

**THE
SECRET
SKILL**

truly
**OF THE
PROFESSIONAL
SCREENWRITER**

Jeff Bollow

THE SECRET SKILL

OF THE (TRULY)

PROFESSIONAL SCREENWRITER

by Jeff Bollow



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FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gotta ask you a question.

Are you *starting* here? Or have you already watched the “**3 Fundamental Problems**” video and read the *Missing Ingredient* report?

If you’ve skipped that companion video and report and jumped straight here, please **stop right now**.

Don’t read any further.

I’m not kidding. There’s an order of priority here.

It’s kind of like that secret fraternity you wanted to join as a kid. You desperately wanted to know the secret handshake — but you had to *prove yourself* first. You had to show the fraternity you were *ready* to be admitted.

Here’s the thing:

Knowing the “secret skill” of the “truly” professional screenwriter (and, yes, I’ll reveal why it’s a “secret” *and* why I put “truly” in parentheses) *will do you absolutely no good whatsoever* if you don’t deeply grasp the fundamental purpose and objective of screenwriting. In fact:

If you attempt to discover the “secret skill” before you grasp the missing ingredient, you may actually DAMAGE your ability to attain the secret skill.

Read that carefully. I’m completely serious.

I know this all seems a bit overly dramatic, but trust me. I will *demonstrate* how and why this is true in a minute.

For now, just make sure you’ve watched the video and read the report first. Come back here when you’re done. Don’t worry. This report isn’t going anywhere.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Alright. I'm trusting you now.

So you know the **three fundamental problems of screenplay development**.
And you know **what ingredient is missing in 99% of all screenplays**.

You grasp exactly what producers are looking for, and the fundamental challenges that make finding it so elusive. Right?

The reason I wanted you to discover those things *in that order* is this:

Where the "missing ingredient" draws producers to your screenplay, the "secret skill" draws producers to you.

When your screenplay *includes* the missing ingredient, producers will want to buy it. But they'll have no real need for *you*.

But when you master *both* the missing ingredient *and* the secret skill, you become "truly" professional.

Together, they're a "one-two punch."

The secret skill makes you irresistible. It makes producers perk up and look beyond just your screenplay. It gives them a very specific reason to work with *you*.

I've read *scores* of screenwriting books, and looked at *tons* of information. I've listened to the gurus and I've worked with the pros. And I've never seen *anyone* suggest deliberately developing this secret skill I'm about to reveal.

And yet, in all my experience *searching* for screenplays, and *working* with writers, and *trying* to develop not just commercially-viable screenplays — but a system for developing them, I have consistently found one thing to be true:

This is the most sought-after skill there is. And even people looking for it... don't even realize they're looking for it.

ALL THE SKILLS YOU NEED

To understand the secret skill, you must first understand that **screenwriting is a craft**.

It's not something just anybody can do. Don't get me wrong — *anyone* can successfully write a screenplay, in my opinion — but *in order* to write one, you **must** develop your craft.

And every craft requires a unique skill set in order to successfully master it. As a screenwriter, you need to be able to:

- Develop a compelling **premise** that attracts the interest of an audience
- Craft realistic **characters** with authentic dimensionality
- **Plot** and **structure** a story "ride" that elicits an emotional reaction
- Identify **themes**, and successfully evoke them
- Design entertaining **dialogue** that serves the story and character
- Shape **subtext** to add layers and meaning
- See and adjust **pacing** issues, in order to carefully design an effect
- Expand, select and incorporate appropriate **subplots**
- Create and sculpt **metaphors**
- Productively **brainstorm** at will
- Spot and incorporate the different requirements of **genre**
- Have a command of the **language** that grabs the reader and won't let go

...among several other skills.

Developing these skills takes time and practice.

They will not be acquired overnight.

By its very nature, a **skill** is something you're able to do *well*. It's "expertise". It's proficiency. And in order to write consistently at a professional level, you need to have a mastery of the skills in this list.

And once you have them, the "secret" skill rockets you to a whole new league.

