

## Ep #52: Tips for a Killer Pilot (Part 2 of 2)

0:00

In this episode, we have the second part series about tips for a killer pilot. Yep, we're gonna go over four more types to key in on. So listen in.

0:12

This is the Script Reader Pro podcast, hands on advice, insider hacks and deeper discussions for the screenwriters who are serious about breaking into the industry.

0:25

Hey everybody, this is Desiree. I am the podcast host for the Script Reader Pro podcast, Scott, why are you being so cheesy? Why do you look like you're not here today, I was

0:40

reading something, and then I was like, I thought it didn't even sound like you were recording, because you were like, Hi, I'm Desiree.

0:47

Everybody who listens knows that they get a different version every time,

0:51

different version of Desiree every time. Welcome to my life.

0:54

You're welcome. Hey, Scott. Happy New Year. Happy New Year. Yeah, filthy animal, this will be out in 2026

1:04

Wow, that's the it's I just isn't that the worst when you see someone just before New Year's and then as they leave, they're like, see you next

1:11

year. It's so cheesy if you go, but

1:14

everyone does it. You did it this morning. No,

1:17

that the friend that I saw. She said, See you next year, and then I said,

1:23

being like, here, yeah, and she's Nigerian, and you were trying to teach her how to say, y'all, you were like, say, Happy New Year, y'all, and she couldn't do it. You all, you all, she kept saying, You all, you're like, No, y'all, you all

1:39

pretty funny. Yeah, it was funny. Yeah, hey, hey, how you doing good? You know what? I feel like it's a brand new year. This next year. Better be better than the last year. No, honey, we're already in the next year. We're we traveled through time. Well, we will be, because this will be aired this second week in January. That's spooky. What? No, that's probably the end of January, this one. Oh, well, happy New Year. Three episodes ago. Happy New Year everybody today. We're talking about, we are talking about more pilot stuff. We are because it's the second, it's the second part of a two part series. All about tips for a killer pilot. Yes.

2:17

So if you didn't listen to the part one, go back and do that. We got some great stuff. We're going to be continuing on talking about the second set, no, the second set of four types of pilots. So we talked about the first four. We talked about the first four types of pilots in the last episode, and we're going to continue that. So if you, if you don't listen to that first one, you might, you might miss something, or be confused and or, you know, not understand something. We just that we we know what we talked about. So give it

2:42

a listen what Scott's even saying right now. I understand they get a medal. Also, for those who listen to the first part series, you might not understand some of what I had to read of Scott's writing because his notes are extremely I

2:57

don't edit my notes. Detail oriented. Read them. They're for me did and

3:01

you anyway, guys start by show that we watched, and we are talking right now about PILOTS anyway. So this here is not a pilot, no, this here is a TV show,

3:14

yeah, but it's a Not really. It's a documentary. Well, still, we found it on TV, but it was a documentary film.

3:19

Scott just thought, let's be real. For those that are listening, Christmas is hard for a lot. Christmas is hard for us. It's always hard. We survived Christmas. We did. We're doing a podcast, which means we survived we did. So that's a good thing. And so after the whole Christmas season, Scott was like, Hey, let's watch some Murder Mystery Crime shows.

3:42

Yeah. Let's watch some documents about really bad families, so ours don't look so bad.

3:48

That's sad, yeah. So

3:50

we watched this one called capturing the freedmen. You came

3:53

up with a long list.

3:54

Unfortunately, it was all about incest and and SA and so if that triggers, you don't watch it. But it was, it was about this, this father who, all of a sudden, FBI came and arrested him and his son running a computer class out of their home piano lessons. And apparently he had abused all these boys with his son, his 18 year old son, in this class. And it was all about that. But what was most compelling about it,

4:23

yes, was the fact that they had basically done a recording of their lives from as soon as you could get a video camera.

4:30

Yeah, they did a lot of home video movie, not movies, but just like

4:35

90% 80% of it was all authentic, recorded film from the family,

4:40

yeah, and then these boys, they turned on their mom. They were horrible. The one older brother was just awful. But we read that. We read crazy and like and like, still just like, denying things and like. They talked about how their their dad finally admitted that he did some things to some boys at a summer camp when he was older. Yeah, and then that one boy was like, okay, yeah, fine. You know, he slipped a couple times. And I'm like, what he's you're saying? That's just he slipped. No big deal. It's just really, really odd and creepy and weird, yeah? But afterwards, we were reading more about the dog, because so this documentary was nominated for an Oscar when it came

5:19

out, and I, and that's what I was gonna say, is that what was interesting? And this is something I mean, with AI being so rampant these days everywhere, yeah, you really cannot even believe from the 80s, 90s, when this one was made in the 90s, early 90s? Was it 90s? You can't necessarily believe what you even see back from in the day.

5:43

No, as you can't whatever was in the documentary. You could, trust me, you couldn't google it

5:47

after, no, and because it's such a skewed viewpoint from the person who is, documentaries

5:53

aren't supposed to do that. No, I was very biased to say these, these guys are probably innocent, yeah, but then we looked it up and right and right after, there was one that we saw. It's called what they left out, yeah? And like, the guy who went to jail, the kid, the 18 year old, he then had this interview with Geraldo, admitting everything he did,

6:10

yeah, I know. So it's just like, and then that wasn't in the no documentary, no, anyway, God, it was interesting.

6:16

But you know what's really interesting, Dez, I read this after. You don't know this, I looked it up again, and this director was going to he actually went and was making a short film about clowns in New York. And there was this guy who was like the number one children's party clown in New York, and that's what his movie was going to be about. But then, as he started talking to him and looking into him, he realized that this guy's dad and brother were arrested for this major the story,

6:42

because one of the brothers is a professional clown in New York, which me is a

6:45

little sketchy. Yeah, creepy that he's around kids when, anyway,

6:49

not saying he's guilty. No, no, but that's what it started with, yeah?

