

WEST HARTFORD SCREEN WRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 9/28/05

Moderator: Tessa O'Sullivan

Scribe: Denning Powell

Snacks: Liz Cippolina

ATTENDEES:

Steve Consolatti

Joe Vojt

Denning Powell

Lida Boynick

Jacque Devlin

Darryl Johnson

John Mason

Patrick Lee

Rita Isaacson

Bethany Trzaskos

Adam Kirko

Tom Murphy

Tessa O'Sullivan

Steve Olechna

June Neal

Liz Cipollina

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

David Lynch, director of *Twin Peaks* and *Dune*, is speaking at Yale Friday night 9/30/05 (per article in 9/28/05 Hartford Advocate).

OPEN DISCUSSION:

None – meeting got off to a late start, so discussion issues raised in August (re meeting format and process) were deferred in the interests of getting to the script reviews.

REVIEW 1: Central African High, by Tom Murphy (revised opening scenes).

Logline: Novice high school teacher deals with a cultural context in which male teachers have power over female students.

Why writing it: To tell a good story, as observed from actual experience in the Peace Corps.

Theme: Use and abuse of power, in a different culture.

Genre: Drama.

Wants from review: Are the opening scenes going in a worthwhile direction?

Synopsis of group review: Concept of power use/abuse in a different cultural context is very viable. More overt action of some kind would be useful upfront, both to hook (commercial) interest and to better foreshadow what the screenplay is about -- it has a sort of documentary feel about it now. Suggest putting maximum focus on characters by having them take simple actions from which a lot can be inferred; the discordant cultural note where Michel leaves his new wife

sitting on her suitcase is a good example. Also, minimizing or condensing some of the scene descriptive material to brief phrases would be useful.

REVIEW 2: Hero's Tunnel by Liz Cippolina (opening scenes).

Logline: Young men struggle to avoid re-instituted military draft.

Why writing it: Personal motivation -- doesn't like senseless war, son approaching draftable age (if draft is re-instituted).

Theme: Overcoming prejudices (gays and straights can become friends), set in a political context.

Genre: Drama, possibly with satire.

Wants from review: Does the first montage make sense; is the storyline viable?

Synopsis of group review: Great concept – could be very timely if re-institution of the draft comes under serious consideration. Good potential for political satire, or for morality play on sensitive subjects (gay vs straight perspectives, don't ask/don't tell, obligation to serve). Present direction seems one-sided; this is fine for a message but would limit the potential audience (as opposed to a savage satire which would offend all sensibilities equally). Suggest staying away from cliches (beating in toilet, coincidental meeting at courthouse), adding more intrigue to up the emotional ante early on, playing the government as casting a dark shadow, creating more sympathy for the protagonists to magnify their subsequent pain (one idea is using basic training as a context rather than the brief screening procedure at the courthouse).

REVIEW 3: Papa Wheelie by Steve Olechna (Act 1).

Logline: Childhood dominance game is reprised in adult life.

Why writing it: Wanted to do something light and easy to read, and retro to the 70's.

Theme: Childhood loser struggles to gather his resources and overcome his buried inadequacies, and triumphs over his old nemesis as an adult.

Genre: Dramatic comedy, or comedic drama.

Wants from review: Is the storyline viable?

Synopsis of group review: Retro 70's stuff is eminently salable -- those who grew up in that era are a receptive audience -- nostalgia factor. First act sets up three distinct areas of possible competition that include Teddy's wife and children; excellent foreshadowing of an up-the-ante personal dominance struggle to develop in the subsequent acts. Script flowed very well and was easy to read. Some parallels seen to *Married with Children* and *Parenthood*. Suggest that this current piece might have to be trimmed substantially to fit the entire screenplay into 120-pg size.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, October 26, 7:00 PM, Webster Hall.

Moderator: Steve Olechna

Snacks: Rita Isaacson

POST-GELAMEN:

Usual suspects decamped to Cosi's afterwards for pizza and beer. No fatalities reported on next morning's news.

~DSP 10/1/05