

THE **MISSING** INGREDIENT



WHY **99%** OF ALL SCREENPLAYS **FAIL**
AND **HOW** TO PUT **YOURS** IN THE **TOP 1%**

JEFF **BOLLOW**

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by Jeff Bollow

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Before We Go Any Further, What's the Point of All This?

Whoa, whoa, whoa.

I know you want you jump straight to the payoff. You want to know the "missing ingredient" **and you want to know it right now.**

But slow down a second.

There's no point knowing the "missing ingredient" until you have **context**. Without context, the whole concept is meaningless. So before we begin, let's quickly establish some. The most important basic point is this:

A screenplay is a working document.

It has many purposes. A screenplay is:

- An entertaining **story** designed to give the reader an emotional ride
- A written re-creation of **the cinema experience**
- A **sales tool** designed to attract money, people and resources
- A **production blueprint** designed to keep everyone on target
- A **promise** of something even greater than itself

Stop.

Don't go any further.

Re-read that list and consider each one carefully. A screenplay is many things. In fact, it's even *more* than just that list.

But consider this: It's **absolutely vital** that *your* screenplay be a satisfying representation of **every point on that list.**

If your screenplay were a cake, every point on that list would be *required* for it to taste right. And we bake the cake by adding the right ingredients.

Why Most People Misunderstand the Ingredients List

Most of the ingredients in a screenplay are obvious.

And most of the screenwriting courses (and books and gurus and workshops and methods and systems and *yadda yadda yadda*)... focus on the **obvious** ingredients:

- Story Structure
 - Plot
 - Theme
 - Character
 - Dialogue
 - Pacing
 - Subtext
 - Subplots
 - Scenes
 - Story World
 - Writing Style
- ...and so on.

And I'll be the first to agree — **every one of these ingredients is VITAL to the success of your screenplay.**

99% of screenplays submitted to production companies fail to meet producers' basic needs — there is no doubt that failings in *each* of these areas can be blamed for some of those failures.

But everyone — myself included, *prior* to FAST Screenplay — seems to *misunderstand* the ingredient list. **They think improving the quality of some or *all* of these ingredients is the secret to creating a screenplay that sells.**

But here's what I now think:

**If technique alone could solve the 99% problem,
IT WOULD HAVE BY NOW!**

With all the information swirling around the internet about “how to improve your screenwriting technique”, why do 99% of screenplays *still* fail?

If these ingredients were *all* that were missing, substantially more quality screenplays would be made each year.

The problem is... there’s a **missing ingredient** that no one seems to identify.

And *I* only know about it because, for the past 10 years, **I’ve been actively looking for screenplays to produce.** My company, Embryo Films, has received over 15,000 submissions over the past decade.

And 99% of them are **missing** this fundamental ingredient.

The Missing Ingredient

The **reason** the ingredient is missing is that it’s NOT an *aspect* of story. It’s much larger than that.

If you look back at that list on the previous page, you’ll notice that the ingredients most people focus on — the *technique* of screenwriting and storytelling — are the **details**. But:

If the “big picture” is missing an ingredient, then it doesn’t matter how skilled you are at the details.

It’s like spending a month fixing a character’s *reaction* in a scene in your screenplay... when what you *really* need to do is get rid of the character entirely!

But it’s so much *easier* to focus on improving details — all those blog tips like how to create “better characters”. That’s *tangible*. You can point and say: “Look, that detail doesn’t work. If you do *this*, you’ll have a better character.”

But the missing ingredient is bigger than that. More fundamental.

Yes, you can point at the missing ingredient, too, but **it's harder to see**. So most screenwriting teachers and systems *don't even know how to spot it*.

And yet, it causes **99% of all screenplays to fail**.

So what *is* the missing ingredient?

Missing Ingredient: A compelling promise exceeded.

That needs some explanation. And you'll fully understand it by the end of this report.

But first, consider this:

99% of screenplay submitted to production companies either do not make a compelling promise... or they do not exceed it!

Let's take a closer look at what that means.

My goal is to equip you with the tools you need — by the end of this report — to **design** a compelling promise **and** to understand **how to exceed it**.

Let's dig in.

What Kind of Promises Are You Really Making?

To really understand what a "compelling promise" is, we need to take a half step back and look at the bigger picture.

