

## Ep #57: Brandon Violette Interview

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In this episode, we are talking to a special guest. Yes, Brandon Violette is a television writer who has a lot of experience, and he's going to pass on some really great stuff

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today. So listen in.

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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.

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Hey, Scott. Hey Desiree. Hey listeners, hey. Listeners, Hello, is anyone there? Hello. No, I'm hoping. I'm hoping too. Anyways, I'm Scott. Hey, I'm Desiree, and Desiree's the host of our podcast. Scott is the writer, and he is a writer for Script Reader Pro. This is the Script Reader Pro podcast.

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Yes, I'm one of the team here, writer, reader mentor, all that kind of stuff. We have a cool rewrite accelerator program excited to be leading, to help writers move very specifically and guided through a rewrite process, because a lot of writers just have a hard time taking notes and putting them in. And putting them into action. So I'm excited about all the stuff we've got going on here.

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I am so excited too. Desiree just can't even handle her guys. I'm so excited I can barely stand it. And for those who have listened before to previous episodes, you know I really am being sarcastic. Sorry to burst your bubble. I am not a writer. No, nor do I ever want to be a writer, nor would I ever choose again to be with a writer. Oh, really, that's sad. I'm feeling a little sassy and and, you know, you're sassy and stabby today, stabby, I'm a little stabby. I should have had my shirt on today. Sassy and stabby, yeah,

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but we are. We got a great guest. We're gonna talk about some stuff, specifically television. We talked about television. I'm glad we're having Brandon on because he brings a different perspective, because he works in preschool television, definitely a different medium. Yeah, find out about that before. Yeah, so that'll be fun. But how do we normally start this

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off desk? We always talk about something we've seen, and most of the time, like 80% of the time, I forget about what we've seen. You do not remember titles? No, I don't, yeah. So this one is called, went to the theater and saw this. And it was called, send help. When you said that, I was thinking, Did we go to the theater? It was last week. That was last week, well, a few days ago, yeah, if you had said to me, if you had said to me, we got popcorn, I would have remembered. I would remember that

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is cedar popcorn. Yeah, yeah, Landmark has great stuff, yeah, yes, we watched it. It was basically, I said it was kind of like misery on a deserted island, right? So it was basically this female character, she worked for this horrible male chauvinistic boss. They, they're playing crashes only the two of them at land on this island, and don't give any no not this is in the trailer, and she has to she, she's kind of like the survivalist, and he, he's hurt, and has to rely on her. So the dynamic shifts of him now needing her to be nice to him as a boss. Yeah and yeah, lots of twists and turns, lots of funny games, things you don't expect, things you don't expect very unexpected, subverted a lot of the expectations. You know, you saw a couple things coming. You know, I saw a lot of things,

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a few you always see. A lot of you did, but you ruin it a lot of the times, because we're like myself, a lot of times, like we watched that a movie the other night, the RIP. Pause it. You paused it to tell me what you thought you usually does during the RIP. You usually pause it and you're like, key this sometimes when it's a really complicated,

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like, when it's complicated, and then sometimes I just pause to make sure that you understand. Because sometimes there's so many things that you're like,

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I don't get it. No, seems smart, smarter than what you are. Yeah, I

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have to take the chances. When I have them really, they come very I don't have a lot of them really that movie, I saw it all coming. I was like, Oh, well, he said this and this, so that makes no sense. So clearly, oh, I knew that it wasn't a surprise to me the whole time, which is unfortunate, and that's part of being a writer and analyst.

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You know, for those that have watched the movie, I'd like to know if anybody else is asking the question on where is that diamond ring? No, I'm serious. That has stuck with me. Is I thought? Did she end up doing something? Took it from his pocket? No, no, no. We had it on him. I know what happens to the diamond ring, if you remember, yeah, I want to know what happened

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to the diamond remember now that you motioned that motion? Yeah, as

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I want to know if she ends up using that or how that comes to me. Yeah, that's clever, yeah.

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Anyway, if anybody has entertaining, you know, if you don't go to the theater, it'll be on streaming soon. But yeah, it was fun. It was,

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it was lots of fun. Hey, Scott, yes, we have a dude with us. His name is Brandon. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Brandon? Brandon, it's Brandon Violette. Is a screenwriter. He's a podcaster. He's much better than you Scott probably, and a speaker based in LA he was most really recently the head writer for Robo. Go Gobo. Say that four times fast. Robo gobo, Robo gobo, Robo gobo, gobo, go yep. And pop struction at Disney. Oh, Disney. Scott, yeah, Disney Television Animation. And the CO creator, head writer of Coco melon, feels like that could be a song. Scott, it could be Coco. Marilyn lane, one of Netflix top performing preschool series, nice. His writing credit span hit shows including dew drop diaries through DreamWorks tots through Disney Jr, Thomas and Friends. All engines go Scott you love Thomas and Friends. Okay, just

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Yeah, our daughter was obsessed with showing us creepy, creepy memes of Thomas

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of Thomas. Thomas yes through Mattel and Stretch Armstrong and the flex fighters Hasbro studios. In addition to his screenwriting work, Brandon is the host of The Story series podcast where he interviews writers, show runners, filmmakers, authors and creators about the rules they broke to build lasting careers before moving to to LA. Brandon studied at the Beijing Film Academy and continues to return to China as a guest lecturer, sharing insights and storytelling animation and the global landscape of entertainment. Welcome, Brandon. Welcome. Brandon Violette,

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hey, thank you so much for having me. I'm thrilled to be here.