6:53

And then he's like, Oh, there's more here. And so he went into the story, but, but yeah. So anyways, it was interesting. It was worth watching if you're not triggered by that stuff, but, yeah, very,

7:03

very skewed opinion, though, because, like, you find all that, all that stuff out later, and it's

7:08

like, oh, you're like, Oh, why? Okay, yeah, so, anyways, very interesting. That's what we watched. So, yeah,

7:13

so also had watched a lot of Christmas movies, but,

7:15

yeah, but after Christmas is done, we were like, Okay, we're done. We're done seeing all these perfect happy families. So let's watch something about killing each other in jail and murder and possible stuff. Okay, well, anyway, but today we're talking about actual not just not documentaries, not reality TV. We're talking about what fictionalized television pilots. Yes, fiction, yes. So we're going to talk about the next four, the next four pilot types. Then there's more, like, these are just things that I was like, okay, so what are the kind of shows? This show fits into this category. Just so you know, when you're gonna write a pilot, you come up with an idea, and you think, okay, yeah, this has longevity to it. This can go to a lot of different places. I'm gonna set everything up, and it's this kind of show. But then people will be like, Well, what, what's a comp? Do you know what a comp is does when someone says, What's a comp? Nope. So it's something comparable. So like, if you're, like, when you watch your house building shows, let's go and see a house that's a comp to what we're trying to do to your house. Yeah, you're when you were doing your look book. And yeah, you always want to say, because someone wants to know what the audience is. So you can say, well, this TV show, this TV show, and this one, that's the kind of show. This is so terrible, yes, so looking at some of the most successful ones and breaking down how that fits.

8:24

Okay, yeah. And just to recap, you have here breaking down the core craft mechanics that make pilots compelling on the page, character authority, emotional stakes, voice and narrative

8:36

control, yeah, and we talked about that in the last episode. But you know, basically what they mean is that the characters, they have the authority in their show, they are present. They are doing it. They seem like real people. They're taking us somewhere. The emotional stakes you got to get that audience emotionally involved in any way you can, that the voice is standing out, and that there's control of the narrative, that there's confidence that the writer knows what they're doing and they're taking us some are important, so we dig more into those in the last episode if you haven't heard it. But yeah, let's jump right into the different types.

9:07

First one that you have listed here is TV pilots that are really feature films in disguise.

9:13

Yeah. And what I mean by that is some shows have a plot that really seems like it has a very closed end that's probably going to come, you know, it be explosive. It's got a narrative that's got those big steps of Act One, act two, act three, and then that story is kind of done, right? And so a lot of those we see as limited series now, and a limited series really is just a long movie, right? It's like a four hour movie. But, you know, they they have strong standalone pilots where you're

like, Okay, this actually, this feels like a strong first act, right? Of a movie. That's kind of how you know you're leading you're as a reader. That's how you know you're reading a limited series, rather than, this is something for like, a six season arc. You get to the end of it, you're like, Okay, I feel like I've already know, like a third of this story. I think, I think the next Act's got to be, you know. Here, yeah, that there's closed story loops, that it's not designed to be like more movement. And this can go here now, this can go here. That is more about the impact of what that pilot is giving you, you know, as a big chunk of story, rather than that idea of longevity, right? Of, oh, this can go on and on, and there's nothing wrong with a pilot like that, but it should feel like, okay, yeah, this has a closed like, a lot of times I'll read a pile. I'm like, Okay, well, I can see the ending coming. It's not gonna be that far. And then you find out, Oh no, this has, I have a seven season arc for this. I'm like, how this doesn't set up enough kind of thing, right? But, like, Queen's gambit is a perfect example

10:37

of it. But sometimes they can, you can think, oh yeah, I feel like I'm a third away through the show. And in rare cases, they probably can. Oh, yeah, they can. But is that? Would that be like that show that you like that with the fantasy stuff? Stranger Things? No, not Stranger Things. It was that other Game of Thrones. Yeah. Would you say Game of Thrones is kind of like that, where you're like, Wow, all of that happened in one episode. Probably, it's probably gonna be done in like, six Yeah? And then it continued to carry

11:09

on, yeah, I would say so. I mean, if you hadn't read the books, yeah, like, it ends, in a way, one of the best last moments of any television pilot ever. But then you're just like, okay, okay, this is all gonna explode. Now there's going to be major fighter battle, and then someone wins, right? Yes, you thought it was going to be a lot shorter. Yeah, it was hard to see how this stretches. I mean, it's stretched to unending places, but at first you're like, Okay, there's a lot going on here, but I can see, I can see where it's going to end. Do you think that they intended for that? No, they intended to write something that would change everything forever. Wow, crazy, yeah, because it had like, five big, huge, gigantic books, right? Yeah. So, hey, you were saying the Queen's So, yeah, Queen's Gambit, that's the one about the the woman going through in the chess tournament, right? A woman in a man's chess world, right? And so the pilot, it plays like a sports biopic opening reel, right? It's complete and emotionally resolved by the end of it, and you're like, okay, yeah, but this cannot obviously go and become a long running series. It's about this chess tournament. Like it's not gonna what next season is gonna be up the next chess tournament, right? So it felt more like just the first part of a feature, right? And it was a limited series, right? So, but, but that's kind of like, that's the big difference, right? Everyone's writing a limited series now, which Great. Go ahead. But you you look at all the pilots of the limited series that are out there, and Bill, you know, like mayor, Mayor of East town, for example, unbelievable show. Do you remember that one? Nope, it was with Kate Winslet, and she was the police officer. She was police officer, and there was a murder, and she was on the basketball team. They had this big alumni thing, and she was really damaged, and she was divorced from her husband, but his house was right across the backyard. No. Anyways, I don't think I watched you. Did you watch it with me? And we loved it. It was really, really good. But anyways, that the