What is drama?

You may have heard the cliché that "all drama is conflict". And that's true, but I'd like to position the idea a little differently:

All drama is Setup and Payoff.

Setup and Payoff is a simple dynamic (you set something up, and then you pay it off), and everything in your screenplay is either one or the other — or *both*.

Imagine a character comes home one day to discover that his house has burned down. That's conflict. But it's not drama. It's not a story. In fact, it's only the *setup* for drama.

In order to have a story, we need the other half of the equation. In some way, we need to *pay off* that setup. As the character speaks to the police, he may discover it was arson. *Now* we have drama. The discovery that it's arson **pays off** the setup of the burned-down house. And it also acts as a **setup** for where the character goes next.

Every setup requires a payoff. And a payoff doesn't exist without a setup.

These are pretty basic and fundamental story principles. And this is where most writers and teachers put their attention.

But there's another element at work, too. And it's the part that trips writers up:

Every setup *implies* a payoff. And it's inside this *implication* that we find the "promise".

For example:

Take the character who discovered his house had been burned down. Let's say he'd just had an explosive argument (no pun intended) with an ex-girlfriend. The reader immediately *imagines* where the story *might* go from here.

If the character were mild-mannered, we might *want* to see him tap into his animal rage. Or if the character were set up as a slimy jerk, we might *want* to see him fall into a downward spiral of destruction.

The point is, the audience *imagines* the payoff based upon what was set up.

Don't Break Your Promises

The writer's job is to design the experience.

Every word you write puts an expectation in your reader's mind. And not all of those expectations come directly out of the words you've written, either. Many are *implied* by what the reader already knows.

But one thing is universal:

Your screenplay MUST fulfill the promise you've made.

And if you don't know *what* your words are promising — if you can't point directly to it and know precisely *how* your screenplay fulfills it — you are destined to break your promise.

Don't do that.

A "BAD" screenplay is one that doesn't fulfill its promise.

A "WEAK" screenplay is one that fulfills a dull promise.

A "STRONG" screenplay is one that fulfills an interesting promise.

A "GREAT" screenplay is one that *exceeds* a *compelling* promise.

Producers buy **great** screenplays. We have no interest in any of the others.

Nor *should* we.

Put yourself in our shoes. Consider the enormous amount of time, effort, money, sweat, and passion required to see a film from script to screen.

Writers make promises all day long.

"I've got an idea for a movie."

"Will you read my script? I know you'll love it."

"It's a high concept thriller."

"It's going to break box office records."

"It's the story of a guy facing insurmountable odds."

Everyone expects a sales pitch. That's okay.

But you've got to *live up to it*.

And whatever you say about your story, screenplay, project, characters, box office potential, or whatever you choose to talk about, **you've got to deliver.**

A Compelling Promise Exceeded

Since this is literally the missing ingredient in **99% of all submitted screenplays**, I want to really make sure it's clear. To understand it better, let's look a little closer at the component parts.

"Compelling" means captivating, mesmerizing, absorbing. When something is "compelling", something about it engages some part of the mind, or makes it attractive.

"Promise" is the expectation of the payoff you've put in the reader's mind. When something has "promise", it has potential excellence. When you *make* a "promise", you're literally *assuring* that you'll do what you've said you'll do.

"Exceeded" means brought to completion in a way that goes beyond expectations. When you've "exceeded" a promise, you have lived up to the expectations you created when you made the promise — and gone a step further.

Are You Compelling?

Most screenplay concepts are simply not compelling. Before creating FAST, I taught over 80 live screenwriting workshops where every person in the room revealed their idea. In over 1,200 ideas, less than 30 were what I would consider "compelling".

The real tragedy is that writers so often choose an idea, story, character, or premise that's not fundamentally compelling on some level, and then they spend the next several months or years working it into a screenplay.

If the idea isn't compelling, you're in the 99%.

To create something compelling (or reshape something bland into something compelling), there must be an intrinsic *mystery* or *fascination* beneath the element. Later in this report, we'll look at some solutions.

But for now, understand that to be compelling, your idea/story/character/premise must stand outside of the mundane.

If you fulfill a promise that is not "compelling", you have written a bland screenplay. You're in the 99%.

Did You Promise?

