

EDITORIAL

Give 'em some credit! Johnny Depp's performance as Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* is amazing. As film critic after film critic stumbled over themselves to call his performance everything from "original" to "eccentric," they forgot one thing: the screenwriters, Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, who did one heck of a job creating Sparrow on paper first. Sure, some critics mentioned the writers when they declared the film "cliché" and attacked it. Since the previous Walt Disney film based on one of its theme park attractions was the unbearable *The Country Bears*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* is surprisingly entertaining. But let's face it. This wasn't intended to be serious filmmaking. Not much is anymore in Hollywood.

Recently the *USA Today* ran an article asking, basically, "What's wrong with Hollywood?" Blockbusters are failing because attendance is down 3.3% from last year. It's anyone's guess why this is happening, and frankly, it doesn't matter, because next year the industry will be back in full force with the same schlep of sequels, comic book heroes and mindless action-adventure extravaganzas. But maybe if we turn our backs to Hollywood's fast food service, they will serve us something different. Well, it is a nice thought anyway.

It's been a long summer thus far. I've been disappointed with most of the films I've seen. Surprisingly, it's not just the writing but the whole filmmaking process that I am having trouble with. Don't the movies this summer seem too long? Narratives flounder, the action is pumped up more than usual, and the special effects (CGI) seem to be getting in the way of good storytelling. *Hulk* turned out to be a two-hour character study of the Jolly Green Giant. The filmmakers seemed more enamored with their computer wizardry than with telling a comprehensive story. What screenwriters James Schamus, Michael France and John Turman were thinking is unclear. But that director Ang Lee had the nerve to make his audience sit through a movie (for 138 minutes) that had at its motivational core the inner-workings of a comic book character's mind is almost laughable. There was a good movie in there somewhere. The same could be said for the enjoyable *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, another blockbuster character study. Johnny Depp's mesmerizing performance is almost lost when director Gore Verbinski and his crew fall into a technological trap. (That Peter Jackson has been able to avoid with his adaptation of the *Lord of the Rings* series, where CGI is such an important part, is becoming increasingly more impressive.) *Pirates* is not as long as any of the *LOR* films, but felt as if it was. It would have been a completely satisfying film at 110 minutes but instead is nearly washed away in 143 minutes that includes one battle sequence that goes beyond the point of no return. *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* is a mess of a movie with some of the worst screenwriting ever heard or watched. It arrogantly produces one special effects driven action scene after another with very little narrative relief. *The Matrix Reloaded* is another one, a good enough movie the way it is but one that would have been even better had the second act not dragged on happily with its pointlessness.

Filmmakers today have at their disposal advances in technology that no other generation of filmmakers have had since the introduction of sound (1929). Like the 1930s, Hollywood is struggling to incorporate today's technology without sacrificing the story. They're making the battles, blowups and action scenes longer and more realistic because they can. It's called cinema of immersion. They forget that there is more to a film than making it feel and look like reality. Hollywood has forgotten that less is indeed more. They are killing their movies by over-playing the technological hand they have been dealt.

Which is why it is a pleasure to feature an interview in this issue with the writer-director of *Seabiscuit*, Gary Ross. A film that reminds me why it is I fell in love with movies in the first place. For 140 glorious minutes I was transported back to the 1930s. When the film was over I was left wanting more. I don't believe there was a single CGI effects shot in the entire film. So, when we get a few films each year like *Whale Rider*, *American Splendor*, *Mystic River* and *Seabiscuit*, we are reminded why it is we go to the movies. I hope you enjoy our August issue. Thanks much, and keep writing!

- Chris

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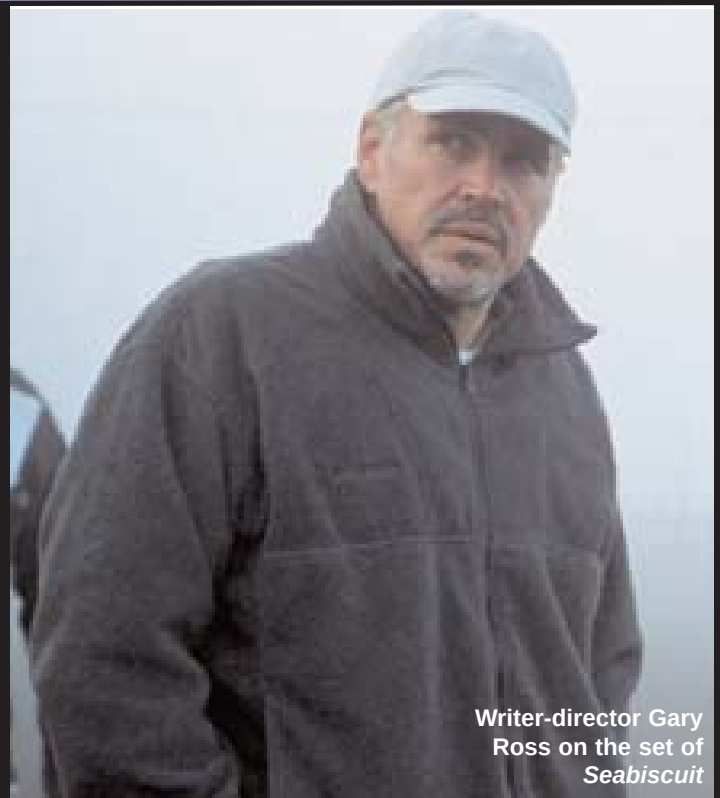
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Writer-director Gary
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Seabiscuit

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Order back issues of *Screenwriter's Monthly* including our "Collector's Edition" (February 2003) featuring a filmography and in-depth interview with Larry Cohen (*Phone Booth*). In March of this year we picked the *Best Screenplays of 2002* and featured a great interview with Jeff Nathanson (*Catch Me If You Can*). In April we took a close look at "Writing the modern police drama" in our *Good Cops - Bad Cops* issue. And last month we examined the Hollywood Summer Blockbuster and the "Downfall of Screenwriting" along with an interview with William Goldman. See instructions below:

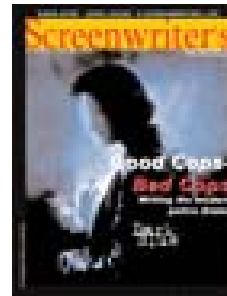
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Seabiscuit

Tobey Maguire, Chris Cooper and Jeff Bridges in *Seabiscuit*. All photos by Francois Duhamel



Interview by Fred Topel

Seabiscuit is your classic underdog story about a horse nobody thought could race and a jockey nobody thought could win. The film itself is also a sort of underdog, a human drama in the middle of a summer filled with superheroes, cyborgs, alternate realities and women in bikinis. Based on the excellent book by Laura Hillenbrand, the film tells the true story of jockey Red Pollard.

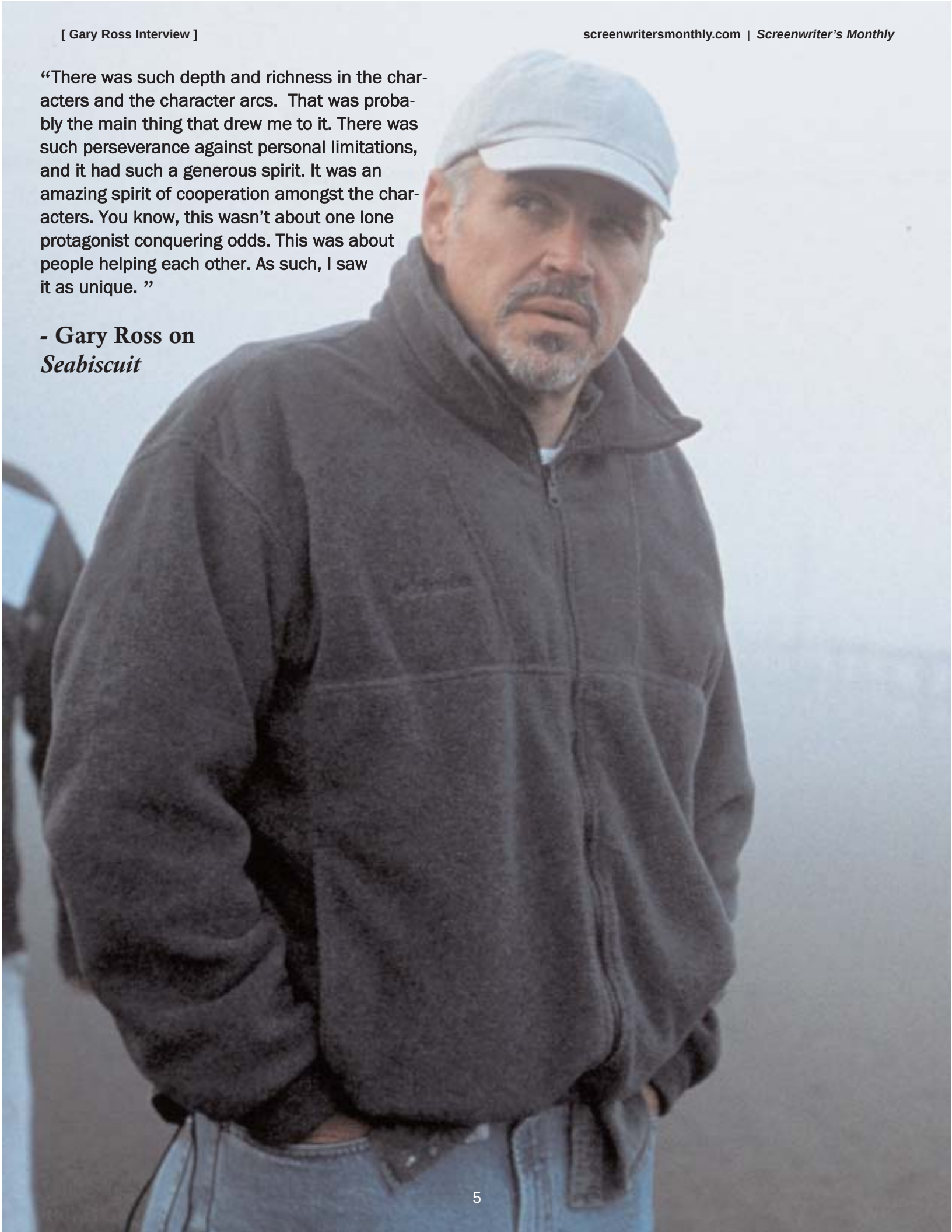
Writer-director Gary Ross's previous work has mostly been in the fantasy realm. *Big* and *Pleasantville* were supernatural fantasies where shy heroes learned confidence through a wish fulfillment scenario. Even *Dave*, though not supernatural, was a high concept idea about a common man in an extraordinary situation. With *Pleasantville*, Ross began directing his own scripts. *Seabiscuit* is his second directorial project but his first adaptation ever.

With post-production wrapping up in June, Ross was on a hectic schedule to finalize the sound mix and still make time for an interview, but after discussing the writing process, Ross said he enjoyed the interview because it was like filling out a survey in the back of a magazine.

What is your process of adapting a book? Well, I had never really adapted before. I had written all original screenplays, so it was new to me. But I think I was lucky because I had written for a long time, and yet I'd never adapted before. So, I think I had a fair amount of experience coming into it as a screenwriter, but I'd never really adapted anyone else's material, so I went at it kind of simply, which is a lot of the way that I approach an original, which is what interests me. What do I like? Where do I personally connect to the story? Because that's the only way it's

“There was such depth and richness in the characters and the character arcs. That was probably the main thing that drew me to it. There was such perseverance against personal limitations, and it had such a generous spirit. It was an amazing spirit of cooperation amongst the characters. You know, this wasn't about one lone protagonist conquering odds. This was about people helping each other. As such, I saw it as unique. ”

- Gary Ross on
Seabiscuit



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agenda

DAY 1

- The writer and the art of story
- The decline of story in contemporary film, TV, theatre and literature
- Story design: the meaning of story, the substance of story, the limitations and inspirations of story structure and genre, the debate between character versus story design.
- Premise Idea, Counter Idea, Controlling Idea
- Story Structure: beat, scene, sequence, act, story
- Mapping the Story universe: Archplot, Miniplot, Antiplot
- Shaping the source of story energy and creation

DAY 2

- Act design: the great sweep and body of story
- The first major story event (the inciting incident)
- Scene design in Story: turning points, emotional dynamics, setup/payoff, the nature of choice
- Ordering and linking scenes
- Exposition: dramatizing your characters, the story setting, creating back story
- The principles of antagonism
- Crisis, climax and resolution

DAY 3

- Putting the elements of story together
- The principles of character dimension and design
- The text: description, dialogue, and poetics
- The spectrum of story genres
- Story adaptations
- Scene analysis: text and sub-text; design through dialogue versus design through action
- The writer's method: working from the inside out; the creative process from inspiration to final draft
- How it all works: the principles of the previous 2-1/2 days applied in a 6-hour, scene-by-scene screening and analysis of *Casablanca*

Tobey Maguire as Red Pollard in Universal Pictures and Dreamworks' *Seabiscuit*

going to be any good anyway. So, that was really the first question I asked in the adaptation. What drew me to the material? What do I love about this? It's weird. The whole world knows the book now, but I read it off a magazine article. It knocked me out long before it was ever even a book, let alone a bestseller. So, to me, it was a combination of so many things that I loved. It was horse racing, which I've grown up around. There was a populist streak in it which has been in some of my other movies, which kind of enthralled me. There was such depth and richness in the characters and the character arcs. That was probably the main thing that drew me to it. There was such perseverance against personal limitations, and it had such a generous spirit. It was an amazing spirit of cooperation amongst the characters. You know, this wasn't about one lone protagonist conquering odds. This was about people helping each other. As such, I saw it as unique. In particular, the relationship between Red Pollard and Charles Howard, one having lost a father, the other having lost a son, and the symbiosis there and how they were able to heal. Neither one could replace the loss that they'd experienced, but each one could sort of survive it and find another person. So those were the things that drew me to the material, and that was my compass. Those were the things that I wrote towards and that informed the adaptation process.

What first made you decide to try to adapt something? It was just because I loved the material. It wasn't like a conscious decision to switch to adaptations. It was just because I loved *Seabiscuit*.

What did you have to take out of the book? Oh, there were several things. Things we couldn't afford. There certainly was not

room for a huge number of races in the second half of the book that actually existed, like the Ligaroti race or his injury on Fair Knightness or his return down to Caliente after so many years. Things like that that were very colorful in the book but that I couldn't include. The San Francisco earthquake, for budgetary limitations, could not be included. Things like that I miss. I wish I could've included them, but you know, film has more limitations than a book, unfortunately.

If you weren't going to direct it, would you have included those things to let whomever handle? No. Everybody is a slave to page counts to a certain extent anyway. And this is not a long movie. It's under two hours and 10 minutes, but it was a very long script the first draft. It was 155 pages, so I don't think I ever would've been able to include those anyhow. They just didn't fit within the thrust, the throughline or the focus of the narrative drive.