end of that pilot, you're like, okay, yeah, here we go. You knew it wasn't gonna go on forever. You knew it was gonna be a closed show. That that's the thing, right? That's their feature films in disguise. And so you want to make sure that that first episode really, really grabs us in right? Mayor of East town, they establish the tone immediately, that there's trauma there, that there's mystery because someone is murdered, right? And you know, it has feature level completeness as the end of Act One is kind of how it feels, right? Not when I had like, eight episodes, but it just felt more like a movie, right? And so that's if you're writing a feature film, that's how it should feel, or, sorry, if you're writing a limited series, that's how it should feel. It should feel like a mini movie, rather than, here's all the setups. We've got 100 setups, because we're going to go forever like, Oh, this is about fire department in Chicago, okay? Well, that's obviously going to be something that has just episodes and episodes, right? Yeah, and then the last of us, which we have to finish, does remember we, I think we're only two episodes in, and you're like, I do not like these kinds of shows. That was like you said, but you loved it, and it because, because it's character and it's emotional, and that's why it works. But, but at the end of that pilot, right? It functions. It's a post apocalyptic feature film, right? It has an origin story. Right off the start, there's loss, there's a mission that is launched, you know, it's extraordinary, and it comes from a video game, but, and they'll, there's, you know, that more more than one video game, so more than one seasons, right? But it spends a lot of time laying out that narrative capital, right? Laying out that idea of, here's the world of characters, here's a big event that happens, and now let's go forward, right? Like it could easily have been like a two and a half hour movie, right? And so that's, that's how you want someone to feel, so they understand. They don't even have to ask a question, okay, wait, is this a limited series? They'll know. So that's the trick in writing. Those make sense. Makes sense, yep. So, so a great pilot isn't always a great series starter, right? So it just depends on what type of series it

14:51

is, right? Because it could be limited, it could be a long standing, Yep, exactly. Okay. Two, you have procedural fatigue and reinvention. Yes.

15:00

So do you know the difference between a procedural and, like a serial procedural? To me, I think law Yeah, it's about the procedures, right? So Eddie, you know, like Grey's Anatomy, as we say, Doctor shows, yeah, Doctor shows law shows police, you know, law and order and fire departments and those are procedurals, right? It's like the monster of the week, the bad guy of the week, the fire of the week. There. You only ever like most of those is what fills network television right now, right? Not streaming stuff, but network stuff.

15:33

You know why I can't get into a lot of it, too big of words. I'm a smart person. I am, especially like in in the hospital ones if I have to, like, and I maybe it's because I'm so nosy and articulate, if I have to go and pause it to look up a word or meaning as something that takes me out.

15:50

Yeah, and that's who you are. And people notice that in the podcast, because you're like, Oh, so you said that thing a while ago. I looked it up because you're curious. You're like, okay, so yeah, you want to pause them a lot and that kind of thing. But I don't watch them because I'm like, they're more about, oh, okay, let's go all over these medical terms, and oh, they're gonna save that person. And these are all the things they do. And I'm like, I'm more about character, and I don't feel that there's enough time spent in that episode to get me interested in the characters. Okay, but

16:13

you're gonna be mad about this. Not mad. But there is one show I'm watching that I cannot find. What streaming service it's on, remember? And it's about three lawyers who are women. Oh, those women, the female lawyers, yeah. And that's more about character than it is procedural,

16:32

yeah, but yeah, but yeah. And so that's what, that's why I wrote reinvention, right? So they reinvented the wheel, reinvention of what procedural is. I don't remember. I've never, I only watched like five minutes. I'm like, is that Kim Kardashian?

16:44

Why is she in a TV show? Kim Kardashian, to see who what she's. Naomi Watts, yeah,

16:51

but yeah. So, so you want to reinvent it, and we've seen a lot of that lately. And those ones that are reinvented tend to be on streaming like, you look at like True Detective, right? For example, that reinvented the police procedural, right? It was 10 episodes long, I believe, and it was just so different. It was, again, like a feature film, but a television show. You'll get something like the bear, right? It's like, it's procedural. It's like, okay, this is what's happening in the restaurant this week. This is the this is the critic that's coming this week. But it's all about the procedure of being in a kitchen, being in a high anxiety workplace, right? But it's different.

17:26

It's new, and every time, right, as it always is, yeah, this one is called all's fair. All's fair, okay, I'm kind of sad. It only got 3.4 out of 10 stars.

17:36

I really liked it. See, I watched, I watched that short piece of the episode, right? And it was Kim Kardashians character thinking. And while I was thinking, okay, it kind of had a reality, okay, this is kind of, I'm like, this. This is different, right? These three high powered female attorneys trying to left the manpowered law firms and made their own good, good premise. Well, she's this. She was married to this guy. This guy comes in, and he's like, football player, and they seemed okay. And then he's like, Yeah, I'm kind of done with this. And he's moving out. And they didn't seem angry at each other. There was no, like, emotional warfare. He was just like, I think I'm done, right? So he left, and then her friends came over, and she's crying, and she's like, they're like, oh, you know, we'll get through this. And then the next scene you see him, they call this other

