

PRESS KIT

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

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# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

A GRAND RIVER FILMS / JADE TIGER FILMS Presentation

**"TALES FROM THE SCRIPT"**

Edited by J.D. FUNARI Music by T.J. RAIDER

Archival Supervisor TIM MERRILL

Created and Produced by PAUL ROBERT HERMAN

Written by PETER HANSON and PAUL ROBERT HERMAN

Directed by PETER HANSON

Feature-Length Documentary

105 Minutes, Color, 2009, USA

Language: English

All Rights Available

World Premiere: Palm Springs International Film Festival 2009

Participants: Allison Anders, Jane Anderson, Doug Atchison, John August, Shane Black, John D. Brancato, John Carpenter, Larry Cohen, Frank Darabont, Steven E. de Souza, Gerald DiPego, Mark Fergus, Antwone Fisher, Naomi Foner, Joe Forte, Josh Friedman, Mick Garris, William Goldman, David Hayter, Peter Hyams, Michael January, Steve Koren, Jonathan Lemkin, Andrew W. Marlowe, Mark O'Keefe, Dennis Palumbo, Zak Penn, Billy Ray, Adam Rifkin, Jose Rivera, Mark D. Rosenthal, Ari B. Rubin, Bruce Joel Rubin, Richard Rush, Paul Schrader, Melville Shavelson, Ron Shelton, Ronald Shusett, Stephen Susco, Guinevere Turner, Kriss Turner, David S. Ward, James L. White, Michael Wolk, Kris Young, and Justin Zackham

Production Format: 4x3 MiniDV

Exhibition Format: 4x3 DigiBeta (letterboxed)

Made on Location in Los Angeles and New York City

Project Website: [TalesFromTheScript.org](http://TalesFromTheScript.org)

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

## TAGLINE

Hollywood screenwriters finally get the last word.

## LOGLINE

Dozens of Hollywood screenwriters share war stories and life lessons.

## PRINCIPAL CAST

Shane Black, John Carpenter, Frank Darabont, William Goldman, Paul Schrader

## SHORT SYNOPSIS (50 words)

Screenwriters ranging from newcomers to living legends share their triumphs and hardships in this probing, insightful, and often hilarious odyssey through the world of movie storytelling. Candid and unafraid to name names, dozens of participants reveal the fascinating creative adventures that gave birth to notorious flops and beloved classics.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Shane Black ("Lethal Weapon"), John Carpenter ("Halloween"), Frank Darabont ("The Shawshank Redemption"), William Goldman ("The Princess Bride"), Paul Schrader ("Taxi Driver"), and dozens of other Hollywood screenwriters share hilarious anecdotes and penetrating insights in "Tales from the Script," the most comprehensive documentary ever made about screenwriting. By analyzing their triumphs and recalling their failures, the participants explain how successful writers develop the skills necessary for toughing out careers in one of the world's most competitive industries. They also reveal the untold stories behind some of the greatest screenplays ever written, describing their adventures with luminaries including Harrison Ford, Morgan Freeman, Stanley Kubrick, Joel Silver, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg. The film was produced in tandem with the upcoming HarperCollins book of the same name.

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

## PARTICIPANTS

### **ALLISON ANDERS**

Writer and/or director of “Four Rooms,” “Gas Food Lodging,” “Grace of My Heart,” “Mi Vida Loca,” “Things Behind the Sun”

### **JANE ANDERSON**

Writer, director, and/or playwright of “How to Make an American Quilt,” “It Could Happen to You,” “Normal,” “The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio”

### **DOUG ATCHISON**

Writer/director of “Akeelah and the Bee”

### **JOHN AUGUST**

Writer/director of “The Nines”; writer of “Charlie’s Angels,” “Big Fish,” “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,” “Corpse Bride,” “Go”

### **SHANE BLACK**

Creator of the “Lethal Weapon” franchise; writer/director of “Kiss Kiss Bang Bang”; writer of “The Last Boy Scout,” “The Long Kiss Goodnight,” “The Monster Squad”; actor in “As Good As It Gets,” “Predator,” “RoboCop 3”

### **JOHN D. BRANCATO**

“Catwoman,” “The Game,” “The Net,” “Terminator: Rise of the Machines”

### **JOHN CARPENTER**

Co-creator of the “Halloween” franchise; writer, director, and/or composer of “Assault on Precinct 13,” “Big Trouble in Little China,” “Christine,” “Escape From New York,” “Eyes of Laura Mars,” “The Fog,” “Starman,” “The Thing”