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Yeah, thanks for joining us. This is fun. We've we're just kind of getting deeper into interviews here. We're almost 60 episodes into our podcast, and a lot of it is just me as just chatting, but we've had a handful of interviews, and it's a lot of fun to just get different insights from writers at different levels of the business, different capacities, different mediums. So yeah, got a bunch of questions here. So excited to have you here. And yeah, and we just, just to kind of set up. We have a 17 year old now, but she was quite the television show kid. She had a handful of of these types of shows that she absolutely loved. Phineas and Ferb was one of her favorites. My Little Pony, the the Big Comfy Couch. I don't know if you know that one is, oh yeah, one with Luna

and her carpet, rug, yes, her clock rug, sure, yeah. So we are. We were familiar with, we're privy days of priestly blues, clues, all that kind of thing. So it's gonna be interesting to get that behind the scenes. Kind of peel back the curtain a little bit and

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before we start, before we start, though, can you tell us, I guess, a little bit about yourself?

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Yeah, tell us, like your background more, more like what got you into writing, kind of, where you came from, what, what avenue you took, that kind of stuff.

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Yeah, absolutely. Well, I grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, so I'm sort of a local. And growing up the show that, like, changed kind of everything for me was Rocco's modern life. So I was very much a 90s Nickelodeon kid, and I wanted to draw, like, that was my earliest kind of memories, like, specifically the show, but they would have these featurettes of, like, making of Rocco's modern life during the commercial breaks. And I got to see the Creator, Joe Murray, at his studio, and he was drawing, and there's all this kind of cartoon chaos around him. And I connected that with the show that I was watching. And I was like, I want to be a cartoonist. That was all I said growing up and and what kind of changed into writing was in high school, I kind of had this realization that I was like a mediocre artist at best. And I went to, you know, went to community college and found film production and filmmaking and and I fell in love with the medium that way and and I specifically screenwriting, which I felt was something I could do, and then I followed that. That kind of set me up to to pursue that in the industry, like professionally, but that was kind of how it

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started. So you went to you went to school, though

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I did. I went to community college, first out of high school, and

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then I write for writing, or what was it for? It was

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really just to cover the general education and I but found film production there and screenwriting classes. Took basic screenwriting, advanced reading. So that was where, like, the love, like, really kind of, you know, melded into, like, maybe a career path, and then I took that to Cal State, Northridge, which was like the four year school, and I transferred there with a focus in film, production,

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screenwriting, Okay, makes sense. Okay, that's cool.

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So, like you said, mediocre artists, but you always had, like, a love of animation. Would you say,

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yeah, yeah, love of animation and comic books and just, you know, anything visual like that, growing up, visual storytelling and and so I think that that was, yes, I love to draw, but I love to draw comics and stories. And so I think writing is, like the same thing. It's just like you're writing. Writing stories instead of drawing them.

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Yeah, that's, I mean, that's, that's, you know, it's a great way to look at it and and I always say, like, you can teach anyone how to be a screenwriter. You can teach everyone how to do the format and the structure and stuff, but you can't teach someone how to be a storyteller. You either love storytelling or you don't, right, right? So it sounds like, and especially with comic books. I mean, they're so great at weaving a story together, but in a visual, very visual way, which is very much dictates well into into screenwriting. So, so that's awesome.

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Probably relate to that too, though, Scott, because you were an artist for

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so long, yeah, I was gonna be a cartoonist. That's what you wanted to be, right? Like an animator, an animator, and it was just, and I'm old balls, so it was, like, it was like, way back in the day, but when, when CGI was just 20 thing, right? No. And so, yeah, I got into, you know, and I was still drawn, like, on flip paper and, you know, like, that kind of stuff. But, yeah, story, you know, animated stories are such a way to really escape the world, right? And able to have, like, there's, there's endless possibilities. And that's why, yeah, I love animation stuff too, yeah?

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And like, Cal Arts, the, you know, the famous art school is, like, right in my backyard growing up. So I was like, oh, I want to go there one day. And then I got that realization of, like, no, that's not going to happen. You're not going to go to Cal Arts. And so it was like, Okay, well, I still love this. What could I do around storytelling and still be involved? And, you know, yeah,

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so did you have like, you were like, oh, yeah, I'm not gonna go. Did you have like, support? That's my my curiosity there. Do you? Did you have support growing up where they were like, Yeah, whatever your dream is, you can be a writer, you can be creative, you can be an artist, whatever you want to be. Or did you not luck out like Scott, where it was like, that's only for special that's only dreamers only like special people get that kind

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of job, go and get a degree in something.

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Yeah, you know, thankfully, I was supported. My parents supported me, like they never hinted that it would be tough, or like it was just like, I think they were happy I had an interest. And so they were like, Let's help, help, kind of foster this, this interest and and when it came to college, it was like, if that's what you want to study, great, just go to college. Like, go get something.

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Yes, yes. Get out of our house. That's what we

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want, exactly.

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So, so how did you get your big, your big break, or your first job into actual professional writing, or the in,

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yeah, the industry, yeah.

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So, you know, I was, this was after college. You mentioned earlier. I studied overseas for about two years. I came back, and I was, like, ready to be, not be a student anymore, and I wanted to work full time, and so I was trying to get a job at, like, any sort of production company, and I sent my resume out, you know, six months I wasn't getting anything. And then I found a temp agency where I lived in the area, and I signed up for the temp agency. You know, they place you at different studios for a temporary amount of time as, like, an assistant or whatever. And it's a good way to it's another way to try to get in. And wow, I told them, like, Hey, I'm looking for a production company. And they said, you know, we don't really have that, but sometimes we do. And I said, Well, that's like, better than six months of nothing applying and not getting anything back. And then I signed up with them, and then the next day, they said, We have Hasbro studios. And I thought, Hasbro, they do film, like Transformers, like they do, you know, cartoons, movies. I said, Oh my gosh, yeah. So I The following week, I interviewed on a Tuesday with them. And I felt like it went well, I tried to call the temp agency on the way home, and I couldn't get through. And then they called me back and they said, Yeah, that was Hasbro on the other line. They want you to start tomorrow. And I was like, Oh my God. And so I started that next day, Wednesday as a temp. And so you're kind of everybody's assistant at the studio, but you're in all the departments and

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but that's how people cares, yeah, cares what you're doing.

