

You are not Quentin Tarantino.

(unless you actually ARE Quentin Tarantino...if that's the case, thank you, it's an honor that you find my shit entertaining.)

Otherwise...

You are not Quentin Tarantino.

A lot of you are sitting there thinking, "I fucking know I'm not Quentin Tarantino! Where are you going with this?"

To answer that, I have to back up a bit and chat about a little thing known as "The Blacklist."

So what is The Blacklist you ask?

It's an annual list of the favorite scripts floating around Hollywood. The scripts are voted on by executives, agents and managers.

The Blacklist (as far as I understand it) was created to battle the fucking Hollywood schlock that gets made year after year. As I understood it, it was designed to showcase the unproduced scripts that don't get any love in the mainstream. They're either too expensive, or not necessarily a four quadrant type of movie.

So what does it mean for my career if I make The Blacklist?

A lot.

The list may have started small but now it's grown into a whole helluva she-beast. What used to be a list of the scripts no one paid attention to, is now the go to hot sheet of up and coming talent. Well sort of, more on that later...

Anyway...back to your career...

Because it's the go to list for executives, it's pretty much a guarantee that you're going to get some major notice from the industry. I have a couple of friends that have made the Blacklist in the past and it has led to them landing agents, getting major meetings and selling some of their shit.

A friend of mine who got his script on The Blacklist in '09, just sold a pilot to Showtime.

So yeah, it's kind of a big deal.

Which brings me to this year's quasi-controversy around the office. Although there were a slew of interesting scripts on the list (including a former colleague of mine) the one that stood out the most was Quentin Tarantino's script, Django Unchained.

Now as many of you SHOULD know, Django has been in pre-production for some time and has already assembled quite the cast including: Sam Jackson, Don Johnson, Jamie Foxx, Christophe Waltz, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Kurt Russell and Leonardo DiCaprio.

With that being said, what the fuck is it doing on a list, of what's SUPPOSED to be, unproduced gems?!

Now I have nothing against Quentin, but he has his time...he's fucking Quentin Tarantino! He doesn't need to be on the list.

The opposing argument was the list is made up of "favorite films read this year" and that it's a write in voting process...so if that's what excited people, then that's what excited them.

I get it. It makes sense, but still...come on?! Keep in the spirit of what it should be.

I just think that it's a little lame that someone as prolific as Tarantino is on a list for what should be for the little guy.

'Nuff about that...

So back to my original statement: You are not Quentin Tarantino.

Because of the list coming out and the heated debate in the office, I decided to track down the script and give it a read.

First and foremost, I want to be clear...I'm not going to spoil the story for you. No worries there.

Second, I have no idea which draft I read other than the date. So I have no idea if there's a more current draft or not. Regardless, I read the April 2011 draft, so I would have to assume it's pretty current.

Lastly, keep in mind, just cause it's written, doesn't mean it's not going to change and doesn't mean it'll be in the final flick.

I'm really going to talk about his writing style anyway, but to do so, some generalities need to be known about the story.

So what's it about? Okay, this is kind of hard to explain, but for all of you Q.T. fans out there, this is the best analogy and will make total sense to you.

First, let's set the stage...it's set in the south during the slavery days.

Remember Clint Eastwood's character in the Man with No Name trilogy? Okay...take that guy and make him German.

Now....

Remember LeVar Burton (a.k.a. Geordi on Star Trek: T.N.G.), his character Kunta Kinte in Roots?

Okay, take that guy, but make him a total fucking bad ass.

Have the German free the bad ass, teach him to be a killing machine and then unleash him on the white slave owners that took his wife.

That's what Django Unchained is all about and let me tell you, it's pretty fucking amazing. I mean really.

I've read Kill Bill before that came out and thought it was great, but thought the movies were a little weak compared to the script. The script had a lot more really awesome scenes and storylines that never made the final product. Mostly, I think, because the script got split into two movies.

I've read Inglorious Basterds before the movie came out and have to say, it was pretty fucking sweet on the page and was even more amazing on the screen.

As for Django? Yeah, it's going to be amazing. Especially with the casting involved. I'm most looking forward to Leonardo DiCaprio's performance because he's the main (and pretty ruthless) villain in the flick.

Okay...now that we're up to speed, why can you not be Q.T.?

A lot of the problem with a lot of budding writers is that they want to break the rules right off the bat. They want to do it their way (which, you'll soon discover isn't even THEIR way) and not listen to anyone else.

So a lot of writers will track down movie scripts and use them as their "get out of jail card." "Well he does it, so why can't I?"

Cause you're not him...Plain and simple.

For example. Much like any other script, first thing I do with Django is flip to the last page and see the count that I'm getting in to.

168 pages.

168 fucking pages.

Guess what? It's okay...cause HE can do that.

You can't. You're not Quentin Tarantino.

You get 120 MAX and even then you should bring it home at 110. He's allowed. You're not.

The first sentence of the script, right after EXT. – COUNTRYSIDE – BROILING HOT DAY is:

As the film's OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE plays, complete with its own SPEGHETTI WESTERN THEME SONG....

Yeah, I don't care how cool you think you are and how cool the credit sequence you came up with is...you don't get to talk about it in your script.

Why does he get to do it and you don't?

Cause he's Quentin-Fucking-Tarantino and you're not. Sucks, I know...but alas...it's the truth.

The first two pages are nothing but action. There's a couple of quick flashbacks and a whole lot of description. A LOT. Just looking at the text on the page is scary.

He can do that. You can't. He can take all the time he wants to set up his world because we trust him and know him and want to see where he's going. You? I would trust you to watch my neighbor's fucking cat who I hate...so why would I trust you long enough to see if you're going to get there or not?

Later on in the script, around page 47, there is a short scene that reads as follows:

WE SEE

A SCENE to be improvised (more or less)...

Yup, you guessed it. You don't get to write shit like that. You need to know exactly what's going on. You don't get to talk about improvisation.

"BUT MANNY! I'm going to direct my own script much like he is?"

Oh...you're so adorable! Keep dreaming...it's good to dream.

The bad guy? Played by Leo? Yeah, he doesn't show up until page 61.

Sixty-fucking-one.

Don't do that and don't think cause Quentin does it, you can.

You're not Quentin Tarantino.

So knock it off. Got it?

We're all clear on the subject at hand? You don't get to use other people's work to excuse your laziness or what you think is clever. The only job you have is to write a good, compelling, script that's efficient in its word count and keeps people excited.

After you make your Pulp Fiction and your Kill Bill...THEN you can do whatever the fuck you want. Until then, obey the rules and stop using great screenwriters as exceptions to the rule.

Till next week...