Every word in your screenplay, every idea you utter, every new element you introduce puts an expectation (or many expectations) in the reader's mind.

Those expectations cause the reader to imagine possible conclusions. Those possible conclusions are the "promise".

Writers often make sloppy promises, or don't understand what the promise of their story really is.

For example:

If your character arrives at his burned-down house, the reader imagines how the character might respond. If you don't consider *what the reader will imagine*, you'll write something that falls far short of their imagination. Trust me. The audience is smarter than you or me. They're smarter than you and me put together!

Your job as the writer is to not only *make* promises, but to *ensure* you're making the very best and most compelling promises a situation can offer.

If you don't exceed *the most compelling promise the reader has imagined*, the reader's ahead of you, and you are in the 99%.

Have You Exceeded?

To *fulfill* a promise, you have to first *make* the promise. Once you've made it, you then have to **live up to it**.

And that's a little more challenging than you think. Because:

As the writer, you are expected to be *more creative than the reader*.

The only way you can *truly* fulfill a promise you've made to the reader, is to completely **satisfy the reader's intrinsic fascination with your promise**.

Imagine you've presented an incredibly compelling promise, and the reader imagines a rich, fascinating world of possibilities in your story. *The conclusion of your story can't simply be what the reader imagined* — because there would be no element of mystery or surprise. There would be no "reveal".

In storytelling, you have to go *beyond* expectations. You have to satisfy not only the promise you've made, but the reader's **desire to be surprised** by your solution. You need to inspire the "wow".

And that's why even *fulfilling* the promise isn't enough: You have to **exceed** it.

If you make a compelling promise, but then don't go *beyond what the reader themselves imagined*, you have not satisfied the reader, and you wind up in the 99%.

It All Starts with Your First Words

When you submit your logline (that 25-words-or-less encapsulation of your story premise) to a production company, **you're making a promise.**

When I hear or read a logline that attracts my interest, I instantly imagine the story you're going to tell.

If your logline doesn't contain a **compelling** promise, I'm not interested. After all, that's your first chance to show me that you can pick an interesting project. And if you *can't* pick an interesting project, why would I believe you could tell an interesting story?

(Sidenote: I've tested this theory extensively. And every time I've rejected a logline and decided to read the synopsis and screenplay anyway, my initial rejection hunch was correct. Every time. Always. Without exception. Ever.)

If your logline **does** have a compelling promise, I ask for a synopsis (a single-page version of the entire story — complete with the surprise ending revealed!).

If your synopsis doesn't exceed the compelling promise of your logline, I'm not interested.

Think about that.

You might craft a great logline to attract my interest. But whatever logline you create is going to *imply* a promise for me. If you then give me a **different** story that *doesn't fulfill that promise I imagined*, you've given me a disappointing experience.

Tragically, *most* loglines are weak. (The vast majority.) And *most* synopses are weak. (The vast majority.)

And *most* screenplays are weak. And this is before we've even *looked* at the **details** all those screenwriting gurus seem to focus on. You can see how "fixing your technique" could be a big waste of effort if you don't have a compelling promise fulfilled, right?

It Goes Beyond the Concept

Now don't get me wrong.

I'm not saying that everything relies upon the Concept. While it's true that the concept itself (in the logline) must make the *first* promise — and *that's* the big picture of what you must exceed — that's **not** the only place you can go astray.

In fact, as I mentioned before, it's *vital* that all of the ingredients be mastered in your screenplay. But rather than thinking in terms of creating "more three-dimensional characters" or "punchier dialogue" or "tighter pacing", look at this list...

- Concept
- Genre
- Audience
- Story
- Structure
- Characters
- Dialogue
- Scenes
- Subplots
- Subtext
- Marketability
- Writing Style
- Pacing
- Themes

...and realize that **all of them need to include a compelling promise exceeded!**

For example, if you introduce a richly-drawn, three-dimensional character, *you've made a compelling promise!* That character absolutely **must** live up to (and preferably **exceed**) what we imagine she's capable of.

If you introduce a dynamo scene, you've made a compelling promise of where that scene will lead. You absolutely **must** fulfill (and preferably **exceed**) that promise, or the audience will be disappointed.