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No, it's just anything to just get in, and then people see you working hard, and then they are like, what are you here to do? What do you ultimately want to do? And I always made it known, I want to write. I want to write. And so eventually they greenlit what became my first show that I worked on, Stretch Armstrong and the flex fighters, which was a Netflix Hasbro show. And I, they recommended me for the PA on the show. And so I got to know the head writers and all that. And so that, that time, really turned everything around for me,

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yeah, kind of like a really solid interning right? That absolutely are always kind of trying to find,

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do they still? Do they still have, like, a temp program like that? Is that something that, even, because, to me, that seems like not very common, that someone's just, oh yeah, because, can you imagine the amount of people that'd be interested in something like that? Probably it would be. Of harder, like, more competitive, that's what I'm wondering.

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Yeah, I've heard, I don't know how popular they still are or are not, but they were kind of pretty common around LA, there's temp agencies, and so you sign up, and it could be, you know, you want to work in accounting, they'll put you somewhere for accounting. Or, you know, they're like, oh, we have a job at a hospital for you know, it's like, whatever you're looking to do, they have relationships with companies, and companies are like, I need someone for three months, or I need someone, and then that's what you do, and then you hope that it leads to something long term.

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So this just happened to be that it was within the studio, in the field that you kind of wanted

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100% coincidence,

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total timing. That's what I mean.

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Like, I thought I didn't know if there was a temp kind of situation where I was all, like, people who want to be part of the movie industry, or if it was just one particular job that was out there, and we're looking for temp people. Kind of crazy that happened, that's

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pretty Yeah, this, this was a general temp agency. So it was, like, any kind of industry, any field

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work, and then you're like, I'm just

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gonna try and see and then you get history. That's really cool. Yeah, yeah, that's great. So I mean a lot of people like, I mean I as a as a reader, right? Of working for, you know, different places, reading, reading scripts for give people notes and stuff, I can probably count on one finger how many times I've read an actual preschool pilot on one finger? Yeah? Remember one so it's not something that people I mean, obviously people do it, but I don't think a lot of people spec out that way.

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Well, it's something for the listeners to to know that they that that is an option, right? Yeah?

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Like, there's so and when you think of it like there's so many shows like, you mean, Brennan, he's got like, 17 here that he's working on. But you know, like, there's a lot, there's a lot of content, a lot of shows out there. So, so what's, what would you say is the difference in the dynamic when you're working on it, on, on whatever shows you've been on, what's the different dynamic between it when, because you're a head writer, what, what do you find is different between being the head writer and just being a staff writer?

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Staff Writer. What is a staff so maybe explain the I don't know, because I don't know the difference. I don't know what's Yeah,

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so a staff writer is like, you know, that's the the dream job, where your entire job is writing scripts. You're not an assistant anymore. You're not taking notes like you are a part of the staff, and so you're breaking stories in the writer's room. You're taking participating in table reads. You're working on one script, you're cracking like the premise of the next episode. So you're juggling different episodes. And that's like your job. You are full time writing, and a head writer is the one. Another way to look at a head writer is like quality control, where it's like what the work that the staff writer does before it goes to the network for notes, it goes to the head writer, and the head writer is there to make sure that it sounds like the show. And also, depending on the personality of the head writer, they might do a heavier pass, like, maybe a comedy punch up on the script. Or, you know what this act three feels rushed, I gotta fix it, or just different things. And some have a heavy hand, some don't, but you're the head writers. Like, the last line of defense before it goes to network. So there. So the head writer constantly, like, zooms in to the script and goes over every single line, and then also zooms out and looks at okay. How does this episode stack up against the next one and the one before it? And is there a consistency? But is there also, does this do enough to stand on its own? Does it earn itself as an episode so you're zooming in, zooming out all the time? Wow.

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So they have like that. They have to be able to, obviously, work really well together, right?

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Oh, yes, with their writers, yeah. So then yeah, with the

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with the head writer. Then when they're going and they're looking and seeing changes, do they then make those changes themselves, or will they shoot the script back to the team that's already kind of the writer that wrote that episode, right? So I'm wondering back or is the head writer like, is the head writer like, yeah, I don't like how this is going. I'll just rewrite it myself, because obviously no one's gonna do it like me.

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Do you know I'm saying yes, so it's, it's, I would say all the above, but typically there's a round of notes, so the head writer will read the script, give notes for to the staff writer, and that's just, you know, the staff writer does another pass, which is normal, and then that second pass goes to the head writer. So the head writer gets the script that's now in better shape because of the notes that were done, and then they do their own version, their own little polish to it, and then it goes to network.

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That's really cool. And so the difference, so what's the difference between a head writer and a showrunner?

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Yeah, so, so head writer, it's also an animation Story Editor. They're, they're both the same, okay, you'll see that like, kind of just just used interchangeably. But a showrunner is the one now who is a step up above the head writer, and sometimes they'll look at scripts, sometimes they'll give notes before the network gets it. Sometimes they won't, but they are overseeing the process beyond the writer's room. So the head writer is responsible for scripts, you know, one through 50, or however many episodes, and then the showrunner takes those scripts and then sees it through animatic voice records animation. So they're, they're pre production, production, post, you know, all that, and the head writer is there for the duration of the scripting process for

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the writing portion. Yeah. So the show runners, beyond the writing, they're the one who's just running everything right,

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correct, yeah, yeah. So they're more of a global Yeah.

