

Developing Screenplay Ideas ... My well runneth --- in many directions!

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**By Edward B. Toupin**

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**Toupin**

Recently, I started a screenwriting and movie-making group here in Las Vegas. Our objective was to begin at, well, the beginning of the process and work all the way through to an edited movie. Sounds easy? Yes! Is it really? Not at all.

The one thing I ran into at the very beginning was the problem of demonstrating the development of an idea into something that could be used as screenplay material. The big question is, "what's the difference between regular material and screenplay material?" The only answer I could come up with was, "a beginning, a middle, and an end." They looked at me like I was kidding, but actually, I'm not.

Put simply, a screenplay is a dramatic story told with visuals and dialogue. The screenplay describes the actions, the environment, the dialogue, and the situations that move the story forward. Screenplays have a formula and a format that has been in place for many decades. Yet, the beginning screenwriter sometimes misses this point. I ran into one fellow some months ago who was writing a screenplay that was "325 pages" long! After further discussion, he began to realize that, instead of writing a screenplay, he had a novel with a story that meandered without end.

You can use any old idea for your story, but have a point. Don't just write for the sake of writing as the story will meander around into a traffic jam. If you have an idea, define a theme or objective for the story. What's the point? What is the main character's purpose in "life"?

Life? A character's life? Indeed, the character does have a life in the world you create, but a screenplay is not "real life". It's a metaphor of real life presented in such a way as to represent a particular theme. To write about a real life situation, you have to dissect the situation and find the underlying theme. Then, using that theme as a guideline, you must reassemble the original idea to best represent the theme. Indeed, some aspects of the true-story might be fictionalized to drive the story toward the point.

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For example, my wife is working on a screenplay about medical debauchery in Nevada. After a few passes, she began to realize that the story roamed around in circles because of the many facets of the topic. After much coaching, she began to realize that she had to define one particular point and aim the story at it. As a side-effect, the physical issues of the story would be the driving force that leads the plot around to reach "the point".

After writing and reading screenplays over the years, I've given some pointers to folks that usually help them redefine and direct their stories to a solid point. One of the main problems, which I reiterate here, is that you have to "define a point". For example, we might come up with an idea that has a bunch of "cool" actions and situations. We then try to write a story to include these ideas because we want them to be in the story. But, this approach will usually fail because --- what is the point? Define a point, a theme, an objective that encompasses the feeling and direction of these "cool" actions and situations and aim your story in that direction.

To help to resolve the "meandering" problem and the evolution of the story toward the point, create a story where your main character is just this faceless being that quickly and easily achieves his goal. No dialogue. No rhyme or reason. They just reach their goal without effort or conflict. This is boring, but it creates a basis for the story.

Once you're satisfied with this straight-line story, add a specific characteristic that makes this goal have meaning to the main character. This would also mean that you would have to modify the environment and characteristics of your main character such that, to him, this goal means something. Now, with a call to action, he chases his goal with fervor!

Now, add in an obstacle that keeps him from achieving this goal. This would mean that somewhere in the main character's history, this obstacle came into being, but is now an obvious problem in his goal achievement. It could be a character flaw, a villain, or any issue that blocks the main character from his goal. How does he overcome this obstacle? Again, a character modification and backstory is required to show his ability to overcome this obstacle as well as some level of action to do so.

Once the core story is solid and directed, you add a conflict, a twist, and a resolution, one step at a time, until you begin to see your character and story evolve. With a story in hand, you can now add your dialogue to assist in the forward movement of the story, but only as needed. With this approach, you can slowly build your story while keeping your "point" in mind and following the formula for a solid screenplay.

It is essential that you keep an eye on the theme and objective of the story and that you work in that direction, otherwise your story will wander aimlessly. Keep it tight, start late, leave early, and follow the three-act formula. In the end, your screenplay will have the solid story and professional appeal that producers are looking for in creating today's interesting, original movies! --- About the Author ---

Edward B. Toupin is an author, publisher, life-strategy coach, counselor, Reiki Master, technical writer, and PhD Candidate living in Las Vegas, NV. Among other things, he authors books, articles, and screenplays on topics ranging from career success through life organization and fulfillment. Check out some of his recent print and electronic books as well as his articles covering various life-changing

topics!

For more information, and to find out about his upcoming title on book publishing, e-mail Edward at [etoupin@toupin.com](mailto:etoupin@toupin.com) or visit his site at <http://www.toupin.com>! Copyright (c) 2004 Edward B. Toupin

## **Spooky House Producer Finds Real Spooks in King Assassination**

**By Anonymous**

### **Spooky House Producer Finds Real Spooks in King Assassination by Anonymous**

Producer-Director-Writer William Sachs of Spooky House fame has written a screenplay based on the Gary Revel investigation of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. William Sachs is in negotiations with Gary concerning details of the conspiracy that will end up in the final draft of the screenplay and some details that may not. Gary Revel believes he knows more about the matter than any other living human being and is using that knowledge to advise Sachs on just how much and just how the assassination should be portrayed in the screenplay. Some details; Gary says, "Must be withheld until the actual day of filming of the event."

In company with Oscar Award winning actors, world famous celebrities and this high profile and controversial project, Sachs is constrained not to tell this reporter very much except, "I have written a screenplay of Gary's story and am interested in seeing it come to the screen."

If you google Gary Revel you find numerous websites related to his work on the investigation. You also find his poetry, art and an autobiography titled, "To Live or Maybe Not". One reviewer of the book suggested it needed a rewrite with more details. Apparently that's the trick, getting Gary to provide the details. This writer isn't sure but it may be that we won't get the details until we go see the movie.

None



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