime with a *LOGLINE* eZine that is jam-packed with screenwriting advice and analysis. 2014 Grand Prize winner Matías Caruso offers counsel to writers for whom English is not their first language. PAGE Judge Dwayne Smith explains the impact a carefully chosen character name can have on the reader.

John Truby, expert in all things genre, tells us how to write a movie with appeal to a large, international audience. Dr. Format Dave Trottier talks transitions and flashbacks. Our in-house industry insider Marvin V. Acuna shares author Neil Gaiman's eight rules of the road for writers. To tie a bow on the issue, we have three leads on what producers are currently looking for, courtesy of InkTip.com!

Happy reading,

John Evans

Latest News from the PAGE Awards

◊ The family drama *White Water*, based on the 2005 PAGE Award-winning short film script by Michael S. Bandy and Eric Stein, premiered on February 7 on TV One, kicking off the new TV One original film series and making ratings history for the network. Directed by Rusty Cundieff, the movie stars Sharon Leal, Larenz Tate and Barry Shabaka Henley.

◊ The new action-thriller *The Accountant*, by 2008 PAGE Gold Prize winner Bill Dubuque (the man behind *The Judge*), is now filming in Atlanta. The movie stars Ben Affleck as a mild-mannered accountant and math genius with Asperger's who moonlights as an assassin. Gavin O'Connor is directing the project, and the cast includes J.K. Simmons, Anna Kendrick, Jeffrey Tambor and John Lithgow. Bill is represented by PAGE Judge Eric Williams at Zero Gravity Management and Trevor Astbury at CAA.

◊ 2008 Gold Prize winner VJ Boyd has been working on the hit FX series *Justified* for the past four years and has now been promoted to producer on the show. He wrote the recent episode "Cash Game," which aired on January 27, as well as episodes airing on March 10 and April 7. VJ is represented by Jeremy Platt at Plattform and David Stone at WME.

◊ The feature spec *One of These Days*, by 2009 Bronze Prize winner Phyllis Heltay, has been optioned by Bethany Joy Lenz (*Dexter*, *One Tree Hill*), with Matthew Bissonnette attached to direct. Bethany discovered Phyllis's script through our co-sponsor InkTip.

◊ The 2014 PAGE Gold Prize winner (Family Film) *Skullduggery*, by James Soscie, has been optioned by Corky Loesch of Loesch Productions. Jim tells us that "Paperwork is done and payment received! Thanks so much for your support. It really meant a lot. The contest was such an amazing experience — one that I will never forget."

2015 PAGE Awards Late Entry Deadline: March 16th

Not Lost in Translation

by Matías Caruso

"I can't write in a foreign language," I thought (and probably said out loud) as I struggled to read a screenplay written in English.

> Matías Caruso won the 2014 PAGE Grand Prize for his Action/Adventure script *Three of Swords*. Short films he's written have screened at several top international festivals (including Cannes) and won numerous awards including Best Picture and Best Screenplay at Klapka 2013. A lawyer living in Buenos Aires, Matías is repped by Jennifer Au at Untitled Entertainment.

This was 10 years ago. I was at my soul-crushing day job at a law firm in Argentina, reading scripts on my computer while my boss wasn't looking, when I stumbled upon a website (simplyscripts.com) where aspiring writers could upload scripts to trade reads and feedback. It was a public online community with lots of members and seemed like a perfect place for new writers to hang out and learn the ropes. Problem was, the scripts and reviews were submitted in English. I had some basic English skills at the time, but I wasn't fluent enough, so I started looking for similar sites where writers shared scripts and comments in my mother language, Spanish.

After several Google searches, I realized that what I was looking for didn't exist (and probably still doesn't), so my lack of options pushed me into a new perspective. "I can't write in a foreign language," I thought, "But if I work hard until I can, I'd learn a lot by becoming a member of an online community like this."

It was the start of a very long journey during which I was bitten by the Hollywood bug and also learned some tips and pitfalls about writing in a foreign language. I'm happy to share my experiences, hoping they can be useful to non-English speaking writers who are trying to break into Hollywood.

Of course, if you like the movies being made in your own country, you'll have a greater chance of success by trying to break into your local industry, where you are likely to have more contacts and the advantage of being able to write in your mother language.

But personally, I write high-concept, medium-budget movies that don't exist in Argentina's movie industry and which are often frowned upon because they're not "art." So if, like me, you're not on the same page as your local movie industry, then you need to explore other options in the U.S. and other foreign markets.