If you introduce a breathtakingly original story *structure*, you've made a compelling promise of *how* that structure will impact upon the theme of your story. You **must** fulfill (and preferably **exceed**) that promise, or the story will feel fractured.

"A compelling promise exceeded" applies *across the board*.

The basic need of every film producer is a screenplay that exceeds a compelling promise.

Hopefully it's becoming clear why 99% of all screenplays fail — and how frustrating a producer's search for screenplays can be.

If you've already written and submitted screenplays to production companies, I hope this revelation will help you take a closer look at the work you've already done.

If you focus on making sure this missing ingredient is *always* in your work, I guarantee it will completely transform your screenwriting career.

Promise What Producers Want

Okay.

So from this point forward, you're going to watch your words. You're going to make sure you *understand* the promise of the logline you've created. You're going to *exceed* the most *compelling* promise of your logline *in* your synopsis. And you're going to make a *compelling promise* in your synopsis that you'll *exceed* in your screenplay.

Then, you're going to look at *each* of the aspects of screenwriting, and you're going to make sure you're exceeding the compelling promise of each.

"But," I hear you asking, "how do I know that my 'compelling promise' is something producers want?" What exactly *do* producers want?

What kinds of stories constitute a “compelling promise”?

And if every screenplay sold *had* that missing ingredient of **a compelling promise exceeded**, how exactly did *crappy* movies get made?

Here’s a secret producers *would* like you to know:

The compelling promise of a screenplay can be found in more than just the story.

To really write a screenplay producers can actually *use*, you need to first consider what producers actually *need*. Take a minute to go back to the very *first* page of this report. Remember that list I asked you to stop and re-read? Re-read it again.

Producers don’t simply want to find great *stories*.
They want to find **great screenplays**.

And if you remember that list, you remember that a screenplay is more than just a story.

It’s also a blueprint for production. It’s also a sales document. It’s also the promise of something even bigger than the story itself. And within *those* aspects of the screenplay, you can find **additional compelling promises**.

It Ain’t All About the Story

Producers have a difficult job. They’re the first on the project, and the last to leave. Long after the actors have wrapped, long after the editor’s final cut, long after the director has finished his creative masterpiece... the producer is still there, trying to make sure the film gets the best release it can, the best DVD sales figures, and the best return-on-investment to its investors.

Which is why, even though to you (the writer), the story and its characters are the most important thing — that’s not always the case for the producer.

In fact, there are several other “compelling promises” you could exceed that producers might find even *more* important than the story itself:

- **The promise of salability**
If a producer sees in your story an easy sale (perhaps because she knows there’s a hole in the market for the genre of story you’ve written), she will know exactly who *wants* your screenplay, and she will buy it.
- **The promise of packaging**
If a producer happens to be a great friend of a name actor who he knows is looking for a role that’s exactly like what you’ve written, he may believe he can easily package the project, and he will buy it.
- **The promise of audience**
If a producer knows that stories targeting a specific audience are actively being sought by a studio or distribution company, and she knows there’s a ready audience for your project, she will buy it.
- **The promise of box office**
If a producer is convinced that your story has enormous box office potential, perhaps because of a unique premise, or because you’ve tapped into the core of a genre, he will buy it.
- **The promise of production**
If a producer thinks there’s any reason a project could get greenlit due to a hole in a production slate, and she thinks your story could fill a need, she will buy your screenplay.

There are scores of reasons producers buy screenplays. Writers often think it’s the story alone that will make or break their chances.

And if all things are equal, **story is vital**. But it’s not the only “compelling promise” you can fulfill that can lead to a sale.

Crappy Films Hold the Secret Key

It’s probably not what you want to hear, but you can learn a lot from crappy films. I’m not suggesting you should *write* crappy films (enough such screenplays already exist). But they do hold a valuable key to understanding the screenwriter’s job.

Have you ever watched a film and thought, “How did THAT get made?” Before you berate the screenwriter, first realize this:

It’s easy to make a bad film from a good screenplay, but it’s impossible to make a good film from a bad one.

Not all crappy films come from crappy screenplays.