Do you have a shorthand when you know you're directing? No. Ironically, there's a longhand. I think that I infuse the writing much more visually now that I'm a director than I ever did before. I think I write with a visual sensibility more than I ever did before. I sort of trust details to be figured out later much less than I ever did before. Ironically, I think it's way less of a blueprint. I think it's more of a specific portrait of the movie, probably written a little bit more eloquently and a little bit more specifically in the narrative than I even wrote before I was a director.

After you wrote it, were there additional scenes that had to go? Sure, there always are, but not while I was shooting. I think I shot pretty much everything that I wrote, but there were certainly cuts between the first draft and the time we began shooting.

Do you rewrite a lot on the set? Sure. I mean, I think that each part of the process has to be kind of vibrant and alive. It has to have a sense of creation about it, so the first draft has to have that feeling and heading toward production. It has to have that feeling of when you shoot it's a collaboration with the actors, where you feel kind of as if you're writing it together even though there's a script. I mean, many actors are very careful or afraid to change lines with me because they know I'm the writer, when instead I want that to be a fluid and a very dynamic process. We have to bring it to life. There isn't just my interpretation. If that's the case, the script will end up becoming very wooden. And there are a lot of writers who I don't think necessarily make great directors sometimes because they can't take that leap. I can feel the tug in me to not take that leap sometimes, and it's something you really have to overcome.

Who in this cast would collaborate and adapt? I think they all did. Everybody will ask you, "Can I do this? Can I do that?" Jeff [Bridges] has a wonderful habit of trying to improvise the scene the moment before the cameras roll, so he can put himself in the specific circumstances. And probably Chris [Cooper] being such a theater actor is less inclined to change text than anyone else. But I encourage it. I mean, they're all very respectful to me as a writer, but at the same time, it's a very collaborative process, and I kind of encourage everybody to mix it up. I'm not locked down about my script.

Less? Yeah, because it's not that big a deal to me. I change stuff all the time. So, changing something is not that extraordinary. I change it. They can change it. I'm always open to it. I'm not defensive about changing lines of dialogue.

How do you write a horse race and make it exciting? That's interesting. Each horse race really has a three act structure. For each race to be interesting, it has to kind of have its own character and its own purpose in the movie. And, interestingly, the premise of the race is established either in the starting gate or coming out of the clubhouse turn, going into the back stretch where Tobey [Maguire] is told to follow this gray horse and stalk him. He's told to watch out for Rosemont. In the match races, everybody knows he was supposed to get the lead by the first turn and then let War Admiral catch up. So, the premise or the conceit of the race, if you will, is sort of established going into the first turn. The backstretch is where the complication happens, sort of the second act of your race. The surprise will ensue. There will be a reversal of the circumstances. New information will be added. The gray takes off. He chases another horse. He holds Seabiscuit back to let War Admiral catch up. Will the plan work? That's where the complication ensues, and the conclusion is coming out of the far turn into the home stretch. So, one, you have to write each moment in a very compelling way so that you viscerally feel in the narrative that you're on the horse. Otherwise, there's no way to bring it to life or even understand how to shoot it. But at the same time, seeing it in sections like that informs the way you shoot it and allows you to kind of block out and break up the action a little bit better.

Did that structure come from the book? I think it depends. Sometimes it's there. Certainly in the case of the match race, that's already in the book. Some aspects of some of the races are fictionalized.



Elizabeth Banks as Marcela Howard

Were any scenes particularly challenging to write? I have to be honest. This one was really a joy. And there was very little angst in it. There was less angst than usual, in part because I was given such a good book, and the story was so vivid, and the characters were so real. I wouldn't say that there were any scenes that I found amazingly difficult, that I really labored with or that were more difficult than others.

Is writing historical drama a lot different than fantasy? Sure. It's a historical drama. It's going to have a more realistic tone to it, but I think the differences are pretty obvious. They're tonal differences.

Isn't a story still a story? No, I don't think so. I think that you're always aware of tone. I think you have to be. That's the point. There is one difference, which is I'm much more in the flow of the narrative. The music that I listen to, the inner music I listen to when I'm writing a drama is the flow and the emotional undercurrent of the narrative. And the music I listen to when I'm writing a comedy is the absurdity of the laughs in the situation. You sit down in the morning with a different feeling in each one. You sit down with the onus to be funny every morning in a comedy, and that's a different thing.

Do you actually listen to music? No, I don't. I just meant that metaphorically.

What type of material generally attracts you? I think it has to be openhearted. It has to investigate the opening of a person's heart in one way or another whether that's *Big* or whether that's *Dave* or *Pleasantville* or this. That there is a sense of generosity to it. There tends to be a streak of populism, little guys taking on obstacles that are larger than they are. I'd say that's a common thread, but I'd say a generosity of spirit, hopefully.

What are the pros and cons of directing your own screenplay? The cons are that you get locked down into the way you had it in your head. You get very closed off to reinventing or reimagining or being loose enough to breathe a kind of dynamism or creativity into the directing process. So, those are the cons. The pros are that you know the material better than anybody else. It's not like you have to interpret or figure it out. You know what your intentions are. You can feel it, and therefore, if something isn't working, you can make adjustments at that moment and

sort of understand the reasons. I mean, many things can go wrong with a scene if it's not playing on the day. It can be the blocking. It can be the camera work. It can be the acting. It can be the writing. You really have to employ a diagnostic set of skills in order to realize which one of those it is.

Were there any scenes where you got to the set and thought, "Wow, this is what I wrote"? Yeah. Tons. Absolutely. I'd get there and it's just vivid, it comes alive. I'd say more so in this particular movie just because there were existing locations that were historical places. So, the picture in your mind's eye is no different from the day you actually get to the set. I mean, I know what Santa Anita looks like, so when I'm writing Santa Anita, the picture in my head is no different than what actually happens when I get there. But that happened frequently.

Why has it been five years since your last film?

I take my time. It had been five years from *Dave* to *Pleasantville* and it was five years from *Big* to *Dave*.

What scripts are you most proud of? I'm proud of all of them.

Do you have any great unsold scripts? No. In fact, not only do I not have an unsold script, but everything I've ever written has been shot, with the exception of one thing I was going into pre-production on last year that I decided not to do. But I've never written a word in my life that hasn't been filmed.

Was there an alternate ending to *Big* where Susan comes back as a 13-year-old? No.

What's the biggest misconception about screenwriting? That it's character based. I'll leave you with that.

No, explain. It's author based. Character based sends a lot of young writers running in the wrong direction because they think there are these people who already exist, and if they just chase the characters, who don't exist and are fictional creations, that they'll somehow speak to them and tell them what the story should be, which is a fallacy. The first thing you have to know is your point of view: how you feel about the material, what you want to say, and make characters instruments of that creative process.

Do you have any advice for screenwriters trying to get their work read? No. I don't because I don't know how to do that. I think everybody's road is different.

Fred Topel is an experienced entertainment correspondent with a degree in Cinema and Photography from Ithaca College. He currently writes and has written for online news outlets and magazines such as *Herald Tribune Online*, *Daily Radar*, *eUniverse*, *Cinefantastique* and *The Hollywood Reporter* since graduating in May 1999.



Chris Cooper as Tom Smith

Gary Ross: A Screenwriting Life



This son of Hollywood screenwriter Arthur Ross initially wrote fiction but eventually followed in his father's footsteps, scoring a mega-hit with his first produced feature script. *Big* (1988), co-written and co-produced with Anne Spielberg, recounted the story of a young boy who wakes up one morning—BIG—and must navigate the world in a man's body. The writers shared an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay and Ross netted a second nod for his first solo effort, *Dave* (1993), about a look-alike who steps in after the U.S. President has a heart attack. Gary Ross has proven his ability to tap the zeitgeist and create gentle, somewhat exaggerated scripts which revolve around mistaken identities and subversion of the status quo by an outsider who often is pretending to be something other than his or her true self.

The apotheosis of this scenario was his feature directorial debut *Pleasantville* (1998), a Capraesque fable in which two 90s teens find themselves transported into the homogenized, black-and-white world of 50s television. Like the main characters in his previous efforts, the pair both upset and embellish the society in which they find themselves, bringing much-needed change that comes at a price. When Ross naively hit upon the concept of making a movie that began in black-and-white and gradually turned to color (a metaphor for coming alive), he had no idea of the technical expertise required to make it work.

1,700 special effects and \$40 million later and after a post-production period spanning more than a year, the finished film opened to generally praiseworthy reviews. For his part, though, the director said, "I'm dying to do a movie that doesn't have any special effects in it. That would be a walk in the park."

It would be five years before Ross would step behind the camera again—although he kept busy with uncredited rewriting assignments—this time in an attempt to film writer Laura Hillenbrand's bestselling nonfiction book "Seabiscuit" (2003), about the real-life 1920s-era racehorse who became an unlikely champion and an American folk hero of his day. Reteaming with past collaborators Tobey Maguire and William H. Macy as well as top-line performers Jeff Bridges and Chris Cooper, Ross assembled an inspirational, often moving and beautifully photographed version of the historical events, although his desire to capture as much of the book's historical information led to intentionally shorthanded and brisk scenes that often avoided plumbing the characters' genuine emotional depths.

All data from Baseline-FilmTracker. For more information on Gary Ross or other writer-directors, please visit: www.baseline.hollywood.com.



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Company Profile of the Month: Silver Pictures

THE COMPANY:

Very few companies know how to stay ahead of trends like Silver Pictures. In the past two years alone, they have launched the film career of rapper DMX, re-launched the film career of martial arts maven Steven Seagal, and launched into orbit the *Matrix* franchise. With well over twenty projects in active development and a rock-hard grip on the action genre at Warner Bros., the team at Silver continues to look for new ways to bring exciting moments to the screen.

HISTORY:

A leading producer of action-adventure movies of the 1980s and 90s, Joel Silver is truly the king of splashy, crowd-pleasing fare. After producing and starring in student films at NYU, Silver began his career as an assistant to producer Lawrence Gordon. His first credit was as associate producer on *The Warriors* (1979). Soon, he was president of the motion picture division of Lawrence Gordon Pictures. In 1985, Silver produced, under his newly formed banner, Silver Pictures, the highly profitable *Commando*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. He continued in the action genre, turning out some of the most profitable film franchises in recent history: the *Lethal Weapon* series (1987, 1989 and 1992 respectively), the first two *Die Hard* films (1988 and 1990) and *Predator* (1987) and *Predator 2* (1990).

RIGHT NOW:

Through their Dark Castle division—a joint venture between Joel Silver and Robert Zemeckis's dedication to producing mid-budgeted horror films—the company is in production on *Gothika*, a ghost story about a psychologist who awakens as a patient at the asylum where she works and is unable to remember the murder she supposedly committed.

IN DEVELOPMENT:

Speed Racer

The story of Speed Racer, whose Mach 5 vehicle can jump, go under water and clear trees. When he's not racing, he's battling villains with his girlfriend Trixie, kid brother Spritle and pet monkey Chim-Chim.

Writer: Gudegast & Schuering (most recent take)

Director: Hype Williams

Producers: Partnered with Richard and Lauren-Shuler Donner

Studio: Warner Bros.

In Nomine Dei (Woman of the Rock)

Update of the Joan of Arc story.

Writer: Laeta Kalogridis

Studio: Warner Bros.

Brave One

A female version of *Death Wish*.

Writer: Bruce Taylor, Roderick Taylor, Cynthia Mort (Rewrite)

Studio: Warner Bros.

Genre Report: Musicals

After the success of *Chicago* and *Moulin Rouge*, the movie musical is definitely making a comeback, but just how much do the studios care about these expensive and risky ventures? One studio exec told us that at least one or two musicals are a necessity on every studio's slate right now. But unless it's the right combination, the studios have made it clear that they aren't actively purchasing song-driven specs. So, we decided to look at just how many Musical projects the studios are keeping on their slate. Surprisingly, the five major contenders came out very even—most kept 4-5 on their slate, almost all of which were remakes or stage franchises. Below is a sampling of our findings.

Warners – 5 in Development

Sample Project:

Love Me or Leave Me

- Loosely based on the life of singer Ruth Etting, the story follows the Chicago gangster who becomes enamored of a dance-hall girl and helps her rise to the top through his crooked and arm-twisting tactics.

- Notes: Remake of *Love Me or Leave Me* (USA/1955) directed by Charles Vidor and starring Doris Day and James Cagney.

- Talent: Jennifer Lopez, Robert DeNiro

- Writer: Howard M. Gould

- Producers: Tribeca, Nuyorican, Handprint

Paramount – 5 in Development

Sample Project:

Alice

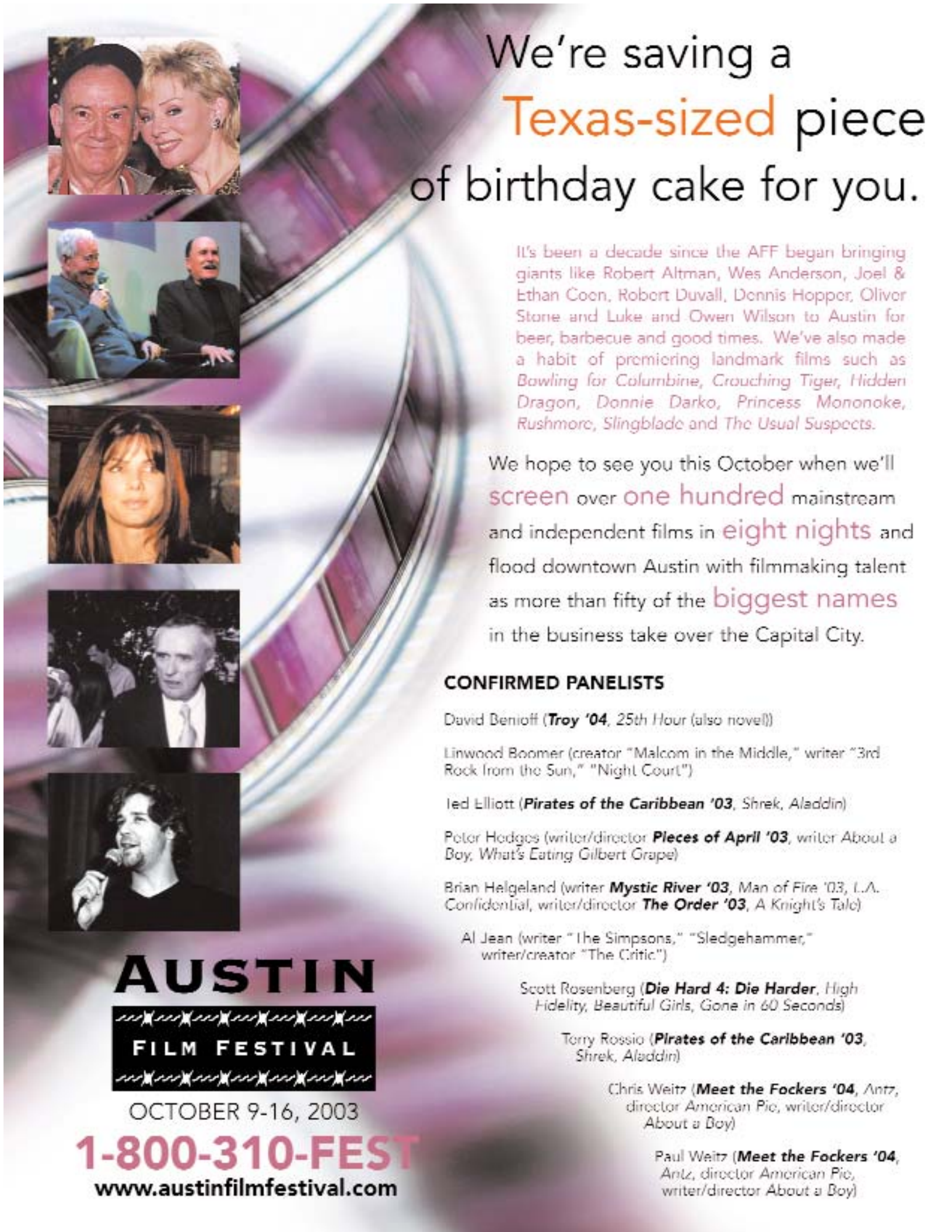
- A retelling of the classic tale set in the modern world of pop-music.