Unfortunately, the bar is very high for us. Most of our competition consists of native speakers from the U.S., U.K., Canada and Australia, so although we won't stand out if we are perfectly fluent in English, we can and will stand out (in a bad way) for not being so. *There's no reward for doing it right, just a penalty for doing it wrong.* That's why it behooves us to trick the Hollywood reader into thinking we're native speakers. Most aspiring screenwriters are native speakers, so it makes sense that the market won't settle for anything less than that.

The obvious shortcut, which I'm often asked about, is writing the script in one's mother language and then hiring an English translator. Tempting as it sounds, unfortunately, I don't think this is a valid option. Should anyone in the industry like your script, the first thing they're going to do is get you on the phone to give you notes. Lots of notes. This call will be in English, of course, and Hollywood folks speak very fast. You will have to be able to engage them in meaningful conversation about your work, on the spot, without a translator's help. So even if you somehow dodge putting your English to the test during the initial writing phase, you'll inevitably have to deal with this hurdle later on, should the script gain any traction.

Plus, screenwriting is a very particular writing medium that differs from regular prose in so many ways (word economy, emphasis on visuals, rhythm, etc.). It's very demanding and requires particular skills that take years to hone — skills the translator is not likely to have. The writer's voice and personal style is likely to be lost or get seriously diluted once his or her work goes through the translation grinder.

So if having top English skills is pretty much inescapable, it means the hard work needed to acquire such skills is as well. There are many tools to help you on this front:

- Take language courses. Any kind of formal education will speed up the learning process. (Personally, I attended a bilingual school).

- Watch movies with subtitles in English instead of your mother language. Listen to podcasts in English (preferably about screenwriting). This will help you hone your oral English skills and be prepared in case a script gains traction and the phone starts ringing.

- Read scripts written in English. I read hundreds of them online, and I'm not using "hundreds" as hyperbole for "many" — I mean that number literally.

- It helps to start small and then gradually go bigger. The first script I wrote in English wasn't a feature, it was a short.

- Online dictionaries and translators are very helpful. I'm particularly fond of wordreference.com because of the forums where native speakers answer questions from foreign members.

- Exchange feedback with fellow writers who are native speakers. Joining online writing groups and networking with English-speaking writers is a must.

Back to my boring work cubicle… I did join the Simply Scripts site that day. I read and reviewed tons of scripts, got feedback on mine, made many mistakes and learned from them. One day, I was able to finish a feature-length script that seemed written by a native speaker… but that happened about *five years* later, which is why I'd like to add one final suggestion: It's better to think of writing in a foreign language as the equivalent of a committed relationship, not a fling. It takes a lot of time and effort to do it well, so you must be in it for the long run.

Good luck!

How to Play the Name Game

by Dwayne Smith

I'm often asked how much thought I put into naming my characters. I always chuckle at that question because I know that my response might surprise the questioner.

> Dwayne Smith has been a working screenwriter for 13 years. Represented by Verve and Circle of Confusion, he's been hired for several assignments and sold six specs. His first novel, thriller *Forty Acres*, was published in 2014 by Atria Books (an imprint of Simon & Schuster). In February Dwayne was honored with an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work by a Debut Author.

I can devote a full writing day to naming all the characters in my script. And sometimes, because I can't find the right name, I get stuck for days. I find it impossible to get down to the business of pounding out script pages until all my characters are named properly.

The reason is simple. I spend a lot of time creating bios for my characters, from birth to the start of the story. But even with all that prep work, they aren't fully fleshed out until they have the right name.

Sure, I could slap any ol' name on them and get busy, but that would be a huge mistake, and just plain lazy.

A name, when chosen carefully, has the potential to give your character a great deal of added dimension. A character's name could be used to impart masculinity, intelligence, or even sexuality. The right character name nudges the reader's imagination in the direction you choose, helping them to fully visualize your characters.

As a PAGE Judge, I read a lot of screenplays. I've noticed that far too many writers put far too little thought into their characters' names. When I first began writing I was guilty of this offense as well. Even worse, I had the awful habit of using the same names in every script I wrote. I used David for the male lead and Lisa for the female lead. The supporting roles were labeled with bland names like Mark and Glen and Rebecca and Jessica. I don't remember my reasoning behind those choices. Perhaps I was just trying to use the most unobtrusive names possible. This approach changed 15 years ago when I sat down to write a comedy spec titled *Joe's Last Chance*.

