

ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

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Please note this is a sample schedule

For fees and details, please visit www.id2films.com

This workshop is designed to take place over 3 days, with a maximum of 12 participants.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

During the first 2 days, we analyse the main dramatic tools used to write, read, assess and develop feature film scripts.

During the third day, we focus on practical development issues, from a producer's point of view: differences between writing tools and development tools, different writing stages, and how to work with a writer...

The following films should have been seen right before the workshop:

- **Groundhog Day (H. Ramis)**
- **Back to the Future (R. Zemeckis)**
- **The Apartment (B. Wilder)**
- **Psycho (A. Hitchcock)**
- **Amadeus (M. Forman)**

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE:

DAY 1

THEORY 1 (Managing conflict: protagonist, goal, obstacles, conflict, and emotions)

During this session, we study the basic elements of structure. We see how we can generate and manage conflict in order to maintain the interest of the audience over the length of the story, to allow the audience to identify and empathise with a protagonist. We study the real three act structure (in opposition to the Syd Field/Robert McKee simplistic paradigm), and the relationship between character and plot. We watch and analyse a clip from *Frenzy* to see how we can structure a 13mn sequence within a film the same way we can structure a two hour feature film. We also watch clips to illustrate the identification process (*Ridicule*), the relationship between conflict and emotion (*Elephant Man*), the role of the inciting event and the notion of co-protagonists (*Alien*), the use of external obstacles (*Die Hard 2*), and the exploitation of a strong internal obstacle (the climax of *Cyrano de Bergerac*).

DVD clips: *Frenzy* (A. Hitchcock), *Ridicule* (P. Leconte), *Elephant Man* (D. Lynch), *Alien* (Ridley Scott), *Die Hard 2* (Renny Harlin), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (J.P. Rappeneau).

THEORY 2 (Managing POV: mystery, surprise, dramatic irony and suspense)

During this session, we see how the writer can play with the audience and use different tools to change the audience POV. With surprise, we suddenly discover something we did not know. With mystery, we know just enough to be aware that we do not know something important yet. With dramatic irony, we know more than some characters, and we love it. All this is, as usual, illustrated by some clips: in *Ridicule*, an example of a simple setup,

exploitation and resolution of a local dramatic irony; in *The Court Jester*, a festival of installations of dramatic irony; in *There's something about Mary*, a mutual dramatic irony or “quid pro quo”; in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a beautiful exploitation of a double dramatic irony; in *City Lights*, a visual resolution of a structural dramatic irony; in *Misery*, a dramatic irony where the victim is the antagonist, and in *Psycho* a brilliant combination of mystery, surprise and dramatic irony, as well as a successful change of protagonist.

DVD clips: *Ridicule* (P. Leconte), *The Court Jester* (N. Panama), *There is something about Mary* (Farelli Brothers), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (J.P. Rappeneau), *City Lights* (C. Chaplin), *Misery* (R. Reiner), *Psycho* (A. Hitchcock).

Day 2

THEORY 3 (Managing information: exposition, activity, dialogue and ellipses)

During this session, we study the different tools writers can use to convey information to the audience. We see how we can tell a past story using exposition or flashback (as little as possible), and how we can show rather than tell, using activity (as often as possible). We also see how we can write good dialogue, and how we can use narrative ellipses to avoid wasting precious screen time. We watch clips from *Frenzy* to study exposition and from *Rio Bravo* to study activity. We will also watch a clip from *Un Air de Famille* (*Family Resemblance*) to illustrate dialogue, and from *Parenthood* to illustrate the use of narrative ellipses.

DVD Clips: *Frenzy* (A. Hitchcock), *Rio Bravo* (H. Hawks), *Un Air de Famille* (C. Klapish), *Parenthood* (R. Howard).

THEORY 4 (Managing foreshadowing/planting/setup and payoff)

During this session, we study the different ways to use foreshadowing and payoff: to justify some elements that would otherwise be rejected by the audience, to raise the emotional involvement of the audience, or to assign a specific meaning to an element. We also watch clips from *Aliens* and *Jurassic Park*, to show how American blockbusters can use foreshadowing efficiently or forget it and create a “deus ex machina”. We finally make a synthesis of all the tools we have seen, through an in-depth analysis of an excerpt of *The Apartment* (Clip + script), to demonstrate the effective and creative use of dramatic irony, foreshadowing/payoff, activity, dialogue and conflict.

DVD clips: *Jurassic Park* (S. Spielberg), *Aliens* (J. Cameron), *The Apartment* (B. Wilder)

In-depth analysis of an excerpt of *The Apartment* (script & DVD clip).

FILM ANALYSIS: BACK TO THE FUTURE (R. Zemeckis)

DAY 3

During this last day, we define the development process, from a producer's point of view, in a very practical way: the different development stages, the main resources and the key decisions involved; the most useful tools, and hopefully the way to limit the number of mistakes during the process in order to get the best possible scripts... but before diving into this, we are going to do another study of a great film from a “learning of the craft” POV:

FILM ANALYSIS: GROUNDHOG DAY (H. Ramis)

The development process

There is a huge difference between a writer who just wants to express himself/herself, and a writer who also wants to play a game with the audience, who is keen to deliver emotions and entertainment as well as a message. In the first case, the discussion is subjective (he/she likes it or not, is relieved by it or not). In the second case, the discussion can be more objective: it works or does not work for an audience, and we can try to explain or justify why.

If we see the film experience as a communication process, from the writer/director to the audience, the development of a script - from the original idea to the shooting script - can be seen as a way to improve the communication between the writer and the audience, as long as the writer has the will to do so.

We have studied the main dramatic tools, so let's now see how we can put this knowledge in practice during the development process:

Theory: from the original idea to the shooting script

Ideal... for whom?

What assessments do we need to make?

Which writing resources can we use? Producer, original writer, co-writer, new writer, story-editor, script doctor... how do we know which one is the right one?

- From the writer or from the producer?
If you initiate it, you often control it.
- Adaptation or original material?
The origin of the story often influences what has to be done.

Reality: the powerful impact of the "Fab Four"

In practice, theory is affected by four main parameters: time, money, creativity, psychology.

- Time & money
- Creativity & psychology

The development stages: presentation tools and writing tools

Here lies one of the most terrible problems in the whole industry: classical development stages and development documents do not necessarily make useful writing documents, which creates confusion, frustration, and often, chaos.

Presentation stages & tools

Definition & use

- Pitch
- Synopsis
- Treatment
- Script

Writing stages & tools

Definition & use

- Skeleton, character outlines, relationship maps
- Step outline
- Scene breakdown
- Script

Practical tools

- How to read a script
- Checklist
- Problems & solutions
- Keep an open mind