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Showrunner is basically

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the wife. No, I was gonna say, shut up. I was gonna say the showrunner is basically, like, in a medical setting, they're the surgeon, yeah, they're the head surgeon. They're like, okay, you know what? Fix that cut that's a little bit crooked, yeah, stitch it up a little better here, guys. Yeah, right, yeah. But you know, show runner to me, though, sounds okay. This whole time, I thought a showrunner is, like, below, way below, running

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and doing things. Yeah? I was like, oh yeah. Go get

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me a coffee. Go get me. Oh yeah. Sometimes

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you hear that they're runners, like runners or like assistants. That's like a live action term, but I know what you're saying, that that is true. Yeah, no, you

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didn't know that. Does that. I did not know that. So I'm learning. I'm learning something every day. You guys,

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you are every day. So am I? It's me. I don't teach you much, but you teach me a lot. Oh, good. So, so, okay, so, I mean, so many writers are trying to break in, right? Writers are trying to get in there. Want to get staff so, so what would you say, just because obviously you're in that system, right? You probably do staffing and stuff. So what should a writer trying to break in or be staffed on your types of shows, these preschool, animated types of shows be doing or be writing, what are some kind of things that they should be focusing on?

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Sure, I would say two broad things, which is, you have just an undeniably strong writing sample, and ideally it's in the ballpark of what you're the show that you're trying to get staffed on, if it's, you know, like Stretch Armstrong was a six to 11 show, so that's like an older kids. So if you had a preschool sample that would be tough to get on, you want to try to get close to the show that you're writing on. But the other side to the having a strong script is following up. I say a lot. Like, like, you send it to someone, and don't be afraid to follow up and ask if they got a chance to read it yet, reiterate how much you're interested. Like, that hustle side of it is, is, I think, under discussed, and it's very important

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totally agree, yeah. And I like, when I'm talking, because writers, after they'll get notes or things like that, their question was like, Well, now, what do I do? What do I do next? What's next? And like, 95% of writers out there, they just sit there and they wait and they hope. And you know what? They're not gonna send it out. They're just gonna wait, and then they'll just sit there and

wait a year to hear back from someone and it Yeah, you got to be proactive, right? With anything

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in life. That's what it's like with life. Life is like that now where it's just like, you can't just do something, make a call and then expect that it's just going to come to fruition and be done. Yeah, you can't be follow up.

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You got to grab Yeah, that's a great that's great advice then. So yeah, follow up. And, yeah, okay. So, like, I'm going to jump in at that a little bit the whole idea of writing a sample, I find. I mean, there's this culture of writers out there who they think they have the next big show, and maybe they do, and they'll write the pilot, but then they'll write like the whole season, they'll write like 10 episodes. And I'm always like, you could probably be spending that energy on maybe writing a couple other original pilots, rather, because no one's gonna really read anything after the pilot. Is that kind of along the right track there?

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Oh, yeah, that's spot on. Like, I've never heard of writers doing that. And if they were like, Oh, I have eight no time, and they don't understand that, yeah, but I'm the only one.

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Like, they got but this happens in episode three, they got it. Like, well, then if it's important, put it in the pilot. Like, that's all they're gonna read. Going to read, and it's 95% a sample more than a sale.

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Yeah, no one is going to buy your project based on script number seven. There's no way

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I like that. Yeah, that's good, because good to

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hear from someone in the system, someone other than head writer, yeah, because I think it's really important. You know, you've got these writers that are just banking everything on someone buying their entire series and producing it, and it doesn't and it doesn't have from scratch, right? So, yeah, that's really good to that's really good. A better

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way to do that is to put that kind of information in the show Bible, to show that you know where it's going. But, but there's such a thing as bringing too much to the table. Like, oh, I have this. I have everything worked out, and it's like, that's not what you want. And so yeah, I agree. The effort is best spent developing other things, like, you have a pilot, and then, yeah,

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okay, and you're going, you're sending a writer, writing sample, for example, to, like, some producer, or wherever you're sending to, I'm gonna guess that someone doesn't want to see 25 attachments.

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Yeah, exactly. That's all my scripts. It's, this is 1000 page this

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is my my Bible. This is my, you know, like, it's just like, oh my gosh, no one's gonna even open that. That's too much. Yeah, exactly,

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because, because, I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, Brandon, but, but even if a pilot gets some juice and people like, oh my gosh, this is the thing, and they find a showrunner, and whatever that that pilot is built in, in the room by the team, right? That where that writing, what those episodes are, what that arc is going to be. It's built by the team. Is not how does it writer who sold that

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script? Does it work? That's what we want to do. Yeah,

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well, it's the pilot is written by the Creator first. But to your point, it's not exactly that. It's built in the room, but it will change a lot. And so you want to have the pilot, which is what is going to sell your project. You know, pilot, the show Bible, and that goes through development, and that will inevitably change a bit. And then once you get, you know, you're still finding the show, even after you've gotten the green light, and you're writing the first few episodes, and you realize, you know, that's a really funny recurring joke. That means we got to go back to the pilot, put it in the pilot, so it's going to continue to evolve. But, but there's so you know that up front, but, but you still need to have that in your, in your as part of your, your portfolio. But, yeah, yeah, expect it to change and evolve.

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Yeah, good, yeah. And that's a great point, because that's why I say too. I'm like, Yeah, but what if the showrunner, or they build the team and then they think, Oh, what if we go this direction in the last five pages, five minutes of this, and that new direction could completely erase everything that else that you've planned out. You can't, you can't, you can't predict what's gonna happen there once you get other people in, right? So, yeah, so that's great. That's good to hear. I'm glad,

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but I want to know more. So like, about the fun stuff in the writing room? Like, is there, like, Do you have a coffee maker and like, tea maker and donuts and all the things? Like, what's it like? Is it like a college does craft supply you with food or beds if you're tired, or

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pillows or sleep time in the corner?

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I want to know if you have a mat that you put in the corner for sleeping.

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What are your rooms like? Yeah.

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So we have, I mean, there's, I'm sure the live action writers rooms are, are they get more craft services, but, like, we have, like, the kitchen area, and so they have, like, snacks, and they, there is a coffee machine for people at the studio and and all that stuff. No, I don't see any mats, but there's chairs are pretty comfortable

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and dynamic. Like, what's the dynamic in in the room? Like, are you guys telling jokes? Are you battling things back and forth? Everyone's personalities are bigger, or is it that you get to really serious when you can you imagine what I would be like in a writing room? So fun? Oh, I would love being in a writing room. You'd be so I would not stay on track.