THE SECRET SKILL

Just as the “missing ingredient” was focused on the bigger picture, so too is the “secret skill”. It’s not just an *additional* skill.

It *subsumes* all other skills.

The Secret Skill: *Speed*.

The secret skill of the truly professional screenwriter is the ability to do all the things in the previous list *quickly*.

Let that sink in for a minute.

Imagine for a moment that you were seated side by side next to a concert pianist. You both have one half of the piano in front of you. Imagine you’ve never played before, and this master is going to teach you.

He quickly shows you how to run the scales. You slowly move your fingers up the keys, awkwardly trying to remember which finger your thumb should follow. You move slowly, don’t you? Why? Because you’re unfamiliar with the movements.

But the master moves much quicker and more fluidly than you. Even when he moves at a deliberate pace, his mastery of his craft enables him to do the same thing — *better* than you — immediately, and without thinking.

Understand this:

The point is *not* “speed for the sake of speed”. The point is *speed as an expression of mastery*.

You can sell a screenplay that took years to write. You can sell a screenplay before you’ve mastered *all* the elements of screenwriting. People do it all the time.

But when you can write, adjust, and improve a screenplay at genuinely pro quality, and you can do it with *speed*... it is then that you are *truly* a professional.

WHY SPEED IS GOOD

For the record, I'm not talking about the Keanu Reeves movie. (Although, c'mon... a bus that can ignore the laws of physics? That's just gold!)

The speed I'm talking about is mastery. It's efficiency.

When we first try our hand at something new in life... whether it's driving a car, or speaking a foreign language, or building a cabinet, or cooking, or writing a screenplay... we begin as novices. We start with *no* knowledge, *no* skill, and *no* technique.

There is no shame in not knowing something.

But as we practice and improve our skills — and *all of us* are capable of these skills if we focus our attention on them — the skill itself becomes second nature.

As it becomes second nature, we stop needing to focus on the skill itself.

And that's where the true power comes into play. When you write well *with speed*, **you don't need to think about it**. It's just there. You just *know* how to do it. You just "get it". You're capable. You're confident. You know your stuff.

The master painter or pianist or builder or electrician or engineer or astronaut or journalist or athlete or dive instructor... these people don't need to think about *how* to do their work.

They can focus on finding the most powerful, effective, and creative solutions to any problems that arise.

Your value to a producer skyrockets when you can write with speed.

Ask yourself this: If you were a producer, and you had the choice, which writer would *you* prefer to work with? The excellent writer who took months to craft a screenplay? Or the excellent writer who took weeks?

THE PREREQUISITE

Now, before you drop everything and try to bang out your script in 3 days, you should know that doing so is a recipe for disaster.

Nobody cares how long it took you to write your screenplay.

All that matters is its quality.

(And, ironically, we *know* it's a quality screenplay when it *reads* fast — when you can grab the reader by their eyeballs and race them down your pages, and they just can't pull themselves away. The *real* meaning of "fast screenplay" is a screenplay that *reads* fast, because *that's* our true goal.)

So, what gives? Should you write quickly or shouldn't you?

Remember when I told you earlier that trying to understand the "secret skill" *before* you understood the "missing ingredient" might actually *damage* your ability to acquire the secret skill?

Remember how you thought that was just me creating artificial hype? (Yeah, don't worry... I know you're suspicious — I've met enough screenwriters over the years to know I have to prove myself to you; it's all good. C'mon... gimme a fist pump. No? Okay, nevermind.)

You need to understand the *point* of screenwriting first. And here's why:

If you try to increase the *speed* of your writing *without* mastering the other skills, you ingrain bad habits.

Practice is a funny thing.

If you were a basketball player, and you practiced shooting hoops every day, you'd improve. But what if you consistently practiced *wrong*? What if you were leaning or bending your arm in some way that actually *hurt* your chances of landing the ball?

Writing with speed while *ignoring* the other skills will **prevent** your success.

WHY IT'S A "SECRET"

So, what's with me calling it a "secret" skill? Is that marketing hype? Is that me just trying to arouse your curiosity? I mean, what's so secret about writing quickly?