But — and here’s the key lesson — **some do.**

How did *those* get made? Answer: **The writer fulfilled a compelling promise.**

- Maybe it satisfied an actor’s desire to travel to an exotic location
- Maybe it satisfied a production output agreement
- Maybe it satisfied a studio’s need for a tentpole
- Maybe it satisfied a producer’s girlfriend’s acting aspirations
- Maybe it satisfied an investor’s lifelong desire to produce a film

In each of these cases, a compelling promise was fulfilled or exceeded. It may not have come from the story. It may not have come from the characters. It may not have come from your *craft*.

But that’s the point. Again:

The compelling promise of a screenplay can be found in more than just the story.

Every screenwriting course you’ll ever encounter will *ignore* this reality. They’ll only focus on **technique**.

But that’s because most screenwriting teachers are either **writers** doing a day job to pay the bills, or **teachers** who have been taught how to teach screenwriting.

If you really want to sell screenplays, **you must understand the producer’s perspective.** Screenwriting is not like writing a novel, because *the audience never reads your screenplay*. You *need* the rest of the production. You *need* the producer. And if you exceed a compelling promise for her, you’ll be in the top 1%.

Some Random Examples

Maybe the best way to make the idea clear is to give some examples.

Now, bear in mind, the following examples show *one aspect* of “a compelling promise exceeded”. In each case, there are **lots** of reasons for the success of the film.

What interests us right now is the “*most* compelling promise” that a SCREENPLAY of each would fulfill.

Back to the Future — A kid must go back in time to ensure that his parents fall in love. The concept is intellectually intriguing, and promises fun entertainment, which the story and characters exceed.

Forest Gump — A mentally challenged man innocently meanders through his life, inadvertently participating in major historical moments. One promise exceeded is historical nostalgia as seen through the sweet eyes of innocence.

Star Wars — A space opera set in a distant galaxy, where a boy must lead a group of freedom fighters against an evil empire. The compelling promise is an underdog tale of triumph in a setting that’s exciting and unfamiliar.

The Blair Witch Project — Three filmmakers go missing trying to document their search for a local legend. The compelling promise is that the film is presented *as if it were true*. It promises to engage the imagination.

Up — Animated story of an old man who ties thousands of balloons to his house to float to South America. Created in 3D, the compelling promise is stunning visuals, and a sentimental story about approaching the end of life.

Now, these are just five random examples that popped into my head. I encourage you to think about *every* film, and try to see what compelling promise it offered.

Imagine you were producer and you read a screenplay set on a tropical island. The compelling promise might be the opportunity for cast and crew to shoot in the Bahamas. Think about it. If the story was solid and entertaining, *why wouldn’t* you want to buy that screenplay?

How EXACTLY to Put Your Screenplay in the Top 1%

So.

Before you misinterpret what I'm saying, let me make one thing perfectly clear:

I want you to write powerful, compelling, engaging stories with richly drawn characters in fascinating situations. I want to find GREAT screenplays that work on EVERY level. I'm NOT suggesting you write crappy stories that satisfy some film producer's business need. And I'm NOT suggesting you should let your goals be hijacked by a movie star's desire to shoot a film on a tropical island.

The only way to create, build, and *sustain* a screenwriting career is to master the craft on every level.

But I want you to understand that it's not about "better characters" or "punchier dialogue". It's not about creating "a gripping first 5 pages" or "an explosive ending" or "scenes that twist expectations".

You need all those things. Of course you do.

But the *missing ingredient* is **a compelling promise exceeded**. And if you focus on creating and fulfilling them, you will succeed. Just *one* in your screenplay can lead to a sale. If you've included many, you increase your odds.

Three Crucial Steps

Before you send out your logline, synopsis or screenplay:

1. ALWAYS KNOW YOUR PROMISE
2. Always make your promise COMPELLING
3. Always EXCEED your promise

Print them out, and put them next to your computer. And never stray!

You Can Develop a Compelling Promise

Before we finish up, let's give you some quick ideas for *how* to develop a compelling promise.

