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**DON'T SHOOT**  
ONE ROLL OF FILM UNTIL  
YOU READ THIS BOOK!

**SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER - '09**

## IT STARTS WITH THE SCRIPT

The real indispensable ingredient is the script/story. That is the secret to a great movie. You can ruin a good story with bad direction and acting but great directing and acting can't save a crappy script. Your focus should always be on creating the tightest, most flowing script where the story picks you up and takes you away from the start and does not let you go. Having the best script possible before you get too deep into the process is key.

In my book *“So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker,”* we focus mostly on the business side of the filmmaking industry. The reason for that is most filmmakers are clueless when it comes to the business of show business. I wanted to show people how to navigate the industry using practical applications in all areas. These are not general ideas or concepts but rather the step by step process of how to make investors see the real potential in your project. This seems to be the biggest problem most filmmakers face. We cover this aspect in several chapters: Tax Credits, Film Financing, Distribution and Press Kits. But the script is still always the key to everything.

With the economy in the state of flux you need every tool possible to help you in your film career. Money is tight and standing out amongst the crowd is more important than ever. How do you do this? *“So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker”* tells you exactly what to do and what not to do when it comes to film financing, distribution and the business side of the movie industry.

In the book we talk about what genres sells better than others and what is necessary to get your film distributed or financed. If you have a large budget and can afford an A-list cast then the genre is not as much of a concern. If you don't have a big budget (or any budget) it is very important which genre your film is in. This also matters if you want to have a career in filmmaking and have investors who continue to believe in you and finance your films. Or if you just want to make a film. Most potential filmmakers I talk to want a career in making movies, so I assume most of you will want this as well.

Although every film we have ever made has been in worldwide distribution, I wish I could go back and redo all of them for the simple reason that we didn't focus enough on story, story, story. We made the film to fit what the market was looking for but did not have a tight enough story. You can do both and in doing so your film will do a lot better.

It is just as hard to make a bad film as it is to make a good film. Sometimes it's even harder because you are spending all your time trying to make a turd into a prom queen in editing. It is way better to fix it at the script level before you start because if it isn't on the page it definitely won't be on the screen.

The market is getting tougher and tougher to sell product. It costs so much money to release a film in the theaters and the DVD market is shrinking everyday. If you work and work on the script you can eliminate most of the problems before you take a crew out to film and it costs you a ton of money. Remember you want to have a long career in filmmaking.

My latest film, All Roads Lead Home, is a beautiful family film with good performances. However, we got a little ahead of ourselves and I put in too many plots into the story. This made it difficult to edit and in some places it was a little confusing and slow. By adding too many elements to the plot, we had so much setup to do in the first act, it took too long for the story to get going. Granted, we have had more people like the film than not, but in retrospect with some work on the script end we could have made a great film. Don't just make a film to be making it, treat your investor's money with the utmost care, because you want to continue your career.



Script readings with several actors are a first start. Just call your local talent agencies and tell them you are looking for about 12 actors for a script reading. Let them know you are not paying however you will have refreshments. Most actors like doing this because it can give them a leg up on getting a role in the movie. Video tape the reading and take notes. In the script reading you will learn a lot about what is working and what is not working. Make sure you have other people on the team other than the writer because sometimes they are too close to the project to see the problems in the script. If it requires a page one rewrite make sure you do it, because if it isn't on the page it will only be worse on the screen. Also, have people read the script who are not family or friends; they will give you their real opinion. Your family and friends are just amazed that you were able to write a script and give you the benefit of the doubt. Remember this will not help your career.

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If you have any questions about this newsletter or the book, send me an email at [info@film3001.com](mailto:info@film3001.com) and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Thanks,  
Dennis

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