lawyer to make sure that he doesn't hire her. And then he's sitting in the office with her, and he says these really awful, hateful, horrible things about her to her on the phone. And I was like, Okay, what has, like, four months gone by or something, and they've been fighting this whole time universe, because you never saw this stuff before. I'm just saying, when I saw that, I was like, Okay, well, that's not believable, because he was just nice to her when he was when he was like, leaving her. I was just like, I hate that kind of writing where it's like, oh, now, this is so extreme now, and we don't see why. So anyways, that's, that was my but I didn't watch the whole episode, but that's what I thought. I'm like, I don't want to watch that. That's also from a writers could be, yeah. So, I mean, yeah. So so that, that is a procedural, right? But it focuses tightly on those three core characters, yes, right? It does. Slow horses, one of my favorite shows, and I know you would love it dads, but you haven't watched it. I just finished last season, but it's technically procedural, right? It's about these, am I am I five agents? Or am I six? My 5am? I five? I can't remember, but you know, there's missions, there's failures, there's Fallout, but it's, it's more about the characters. Gary domans character makes that whole show. And every season, you know, every every episode something new and crazy, twists and turns. Every season is a new mission, but it's still a procedural, but it's a different it's new. It's, it's pushing the boundaries and doing things differently. So, so if you are going to watch that right, you want to think about your buyers appetites. And I say buyers because you have to sell your script, right? There's no audience until you're selling. Yeah, exactly. So you want, you have to think about that and think about audience fatigue. Are you writing something that's been done a time like we still see shows break out, like the pit this year. Everyone I know is talking about the pit. Oh my gosh, you have to watch the pit. It's so good. I'm like, yeah. But. It's just another hospital show. I'm tired of hospital shows. They're like, No, no, no, no. It is so different, so good. So I want to watch it, because everyone says it's so different, but it so there. People still buy these and make them, but they're the ones that are different, right? So you want to make sure you're doing something that hasn't been done, even if it's a premise, like, Okay, we're going to do a fire show, but you want to do it differently, right? You The difference with all of these is that it's, it's what can be referred to as a character first engine. So yeah, like your show, you're watching the law show. It's about legal cases and, oh, we'll help this woman get her divorce. But it's character driven. It's totally care. It's about the characters. So that's the difference, secondary, yeah, and I think it's because people are tired of that. Oh, okay, another law shouldn't serve this enough. It's more like humanity, yeah, human interest stuff, Human Condition stuff, yeah, just like, Oh, got to help this woman and friends sticking together and like all those things, they're like, Oh, that makes me feel something. I feel that's why I liked it. Yeah, and we haven't seen a show about a group of female lawyers, right? Haven't done it, so you're reinventing that format. You're giving us something that is a familiar format, but you're doing it in a fresh way, in a fresh way. So, so that's the key. When you're writing something like that, right? When you're writing a procedural, you want to make sure that it's not something that's been done a million like the good doctor, for example, right? It's just another doctor show. It's an it's about residents in a hospital, but the leading character is autistic. That's the selling point. That's what makes it different. That's what made everyone go, Oh my gosh. This is wild.

21:25

We never finished that one either. No, because we always start once and then we never finish.

21:29

Well, because we, you and I, are more interested in limited series. We like something that is, yo, okay, here we go, right. Like, like, an eight episode, like, I remember before, it always used to be 2325 whatever. How many episodes? And then we started watching BBC shows, right? Like Luther and broad church. And we were like, We were mad at first, because they were only, like, four or six episodes. We're like, what? No, we want more. But then we were like, This is amazing, because it's so good. They don't stretch things out. Things happen quickly. Does feel too stretched out? Too? Yeah, and that's why procedurals are like that, because you just have next week is this person next week is this guest, like, it's always that's why they fit there. But you're not going to see those as much on the limited series on streaming

22:11

services, right? Makes sense off the start. Okay? Third one you have here is pilots built for binge not weekly viewing, yeah?

22:18

So we just kind of talked like, we just talked about, you want to, yeah, and that's the thing is, a lot of people will sit, get in bed, or sit on their couch at six o'clock. And, okay, let's they watch an entire series of something by midnight. So they want to watch something that is just like you watch nine episodes of below deck last night, right? Those? And, I mean, a lot of reality is built for that, right? It's built for streaming because they stretch it out, or it's built for binging. They stretch it out. They like, they have, like, what 17 tell alls now at the end of the 90 day, fiance, because it's just repetitive, but you want, you're like, okay, oh, I gotta watch the next one. Can we just watch the first five minutes? I want to see like, they cliffhanger, you right, but you know that they're a lot of these shows that are built for binging. They have a stream, they have a streaming first structure, most shows now, unless they're those procedurals, they're landing on streaming, right? That's what they're built for, because they want an audience. The audience is like, bam, bam, bam, bam. Next button. Next button. It's about retention, right? It's about audiences, about the views and the clicks and oh, they Oh, that person watched this television show for four hours straight, right? They over the resolution. It's not about as much about getting to the end and finding out how it all ends. It's about moving through the content, getting interested, getting engaged, seeing where things are going. You don't want it to end, but you want to see where things are going. Yeah, it makes sense. And a lot of them will have kind of slow burn hooks right where, like we watched, I mentioned this a few times, we watched that television series. It was on Netflix called untamed, and it was about that murder in the state park, right? And you've got the Ranger and this, like rogue agent guy. It was a slow burn. It was the first episode was really set up about the world of the story, who the characters are. There's a murder. It's less about the murder in that opening episode, but it's more about who is this guy? What is this problem? What have they gone through? Why is his wife estranged? It was a slow burn, but it was meant for binging. It was meant, okay, yeah, episodes done. Let's go to the next one. So you have to keep that in mind as a writer, that you want to create something binge worthy. You want to create something that people are going to watch and immediately want to hit that next button? Yeah, right, exactly. Stranger Things is a perfect

example. It was so different and unique. As soon as you got to the end of that first episode, you're like, Okay, what is the what everything just tilted and twisted and now we're underground. What is this? What this? What's the upside down? Where did the kid go? How is the kid dead? Where, you know, like, what is going on here? What is even happening? It was built to create such interest that you could not watch the next episode.

24:47

Just like putting a book, a good book, down, right? You're just like, Yeah, I got to go down to the next chapter.

24:51

Yeah, exactly. So, I mean, that kind of thing that's, it's been, it's built for binge and so the best thing you can do is. To keep in mind that you need to, you need to, to put so much interesting stuff, and it's all about not answering any questions, not paying anything off. Just set up, set up, set up, set up, set up, set that creates binge Ness. Yeah, binge Ness, that's a new word, binge Ness more than anything else, because the audience has no answers. So you have to watch the next episode to at least get one answer. Yeah. They need to come back and then you. So you'll start the next episode thinking, I just want to see what that does. But it doesn't start that episode with what it ended with. It'll give you some other stuff to get there. So you just keep watching, and then same thing again and again and again. So it's, it's writing binge worthy stuff is just, don't pay anything off. Just set it all up. So the reader gets to the end of that and they're like, Okay, I got to give this to my boss, because they we, we got to talk to this writer. We got to figure out where this goes. Right? That's what you want them feel, which then makes them understand what the audience will feel. So, so retention has definitely replaced resolution. Now, right? You want these people who are making these streamers who are putting this out, they just want to retain more and more audiences, because there's so much content out there,