### **LARRY COHEN**

Writer/director of “Black Caesar,” “God Told Me To,” “It’s Alive,” “Q: The Winged Serpent”; writer of “Captivity,” “Cellular,” “Phone Booth”

### **FRANK DARABONT**

Three-time Academy Award nominee; writer/director of “The Green Mile,” “The Mist,” “The Shawshank Redemption”; director of “The Majestic”; writer of “The Blob,” “Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein,” “A Nightmare on Elm Street 3”

### **STEVEN E. de SOUZA**

Writer/director of “Street Fighter”; writer of “48 HRS.,” “Commando,” “Die Hard,” “Ricochet,” “Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life”

**GERALD DIPEGO**

Writer of “Angel Eyes,” “Instinct,” “Message in a Bottle,” “Phenomenon,” “Sharky’s Machine”; author of “Forest Things,” “Keeper of the City”

**MARK FERGUS**

Academy Award nominee; cowriter/director of “First Snow”; writer of “Children of Men,” “Consequence,” “Iron Man”

**ANTWONE FISHER**

Writer of “Antwone Fisher,” “ATL”; author of “Finding Fish”

**NAOMI FONER**

Golden Globe winner; writer of “Bee Season,” “A Dangerous Woman,” “Losing Isaiah,” “Running on Empty,” “Violets are Blue”

**JOE FORTE**

Painter/filmmaker; writer of “Firewall,” “Say I Do”

**JOSH FRIEDMAN**

Executive producer of “Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles”; writer of “The Black Dahlia,” “Chain Reaction,” “War of the Worlds”

**MICK GARRIS**

Creator of the TV series “Fear Itself” and “Masters of Horror”; director of miniseries “The Stand” and features “Psycho IV,” “Quicksilver Highway,” “Riding the Bullet,” “Sleepwalkers”; writer of “The Fly II,” “Hocus Pocus”

**WILLIAM GOLDMAN**

Laurel Award winner; two-time Academy Award winner; screenwriter/novelist of “Magic,” “Marathon Man,” “The Princess Bride”; screenwriter of “All the President’s Men,” “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” “The Great Waldo Pepper,” “Maverick,” “Misery”; author of “Adventures in the Screen Trade”

**DAVID HAYTER**

“The Scorpion King,” “Watchmen,” “X-Men,” “X2: X-Men United”

**PETER HYAMS**

Writer, director, and/or cinematographer of “2010: The Year We Make Contact,” “Capricorn One,” “Outland,” “The Star Chamber,” “Telefon,” “Timecop”

**MICHAEL JANUARY**

“Deadly Target,” “Hostile Force,” “Neowolf,” “Warpath”

**STEVE KOREN & MARK O’KEEFE**

“Click,” “Bruce Almighty”

**JONATHAN LEMKIN**

“The Devil’s Advocate,” “Lethal Weapon 4,” “Red Planet,” “Shooter”

**ANDREW W. MARLOWE**

“Air Force Once,” “End of Days,” “Hollow Man”

**DENNIS PALUMBO**

Licensed psychotherapist; writer of “My Favorite Year”; story editor of “Welcome Back, Kotter”; author of “Writing from the Inside Out”

**ZAK PENN**

Writer/director of “The Grand,” “Incident at Loch Ness”; writer of “Behind Enemy Lines,” “The Incredible Hulk,” “Last Action Hero,” “X-Men: The Last Stand”

**BILLY RAY**

Writer/director of “Breach,” “Shattered Glass”; writer of “Color of Night,” “Flightplan,” “Hart’s War,” “Volcano”

**ADAM RIFKIN**

Writer/director of “The Chase,” “The Dark Backward,” “National Lampoon’s Homo Erectus,” “Look”; director of “Detroit Rock City”; writer of “MouseHunt,” “Underdog,” “Zoom: Academy for Superheroes”

**JOSE RIVERA**

Academy Award nominee; writer of “The Motorcycle Diaries,” “Trade”

**MARK D. ROSENTHAL**

“For Love or Money,” “The Jewel of the Nile,” “The Legend of Billie Jean,” “Mona Lisa Smile,” “Star Trek VI,” “Superman IV”

**ARI B. RUBIN**

Second-generation screenwriter; son of Bruce Joel Rubin

**BRUCE JOEL RUBIN**

Academy Award winner; writer/director of “My Life”; writer of “Brainstorm,” “Deep Impact,” “Ghost,” “Jacob’s Ladder,” “The Time Traveler’s Wife”