Why I was struck by an epiphany about character naming I don't recall, but I decided to put some serious thought into what I would name my characters. For the main character, a badass hit man, I came up with the name FRIENDLY. Friendly's target — a slick, fast-talking lawyer? I named him JOE KEANE. The love interest — a spunky, beautiful writer — I called VIOLET. And the fat mob boss who wanted both Friendly and Keane dead was named HERMAN GRIPPO. Now I'll admit that my character naming kung fu was still raw and a little clumsy, but *Joe's Last Chance* was the first script I ever sold and I'm convinced that using those colorful names really helped.

I've improved on my "naming technique" over the years. I've learned to craft character names that more subtly evoke a particular image or notion in the reader. To do that, I ask myself three questions: What do I want the reader to feel when they read the name? How do I want them to visualize the character when they read the name? What trigger words can I use to spark that feeling without

being too heavy-handed? It's almost like I'm trying to implant a subliminal suggestion.

In my recent novel, *Forty Acres*, my main character is a young African-American civil rights attorney. I wanted the reader to feel my character was a just and honest man and to visualize someone very neat and put-together. I named the character Martin because, in the context of the story, I knew that somewhere in the back of their mind every time the reader read his name, they would think of Martin Luther King. Simple? Absolutely. But very effective.

One of the antagonists in my story is a brash and suspicious younger man who constantly causes trouble for Martin. I named him Carver. The word "carver" evokes edginess and violence — a looming threat.

All of this might sound blunt but remember, I'm giving you a peek behind the curtain, showing you the smoke and mirrors. If you were reading the book it wouldn't occur to you, at least not consciously, that Carver was anything more than a name. It's one of the nuances I've endeavored to perfect over the years. I look for common names that still achieve the imagination-nudging effect that I'm after. Carver is a very common name in the African-American community, but it's also perfect for a villain.

Now, when you're writing spec scripts, there's another level to this character naming sleight-of-hand that can actually help you make a sale. One of the greatest screenwriters ever, William Goldman, wrote a book called ***Adventures in the Screen Trade***. If you haven't read it, go get yourself a copy and study every word. Mr. Goldman advises, "Always write for a star." What he means is, stars make movies happen, so your spec should have a great role for a star. In fact, when producers read your script, trust me, one of the things they are wondering is "whom can I attach to this script to get the movie made?"

Knowing this, I have developed a little trick to help the producers' imaginations along. I try to come up with a name for my protagonist that nudges the reader to think of a particular actor in the starring role. Sometimes I will simply use a part of the star's name. Tom for Tom Cruise, Hank for Tom Hanks, Will for Will Smith — you get the idea. (Of course, you still may want to add a well-thought-out first or last name to add color to the character.)
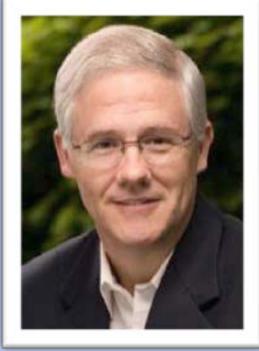
About 10 years ago I wrote a spec thriller called *Pressure* about a wealthy family threatened by some shadowy underworld figures. The protagonist is a businessman who suddenly has to come to the rescue of his family. I named this character Harry Sanford. Can you guess who I wanted readers to picture in the starring role?

To many of you, all of this fuss about naming characters may sound like overkill, but consider: What's the downside of giving your storytelling an extra edge? The thoughtful and strategic selection of character names is another tool that can help you fine-tune and enrich your screenplay, making it as entertaining and as sellable as possible.

Oh, and in case you didn't figure it out, I wrote the Harry Sanford role for Harrison Ford. Yeah, I can get a little nutty about this stuff.
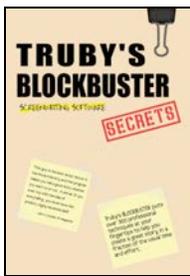
Writing the Blockbuster

by John Truby

Hollywood is in the business of selling films to a worldwide audience, which means they are always looking for a script with blockbuster potential. That's a very special kind of script, with a number of story elements that studio executives are looking for. I'd like to point out five of the most important blockbuster script elements, out of about 40 that we consistently see in the top money-making films.

Technique 1: The Myth Genre

When Hollywood was selling primarily to an American audience, execs thought that movie stars were the key to a hit film. But the emphasis has changed to genre films with great stories. Story forms are instantly recognizable anywhere in the world. But you can't just choose any genre to write a script with blockbuster potential. Some genres travel well while others don't. For example, comedies based mostly on funny dialogue don't travel. Ironically, the story that travels best is the oldest genre of all, the myth form. Myth is found in more blockbusters than any other genre by far. Add up the box office for myth-based movies *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Shrek*, *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*.