26:07

there is to get to pick a show like you want someone to pick your show, yeah? And when there's so much being thrown at you, it's like, what do you even pick? And it's so easy just to stop and go on to the next one. Yeah, that you really have to catch them either first couple minutes

26:25

you do. Like, for us, it's like, I noticed when we watch something and we're like, next up one, do another episode. Like we were like, each other, like, yeah, for another episode. Normally we're just like, Okay, we're done. I'm gonna go do this. You couldn't do this. But like, trying, we were just like, we just watched episode after episode, shrinking episode after episode. For me, slow horses, I'll watch an entire season in one night, because I just can't stop, right? Because I just, it's just, I just want to keep going and going and going, because the resolution doesn't come to the very, very end. You don't know the whole time where this is going to go. So it's about retaining that person without giving all these things away. And slow horses is great for that, because Gary Oldman, he is incredibly methodical with everything he does, and he's like, the worst guy, and he's gross and he's dirty, and right, he's just a slob, but and he does these things that no one understands why he's doing it. They think that he's just being mean or rude, but

seven episodes later, they they're like, oh, so he actually sent me. You meant to sent me there, knowing that he would shoot at me, because you knew I would go do this. And he's like, Well, of course, right? But if the whole time you have no clue, because you're like, Okay, he's just being this way, and you keep going. So it's all about creating that, that next I got to hit next. I got to hit next, makes sense? Yeah. So what's the fourth one today?

27:40

Fourth one is the side character who should have been the lead,

27:44

yeah, and this is, I mean, this is something you don't always understand when you're writing something, right? You don't know that your secondary character is actually your leading character, right? You'll see it maybe as it as the season continues on, but it's all about making sure there's enough going on there that it, it can, it has the ability to shift to different characters, that that there's enough content for that character, that anyone could be the leading character, right? And that's, that's what's fun about ensemble shows like that. A couple examples, so you can understand what I mean. Orange is the New Black. I never watched it. You watched it? I didn't watch the whole thing, no, but it started as the story about this woman who went to prison, and I can't remember what she did. She was still married, and she did something. Asked me, you guys know, did some kind of crime anyways. And so it seemed like that show was going to be about her, but it wasn't when she got to prison. It was about everybody. It was about the crew that she got caught up with, and the friends and their stories in their lives. So it wasn't actually her story about her. She always kind of stayed as that main. But are the other characters? When you talk about, when people would talk about Orange is the New Black, they wouldn't talk about her. They talk about, I think crazy eyes was a character like they would talk about all these other characters, right? When you talk about Breaking Bad, for example, who do you talk about? Usually I like Jesse, yeah, that's right. Bitch, yeah, right. Like, I'm not calling you that, but that's what Jesse would say, right? But you do? You think of Jesse Pinkman? You don't think of Walter. He's the lead. He does everything. But the first thing most people think of is Jesse, right? Same surprise that I knew his name, no, because that's that was my point. That's why I made that point, because, everybody knows me. Remember names, right? Breaking Bad. You know that it started to that. But if you like, I always think, well, who's the main who's the really, the main character of a story, the main character, to me, most important character is, if you take that character out of the story, that story will never happen. And that's Jesse, because Walt would never have even thought about selling meth or cooking meth without Jesse, if he hadn't gone on this bust with his brother in law. Saw Jesse Pinkman run out of the house. Think, hey, I taught him chemistry. Went after him. Saw how much money Jesse was processing, and thought, there's how I pay for my cancer treatment. But the. Here's how I set up my family for the future. There would be no show without Jesse. So that's to me, is the he, he doesn't seem like the main character off the start, but he's probably the most important character as it goes through.

30:09

That's also kind of what you talked about last episode, though, too, with having the like, having questioning yourself, almost, for rooting for the bad character, yeah, rooting for the bad guys,

because the bad those are bad guys, yeah, but Jesse wasn't bad. Walt was bad. No, they do, but Walt was not initially, but no, but that's the trick. Is, Walt was always a bad person.

30:32

He was, he was resentful. He hated his life, his friends stole his career, and they were rich and he was bad, but he was though he was always, he was always the underdog. I'm the guy who knocks. He's the he was always was. He was just living a boring, mundane life because he didn't have, he didn't have the opportunity to be best but, but Jesse wasn't. He was just selling drugs. He wasn't a bad person, but we still root for him, right? But that's what I'm saying, is Walt was the bad guy we're rooting for. But at the as you go through you're like, hey, this guy is this guy's needs to stop. Like you still want to see he's ruining everybody's lives, Yeah, but you're not really rooting for him anymore. You're rooting for Jesse. Jesse. Find a way out, man, get out all the bad things happened to Jesse. Jesse was the one who was locked away in a cage in the desert, like every so, so, yeah, so, not always. It seems like it's about that main character, but it's, it's really, it's really not, it shifts, right?

31:24

More like Jesse's more the emotion, right? Definitely the emotional character.

31:27

He's the one we emotionally attached to, and the and the wife and the Son and all that, right? Game of Thrones,

31:32

even the brother. Yep, I still like the police officer brother, yep, the brother in law.

