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Workshop from 17 to 28 September 2007 at the Norske Filmskolen

## **THE BASICS OF PROFESSIONAL SCRIPT ANALYSIS**

by Donat F. Keusch (dfk)

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An intensive workshop for the students of the producers' department: Christian Bakke, Gisle Melhus, Frederick Howard, Janne Mæle, Ruben Thorkildsen, Åshild Sollien. Head of the department: Tom Remlov.

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The workshop starts on Monday (17th) and ends on Friday (28th). On the weekend Sat/Sun (22nd/23rd) a complete story-step-outline and an analysis of a screenplay has to be worked out in groups of two. The shooting of this script will be next year.

It is absolutely indispensable to read all the scripts you got in advance and the ones you will get during the workshop. Just watching the films will not be enough for being able to do your homeworks properly.

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### **DAYS 1+2 (Sept. 17+18) at 10:30+09:30**

Discussion about the programme. Final choice of the films/scripts to analyse.

Discussion and answers to the questions: What is a script? What the writing of it and what the professional analysis?

From the initial idea (based on an event, a person, an object, a novel etc.) to the own story, to the screenplay, to the shooting, to the editing/post-production of the film and finally to the audience. The four big steps of filmmaking.

Explanation of the 3-act-structure as a part of the daily life of heroes. There is a beginning (introduction), a middle (confrontation) and an end (solution) – but it is not necessary for a story told in a cinematic form to have these 3 parts exactly in this order. The only rule is that there is no rule. But you will only be able to work that out if you and your scriptwriter and/or director know the rules of dramatic structure in cinematic story telling.

Presentation and brief explanation of some technical terms used by my teacher, Frantisek Daniel, and by dfk during script and film analysis. (see "List of...")

Explanation of my version of the story-step-outline (sso) which is based on Paul Schrader's initial writing system (Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, The Last Temptation of Christ, American Gigolo, etc.). Presentation and brief explanation of the most important elements of the script analysis.

#### **\* Homework for day 2: Complete the story-step-outline of "Some Like It Hot".**

Handing in the homework which will be corrected by dfk during the lunch break. Discussion of the results.

Screening of Mel Stuart's (dir) and Robert Mundy's (w) feature "The Human Comedy" (VHS, 50') about Billy Wilder, narrated by Walter Matthau.

Analysis of the script "Some Like It Hot" during the screening of the film (DVD).

#### **\* Homework for day 3: Read the script of "American Beauty" and complete the sso. Work out the 6 important characters with short definitions as well as the 5 important topics. Figure out the protagonist and his goal. Work out the 3-act-structure as well as 1 sequence. Define the dominating genre.**

**DAYS 3+4 (Sept. 19+20) at 09:30**

Find the script of "North By Northwest", written by Ernest Lehmann.

Summary of the first two days with remarks and introduction of additional terms like sequence, theme (final impact) etc. Q&A on your problems and doubts and fears.

Handing in the homework which will be corrected by dfk during the lunch break. Discussion of the results in the afternoon.

Analysis of the script "American Beauty" during the screening of the film (DVD).

**\* Homework for day 4: Read the script of "North By Northwest". Define the 5 important characters as well as the important topics. Figure out the main character's goal. Work out the 3-act-structure as well as all the sequences.**

Discussion about the structure of "American Beauty": Acts, sequences, master scenes, twists, culmination, subplots, transitions, etc.

Analysis of the script "North By Northwest" during the screening of the film (DVD).

**\* Homework for day 5: Read the script of "Rocky" and complete the sso. Work out the 6 most important characters with short definitions as well as the most important topics. Figure out the main character's goal, the structure, the dominating genre, the obvious archetype, the use of irony and the dialogue.**

**DAYS 5+6+7 (Sept. 21 to 23) at 09:30**

Handing in the homework which will be corrected by dfk during the lunch break. Discussion of the results in the afternoon.

Summary of the days 3+4 with remarks and repetition of some terms like history versus story, character, sequence, theme (final impact) etc. Q&A on your problems.

Analysis of the script "Rocky" during the screening of the film (DVD).

**\* Homework for the days 6+7: Read the script of "One Woman" and complete the sso. Working out a complete and detailed analysis as well as the main questions you would ask the producers and the writers. The analysis has to consist of a synopsis, a very short synopsis (3 to 7 lines), and your remarks to the story/plot, the structure (acts+sequences), the topics, the characters, the dialogue, the credibility, the irony, the genre, the final impact, etc. (You will need at least 20 hours of work to do this sso and the analysis!)**

**DAYS 8+9 (Sept. 24+25) at 10:30+09:30**

Handing in the weekend homework (sso+analysis) about "One Woman" which will be corrected by dfk for a special session on day 10. Discussion about the main problems faced during the process of working out this homework.

Analysis of the "Elling" script during the screening of the film (DVD).

Analysis of a short film produced, written and directed by students of the NSF.

**\* Homework for day 9: Read the script of "Amadeus". Define the 7 important characters, the protagonist and the important topics. Figure out the main character's goal, the structure, the use of irony, the genre, the antagonist.**

**\* Homework for day 10: Read the script of "When Harry Met Sally". Define the 4 important characters as well as the protagonist and the important topics. Figure out the main character's want and need, the structure, the use of irony, the dialogue, the antagonist. Write about your impression of the credibility. What is the premise of this story?**

**DAY 10 (Sept. 26) at 09:30**

Handing in the homework which will be corrected by dfk during the lunch break. Discussion of the results in the afternoon.

Special session about the weekend homework. Award ceremony and handing over of the big Swiss chocolate to the winners.

Discussion about your master projects.

Analysis of the script "When Harry Met Sally" whilst screening the film (DVD).

**\* Homework for day 11: Read the script of "Erin Brockovich". Define the 5 important characters as well as the protagonist and the important topics. Figure out the main character's want and need, the use of irony, the dialogue, the credibility, the antagonist, the genre. Write about your impression of the credibility. What is the premise of this story? What has this script in common with the one of "Rocky"?**

**DAYS 11+12 (Sept. 27+28) at 09:30**

Handing in the homework which will be corrected by dfk during the lunch break. Discussion of the results in the afternoon.

Analysis of the script "Erin Brockovich" whilst screening the film (DVD). Information about this project and screening of additional material. Discussion about the plan to produce a documentary and the final result.

**\* Homework for day 12: Read the script of Cameron's "Titanic". Define the 12 important characters and the important topics. Define the main character's want and need, the use of irony and all the other analytic elements you learned during this workshop. What is the premise of this story? What the structure (acts, sequences, transitions)? What is the ship standing for? What is the symbolic meaning of the ice/iceberg? What has this script in common with the one of "American Beauty", with the one of "Rocky", the one of "Amadeus" and the one of "Erin Brockovich"? What is unique in this script? What is the resumé included in the script? (E-mail it at night to dfk!)**

Resumé of the workshop and Q&A.

Discussion of the homework and analysis of "Titanic", the most successful film since more than 50 years, based on the best script I ever analysed.

End of the workshop.