- Notes: Based on the Lewis B. Carroll novel

- Talent: Britney Spears was attached

- Writer: Sarah Thorpe

- Producer: MTV Films



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We hope to see you this October when we'll **screen** over **one hundred** mainstream and independent films in **eight nights** and flood downtown Austin with filmmaking talent as more than fifty of the **biggest names** in the business take over the Capital City.

CONFIRMED PANELISTS

David Benioff (*Troy '04*, *25th Hour* (also novel))

Linwood Boomer (creator "Malcolm in the Middle," writer "3rd Rock from the Sun," "Night Court")

Ied Elliott (*Pirates of the Caribbean '03*, *Shrek*, *Aladdin*)

Peter Hodges (writer/director *Pieces of April '03*, writer *About a Boy*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*)

Brian Koppelman (writer *Mystic River '03*, *Man of Fire '03*, *L.A. Confidential*, writer/director *The Order '03*, *A Knight's Tale*)

Al Jean (writer "The Simpsons," "Sledgehammer," writer/creator "The Critic")

Scott Rosenberg (*Die Hard 4: Die Harder*, *High Fidelity*, *Beautiful Girls*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*)

Terry Rossio (*Pirates of the Caribbean '03*, *Shrek*, *Aladdin*)

Chris Weitz (*Meet the Fockers '04*, *Antz*, director *American Pie*, writer/director *About a Boy*)

Paul Weitz (*Meet the Fockers '04*, *Antz*, director *American Pie*, writer/director *About a Boy*)

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Universal – 5 in Development

Sample Project:

Same Old Song

- Set in the world of real estate, the story of relationships gone wrong.
- Notes: English language remake of *On Connait la Chanson* (France/1997), directed by Alain Resnais.
- Director: Ang Lee
- Writer: James Schamus
- Producer: Good Machine

Miramax – 4 in Development

Sample Project:

Rent

- A group of young East Villagers in New York City cope with such harsh urban realities as AIDS, homelessness and paying the rent.
- Notes: Spike Lee was previously attached to direct. Miramax reportedly acquired the movie rights to *Rent* in 1996 for \$5,000,000. The original play *Rent* was the winner of the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for drama, and the 1996 Tony award for Best Musical.
- Talent: Justin Timberlake (has been mentioned to star)
- Writer: Stephen Chbosky
- Producer: Tribeca

Disney – 4 in Development

Sample Project:

Oliver!

- Lionel Bart's stage musical *Oliver!*, an adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist*, was previously adapted to film as *Oliver!* (United Kingdom/1968), directed by Carol Reed and starring Ron Moody and Oliver Reed.
- Talent: Mick Jagger mentioned to star as Fagin

Columbia – 3 in Development

Sample Project:

Bye Bye Birdie

- Before he's drafted, a singer goes to a small town to kiss his biggest fan.
- Note: Remake of *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963/USA), directed by George Sidney and starring Janet Leigh and Dick Van Dyke.
- Writer: Robert Harling, Amy Heckerling
- Producers: Red Wagon Productions

All data from Baseline-FilmTracker. For more information on Silver Pictures or other production companies, agencies, and studios please visit www.baseline.hollywood.com.

Write Right

PAGE FRIGHT

by Neill D. Hicks

Writing is the most frightening profession you can undertake. Oh, sure, rescuing a kitten from a burning building, or topping off a skyscraper, or plunking down a few mil on the latest IPO may cause you to catch your breath once or twice, but writing is really terrifying.

At least with the kitten, the skyscraper and the IPO, you'll know you have an obvious, unmistakable success or failure. Writing is always uncertain. Even at its best, it never quite matches that Precious Vision that began the process. The product is always in some respect a compromise. Perhaps the compromise that results from the creative decisions you've had to make along the way produces a far superior work than that capricious hallucination of your fantasy, but the written page is never quite the same unflawed daydream child it was before craft breached it into the world.

Every time you face the blank page, then, the potential for failure is enormously high, perhaps even inevitable. We're not talking about popular or economic nonsuccess here, but real personal deficiency, the kind of naked truth that jerks you awake in a cold sweat at night. We're talking about I'm-a-fraud-and-everybody-knows-it failure. That is what makes writing the most terrifying profession.

This is the reason why many would-be writers never get around to putting anything down on paper. It is also the reason why so many people who wouldn't presume to fly their own airliner or perform their own hemorrhoid surgery or even mow their own grass are absolutely certain they can do a better job of writing than a professional writer—after that writer has knocked back the blank page to create a work of something from a beginning of nothing.

The problem, of course, is that the screenwriter is injected into the work to such a degree that it is often difficult to separate where the incarnate person stops and the fictional characters begin. We regularly tell ourselves that we are basing a character on cousin Charlotte or Uncle Max, but the fact is that Charlotte and Max are merely starting points. They have certain superficially observable traits and behaviors that we find interesting, and we try to extrapolate character from these mannerisms. But the truth is all characters are you.

Who else could they be? You, the writer, are probing your own soul to touch the vulnerabilities until you discover that cantankerous cousin Charlotte in life is actually an eccentric millionairess as a character, and the living good-natured Uncle Max is a screenplay psychopathic rapist. Charlotte and Max have reached inside of you for the components of your soul that become living characters. The writer then forces those attributes through a magnifying lens. Sometimes it can be delightful when you touch the part of you that's a quirky philanthropist. But when you get in touch with the part of your essence that is angry, demented and evil, it sucks the breath out of your body and you push yourself away from the keyboard. You'll go anywhere except to that place. Eccentricity is one thing. Raw evil is an entirely different matter. If you've touched it, you know it's there.

The difference between professional writers and amateurs at this crucial stage is that the professionals write through the fear, manage it and use it to make discoveries about their characters, more than about themselves. The amateurs either run away or, worse, wallow in their personal distress until their screenplays become nothing more than incoherent psychotherapeutic masturbation exhibited on the page.

What is most alarming is that the dread you discover doesn't have to be evil at all. Far more often the dismay you encounter is simply the terror kept in some painful part of your inner self that you have successfully hidden or ignored. Suddenly, there it is, demanding expression in a character. Do you manage it, write through it, make it work for your story—or do you run away? Are you a professional or an amateur?

Neill D. Hicks is a screenwriter whose groundbreaking work on defining film genres has made him a leading script analyst both in this country and abroad. To suggest films for analysis or questions about genres to address in this column, please e-mail screenwritersmonthly@iscriptdb.com



P.O.V.

THE LOWLY WRITER

by Michael B. Druxman

I once thought that the day I sold my first screenplay would be the happiest day of my life. You know, fame, fortune and Academy Awards would soon be mine. Beautiful movie starlets would chase me, offering sexual favors if I would only write them a wonderful role in my next picture.

Marvelous fantasy, isn't it? It's a shame that life doesn't work out quite that way. Actually, the day that my first screenplay sold was the beginning of one of the worst nightmare experiences of my life and the start of my education that, in Hollywood, no matter who he is and how well he's paid, the writer is really on the lowest rung of the creative food chain.

Often, he's barred from the set or location of his own movie and isn't even invited to a cast/crew screening, not to mention the film's premiere.

Any writer who is worth his salt truly cares about the words that he puts down on paper. He spends hours ... days ... weeks ... months ... toiling over his characters, plotline and dialogue in order to build a viable and structurally sound story. Then, when he's finished and satisfied with his creation, he sends it, like his human children, out into the world to seek its fortune.

If this writer has created a novel or a stage play, what he wrote is pretty much what the public is going to get. True, a book editor may help him revise his novel and a director might suggest changes in his play, but the final decision as to what changes are actually made or not rests solely with the writer. However, the moment a screenwriter signs his name onto the dotted line and takes the check, that script is no longer his. The producer or studio has total control. Even if they loved his work, chances are another writer will be called in to "improve" it. And, that writer, almost certainly, will attempt to eliminate as much of your writing as possible in order to get more of his words into the script so he can, under Writers Guild rules, qualify for screenplay credit and, thereby, get a share of the future residuals. Even if you're not a member of the WGA, you can still get re-written and often do.

My first screenplay sale was to an independent producer-director in Texas who rewrote it to the point where the finished movie bore little resemblance to my original script. The story was altered beyond recognition so much that I had to ask someone to explain the plot to me. And yet, I was the only credited writer on the film.

In fact, virtually all of my scripts have been re-written to one degree or another by others or, in one case, by myself, having been ordered to make changes with which I didn't agree. You might wonder why, if I didn't like the finished script, didn't I remove my name from it or at least use a pseudonym? I definitely considered that course of action, but veteran Hollywood producer Stanley Rubin (*The Narrow Margin*, *River of No Return*, *The President's Analyst*, *White Hunter*, *Black Heart*, and many others.), my long time mentor, dissuaded me.

"It's more important to have the screen credit," he advised. "If the movie is no good, nobody important will see it anyway, but your resume will reflect that you wrote a film that starred such-and-such star. Also, if your name is not on the credits, you won't get any residuals."

I also asked Stanley, a former screenwriter himself, why the writer is treated so badly in Hollywood.

"Because he's the easiest one to get rid of," he explained. "When you're producing a picture, you have to deal with the director and your star. They read the finished script and usually have their own ideas on how they want it changed. Often, they feel that the original writer is 'too emotionally involved' with the material to make the changes they want. Or, perhaps they prefer to bring in their own favorite writer or even revise the script themselves."

"When this happens, it's more important for the overall project to keep your director and star happy because they are the ones who are going to get your film made."

"If at all possible," Rubin continues, "I like to keep the original writer on the project. He knows the material better than any-

one and is more apt to maintain the elements that made the script likable in the first place.

"But, the reality of the business is, as my late friend, screenwriter Earl Fenton, used to say, 'When soup has ended, who has need for a spoon?'"

Frankly, I've often thought that one of the main reasons that original screenwriters get rewritten so often is because of jealousy. The truth is that the only real CREATIVE aspect of movie-making is the original screenplay. Everything else, including producing, directing and acting, is merely INTERPRETATION of the original material.

The fact that they are only interpreters, rather than creators, must certainly bother many ego-oriented artists. Thus, they insist, like a dog does with a fire hydrant, upon leaving their own personal mark on the script.

The tragedy is that, after one or more rewrites, what was originally so appealing about the script might very well be lost. A producer and/or director might even recognize this truth, yet because of scheduling conflicts (e.g. the star might only be available for a limited period of time), they are forced to proceed with the most recent version of the script ... even if it is not the best.

Years ago, I interviewed legendary director Howard Hawks (*His Girl Friday*, *The Big Sleep*, *Red River*, etc.), who surprised me when he said, "I'm not interested in telling a story. I want to make good scenes."

And, that revelation brings us to the bottom line: The reason that there are so many bad movies being made in Hollywood is because everybody working on a film wants something different.

The director wants to create great, memorable scenes.

The actors are interested in their own roles.

The cinematographer wants to shoot "pretty" pictures.

And, the producer is willing to "sell his soul" just to get the picture made.

The only person who is interested in telling a viable, well-constructed story is the writer ... and he's usually the first one dropped from the project. Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

But, that's just my point of view.

Michael B. Druxman is a screenwriter-director whose credits include *Cheyenne Warrior* (1994), *Dillinger and Capone* (1995) and *The Doorway* (2000). He is also a produced playwright, a published novelist, and the author of "The Art of Storytelling" (The Center Press, 1997), which is used as a writing textbook in several schools and colleges.



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Book Review of the Month

By Kenna McHugh

Script Partners: What Makes Film and TV Writing Teams Work

Teaming Up for the Perfect Script

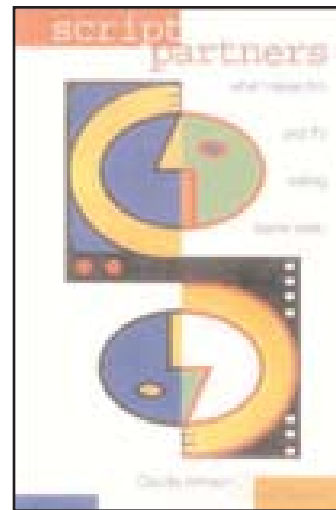
While doing research for another project at the city library, I came across the book *Script Partners: What Makes Film and TV Writing Teams Work* (MWP) by writing team Claudia Johnson and Matt Stevens. I thumbed through the 280-page book, reading bits and pieces. I found myself becoming more and more aware of the subject as a fascinating piece to read and apply to my writing career because I never really thought about writing with a partner, but the book changed my way of thinking. Why not write with a partner?

"It may be a cold world out there for screenwriters, but one of the best ways to stay warm is collaboration," it is dutifully stated by the book's authors, who sum up the whole subject of why one should write with a partner.

Writing a screenplay is not easy. We screenwriters know that; it's hard work and conventional wisdom says it takes five to ten screenplays before you finally sell one. Then, it's even harder to produce, so "why not collaborate" is the mantra of this book. At least you'll have someone on your side looking out for your interests.

Script Partners tells you how to go about doing just that—write with a partner. It goes far beyond stressing the plus points of collaboration, such as finding a partner or handling the legal end of the deal. It offers basic rules a fledgling writing team can follow, so egos aren't destroyed, friendships aren't severed and careers aren't faltered.

