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Letter From the Editor



A warm welcome to all our new readers! I'm told that this contest season has brought over 3,000 new subscribers to the **LOGLINE** eZine. Like you, I look forward to July 15, when we will announce the 2017 PAGE Awards Quarter-Finalists. Here at PAGE HQ it gives us great pleasure to confer this well-deserved recognition on so many talented and hard-working writers.

We hope that this issue of the **LOGLINE** eZine will be a nice addition to your summer reading list! As always, we've tried to assemble articles that provide a broad range of industry insights into the art and craft of screenwriting...

To kick things off, 2013 PAGE Award winner Melissa London Hilfers tells us what she learned making a short film while she waited for word on her feature screenplays. How to identify (and produce) great dialogue is the subject of PAGE Judge Genie Joseph's first article for us. Script consultant Ray Morton isolates the essential things all mainstream movies – and thus, viable specs – have in common. Dr. Format himself, Dave Trotter, provides one compelling answer to ten common questions. Career coach Lee Jessup tells us four things screenwriters should never say. And finally, our friends at InkTip offer a triad of "hot leads" that come straight from content-hungry prodcos!

Happy reading,

Latest News From the PAGE Awards

◆ 2006 PAGE Silver Prize winner Davah Avena, a producer on VH1's new series **Daytime Divas**, wrote the recently aired episode "Baby Daddy Drama." Previously, she wrote for the Hulu series **East Los High**, worked as executive story editor and co-producer on the Lifetime drama **Devious Maids**, and for two seasons was a story editor on the NBC series **Medium**. Davah is represented by Abrams Artists and Sheree Guitar Entertainment.

◆ 2008 Gold Prize winner Bill Dubuque continues his phenomenal roll! His PAGE Award-winning drama **A Family Man**, starring Gerard Butler and Alison Brie, will have its U.S. theatrical premiere on July 28. And on July 21, his highly anticipated original series **Ozark**, starring Jason Bateman and Laura Linney, premieres on Netflix. In addition, Warner Bros. has announced that it is planning a sequel to Bill's hit movie **The Accountant**, starring Ben Affleck and Anna Kendrick. Bill is represented by Zero Gravity Management and CAA.

◆ 2008 Silver Prize winner Jonathan Hall is currently in post-production on the new feature film **Solo!**, which he wrote and produced. Filmed in Barx, Spain, the movie was recently selected for the "Works in Progress" program at the 2017 Edinburgh Film Festival. (You can take a sneak peek at the trailer here: <https://vimeo.com/221990503>)

◆ 2014 Gold Prize winner Jim Soscie has just signed with literary manager Seth Nagel at Infinity Management. The introduction was facilitated by our wonderful co-sponsor and partner Joey Tuccio of [Roadmap Writers Network](#).

◆ After reading 2016 Silver Prize winner Sarah Hohman's PAGE Award-winning rom-com **After Ever**, producer Jennifer Jenkins at Larry Levinson Productions hired her to write a new TV movie for the company. Jennifer discovered Sarah's work through our terrific co-sponsor [InkTip.com](#).

2017 PAGE Awards Quarter-Finalists Announced: July 15

The Waiting Is the Hardest Part

by Melissa London Hilfers

*"The waiting is the hardest part
Every day you see one more card
You take it on faith, you take it to the heart
The waiting is the hardest part"*

I didn't write that. Tom Petty did. But man do I get it. There is nothing worse than laying your heart out on the page, sending it out into the universe and then...waiting.

A lot has been said about what screenwriters who are aspiring to break into the business should do with their downtime. The truth is that even once you're consistently working in the business there is downtime, whether it's waiting for notes from a studio or waiting for a director to be attached. In these little windows of time it's not always possible to write another movie — although I totally agree with those who say you should be writing every day, both for your craft and for your sanity. But I actually recommend doing something that might seem a little off-target: write and produce a short film.

I'll tell you why...

A few years back I was in one of these lulls. A bunch of my scripts had been sent out, but I didn't know what the next step would be. This lull coincided with a period during which my kids were obsessed with Legos, and I was finding them all over the house. I was chatting with an actress friend with kids in the same phase, and I said, "sometimes I have this fantasy that every time I clean up a pile of Legos, a bigger one takes its place. It's like *The Birds* with Legos...a Hitchcockian nightmare." She laughed and said that it sounded like a great short film, and we decided, just for giggles, to make it.

I wrote the script, and she and I went over it. She had a friend who was an incredibly accomplished editor who'd been wanting to direct and jumped at the chance to do so. A couple of months later, over the course of two days, we shot *Missing Piece*. The film later screened at the Phoenix Film Festival.