31:37

Yeah, because he felt bad. You're like, this guy's gonna be, he's gonna be he's gonna be in so much trouble when they find out that his brother in law was this, was this? Right? Yeah, so, so, and Game of Thrones is another example. So Ned Stark, right? He's the leading character of this series. He's the one that we attached to. He's the point of view we're learning about everything from him. We think he's the main character. And if you haven't seen Game of Thrones them. Not going to spoil it for you, but something happens to the end that you realize, okay, no, never mind. This is not going where I thought it was going to go. And if they hadn't built up such an incredible ensemble of other characters, it wouldn't, wouldn't have been able to go in so many directions, right? So you think this is Ned's story, but it's not. It's everybody else's. So the only way that will ever work is if you set up enough characters in your pilot that that could be, that could very well be the main character, right? Otherwise it just feels like you're cheating and you're just, oh, well, this didn't work. So we're gonna go this direction. But because you're just writing in the pilot, it's not on purpose, not purposeful, yeah, so, so because you're only writing a pilot, no one's gonna know that that's where it's going. But every writer should know in their heads, this is where it goes, right? So that it feels like, okay, there's something intentional here. So that's, that's what you that's what we want to keep in mind there. So it's about the ensemble imbalance, right? So there needs to be an imbalance in the ensemble that, okay,

yeah, we feel like this person is our main that we're connecting to, but this person's just as cool, and this person's just as bad, and like, Okay, I don't know who, I don't know who's it gets you thinking, Okay, I want to see where all these, how this all works. It's, it's about when, you know, understanding when to pivot to that other protagonist, when it's time in that pilot to focus on that other character just as much, yes, as the main character,

33:33

not just, not necessarily protagonist either. No antagonist,

33:37

antagonist as well. Yeah. So not, not just Pro, yeah. So these, I mean, those are sometimes you're not going to write a pilot thinking of that or like, Okay, I know that this is my like, one of the things that always threw me is, watch the pilot for the watchman, okay? And this is based on the comic books. It was on HBO and Don Johnson, I don't remember the character he plays, but he is like, the mayor of this town or something, and he is like the main person, and he's Don Johnson. He's a big, you know, big, whatever, not a list actor anymore, but he was, like, the biggest actor in the show, and he gets the most like time, and at the end of the pilot, he dies. They hang him. And I was like, what like? Okay, so who, who's the main What, like? I think, like, I haven't watched, I didn't watch any of the episodes. I didn't find it that interesting, but I was like, okay, oh yeah, I gotta fight. Okay, well, who is this gonna be about then? And so it did interest me to know what comes next. But that's the thing. Is, sometimes you you can end a story, you can start with a protagonist, a leading character, that you that you want the audience to be like, This is who you're with, and then do something to them that they're like, what? But it only works. Didn't work for me because I didn't. I was paying so much attention to him, I didn't really care about anyone else, and then he was gone, and I'm like, but

34:49

how do you know I don't really care about those aren't going to be about how he dies and gets to that point it

34:54

might be, but it didn't set up that that's the expectation of what the format would be, because these other characters were in this movement. Moving Forward ends up happening.

35:01

Though, do you know? Don't? I never watched the rest of it. I know you didn't watch it, but did it show his other part of his life? Or was he legit episode?

35:08

I think it was just in one episode. Be interesting to know. I mean, maybe. But the problem for me in that one was that I didn't. I can't even tell you who else was in it, whether characters were in it only his. It's because they weren't given enough time, or they weren't, you know, they didn't stand out enough for me, right? So, you know, and that's just, and that's all personal taste, right? Doesn't mean doesn't work for everyone else, but, yeah, that's, that's how, that's how it goes. So

you got to make sure you have the right kind of balance in your character set depending on what you're going to do, Okay, makes sense? Because then if you don't that, the confidence comes back in where you're like, I don't think the character knew that they I don't think the writer knew they were going to do that, and now that they did, it doesn't work like it should have, yeah.

35:49

So it's like, having all of the puzzle pieces ready to go, and then you have three pieces left, and they're all the same puzzle piece, yeah?

35:58

Or you, or you, you're about to finish your puzzle, and there's two pieces missing, yeah, and then you're like, well, this sucks. Was the point of this, yeah, all of

36:06

this for absolutely nothing. These pieces don't fit. They just don't.

36:10

And when, if you are going to do a pilot like that, get people to read it thought you're gonna say, and if you are going to do a puzzle like that, no, get, get as many people to read it as possible, because you need to. You may not see that right, and so the loops need to be, yeah. But if you know, okay, I'm killing this character at the end of this episode, for example, you want to give it to a bunch of people, and if they're saying, don't kill him, or, or, Oh, if you're gonna kill him, I don't know where this goes, or who are the other people like you. That's how you find out where your holes are what isn't working right? And, like, don't ever write a pilot. Never get notes and send it out. Like, just, it's, I mean, go ahead and do it. Maybe your script's perfect. Yeah, right, whatever it could be. But man, like, get as many eyes on your script as possible. Because, like, idea, I get my best ideas. Like, I'm not joking. I'm not just saying this because I'm trying to brown nose. But desert gives me my best ideas. When I'm stuck, I go to her and I say, okay, so this is happening, and then this and this. And normally she's like, I have no idea what you're talking about. You make no sense, but because I'm not great at explaining how my brain works. But then she'll be, Oh, what if, what if you did this? Or I'll go and I'll say, I need an idea. I'm here and here, and here and I here, and I don't know where to go, and then you will just be like, Oh, what if you do this and this and this, and I'm just like, Why have I been sitting at my computer for seven hours struggling to figure this out? Why did I not just come and ask my wife earlier? So the best, sometimes the best ideas you have come from people outside your brain, because you you see it a certain way. It's hard to see it from outside.

37:40

So anyways, way back to the watchman. Yep, it only lasted one season. Yeah, I don't know if it's meant to or 2019 it was out. I don't know if Don Johnson was in the whole thing or not, but it did get 8.2 Yeah.

37:54

Like, I'm sure it was IMDb, and I'm sure it was good, but I was just like, it's one of those things where, like, there's 1000s of television shows on my list to watch if something doesn't get me at the end of that first episode, I'm like, maybe I gotta move on to the next one, right? And then I just will never go back. You should.

38:08

Oh, yeah. And here it says, the creator of the show is not, was not interested in pursuing a second season. That doesn't seem right.

38:17

Maybe they didn't like how it went. Maybe I'm wondering, a lot of times a series will be, you know, like, like, critically acclaimed, or an audience was love it. Maybe critics don't, and then they'll just cancel it. And you're like, why did you cancel this? It was so good and so or I'll be like, Oh, I'm excited to watch this show, and then you find out doesn't get a season two, and then I just won't watch it, I know, because it's, well, kind of like what I said about Vikings, and few episodes ago, got to the end of Vikings, and it was like, you could tell that something happened while they were shooting that season, that they finally understood they weren't moving on, because there were so many new storylines set up that just made no sense as to why they set them up, because they had no resolution or not even, like, the next step, no payoff. So yeah, so sometimes that's just how it goes. Okay, well,

39:03

because you were talking for so long, I did look it up a little bit more. Thanks. He's actually in three episodes. Oh, so flashbacks, through flashback sequences, as the central mystery of the season unfolded,

39:14

but he's not the main character, but he's treated as the main character.