The authors, being collaborators themselves, draw from personal experience and mingle with a pool of successful screenwriting teams such as Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski (*Ed Wood*, *Man On the Moon*), Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen (*Friends*), and Fan Kanin and the late Michael Kanin (*The Opposite Sex*, *Teacher's Pet*). The book also includes writers who partnered up with different writers throughout their careers, such as Harold Ramis (*Ghostbusters*, *Analyze This*), who tells tales of working right out of college with Second City and National Lampoon and swapping ideas over the phone with Bill Murray or the late Gilda Radner. You get a feel for how they brainstormed, and their work solidifies.



Johnson and Stevens also point out the option of teaming up with your brother or sister. Let's not forget the familial combinations that have made some of the best films: Jerry and David Zucker (*Airplane*, *Naked Gun*), Joel and Ethan Cohen (*Blood Simple*, *Fargo*), Larry and Andy Wachowski (*The Matrix*, *Matrix Reloaded*) and Nora and Ephron (*Michael*, *You've Got Mail*). The authors describe how the siblings grew up together, goofing off and experimenting with film that led to a break, then a script and a feature film.

Script Partners is an easy read that takes you through Hollywood coffee shops and restaurants, meetings with various writing teams, partners and ilk, all inspiring you to team up and write the six-figure script that casts you as part of a top writing team.

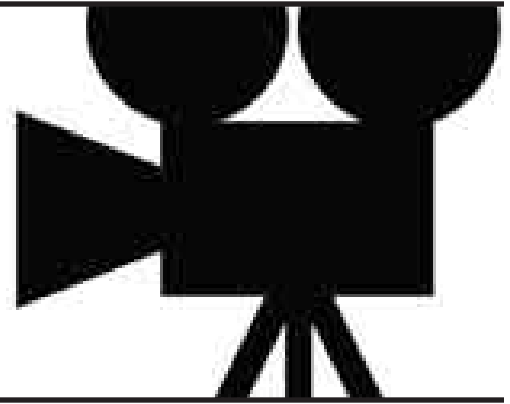
But is collaborating that easy? No. This book gives it to you straight.

Read *Script Partners*. Learn from the pros. Perhaps you'll find that perfect partner. If not, at least you know that the writing team option is there and worth having on your bookshelf.

Kenna McHugh has been freelancing in the film industry for over 15 years. Her writing credits include the book "Breaking into Film," three screenplays, seven produced plays and numerous articles on the adventures and mishaps of the constantly changing film industry.



Script Deals



OUR SCRIPT DEALS OF THE MONTH

Warner Brothers Pictures and Mandeville Films picked up writer Mark Perez's pitch ***The Afterparty***, a comedy about a regular guy who goes to Las Vegas for his bachelor party and gets so drunk that he forgets the entire weekend. (We've all been there.) Only here, the week before his wedding, a series of strangers he befriended that weekend drop back into his life. Reportedly, Jamie Kennedy is interested in the lead role. This looks like a winner. Mark Perez, Brian Lutz, and Mandeville's David Hoberman to produce.

Writer-director Cameron Crowe (*Almost Famous*) has a new comedy in development, DreamWorks Pictures and Paramount Pictures doing the honors. The project is called ***Elizabethtown*** and centers on the resilience of the life force and an unexpected romance that develops against the backdrop of a Southern patriarch's elaborate memorial. Crowe's Vinyl Films and Tom Cruise's C/W Productions will reportedly produce. Kirsten Dunst and Ashton Kutcher are rumored to be interested in starring.

The writing duo behind *About Schmidt*, Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, adapted a manuscript by Rex Pickett to be published in 2004 by St. Martin's Press called ***Sideways***. Fox Searchlight grabbed the comedy dealing with a writer and a washed-up actor who are about to get married and decide to salute what remains of their youth. They get lost in wine country on a weeklong vacation. Trouble ensues as the pair come to terms with maturity. Michael London will produce. Alexander Payne will direct. This project was originally set up in 1999.

Screenwriter Jordan Katz (*Incognito*) will write the live-action comedy ***Geronimo Jones*** for Vanguard Films, the production company behind the computer-animated *Shrek* movies. Financing for the writing reportedly will come out of a discre-

tionary fund set up through DreamWorks, where the story idea was given a first look, though the studio ultimately passed on it. The story will center on a down-on-his-luck hustler who discovers that he is the last of a near-extinct tribe and heir to a wildly lucrative Indian casino.

TELL ME THAT AGAIN?

Fox 2000 Pictures is apparently developing this insane storyline from a Korean film, which was based on a 1999 detective thriller of the same name, helmed by Yoon-Hyun Chang. The tentative title is ***Tell Me Something***. The storyline goes something like this: a serial killer deposits bags of his victims' mixed-up body parts in various places. The police detectives then have to do the gruesome task of reassembling the victims piece by piece in hopes of discovering a pattern to the killings and identifying the killer. Okay, well we have a title suggestion: "The Reconstructionists." State Street Productions' George Tillman Jr. and Bob Teitel to produce, as well as Vertigo Entertainment's Roy Lee and Doug Davison.

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING!?

Outlaw Productions has nabbed the psychological thriller ***Move 5*** from writing trio Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Abhijit Joshi, and Suketu Mehta. The story deals with the friendship between a master chess player and a detective. They develop a friendship because both have suffered the death of a daughter. When the chess player is killed, the detective plunges into a quest to find out who did it. The answer lies in an unfinished game between the dead and the living. Sounds like a snoozer. Outlaw Productions' Bobby Newmyer, Jeff Silver, and Scott Strauss to produce. Vidhu Vinod Chopra to possibly direct.

A photograph of Ron Shelton on the set of the movie Hollywood Homicide. He is wearing a blue baseball cap, a watch, and a light-colored short-sleeved shirt with a floral pattern. He is smiling and holding a professional video camera. The background shows a residential setting with a house and some landscaping.

Ron Shelton and Robert Souza on *Hollywood Homicide*

by Fred Topel

Ron Shelton on the set of *Hollywood Homicide*. All photos by Sidney Baldwin

Maybe *Hollywood Homicide* wasn't the blockbuster you'd expect from stars Harrison Ford and Josh Hartnett, but from a writing point of view, it was an interesting blend. Part hard edged police thriller and part self-referential "inside Hollywood" comedy, the film mixed elements of buddy comedy, situational comedy and wild action in an attempt to appeal to everyone. Maybe it didn't, but the process was an interesting experiment.

The "so far fetched it has to be true" premise was brilliant. Cops with part time jobs. This gives you great situations where Joe Gavilan (Ford) is desperately trying to close a real estate sale while he's on a crime scene, and K.C. Calden (Hartnett) asks his partner to read lines with him because he's a wannabe actor. The mismatched pair do their best *Rush Hour* impression and practice some questionable police procedure. Calden chases a suspect back and forth across a small canal and commandeers a car with a screaming family still inside. Gavilan turns an Internal Affairs investigation into a sarcastic back and forth that culminates in him making obscene gestures at the officers behind the one way glass.

The minds behind this were Ron Shelton and Robert Souza. Shelton is most famous for his sports comedies *Bull Durham*,

White Men Can't Jump and *Tin Cup*, although he tried a cop drama earlier this year with *Dark Blue*, written by David Ayer. He is also one of those fortunate writer-directors who gets to make his own movies, and therefore, can control how much of the final script ends up on screen. His partner on *Hollywood Homicide*, Souza, is a former LAPD detective himself. I first sat down with Shelton to discuss his end of the collaboration.

So, detectives in the LAPD have second jobs? Yeah, as a matter of fact, it's so common that it would be unusual not to have a second job for a detective. It's an accepted part of the LAPD system so much that nobody had any qualms about it. Don't cops in other cities have two jobs? It's because of the overtime. Homicide cops get hundreds of hours of overtime and the city can't pay for overtime, so they give them time off. What are these guys going to do with time off? Sit around and drink beer? So, they get second jobs to make money, and they tend to choose second jobs that have flexibility to them. A real estate broker is perfect. Some detectives have third jobs. A common one is running a security company. The LAPD was very helpful with this information. They'd tell us they're tennis pros, cabinet makers, lots of stuff. A couple of the cabinet makers do beautiful finishing work if you're ever doing your house. There are

some certified public accountants, stuff that they can do late at night. All sorts of things.

Isn't the corruption investigation a cliché? No. The point is they look corrupt, but they're not corrupt. LA guys are convenient villains. It's almost an archetype now in movies which I didn't mind using. Internal Affairs investigators have carte blanche. They really can do damage to guys' careers, and a lot of good cops quit because of the investigations even though the investigations turn out to prove nothing wrong. It's kind of a problem with these special investigators offices that the mandate is to find something wrong. So, these investigators go out and they're gonna find something. Now, it may be jaywalking, but that stuff gets built up to the point that the good cop is defending himself so often they just get out of the business. The plot point that is quickly thrown over in the script—and I probably should have underlined it more—is they don't realize he's about to crash. It looks like he's living beyond his means, but they don't know that his credit cards are burned out. He's that close to total collapse. "If I don't sell a house, the word Titanic comes to mind." The fact is he is not really supporting the lifestyle he has. It's always the lifestyle change that people look at. Suddenly, the guy's driving too nice a car or he's buying a summer home, and that's where they start to say, "Where's that money coming from?"

When did you come into the writing process, and what was your collaboration? Well, we wrote it together last spring. I never really had a writing partner before. The only thing close to this was *Tin Cup*, John [Norville] wrote one draft, and I wrote the next one. For this one, we kind of wrote it together. After lots of meetings and dinners, we had a very careful outline. When we started writing, I was holed up in my place, and he was in his place. He and I would write and e-mail back and forth, and sometimes I'd say, "I have no idea how to do this procedural thing, you write it. Then I'm going to have a pass at it." Or, I would send a scene and say, "Make sure a cop can look at this and say that's how it would go down." Thanks to e-mails and modems and faxes and whatever, it was pretty easy.

He gave you cop elements. What were the Hollywood elements you brought to the story? Well, when I was scouting the movie I checked out the Hollywood division on Wilcox, just a nondescript brick building, which we actually used. I walked in and I said, "I'd like to look around. I'm a director working on a script about Hollywood cops." The guy at the desk—a uniform cop, a good-looking Latin guy with tattoos and kind of buffed up—was a classic LAPD guy. He goes, "Really?" and he hands me an 8x10. I'm not making this up. He's a member of SAG. I put him in the movie. So, I went, "Okay, what if our guy wants to be an actor?" So, I didn't feel like I made much of this stuff up. It's part of LA. Everybody has a script, an 8x10, or a demo tape.

Where's the weirdest place somebody's given you a script? Well, steam rooms, though they aren't even weird in LA. I got one coming out of a steam room once. The guy just handed it to me. On the golf course was another. Bartenders always are handing out scripts. If you get two free drinks, you know a script's coming.

So, you'd rather pay for the drinks and not have to deal with it? Definitely. [Note: don't hand Ron Shelton scripts.]



Meredith Scott Lynn as Detective Jackson (left) and Josh Hartnett as K.C. Calden in Columbia Pictures *Hollywood Homicide*

Do you at least scan through the scripts? I give them to my assistant.

Do you prefer directing scripts you've originated? Well, I've done it mostly because I enjoy writing, but it's not because I don't look for other material. *Dark Blue* I didn't write. So I would direct other scripts. Usually the scripts I want to make that other people have written nobody wants to make because they're deemed too noncommercial. I have a really unerring sense of the non-commercial. [laughs.]

How did you approach the tonal mix here? I think that is the question of the movie. That is the concern when making it. That's the question I asked myself every day while shooting and every day cutting it. "Am I getting away with this tonal balancing act?" I would ask myself. The world will tell me I did or I didn't. These are the choices I'm going to live or die by. Any real comedy is obviously—it's an old truism—based on pain and reality. I always think in the movies I make you can do a flipside of a dark movie with the same exact storyline. In other words, I can describe a 40-year-old woman who goes to the ballpark wearing too much makeup, sleeping with 19-year-old guys, and when the 38-year-old "has-been" comes to town who's right for her, she refuses to talk to him. This could be Tennessee Williams, but it happens to be *Bull Durham*. I can describe two guys who hang out on the playground playing basketball, pretending they're better than they are as their lives slip away. That's *White Men Can't Jump*. It could be something else. So, I always think when I'm writing something with a comic worldview I'm always thinking of what is the serious story I'm writing? Now, we did cut way back. The violent murder at the beginning was very graphic. I cut it back to where the gunshot starts. We get out because when I showed it to an audience the first time it took 40 minutes for people to get over the murder. We went back and looked at *Some Like it Hot*. There's a killing at the beginning of that, but it's not very graphic. So, once the gunshots start, I'm out of there.

Was anything too much for the movie? Yeah, Bob Souza has stories that are so absurd and outrageous that I had to keep them grounded. I mean, he was a real estate broker and a homicide

Harrison Ford (right) as Joe Gavilan and Josh Hartnett



detective. He and his partner, Tom Lang, were on the John Holmes murders. There was the Freeway Killer, and there was the Night Stalker. First thing they do is call in the finger-printer, put up yellow tape, fingerprint and shut the windows. First thing they did was fingerprint and photograph the refrigerator. Why? Because it's full of beer and they want to start drinking it. They're going to be there for 36 hours. Okay, this is my kind of movie now. I started it with that, and it was just too off putting to me. That was how I first wrote that scene when they come in, "Four on the floor, three backstage," fingerprint the thing and people were saying, "They wouldn't say that; they wouldn't say that." So, I took it out. I had to start the movie a little more procedural because it's a common language for the audience, and then let the cheeseburgers and selling a house to Master P start growing out of it. That's also an answer to the question about, "How do you get the tone right."

What would you really love to do despite noncommercial tastes?

I think it has hurt me. As I said, I'm trying to make popular art. When somebody thinks you make a movie because it's topic is popular or some critics like it, it doesn't matter; you want to make successful movies because it's too hard to get them off the ground. I think everyone's goal is to make quality movies that also have an audience. Otherwise, you're Frank Sinatra sitting there with people walking out of the theater. We're in the popular art business. There's a movie I want to make. I had the script, got financing, casting, and I had the locations. It was the Bob Marley story. I'd spent four years on it. I had the Marley family totally signed off on the script. It was a very complicated thing. It's a story of third world revolution, and it's the story of Bob Marley and his music, of where he came from. I also happen to love the music. I'd spent a great deal of time in Jamaica. We were shooting it in Frenchtown, which is not the easiest thing to do. Well, the studio got cold feet. I was insisting on casting a Jamaican to play Bob Marley. We were looking for that person, and we were that close to shooting it, and the studio backed out. I happen to think it could be a great and popular movie.

Why isn't that considered popular? They think it's a black guy that talks funny, and I'm quoting you. You can quote me on that. It's music that is as timeless now as when he wrote it.

Robert Souza left the LAPD as a detective in 1988. *Hollywood Homicide* is his first produced script. Like the characters in the story, Souza also had multiple jobs, which he'll talk about in this interview. Now it was his turn to explain his half of the Ron Shelton collaboration.