**RICHARD RUSH**

Two-time Academy Award nominee for “The Stunt Man”; writer of “Air America”; director of “Color of Night,” “Freebie and the Bean,” “Getting Straight,” “Psych-Out,” “The Savage Seven”

**PAUL SCHRADER**

Laurel Award winner; writer/director of "Affliction," "American Gigolo," "Blue Collar," "The Walker"; director of "Auto Focus," "Cat People," "Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist," "The Comfort of Strangers"; writer of "The Last Temptation of Christ," "Rolling Thunder," "Raging Bull," "Taxi Driver," "The Yakuza"

**MELVILLE SHAVELSON (1917-2007)**

Laurel Award winner; two-time Academy Award nominee; writer and/or director of "Cast a Giant Shadow," "The Five Pennies," "Houseboat," "It Started in Naples," "The Seven Little Foys"; longtime gag writer for Bob Hope's radio shows

**RON SHELTON**

Academy Award nominee; writer/director of "Blaze," "Bull Durham," "Cobb," "Tin Cup"; writer of "Bad Boys II," "The Best of Times," "Under Fire"

**RONALD SHUSETT**

Co-creator of the "Alien" franchise; writer and/or producer of "Above the Law," "Freejack," "King Kong Lives," "Minority Report," "Total Recall"

**STEPHEN SUSCO**

"The Grudge," "The Grudge 2," "Red"

**GUINEVERE TURNER**

Writer of "American Psycho," "BloodRayne," "Go Fish," "The Notorious Bettie Page"; star of "Go Fish"; featured actor in TV's "The L Word"

**KRISS TURNER**

Writer, "Something New"; writer and/or producer of TV's "The Bernie Mac Show," "Cosby," "Everybody Hates Chris," "Living Single," "Sister Sister"

**DAVID S. WARD**

Academy Award winner; creator of the "Major League" franchise; writer/director of "Cannery Roy," "Down Periscope," "King Ralph"; writer of "Flyboys," "The Milagro Beanfield War," "Sleepless in Seattle," "Steelyard Blues," "The Sting"

**JAMES L. WHITE**

BAFTA nominee for "Ray"

**MICHAEL WOLK**

Writer of "Innocent Blood"; director of "You Think You Really Know Me"

**KRIS YOUNG**

UCLA screenwriting professor; writer of TV projects including "Teen Angel"

**JUSTIN ZACKHAM**

Writer/executive producer of "The Bucket List"; writer/director of "Going Greek"

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

## SELECTED REVIEWS

**“A lively collection of war stories.”**

Todd McCarthy, Chief Film Critic, “Variety”

**“The best film about writing I’ve ever seen.”**

Chris Gore, Founder, “Film Threat”

**“Hugely entertaining . . . Insightful.”**

Ken Jacobson, Programming Coordinator, Palm Springs Int’l Film Festival

*Tales from the Script* smartly focuses on everything that comes after “The End”—pitching your script, getting an agent, being on set, and dealing with the producers and directors and actors who run this big-money, big-ego business. Trying to “make it” as a writer in Hollywood is comparable to the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*, quips a UCLA screenwriting professor. Director Peter Hanson wrangles writers who’ve reached the peak of success—Academy Award winners like William Goldman (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*) and Bruce Rubin (*Ghost*), Paul Schrader (*Taxi Driver*), and Frank Darabont (*The Shawshank Redemption*)—for some life lessons, and he also hears from those who’ve sadly seen their life’s work “mangled and mashed” into an embarrassing mess. Hey, at least it makes for a good story.

Program Listing for 2009 Palm Springs International Film Festival

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

## QUOTES FROM THE FILM

**JOHN AUGUST:** Screenwriting is kind of invisible. If screenwriting is done really, really well, it seems like the actors made up their lines, and that the director knew to put the camera there, and that the movie sort of came together all by itself.

**JOHN CARPENTER:** You don't know what to expect, and I think that's probably best. Because if you knew what was gonna come, you wouldn't do it.

**STEVEN E. de SOUZA:** We've moved into a post-content era now, if you're talking about a studio, tent-pole, franchise project. If you're interested in story and human emotion, I would not recommend chasing those kinds of movies.

**NAOMI FONER:** It was very clear when I worked with Sidney Lumet that I was to talk to him and not to the actors, and the actors would call me only when they had his permission. That's part of the protocol, because there has to be a single leader.

**WILLIAM GOLDMAN:** Screenplays are structure, and they're story, and that's all they are. The quality of writing, which is crucial in almost every other form of literature, is not what makes a screenplay work.