So many good things came out of my writing and producing that short that I feel like it was, in some ways, a catalyst for my career.

Here's how:

1. While writing, I learned to think like a producer. We had a teeny-weeny micro-budget, so when I wanted to include one scene with a school bus and another with a Darth Vader head smashing into a pile of Legos (yes, the short is awesome), I thought twice. Those things can be expensive.
2. I learned there are ways to accomplish things you think you can't afford. We made the school bus work, and we got a talented CGI guy to do the head-explosion as a favor. You don't realize all the people you know, and all the people your friends and colleagues know. As much as we writers like to hide away in our little hovels and spin straw into gold, it's important to network with other creatives, and this experience forced me to do that.
3. I learned that it's important to be nice to people and help them out when they ask, because when

the day comes, they will be nice back. (Of course you should be nice to people anyway, but for those who need extra motivation, filmmaking has it in spades.) Many of the effects in our film — and the amazing original score — would have been impossible without some huge favors from generous friends.



4. I also met inspiring people while we were shooting, and they taught me stuff. Our cinematographer, a talented young German guy, showed me amazing things that could be accomplished in storytelling with just slight changes to how we shot a scene. This, believe it or not, has informed my writing going forward. I also learned a lot from our director, who was meticulous yet flexible.
5. It was super fun, so it cheered me up in that lull between projects that can sometimes feel like an emotional abyss. The value of this is not to be underestimated.
6. I saw my work projected on the big screen. And audiences reacted to it. I really can't express how incredible this is. As amazing as it is to read a script and know you created it, it is indescribably awesome to see your words come to life in a theater, and to see people appreciate it. That joy galvanized me.
7. My mom came. She saw my movie play in a theater. Although she was always supportive, she **really** gets it now. Screenwriting can be lonely, and it's important to have some cheerleaders who really understand.

Soon after the short screened, I sold a pilot. And soon after that, I signed with an agency. I'm not saying the short was the reason those things happened. In fact, I'm quite certain that neither the agent nor the network even saw the short film. But something in me had changed. I had a different level of confidence and enthusiasm.

I had made something.



Melissa London Hilfers won a 2013 PAGE Award for her comedy *Mommy Rehab*. Since that time, her spec thriller *Undone* sold to Black Bear Pictures, and her true story about Carrie Buck, *Unfit*, sold to Amazon Studios. She is currently writing the thriller *Behind Closed Doors* (based on the bestselling novel) for Wild Bunch and Stone Village Productions. You can follow her on Twitter [@melissahilfers](https://twitter.com/melissahilfers).

Writing Memorable Lines

by Genie Joseph

"I wish I had written that line."

Ever say that? Or at least felt it, after seeing one of your favorite movies? The only benefit to "writer's envy" is if we harness this green monster and use it to become better writers ourselves. Studying what makes certain lines memorable can inspire us all to write better dialogue in our screenplays.

Memorable lines last far beyond the closing credits. They seem to summarize everything we love about the movie in a single phrase. These lines stay with us, and we often use them in our daily lives to summarize a moment better than our own words can ever do. As Jean Picker Firstenberg, President Emeritus of the American Film Institute (AFI), said, "Great movie quotes become part of our cultural vocabulary."

If you say "May the Force be with you!" to a friend embarking on one of life's adventures, it carries so much shared meaning. It is like emotional shorthand, and has universal application. If you say "You had me at hello..." to a potential lover, the rest of the scene is already scripted and ready to unfold. Everybody knows exactly what you mean when you say, "We're not in Kansas anymore..." or "Go ahead, make my day!" or "You talking to me?"

I teach a class called "Introduction to Motion Pictures" at Chaminade University in Honolulu, mostly to service members and their spouses. To help get to the heart and soul of a movie, I ask the students to identify its most memorable line of dialogue and most memorable visual, then talk about how these elements reflect or contrast the theme of the film. This exercise is always incredibly insightful and revealing, not just about the movie, but also about how these moments resonate with students' lives.

It's really fun to read the American Film Institute's [Top 100 Movie Quotes](#), but I think everyone should have their own personal list of favorites. It doesn't have to be the most famous lines. The lines on your list should be the ones that speak to you. It's like a writer's treasure chest. Look at your favorite lines and analyze why they have so much impact for you. This deeper understanding will help you write memorable lines that make your dialogue ignite on the page.

What makes certain lines so unforgettable?