Is this the most realistic view of the Hollywood police department ever made? Well, the movie is made for entertainment. Most of the events and the situations in the movie are patterned after things that actually happened to me in my career. All the things didn't necessarily happen in Hollywood, but they are actual events that did occur. In fact, we had to tone it down a little bit because there were some things that people just wouldn't believe. So, what you're seeing is the tip of the iceberg of strange and unusual things that happen within the police department.

What were your second jobs? I was actually a real estate broker. I still am. I had a private security business. I'm a licensed private investigator. I wrote for television. I repossessed cars. I had all that going at once.

How did you like your first movie screenwriting experience? It was incredible. I got to hang out with Ron Shelton, and I worked quite a bit on *Dark Blue* with Ron. We went over that script pretty heavily, so that was my film school education. This movie was totally different because I got to be involved with the creative process from the beginning, and I had training. I was an English major in college, and I studied creative writing, so I'd been writing for years, but to sit down with a master like Ron and see how it really works—that was something else.

How did you get comfortable with the format? I understood the format. I'd written screenplays. I have no problem with that. I understand structure. The difference between Ron and me is his vast experience. Ron, when he writes, his first draft is normally close to a shooting script, whereas my first draft would be a real first draft. I'd have to really tweak it.

What's your perspective on the collaboration with Ron? People I think have this impression that we sit with dueling laptops, sitting across from each other, but quite often we were 300 miles apart. He had this great idea; he'd e-mail it to me or fax it or we'd talk to each other on cell phones, and we'd hash it back and forth. Ron said, "I like your ideas, but I'm now giving you a haiku version." He'd send it back to me and we'd go back and forth like that, and that's pretty much how we did the whole thing. Of course, I would defer to his judgement quite often. Anybody who's nominated for an Academy Award for *Bull Durham*—you're going to listen to him.

Would you write scripts alone? Oh yeah, I'm writing one now. I have no problem with writing one alone. On the other hand, I'd do another movie with Ron in a minute. I have no problem with that.



"Writing pair Tom Firestone and Martin Meunier have sold the pitch 'Antarix' to the Walt Disney Co.'s feature animation division. They were discovered from a posting they had on the web site www.scriptshark.com..."

- The Hollywood Reporter

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Is this the flip side of *Dark Blue*? Yeah, in fact Ron called it *Light Blue*.

How do you feel about the frequent portrayal of LAPD corruption? I have no problem with it. Dramatically, I've entered this business of entertainment. I think movies like *LA Confidential*, *Training Day*—they don't portray LAPD necessarily in a good light, but I'd like to think that the public can discern from what's real and fictional. That's not to say that cops haven't done everything wrong that you can imagine and you like to think that they're going to be punished.

What scenes do you see in the movie and think, "Wow, that's what I wrote?" It's pretty awesome actually, especially when you see Harrison Ford. There are things I had pictured in my head of how this should go and what the look on Harrison's face would be, and there it is right in front of you. I was on the set every day and saw what he brought to it. Quite often things that I wrote—Harrison would decide that it would play better a different way. So, he and Ron would have discussions and Ron being a writer would say, "That's the great thing about being the writer-director. I'm changing that right now." Harrison and Josh brought a certain amount to it. Ron and I had what we consider a fun movie, and it's just exciting as hell compared to what I used to do.

What scenes are you disappointed got altered or cut? Mine. I was in the movie. I didn't make the cut. I can't think of anything

I'm really disappointed in. I understand the reason for the editing. I was involved in that process. I know how that works. There were a couple scenes that Ron and I discussed and that we wrote early on that were a little unbelievable. They actually happened, but it was something the public would go, "No."

The beer scene? Yeah, the drinking thing. It doesn't bother me that it's gone. That was a concession we made with the police department. They didn't like it, and we really wanted their cooperation. It didn't bother me losing that. That's part of the process.

What other scenes? There's so much footage.

What was your scene? I was the preacher at a gay wedding. It was a short, very ridiculous part that didn't matter.

Was the interrogation scene realistic? That was sheer fun. I've been interviewed by Internal Affairs many times, and normally, it's done in individual interrogation rooms. You sit with two Internal Affairs investigators and it's very intimidating because you don't know what they have. They don't say, "We're looking at you because we found out that you slapped the hell out of your neighbor the other day." They sit there and ask you if you were working on such and such a day. It's like courtroom testimony; it's very intimidating. So, every bad thing you've done for the



Writer-director Ron Shelton discusses the next scene with Josh Hartnett and Harrison Ford

past six months is going through your head, “Oh my God, what do they know? Did they see me drinking that day?” It’s the intimidation factor. What we wanted to bring into this really was to show how Joe Gavilan is such a veteran. The difference between the young cop and his reaction to Internal Affairs and the reaction of a veteran cop, how I reacted when I was interviewed by Internal Affairs when I was Josh’s age as opposed to when I was a veteran. That was totally different. I would tell them to kiss my ass. “You’re barking up the wrong tree.” I outranked most of the guys I would be talking to. But you wouldn’t do that as a young cop. That was a whole different situation, but we wanted it to be fun. I thought that splitting the screen and having the two different rooms so you could see them both was great. I think that Josh and Harrison do a wonderful job in that scene.

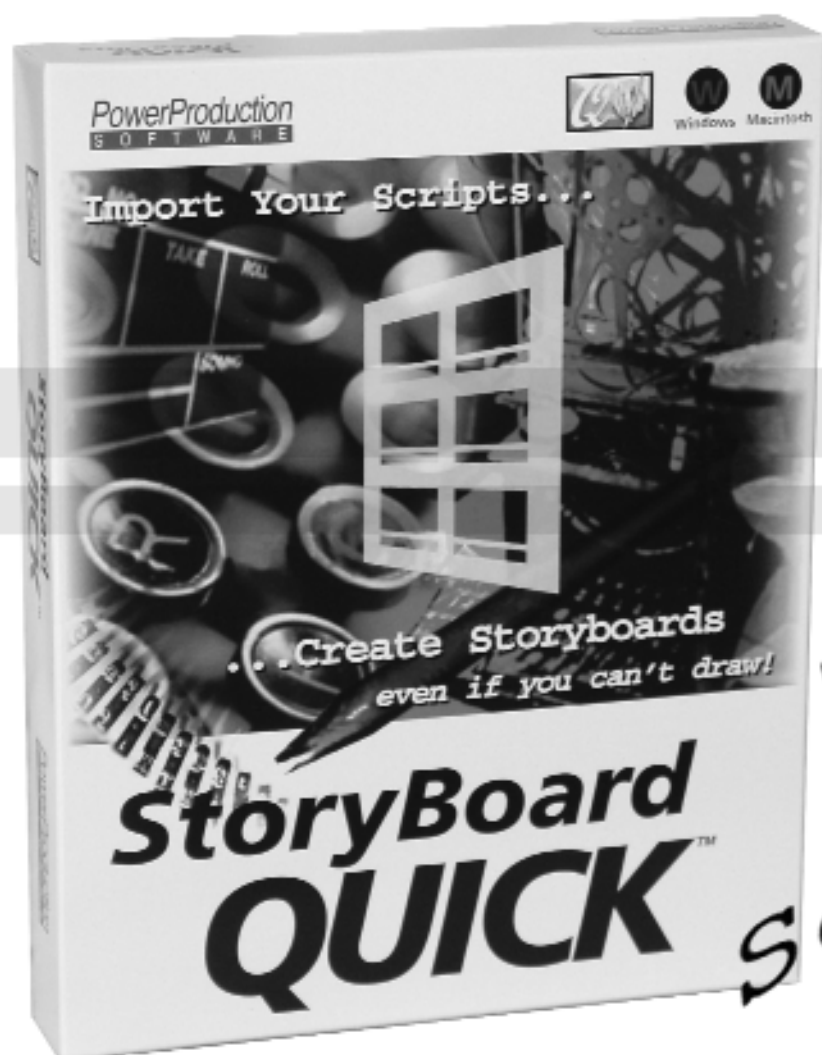
Is it realistic that Hartnett’s character would commandeer a car with kids in it and not let the kids out? It’s Hollywood. A police officer in performance of his duty, in fresh pursuit of a suspect has the right to commandeer a vehicle. It would have ruined that scene if he let the kids get out. Chances are he would’ve probably let everybody out and taken the car in the real world, but we had to have some fun with that. You are putting the child in danger; there’s no question about that. I wouldn’t argue that point but a lot of discussions Ron and I had—I might say, “You know, it wouldn’t happen in 100 years, Ron.” He’d say, “Yeah, I know, but this is Hollywood.” There were things I didn’t want in this movie. I’ve seen the screaming captain who’s yelling at his guys all the time and said, “I just hate that.” And Ron said, “Yeah, well, what would he be like?” So, we have Keith David who’s this mild mannered lieutenant acting exactly like an LAPD lieutenant would do. He’s supporting of his troops. He’s looking out for them. He’s handling the press while they’re doing the crime scene. That was my part of the reality of this. That was one

thing. The other was the Internal Affairs where Gavilan is interviewed in the captain’s office. We accomplished two things there. One, we saw the captain supporting Joe, and two, we saw Internal Affairs with their tunnel vision; they were forgetting about a quadruple murder. We talked about administrative vice protecting the subject and all these other things. I just liked the idea that homicide cops are on the front line, trying to do a job, and there are other people trying to sideline them, which used to happen to us, so we wanted to show that. Those were things I was adamant about.

Could you write about other subjects besides police work? I think so. I have several projects in various stages. I have file cabinets full of ideas. We barely scratched the surface really in *Hollywood Homicide*. I could easily support a series. That’s not a problem. Outside, I have two or three things I happen to be involved in which have nothing to do with police work. One is the subject of a constitutional issue that takes place in Washington, D.C. One is a teenage movie—kind of a fun racing car movie. One other is about swimming pool developers.

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Ron Shelton: A Screenwriting Life

Former slick-fielding, light-hitting minor league infielder Ron Shelton first tried his hand at sculpture before establishing himself as a screenwriter in the early 1980s and as a leading writer-director by the end of the decade. With his literary values, sharp ear for naturalistic dialogue and penchant for strong, interesting female characters, Shelton has become Hollywood's premier purveyor of the sports film. His character-driven scripts have emphasized acting far more than any formal attributes, and he has used the rehearsal process to discover the right behavior before blocking for the camera. Though he has not limited himself exclusively to sports, Shelton has returned again and again to athletics as a rich source of metaphor and analogy.

Shelton attended college on a baseball and basketball scholarship and signed with the Baltimore Orioles upon graduation. He worked his way up the ranks of their farm system, eventually reaching the Rochester (NY) Redwings, a Triple-A minor league team just one rung below "The Show". Deciding that he lacked the ability to make it to the majors, Shelton quit baseball and went to graduate school at the University of Arizona, earning an MFA in sculpture. Moving to L.A., Shelton enjoyed some success with his art—"large, movable, theatrical pieces"—including a one-man exhibition at the Space Gallery.

Shelton next began writing fiction and screenplays. He found a valuable early mentor in Roger Spottiswoode who directed Shelton's first two produced screenplays, *Under Fire* (1983) and *The Best of Times* (1986). The former was a taut, intelligent political thriller set in Nicaragua while the latter was a sports comedy-drama with Robin Williams and Kurt Russell. These projects not only demonstrated Shelton's breadth but also afforded him an opportunity to get behind the camera as a second unit director. He established himself as an adept writer-director with the 1988 sleeper hit *Bull Durham*, a witty and literate insider's account of both love and minor league ball. Shelton was also responsible for the ambitious but underperforming biopic *Blaze* (1989), based on the notorious relationship between Louisiana governor Earl Long and famed stripper Blaze Starr. The film did provide the first major leading role for Lolita Davidovich, who would go on to become the director's real-life love interest and appear in several of his films (*Cobb*, *Play It to the Bone*, *Dark Blue* and *Hollywood Homicide* among them).

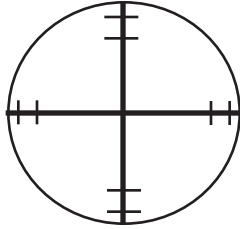
Shelton scored a solid hit with the street basketball comedy *White Men Can't Jump* (1992) but stumbled with his subsequent sports-related projects. He served as executive producer and provided the screenplay for William Friedkin's *Blue Chips*, a surprisingly unconvincing college basketball drama, but fared a little better as the writer-director of the biopic *Cobb* (both 1994). Sort of a *Raging Bull* with a baseball cap, the film told the somewhat one-note story of baseball legend Ty Cobb—embodied by an over-the-top Tommy Lee Jones—whose viciousness on and off the field exceeded his considerable athletic skills. The interplay between Everyman Robert Wuhl (as sports-writer Al Stump) and rabid Jones made this character-driven movie well worth watching.

Shelton has tried to repeat the success of *Bull Durham* and to a lesser degree *White Men Can't Jump*, but the far from fool-proof winning formula has eluded him. As co-writer (along with Tony Hendra) of *The Great White Hype* (1996), he failed to deliver a knockout punch in a look at the fight game which put all too much pressure on a good cast to bolster shoddy material. *Tin Cup* (1996) shifted the sports focus to golf, reuniting writer-director Shelton with *Bull Durham* star Kevin Costner as a washed-up pro who rediscovers his mojo while romancing a therapist (Rene Russo) and confronting his old rival (Don Johnson), but the amusing and amiable romantic comedy failed to ignite excitement on par with Shelton and Costner's previous collaboration. In 1999 Shelton again took on the world of prizefighting as writer and director of *Play It to the Bone*, this time attempting to explore two quirky boxers (Woody Harrelson and Antonio Banderas), best friends and rivals who scramble to road-trip to Las Vegas for a potentially lucrative showdown in the ring with their girlfriends (Lucy Liu and Lolita Davidovich) complicating matters along the way. Although released for one week in Los Angeles to qualify for Oscar nominations, the film was a mixed bag and failed to generate much critical buzz or box office dollars.

After a brief hiatus, Shelton returned to feature films with a vengeance in 2003, helming the intense cop drama *Dark Blue*, based on an original story by noir master James Ellroy and set against the backdrop of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. While Shelton steered Kurt Russell to great heights as a corrupt L.A. detective coming to grips with his dark reality, the initially absorbing film faltered toward the finish line and shifted into a conventional thriller. Shelton also had a hand in the screenplay for the big-budget sequel *Bad Boys 2* as one of three credited (and over a dozen uncredited) writers on the film. In the summer of 2003, Shelton also delivered his first project as writer-director in a long while, the crime drama *Hollywood Homicide*, starring Harrison Ford.

All data from Baseline-FilmTracker. For more information on Ron Shelton or other writers, please visit: www.baseline.hollywood.com.