**WILLIAM GOLDMAN:** If you want to write movies, you can't stop after you get pissed on and rejected, because you're gonna get pissed on and rejected.

**WILLIAM GOLDMAN:** I wrote a line once that caught on out there: "Nobody knows anything." And they don't. If we knew what we were doing, every movie would be wonderful. If actors knew what they were doing, every performance would be just swell. It's a crapshoot. It just is.

**DAVID HAYTER:** You can finalize and fine-tune a script down to the nth degree, and it's uninspiring. It doesn't move. It's too constructed. Sometimes you just need to break all that, and you need to mess it up a little bit and try to re-infuse some of that chaotic energy into it.

**PETER HYAMS:** If I want to write, I sit down at the keyboard and write. If I want to draw, I take a No. 2 soft pencil and a blank piece of paper, and I draw. If I want to make a film, I'm asking somebody for money. The only reason why they're gonna give me money is they think they're gonna make more money back than they gave me. If they didn't think they were gonna make more money back than they gave me, they'd be idiots to give me the money.

**ANDREW W. MARLOWE:** There was this experience on “Air Force One,” where I’d written this little speech, and Harrison [Ford] came up to me and said “It’s a great speech.” I said “Oh, thank you.” He said “I’m not gonna do it.” He said “All this, I can do with a look.” And he could.

**DENNIS PALUMBO:** A writer friend of mine once described screenwriters as “egomaniacs with low self-esteem.”

**BILLY RAY:** Someone told me that Warner Bros. has 360 movies in development. Just let that number rattle around in your head. I mean, they’re gonna make ten a year, twelve a year? So where are all those scripts going? They’re going nowhere.

**ADAM RIFKIN:** If you’re a purist and you don’t want your words touched, you should either be a playwright or an author. Because if you’re gonna be a screenplay writer and expect that your words are gonna be treated like gold, that’s just not reality.

**BRUCE JOEL RUBIN:** The writer isn’t even at the bottom of the totem pole. They’re at the part that they stick in the ground, and then there’s the totem pole

**PAUL SCHRADER:** After he made “The Godfather,” Coppola told me “I can fail for ten years now.” Well, he was wrong. He can fail for thirty years. Once you make a big hit, life becomes easy.

**STEPHEN SUSCO:** “The Grudge” was my first film. It was my twenty-fifth screenplay.

**DAVID S. WARD:** The first two movies I wrote got made, so I had this unrealistic idea about how this worked. It seemed like “Well, you write a movie, it gets made.” It wasn’t until later I realized that a lot of times you write a movie, it doesn’t get made.

**MICHAEL WOLK:** Something that will always sell in Hollywood is high-concept, and it’s usually “You take this and you match it with that, and then you got a movie.” Like with my show “Innocent Blood,” it was “Mafia, vampires . . . Hey! It’s a movie.”

**JUSTIN ZACKHAM:** I was on the phone with Morgan Freeman, and we had this long conversation. Afterwards I said “Listen, I just wanted to tell you that I wrote this script with you in mind, and the fact that you’ve made it better than I ever thought it could be . . . I’m just thoroughly grateful that you did it.” And he said “Look, I didn’t really do a whole hell of a lot. You had all the hard work to do. You wrote a great script, and I pretty much said the words that you wrote.”

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## SHORT DIRECTOR BIO (25 words)

Writer and filmmaker Peter Hanson is the author of “Dalton Trumbo: Hollywood Rebel” and “The Cinema of Generation X.” He directed the short “Stagehand” and the feature-length documentary “Every Pixel Tells a Story.”

## LONG DIRECTOR BIO (100 words)

Michigan native Peter Hanson studied film at New York University and journalism at the University at Albany before spending ten years as a writer/editor for various publications in upstate New York. He wrote the books “Dalton Trumbo: Hollywood Rebel” (a finalist for the Theatre Library Association Award) and “The Cinema of Generation X”; he directed the feature-length documentary “Every Pixel Tells a Story” and the award-winning short “Stagehand”; and he co-wrote the narrative feature “The Last Round.” Hanson also appeared in the award-winning documentary “Trumbo,” alongside Kirk and Michael Douglas. Hanson lives in Beverly Hills with his wife, Leslie.

