



INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE MANAGEMENT, INC.

ICM STORY DEPARTMENT -- COVERAGE PACKET

How To Do Script Coverage	1
Questions to Elaborate on When Writing Comments	3
General Coverage Information	4
Summary Outline from <u>Reading For A Living</u>	5
Primary Generes	9
Secondary Genres	10
Locales	11
Settings	12
General Coverage Examples	13-29
Extended Coverage Examples	30-51

TALENT AND LITERARY AGENCY

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HOW TO DO SCRIPT COVERAGE

LOGLINE:

The logline provides a one-sentence summary of the script's premise and plot. It should succinctly describe the situation of the protagonist and include any major story elements.

Concise, concise, concise. One sentence that generally describes the script. General is the key word. Don't worry about every detail of the story in the log line. Examples of recent good log lines:

An attractive young nun and an ex-leprechaun venture into a bizarre Irish fantasy world to return a stolen magical ring.

A private detective gets in over his head when a simple missing persons case turns into a deadly chase for a priceless diamond.

An amnesiac plane crash survivor discovers that he is a government assassin... or is he?

CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS:

The maximum amount of character breakdowns is six. If there are less than six lead and/or co-star characters then only list those. For example, THREESOME, main characters two boys and a girl, only list those three. If there is an important featured or cameo role please include that. For example, SEVEN, the part of the serial killer (Kevin Spacey), mostly a voice over only seen in a few scenes, important role, list it.

SNYOPSIS:

- 1) **TELL A STORY**— After reading the script, take a moment to decide what the story was essentially about. Your synopsis should not try to reproduce every detail; just the facts which the reader of your coverage will need to know in order to understand what's going on.
- 2) **PRESENT TENSE**— The action should always be written in the present tense. If some of the story takes place in the past, then introduce the action with a phrase like: "Flashback to 1965". Then tell the 1965 action in the present tense. When that action is over, move ahead in time by using a phrase like, "Return to the present."
- 3) **INTRODUCING PEOPLE AND PLACES**— When a person or place appears in your synopsis for the first time, put his/her/its name in capital letters. For characters, give a brief physical description and whatever else needs to be said in order to establish his/her relationship to the story or other characters.
- 4) **EXTRA DETAILS**— High quality synopses include key, non-essential details wherever such details will give the reader of the coverage a sense of the script's tone/style. This is not always necessary...but in subtler material, such extras may be essential.

COMMENTS:

1) **STRUCTURE**--- Your comments should begin with a summary paragraph, briefly listing all the strengths and weaknesses you are going to address in the body of your comments. The issues of Concept, Story, Characterization, Dialogue, Action/Visuals, and Commercial Potential should all be addressed. The final paragraph should summarize your comments, making explicit your overall impression of the material.

2) **BE SPECIFIC**— Simply saying "Dialogue is good," "The second act is weak," or "Characterization is excellent," is not very helpful. If you like the script, then explain why. Quote dialogue to make your point. If a character has conflicting personality traits, then list them. If the story is not engaging or believable, then illustrate how and why. If a strong premise falls apart, then point out where.

3) **PRIORITIZE**— The relative importance of the various script elements— story, characterization, dialogue, etc.— will vary from script to script. Therefore, you should prioritize your comments, beginning with (and devoting most time to) whatever element is most significant. For most commercial properties, though, you can be assured that the story and concept are very important elements.

QUESTIONS TO ELABORATE ON WHEN WRITING COMMENTS

CONCEPT/STORY

- What is the script's intention?
- How well does it fulfill that intention?
- What works, what doesn't work, why?
- How strong is the concept?
- How well executed is the story?

STRUCTURE

- Does the pacing build effectively?
- Do the subplots enhance the main story?
- Are there scenes that should be eliminated?
- Does the script feel long? Does it feel short?
- Are there any scenes missing?
- Does the writer have a firm grasp on screen writing?

CHARACTERS

- Are the characters three-dimensional? complex? compelling? interesting ?
- Are they sympathetic? motivated? believable?
- What are the goals of the characters? Do they obtain these goals?
- Do the characters change throughout the script? What changes do they go through? Do they overcome obstacles? Do they develop relationships?

DIALOGUE

- If it's humorous, is the humor effective? is it good?
- Does the dialogue match the characters and the story?
- Is there too much dialogue? Is there more telling than showing ?

ACTION/VISUALS/COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL

- Are there any particular production challenges? Special effects? Crowds? Elaborate sets?
- Can this be made into a movie?
- Will people want to see this movie?
- Is there commercial appeal?
- Why should someone consider making this film?

GENERAL COVERAGE INFORMATION

TITLE & AUTHOR: Rely on title page of the script for correct spelling.

