
DIRECTING

FEATURE

FILMS

THE CREATIVE COLLABORATION
BETWEEN DIRECTORS, WRITERS, AND ACTORS

MARK TRAVIS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xvii
PREFACE	xix
NEW INTRODUCTION	xxi
ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION	1
The Role of the Director and the Creative Team	5
The Director's Writing Process	7
The Director's Notebook	8
Formulating the Vision	8
1. THE DIRECTOR AND THE SCRIPT	11
Reading the Script — The Script Wash	13
Identifying the Passion	14
The Core Question	16
The Emotional Core	21
Telling the Story	23
The Audience	24
2. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS	25
The Three - Act Structure	25
Overall Objectives	27
Objectives (Internal and External)	31
Obstacles (Internal and External)	32
Means	35
Actions	36
Independent Activities	37
Adjustments	38
Public and Private Lives	39
Windows of True Nature	40
3. WORKING WITH WRITERS	43
The Writer/Director Collaboration	43
The Writer's Vision vs. the Director's Vision	45
Discovering the Writer's Vision	46

Establishing the Genesis of the Story	48
Melding the Writer's Vision with the Director's Vision	50
Point of Agreement	51
Going from the General to the Specific	52
The Process of Rewrites	54
Determining Where Rewrites Are Needed — Black Holes	55
Determining the Writer's Ability to Rewrite	59
Working with the Writer on Rewrites	61
The Ripple Effect	62
If the Writer Can't Deliver The Rewrites	64
Working with the New Writer	68
Readings as part of the Script Development Process	69
The Writer as Third Eye in the Rehearsal Process	73
The Writer in Production and Post	74
The Writer/Director	74
In Summary	75
4. THE SCRIPT BREAKDOWN	77
Steps to Script Breakdown	77
What Is the Story Really About?	78
Director's Objective for Telling the Story	80
Point-to-Point Description	82
Defining the Acts	85
Character Objectives and Obstacles	88
Objectives in Acts, Sequences, and Scenes	92
Obstacles	94
Analysis of The Script Units	97
Asking the Hard Questions	107
Character Arcs	114
Character Analysis	116
Visual and Aural Design Arcs	119
Summary	123

5. THE CREATIVE TEAM	125
The Interview Process	126
Your Collaborators as Storytellers	127
Cinematographer	130
Production Designer	132
Editor	133
Composer	134
Sharing Your Vision	134
Additional Screening Methods	135
Team Members Who Have Been Preselected	141
Preproduction with the Creative Team	141
6. THE CASTING PROCESS	147
Selecting the Casting Director	148
Storytelling	148
Conveying Your Vision	150
The Casting Director's Attitude about Actors	150
Access to Talent	151
Ability to Negotiate	151
Preparation for the Audition Process	152
Typecasting	155
The Actor/Character Meld	157
The Actor/Character Split	157
Selection of Scenes	159
Preparing The Actors for the Readings	160
Casting Name Actors	164
The Audition Process	167
The Environment	168
The Audition	169
The Callbacks	173
The Interviews - Getting To Know Your Actors Personally	175
Mixing and Matching	176
Creating The Ensemble	177
Directing the Actor in the Audition	178
Screen Tests	180
Viewing Past Work of the Actors	181
Contacting References	181

7. THE REHEARSAL PROCESS	183
The Nine Basic Steps	183
The Rehearsal Plan	184
The First Rehearsal and Read-Through	187
Ensemble Work with the Actors	193
Creating the World of the Film	195
Developing Character Backgrounds and Histories	200
Developing Character Relationships within the Story	205
Improvisations, Theatre Games, and Rehearsal Exercises	206
Read-Through of the Script	209
Improvising the Story	210
Rewrites and the Creative Triangle	211
Working with Specific Scenes	211
Rehearsing the Scene	212
Other Rehearsal Exercises	217
Staging as a Directing Tool	221
Methods of Staging	225
Developing an Eye for Staging	235
Storyboards	236
The Final Reading	237
Preparing the Actors for the Production Process	237
8. PRODUCTION	239
The Nightly Reconsideration Process	240
Development Review	241
Staging	242
Camera Coverage	243
Communications with the Creative Team	245
On the Set	248
Working with the Writer and The Actors on the Set	248
Rehearsals the Night Before	250
Meeting Actors on the Set	250
The Rehearsal on the Set	251
Rehearsal Exercises in Production	253
Back on the Set	257

Creating Choices through Bracketing	257
Techniques to Trigger Performance	259
Using Music to Set Rhythm and Tone	262
Dealing with the Problems on the Set	262
Rewrites	263
Improvising the Scene on Camera	263
Finding and Shooting the Details	265
Dailies	266
Communication	267
9. POSTPRODUCTION	269
Editing as a Rehearsal Process	269
Reviewing Dailies with Your Editor	270
Get Away	270
Find the Story	270
The Editor's Cut	271
The Director's Cut	273
Establishing Your Process	274
Molding the Actors' Performances in Postproduction	276
Keeping the Audience Dissatisfied	278
ADR as an Area for Performance Adjustment	280
Narration and Voice Over	281
Postproduction Sound	283
The Sound Effects Team	283
Music	285
The Temp Track	285
The First Mix	287
Previews	287
The Final Cut	290
Spotting the Picture	291
The Scoring Session	291
The Final Mix	292
Achieving the Mix You Want	293
Letting Go	295