Point of Entry



by Philippa Burgess

OPTIONS AND SPEC SALES - GETTING TO "I DO"

Playing the Hollywood game to get your script out there is like dating, hoping to find "the one"—which in this case looks like a big spec sale or a greenlight for production on your script. In this world as the writer, you are always the girl, waiting for them to call, for them to ask you out or to ask for your hand in marriage. For some writers it is always the bridesmaid and never the bride when it comes to selling material. Why do some scripts get sold and others optioned? The basic answer can be found in the distinction between high concept and low concept ideas. The high concept ideas are the marrying kind. The low concept ideas you might date, and under the right circumstances they may just surprise you and be "the one" after all.

The Spec Script Market – The Debutante Ball

The spec script market offers a unique opportunity to new writers outside the system. This is your coming out party. Anyone can sell a spec. The definition of a spec by a writer is something that they write for free in the hope that someone will buy it from them later ... However, the industry definition of a spec is a high concept idea that can be taken to market competitively. Specs are taken to market—the market is studio producers or producers with studio relationships—in what is a 48 to 72 hour process where the studios either bid for it or they don't. It is the high concept that gives the project heat in the marketplace that gets it read and considered quickly. The spec game is an organized system from representatives to sell

to production companies and studios. Fear and chaos rule the marketplace so getting good buzz on a project is important to leveraging a sale.

A Script Sale – Engagement

A spec sale is where a studio or buyer purchases the rights to a project. This is the equivalent to winning the heart of the man of your dreams and getting a very expensive diamond ring. When a spec sale is announced in the trades, you may read that it is a low six-figure against a mid six-figure deal. This means that the writer is paid low six-figures for their script. For instance, let's say it is a \$150,000 against \$300,000 deal. The balance, or the other \$150,000 will only be paid at the start of principal photography if the script ever goes into production. This bonus amount is reducible by half if there is shared credit. The WGA protects the interest and credit of the first writer, so another writer would need to re-write more than 60% of the original script in order to get a shared writing credit. This is the best of all worlds and a great first step to building your career.

The Selling Game – Dating

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match. Agents and managers sell to producers. Producers sell to the studios. Studios do their best to say no unless they have to say yes. Consider that everyone who is in a position to sell or buy is subjective about the material they are championing. It is corporate suicide for a studio executive to make a business decision to authorize to pay a large sum of money to purchase a script unless there is agreement. This agreement is best gained through a sense of competition where the studio or buyer feels that if they don't take the script off the table (make a deal) then someone else will. It can also be gained with a marketable element, such as a star or high-end director attached to the project. Other times there is either a relationship or a corporate mandate that makes a project favorable for the studio or buyer to purchase. The competitive situation is best achieved with high concept scripts that are taken to the spec market by agents or managers. Otherwise it is best to let producers option your material and use their relationships to get attachments or find favorable situations for getting your script made.

An Option Agreement – Going Steady

An option agreement is where a producer wants to secure the rights to material for a specific amount of time. Quite commonly it is a \$1 option. This usually buys the producer a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of a year or two. Then the amount to renew the option goes up incrementally with each

extension that the producer uses. An option agreement has a final purchase price negotiated into the agreement. It provides a floor—the lowest price to be paid—which is recommended if not required to be a WGA minimum, regardless of whether you are a member or not. It also sets a ceiling—the most that you can be paid—which is determined by any previous quotes or whatever the producer feels is the outside that anyone will pay. The actual purchase amount is determined to be a percentage of the budget of the film that will not be less than the floor or more than the ceiling.

High Concept Material – Being the Dream Girl

High concept ideas are smart and sexy. Only the most commercial scripts will be considered for the spec market. What makes an idea high concept is an original idea that we haven't seen before within a familiar genre. The basic genres are, on the light side, comedy, romantic comedy and action-comedy and, on the dark side, action, thriller and horror. These represent the emotions that you are eliciting from the audience. Each of these basic genres has its structure and certain beats that it needs to hit. Other terms such as period, sports, sci-fi, or family can be married to these genres, but it is the basic genre that sells it.

Low Concept Material – The Cute Girl

Dramas are typically less commercial, no matter how compelling the idea. What will ultimately make a drama commercial for a studio are the actors who get involved. Dramas can make excellent movies but usually don't make it to the spec market. Low concept applies to other genres as well, where the story is more character rather than concept driven. There is room in the marketplace low concept material, but it takes more time and in roads to get it to the right people. These are the projects that are most likely to be optioned. They need to find a champion who can bring together the right elements before it can move toward production.

The Aftermath - A Broken Heart or Wedding Bells

The writer also needs to understand that, regardless of whether a spec script sells or not, the spec market is the best tool to get them introduced into the marketplace. After a spec goes out it is a great opportunity to take meetings with the development executives who read your script and responded positively to the writing. When the writer is in the room, he can talk about their portfolio of ideas, both high and low concept. The more fans that you have around town, the easier it is to facilitate your career goals. Your fans will want to find a reason to get in business with you. Given the way the system runs, sometimes great material doesn't sell, and lesser quality mate-

rial does. In the case of material that does not sell which still has merit, this is where packaging with the right elements comes into play. Great material finds its way. Your fans will always champion your great scripts with the right people.

The Career – Marital Bliss

Your arc as a screenwriter is to transition from being an outsider to an insider. As an outsider, your best opportunity to break into the system is with your most commercial material. Although you may have both high and low concept scripts in your portfolio, you want to focus the possible spec as your point of entry. A spec can be that opportunity to break into the system and lead you to a long and happy marriage. If you lead with your other material, the process just takes a lot longer. Trust that once you are in the system some if not all of your other projects will find their way. In dating, as in writing, it may take some effort to look your best and make a great first impression, but it will give you the best opportunity to find “the one.”

Philippa Burgess of Mason/Burgess/Lifschultz is a literary manager in Los Angeles who represents screenwriters working in Hollywood. This article was initially written for Scriptshark, a division of Baseline-Filmtracker (www.scriptshark.com), where you can find additional articles in her 'Marketing for Writers' series.



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IN DEVELOPMENT

Oceans Twelve Update

George Nolfi (*Timeline*) will apparently adapt his already written spec script *Honor Among Thieves* for the upcoming sequel. According to reports, he is currently adapting it to fit the cast which will include George Clooney (Danny Ocean), Julia Roberts (Tess Ocean), Brad Pitt (Dusty Ryan), Andy Garcia (Terry Benedict), Bernie Mac (Frank Catton) and others not yet announced. According to what we know about the storyline, George Clooney and pals are aiming to take the *Ocean's Eleven* gang of thieves overseas, pulling off heists in three of Europe's greatest cities: Rome, London and Berlin.



Walt Disney is going to *The Woods* for Shyamalan



M. Night Shyamalan will next direct his script *The Woods* for Walt Disney. The movie will possibly star Ashton Kutcher, Kirsten Dunst and Joaquin Phoenix. Set in 1897, the script reportedly revolves around a close-knit community that lives with the frightening knowledge that a mythical race of creatures resides in the woods around them. As with his previous projects, Shyamalan closely guards the storyline and reveals little about his project. However, you can be sure that it will be similar in tone to his previous work and will again be set in Pennsylvania.

"I like to write in a shroud of secrecy because I have to keep finding ways to scare myself," Shyamalan told the *Associated Press*.

Shane Black, *You'll Never Die in this Town Again*

After a long absence, Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon*) is apparently back in action. According to reports, Joel Silver is producing Black's new script, *You'll Never Die in this Town Again*. According to rumors, the story opens with the protagonist stopping a Hollywood agent from having his way with a semi-conscious actress only to be assaulted later by the agent outside the dressing room. The hero's buddy is a tough-as-nails private eye who happens to be gay. No other details were disclosed at this time. The project is set up at Warner Bros. Black also collaborated with Anthony Bagarozzi to write an action spec script called *The Nice Guys*, which is still being shopped around right now.

Screenwriter Antwone Fisher to do a Comedy Next



Antwone Fisher, whose recent self-titled Fox Searchlight feature gained him notoriety, is now turning to comedy for his next as-of-yet untitled project described as *Big Daddy* meets *Problem Child*. It is reportedly set in the world of foster care and revolves around the comedic dynamic between a foster child and his unqualified caretaker. The project reunites Fisher and producer Robert Simonds, who recently worked together on the comedy *OO Soul*, which Fisher co-wrote with Chris Tucker, who was going to star. The project was set up at Universal Pictures with Mariah Carey co-starring, but it never came to fruition. Fisher also has worked with New Line, having done some uncredited rewrites on the Tucker vehicles *Money Talks* and *Rush Hour*.

Die Hard 4, is it really a go?

It appears so. Speaking with the *USA Today* in June, Bruce Willis confirmed *Die Hard 4* is scheduled to shoot next year. He told the publication, "I always said the genre had kind of run out of gas and had to reinvent itself. I think that's the goal Fox has also. Maybe too much time has gone by since the last one. We'll see. If the first *Die Hard* were an analog version of an action movie, the kind of action movies that are being made right now are all digital. So, *Die Hard 4* would have to be brought up to the modern age."



Photo credits (in order): the gang in *Ocean's Eleven*, Warner Bros; Shyamalan and Mel Gibson in *Signs*, Touchstone Pictures; Antwone Fisher, Fox Searchlight Pictures; Bruce Willis in *Tears of the Sun*, Columbia Pictures.

Script Review:

Hollywood Homicide

by Harry Caul

In 1988 Ron Shelton really came into his own when he wrote and directed *Bull Durham* (which was originally titled *A Player to Be Named Later*). The film was a surprise box-office hit, made Kevin Costner a major star and earned Shelton a Best Screenplay Oscar nomination. The movie is a sports comedy classic.

Shelton's next project was *Blaze* (1990), which was at times a funny and raucous account of the romance between Louisiana governor Earl Long (Paul Newman) and stripper Blaze Star (Lola Davidovich). The movie ultimately failed to find its audience and fizzled.

Shelton returned to form with the familiar and timely comedy, *White Men Can't Jump*, an uproarious and comedic study of "street basketball" that connected with black and white audiences alike, thus making it a marketing department's dream movie. But Shelton tripped himself up again in 1994, when he made the somewhat anticipated biopic of controversial baseball legend Ty Cobb, which proved to be a lackluster script and movie. His other credits include *The Best of Times*, *Tin Cup* and *Great White Hype*.

Shelton sold the project as a pitch and then co-wrote it with Robert Souza. The script discussed here is dated June 6, 2002, and was later re-written. Lou Pitt is producing along with Shelton for Revolution Studios. Here's the basic storyline:

Joe Gavilan (Ford) is a veteran Hollywood homicide detective who also just happens to be a real estate agent on the side. (He's a dirt pimp and not a very good one.) On top of that, he's a dysfunctional three-time divorced middle-aged man on the verge of bankruptcy. He also drinks too much, has an upscale call-girl for a girlfriend and has to sleep in his car in fear of it being repossessed by the bank.

K.C. Calden (Hartnett) is a young, handsome, clean cut up and coming officer who teaches Yoga. He also aspires to be an actor. It's revealed he doesn't particularly like being a cop, but because his father was one (though he died in a drive-by shooting), he felt he had to.

The script starts off with a bang when a rap group is gunned down while on stage, performing at Whiskey's Night Club on Sunset Boulevard. A very serious and professional hit. The club

owner and all its occupants—the ones still around when the police show up—are witnesses. Joe and K.C. arrive first, and it's now their investigation.

The club owner, Armas, is in the music business and owns a bunch of clubs. When questioned he seems indifferent. It looks like it's going to be a long night, so Joe does the only sane thing and orders food, but not before instructing the fingerprint guys to get to work spouting, "Page one in the Homicide manual—always dust and photograph the refrigerator first. Do you know why? (They don't.) 'Cause it's gonna be a long night and we're gonna need to pop a few cold ones." (This was unfortunately removed from the final edited film.)

Later, after busting Armas's balls a little, Joe learns that the ultra-rich owner is looking to buy a new home, a big one "for no more than five." Joe is taken back by this, replying "Million?" This begins a humorous subplot with Joe ultimately trying to sell Robert Evans's home to Armas. Evans is a famous and infamous Hollywood producer. He produced such films as *Chinatown*, *Marathon Man* and others. He was also an actor. A July 2002 rewrite removed Evans and instead inserted a fictional character named Jerry Duran. I think this was a mistake as the absurdity of having Evans involved was part of the humor in this storyline.

This script is funny, at times serious (sometimes taking itself a little too seriously), dark, and though it's been called an "Untitled Cop Drama," I think the comedy and action elements are much stronger than the drama or the investigation of the murders, which was weak.

The characters are rich because of the humorous combination of situation and traits. The two characters play off of each other nicely, and there is a believable comfort level established between them. The dialogue is crisp, witty, and when required, contained a certain level of edginess.

This draft is a bit long (over 130 pages), but it was a first draft and was tightened up. Harrison Ford probably also gave the writers his customary ten pages of notes. Ford was considering Scott Frank's adaptation of *A Walk Among the Tombstones* right around the time he decided to do *Hollywood Homicide*. Whether or not Ford will do both projects will have to be seen, but after playing a serious role in the heavy drama *K19*, Ford was obviously up for something a little lighter, and this project was a perfect fit.

So, there are some funny and quirky scenes that really work, and if they are still in the movie, I'll be pleasantly surprised. But we have already seen that many are not. Overall, this is a fun story with a somewhat lackluster dramatic narrative thrust. Though it's been described as being set in the hip-hop music industry, that's really just window dressing for what is a comedic and sometimes dramatic story about two odd ball cops.

Harry Caul is a Screenwriter's Monthly staff writer and can be reached by email: harry_caulx@iscriptdb.com

Script Notes

News and information concerning screenwriters and their craft

Tarantino's *Kill Bill* to be Chopped in Two

In an interview with *The New York Times* recently, Miramax chief Harvey Weinstein confirmed that writer-director Quentin Tarantino's new film *Kill Bill* will be released as two movies. The script is 200 pages, broken up into chapters much like his earlier film *Pulp Fiction* and centers on The Bride (Uma Thurman) who seeks revenge on Bill after he leaves her for dead on her wedding day. Our question is, "Does it really take two movies to tell a cheesy revenge flick?" We find it hard to believe that splitting the movie was Tarantino's idea. Weinstein is becoming as notorious as Thalberg with his meddling. From what we've seen of the script (to be reviewed in our September issue), the movie is going to be too long, so splitting it up might have been the best thing. But let's face it: this is a sign of trouble. Will anyone go back for part two? Will they want to? We don't think so. Further evidence that the film is in trouble: Weinstein was quoted as saying he was worried about over-selling the movie, calling it "just a fun B-movie." We're sorry, but why are we going to pay \$8.50 twice for a B-movie?



Photo credit: Quentin Tarantino in *Destiny Turns on the Radio*, Rysher Entertainment.