Consider this: If a producer would prefer a *quick* writer to a *slow* writer, doesn't that skill give the writer a **distinct competitive advantage**?

Do you share all your secrets with your competitors?

Those who write quickly will never reveal it as their competitive advantage.

Truth be told, they've probably never even thought about it. Writers who write quickly tend to do it naturally. And producers? If you ask them whether they'd prefer a quick writer or a slow writer (all else being equal), they'll always say they want a quick one — but they might also say they'd never thought about it before.

(And that's because most writers aren't so quick. ...Only the truly professional ones are. Ask around.)

But as a producer who *recognizes* the need for a steady stream of top-level production-ready screenplays, **I know how important speed really is**. Time is money. Remember **Problem #1** in the video?

That's why I'm blowing this thing wide open. (Hey, I can be dramatic, too.)

10 REASONS TO WRITE WITH SPEED

As a way to shed some additional light on the subject, I've come up with a list of ten reasons why writing with speed is a *good* thing. But please note that this list is by no means exhaustive. (In fact, I can't actually think of a reason *not* to write with speed.)

REASON #1 - FLEXIBILITY

Producers often need changes. It's just the nature of the beast. It's extremely rare that we can film *exactly* what's written without the need to make *any* adjustments.

And that's not even a bad thing. No matter how brilliant *you* are, the director, the actors, the cinematographer, the art department, the stunt guys, the lighting people, the sound department, costumes, editors, visual effects people... **all of these jobs are creative.**

Movies are a collaboration of a large number of very creative people. As long as everybody's on the same page aiming for the highest consistent creative vision, we should *embrace* changes.

And if you're a fast writer, you have great flexibility. You can make **quality** changes, even in the face of adversity, or even while having to "make do" with budget restrictions or casting limitations.

Flexibility is a time-saver. A flexible, can-do, solutions-driven writer who is a master at her craft is worth her weight in gold. And that comes with speed.

REASON #2 - MORE STORY IDEAS

The conscious mind is an "idea factory". Our minds work by continually putting puzzle pieces together. First and foremost, we do it to solve problems. Once our survival needs are met, our minds are free to explore *creative* problems.

Without exception, every single screenwriting workshop I have ever taught has had at least one person (and sometimes up to 100% of the participants) who refuses to share his or her idea. No matter how hard I try to convince them, they will not budge. Their idea is sacred to them, and they're terrified I'm going to steal it.

They're making a fundamental misunderstanding about their own mind. They don't know they've got a limitless supply of ideas awaiting them. We all do. We can't *not*. It's the very nature of the human mind.

If you hold an idea in your head, or you work so slowly on it that you're overthinking it in a bid for perfection, your brain amplifies the importance of the idea and distorts its true value. You hang on to weak ideas and miss the stronger ones.

When you write **fast**, you get the ideas out of your head more quickly. And the more ideas you get out of your head, the more ideas you will have the opportunity to experience. And *share*.

REASON #3 - BETTER STORY IDEAS

At the end of the day, we all share a common experience. We watch the same TV shows and see the same movies. We read the same news and experience the same moment in history.

And since ideas come from creatively combining different thoughts in our brains, it's not really surprising when several people have the same creative idea at the same time. (Writers are always shocked at this notion, for some reason.)

When you write slowly or take too long bringing your idea to fruition, you give other people the time to make the same creative connections.

Haven't you ever had a great idea for a movie, only to see it get made by someone else a year later? I can't even begin to count the number of times it's happened to me. I had a virtually identical idea to the *Blair Witch Project* about two years before it was released. I sat on it. I needed perfection before I'd do anything. They make \$250 million dollars from a \$35,000 movie. I got bupkis.

But even beyond that, when you write **fast**, you get *through* the "obvious" ideas — the ideas everyone has — and begin to find better ideas that most people will never arrive at (because they're focused on that one perfect idea).

Writing fast will (eventually, at least) give you better quality ideas, and in greater quantity. Ask anyone who writes with speed. They have far more ideas than they have time to write, and the ideas tend to be of higher quality.

