

To get you prepped for the upcoming pitchfest season, I thought I would give you a shitload of things NOT to do when you get your five minutes of fame at the tables. Don't worry, I'll sprinkle in some DO's as well.

Let's run through how it should go. Before you get to the pitchfest or once you get there, figure out who you're going to see.

And then...

Research the fucking company!

Find out what movies they've made in the past, see if they have flicks coming out soon...are they more of the same? Or are they branching out? It's like 12 or 14 dollars a month for IMDBpro. Get it.

Or, even better...every pitchfest asks us to provide them with a list of genres that we're looking for. READ IT AND STICK TO THAT!

We made Seven. The movie that put Gwyneth Paltrow's head in a fucking box. I don't want to hear your fucking Christmas movie pitch. I wish I was making that up but I actually have to use two hands to count the number of times I've been pitched a fucking Christmas movie. Pitch that fucking schlock to the Hallmark Channel, not me. ;)

K. You've figured it out. You know where you're going. Bell rings. Get there.

Introduce yourself. IN NAME ONLY!

I don't want your fucking credentials. I don't actually give two shits about you. I only care about your story. I don't want any set up to the story. I don't want to hear how you came up with the idea. I don't want to hear about your dying son and how his last wishes were for you to write this fantasy piece of shit.

Don't care.

Gimmie a name. Shake my hand. Be polite. Sit down and start pitching.

Oh and another thing I don't care about? Awards.

FUCK YOUR AWARDS! I really don't know how many times I have to say this before I start getting nasty. Informing me of your awards tells me one thing and one thing only:

You're a loser and the script is a loser.

"But Manny, how can that be with all of the achievements I have made in the screen writing competition scene?"

Simple.

If you've won an award, why are you here? That's what I think.

All you're doing is telling me that it went out there, got some heat and then everyone passed. If you've won an award, then why don't you have an agent? Where's your manager? Why am I not calling YOU? All you're doing is telling me that no one wants your script. So why would I want it? It MUST be a piece of shit. Everyone passed on it. They're here peddling it at a pitchfest. It HAS to be garbage. And guess what? They usually are.

There are literally 3 competitions that would impress me if you WON, not placed, WON. The Final Draft Big Break competition, The Austin Screenwriting Competition and the Nicholl Screenwriting Fellowship. But guess what? You win those and I would be calling you.

Another thing you have to stop doing...stop bragging about your "placement" in these competitions. You do know that second place is still losing, right? Or worse, the people that tell me they placed in the top ten. Who cares? Still didn't win.

The worst is the people that throw out percentages. "I finished in the top 10% of the Nicholl's!"

Wow. Good for you. Let me lay a little science on your dumb ass. According to the Nicholl Fellowship website, in 2010 they received 6,304 entries. Hmmmm. So if you placed in the top 10%, you're telling me that you came in 630th. Don't ad spin me fucktard, \$19.99 is NOT under \$20.00. I know the numbers so don't make it seem like you're making yourself out to be better than you are. You just come across looking stupid.

Anyway...

The BEST way to impress me is make me feel like I have my hands on a hidden gem. That you JUST cooked it up and I'M the first person to EVER see it outside of your fucktard friends. That you wrote it for ME and ME alone.

Of course then you go to the next table five minutes later and blow them the same way.

I'm going to let you in on a little secret. One that a lot of people will NOT like me telling you. Pitchfests are full of nothing but desperate people.

For those of you that have never been, I want you to picture the best mall you have ever been to. The mall with Tiffany, Mont Blanc, Louis Vuitton, Sak's. I want you to picture the well kept lawn. The fountain's. The marble columns. I want you to picture the beautiful people that work there. The beautiful people that shop there. I want you to think of the smell. I want you to hear that guy playing classical acoustic guitar in the courtyard while you sip your Starbuck's and relax.

Now picture the fucking dirt mall. The mall with the Sears. The mall that has that Mexican family of 8 sharing a churro and dragging around bags from Target. The mall where the best store is MAYBE the Gap but probably H&M. The mall with the fountain that hasn't worked since that kid fell in it and died back in '92. The mall that has sloppy looking security guards. The mall where kids walk around with their pants hanging off their ass.

Got it in your head? That's what a pitchfest is. It's the dirt mall of the screenwriting world. Everyone knows it, no one says it.

They dangle us out there like you're really going to have a shot making it big. That the ONLY thing stopping you from making it big in this town is 5 fucking minutes with an exec. If only you had 5 minutes, then the gates of Babylon will open and it will all be yours.

It's a lie people.

See the problem is that ANYONE can pay the money to sit across from me. A-N-Y-O-N-E. Which means the bored housewives who were failed novelists...5 minutes. The account by day wannabe writer by night...5 minutes. The girl who did something spectacular who now thinks it would be a good movie but hasn't written one word of it...5minutes. The first year screenwriting student from USC that wrote some script in class and now wants to jump 18 steps ahead...5 minutes.

Everybody and anybody can pay for those 5 minutes. And they do. Hell, most of you reading this column are one of those people. You know it and I know it. But, in the off chance that you are that ONE person that has that ONE script that no one has seen and everyone will want...this is what you're up against when going to a pitchfest.

