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TOPIC #2 for TEST ONLINE Forum

If the training of screenwriters is useful, what direction should it head for?

- **Should the training programs specialise more (differentiate between cinema, television and interactive media)?**
- **Should these programs use American models?**
- **Should the focus of these programs be more on general writing skills and less on project development, or on the contrary, principally on the project?**








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Date: 2005-02-14 10:27:49
Posted by: Michel Gaztambide
Subject: **No title**

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In my opinion, for a screenwriter, specialisation is the first step in autodestruction. It might work for a short period of time, but very dangerous on the long run. The market think that screenwriters that have been writing sit-coms for ten years is not equiped to do a drama-series. This implies that a writer should be prepared, during initial training, to write different formats and genres. Their abilities and the needs of the market on a given moment will put the emphasis on one field or the other.

Date: 2004-12-17 14:27:47
Posted by: Tony Macnabb - PILOTS tutor
(tony.macnabb@tiscali.co.uk)
Subject: **Training**

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Dear Tony Macnabb, We would like to ask for your opinion concerning the following. Some weeks ago Antonio Saura opened TEST ´s online forum about the interaction between screenwriters ´ training and the industry. In this email you can read a summary of the discussion so far. We hope this summary inspires you to contribute a few lines.

THE NEED TO TRAIN: In the discussion it was agreed that the training of (professional) screenwriters is needed/wanted for a couple of reasons: writing is a very solitary job, writers lack understanding of the industry and training helps to improve the status of the writer, whose authority is very low.

Agree 100%. For this reason it is invaluable to incorporate contributions from producers, TV execs, actors, agents and directors in courses.

EUROPEAN TRAINING PROGRAMS: In recent years a lot of training programmes for professional screenwriters have emerged in Europe. This is very confusing for potential participants, because it is hard to differentiate between programs. Apart from that, training programmes are more and more competing with each other for participants. The entrance level has therefore gone down. Training programmes have to accept participants that can afford to pay the fee, rather than looking at the quality of their project. In theory longer training courses would be better for participants, but the reality is that the longer the course, the younger and less experienced participants seem to be. To attract professionals working in the industry training courses need to be short, or at least as flexible as possible, with one or two group workshops, interspersed with on-line tuition and guidance.

Workshops can be a cost-effective way for broadcasters or production companies to develop promising projects - depending on how they are organised. PILOTS, which uses a one-to-one approach, has fulfilled this role with some success. It might be worth exploring funding structures which split the cost between the TV/Film company, local arts funding organisations and the writer/producer teams. If a broadcaster runs a training scheme, they might be willing to out-source parts of it.

TRAINING AND REALITY: Tutors and producers agreed that the experience of writing for a living is far different than that what most writing courses teach: writers lack understanding of the industry and there should be more understanding between writers and producers. Writers often have the idea that creativity and commercial demands can not go together: the result is a vast number of products that are routine, worthless and doomed to oblivion. What screenwriters especially need to learn is how to deal with critique and how to work in teams.

This is certainly true - see above. A lot of screenwriting involves working with other people's ideas and formats - especially TV. However if a camel is a horse designed by a committee, many a cop/medical/legal TV series is a camel designed by a committee of entomologists. There is no substitute for originality!

Date: 2004-11-30 10:14:05
Posted by: Isabelle Fauvel
Subject: **réponses**

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- de mon point de vue la spécialisation doit être exceptionnelle, il est bon que des programmes généralistes co-existent avec des programmes spécialisés. On peut même comme nous le faisons à Mediscript envisager des spécialisations particulières ici l'adaptation littéraire, ailleurs le film de genre.

- quant à adopter le modèle américain, ma question serait pourquoi devrions nous le faire ? L'industrie est elle comparable ? Les mentalités le sont elles ? Est-ce vraiment Le modèle ? Que faisons nous de l'Europe si nous allons en ce sens ? Non vraiment ce n'est mon avis ni en tant que formateur, ni surtout en tant que professionnelle sur le terrain.

- de mon point de vue sur le terrain la seule façon de faire "rentrer" le general writing skills est de le faire au regard de projets précis que sont ceux des participants, donc ma réponse est un mélange des deux.

Date: 2004-11-23 09:30:16
Posted by: Christian Routh
Subject: **More industry focused training for TV drama**

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Too many courses focus on film, without acknowledging that a new writer has a massively better chance of seeing their work go into production if it is for TV than for cinema. The statistics are quite clear on this. Thus I would advocate more industry focused training for TV drama.

(comment on the TEST seminar proposals)

Date: 2004-11-22 13:19:54
Posted by: TEST
Subject: **We must take the translation much, much more serious**

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TEST seminar proposal 9:

We must take the translation much, much more serious, especially if we are going to concentrate on professional training rather than basic training. For writers the best language to have a workshop in is their own language.

Date: 2004-11-22 13:03:36

Posted by: TEST
Subject: **stimulate new forms of film language**

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The provocation on the process is most important.

European programs should be able to stimulate new forms of film language, new forms of grammar and expressions. Possibly with new technologies, new groupings of people, new ways of making scripts which are not necessarily just with words.

(One of the outcomes of the TEST seminar)

Date: 2004-11-17 17:23:08
Posted by: Webmaster (benjamin@focal.ch)
Subject: **Welcome !**

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