The best way to find and develop a compelling promise is to *think differently*. For example:

- **Understand the producer's needs.** What kind of story would satisfy a producer's needs? Different producers are different, so this will vary. Some are driven by artistic motives, others by profit, and still others by the experiential opportunities offered by moviemaking.
- **Find the *most compelling aspect to a concept*.** Don't settle for the first idea that pops in your mind. Explore it, play with it, see it from different angles. You're looking for something that promises the best possible ride.
- **Look at your story/concept/element from outside yourself.** We can easily tap into our own fascinations, but try to see it from other points of view. A promise isn't truly *compelling* unless it's compelling to *other* people.
- **Go to the next step or level.** When you find a compelling idea, consider what the *next* level might be. It's when you're *two* steps forward that you find the truly original ideas, because *anyone* could tap into the obvious.
- **Introduce something new in a familiar genre.** One way to create a compelling promise is to tap into something new. Introduce an unusual character into a familiar setting, or tell a genre story from an unexpected perspective. A new engaging view of something known is irresistible.
- **Understand people and their needs.** Stories are by, for, and about *people*, and they help us see, understand, and attach meaning to our world. Uncover the hopes, dreams, fears, and motivations that drive people. A compelling promise always taps into human emotion.

Ideally, every story concept you create will in itself make a compelling promise. But you can increase your chances of success by incorporating a business-related promise that your screenplay delivers, too.

Perfect Alignment

Before we wrap up this quickie report, I want to talk about a concept I stumbled on as I was teaching screenwriting. I call it “**alignment**”.

In this report, I’ve mentioned the producer’s needs and the producer’s requirements, and all the things a producer wants to find in your screenplay.

Now, I’m going to tell you what I really think:

You should write for yourself.

I’m a big believer that writers *must* write for their own dreams, passions, and motivations. I know what it takes to write a feature-length screenplay. It takes excitement, passion, dedication, discipline, enthusiasm, and stamina, for starters.

Don’t try to appease a producer. At least not with a spec project.

But at the same time, as a producer actively seeking screenplays, I’ve been continually frustrated by the fact that writers are focused on *their* dreams and passions and motivations... resulting in some of the best screenplays I’ve read being stories I have no interest in producing.

So the secret to finding the right balance is this:

Don’t appease.

Align.

Write for *yourself* and then *align* with a producer who is looking for exactly what you’re offering. OR... find a producer who’s looking for the kind of thing you’re interested in, and then *align* with him by creating a story that fulfills a compelling promise *he’s* interested in.

Imagine you’ve written a screenplay a producer loves — but she wants you to change your character from a mid-30s female to a mid-20s male. You need to **align** with her needs. You need to **find the passion that’s common to you both**.

Why Do We Make Movies, Anyway?

At the start of this report, I asked what the point of all this is. And the point is this:

We write screenplays so we can turn ideas into movies.

If you love movies the way I love movies, the whole process is exciting. It's a challenging, exacting, expensive artform that involves hundreds of people working on a project that takes months or years to complete.

Why do we even do it? Why do we love movies so much?

I think it's because movies are an *emotional* experience that show us new worlds, give us fascinating insights into the world we live in, and push and pull and tug and play with our most visceral instincts.

The best movies are emotionally *and* intellectually engaging.

And because of the elaborate and expensive nature of the process of putting them together, we need a clear blueprint that is architecturally sound, engaging on all those levels, and makes financial sense.

It's doable.

But we must reach into the best part of ourselves.

There are many reasons people make movies.

**99% of screenplays fail to meet producers' basic needs.
The producer's basic need is to find a great screenplay
that exceeds a compelling promise.**

Tap into your passion, align it with a producer's, and you'll find yourself in the top 1%.

Thanks for reading. Now get back to work!

About This Report

In 1999, while I was in post-production on my first feature film (a film I had written), I started looking for screenplays. When I couldn't find anything good enough to produce, I started teaching people how to write what I *could* produce. This eventually led to my career getting sidetracked for ten years, as I became Australia's top independent screenwriting teacher.

My two-day FAST Screenwriting Workshop was presented to over 1,200 adult participants through 80 workshops in 9 cities in 5 countries, where participants unanimously gave it a "**recommend**" rating. I've delivered seminars and masterclasses in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia and the United States, at major universities, international film festivals and media training organizations.

But **I was doing it all wrong**. I was doing what everyone *else* was doing. I was teaching *technique*. Eventually, I realized that **technique alone is not enough**. That's when I created FAST Screenplay — a systematic **process** that gives you the techniques you need *when you need them in the writing process*.