One reason myth transcends national and cultural boundaries so well is that the form tracks archetypal characters and archetypal life situations. These are fundamental character types that everyone knows, and life experiences everyone passes through from birth to death. Myth has a number of unique story beats you must include if you want to tell the form well. And remember: in blockbusters, myth is almost always combined with one or two other genres (such as action, fantasy and science fiction) that serve to update and unify the myth story for a young audience.

Technique 2: The Hero's Goal

The single most important element in an international blockbuster is narrative drive, the ability of the story to propel forward at an increasing rate. Narrative drive comes primarily from the hero's desire line. Desire is one of the seven major story structure steps, and provides you with the all-important spine on which you hang all characters, plot, symbols, theme and dialogue. There are three keys to a good desire line. First, make it specific; the more specific the better. Second, extend the goal as close to the end as possible. Third, make sure the hero is obsessed with it. Above all, intensify the desire.

Technique 3: The Opponent

We are taught to focus on the hero, since this character drives the story. That's sound advice. But in blockbuster films, the opponent may be even more important. One of the great principles in all storytelling is that the hero is only as good as the person he fights. When writing your script, first make sure you have one main opponent to focus and build the conflict. Then look for ways to intensify the central opposition. Make your main opponent bigger, smarter, more aggressive, more passionate. Christopher Nolan has said, "What was important to me in creating an incredible frightening villain is that everything he says is true and at some level reasonable and also makes sense."
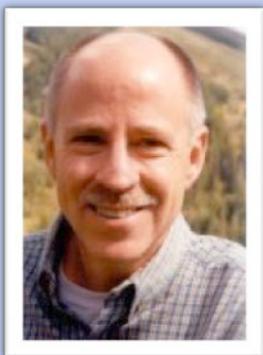
Technique 4: The Scam

The emphasis blockbuster films place on plot leads to another story technique. And it's designed to solve a problem that plagues almost all screenwriters: how do you create maximum plot in the middle, where 90% of scripts fail? The hero's plan is often a scam, or a plan that involves deception. When the hero scams, he becomes a trickster character, which audiences love. When the opponent scams, it gives you more plot and makes him/her a more challenging foe.

Technique 5: The Story World

The rise of the videogame along with the ability of FX artists to realize imaginary worlds has made the story world a crucial element in a blockbuster. Many screenwriters believe that this aspect of the film is the responsibility of the director and FX artists. Wrong. A good story world is written into the script, and it is intimately organic to the story. Every visual element should have story meaning embedded within it. The major techniques for creating a rich story world are found in my **Blockbuster** story development software.

If you are serious about succeeding as a screenwriter, start with these five techniques and you will be well on the path to writing a script that Hollywood is eager to buy.
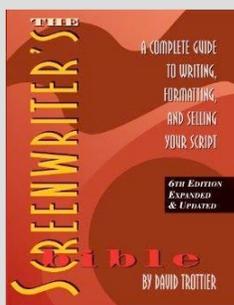

John Truby is regarded as the serious writer's story coach and has taught his 22-Step Great Screenwriting and Genre courses to sold-out audiences in Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, Sydney, Rome, Toronto and other far-flung locales. Over the past 20 years, more than 30,000 students have taken Truby's 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.

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Magical Transitions

by Dave Trottier

MORPHING MORTIMER

READER'S QUESTION:

In a number of transitions in my screenplay, we are going to see a person in the middle of an action morph into a younger version of himself without a break in the action, but a change of scenery and time. How do I handle that?

DAVE'S ANSWER:

There are many possibilities. Here is one.

```
INT. THEATER – NIGHT

The theater is packed with fans.

MORTIMER struts across the stage, playing his
harmonica. He MORPHS into....

EXT. KANSAS CITY BACK ALLEY – DAY

... YOUNG MORTIMER (15) playing the same tune on his
harmonica.

SUPER: "KANSAS CITY 1983"
```

MAGICAL FLASHBACKS

READER'S QUESTION:

What about flashbacks that use magic? Would I have to note that it's a psychic or magical flashback? For example, a psychic detective picks up a hairbrush handle. Then we see what is in his head: a young woman brushing her hair when a man in dark apparel comes through the window.