## DIRECTOR’S WEBSITE

[GrandRiverFilms.com](http://GrandRiverFilms.com)

## PRODUCER BIO

Paul Robert Herman received a degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina. He then earned teaching credentials from the University of Colorado, specializing in cinematography and creative writing. After moving to Hollywood, he worked as an associate producer and marketing coordinator for an entertainment company in Pacific Palisades with clients including Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jet Li. Herman wrote, directed and produced two short films; the latest, “Tempus Fugit,” screened at several film festivals. Soon after landing his first literary agent, Herman graduated from UCLA’s Professional Screenwriting Program. He is the founder and CEO of Jade Tiger Productions.

## PRODUCER’S WEBSITE

[JadeTigerProductions.com](http://JadeTigerProductions.com)

# TALES FROM THE SCRIPT

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Producer Paul Robert Herman was enrolled in UCLA's Professional Screenwriting Program when he came up with the idea for a project exploring the rejection screenwriters face during their careers. The aim was to interview an assortment of successful screenwriters and discover their career strategies. He held onto the idea for a few years, waiting for the right project partner. Herman met director Peter Hanson, who already had a feature-length documentary and two nonfiction books to his credit, and the two joined forces. Work then began on arranging and conducting interviews with screenwriters for the two-pronged project of a documentary feature and a nonfiction book.

The project's working title was "Pass! Screenwriters on Surviving Hollywood Rejection" when production began in November of 2006. The first writer to sit down with the filmmakers was screenwriter/professor Kris Young, who taught Herman at UCLA. Hanson's work as an associate producer of the annual Saturn Awards helped land a linchpin interview with horror-movie legend John Carpenter in early 2007. Carpenter's participation immediately gave the project a profile, leading to attention including a "Los Angeles Times" feature story. Throughout the late spring and early summer of 2007, notables including John August, Shane Black, Billy Ray, and Oscar winner David S. Ward joined the project.

In the summer of 2007, the filmmakers spoke with two-time Academy Award nominee Melville Shavelson at his home in Studio City, California. The comedy veteran passed away the following day at the age of 91, making his appearance in "Tales from the Script" a touching farewell.

Interviews continued throughout late 2007, and Hanson augmented the project's Los Angeles shoots by heading a second unit in New York. In fact, the final interview of principal photography was Hanson's conversation with Paul Schrader at the writer-director's office near Times Square in January 2008.

Some of the writers who spoke with Hanson and Herman elected to be interviewed off-camera. Hanson also conducted several supplemental interviews with industry "gatekeepers" who accept or reject scripts for a living. As a result, the "Tales from the Script" book will feature interviews not seen in the documentary feature. Some of the participants in these interviews are Academy Award nominees Nora Ephron ("When Harry Met Sally"), Paul Mazursky ("An Unmarried Woman"), and Joe Stillman ("Shrek"); director David Dobkin ("Wedding Crashers"); and writer-directors Mike Binder ("The Upside of Anger") and Duncan Tucker ("Transamerica").

In early 2008, archival supervisor Tim Merrill, composer T.J. Raider, and editor J.D. Funari joined the project as post-production began. “Tales from the Script” marks Raider’s third collaboration with Hanson; Raider did the music for the documentary feature “Every Pixel Tells a Story” and the short “Stagehand.”

Concurrent with picture editing and the collection of archival material, two final interviews were conducted. After a year-long effort to land the interview, Hanson persuaded Frank Darabont to participate, resulting in one of the film’s funniest and most inspirational conversations.

Two weeks later, Hanson traveled to New York for a conversation with two-time Academy Award winner William Goldman at the novelist-screenwriter’s penthouse apartment near Central Park. The interview was conducted in the room where Goldman held his famous meeting with Ben Affleck and Matt Damon when the actors were writing early drafts of “Good Will Hunting.”

While making initial approaches to publishers, Hanson discovered marketplace resistance to the idea of a project focused on rejection, and the filmmakers reframed the material into a broader discussion of the lives of screenwriters. Around the same time Herman suggested the title “Tales from the Script.”

The project’s literary component found a home in the fall of 2008, when Anna Cottle and Mary Alice Kier of Cine/Lit Representation sold the book version of “Tales from the Script” to HarperCollins. Cottle and Kier have represented Hanson’s screenwriting endeavors for several years.

In the final weeks of 2008, post-production was completed and the film was selected as one of the handful of world-premiere screenings at the 20th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival. Other screenings have included the Newport Beach Film Festival and the Sonoma International Film Festival.

Publication of the “Tales from the Script” book is slated for early 2010, and the distribution plan for the documentary includes television broadcasts, educational exhibition, road-show screenings in cities and towns with screenwriting groups, and a bonus-laden DVD release, also slated for early 2010.