39:17

His subsequent two appearances in occurred in later episodes.

39:21

Yeah, so for me, I just won't go back to it, because too many other things to watch. But yeah, so interesting. Interesting, very interesting.

39:28

Just to go over what you talked about on this episode, the part two, you talked about TV pilots that are really feature films in disguise. You talked about procedural fatigue and reinvention. Then you talked about PILOTS built for binge, not weekly viewing, and the side character who should have been the lead? Yep, that is a lot of information, it

39:54

is, and I hope it made sense to most people. Sometimes my brain, I think, like I noticed sometimes how my brain does. That make sense in these podcasts, because I'll say a bunch of stuff, and then you'll just stare at me, and I'm waiting for you to I'm waiting for you to say the next thing, and you're not and I'm like, Okay, so maybe that didn't make sense, like I thought it did. Sometimes my like, I have extreme ADHD, and my brain, my brain runs at like, 200 miles an hour when my mouth runs at about 80. So I just have such a hard like, same with my writing. Like I, I'm like, I need to write 2000 words a minute because I'm having trouble getting this all out. That's why I dictate most of the stuff I write. And then I go in and I play with it, because my brain is just like, okay, yeah. Then this happens in the what if you do this, and I just can't, I can't write it as fast, right? More. So talk it out, so that you have someone listening yourself. Talk it out. You talk no. You talk it out. You record yourself, yeah, then you listen back, yeah, to make sure that everything sounds good. Yeah. Like, am I before you're gonna go and write, yeah? But yeah exactly. Just, it's like your outline, yeah? Just because my brain just goes too fast. I can't keep up, but Sonny's, I apologize if that happens, try leaving with me. I know. But if it's something didn't make sense, I apologize,

41:03

try, because I'm different, so I try to clarify, yeah, and you're like, I don't

41:07

understand what that means. It's like, okay, good. So that's legit, you guys. Not everyone will. So when I say I don't understand, I legit don't understand, yeah, but yeah. So like I said in the last episode, the little math formula, it's not math, but it's just got plus signs in it. It's all about authority, voice and emotional control, right? Meaning that your characters have authority, and you have authority that we feel okay, this writer knows what they're doing. They're taking control of this, that the voice is different, not the same thing we've heard all the time, even if it's a familiar formula of a procedural and then the emotional control that the writer has control over the characters, to showcase that these things are making them feel stuff, which then is also dictating the audience feeling something. And we did a whole episode, I think, on emotions before, on emotional connection to the reader and to the audience, but all of those together, authority, voice, emotional control equal a pilot that will make someone stop what they're doing and just get lost in it. So while you process some of that, hang tight, we're going to talk about one of our services here. We'll be right back.

42:09

Feel like you've taken your script as far as you can on your own. We know how frustrating it can be sometimes to get the great ideas that are in your head properly on the page, but imagine having a professional screenwriter jump in and rewrite it for you to create a market ready script. Send us your script for a rewrite proposal, and the pro of your choice will write up a page or so of notes on exactly how they'd approach a rewrite. Head on over to [www.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite](http://www.scriptreaderpro.com/rewrite) and use the code rewrite15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

42:52

If you are still with us during this podcast, of course, they're still with us.

42:56

They need to hear about the questions. Thank you so much. They love the questions. And maybe there's maybe they're waiting because they want us to read their question.

43:02

Maybe, maybe. But if you do have a question, you can always submit to [hello@scriptreaderpro.com](mailto:hello@scriptreaderpro.com) Yep, and we would love to answer any questions that you have. First question comes from Kelly from Omaha. Kelly asked the question, What makes you lose confidence in a writer, even if the script is technically good, oh, confidence. Is it layout? Scott, is it for me? Is the format? No, I

43:28

think that's saying even if it's technically good, meaning that it's in format. Everything's being done, right? Technically good could mean that it's a good story. Well, I mean, you lose confidence in a writer immediately, if there's if there's if it's not formatted as a screenplay should be. Or if there's writing mistakes, and I make writing mistakes all the time, I don't always catch all my typos. That's why I have someone else look for them. But yeah, like the other I was reading a script yesterday, and this was what a character said, You're too good, but it was Y, o, u, r, t, O, good. Like they spell your and wrong, they spell your and two wrong, and it was on the very first page, and I'm like, well, that's not a good sign. I have this is not going to be good. Like you immediately think I have no confidence now in the writer. So always proofread. But I think for me as a reader specific, because everyone has something different, but for me as a reader specifically, what makes me lose confidence is when characters do things that make no sense for that specific character. I was like, Okay, so the writer knew where the character, they knew they needed the character to do this, so they just did it. Well, I don't believe that character would do that. I'm out right? Because then I'm like, this is just going to be manipulation the whole time, right? It's not going to feel organic. That's what pushes me out of it. And if you want, and the tip is, if you need to, if everyone in a story, you need your characters to get to a certain point. Ask yourself, how would that character get to that point? How would they act in this situation? I still need them to get that way. So how would they get there? Not, oh, I'm going to. Make them do this. How would they get there? Right? The Joker would get to a point completely differently than, say, the Riddler or scarecrow or whoever, like, they would all do it differently. That's what you want to make sure you're doing is that's what loses confidence for me. Okay, those two things,

45:15

hopefully that answers your question. Kelly, next question we have is from William from Belfast. Belfast, at what page do you know whether a pilot is worth finishing? I'll read it in

45:26

a Belfast accent. At what page do you know whether a pilot is worth finishing? How's that? Okay, yeah, I'm Scottish. You are. Well, you just found that out too, that you 70% Scottish.

