



Learning from the Masters

AN INTERVIEW WITH SCREENWRITER SCOTT ROSENBERG

QUIZ & SUGGESTED EXERCISES

*(RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE STUDENTS)*

*“Everyone can write the first 25 pages of a screenplay. Everyone can write the last 20. What separates the men from the boys is page 71, when you’re mired in the muck.”*

*Scott Rosenberg*

## EXCERPTS FROM SCOTT ROSENBERG'S INTERVIEW:

**MIKE DE LUCA:** *What's the most difficult part of writing a screenplay for you?*

**SCOTT ROSENBERG:** It's the 110 page thing. Every first draft is always 175 pages.

**DE LUCA:** *Your first drafts run that long?*

**ROSENBERG:** Absolutely. I know some people whose first drafts are 80 pages, and they have to pad. My rule is always, if I finish a spec script, there's five people that I give it to. I will take a few weeks off while they're reading it, and think about other things, and then start getting their notes. They're five very different people, and if some of them have the same notes...you know, it's that "if three people tell you you're drunk, lie down" thing. Once you have some distance from it, you go back. One of the most satisfying things is [realizing], "Oh my God, I thought I needed that scene so much. It's so much better without that scene."

**DE LUCA:** *How long do you put it down for, before you come back to it and start pruning?*

**ROSENBERG:** Usually at least a week. It's hard, because it's there, and you want to get at it, you can't really focus on anything else until you have.

**DE LUCA:** *That process...I write my first draft, I put it down for a week, I come back to it. Did that evolve through trial and error?*

**ROSENBERG:** Absolutely. Because when it's so fresh, you're so wed to it and you can't [cut]. You're like, I just wrote that, I'm not getting rid of that scene.

## QUIZ:

As you watch the interview, see if you can answer the following questions.

1. Does Scott Rosenberg outline before writing?
2. How many drafts of “Con Air” does he say he wrote?
3. What does he say are the pros and cons of doing uncredited work on a film?
4. Where is he from?
5. How many scripts did he write before he sold one?
6. What did he learn in his semester at USC film school?
7. Why does Rosenberg think a setup and payoff are satisfying to an audience?
8. Does he like to do research?
9. What script of his does he think suffered the most during production?
10. Does he approach writing for women differently than for men?
11. What did a junior agent identify as a strength in Rosenberg’s work?
12. What does he think is the best script he has written?
13. What is his method for breaking through writer’s block?
14. What Steven Soderbergh quote does he take to heart?
15. What advice does he have for young screenwriters?

### **Bonus question:**

16. What is “Vile City?”

## SUGGESTED EXERCISES:

1. Scott Rosenberg says big-budget action films and small character-driven films are “different animals.” In what way does he say the writing of them is different? How would you imagine approaching the two types of films, yourself? What would be your priorities in the writing of each one?
2. Rosenberg suggests that working as a script reader is a bad idea because bad scripts are annoying and good scripts are intimidating. Do you agree? What might be the pros and cons of reading great scripts? What about mediocre scripts?
3. Rosenberg says he finds it difficult to write in anything than his own distinctive voice. Do you think you have a particular voice or style of your own? How would you describe it? What does Rosenberg mean when he calls his writing “flowery?”
4. A sleep mask inspires Rosenberg to tell a story of a violent stalker haunted by adolescent rejection. Using the same item, can you come up with a story of your own?

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