REASON #4 – A SHARPER BRAIN

If you can train yourself to take your ideas from “brain to page” more quickly (while doing it effectively), your brain actually gets sharper. You develop the ability to more quickly spot problems and solutions.

Remember when you first learned to drive a car? You had to focus on every little detail. It was incredibly nerve-wracking — checking the mirrors, holding the wheel, easing up on the clutch at just the right speed, shifting the gear... all while moving down the road and being ready to dodge some other guy who swerves funny.

Cut to a year later, and you’re not even *thinking* about *any* of those things. In fact, you’re probably talking on the phone and switching the radio in the middle of gear change as you’re making a turn. (I’ve been ticketed for that. I advise against it.)

We get better at what we consistently *do*. When you write **fast**, you write more *often*, and the more you write, the stronger your skills become. Your brain gets sharper, and you’re not even aware of it.

REASON #5 – YOUR VALUE ON SET

If you’re focused on screenwriting, you probably love movies. But it may surprise you to learn that screenwriters are generally not wanted on set.

I’ll be more specific: *slow* writers are generally not wanted on set.

That’s because slower writers tend to labor over their words. They’ve polished their draft carefully and they’re in love with it. If and when a change needs to be made on set, they will invariably try to argue against it.

Movie sets are busy, complicated places with a lot happening. They’re no place for a creative energy that goes against the prevailing creative sensibilities.

In other words, if you can write **fast**, you can see the inevitable changes as an opportunity. You can even offer powerful creative solutions immediately.

Suddenly, you go from being a reluctant guest, to a potentially collaborative creative partner who can offer *real value* — including the possibility of quality rewrites on the fly. Suddenly, you're *good* to have around.

REASON #6 – YOU LIVE MORE

When you write *fast*, you write more in less time. Imagine you have three hours to write. You can slowly write five pages, or quickly achieve fifteen.

When you accomplish more in less time, you actually give yourself more time to experience life itself. And since the best writing comes from your life experience, it's *crucial* that writers get out into the world and actually *live*.

Plus, you can pour ideas onto the page more effectively, and actually *capture* more of the experience you've lived.

How often have you had a brilliant idea with no way to write it down? Minutes later, you've forgotten the idea, and no matter how many times you tap your head, it doesn't come back.

Life is an experience, and writing is a way to bottle that experience. To create richly drawn characters and fascinating scenes and situations, it's necessary to live and to observe, and to record. If you're in front of your computer all day and night — even if you're assembling your screenplay — it's whizzing by you.

REASON #7 – YOU'LL LOOSEN UP

When you think of the cliché image of a writer, what do you imagine? The scotch-drinking curmudgeon who takes himself and his work so seriously that he can't interact socially.

Obviously, that's far from the norm. (No, really. I've met a couple thousand writers in my time. It's not the norm.) But where did that image come from?

It came from the fact that writers tend to lean in that direction. What I've found is that when you write **fast**, you train yourself to loosen up. You play with ideas more and you don't get stuck on them. You don't let ideas haunt you. Writing is about getting it out of you and onto the page. It's not about perfection.

Don't get me wrong. We must strive for powerful writing, and I'm a stickler for creating as near to perfection as we can reach. But when you free your mind to let things out without all the overwrought demands you place on yourself... you free your mind to give you more.

It's like a child being rewarded for a job well done. If you tell your brain it's okay to write more quickly, it will happily appease you by writing more quickly. Your shoulders will drop and you'll breathe more easily. Sounds crazy, but it's true.

REASON #8 – YOU'LL WRITE DAILY

A writer writes. A good writer writes often.

A slow writer looks at blank pages for long stretches of time. And the longer he looks, the longer he will look. The danger is in letting a day pass without writing a word, because he's too busy thinking about what those words should be.

Writing *daily* is the secret to become a writer. Not "occasionally". Not "when you're inspired". Not "when you know what your story's about".

Daily. Every day. Without exception. To an arbitrary word count, if need be — it doesn't matter.

And the **faster** you write, the more likely you are to never skip a day. And every day you write, provided you're focused on improving your skill, you *will* improve.