Belushi's Memorable *Animal House* Scene Ad-libbed

One of John Belushi's most memorable scenes in the 1978 frat-house comedy *Animal House*, written by Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney and Chris Miller, apparently wasn't in the script. Director John Landis was recently a guest on HBO's "On the Record" with Bob Costas. During the episode he discussed, among other things, the scene in which Belushi, while walking downstairs, destroys the guitar of a singer during a Delta House toga party and with that classic Belushi look gawkily apologizes.

"That's a good scene. That's not in the script; we just made that up," Landis revealed. "But that's key to Belushi's character, Bluto, who is sweet. That's the thing John was capable of doing. I told him he was like Harpo and the Cookie Monster, and both Harpo Marx and the Cookie Monster are about appetites, and what's unique about Cookie and Harpo is they're both totally destructive and completely sweet."

2003 Las Vegas Screenwriter's Conference and Cinevegas

Last month *Screenwriter's Monthly* spent 10 days in Las Vegas where we covered the Las Vegas Screenwriter's Conference and the Cinevegas Film Festival.

If you're an aspiring screenwriter, this is a wonderful way to spend 10 days. First, the conference arms you with important information on marketing your screenplay: how to write effective query letters and most importantly how to communicate your story effectively to industry professionals a la "the pitch." The highlight of the conference was Christopher Lockhart, Executive Story Editor at ICM for Ed Limato, who represents such Hollywood power as Mel Gibson and Denzel Washington, among others. His classes and seminars were honest, poignant and extremely helpful for everyone. When we left we were better armed for the real world of Hollywood screenwriting.

The most important thing besides writing a great story is preparing a great pitch. You have to compel an agent or producer into wanting to read your script. This is no easy task when you consider that they are looking for any reason not to read your script. Why? Because they already have a stack four-feet high given to them from other industry professionals whom they trust. Why do they want to waste an hour of their time on your script when chances are it will not be very good? You're competing with professional writers, not just your fellow "aspiring" screenwriting brethren.

The conference also provided access to some industry professionals who took pitches from attending screenwriters. Industry professionals included Tom McNulty, Development Exec with Adam Sandler's company and producers Lesley Bracker, Frederick Levy and Alex Ross. Word after the conference was that many scripts were requested.

The 2003 Las Vegas Screenwriters Conference was held June 12-15 at the Treasure Island Hotel & Casino. For more information see: www.vegasscript.com

If you want to get better as a screenwriter, watch movies, lots of them. If you want inspiration, seek out independent film festivals. Cinevegas is one of the more accessible festivals I've attended, located at The Palms, off the strip but close enough to have plenty of fun. I loved the location because it was very self-contained. There is a fairly large cinema in the casino where the entire festival is held. No long treks to screenings! Before and after each film there is usually time where the writer-director addresses the audience with his/her background and how the film was made. There is also usually a Q&A session. These are very inspirational talks where you realize that following your screenwriting dream may lead you to independent filmmaking. For more information about next year's event, see: www.vegasscript.com

British Professor Claims to have Discovered the Formula for a Perfect Screenplay

Move over, Syd Field! a British professor believes she has found the formula for making box office hits.

"I analyzed frame by frame what elements were present in different film genres and what made certain films successful," said professor Sue Clayton of London University while lecturing on screenwriting and directing at the Cannes Film Festival in May of 2003. According to Clayton, the make-up for the perfect film is as follows: 30% action, 17% comedy, 13% good versus evil, 12% sex/romance, 10% special effects, 10% plot and 8% music.

Clayton, a movie director in her own right, noted she was careful to examine different film types. "It was important to look at all film genres and not just the big box office winners—that would have skewed the research," she told *Associated Press*.

The study was based on breaking down the components of a range of hits, including *The Full Monty*, *Die Another Day*, *Titanic* and many others. While the movie *Shakespeare in Love* came away having the right combination of elements, it could have done with more special effects, according to Clayton. Interestingly enough, the film that best represents her formula of success goes to a kids movie: *Toy Story 2*.

Oscar-winning screenwriters Die Sooner

Good news for all those scorned Oscar "runner-up" screenwriters. According to a Canadian study, Oscar-winning screenwriters do not live as long on average as their losing counterparts. The study looked at all 850 screenwriters ever nominated for an academy award between 1929 and 2001, and found life expectancy was 3.6 years shorter for winners than for nominees. However, the results, published in the *British Medical Journal*, concluded that winners were generally more successful in their field than nominees, including a longer career (by 14%), 34% more films, and 58% more top-rated films. Usually such studies show that with success comes longer life and greater staying power. According to the study, Oscar-winning actors and actresses live longer than nominees. So, why then do screenwriters die faster? The study suggests that screenwriters are more likely to have unhealthy lifestyles, including more smoking (due to stress from working with hack directors), less exercise (from being chained to their computers by slave-driving producers), and frequent late nights with no sleep (from worry about their latest draft and whether or not any of it will make it to the screen).

The Nicholls Fellowships in Screenwriting Keeps On Getting Bigger

The Motion Picture Academy has announced a record of 6,045 entries for the Don and Gee Nicholls Fellowships in Screenwriting. Reportedly, first-time entries came from Bolivia, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania and Zimbabwe as well as Malta. Past recipients of note include Oscar winner Susannah Grant for *Erin Brokovich*, Allison Anders for *Tears Behind the Sun*, Ehren Kuenne for *The Ring*, Andrew Marlowe for *Hollow Man*, Randall McCormick for *Titan A.E.*, Mike Rich for *The Rookie* and Karen Moncrieff for *Blue Car*.

Academy Award Nominated Screenwriter of *Bonnie and Clyde* David Newman Passes

Screenwriter David Newman passed away on June 26, five days after suffering a debilitating stroke. Newman and writing partner Robert Benton were nominated for an Oscar for their screenplay *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). The movie, directed by Arthur Penn, was at first criticized for glamorizing violence, but it won audiences over and was eventually nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Screenplay. One of the few critics to immediately call the film a "work of art" was the late Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker*. She wrote that the film brought to the "almost frighteningly public world of movies things that people [had] been feeling and saying and writing about."

Newman, who began his career as an editor at *Esquire* magazine, penned screenplays for more than a dozen films, several (including the *Superman* movies) with his wife, Leslie Newman.

Novelist and Screenwriter Leon Uris Dead

Leon Uris was best-known as a novelist. He wrote "Exodus." His most important screenplay, *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, is considered by some to be the archetypal Hollywood Western of its time. Uris died recently at his home on Shelter Island, N.Y. He was 78. Uris arrived in Hollywood after serving in World War II. He wrote screenplays unsuccessfully until producer Hal Wallis hired him to write a Western about Wyatt Earp. The result, *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957), was directed by John Sturges.

Screenwriter of *The Manchurian Candidate* George Axelrod Passes

Screenwriter and playwright George Axelrod died in his sleep of heart failure last month. He was 81. "He ended his life very peacefully in his home overlooking Los Angeles," his daughter told the *Associated Press*. "He was very happy."

Born on June 9, 1922, in New York City, Axelrod started out as a radio and television writer. In 1952, he wrote *The Seven Year Itch*, which lasted almost three years on Broadway and in 1955 was developed by 20th Century Fox as a vehicle for Marilyn Monroe. It was a box office hit and, of course, provided us with the famous photo of Monroe playfully holding her skirt as it is being blown into the air. Axelrod collaborated with Billy Wilder on the script but later said, "We didn't make a very good picture." Motion Picture censorship of the era did not allow any of the sexual innuendo contained in the play and would not allow any characters to sleep in the same bed together. In 1957, Axelrod was not pleased with the movie made from his script for *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*. He refused to support it saying, "They didn't use my story, my play or my script." *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) was yet another bitter experience for the writer when he clashed with director Blake Edwards. However, it was around this time that he became one of the highest paid writers in film.

In 1987, Axelrod was honored at the New York Film Festival, and during his speech he was quoted as saying, "I always wanted to get into the major leagues, and I knew my secret: luck and timing. I had a small and narrow but very, very sharp talent, and inside it, I'm as good as it gets."

Indeed he was.

Welles' 1942 Oscar Reclaimed by the Academy

Orson Welles' 1942 Oscar for *Citizen Kane*, which he co-wrote with Herman J. Mankiewicz, was reportedly going to be the centerpiece of an auction of entertainment memorabilia. However, in the eleventh hour the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences exercised its right to buy back the statue for \$1. A large collection of Welles-related material, estimated to sell at \$300,000 to \$400,000, was being offered by his youngest daughter and the sole heir of his estate, Beatrice Welles.

"The Oscar has been withdrawn," a spokeswoman for Christie's auction house, which featured the Oscar on the cover of its auction catalog, told *The New York Times*. The Oscar was presumed lost for many years after Orson's death, causing Beatrice Welles to get a duplicate from the Academy. The original Oscar surfaced in 1994 when friend and Welles's cinematographer Gary Graver auctioned away the trophy for \$50,000. When Beatrice Welles learned of its existence, she sued and ultimately won, gaining back the statue.

WGA Co-founder Maurice Rapf Passes

One-time blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter Maurice Rapf, who co-founded the Writers Guild of America (WGA), died on April 15, 2003 at the age of 88 in Hanover, New Hampshire. Rapf was the son of Harry Rapf, one of the MGM Studio pioneers. While attending Dartmouth College he became active in politics and attended Communist Party functions. In 1944, the writer accepted a job at Disney to work on the script *Song of the South*, which began his writing career.

Rapf worked on the scripts for *Cinderella* and *Dear to my Heart*, and the animated short *The Brotherhood of Men* (1946). Blacklisted in 1947 for his support of the Communist Party and his union work, Rapf moved east to establish the Dartmouth Film Society and became a film critic. Rapf wrote an autobiography ("Back Lot: Growing up with the Movies") published in 1999 by Scarecrow Press.

The Last Word

by J.F. Allaire

S.W.A.T.

Originality has always been one of the more unused traits in the Hollywood filmmaking process. A decade ago, *The Addams Family* movie started a tsunami of TV properties being transformed into full-length features. We all remember the *Flintstones*, *Mission Impossible*, and *Wild Wild West* adaptations. One of the strangest being considered for big screen treatment in the late 1990s was a 70's TV show called "S.W.A.T." The program only stayed on the air for one season and was generally criticized for being too violent. In 1997, Ron Mita and Jim McClain wrote a script based on the show. The screenplay was hailed as it did the rounds in Hollywood, and believe me the script is worth the praise. Arnold Schwarzenegger tried getting himself involved in the project and asked for rewrites that almost killed it. Then the project began hibernating slowly at Columbia Pictures. It finally took four more writers plus David Ayer's strong effort to get a green light for this picture.

Special Weapons and Tactics unit (S.W.A.T.) hotshot rookies Jim Street (Colin Farrell) and Brian 'Poker' Gamble (Jeremy Renner) are trying to defuse a hostage situation in a jewelery store. When they lose a hostage, the two cops are reprimanded and demoted. Poker quits the force while Street is downgraded to a lowly office-type S.W.A.T. job. When Lt. Dan "Hondo" Harrelson (Samuel L. Jackson) is assigned to recruit and train five officers for a new S.W.A.T. unit, Street is desperate to get himself back in. After weeks of rigorous physical training, the new unit, which also includes Chris Sanchez (Michelle Rodriguez) and Deke (LL Cool J), is thrown into the fire when euro-trash drug lord Alex (Olivier Martinez) offers a \$100 million reward for his freedom. The new team is suddenly up against numerous thug and mercenary units while trying to protect the kingpin and get him out of the city and into the hands of the feds.

Probably the highest compliment I could ever give this screenplay is comparing it to *Speed*. For the readers who don't know my online column, I worship *Speed*. I'm a bit fanatical about it. *S.W.A.T.* moves rapidly like *Speed*. The lead character is a suicidal daredevil like Keanu's Jack Traven. It has some good laughs, and there are some high-quality twists and turns. I find it refreshing that the screenplay is more driven by the S.W.A.T. team than by individuals. It doesn't just focus on Farrell's Jim Street as one might expect. The only problem with the story are the villains. None of them are really impressive or steal the show. They are seriously underwritten. Usually, the rogues are the most alluring characters in action movies. In this story, they're standard at best and a bit disappointing. However, perhaps the acting performances will save those roles.

So far, I have enjoyed the characters Colin Farrell has played on the big screen. This isn't about to change anytime soon. Jim Street is the

usual cool-as-hell lead of this flick. His character arc is relatively ordinary and we obviously root for him the entire way. He even gets a good laugh here and there. I think Farrell's performance will help energize the already well-written role. He's on the brink of super-stardom. Farrell is the best thing to come out of Ireland since U2.

HONDO

LAPD SWAT has the toughest and most professional cops in the world. I'm not bragging, that's a fact. We don't go in to kill, we go in to save lives. Even the life of the six-foot-four three hundred pound ex-con holding a butcher's knife to a hostage's throat. We take down the most dangerous men on two legs. And we take them down alive. SWAT only had one fatal shooting last year. That's how good we are. The Green Berets, SEALs, FBI all come to L.A. to see how we do it.

Samuel L. Jackson is back to form in *S.W.A.T.* I absolutely loved his character (Hondo) in this script. He's the mentor/leader of the unit. I loved his interaction with the members of his team. While he's mainly the father figure, he can still handle himself. It's a role that Jackson can play in his sleep.

S.W.A.T. is bound to be the surprise action hit of the summer. It moves fast and will leave you breathless. It also features an impressive cast and a good story. Don't miss it!

GIGLI

When this film was greenlighted, no one had any idea how much it would set off an un-presented chain of events. The pairing of Jennifer Lopez (replacing Halle Berry) with Ben Affleck sounded rather intriguing. They had not crossed paths on any film until now. There is also the return of Martin Brest (*Scent of a Woman*), who both wrote and directed this picture after the disastrous *Meet Joe Black*. It also had some interesting supporting characters being played by Al Pacino and Christopher Walken. Everything sounds pretty good right? In a case of life imitating art, the two leads fell for each other and a media sandstorm was unleashed upon the world.

Low-level thug Larry Gigli (Ben Affleck) is given a simple assignment: kidnap Brian (Justin Bartha), the mentally challenged brother of the district attorney. A beautiful female enforcer called Ricki (Jennifer Lopez) is sent to assist Larry on the simple mission. It becomes a bit more intricate than it should when Larry tries everything to make an impression on Ricki. The only problem: she's a lesbian.

When I first heard of this project, I became intrigued. Director Martin Brest was desperately looking for a comeback. *Meet Joe Black* was

three hours of my life that I still want back. Is *Gigli* his redemption? To put it mildly, No. It's a calamity. Most of the characters are terribly conceived and the plot moves at a snails pace. Some of the dialog has a spark here and there, but that's it. The straight man/lesbian angle feels forced and comes off lame. There's no inventiveness in it. Martin Brest tries to throw in one or two twists to ignite the plotline, but the screenplay fails miserably. He doesn't seem to know what kind of story he wants to tell. Is it a romantic comedy? Is it a buddy comedy? Is it one of those lovable hit man comedies? He doesn't seem to make up his mind.