If the writer is a client your comments need to focus primarily on the positive aspects of the script. The box scores should not be x'd below good in regard to the story. Please be especially diplomatic when writing coverage on a client's piece. The emphasis should be on selling the project.

AGENT: Always write first and last name of the agent and be sure the spelling is correct. If it's hard to read, or you are unsure of the agent's name, please call us.

PURPOSE OF SUBMISSION: write the name of the client or the purpose given on the request form (i.e., packaging, casting, open directing, etc.).

TALENT: You are reading the script with this particular actor in mind. When writing your comments, talk about the role, not the actor. The word career is prohibited and must not appear anywhere in your comments. An appropriate way to address a bad script for an actor would be to say "this would not be a good vehicle for x" or "the role is not challenging enough for x" or "the role is underdeveloped and therefore should be overlooked by x." Never say anything about prior career choices or presume to make a career choice for the actor. Please do not mention the name of the specific actor/actress or director until the last line of the coverage (as in the examples used above).

DIRECTOR: The script is to be read with the particular director in mind and paying attention to that client's forte or genre. Point out the needs of the script for adaptation to the screen, i.e., what kind of director is needed. There is always the chance that the director will not like the script, but another one will. Be objective yet specific so we understand the tone of the project and can compile a list of possible directors.

OPEN DIRECTING: This is a job for a client; the studio is actively looking for a director. The above comments apply here. Be as cinematic as possible.

PACKAGING: We are looking at this script as a potential ICM package, meaning we can bring at least two clients to the project. Therefore, comment on the script as a whole (the roles, the kind of director needed, its commercial potential and its international appeal).

GENRE, SETTING, LOCALE, ETC.: Please refer to our computer list only, and be as specific as possible. If something is not on our list, point it out to us, we may add it. Copies of these lists are included on the pages immediately following.

SUBMITTED BY: Again, make sure spelling is correct. If it's illegible, please ask.

RANKING GRID: Please be sure to fill out the ranking grid for the last page of the coverage.

SYNOPSIS & COMMENTS:

Synopsis, comments and grids should continue to be as they are, each on a separate page.

LENGTH OF COVERAGE: For General coverage, the synopsis should be approximately 1 page and the comments should run between 1/2 to 3/4 of a page. For Extended coverage, the synopsis should be 1 1/2 - 2 pages and the comments should run 1 - 1 1/2 pages.

APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OUTLINE
HOW TO WRITE COVERAGE

You will find this summary especially useful as a quick reference guide when writing your coverages. The main points of each coverage component are outlined here to jog your memory.

- I. The art of reading
 - A. Look for:
 1. The main points of the plot
 2. The main and supporting characters
 3. Aspects of the work pertaining to the purpose of your coverage
 4. Visual value
 - B. Ignore:
 1. The little things: typos, grammatical errors, tense changes, and the like

C. Skim:

1. Fight scenes
2. Chase scenes
3. Love scenes
4. Bloodbaths
5. Background and internal action unrelated to the main plot or to major points of character development

II. Writing the synopsis

- A. Stick to the main plot
- B. Write as much as you can from memory
- C. Capture some of the mood or tone of the work
- D. Use evocative words (use a thesaurus)
- E. Simplify
- F. Show the work in its best light

III. Writing the character breakdown

A. List roles in the following order:

1. Leads
 2. Co-stars
 3. Supporting roles
 4. Minor roles
 5. Cameos
- B. For each character, include:

1. Name
 2. Age
 3. Physical appearance
 4. Personality or background
 5. Page number on which the character first appears
- C. Follow closely the writer's description of the character

IV. Address comments to:

A. Concept

1. How original it is
2. Whether it's high concept or a soft story

B. Premise/theme

1. Strength
2. Universality

C. Plot

1. Predictability
2. Obstacles, complications, reversals, twists
3. Believability
4. Subplots, if any
5. The hook, if any
6. Continuity

D. Main and supporting characters

1. Background
2. Range of emotion and expression
3. Motivation
4. Fatal and other flaws
5. Evolution
6. Consistent development
7. Rooting interest
8. The spice of life: variety of characters
9. The proof of the premise: the right hero for the story

10. In general, what kind of talent would be appropriate

E. Dialogue

1. Reveals character traits
2. Reveals essential information
3. Flows or flounders

4. Is over- or underwritten
5. Sounds like people talking
 - a. Is appropriate for the various characters
 - b. Is appropriate for the time period and culture

F. The stakes

1. What is at stake?
2. How crucial is it?
3. How dangerous is it?

G. Structure

1. Use of back story or ghost (a beginning that is really the middle)
2. Proper setup of main character and conflict in the beginning
3. A middle that smoothly follows character development and pursuit of the goal
4. An ending that resolves the conflict presented in the beginning

