

# Enlarge Your Penis Now

## Script-writing as self-help for a sick industry

Surveying the many filters I have set up to block spam email, I discover that an inordinate amount are from self-professed professionals who hawk script-writing workshops. I wonder who is the more pathetic loser? Script-writers: wannabe Hollywood powerbrokers, sitting alone in their messy rented apartments, writing what they think fretful ulcer-churning studio executives will second-guess to be what 'the audience' thinks it wants. Or script doctors: self-help gurus who claim their credentials like a magus unlocking the secrets of success while avoiding why they themselves aren't successful Hollywood script-writers.

But suckers and hucksters are of no core interest (one is born every download). What is more interesting is how this model of industrial improvement connects with cinema, and how script-writing – far more than any other component of the filmmaking process – is the perceived currency for enabling one to enter the film industry. Granted that singing and dancing also now elicit a similar frenzy of amateur involvement (as in the franchises of *Idol*™ and *So You Think You Can Dance*™, etc.), script-writing is marketed by the industry as being the scriptural essence of the filmmaking process. Actors, producers, directors, even your mum will drone on about how important 'story' and 'character' is to a film. Everyone is a two-bit William Shakespeare, conscious of how important the literary base is to cinema.

What could be a more conservative view of cinema than one that places 'the script' at the top of the food chain that ultimately expels ersatz-literate excreta onto televisual screen worldwide? Everyone seems to have forgotten the recurring historical struggles when cinema squirmed for a near-century, seeking acknowledgement for its status as a compound, multiple, mutant, dimensional medium. Not theatre, not photography, not literature, not art – but a bit of each, cross-wired to produce a sensorial, phantasmagorical experience of visceral bombast. Like a lost repressed memory of impure desire, cinema today still entrances its audiences through similar mechanisms, sweeping them up in a techno-fest of giddy sensationalism that compensates for the anaemic humanist story-telling that dribbles from the sagging orifices of film studios and their prolapsed phalanx of script-writers.

The power of the script, then, is a self-cancelling conundrum of investment and production. Everyone voices their undying support for it – but cinema persists in being a gaudy carnivale of spectacle and effect, pumped up with the most skeletal of global concerns, human stories and social issues. This is not a cynical view: cinema itself is cynical – innately so due to this blind contradiction. Such are the ways in which power is wielded in the myth-making carney exploitation of Hollywood. The script, thus, becomes a revealing artefact of such procedures. Despite the post-WWI Jewish diaspora's well-earned grip on Hollywood's industrial franchisements, the post-80s desperate cling to 'the script' as a panacea for an ailing industry ironically smacks of the worst fundamentalism. In the wake of Spielbergian sequelization (wherein the successful movie becomes a prophecy of a second coming as it is written in the first film), 'the script' has become as fundamental as 'the bible'. Both are texts of fanciful control and frightful fixity; both are clenched in fists and slammed on tables and pointed to as manuals for existence (economic in the former, spiritual in the latter). Script doctors thus become the shamanistic diviners in an industry bent on forecasting signs of

profit and success.

Due to this investment economy based upon 'the script' (which ranges from original treatments operated on by a dozen-plus scribes, through to pre-published options held on 'the novel'), its feverish consumption has bred multiples ailments. On the eve of the new millennium 10s, this script neurosis has become so entrenched that it supports the sub-industry of script doctors. They internally doctor cinema with *Microsoft Word*™ cut-and-paste like a plastic surgeon shifting cellulite and cartilage around as he performs a cut-and-tuck. Clever-clever cineastes might laud Charles Kaufman's clever-clever take on scriptwriting in *Adaptation* – but despite its formal radicalism, the film reinforces the act of writing as a supreme act carried out by and author (that most conservative of creative figures).

Emile Zile is no apparition of Charlie Kaufman. Nor a Barton Fink or Griffin Mill for that matter. Rather, his performance is an exposure of the delusional Everyman who thinks he can reduce cinema to universal story elements. Emile's *Post-It*™ *Kino* is the abject reality of what cinema has become – or more precisely, how it has reduced itself to such a state through trumpeting the power of 'the script'. His performances are part-pitch, part-direction, part-analysis, part-expose, part-revival, part-review. His faux-*Power Point*™ presentation – playing film music to a DVD screen playing not a DVD but the *Pong*-like screen-saver, atop which he slams *Post-It*™ notes to evoke the unfolding of a typical cinematic scene – is a wilful bastardization of just about everything cinema employs to define itself now. When he holds up a scrap of paper scrawled with the *THX*™ logo and moves it into the live camera lens in mimicry of George Lucas' mystical dry-humping of low-end anal tickling, it is clear that his presentations are the most desultory of 'multi-media'. This is apt: 'multi-media' is now the province of IT start-up executives who think *YouTube*™ video mash-ups are radical. Emile's dismissal of the 'high-end' of cinema combined with his brutish e-office-worker mechanisms acknowledge that even the most bargain-basement of addled brains can register how dumbly effective cinematic effects have become.

There is nothing to bemoan here: cinema deserves such a tribute. As evidenced by those earnest film critics at the New York International Film Festival last year who again debated the tawdrily touted 'death of cinema/criticism/whatever', the collective intelligentsia continues to reject the Frankensteinian monster that cinema is. They seem to forget that cinema is the beast that cannot die, born as it was from death – from the decaying fraying strands of pre-modern art forms. Emile's *Post-It*™ *Kino* is a love-letter to this death of cinema. He impassively audits its self-recycling remains, sweeping an ultra-violet light to uncover age-old semen stains from cinema's glory days. In his savage proto-kine *Punch & Judy* pantomime of cine-effects, Emile's shows us that he who believes a workshop in professional script-writing will help him 'make it' in the industry is akin to he who responds to *Viagra*™ spam in the hope that his penis will enlarge.

Philip Brophy