

Hey Boy and Girls!

So last week I opened up the column to take questions and I want to share some of those questions here. First though, I want to take a minute to thank all of you for submitting your VERY positive comments along with your questions. When you write this kind of column, it's rare that you ever get feedback. I just write and put it out there in the ether and never know if it actually gets through to anyone.

I'm glad that it does and thank you from the deepest regions of my ice filled heart!

Now, on to the main event...

Out of all the questions I got, this was the most disconcerting and took highest priority. Here's the question:

Thanks for the great column every week. I enjoy the tips and the way in which they are delivered.

My question: my screenwriting partner wants to use a computer program (not sure of the name) that will shrink a 137 page screenplay down to the required 120 pages for an upcoming screenwriting contest. I told him no way was I going to go along with that. We rewrite it down to 120 pages. He poo-pooed me and said everyone in the industry is doing it. Personally, I think it's bullshit. Your take?

Thanks for your reply.

John

Thanks for the question John but I think you know what the answer is. Everyone? Let's help John out here...ALL TOGETHER NOW!

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

But you already knew that or else you wouldn't have asked me, right? I think you specifically asked for "my take." Well here it is in all its glory...feel free to pass this along to your writing partner:

No, John! What is this guy, a fucktard? Actually, don't answer that. I know the answer and that answer is yes. Here's what you need to do...go over to his house, rip his unnamed computer software out of his hands, get him on his knees like the dog that he is and rub it in his face then, in a condescending tone say: "No, that's a bad boy. Bad! No shitting on the script." After that hit him with it. Hard. Preferably hard enough to give him amnesia so he forgets such an ignorant idea.

Look people, in case you haven't figured this out yet, life is fucking hard. There is NEVER an easy way out. You have to work for everything you want. Roll up your sleeves and do the work.

Also John, it worries me a little bit that you two wrote a 137 page script. That sends all kinds of warning signals off. I see LOTS of description. I see LOTS of pages of endless dialog. I see LOTS of pointless action that we don't need to know.

Lastly, and I hate to do this to you, but I feel like you need to be reminded of something I'm sure your mother told you once...

"If everyone jumped off a bridge, would you jump?"

Don't hang out with people that tell you that everyone is doing it. Those people were fucktards in high school and apparently they're fucktards as adults.

Movin' on...

I use David Trottier's "Screenwriter's Bible" as a reference a lot, sorry if that's lame, and I'm trying to figure out the right way to approach sending my screenplay to someone in the industry.

David advises to always send a query letter first before sending your script, and to keep the query very concise with very little use of the "Hey, How you doing?" formalities.

Now if your co-worker's wife is best friends with a woman that works for a large production company, how would you go about getting in contact with them (or any other "Higher Up") without doing something stupid to piss them off?

Do you hate it when people you don't know go through your friends to get to you?

Thanks man, and awesome column by the way.

Scott

First off Scott, the Screenwriter's Bible is not lame. Had you said McKee's Story sat on your night stand, then...um, yeah, we'd have to fight.

Giving people in the industry your script, when you're not in the industry is hard. Hell giving people in the industry your script when you're IN the industry is hard.

When people try to give me their script I always grumble and roll my eyes. As I've written before, everyone has a script. Everyone has the next best thing. Throw that in with being a cynical, surly bastard like me and you know I won't give it its fair shake.

Here's what you have to do. I've successfully done this with my last script which is starting to make its way around the higher ups.

Don't come from a place of, "Will you read my script?" Read my script means read it. As in, this is going to be the greatest and you HAVE to read it.

Come from a place of wonderment. "Hey, I wrote a script and I'm not sure where I'm at with it. I was wondering if you could give it a glance and just kind of gauge where I'm at. Is it ready to show people?"

That last part is VERY important, because you're technically showing it to people, but you don't want to treat them as such. You want to put them in the place of being a mentor. That you're not asking them to make your career, but to help guide it and give you feedback as to where you are and where you need to be.

If you still feel like they're resisting, ask if you can just send them 10-15 pages. Hell, even 5. They'll be able to tell, on a very basic level, where you are as a writer.

Hope that helps...

Next!

I liked what you had to say in the "What I look for when I get a script" series.

I have a question about comedies. What hooks you? What doesn't? If you could name main aspects you HOPE to see in a comedy, besides original plot, what would they be?

Dan

This is a tough one Dan. Comedy is one of the few things that has no rules. What you find funny doesn't mean ANY one else will.