Here are five reasons I offer my students:

1. They touch and express deep emotion.

"There's no place like home." (*The Wizard of Oz*)

"E.T. phone home." (*E.T.*)

"I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore." (*Network*)

2. They reveal nuances of character.

"Mrs. Robinson, are you trying to seduce me?" (*The Graduate*)

"Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine." (*Casablanca*)

"A census taker once tried to test me... I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." (*The Silence of the Lambs*)

3. They offer a new perspective that opens up the world of the story.

"Houston, we have a problem." (*Apollo 13*)

"Fasten your seat belts, it's going to be a bumpy night." (*All About Eve*)

"You can't handle the truth." (*A Few Good Men*)

4. They are clever, funny, ironic or twisted.

"I'll have what she's having." (*When Harry Met Sally*)

"Snap out of it!" (*Moonstruck*)

"There's no crying in baseball." (*A League of Their Own*)

5. They change the rules of the game.

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse." (*The Godfather*)

"We'll always have Paris." (*Casablanca*)

"I'll be back." (*The Terminator*)

Memorable lines usually don't show up in a first draft. Most often, early-draft dialogue is a bit "on the nose," where characters say exactly what they mean. Nuance, sophistication and more lyrical moments usually start to happen in the second or third draft. That's when you know who your characters are, what they're afraid of, how they don't fit into the world around them, and who they wish to become. That's when you start rewriting clunky dialogue. There is a creative process at work here that reveals the meaning of a moment, so that a line becomes turbocharged and has crystal clarity.

You need not chase these standout lines, however. As a reader, it gets annoying when you see writers who are trying too hard to be too cute or clever with every character interaction. Rather, allow the deeper nuances of your characters to be gradually uncovered. Trust that there are a few gems hiding in your early drafts, just waiting for the right time to emerge.

When you have a draft that is almost ready to present to the industry or enter into the PAGE Awards contest, do a "memorable pass" through the script. Look for moments that could express more meaning — maybe just half-a-dozen "power moments" within the hundred or so pages you have written. In which moments can your characters truly shine? When can their words touch viewers' hearts and change their minds? How can their words bring comfort, bravery or a new way of looking at life? Where can your characters' thoughts heal and transform?

Ah... now, that's the Write Stuff!



Genie Joseph studied filmmaking at NYU and has a master's in screenwriting from National University, as well as a Ph.D. from the University of Sedona. She is an award-winning filmmaker, editor, director and producer who has worked on over 100 film and TV productions in various capacities. Genie has taught media and TV production courses at several universities. She is a published author, and has sold five screenplays.

Did You Really Write a Movie?

by Ray Morton



Ray Morton is a writer and script consultant. He was a senior writer for *Script* and is currently the author of *Scriptmag.com*'s *Meet the Reader* column.

Ray's recent books [A Quick Guide to Screenwriting](#) and [A Quick Guide to Television Writing](#) are available in stores and online. He analyzes scripts for producers and individual writers, and he is available for private consultation.

You may contact Ray at ray@raymorton.com and follow him on Twitter @RayMorton1.

To be creatively and commercially successful, a screenplay must be well written, compelling in its premise and narrative, and packed with interesting characters and effective dialogue. Most of all, however, it must be immediately plausible that a motion picture could be made from it. This sounds like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised at how many specs out there are **not remotely a movie**.

So what qualities should a screenplay have in order to be a movie?

It must have a story.

The mainstream film industry (the one that buys specs) makes narrative films. It does not make experimental films or cinematic tone poems – it makes movies that tell compelling stories. Ninety-nine percent of those stories are genre tales. Movie stories must be based on a strong premise, have a solid beginning and middle, and a powerful, memorable ending.

It must be cinematic.

Cinema is a visual/audio medium – it tells its stories through images and sound (dialogue, music and SFX). Of the two, images should always take precedence over sound. Dialogue is important but should never be the primary way the story is told.

Something has to happen. Cinematic storytelling is a dramatic storytelling, and dramatic storytelling is achieved through action: both big action (battles, car chases, fist fights) and small action (looks, gestures, behavior).

Viewers can only know what they see and hear. Therefore, all aspects of a screen story – including backstory, any necessary exposition, and the characters' thoughts and feelings – must be dramatized, rather than simply written into the text.

Cinema does not tell tales through prose. Too many spec writers put far too much energy into the literary style they employ in their text. All of that work is wasted because a poetic turn of phrase can't be photographed or recorded, so no matter what its quality, in this medium its value is nil.

It must have parts for stars.

