



Write Screenplays That Sell: The Ackerman Way

By Hal Ackerman, First Last

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Hal Ackerman offers a treasure trove of information on the writing of quality, saleable screenplays by teaching the art of story structure, substance and style.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Hal Ackerman was my teacher, mentor and guide, but I also think of him as the 'midwife' who helped me deliver my script."

"Any aspiring screenwriter would be fortunate to have him as a teacher."

"Hal Ackerman is a brilliant teacher and an amazing inspiration."

About the Author

Hal Ackerman has been on the faculty of the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television for the past twenty-four years and is currently co-chair of the screenwriting program.

POUSSIN ET MOISE 2

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There is an opinion widely held among intelligent people that a nascent artist either has talent or does not. And that in the presence of talent, teaching is either irrelevant or harmful, and that in its absence, teaching is wasted. It is the cult of the natural. After all, did Mozart go to Juilliard? Did Carnegie need an MBA to run a steel empire? Edison had only three months of formal schooling. Shakespeare attended no writing seminars. The American author Flannery O'Connor, when asked whether universities stifled creative writers, replied, "Not enough."

It is unarguably true that every field of human endeavor is graced with certain individuals who are gifted with such an abundance of natural talent that, for them, teaching is as necessary as a second appendix. And on the other end of the spectrum, there are people with so little aptitude, who are so limited in imagination, so undisciplined and lacking in stamina that the best teaching in the world will have no effect on them. While it is true that talent cannot be taught, people with talent can be taught. You cannot teach an athlete to have a 48-inch vertical leap, like Michael Jordan had in his prime, but the game of basketball can be taught, both its essential skills and the deeper levels of the game that separate the abundantly talented from those who achieve greatness. Let us not forget that Stravinsky had his Nadia Boulanger, as did Bernstein. Tennessee Williams came out of the University of Iowa Writing Project. Michael Chabon is only the most recent brilliant novelist to come through the fiction writing program at the University of California, Irvine. And my home department, the UCLA screenwriting program, has spawned an impressive list of writers, including Neil Jimenez (*River's Edge*), David Koepp (*Spider-Man*, *Jurassic Park*, *Carlito's Way*, *The Panic Room*), Audrey Wells (*The Truth About Cats and Dogs*), *The Michaels*? Werb and Colleary (*Face/Off*), and that Francis Coppola fellow.

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