

WEST HARTFORD SCREENWRITERS GROUP / MINUTES

Meeting of: 1/31/07

Moderator: Joe Cadieux

Snacks: Nancy Rossi (in absentia)

Scribe: Denning Powell

ATTENDEES:

Geoff Saunders

Denning Powell

Tessa O'Sullivan

Rita Isaacson

Patrick Lee

Lida Boynick

Liz Cippolina

Jacquelin Devlin

Jed Backus

Steve Olechna

Tom Clark (new/visitor)

Dan Clark (new/visitor)

INTROS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1) Lida announced her radio script for a podcast was coming out shortly.

(2) Jaq found the book *The Third Act* to be a good reference for fixing script problems.

(3) Joe handed out literature on a Trinity film festival featuring the filmmaker D.A. Pennebaker's work. Pennebaker will be present at a showing of his Bob Dylan biopic *Don't Look Back* Wednesday Feb 21, 7:30 pm at Trinity College's Cinestudio theater. Trinity is located in Hartford; the theater is on campus.

(4) Joe passed around a flip-tablet-book called *Movie Plot Generator*.

(5) Geoff handed out a method for structuring a script, adapted from Writers Boot Camp.

(6) Liz offered to do a presentation, tentatively in February or March, possibly based on her script *Hero's Tunnel*.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

(1) Joe presented an article from *scriptmag.com* called *Reveal Your Character in Just One Second*, then showed a series of six illustrative scenes excerpted from *Harold and Maude*, *Basic Instinct*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Casablanca*, *Wild Strawberries* and *A Beautiful Mind*.

REVIEW 1: Front Page, by Geoff Saunders (Act 1 ~ 38 pgs).

Logline: Two FBI agents struggle to save lives while striving to be the best, two serial killers brutally end lives and fight to secure their place in history, and two news reporters compete to stay close to the story - maybe too close. All share one common goal - front page news.

Genre: Thriller

Theme: The most terrifying of all monsters - man.

Target Audience: Anyone who likes the !#&@ scared out of them.

Why writing it: Couldn't get the visions out of his head - pesty little creatures.

Wants from review: Besides the usual stuff (characters, story, plot, etc.), is the script working as a thriller, its intended genre? Are all story lines developing effectively at the end of the first act? Front Page is more of a newspaper term, suggestions for a title that would be more fitting for television news reference would be helpful.

Synopsis of group review: General agreement on: (1) great opening scene, the gore is especially well done; (2) the working title doesn't fit the script so far; (3) horror genres are current Hollywood darlings; (4) the major proposition of the story isn't fully evident at the end of the first act. Mixed opinions on: (1) Amy's character development -- she seems weak; (2) Savage's character FBLW isn't clear at the end of the first act. Suggestions for going forward: (1) cure a few logic disconnects (Medevac not with SWAT team, initial disclosure of the bad-guy Graham in the diner could use more of a hint); (2) streamline those characters that audiences are already familiar with; (3) do more character-revealing scenes for Graham like where he touches the corpse eye in the mortuary.

REVIEW 2: Monkey Trap, by Denning Powell (full script~ 124 pgs).

Logline: Aliens invade the minds of two lovers, distort their realities, pit them against each other in a battle to the death... and the fate of humanity hangs in the balance.

Why writing it: Book-to-movie conversion.

Theme: Love triumphs over power.

Genre: Sci-fi metaphysical thriller.

Wants from review: Does the script flow more cleanly? How/where to pare it down further? Are the early flashbacks still a problem? Were the problems with the initial draft fixed?

Synopsis of group review: General agreement on: (1) the added beginning is useful, but maybe could be done without dialog; (2) some of the voices still blend together too much; (3) portions of the dialog are still too on-the-nose; (4) need more frequent intercuts of the opening scenes to make the chronology more linear. Mixed opinions on: (1) whether Ham's Irish accent is a good defining trait or just distracting; (2) the protagonists too easily accept aliens in their minds; (3) the opening scenes are too complex. Suggestions for going forward: (1) use Joshua as a device for reflecting audience's questions; (2) cut use of adverbs -- limit to key narrative; (3) avoid the implication that John and Lara are being totally directed by the aliens, they have to have free choice or the test doesn't work; (4) pare down unnecessarily long descriptive passages (e.g., Demuzzio getting into hot tub); (5) smooth out the escalation from drug-dealer elimination to an end-of-the-world conflict; (6) put sounds and noises in CAPS; (7) move the early flashbacks to later; (8) show the script to a fresh set of eyes for an opinion on whether the flashbacks are confusing; (9) base acceptance of the aliens on thankfulness for being saved; (10) write out interview question for characters, and if their dialogue answers are too similar, change their voices; (11) cut down on the backstory and related dialog, find ways to show the characters.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday February 28, 2007, 7:00 PM, West Hartford Senior Center. Nothing specified yet for the queue, but Liz is contemplating a presentation.

Moderator: Steve Olechna

Snacks: Jaq Devlin

~DSP 2/6/07 :-)