Movie financiers want at least one high-profile actor or actress in a picture, on the theory that stars attract audiences. And stars like meaty roles, so a script has to provide them if it's to have a shot at getting made. At the very least, a screenwriter must create a compelling, sympathetic and active protagonist. Ideally, he or she should also craft a powerful antagonist, a strong love interest and a few distinctive supporting roles (stars will often do a cameo if it's colorful enough).

It must only contain things that movies can actually show.

I frequently receive specs filled with incredibly graphic depictions of hardcore sex, bodily functions and ultra-violence. These scripts will likely never be made because this type of material is too offensive to too many people. Films made from these scripts would have such a narrow potential audience that it isn't worth it for backers to invest. Mainstream films require mainstream material.

It must be able to be made for a reasonable price.

There's no such thing as an unlimited budget and therefore you can't write a script that requires one. If you pen a 250-pager with dozens of characters, hundreds of sets and locations, wall-to-wall action and copious VFX, then you're writing a script that can't be made, because it will cost too damn much to do so. Some might argue it's not a writer's job to worry about costs, but simply to write the best story he or she can. I agree with that up to a point, but the truth is, a script is not a finished product. To use a familiar analogy, it's a blueprint for a finished product and if your blueprint isn't practical, then your product will probably never be made.

It must have entertainment value.

Whatever else mainstream movies are, at their core they are entertainment. Movies can entertain in many ways: they can make us laugh or cry; they can scare people or thrill us with spectacle, beauty and suspense; they can challenge us with new ideas and unexpected points of view. They must do at least some of these things to be successful. If potential buyers can't discern any entertainment value in a script, then it doesn't matter what other good qualities it has – they will pass.

Does your script possess all of these qualities? If it does, you're in good shape. If it doesn't, then do your best to incorporate them. If you do, you stand a much better chance that your script will receive a positive response, that it will be bought and that it will be made.

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One Answer to Ten Common Questions

by Dave Trottier



Dave Trottier has sold screenplays and developed projects for companies such as 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.

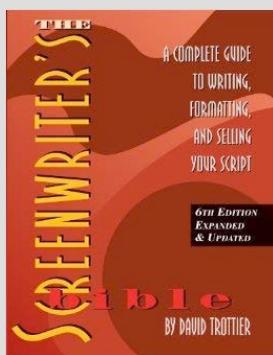
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FIRST, DAVE'S ANSWER:

Here is the answer to **all** of the reader questions posed below.

The screenplay you refer to was developed in the studio system or by a production company and/or was written by an established writer or a writer who is also the director of the production, and/or it is the shooting script version of the original spec.

You, on the other hand, are a spec writer trying to break in with a spec script (not a shooting script). Thus, you should do everything you can to make a positive first impression on your audience, and your primary audience is the reader or story analyst who is the first person to read your script and recommend or not recommend it.

QUESTION 1: You say to use editing directions (transitions) judiciously, but I just read a produced script by William Goldman that had tons of CUT TOs.

QUESTION 2: You recommend limiting spec scripts to 120 pages or less, but I've seen dozens of produced scripts that were over 120 pages.

QUESTION 3: You often caution against a lot of voice-over narration, particularly long speeches on page 1, but what about *The Shawshank Redemption*?

(I should add to my answer above that most of the narration I read by new screenwriters amounts to obvious exposition. Narration should add an extra layer of drama, comedy or meaning to the story without repeating what we already see on the movie screen.)

QUESTION 4: Dave, have you read a Woody Allen script? He doesn't follow standard format, so why should I?

QUESTION 5: You say that it is not necessary to bold and/or underscore slug lines (scene headings), but I've seen both styles in a couple of scripts by pros.

QUESTION 6: You've cautioned against writing long "talking heads" scenes, especially as a first scene, so what about *The Social Network*, which opens with an eight-minute talking-heads scene?

(I can't resist adding the following: When you can write as well as Aaron Sorkin, forge ahead with that eight-page talking-heads scene.)

QUESTION 7: Most of the scripts I've read have camera directions in them. What gives?

(One spec writing skill is directing the camera without using camera directions.)

QUESTION 8: Dave, you emphasize readability, but I've read some produced scripts that were actually difficult to read. How did they get produced?

QUESTION 9: You tell us to be careful about early flashbacks in a script, but I saw a couple of early flashbacks in a successful movie made recently.

(As a general guideline, don't tell your audience about the past until they care about the present. Naturally, there can be exceptions. Also, make sure your flashback isn't just obvious exposition, but something that moves the story forward. And finally, if you use an early flashback, make it as short as possible.)