You're my ancestry, yeah. Anyways, what page Do you know? Oh, it's in italics. Do you know whether a pilot is worth finishing? This is the answer. What do you think the answer is? Dez, how do I know when a pilot is worth finishing the first page? Nope. When I finished it and I didn't realize I read the whole thing, okay, because I'm done. I'm like, nothing stopped me. Not a single thing stop me.

46:00

If you kept eating gumballs and you didn't think of it, never mind. That's what you do all day long. I can't live without my gumballs. Okay? So it's if you get to the end in it,

46:09

and you're me, yeah, but, and that's, that's when you know it's worth finishing, but, yeah, first page, that's when you know it's worth reading. And getting any, getting no, worth reading, worth getting into. It's like, okay, I'm excited. Let's go. But, yeah, worth finishing. Not until I finished it, do I have that idea?

46:22

All right, hey, faith from Kansas City, Missouri, ooh, uh, Kate. Faith says, What's the difference between a pilot that's confusing and one that's intriguing? Well, faith, the answer to your question is one is confusing and one is intriguing.

46:43

I think when I when I see, when I hear this one, when I see these words, I think for me, it comes down to questions. If I get to the end of a pilot and more of my questions are, okay, well, why did that? I don't understand. How does that make sense? Why would they do that? What? What's the point of this confused? That's confusion. If my other if my questions instead, are, oh my gosh, kids, how are they connecting? Why did he do that? Where is that going to go and who can Why did they kill him then? And that's intriguing, right? Those, and I say that a lot my notes, is the questions that I should be thinking about should get me excited, rather than confused, right, right? And so for me, that's it. It's intriguing. If it's got me thinking of, oh my gosh, I need these answers rather than, why did they make me why am I not getting answers, right? That's the big difference.

47:31

It makes sense. Last question Shane from Connecticut.

47:35

Whenever I see Connecticut, I always in my head I say Connecticut connect, because it's Connect. The word is connect with Connect, I cut. Where are you from? I'm from. Connect, I cut. Oh, is that the same as being from Arkansas? Arkansas, Arkansas. That's what I see. When I see it, I'm like, Arkansas must be our Kansas. Why is the sign? Why is the S S S silent, Arkansas, Arkansas. Okay, let's just mark and says, y'all

48:03

okay, how do you know if a note is about the script or about the reader's taste

48:12

for the laughter? I hate readers whose bias enters their notes. There's nothing worse than that, like if you're gonna read someone's screenplay and give them thoughtful notes. You don't infuse your own personal tastes or beliefs or right like if you are reading a script and say it's got it has gay characters in it, and you don't want to see gay characters in a script, you shut that off. First of all, grow as a person. Second of all growth, second of all that. It's nice. That's your no. It's a bias that everyone should be seen as as worthy and as human beings. Some people don't have that same No, but I wouldn't like, so if it was a if it was descriptive about bashing gay people, I wouldn't be like, Oh well, I'd be like, Okay, let's read it for the content it is, and give the notes. That's what I'm meaning, is you don't, don't infuse your own personal belief or opinion in something, or even like something that annoys you, like, oh, we see. Oh, well, they used we see four times. So this script is garbage. You know how to write. That's the problem, right? So that's when you know it's not about the script, because that person is is now viewing it from a different angle, right? Like I had this person I worked with, and she wrote this beautiful script about this woman and her autistic son. And he was pretty extremely autistic on the spectrum, but he loved Lego. Lego was his entire world, and he just got lost in it, and gave him such joy. And so he he wanted to go to this Lego competition that they had to drive across the country, and he couldn't fly, because he couldn't handle flying. Okay, so the only way to get there, and it was, they were lived in, in like San Diego, and it was in, it was in whatever Maine or something. So they had to drive across the entire country. But he doesn't like driving either. And so it was about her and her boy and their bonding experience, because they were very disconnected. Because. Is hard, right? And so it was a beautiful story, lovely. The note from the reader said, I'm sorry, but I have a friend who has an autistic child, and all of these things that this kid did, an autistic child would never do. What the story she wrote was true is her story. Yeah, it was about her and her son, and they traveled across the country and they went to this Lego tournament. Everything that happened is what happened between her and her son, and everything he does in the screenplay is based on things her son does. So she has firsthand experience of these are all truths, and this idiot reader who knew one person, who had one child who was autistic, because I guess all autistic people are exactly the same. They're all Rain Man, right? That meant that that script didn't work for them. That's a problem. That's when you know that note, disregard it. That person, your script is not for them. Don't, don't listen to anything they say. They came at that in kind of like attack mode. That's when you know, it's about the reader and not the script. Hope that makes sense. Yeah, that's good. That's really helpful, and that's it. That's it. That's the end of our episode. So if I got angry, there, things like that make me mad, really angry.

51:10

And I actually motioned to him to bring it. His neck is really red too. And we get when he gets mad angry there, his neck turns red and patchy. I just

51:21

want people to be people. Just be people. People, nice people. Just be people. Yeah, no, not just people. Be nice people. Just treat every person like a person. Hey, if you like this podcast,

please subscribe to wherever you get your wherever, whatever you're listening to this on right now. Just hit the little button. Just subscribe it. We're dropping episodes weekly. We've got lots of series. This was a two part series, which was fun. We had a four part series A while back about features. And if you liked this episode, yeah, subscribe to it. We're dropping episodes weekly, trying to give as much content different ways. If you learned something great, if you were entertained, even better, if I said something that resonated with you in a way that maybe it hasn't yet. That's my goal. That's my hope. So if you did share it with other writers, pass it on, subscribe, come back. Give us a rating.

52:04

Ratings are great. And also, if you have any questions or you want to hear about a certain podcast topic, you can email us at [hello@scriptreaderpro.com](mailto:hello@scriptreaderpro.com),

52:14

yeah, and check out our website. We have endless services, anything that you can imagine. Our writers, you get to pick who you work with, we're fully transparent people, because at Script Reader Pro, we are all about helping writers craft wonder one page at a time.