

Welcome to week 99 people. That's right, this is my 99th column. Do I have something special planned for 100? Who's to say? Guess you'll just have to tune in next week to find out.

There were some great comments about last week's column "hangin' it up..." more than a few of you wanted to weigh in on the topic and had a lot of good things to say. Wanted to share what one reader wrote because it leads into an interesting conversation. Here's what Chris wrote:

*When should someone "...just pack it up and get out?" If you're thinking it, then "now" would be a good time.*

*Becoming a successful Writer is very fucking hard and many don't seem to realize that or want to accept it and I just don't get it. You own a laptop and read a book so you think you deserve a Blind Deal at Fox?!?! Well I own a fucking football and watch the NFL all day on Sundays, but you don't see me asking why the Denver Broncos don't give me a look!*

*Next time one of your younger Writers ask you how to make it, tell them to get a job as a Lit. Asst. at a top level Agency and work 14 – 16 hours a day for 3 ½ years like I did.*

To which I responded, with:

*Nobody wants to put the work in. No one wants to do the time. This isn't fucking field of dreams where "if you write it, they will come."*

This has been kind of a hot topic the past few weeks. I'm hearing more and more from managers and agents and friends this notion of people just not putting the work in.

"What is the problem with these writer's who don't rewrite?"

I don't have an answer.

Here's how I calculate my work and trust me, I'm harsher on myself than I have ever been to any of you, so I feel like I know my own bullshit.

For me, a script is PRETTY polished by the 5th draft. After it's been vetted and I get notes from several different sources, and I work on it and work on it...around the 5th draft I'd say it's ready to show people in the industry.

And I promise you, it will get better. The script I'm writing now I'm about 80 pages in and have already rewritten the first 60 pages twice. One intentional, the other was not (long story... bottom line: don't forget to fucking back up your work!)

I think when it's all said and done I will probably have that script ready in 2-3 drafts.

And that's happening because the more I read quality scripts and the more I write, the better I get. I see myself making the same mistakes and stop myself.

I'm working with a writer right now and she makes a lot of rookie mistakes. So I told her, write down all of the "dumb mistakes" you know you make and set that to the side. Then go away and write your script. When you're done, go back to the list and do a pass through on your script JUST to get rid of all of the things that appear on that list.

Do that every time.

Sooner or later, you'll find that there are fewer and fewer of those "dumb mistakes" because you've trained yourself to catch them when you write them in the first place.

For example...

I've spoken about this before, but I used to do the "starts to" thing all the time. This is a movie... no one ever "starts to" do anything. They're either doing it or they're not. "Starts to" in a script shows you're a rookie. (As well as "begins to," "continues to" and "tries to.")

So that made the list.

And after I finished my first draft I would go through and make sure I didn't have ANY of those in there anywhere.

The first time I did it, I had NO fucking idea how much I really used that phrase in a script. It seemed like EVERY one was starting to do something instead of just doing it. The next script I wrote, I caught myself as I "started to" write it and stopped myself.

Now?

Still happens EVERY now and then... but it's a rarity when it does. You have to be disciplined to becoming a better writer. Not just churning out shitty scripts.

Which, by the way, I fucking hate that. I'll say this shit to a writer and they almost always come back with "I'm writing all the time."

No. You're not. You're churning out bullshit because you think THAT'S what's necessary in order to break in. To be able to come up with idea after idea.

That's not writing people. That's sitting around and thinking up shit. Can you write it?

"Yes, of course I can."

No. You can't.

I got asked the other day by a fellow executive if "I've ever found anything at one of those pitchfests?"

Just so you know, this is the most widely asked question by my peers.

My answer? No. Never.

The great ideas that I hear and eventually see the script? Poorly executed. Shitty writers who have NO idea what goes into a script and it shows. Takes me MAYBE 5 pages to find out if you can write or not. Most of the time, I'm out by page 10.

And that's not just me... that's EVERYONE. The fucking 20 year old interns who have no idea who The Grateful Dead are (sad, but true) know it's a shitty script by page 20.

So why don't you?

It's SO fucking frustrating. And look, I've been there too... I understand it's frustrating on your end. There are endless amounts of information out there specifically geared towards becoming a writer or how to be better writers.

A quick search on Amazon for "screenwriting" gave me 2,434 results. Doing a search for "writing"... 296,525 results. Doing a quick search for painting? 143,897 results. And that's just in books... never mind the how to videos and the computer programs.

So yeah... there's a lot of shit out there telling you how to write and who do you listen to? McKee says do something A and then Snyder says you should do everything BUT something A and then your mom says it's good but your mailman says it's bad, but Scriptshark gave it a "favorable" so I guess you're ready to start pitching, but then you go to pitchfest and only a handful of people said they wanted to read your script.

Yeah. I know. It sucks.

Sorry.

And instead of making THAT script better, you'll just write another one. Learning nothing from rewriting the first one.

Wanna be a better writer? Read good scripts. IMSDB.com, Script-a-palooza and many more. It's the age of the internet. You can find ANYTHING. Download some scripts, read them. Find the script for your favorite movie and see what changed from script to

screen. Cause you know what that is? RE-WRITING! What did they take out, what did they leave in?

Read scripts for movies you HAVEN'T seen... then watch the movies! I know... such a CRAZY concept. Paying hundreds of dollars on weekend seminars with McKee ain't gonna make you better writers. I promise you.

Reading scripts will. And watching movies.

Enough about that...

Wanna quickly share something with you. On Saturday I attended the Hollywood Pitchfest as I usually do. I was there for two hours and met with a long list of people. Of the people on that list, I asked I think 8 people to send me their script.

It's now Friday. Guess how many of those 8 people have sent me their script?

Zero.

Not even sure why you even wasted the time showing up. Oh well. Guess they didn't want it that bad.

This is your competition people. Don't be them and you're already headed for greatness! This is why I point this shit out so you can have the upper hand.

Anyway...

Till next week...