Probably one of the greatest writing lessons I ever learned is that you have to give up the notion of writing to inspiration. Inspiration comes and goes, and by all means, when you've got it, run with it. But you have to stop telling yourself you can't write without it. Write faster, and you'll see that it's always there.

REASON #9 – YOU’RE GETTING OLD

Okay, I originally threw this in to be tongue-in-cheek. But the more I thought about it, the more I thought it’s actually a legitimate and compelling reason to write *faster*.

In our youth, we’re full of unbridled energy, and we’re racing through our lives at a frantic pace. As we age, it’s been scientifically determined that our body clocks begin to slow down, and we experience time differently than we did when we were young.

Ironically, it means that as we get older, we slow down (just when, it could be argued, we need to make the best use of our time!). Intellectually, we can recognize that we have more to say, and less time in which to say it.

Developing the skill of writing more quickly enables us to beat the clock. Every person has a lifetime of amazing stories to share.

Are you only going to share one story? (Or, thanks to a slow writing pace, are you going to share even *less* than one?) Why not share the whole library that is within you? As soon as you start, you’ll find that whole hidden sections open up.

REASON #10 – THE EXPONENTIAL MULTIPLIER

Have you ever noticed how the slower you write, the slower you write? It’s as if there’s a multiplier that makes a “bad writing day” compound upon itself. The whole idea of “writer’s block” (something you’ll *never* have with me) comes from a writer letting the thinking lead to more thinking.

Well, the inverse is also true. The *faster* you write, the faster you’ll write.

In fact, if you develop the skill to write quickly, to spot story problems quickly, to create and play around with character elements quickly, to punch up dialogue quickly – you’ll find your speed compounding.

Consider this: The FAST Screenplay system takes about 8 or 9 months to go through the first time. But once you *have* the skill and can *use* the muscle, you can go through again in half the time. Eventually (if you want to), you can probably zip through it in as little as two months. And because your skill improves each time, you actually end up with better quality writing, too.

5 MISCONCEPTIONS

If all this talk of writing “faster” has sped up your pulse and left you wanting to take a breather, I understand. Grab a glass of water. Take a minute.

I don’t want you to feel rushed.

Seriously.

Let me reiterate a point I made earlier:

The point is *not* “speed for the sake of speed”. The point is speed as an expression of mastery.

I don’t want to make your pulse race. I’m not trying to push you to any *specific* speed at all.

When I say “faster” or “quickly” or “with speed”, it’s compared to your *current* pace.

When you first suggest to someone the idea of writing quickly, one of two things happen. Either they *embrace* the concept (usually because they don’t like to write), or they *reject* the concept (usually because they *do* like to write).

Since I’ve been promoting the idea of writing “FAST” for many years now, I’ve had to defend my position. And every time, without fail, those who reject the concept do so because of a few simple misconceptions.

Let’s look at them briefly.

#1 - FAST EQUALS HASTY

The first misconception is that because you wrote quickly, you didn't *think* about it. So you were *hastily* putting words on the page. In other words, you're writing too quickly to have any time to go to a deeper, more meaningful place in your writing.

WRONG.

Mozart wrote fast. Da Vinci painted fast. Branson does business deals fast. The actual speed of a task's completion has nothing to do with its quality. You can hastily throw something together quickly *or* slowly. Or... you can do something very carefully... again, quickly *or* slowly.

The question is not the speed of your work, but the level of *skill* you bring to the task, and whether your mind is sharp enough to make adjustments that improve quickly upon inferior quality.

#2 - FAST EQUALS IMMEDIATE

This is a huge misconception. When people hear the word **fast** as it relates to a creative endeavor (particularly writing), they imagine it to be synonymous with "immediacy". They think a "fast" screenplay is written within a certain (immediate) time frame.

WRONG.

"Fast" (or "speed") is a measure of motion, not a measurement of time itself. Writing something quickly doesn't mean dashing it down on the page righthisverysecond. Even "fast" takes time.

You can write "fast" at a very slow, deliberate, methodical pace, if you like. I know that sounds like an oxymoron, but it's true.