DAVE'S ANSWER:

This is a great question. You would handle the formatting just like a flashback, but you might use different labeling; in other words, you could choose not to call it a flashback for purposes of clarity. Here's just one possible example.

```
Detective Sam picks up a hairbrush.

SAM'S PSYCHIC VISION

A young woman sits at her vanity and brushes her hair.
A man in dark apparel slips through the window behind
her.

BACK TO SCENE
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Naturally, if the woman and the man in dark apparel are appearing in the script for this first time, you would place their names or labels in ALL CAPS (such as DARK MAN). And then you would keep writing!

Eight Rules of Great Writing

by Marvin V. Acuna

"Tomorrow may be hell, but today was a good writing day, and on the good writing days nothing else matters." — Neil Gaiman

Do you know who Neil Gaiman is? Neil is an English author and a true "writer's writer."

I say that because he's written everything from novels and short fiction to comic books and films.

His notable works include the comic-book series *The Sandman* and the novels *Stardust*, *American Gods*, *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*.

Gaiman has won a ridiculous amount of awards, including the Hugo, Nebula and Bram Stoker awards, as well as the Newbery and Carnegie medals.

In short, he's a kickass author who is worth reading and listening to. On the website **Brain Pickings** he shared his "Eight Rules of Great Writing." Here they are:

1. **Write.**

2. **Put one word after another. Find the right word, put it down.**

3. **Finish what you're writing. Whatever you have to do to finish it, finish it.**

4. **Put it aside. Read it pretending you've never read it before. Show it to friends whose opinion you respect and who like the kind of thing that this is.**

5. **Remember: when people tell you something's wrong or doesn't work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong.**

6. **Fix it. Remember that, sooner or later, before it ever reaches perfection, you will have to let it go and move on and start to write the next thing. Perfection is like chasing the horizon. Keep moving.**

7. **Laugh at your own jokes.**

8. **The main rule of writing is that if you do it with enough assurance and confidence, you're allowed to do whatever you like. (That may be a rule for life as well as for writing. But it's definitely true for writing.)**

9. **So write your story as it needs to be written. Write it — honestly, and tell it as best you can. I'm not sure that there are any other rules. Not ones that matter.**

Cool list right?

I hope it inspires you to get in some good writing!

Sell Your Script

Hot Leads from 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

Magic Elevator

[code: fpyaptdq67]

We are looking for completed, feature-length scripts with a strong female protagonist and female themes. Think *Veronica Mars*, *Twilight*, *Hunger Games*, *Lucy*, *Resident Evil*, *Salt* and *Sucker Punch*. If the script is geared towards young female audience (18-25 years old) and has a romantic element, these are big pluses but not a requirement. We're open to all genres EXCEPT straight dramas or family/kids comedies. In the cover letter please specify the age of the female protagonist and indicate if there is a strong romance/love interest element.

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

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

Windchime Pictures

[code: 99xnmwac8q]

We are looking for completed, feature-length American military-themed scripts with spiritual or faith elements, i.e. scripts in the vein of *We Were Soldiers*. Submissions need be for material that is contemporary, however.

Budget will not exceed $500K. WGA or non-WGA okay.

Our credits include *Redemption of the Commons*.

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

Joie de Vivre Productions

[code: 8b4ew4bp5h]

We are looking for biopic scripts with stories that took place within the last 100 years. This will be for a specific actress, so material needs to be suitable for a Caucasian female between 25 and 40 years of age. When pitching please mention the protagonist (e.g. Amelia Earhart, Marilyn Monroe, Nelly Bly, Rita Hayworth, Clara Bow, etc.) in the personal message space.

Budget under $2M. Non-WGA okay, tell us if you're WGA.

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

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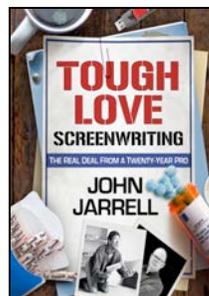
TOUGH LOVE SCREENWRITING

This is NOT another dreaded "how to write" book. It's something much more valuable — a brass knuckles, boots-on-the-ground guide to building a screenwriting career. These pages come from the direct, firsthand experience of a produced professional who's sold scripts, had a hit movie, been hired on numerous writing assignments, dealt with sadistic studio deadlines and handled crazy producers.

The book arms the reader with life-saving nuts-and-bolts tricks of the trade, from craft elements and pitch strategies to coping with notes, agents and self-doubt. Includes a comprehensive guide to Writers Guild of America Screen Credit Arbitration.

Learn more…

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This book explores the most common archetypes, provides instructions for using them to create your own original characters, and gives examples of how other writers have brought such archetypes to life in novels, film and TV.

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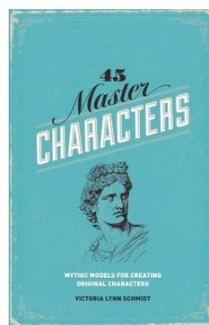
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