QUESTION 10: Every once in a while, I see a writer who breaks one of your "17 Commandments." Why is that?

("The 17 Commandments" can be found on page 160 of the new 6th Edition of *The Screenwriter's Bible*.)

THREE FINAL COMMENTS:

1. Think of all my recommendations as guidelines, not rules.
2. Remember that formatting does not have to be perfect, but you should always show your best work.
3. Keep writing!

Four Things Writers Should Never Say

by Lee Jessup

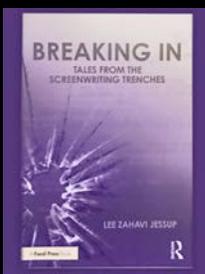


Author of the best-selling book [Getting It Write](#), as well as the newly released [Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches](#), Lee Jessup is a career coach for professional and emerging screenwriters. Her clients include writers who have sold pilots, pitches and specs; staffed television writers; participants in TV writing programs or feature labs; and, of course, writers who are just starting out.

In her role as coach, Lee serves as an industry guidance counselor, adviser, drill sergeant, cheerleader, confidant and strategic partner. Previously, Lee had her own script picked up, worked in development and ran ScriptShark.com for more than 6 years.

To learn more about Lee's services, visit leejessup.com.

Lee Jessup's Breaking In: Tales From the Screenwriting Trenches



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Let's face it: We all say things we shouldn't. We don't mean to – and most of us come to regret it later – but things don't always come out as intended. I am just as vulnerable to this as anyone else. When I was younger, I was constantly in a state of panic about the many and varied ways I might have just put my foot in it. Especially with a glass of wine in my hand.

But as a screenwriter there are some things that should always stay out of your mouth and off the page. Here are some of the phrases that writers have said to me over the years that I wish they could take back.

1. "I wanted to write novels, but then I saw a screenplay and realized that screenwriting was so much easier (and took that much less work)."

The people telling me this often shared it as a point of pride: "I wanted to be a writer, and I was smart enough to find the easiest, least work-intensive way to accomplish this." But what it always sounded like to me is: "I wanted to be a writer, I just didn't want to put in the hard work. I went into screenwriting not because I love the format or can't get enough of visual storytelling, but because it was the shortest path to a completed product."



What it boils down to is this: Don't tell anyone that you're writing screenplays because it seems easier than something else. Ever. If they're going to pay you a lot of money, hire you for assignments or put you in the writers' room, let them do it because they believe you're talented and hard-working.

2. "I saw all these movies/read all these scripts and thought I could do it so much better!"

I may hate this one even more than I hate the last one. Sure, everyone needs some sense of bravado to get into this game. But assuming you can do it better than everyone else right out of the gate is an immediate turn-off for anyone who's been working at this for the better part of their adult life, and for those of us who support them and really understand what it takes.

3. "I write to get rich."

Okay, no one ever said it quite like that, but I have been told things like "How much do you think I can sell my script for? I have debt to pay!" or "I hate my job so I thought I'd sell a script instead and quit my job," or "I don't really want to be a writer – I just want to sell a script for a million bucks." Your script is not your lottery ticket. There is no get-rich-quick scheme here. For a script to sell, it's going to have to be amazing. And that's not something most people will be able to produce easily.

A client of mine recently had his script named to the prestigious Hit List. His wife, by his side for the entirety of his screenwriting journey, said, "Great. Is there a Hit List check?" Because she had learned what many of us know: While there is potential to one day get paid and – especially if you're writing for TV – get paid well, the reality is that it takes some time before writing will generate much income, let alone get you out of massive debt.

4. "I know everything I need to know about writing/the industry."

Here's the deal: I study this industry every day, and I still don't know everything. In fact, that's part of what holds my interest in it. It is always shifting and changing. What is true today may not necessarily be true tomorrow. It keeps you on your toes. If you think you know everything there is to know about any one thing, you probably stopped being a student of it. And it's through learning that growth exists. Or as Albert Einstein once said: "It is not that I'm so smart. But I stay with the questions much longer."

Next Issue: Four More Things Writers Should Never Say

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Company B: Seeking Coming-of-Age Stories

We are looking for completed, feature-length, coming-of-age scripts with few characters and basic/generic locations, i.e. scripts in the vein of *The Spectacular Now* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

Budget TBD. Both WGA and non-WGA writers okay.

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Company C: Seeking Horror Scripts Set Entirely in the Woods

We are looking for completed, feature-length horror scripts with stories set entirely in the woods.

Budget will not exceed \$5 million. Both WGA and non-WGA writers okay.

To find out about this company AND submit a query:

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