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No, I would be in charge of that room. You know what? Don't even make me in that room. Just put me right ahead of the game and just make me like the show runner. Just let you do it all.

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You're very bossy. No, but what is the dynamic? Yeah, what happens if the personalities clash? Like, like, how do you know when, when you read something even, how is this person going to fit in my room? Like, how do you handle those kind of things?

28:06

Yeah, so part of the job of a head writer is to assemble the team. And you do there's not you want to be mindful of all the personalities, and there could be, maybe, on average, if you're lucky, you know, four staff writers, maybe three or four, maybe there's an assistant writer, and then maybe the show runner is in the story breaks as well with the head writer. And so there might be six or seven people in the room for animation, typically. And so you have to be mindful of that. Some people are quieter than others. Some people are, you know, they participate more and so, but there's a it's very relaxed. Generally speaking, it's relaxed. There's a lot of joking. And that is really important, because you're you have to feel free to pitch things and bat things around and take what someone said and you know what? But that reminds me of this, and what

if we did it this way? And then ideally, you have either the head writer or the showrunner as the one who's making that final call, like, yeah, that works. Let's put that on the board. Or, you know, you have to have someone that. It can't be a total committee. There has to be someone to say yes or no. And this is the direction it'll go, right, but yeah, but generally speaking, it's, it feels relaxed and fun. Good.

29:18

Well, that's good. So, okay, so recently, because of the strikes and all the crazy stuff happening, the pandemic stuff, there was the kind of the great contraction right of writing rooms where, oh yeah, they were trying to bring in less writers. They were trying to, kind of like, compartmentalize stuff, and things might have been going on over zoom and when do we get back in the office, things like that. So how has that changed the way you do things as a head writer, and have you, you view your rooms and what how many writers you may or used to have compared to now? What's that looking like in that side?

29:50

Well, writers rooms are so critical in person, just having a writer's room and so what's changed? Changed is that there's an increasing number of fully freelance shows. So you have the head writer who is hiring freelancers, and so you're breaking a story with one other person or two other people, not a room, and so that puts a lot of extra pressure on the head writer, because there's less continuity between the scripts, because the other writers aren't interacting. Freelancers aren't reading what the other writers are submitting, so they're not as familiar with the language of the show. And so that just puts again that goes back to the head writer being quality control, like it's on you to put all that together before it goes to network and make sure that it really works. And so that's more common. Like places like Disney still do writer's rooms, and they have freelance opportunities. So you could try people, but the writers rooms are still the core of every show, and that's something to hold on to as much as you can.

30:54

Yeah, yeah, for sure, that must be so, like, when you're doing to do freelance, for example, you as a head writer, would be like, Okay, this is kind of the outline of the episode. Here's you. You're the freelance writer. Take this outline and make it a make it a script. Or is it more like, this is our core idea. Let's, let's, you know, you figure it out. Give us a take and put it together.

31:14

Yeah, I would say, typically, you could do that, but you want to bring in the Freelancer in as early as possible, so you might actually ask them to submit some ideas, but guaranteeing them a script. So it's like, hey, send me some episode ideas, but know that you're not doing free work. You're gonna get an episode even if none of those ideas work, and either they do or they don't, and then you'll if they don't work, you'll assign them an episode idea, and then bring them in for a story break, and then they're there in the writers room at the beginning.

31:43

Okay, yeah, makes sense, yeah, yeah.

31:47

Speaking of ideas and stuff, then, like, I want to know, because we've talked a lot about the whole process and the outline, and do you outline or do not outline? And I just want to know what your process is like if you outline, or do you just, like, you know, both feet in, you just jump right in. Or what, what do you do personally? Yeah?

32:05

Like, your process, yeah. So outlining in television is a contracted step. You have to do it. But so that's just, that's part of it. But even on stuff that I will write for myself, it's still important to outline, at least to know where you're going. That's That's key. So it could be fun to jump in, but I prefer to outline personally.

32:32

Yeah, yeah, me too. I mean, it's my ADHD. If I don't have a path that I'm going down, I'll just go everywhere. And I'll just never get daily life, my daily life, my daily life, but I'll never get pages done. I'll never get stuff. I'll mean much, it won't make sense. So supper sometimes gets but I mean, it's for everybody and that and that, yeah, and I mean, I A lot of times because a lot of residents, like, No, I don't want to, I never want to outline. I'm like, okay, yeah, but it's still probably a good skill to have, because you may need it when you if you book a gig, you may be expected to deliver an outline if you don't know how to kind of put that together, it's, it's, you know might hurt you. So, oh yeah. And television, obviously, television definitely.

33:09

Do you write? So do you write for yourself? Like, do you write outside of the animated like area, or do you solely stick to that? Like, when you write for your own when you write, are you like? I'm writing war and slash or films, but my real love is children. Yeah, you know what I'm saying. Yeah.

33:32

I've experimented with different things over the years, but I also like try to think in terms of kids television, because I have some credibility there when it comes to trying to get something off the ground. So it's like, I can go in there, whereas if I go into a live action pitch, it's like, well, who are you? You haven't done anything. So there is, there is some, just some juice that you get by going, Oh, you've done this. And okay, let's hear your pitch. And so naturally, there's like, you're kind of moving in that direction. But I like working in kids TV because it still feels hard. It still feels difficult, and so that's not, you know, if it ever becomes boring or easy or whatever, then I know it's not a good fit anymore, like it's still, you still need to feel challenged right now.

34:16

Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, and Scott, Scott got hired to write, to write a Ukrainian film, a kids

34:23

movie, yeah, it was a kids movie, and it so a boy and a robot dog, and I had never written a kid.