H. Pace

1. Fast, slow, or varied
2. Appropriate for the tone and theme of the piece

I. The writing itself

1. Mastery of the craft
2. Individual style
3. Concept and execution

J. Audience

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Media
 - a. Feature film
 - b. Public television production

c. MOW (TV movie of the week)

- d. TV series, drama or sitcom
- e. Miniseries

K. Does the work succeed in its objectives?

1. Realization of the premise
2. Evokes the intended emotional response

L. Comparisons

1. Refer to genre
2. Refer to similar films if appropriate

M. Overall reaction

1. Mention anything unique about the work
2. Is it a good blueprint for a movie?

N. The grid may include any or all of the following:

1. Characterization
2. Dialogue
3. Story line/plot
4. Setting/production value
5. Structure
6. Theme/concept
7. Writing ability
8. Budget
9. Recommend, consider, pass

V. The cover sheet

- A. Copy info directly from the work itself when possible
- B. Use "N/A" when information is not available
- C. Write a catchy, brief log line

VI. Editing

- A. Organize your thoughts
- B. Be clear and concise
 1. Cut out unnecessary phrases

2. Beware of redundancies
 3. Use verbs instead of nouns to express action
 4. Use verbs in the active voice instead of the passive
 5. Keep subject, verb, and object close to each other
 6. Express one thought per sentence or clause
- C. Refer back to the project itself as necessary for accuracy
- D. Check spelling, punctuation, and grammar
- E. Use running heads
- F. Keep a copy of each of your coverages

PRIMARY GENRES

Action
Adventure
Animation
Biographical
Comedy
Drama
Dramedy
Erotic
Fantasy
Historical

Horror
Musical
Mystery
Non-Fiction
Science Fiction / Fantasy
Sports
Thriller
Urban
War
Western

SECONDARY GENRES

Afro-American	Erotic/Sexual	Political
Airplane	Escape	Post Apocalyptic
Allegory/Fable	Espionage / Intrigue	Prison
Animal	Family	Psychological
Autobiography	Fantasy	Racism
Biblical	Farce	Refugee
Biker	Film Noir	Religious
Bittersweet	Foreign	Revenge
Black Comedy	Fish Out of Water	Relationship
British Flavor	Gamble	Road Picture
Broad Comedy	Gang	Robbery
Buddy Picture	Gangster	Robot
Caper	Ghost	Rock and Roll
Character Study	Gigolo	Romantic
Chase	Gothic	Romantic Comedy
Children's	Historical	Saga
Circus	Holocaust	Satire
Coming of Age	Homosexual	Science Fiction
College	Interracial	Screwball Comedy
Comeback Story	Jazz	Show Business
Comic Book	Jeopardy	Slapstick
Cop	Kidnap	Spoof
Corporate	Love Story	Sports
Courtroom	Martial Arts	Superhero
Criminal	Medical	Supernatural
Dance	Melodrama	Survival
Detective	Military	Suspense
Disaster	Murder	Swashbuckler
Docudrama	Mystery	Terrorist
Domestic/Family	Nautical	Vietnam
Drag Queen	New Age	War
Drug	Noir	World War One
Eccentric Characters	Occult	World War Two
Ensemble	Opera	Youth
Epic	Period	

LOCALES

Africa
Alaska
Anarctica
Asia
Australia
Bavaria
California
Canada
Carribean
Central America
Chicago
China
East Coast US
Eastern Europe
England
Europe
Far East
Florida
France
Germany
Great Lakes
Hawaii
Heaven
Hell
Hollywood
India
Iran
Ireland
Israel
Italy

Japan
Las Vegas
Los Angeles
Mediterranean
Mexico
Mid-West US
Middle East
New England
New Jersey
New York
Northern California
Northwest California
Northwest US
Outerspace
Parallel Dimension
Rockies
Russia
Scandinavia
South America
South Seas
Southern California
Southern US
Southwest US
Spain
Texas
United States
Vietnam
Washington DC
Western US
Worldwide

SETTINGS

Airplane
Alternate Reality
Apartment
Bar
Beach
Boat/Ship
Building
Car
Casino
Castle
Church
College
Courtroom
Desert
Farm
Forest
Gymnasium
Heaven
Hell
High School
Highway
Industrial
Interior
Island
Jungle

Laboratory
Mansion
Metropolis
Military Base
Mountain
Movie Set
Office
Outer Space
Prison
Pueblo
Room
Rural
Seaside
Small Town
Snow
South Seas
Southern California
Stadium
Suburban
Theater
Train
Underground
Urban
Wilderness