

Everyone has an idea for a movie. Everyone.

I'm home in Michigan for the Holiday and my dad pitched me Tango & Cash 2. I wish I was making that up. I'm not.

Everyone has an idea for what they think would be a good movie.

It doesn't mean that you should write it.

Most people do though... obviously; it's why we're all doing this right?

The problem is that writers tend to hang on to that idea like it's their ticket in. I mean how could Hollywood NOT want to see Tango Cash 2? It's gotta sell, right?

It's not going to. Put that in check right now. Want to know how things really work? Of course you do. It's why you're here.

You see, in the development stage of things, we often have ideas that we'd like to execute but need the right voice to make that idea a reality. We rarely buy scripts. We buy writers.

Here's how it works...

Let's say you have a script that's a post-apocalyptic Lord of the Flies set on another planet. Let's also say that it's REALLY well written.

The first thing I would do is set up a meeting with you. I'd call you in and have a chat about your script. Get to know you and talk about what else you're working on.

Now, I'm doing this, not because I want to buy your script, I want to find out if I can sell you in the room. You see, at a certain point, we're going to be sitting in some executive's office at some major studio asking for money. I have to know you're not a total fucking freak.

I want to know that you're smart, funny, serious but not too serious and you have a little bit of charm. A tall order I know, but that's key.

When I meet with you, I'm going to say very "Hollywood" things to you like "loved your script" and "it was really interesting."

FYI, any time anyone in Hollywood refers to your work as "interesting," it means they didn't like it.

Anyway...at a certain point, I'll present you with an idea... it'll go something like this:

"I really loved the space part of your script. We actually have this idea and we're looking for writer's to pitch their take on it."

And then I'll hit you up with the idea.

I'll shake your hand and talk to you in a week and see if it's something you connected to or got excited about.

And thus the process begins.

Of course I have stories to back this up...

I have a friend that, at some point, had written a script that had floated around Hollywood for some time. In his script there was a memory loss aspect to the story.

One day, he gets a call from his manager. Joel Silver's company, Silver Pictures, had gotten a copy of his script and loved it. They had gotten the rights to a popular video game in the 90's and wanted to adapt it to the big screen. Most importantly, they wanted his take on how he would adapt it.

Here's the funny thing:

They wanted his take because of his memory loss subplot.

The video game in question has a main character that wakes up with amnesia and a slew of psychic powers.

Now, here's the funny thing... even though the memory loss aspect is what got him the meeting, they actually hated that aspect of the video game and didn't want that to be a part of the final product.

I also have to note that this was also a Hollywood screenwriter's cattle call. They probably met with like twenty different writers, getting all of their takes. They were either going to take the best of all of those ideas and then find the next writer to put all of those ideas to good use or they were going to pick the writer with the best take to run through a first draft.

That's Hollywood.

Another friend of mine had written a couple of pilots that she was shopping around. One of the scripts she had was a thriller. One of the companies I was interning with was looking for a writer to work on a thriller idea they had in mind.

My friend had been solely focusing on selling her pilots. Not her writing.

I knew that she could pitch and that she was personable enough to charm anyone in the room once she got in there. So I asked her for her script. I read it and I believed in her writing. I passed her script to the exec I was interning for and she got a meeting.

Last story...

I recently finished a script that I had a lot of fun writing. I never intended to sell it or have it get turned into a movie. I wrote it because I loved the idea and I, up until this point, I had been known mostly for writing (or trying to write) Woody Allen-esque romantic comedies.

I wanted to show that I could write other genres. So I wrote the script solely as a writing sample. I had a lot of fun doing it.

I gave it to a couple of friends to read, one of which is an exec high up in a production company. He loved it and started talking to me about other ideas that were going on within the company. He asked for my take on a couple of things they were kicking around.

I'm currently working on my pitches for those ideas.

As for my script?

Probably won't sell. But it'll get me work.

And that's what we really want, right?

Don't forget, a script is more than an idea. It's a calling card. Stop trying to sell the idea and start selling yourself.

You'll be amazed at what can happen when you shift your focus.

Till next week...