34:28

That's what I'm saying. That's why I wanted to discuss this like that. That was really, I thought that was challenge, more challenging really for you? Yeah, it was really difficult going from writing thriller, you know, suspense, to then writing

34:38

kids, yeah, but I mean, and I always tell people like I've written, I've been hired to write in pretty much every genre, and as long as you understand everything is based on character, then you can figure it out, right? If you don't have the compelling, memorable character that's going to want people to keep paying attention. And then you have not done right? And, you know? And that's the thing, and it's, I'm sure, in an animated world too, like, it's like, yeah, that you've got colors and vibrant worlds and stuff, but the people come back, like, people come back for Spongebob, people come back for Phineas and Ferb, like that. That's why they come right? Is the character so everything, no matter what you're doing.

35:19

Yeah, it's so true. Oh yeah, no. It just something that, like talking to a lot of writers on the podcast that kept coming up over and over, is how important character is. And it was something that, like, we kind of instinctively know, but, but to hear it from so many different writers of different backgrounds, all saying it is, like, it was just so funny to me. Like, wow. Like, they're all saying that. And so just to your point, like, no matter what it is, like, that is why we come back. Why we're hooked, is

35:45

the character, yeah? And that's why you remember stuff, and that's why you're like, Oh man, I think tell everyone about, oh, this movie is so awesome, and it's usually because of the characters, not because of the plot, right?

35:55

So no, but then yet people still come back and are like, What? What can I do to make my script better? Yeah, and it's like character, that person's boring,

36:03

like, Give us something, give something exciting, yeah, for sure. So, so, so you have a podcast yourself, which is cool, and you're focusing on talking to writers and figuring out what kind of rules they broke to keep their career going. Yeah?

36:20

The podcast again, just for the listeners, so that you can tune into that. That podcast is called The Story series podcast, right? Yeah.

36:27

So, so for yourself, if someone, if you were a guest on your own podcast, like, what brew, how did you break the rules? What kind of rules did you break to give yourself this career longevity? What would be your thing?

36:40

Yeah, that's that's so funny to be to be asked that question. You know, one thing I like to do is just to, like, preface with the rule breaking is, like, you talk to so many people, and that's when you realize that there's not one way to do it. And so it's like people say that this is the way, and it's like, actually, it's not, and that people break in in the middle, people break into the beginning. There's all different paths. And so that's like, kind of where that came from is just like, what's the like, just counter thinking, and because we kind of all get locked into, like, just the way to the way that it's done and and so, but I would say, like, something that I still do is don't accept silence as rejection. We talked about this in the beginning about the power of like following up. Don't assume that because someone didn't get back to you, they're saying no to you. And I say just reach out. Get the yes, because we all want the Yes, but get the no as well, because at least yes and no, you can move forward in different directions. But silence could be anything, and it could be I just didn't get to it. I'm so sorry. Let me do that, all that stuff, and it shows that you want it. Sometimes your response rate increases when you follow up like it absolutely increases. And that's really what it's about. You don't want to bother people, but sending a couple weeks to follow up like that goes a long way, and people are afraid that they're going to bother people, and they're going to be on some list where they're not going to get hired, because this person doesn't. But that's not the case, and so that's something, I think, is just don't accept silence

38:11

as rejected. That's been your secret. You don't just sit there and wait for them to get back to you well, and if you do annoy them, what's the worst that can happen then? Then they're not going to be wanted anyway. But I always say to because sometimes they're just like, oh, like, how long did it wait? It's been a couple weeks and I haven't heard anything, or it's been a month and I'm like, I'm like, well, just take your time. Like, don't. Like, when you feel you want to check in, check in. Like, if they didn't want to read it, they not. They would not have asked to read it. They would have said, No, thanks. So they asked for it because they they were intrigued by our concept or whatever. But they also have 78 scripts on their desk above it, right? Like they will get to it they want to read it. So, yeah, checking in. I mean, they're not going to be annoyed because they wouldn't have asked for your script if they weren't planning on reading it. And they know you want to know an answer, so as long as you're not annoying by it, like the next day, you know, oh, why haven't you read my script yet, well, then you're just burning that bridge. Stalker, yeah, people are busy. They and that's so I'd always say is, like, well, especially in the in television, right? The funnel is, is it's, it's different than features, right? Because it's like, it's its own thing. It like people, like, Why does someone need to read your script if they have this agency and this management, all these people sending them rept writers scripts all the time. They don't need to read your script because they have stuff coming at them if they've asked for it. It means that you really, really caught their attention with your premise, or whatever it is. So just they're not like, that's what I mean for someone to ask for your script. Say, Yeah, you know

what? Send it over. That's a pretty big deal as it is. So they're not going to take that chance unless they're actually interested. So just don't be that person they would never want to work with, because you just, you won't leave them alone, or you show up at the workplace, or, like, Don't be that guy,

39:52

stinky person that's like, you know that person that follows you in high school? And you're like, oh, I don't want to be rude.

39:58

Yeah, exactly. Oh. Right? Yeah, you don't want to be that person, and that's that person. This perception is a big deal in movies and TV, right? People have to know, do I want to be in a room with that person? Do want to want to risk my reputation on that person? It's half writing, half person. So yeah, be but, but, yeah, be in control. Be be proactive, right? People want to see someone who's a go getter, who's going to actually go after something. So go after something. So yes, that's awesome. So what would be your just as we finish up here, last question for you, what would be your biggest piece of advice for writers who are new or struggling to kind of they've been doing it for a while and they can't quite get people to catch catch who they are. What would be your biggest advice for any writer trying to break into television?

40:42

Don't break into television. It's too hard find a real job, get a real job and get a haircut too.