Jennifer Lopez was spectacular in Steven Soderbergh's directorial comeback *Out of Sight*. She was also sublime in *Selena*. Recently, she's been in horrible films like *Maid in Manhattan* and *Enough*, and the tabloids have wrongfully transformed her into a super-diva. Unfortunately, her work on this film will not help her become a legitimate actress. Her role is seriously cliché ridden and under-written. We've seen characters like her in a million movies. Thank God she picked Lasse Hallstrom's *An Unfinished Life* as her follow-up project.

GIGLI

I don't work like this. Let me tell you something. I don't know who the fuck you are, but you wanna talk about reputations, if by some long shot you're not already aware of my reputation. I am the original number one. I am the Sultan of Slick, Sadie, I am the Rule of Cool. You wanna be a thug? Then you should sit at my feet and gather the pearls that emanate forth from me. Because I am the First and Foremost, The One and Only ... Norma Jean, I am -

He pauses for effect

GIGLI (CONT'D)

(savoring the syllables)
- the Gangster's Gangster.

This is one of the most dreadful roles Ben Affleck has ever had. Nowhere in the script is Larry Gigli mildly interesting. He sounds and acts like a fool, a really bad version of cool Italian gangsters. (Think De Niro, Travolta and the like.) The story doesn't take him seriously at all. Even worse, the trailers indicated Affleck gave him an Italian accent. Beside, we have already seen Ben interact with a lesbian. It was a thousand times better in *Chasing Amy*. This has Razzie award potential written all over it. *Gigli* is an extremely inexcusable acting choice by Affleck. Thankfully, I adored the screenplay to his next movie, John Woo's *Paycheck*. He should redeem himself before the end of the year.

GIGLI

That woman... is fucking ... beautiful.

BRIAN

Yeah. She's like the ones at The Baywatch.
Yeah. They make my penis sneeze.

If there's one character that's well written in this screenplay, it's Brian. Of course, they get a few cheap laughs out of his handicap, but it's not repetitive. He's quite possibly the only character in this story that I cared for.

I suggest avoiding this film at all costs. Martin Brest needs to retire from filmmaking for following-up the awful *Meet Joe Black* with this dreadful bomb.

Jean-François Allaire is a respected entertainment journalist, with his columns appearing in such major websites as Corona's *Coming Attractions* and *Scr(i)pt* magazine. Hailing from Montreal, this young writer is determined to dig up all the details on the movies before they hit your local theater. Make sure to read his weekly film column at *TNMC* (www.tnmc.org).



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Telluride Film Festival Guide



All photos by Chris Wehner

“The Telluride Festival is for those who have a passion for the cinema, those who live for the cinema, rather than those who live on the cinema.”

—Bertrand Tavernier

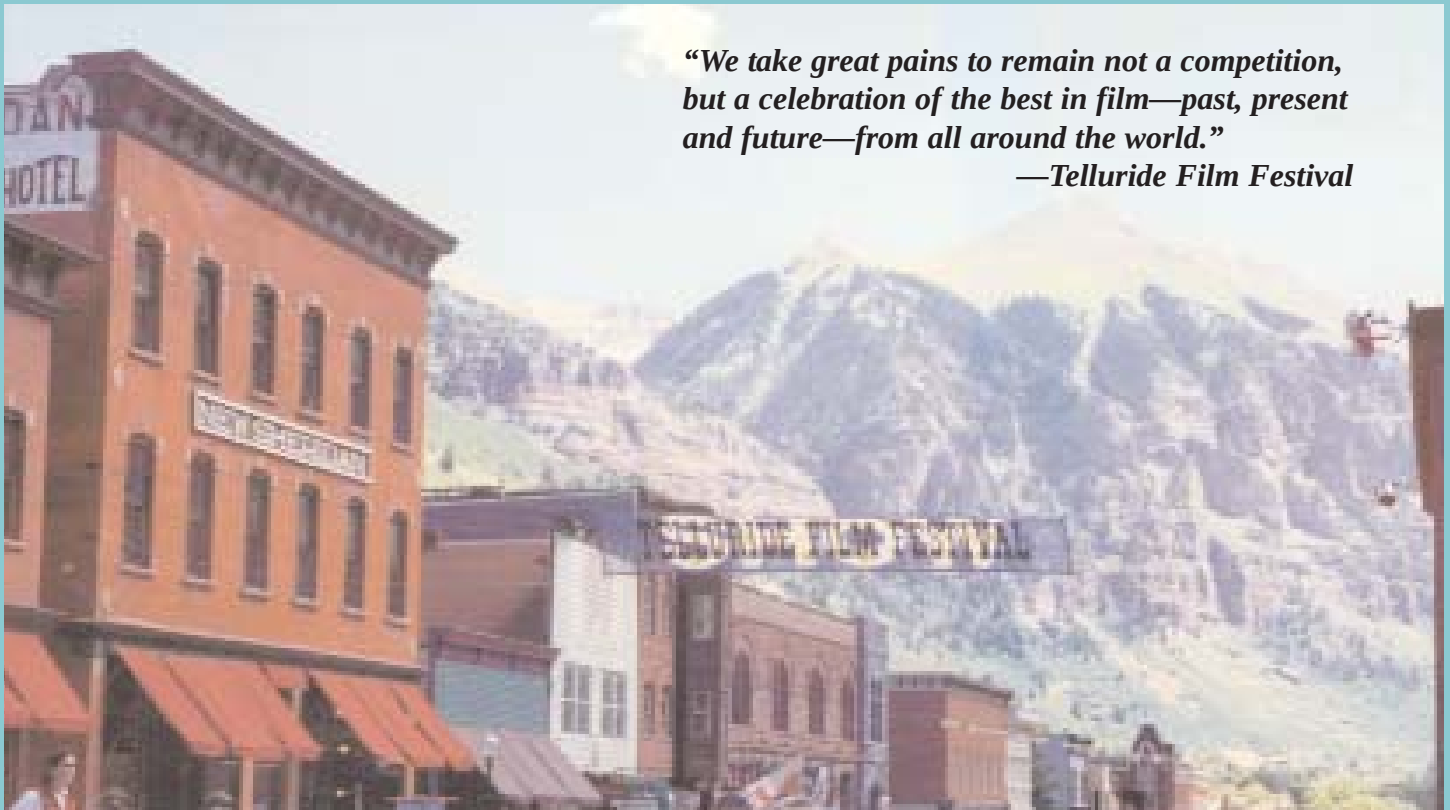
The Telluride Film Festival is a one of a kind event. Nestled in Colorado's beautiful San Juan Mountains, Telluride is host to one of the finest film festivals in the world, where each year hundreds of film lovers arrive from all parts of the country.

The 30th Telluride Film Festival will feature more than 30 programs screened at eight venues over four days. Over the years the Telluride Film Festival has been the first to screen such films as *My Dinner with Andre*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Crying Game*. Not only that, but the first films of Robert Rodriguez, Michael Moore and Billy Bob Thornton all debuted in Telluride. So bottom line, you can count on Telluride screening some of the best films to be seen in 2003.

If you're attending the festival on a budget, here are some free events to be aware of:

- The noon Seminars in Elks Park are free.
- The six "Conversations" in the County Courthouse are free.
- The four film premieres – one each night – in the Open Air Cinema are free.
- The three "Filmmakers of Tomorrow" programs are free.

If you have a few extra bucks and love to stay out late, then the "Late Show Ticket" at The Max is only \$25. Tickets are available at the Film Festival Box Office beginning Thursday, August 28.



*"We take great pains to remain not a competition,
but a celebration of the best in film—past, present
and future—from all around the world."*

—Telluride Film Festival

Here are some places to eat, get coffee, and relax. And for next year, some places to stay:

Restaurants

Baked in Telluride

PO Box 575

127 South Fir St.

5:30 AM to 10:00 PM

Phone: 970-728-4705

Fax: 970-728-0337

Serves Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Between The Covers Bookstore & Espresso Bar

P.O. Box 2129

224 W. Colorado Ave.

Phone: (970)728-4504

Campagna

435 W. Pacific St.

Eagle's Bar & Grille

100 W. Colorado Ave

Phone: (970)728-0886

Honga's Lotus Petal

133 S. Oak St.

Phone: (970)728-5134

La Piazza del Villagio

117 Lost Creek Ln., Mtn. Village

Phone: (970)728-8283

Serves Lunch and Dinner

New Sheridan Chop House

223 W. Colorado Ave.

Phone: (970)728-9100

Serves Dinner

Pizza Chalet

562 Mtn. Village Blvd

Phone: (970)728-7499

Smuggler's Brewpub & Grill

225 S. Pine St.

Phone: (970)728-0919

Serves Lunch and Dinner



Map of Telluride provided by the Telluride Real Estate Corp. web: www.tdsmith.com/maps/townmap.php

Telluride Real Estate Corporation
137 W. Colorado Ave.
P.O. Box 1739
Telluride, CO 81435
970-728-1603
Fax: 970-728-3049

Sofio's Mexican Café

P.O. Box 1372

110 East Colorado Avenue

7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for breakfast and lunch,
from 5:00 p.m. for dinner

Lodging

Camel's Garden Hotel and Condominiums

P.O. Box 4145

250 West San Juan Ave.

Phone: 970-728-9300

Fax: 970-728-0433

Alpine Lodging

P.O. Box 1596

210 S. Oak Street

Phone: 800-376-9769

Mountain Management

Phone: 970-728-6060

Come Join Us!

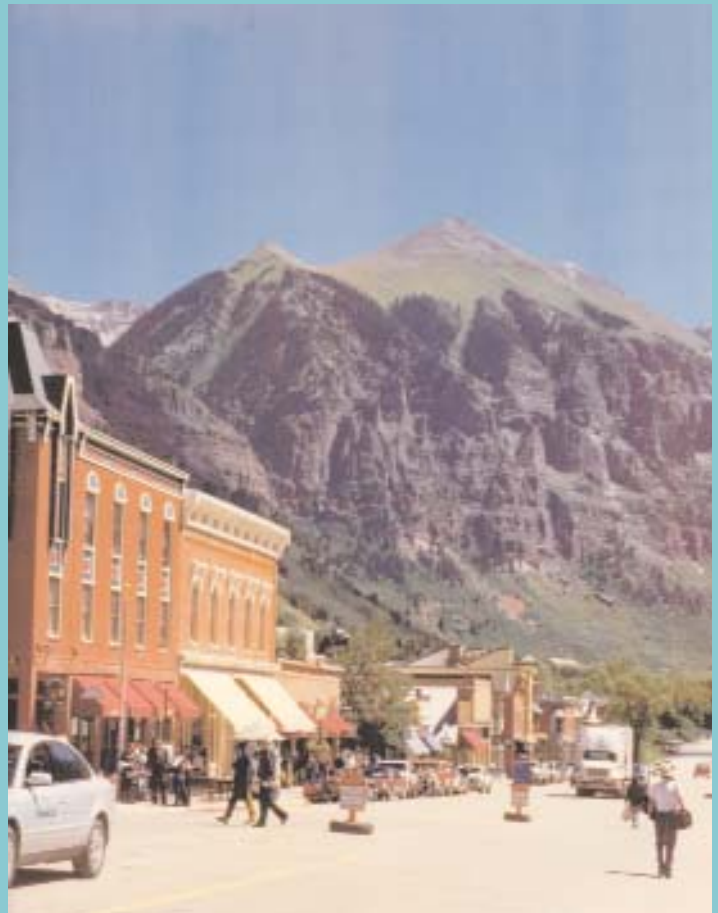
Screenwriter's Monthly invites you to our **Telluride Movie Lover's Party**.

FREE to come and mingle. \$5 ticket at door for appetizers and drinks. Come unwind with friends, talk movies, and make new friends.

When: Saturday, August 30th. From 9 p.m. to whenever.

Where: Camel's Garden Resort Hotel, 250 W. San Juan Ave.

Sponsored by: Zenith, WriteBrothers, Scriptperfection, MoviePartners, Inc., and Camel's Garden Resort Hotel.



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Camel's Garden Resort Hotel

250 W. San Juan Ave., P.O. Box 4145, Telluride, Colorado 81435

Toll Free/888-772-2635 Int'l/970-728-9300

Located in one of the most spectacular mountain settings anywhere, Telluride offers the perfect vacation for any season. Named after one of the region's historical sites, the Camel's Garden Hotel is ideally situated on the San Miguel River yet only two blocks from the Main Street shops and restaurants and is adjacent to the Gondola, which provides a link between the Town of Telluride and the Mountain Village.

The hotel employs an elegant architectural concept whereby Telluride's rich mining history blends with elements of its dynamic and athletic present. And with the Oak Street Ski Lift just 15 feet from the hotel's valet ski locker and the Gondola right next to the hotel, Camel's Garden is a true ski-in/ski-out hotel for all levels of skiers.

The light-filled lobby is a felicitous setting for works of art and innovative designs by local artisans. It provides access to valet ski storage, a full-service ski shop, Atmosphere Spa, and the Wildflour Cooking Company, one of Telluride's favorite restaurants and après-ski bars. On the second floor you will find the conference room and the bar area where continental breakfast with European pastries is served, as well as complimentary wine après-ski.

An extraordinary 25-foot outdoor hot tub offers relaxation and spectacular views of the San Juan Mountains.

Accommodations

The thirty-five large and luxurious rooms, suites, and condominiums with balconies, fireplaces, custom-crafted furniture, Italian marble bathrooms, and oversized tubs provide a feeling of comfort and ultimate indulgence.

Jacuzzi and Steam Room

Relax in our steam room or enjoy the year-round beauty of the San Juan Mountains ~ fall's golden colors, alpenglow on snow-capped peaks, and summer rainbows ~ from our 25-foot outdoor hot tub.

Spa

Unwind in the comforts of Atmosphere Spa, located on the lobby level of the Camel's Garden Hotel. Atmosphere fuses art, luxurious spa treatments and massage, creating a memorable body/mind experience. Designed and staffed by a creative collaboration of inspired professionals, Atmosphere offers a nurturing and innovative resource for your physical and spiritual rejuvenation.

Restaurant

Conveniently located in the Camel's Garden Hotel and with direct access to the slopes, Wildflour Cooking Company, a European-style bakery and restaurant, is a Telluride favorite. The Wildflour serves breakfast, lunch, après-ski, and dinner. It offers everything from omelets or French toast made with



Wildflour's own brioche bread to soup and sandwiches to daily specials like calzones, fried chicken, or Monika's famous roast duck. An even greater attraction is the Wildflour pastry and dessert case, filled with delectable chocolate and fruit cakes, tarts, and confections.

Local Activities

Our staff can provide you and your family with information about the multitude of year-round recreational and cultural events, and can help you make arrangements for your activities including: skiing, snowboarding, tours, and much more. Come enjoy the splendor of the Rockies!

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