When something happens immediately, it's happening *right now* (or moments from now). This has nothing to do with speed — the concepts are worlds apart.

#3 – FAST EQUALS RUSHED

Probably the biggest resistance writers have to approaching the craft of writing from the perspective of speed is that they're afraid it will be *rushed*.

WRONG.

When something is rushed, it's put through the paces without sufficient thought or polish. But you can do that at any speed.

Writing should never be rushed. When you rush through your writing, you're opening yourself up to reader confusion, or at least a bumpy ride. You can easily avoid rushing through your work by simply **ensuring that thought and polish are part of the system itself.**

#4 – FAST IS AN OBJECTIVE CONCEPT

Some people think it's possible to say that writing quickly is a bad idea.

WRONG.

Fast is a concept. You can't point to anything on our planet and *show* me what "fast" looks like. It's a mental construct. The only way to "see" it is to compare it with something else, or to show something *exhibiting* speed.

It's a subjective idea. We use it to refer to something specific (a fast car, a fast talker, a fast screenplay), which leads people to believe it's objective. But it's not. Make no mistake about it. The whole concept exists only in your mind.

We're all familiar with the cliché "time flies when you're having fun". But have you stopped to consider why that is?

It's because time itself is subjective. What *you* consider "fast" and what *I* consider "fast" might be two very different speeds. It's impossible to objectively determine that it's valuable or not merely by its nature.

#5 – FAST IMPLIES A RESULT

Some people think writing fast means actually achieving a specific result.

WRONG.

The speed at which you write is merely a function of your technique, and your confidence in your skills. There is certainly time required to *think* — as writers, we absolutely *must* take time to think, or else we're going to miss the missing ingredient.

But results will *always* vary. You don't need to write a screenplay in 3 days... or 3 weeks... or 3 years. Any of those can be fast. And any of them can be slow.

We're not interested in quantity, duration, or time frames.

We only care *that* you gradually improve this extraordinarily powerful secret skill.

HOW TO ACQUIRE THE SKILL

Alright. You're sold. Improving the speed of your writing has moved up a couple notches on your agenda.

So, how do you actually do it?

Well, let's ask ourselves: Where does speed come from? Sure, we know that it comes from a mastery of the other skills. But how do you *acquire* speed? How do you physically focus on improving it directly?

You focus on the essentials.

When a master is zipping through their work, they're using perfect technique to hit exactly the right notes with precisely the skill required. There's no fluff. There's no distraction. Nothing is off-target.

To acquire the skill of speed, you need a way to stay focused on exactly what you need to focus on at exactly the moment you need to focus on it.

And there's one way to do that that's better than all others.

USE A SYSTEM

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking "Hey! He's just trying to sell me on the FAST System".

Well, of course I'm biased, and I *do* believe FAST will help you write faster.

But actually, it doesn't really matter if you use *my* system or some other system. The fact is, **using any system at all** will increase the speed of your writing.

A system gives you a structure and framework that removes roadblocks so that you can focus on essentials.

One of the great business examples of creating "systems" is McDonald's. What that corporation did was to first take the process of making burgers, and develop a system to do it quickly, consistently. Then Ray Kroc came along and developed a system for consistently opening new restaurants that operated on the same system.

It was genius, really. (It's had the effect of gentrifying our whole eating experience, but that's a discussion for another day.)

Now, before you suggest that we don't want to "McDonald's-ify" movies, don't worry. I'm one step ahead of you. Truth be told, I think there are some screenwriting systems out there that are *already* doing that.

I'm suggesting something different:

I want you to systematize your *writing process* so that you are free to create story forms we haven't yet seen.

I'm not suggesting a "system" for the **story**. That's called "formula" and it *doesn't* work, because audiences begin to *recognize* the formula and jump ahead of you (which prevents you from including the "missing ingredient" in your screenplay).

I'm suggesting a system for *writing*. And *that* will get you to be more creative, more quickly.

FOCUS/APPLY/STRENGTHEN/TWEAK

The system *I'm* going to suggest to you is one that focuses on the writing process.