40:49

Get a haircut. Yeah, I, you know, I, one thing that changed for me was, was giving myself permission to write badly, like when I was starting out, I and then early on, when I, quote, unquote, became a professional, a new professional, everything was like I moved so slowly because I thought every line had to be perfect before going to the next line and and in TV, it's faster paced, so you you can't fall behind. But I thought I was afraid to write badly and write like the skeleton version, because I thought if someone was to look over my shoulder, they're like, Wait, you're professional, and you wrote that sentence like that sucks. And you know, which is all us in our head, doubting ourselves, that's a writer. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And that still comes up every now and then, but to permission to write badly means I'm going to write the whole script, but beginning middle and end, write what I know needs to be in there. And it's the bad, like, I know this is bad and and I'm going to make it better. Because, like, the truest statement for a professional is writing is rewriting. You know, we've all heard that, but, like, that's what the job is, and you do that to yourself first, and so, but by giving yourself permission to write the whole thing, you see where things are falling. You see the page real estate. You see you're not just stuck in the beginning and afraid to move forward. So I think, like stay in motion is important, and the way you stay in motion, because you're not going to have a great idea every time you sit down, is to just allow yourself to write badly, knowing you're going to fix it. Fix it, and that that there's a freedom to that. And so I would say that is important for someone who's starting out, because you need to practice and work on your craft. And if you're freezing up at

the page, then you're not practicing. And so just, just to stay in motion like that, I think is probably, probably the biggest thing.

42:39

That's great. That's great advice. I

42:41

think the thing too is like, you are your own writer. You're your own person. You're entitled to make and break the rules as you see fit. That's what it is, right? Like, yeah. There's lots of people who say, Oh, yeah, this is how it's written in stone. This is this. That's what they say.

42:56

That's what experiment. You got to find your voice. You got excited about what you and I always say to people like to go to pin onto what you say, what you just said. I always tell people, embrace rewriting. That's my favorite part of everything. And it's like, yeah, write a script that's 190 pages long instead of one that's 62 don't send it in. And the more you have there, the better goals you'll find as you rewrite it. People think that, oh, it's got to be 92 pages in my first draft. No, it doesn't just write like that's not your first draft is just you're vomiting out all of your brain and stuff. The rewriting is where the real work and the real excitement comes from. So that's fantastic. Vomiting your brain. Vomiting, that's it. Vomiting that is writing that's Vomit your brain. My advice, vomit your brain on paper. The end, the end, awesome. Well, thanks for joining us. Brandon, you know, really good insight. It's great to have a, you know, someone who's actually within the system, you know, saying these things that people can kind of take as as the truth.

43:55

And I'm a little bummed there's no sleeping bags of pillows. If you have a writing

43:59

room one day, you can have slip sleeping bags and pillows and all that kind of stuff, right? Cool. Check out his podcast. What is it called? What's your podcast called? Again, Brandon, it's called The Story series podcast. The Story series podcast, yeah, check it out. It's fun. Lots of lots of interesting personalities, great questions. You learn a lot on there as well. So, so that's great. So, and Brandon, you know, keep, keep doing the good thing. Keep keep writing fun stuff for kids. And you know, they need it these days. People, you know, children need some fun stuff to keep looking back for so, so and thanks for giving us your time today.

44:31

Hey, Brandon, do you want to stay on with us and and answer some questions that we have from listeners out there?

44:38

Oh, yeah, I'd be happy to yeah for sure. Yeah.

44:39

We're just gonna pop on a quick break for a second so people can hear so people can hear about a certain service that we have, and we'll be right back with those questions.

44:46

With Brandon, 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 rewrite 15 during checkout for the rewrite proposal to get 15% off.

45:32

Hey guys, thank you so much again for joining us with the Script Reader Pro podcast. We are at this part of the podcast that everybody loves, which is answering questions that we have had previously sent in by listeners like you. That sounds so listeners like you like you. So if you have a question, you can always submit them to [Hello@scriptreaderpro.com](mailto:Hello@scriptreaderpro.com) first question today comes from Julian in Manchester England. Oh, nice Scott. You can do a good accent for Manchester, England. I don't know the Manchester accent. You know England. Can you read the question in in your accent, what should

46:08

we not include camera angles in our screenplay? I like, that's like a dirty English accent, very dirty. Like, why should we not include camera angles in our screenplay?

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A guy Richie movie or something?

46:22

Yeah, exactly. So why should we not include camera angles in our screenplays?

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Yeah, you want to answer that one first there. Brandon, I think of this sure question would be like, spec script, right? Is what? Someone Yeah, writing,

46:34

I think at least in terms of animation, don't overdo it. But I, I'm a fan of directing on the page. I think you should present your full vision. If you overdo the camera angles, it's going to read like that and interrupt the read. But well placed, I think will can do you Well, yeah,

46:53

sometimes I agree. Like, if you if you need something like you got to make something. Times you have to make someone really see something. You need them specifically to see, right? Not on every single scene, no. But I mean, like, the ones I don't like are like, so we dolly up and we

pan across as they cross out of the frame. And like, that's not, like, tell me the story I don't need to. Like, you're not directing this to me right now, rather than, it's like, close on his hand as the blood is dripping and, you know, like, that's good, blood

47:21

part in a children's not in the children's one, no, maybe, yeah, don't do that one.

47:25

But yeah, yeah, yeah, don't overdo it, is the thing, right? Just like anything, you know, it's one of those rules where you're, like, if you need to use it, you know, like, you know, a rack, focus. Like, bam, we're there, you know. Like, go ahead, as long as it's not overdoing it. I agree. I agree. Okay.

47:39

Second question comes from someone named Mary Ann in Madison, Wisconsin. Okay, Hi, Mary Ann. What are period pieces? Or why are period pieces thought to be an expensive choice for writing a screenplay?