I have no interest in being a screenwriting teacher. My aim has *always* been to **find and develop commercially-viable screenplays** I can *produce*. My goal from the start has been to create an independent feature film studio that makes between 3 and 6 films per year. I want to make a film in every country. Even though I've written over a million words of content, my true passion is directing and producing.

By developing FAST Screenplay, I am bringing my teaching career to an end, by pouring ten years of experience teaching *and* searching for screenplays into a **complete** system for *developing* screenplays that I (or anyone) can produce.

This report — ***The Missing Ingredient: Why 99% of All Screenplays Fail and How to Put Yours in the Top 1%*** — came out of my realization that writers consistently misunderstand the real purpose of a screenplay. My company, Embryo Films, received over 15,000 submissions between 1999 and 2010. 99% were unusable.

If you apply this information to your movie ideas and screenwriting efforts, you will consistently put your screenplays into a genuine position of salability. When you've done that, I will consider my efforts successful.

About the Author

Jeff Bollow is an award-winning director/producer, best-selling author, screenwriter, film festival organizer, and international speaker.

He started in Los Angeles as an actor at age 12, with appearances in movies, TV, commercials, theatre, and radio. Credits include *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*, *Columbo*, *Lost Valley*, "Ann Jillian", "Gabriel's Fire" and many more.

As a teenager, he worked every job in film production on features, shorts, and music videos — from production to AD to camera to sound to lighting to editing to distribution. Companies include Universal/MCA, Castle Rock, Propaganda, DNA and the Oxygen Network. His first production job was as a PA on then-6-year-old Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's first music video. He later worked on 5 films in 4 months for legendary B-movie producer Roger Corman.

Jeff began making short films, including IFC New Filmmaker Award-winner "The Duel", among several others, before migrating to Australia in 1996, where he wrote and co-produced *6,000 Miles from Hollywood*, an indie feature abandoned in post-production. It was then that he began seeking screenplays to produce.

Unable to find any, he began teaching, eventually offering his FAST Screenwriting Workshop over 80 times to nearly 1,200 participants in 9 cities in 5 countries. In 2002, he founded Screenplay.com.au, and is internationally recognized as a dynamic and passionate speaker and teacher, in addition to being an accomplished script editor. He has done rewrites (*KNIFE*), and dozens of consultations. Jeff is also the author of two books: *Writing FAST: How to Write Anything with Lightning Speed* and the *Apple Training Series: iLife 08* for Apple Computers.

Frustrated by his absence from production, Jeff produced and directed the ATOM Award-winning educational DVD *Making Fantastic Short Films* in 2006, and co-founded the Big Mountain Short Film Festival in New Zealand later that year.

He has directed television in New Zealand ("Pacific Beat St" for TV3), theatre in Australia ("Five Women Wearing the Same Dress" for PGT), and sci-fi drama in the US. He is currently writing a new book and developing several film and television projects. FAST Screenplay is his final contribution to the world of teaching screenwriting.

More Information

To learn more about the people and projects mentioned here please visit the websites below.

FAST Screenplay

<http://FASTscreenplay.com>

A complete, step-by-step systematic approach to screenwriting that focuses on the writing *process*. Writers start with nothing — before they even have an idea — and end with a powerful, un-put-down-able screenplay that's *aligned* to producers' needs — and a unique roadmap for selling it. FAST Screenplay is designed as self-guided move-at-your-own pace *complete* screenplay development system for any writer, with any idea, anywhere in the world.

Embryo Films

<http://embryo-films.com>

Independent production company based in Sydney, Australia, devoted to feature film, television, and non-broadcast production.

Screenplay.com.au

<http://screenplay.com.au>

Founded in 2002, Australia's Screenplay Development Centre is home to the very best workshops, software, and services intended to develop commercially-viable feature film screenplays in Australia.

Writing FAST: How to Write Anything with Lightning Speed

<http://writingfast.com>

Best-selling book by Jeff Bollow that introduces the FAST System approach to writing, and is applicable to any form of writing. FAST is an acronym for FOCUS, APPLY, STRENGTHEN, TWEAK, and is a streamlined approach to the four phases of the writing process.

Jeff Bollow

<http://jeffbollow.com>

Personal bio website for producer/director and author Jeff Bollow.

**Since we can achieve anything we set our minds to,
let's focus our minds on our greatest imagination.**