Writing is essentially a four-part process.

1. You gather your random thoughts and shape them into an idea. One way or another, you're creating a plan for your writing.
2. You get words on the page. The act of doing it will introduce new ideas that necessarily cause you to stray from the plan you created.
3. You review, edit, reshape and redesign your work. The goal is to remove what has caused you to stray, and build upon what gets you closer to the best expression of your ideas.
4. You polish and prepare the final product for the read. When you've got the fundamentals of your story in place, it's time to refine the experience.

Years ago, I came up with a nifty little acronym to help you remember the process. And I thought I was pretty clever, too, because the acronym also has *meaning*: Not only is it the type of *read* you want your reader to have — it's also a skill you want to develop as a writer.

It's the FAST System.

And the reason I like it is because it's not about the *story formula* — it's about the *writing process*.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WRITE?

Before we wrap up, I want to ask you one thing. As you consider the whole idea of writing with speed, I'd like you to ask yourself **why** you wanted to start writing in the first place?

If you're like most of the people I've met over the course of my teaching career, you have ideas for movies.

Ideas. Plural.

I believe every one on the planet has something extraordinarily unique that it's their *purpose* to share with the rest of the world. (In fact, as I write these words, I'm also working on a book — my passion project — about exactly that.)

But that means you have more than one idea for a movie. I know you do. And you're living a life that will never be repeated in the history or future of mankind.

You want to share your voice. To do so, you need to improve your skill. You'll do that by writing daily, and by writing multiple screenplays — because each one will give you different challenges that help you master more and more of the skills.

Never ever let go of your passion. No matter what anybody tells you.

You can achieve whatever you set your mind to. I know it's true, because I consistently see examples of it in my own life and world.

So find yourself a system — FAST or otherwise. And write.

Make yourself indispensable.

Because you are. You've got something extraordinary to share.

Thanks for reading. Now back to work!

ABOUT THIS REPORT

I'm a very big believer in complete honesty. Open communication. Not holding anything back. And if you've found any value in this report, then my belief in this idea has been vindicated. Because this report — ***The Secret Skill of the (Truly) Professional Screenwriter*** — came out of someone telling me that **the whole idea of a "FAST" screenplay is a turnoff**.

When I was putting together FAST Screenplay, a good friend and trusted colleague suggested that I change the name. She told me that if she were presented with the idea (and didn't know me), she would — whether justifiable or not — immediately *assume* it was hokey. That the name *implied* cheap and poor quality.

Naturally, I disagreed. But not because I'm married to the "FAST" concept. Sure, I wrote a book called ***Writing FAST: How to Write Anything with Lightning Speed*** in which I created the FAST System.

But I don't hold onto an idea just because I created it. Ideas are everywhere. We should *never* hold onto an idea that doesn't work — we'll *always* have new and better ideas (it's the nature of the human mind). Plus, I believe in the power of collaboration — it's *important* to take other people's opinions on board.

Rather, I disagreed because I honestly believe we write *better* when we write faster. I've seen it in my own writing. The longer I take, the more I'm overthinking it. The more I'm second-guessing myself. The more I'm striving for a perfection that's unrealistic and unattainable.

FAST is a concept, and it applies not only to the speed at which you write, but the speed at which the *reader reads* your screenplay. In a world of acronyms-for-the-sake-of-acronymizing (yeah, I made up a word), FAST actually has *meaning* in itself. It taps into literally *everything* you want in your screenplay. It will take time to master and you should never *race* through your project. But increasing this skill makes you a truly valuable commodity.

And while you're at it, never be afraid of blunt honesty. Always embrace someone who tells you the truth of their opinion, even when it's confronting. Within criticism can be found whole new ways to present whole new values to the world.

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 ("ONE", a project currently in post-production). 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 step-by-step systematic approach to screenwriting that focuses on the writing *process*. By combining the FAST System with specific skills and techniques focused at the right times in the process, FAST Screenplay is designed as self-guided move-at-your-own pace *complete* screenplay development system. Launched in November 2009.

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.

Embryo Films

<http://embryo-films.com>

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

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.**