47:54

Oh, yeah, I can start off with that one. So you write a period piece set in 1912 in the middle of this of New York. And the only way to make that come alive is to redress and have incredibly expensive art direction and cars and New York, well, I mean, you do, like, they do something, right? But a lot of times it's gonna be a set, yeah, yeah. Or certain streets, or, like, you know, but, but that's the thing. It's like, it's expensive because they, they can't just go out and shoot it as is today. They have to make it look like a certain era to find places in the world that still look old. You got that, the costuming and, you know, all that kind of stuff. It's just it. It ends up costing a lot to put it all together. And if you're an unknown writer trying to get a studio to put \$150 million movie together because it's a period piece, that's a big ask, right? So, I mean, don't, I wouldn't say, don't write it. Go ahead and write it, because a lot of times people are reading your work and they become a fan of your work, and then they want to work with you, right? But yeah, that's, I mean, budget is always going to be, always going to be, you know, important. What are your thoughts on that? Have any thoughts?

49:03

Yeah, what do you How does budgeting even work with an animated How does

49:07

you can write? You can doesn't matter if you draw one thing or the other, it's still gonna cost the same amount of time and man hours and all that kind of stuff. Is it not

49:15

cost of pencils? And, you know, pencils and markers, the cost of that has gone up. You know,

49:23

really, though, I think, you know, generally speaking, a period piece would be fine for animation. The thing that gets costly is water or crowd effects, things like that that require a lot of especially in CG, that's where they're like, do we really need that surfing scene? Or is that? How important is it that we see all the water detail and things like that, and you could still do it and it gets worked out, and maybe you could hide it with camera angles, or there's ways to cheat it, but you do have some more leeway in animation for that reason.

49:56

Never thought of that.

49:57

That's great. I mean, that's a lot of times why I give. People. Like, if I'm reading an animation script and I'm mentoring someone, I'm like, Hey, this is, you realize this idea is huge. Like, someone had this brilliant idea of this specific kind of world. And I was like, This is so like, I can see this just unending. But you're, you don't show us any of it. You don't, you keep us in these spaces. It's, it's, it's animation. You do anything you want, they're going to have to draw it anyway. So just go as big as you want, if it's a big idea, right? But yeah, I mean, I think it's important for a writer to kind of understand budget in general, like, oh, this script would probably cost about seven to 10 million or 25, to 30, or maybe one, right? Like, you kind of need to know, because if you're pitching to people, you want to pitch to the right people, right?

50:41

So, yeah, absolutely, I would be a little concerned if we let our 17 year old budget anything. Oh, gosh, because all she budgets is Candy, candy, \$15 for gas money. Candy, more candy, and a

50:56

couple cracks, supplies and Michaels and some glue. Glue is always important. Yeah, okay.

51:01

Question three we have from Kayla, Portland, Oregon, what are the best ways to find true stories to adapt into screenplays? Ooh, that's interesting.

51:10

What about you, Brandon, what do you think is a good way to kind of find because this question is probably coming from a writer. You're here all the time. IP, IP, yeah, we don't want something completely original. Send us something based on something that has an audience. So what would you think would be a good way to, kind of find those ideas, whether you're writing it as a pilot, true story or limited series or who knows? What do you think?

51:32

Yeah, in terms of animation. I mean, there are Yeah, IP is still that's how to get someone's attention. Everybody wants original, but IP is safe. I mean, there's public domain nursery rhymes or things like that that you could, oh yeah, use to that would be considered IP, just because there's an existing awareness around it that I think you could bring in. So I would look

for things in the public domain and maybe build something off of that, because if you're writing a new script, you might not be able to secure the rights to something yourself, but things in the public domain are up for grabs.

52:05

Yeah, that's a good idea. Yeah, like an old, old fable or something like that, that you can, you know, especially for animation, some of those old fables, see those characters coming

52:14

to life and stuff are so inappropriate. Some of those, some of them, right, are scary. It's like, what the heck we read kids? And it's like, that meant something. Completely different when I was, like, six, versus now.

52:26

Yeah, right. No. Kids see the world a certain way, and it's innocent and stuff. And it's like sometimes these things aren't as innocent as you think dark. So yeah, making sure you can turn it into something that will work for the intended audience,

52:39

for sure. Hey, last question, yes, we have from North Carolina. Elena asks the question, How can I join the Writers Guild if I have not sold a screenplay yet?

52:49

Oh, you would probably know the answer to this one. Brandon, well,

52:53

I so I would say you, I don't think you can. So in animation, there's the animation Guild, and so we're not Writer's Guild friend, right? Yeah, right. But the only way we get into the animation guild is by getting hired to write a script, and then those hours count towards your membership. So I don't know of another way to

53:13

get anything. It's Yeah, same thing in the Writers Guild. People ask me that, oh, I want to join the Writers Guild. I'm like, okay, so you have to sell something and then you have to sell something else, and they have to have a certain amount of sales per year to stay in the Writers Guild. So you can be part of the Union like you can't just join it. I think people misunderstand that. Oh, if I could just be in the Writers Guild, everything would be set. Well, yeah, right, yeah, exactly. Membership card. You can't get a membership card, no, but that's basically the answer. Is, you can't until you are eligible to do so by selling something to a company that is Writers Guild signatory, meaning they will follow the union rules and the contract, you know, minimums and all those kind of things. So, blah, blah, blah, yeah. So basically, ready read an incredible screenplay, sell it for a million dollars, and you're set until next year, when you have to do it

53:59

again, and then just buy the Writers Guild with your money, really,

54:05

we are done. We are done. Yeah, we have to say goodbye, yeah. So if people liked our podcast as what should they do?

54:11

You can subscribe to our podcast. We'd love it if you gave us five stars.

54:15

Loves five gold stars. Trust me on that. But yeah, if you liked it, we hope if you were entertained, if you learned something today, great, pass it on, share with your other writing colleagues and stuff.

54:25

Any questions, comments, ideas for future podcasts, anything else you want to say, you can always email us at [Hello@scriptreaderpro.com](mailto:Hello@scriptreaderpro.com) Yeah,

54:35

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