

When I was first offered this column, without ANY hesitation, I turned it down. I know what you're thinking, what piece of shit who's trying to make it in this town turns down a chance for free press? WEEKLY!?

I'll tell you why. I looked Marvin in the eye and said "no, cause I would REALLY bring down the quality of your newsletter. I have no ability to censor myself and I would want to say what I wanted to without consequences." He said, "no man, you have a voice and that's the voice I want to showcase."

That's what we're going to talk about this week: Your voice.

That being said, buckle up, fucktards. This one's gonna be a bumpy ride.

FACT: Nine out of ten of you reading this article will NOT be a successful Hollywood screenwriter.

Let's first define success.

What is success to you?

Making \$50,000 a year writing absolute shit for a pay check? Writing schlock straight to DVD sequels? Writing Hallmark channel movies? How about a movie of the week? Is that your goal?

Why?

Let me use a real world application...does anyone strive to work up to middle management in the corporate world? Are there people out there who are looking forward to their 9 to 5 gig? Over and over in a fucking cubicle. In an office with no windows?

Is that what you want?

This is the motivation I'm hearing from a lot of you who write into me. You want a paycheck so you'll write what YOU think will be marketable. Guess what? You have no idea what will or will not be marketable. No one does!

There are so many factors involved in writing a movie that you don't even know. And it's insulting when you "think you can do it" compared to those of us that are actually out here doing it.

So you use "money" as your voice.

You read an idea in the newspaper. Think that'll make a great idea. Do a little research. Then sit down and write a script. You might take a little time in figuring out how a script works. You might take a hot minute to read a book or two. Hell, maybe you'll take 15 minutes out of your day to read my shit looking for answers. You'll gather up the tools you need and then you'll sit down and write. You'll finish a draft and then hit the streets. Why? Cause you think you have a winner. As long as you show it to enough people, you'll get your in. You'll get paid. Life is good.

NONE OF THAT IS TRUE.

It takes months, sometimes years, to get anything going in this town.

Let me put it this way, just cause you read a story that YOU think would make a good movie, doesn't mean YOU can write it.

Let me drop a little bit of "real Manny" on you.

When I was in undergraduate film school, I HATED Woody Allen. I just didn't get it. Never made any sense to me. His whines fell on deaf ears and I couldn't stand sitting through Annie Hall.

Then I got into foreign film. I started watching Trauffaut, Godard, Fellini, Bunuel, Bergman and Renoir. I fucking LOVED that shit. I ate it up. It was real. It was life. Then one day, a fellow student did a presentation on openings of movies. He used Fellini's 8 1/2 's opening and compared it to Woody Allen's Stardust Memories opening.

THAT is when I was instantly changed.

I got it and I was hooked.

I fucking LOVED Woody Allen.

He started influencing my films. My camera work. Especially my writing.

I wanted to be the next Woody Allen.

In grad school, I was obsessed. I had a reputation as the Woody Allen go to guy. Any situation was easily explained by a Woody Allen movie. Fuck, the dude has made 50 movies for 50 years. You don't think he hasn't covered it all?

So anytime someone came up with an idea, I was THAT guy...I was the guy who said: "That's like Woody Allen," or "It's like that one Woody Allen film..." "Oh my God, have you seen Woody Allen's..."

That went on for 4 years.

It irritated the faculty. It irritated my fellow colleagues. It irritated EVERYONE.

I sat down and wrote my thesis script. A feature length film. My first REAL feature. It was my Annie Hall.

It fucking sucked.

Horrible.

I mean just pure shit.

One faculty member hated it so much that he actually told me, in the meeting, that he was so "embarrassed that he actually looked into the policy of getting OFF of my thesis committee."

I was pissed. He hated all of the references I made. Funny story, there was not one single curse word in the script. It was clean. Full of innuendo, but nothing interesting.

I look back and I have to say, that everything he said to me was dead on.

But back then? Yeah, fuck that fucktard. I was right and he just wasn't getting it.

I got out of that meeting and immediately called my best friend/producer Michele. I was on the phone with her, told her what was said and then right then and there made a pact. If they hated pop culture references and sexual innuendos? Then I was going to write a NEW script and it was going to be NOTHING BUT sexual references and flat out dirty sex talk. I was going to say fuck a minimum of 32 times and set that as my goal. You know why? Cause that was me! That's my voice.

So I did.

It was also horrible. But you know what, it was true. It was a raunchy Rom-Com. It was Kevin Smith. It was me.

In this process I got pigeon-holed. People thought I could only write comedy. I wasn't the "action guy." I had this cocky attitude that I could write anything, but no one would give me a chance. One friend actually told me, "I wish I could find a writer to help me." To which I replied, "Um, you know I'M a writer, right?" Her response? "Yeah, but this idea isn't really 'your thing.'" UGH! I was pissed.

So one day, just to prove that I could, I decided to write an action movie. My "Indiana Jones" if you will. Guess what? I loved it and realized that I was REALLY good at it. It was my wheel house. It was fun. I had fun writing it and it reads that way.

Last week I had a President of Production for a company whose CEO is a multi-academy award winner, read that script and love it. She commented on my ability to write action. She passed on the script, which I knew would happen because of a couple of key factors, but the important thing was she asked what I was working on now. I pitched it to her and she's really looking forward reading it.

My point is that it's not always a winning script idea...it's a winning ability to write.

Here's the thing, 96% of you reading this think that I'M the fucking arrogant one. The reality is this: YOU'RE the arrogant one for thinking that you have the winning formula when you don't.

I'm not a prick. I'm a realist. I know what I can write and that's what I do.

I know. I know. "He's not talking about me."

K.

You go with that.

Good luck.

Not giving out the email this week. I don't want to hear you whiney bitches crying with your rebuttals. If you are an avid reader of this column OR have the ability to look shit up for yourself, you can find it on your own and write in.

After channeling my inner Hank Moody-ness (props if you get that reference).

Till next week...