I want to take a pause here and throw out a big asterisk: This is only dealing with pitching to production companies, NOT management companies. Yes, there are people who go to pitchfests looking for agents and managers. I know several that have gone and successfully left with a manger's card. You want to pitch to them completely differently. To THEM you might want to brag about yourself more. Talk about your shitty top 10% "victory" at the Nicholl. Managers are Ad men...they'll eat that sales spin shit up.

Back to the production company side of things.

So you've introduced yourself and you've sat down. Now pitch.

That's it. End of story.

Just sit down and tell me a good story because that's what I'm there to find...a STORY. I also need good writers, so please don't be a freak when you pitch me said story.

There you go...so fucking simple...yet...people do weird fucking shit...so here you go people...what NOT to do:

- Already covered, but I'll say it again...don't brag about your shitty awards, no one cares.
- Don't fucking care about your kids, so don't bring them up. I don't care if they helped you write it. I don't care that they drew fucking concept art (yes, it's happened) I don't want to hear their fucking sob story. Just tell me your script. I beg of you.

- Speaking of concept art: Leave it at home. I don't want to see your Mexican comic books. I don't want to see your photoshopped movie posters with actual stars on it to "get me in the right frame of mind." I don't want to see your fucking youtube video, your webisodes, your 3D model of the world you've written, your fucking shitty trailer...none of it. You know what all of that shit is? Dazzle. You know why you need it? Because you have to keep me distracted with pretty pictures so that I don't notice your script is shit. Hey Fucktard...all that time and effort that went into your visual aids? Shoulda went into your fucking script.
- Don't be nervous. I know this is kind of a tough request, but you can't be nervous. Stop looking at me like I'm this grand gatekeeper. When you sit down at the table with me, you're the expert. It's YOUR story. You thought it up. You wrote it. You know it. So talk with confidence. Be excited and I'll be excited. That's how that shit works.
- Don't bring me copies of your script in a binder, do it right or I'll reject it on the spot. Listen people, we live in a digital age...get with the fucking program. Have a PDF ready to email me if I ask to see your script. You know what would REALLY score you points with me? If I asked to see your script and you took my email, put it into your iPhone and sent it to me right at the table. Shows me that you got your fucking shit together and knew what was up. I would take you more seriously...give you a chance. But alas, I get the old guy that wants to send me a script via snail mail. Fuck that.
- Speaking of that: Don't even sit down at the table if you can't even give me the script. If you haven't written it, fuck you go home and write. If you're an old weirdo that typed it up on a typewriter and there's only one copy in existence, fuck you go to Kinko's. If you're afraid that I might steal it and post it all over the internet, well...just fuck you plain and simple. I don't have time to deal with your bullshit and frankly, I don't have to. So, I won't.
- Can you please be prepared? Fuck. Seriously. Don't sit down and start digging through your bag o' scripts. Looking for your one sheet. Looking for your business card. Get your shit together or I'll just tune you out.
- Don't give me a fucking menu. I HATE that shit. When you sit down with a list of 10 scripts you've written, all your doing is telling me that you've been at this for a LONG time and no one wants what you're selling. So you know what happens? I tune you out. You know what I'm looking for, grow a pair and pitch me your fucking script. I will not give any street cred to the "a la cart menu" writers.
- Don't use notecards. This goes along with the nervous thing. All it says to me is that you're not prepared. You wrote the fucking story! Why do you need notecards to remind you of the story that YOU wrote?!

- Don't dress too flashy. I've long been on record in this column as being a BIG fan of boobs. Big fan. If there was a Facebook page for boobs, I would "like" that page. So if you're going to show them off at a pitchfest, I will not be listening to your script. Hate me for being a pig and all that shit, I'm just putting it out there. What do you want me to pay attention to? Your cleavage? Or your script? And guys, I have tats too. Love my tats. Show up with arm ink and I will totally be scoping that out while you ramble about whatever you're rambling about. Also, leave the comic book and heavy metal t-shirts at home. It may be the dirt mall, but we're still trying to hang onto the fact that it's professional.
- Don't ramble. When the bell rings, please leave. 9 times out of 10 I really want you to leave. So, just leave. 5 minutes is PLENTY of time. If that bell rings and you're still going, you don't have your shit down. On the other hand, if we're laughing, having a good time...and I'm asking you questions...keeping the convo going? That's a good thing...so fuck that next person...congrats on being the 1 out of 10 that I want to talk to.

So there you go. Don't do ANY of that shit, and you'll be just fine. Hey, maybe you'll actually MOVE forward in this industry for once in your life.

Or, you can keep doing what you're doing. That seems to be working for you, right? Yeah, that's what I thought.

I WILL be at the Great American Pitchfest this Sunday...PLEASE so feel free to stop by and say hi. Don't be shy...I'm a big lovable teddy bear in real life. Sorta. Strike that. I'm kind of an opinionated dick there too. Still, please say hi anyway.

Sorry I was long (a phrase I don't get to normally say) this week...hope it was worth it and you're now ready to pitch the fuck out of your shit.

Till next week...