10. RECONSIDERATIONS AND RECAPITULATIONS	299
It's Just Storytelling	299
Directors Don't Make Movies	300
Only the Characters Can Tell the Story	301
The Jigsaw Puzzle Model	302
The Nine Steps (Revisited)	305
The Alpha Horse	307
The 90% Rule	310
11. NO MORE ACTING, NO MORE DIRECTING	315
Result Directing	315
Result Directing in the Casting Process	319
When Result Directing Does Work In Production	320
Directing Through Questions Rather than Statements	322
The Link between Obstacles and Staging	333
The Actor's Greatest Obstacle	339
The Theatrical Contract	342
Mind the Gap	348
The Character's Response to the Gap	351
The Emotional Graph	352
A Fresh Look at the Rehearsal Process	362
No More Acting	362
Be Willing to Risk	364
No More Directing	365
The Courage to Break the Rules	367
12. THE ULTIMATE COLLABORATION:	
DIRECTORS WITH DIRECTORS	369
The Role of the Directing Consultant	369
A Panel Discussion	376
It's a Wrap – For the Moment	394
APPENDIX	397
ABOUT MARK TRAVIS	401

NEW INTRODUCTION

It is now five years since *The Director's Journey* was first published and, as predicted, I found myself teaching and lecturing and saying things that I wish were in the book. New questions would arise requiring new answers and suddenly chapters loomed in front of me. While teaching in Tokyo, Berlin, Munich, Cologne, London, and cities throughout the United States, I would hear myself saying, "I wish this were in my book" more and more often. So I vowed that I would make the effort to expand the book and address many of my new thoughts, questions, and discoveries in the world of filmmaking. The result: Chapter 10, Reconsiderations and Recapitulations; Chapter 11, No More Acting, No More Directing; and Chapter 13, The Ultimate Collaboration: Directors with Directors. Plus these thoughts:

Filmmaking is not a precise science. It's not even an imprecise science. It's a craft, an art form. Nobody knows how it really works. We all guess. We all speculate. There are moments of blazing clarity when we think we've discovered some infallible truth about the process — and we rejoice. With great pride we announce our discovery to the world as if we had discovered a tenth planet. Then, a few years later, after more filmmaking, more successes, more failures, more frustrations, anxieties, victories, and disasters — we realize that the truth wasn't quite so infallible. In fact, it may be wrong or misguided. Now we make no bold announcements. We just pull our baseball caps down a little lower over our eyes and hope no one notices. And we move on.

Los Angeles
January 2002

CHAPTER 1

THE DIRECTOR AND THE SCRIPT

You're a director. You're handed a script to direct. What do you do? Many directors begin their process by working immediately with the writer and the producer and by considering casting possibilities, budgets, locations, crews, and other related matters. However, by doing this they bypass one of the most important relationships a director has in the realizing of a film — the relationship with the script itself. This is a relationship that has to be encouraged, nourished, and carefully monitored.

But first, what is a script?

You're handed 100–120 pages of typed material, including descriptions, dialogue, and characters interrelating that we are expected to translate into a film (or a play or teleplay). A script has been defined as a blueprint, a plan, a guide, a skeleton, or a map — but it's more than that. A script is a living breathing force that has reached a specific stage of development. It is an expression, a result, and a mere suggestion of something else — a film.

The novel is an end in itself. It is intended to take the reader on a journey that will stimulate the reader to visualize the characters, situations, and locations. As we transport ourselves into the world of the novel we create all the visuals, the sounds, the smells. But a script is intended to stimulate the reader to see the play, teleplay, or screenplay on the stage or on the screen. It is intended to stimulate the imagination of the reader with the notion that the reader will participate in the next stage of the development of this idea. Therefore it is only a suggestion, a hint, a prodding device. It is very difficult to read a script without

thinking about how this movie could or should or would be made. For one reason it's very difficult because the format of a script is always reminding us of the mechanics of filmmaking (fade-in, dissolve, cut to, interior, exterior, day, night, etc.). It is also difficult because most of us who read scripts are reading them with the constant question in the back of our minds: "Is this something I want to make?" or "How would I make this?"

The script is also a result. Just as the dialogue in a scene is the result of the interrelationship between the characters, the script is a result of all the writer's energies, aspirations, frustrations, dreams, and desires that have led to and informed this story. It only implies what has gone on before or what is happening under the scene — the needs, desires, and emotions that have been or are operative that caused these words and this behavior. But the causes lie buried, hidden, and it is our job as directors to dig them out.

The writer writes from the passion, needs, desires, and emotions of the characters but in the script we only see the character's resulting behavior and words. So the script is not so much a blueprint as a footprint — the image that was left behind as the beast passed through the jungle. But what made the beast choose to go this way? Was he running to or from something and why? Or just wandering and exploring? The director has to dig below the surface to find the cause of these behaviors. And there is not just one probable cause, there are many.

It is important that you see the script as a result of the behavior of the characters and understand that your job in the making of this film is to create an environment wherein those results will organically occur. It's not your job to take this script and make it *seem* real. It is your job to create a dynamic between actors/characters that will *be* real, thereby eliciting the desired results (the script).

Not only is the script (the behavior and words and actions) a result of the characters needs, desires, and passions, but it is also the result of

the needs, desires, and passions of the writer. The writer brought forth this work in response to some deep-felt convictions. Before you attempt to carry that vision forward, you, as the director, must retrace the writer's process in order to connect to the source of those passions, and convictions.

As the director you need to identify and comprehend the impulse that initially prompted the writer to create this script. And you need to locate that urge, desire, or passion within yourself that is your emotional connection to this work.

How can we genuinely find and stimulate those impulses, notions, ideas, and passions within ourselves that will inform and fuel our enthusiasm for this project? First, don't think about it. Sometimes our best thinking gets in the way of our best work, and certainly too much thinking gets in the way of our best intuitive work. Second, form an intimate relationship with the script without imposing ideas upon it or obligations upon yourself. You need to allow the script to become a part of you — a partner, a collaborator.

There are three basic steps that need to be taken in order to establish your primary relationship with the script.

1. Reading the script — the script wash.
2. Identifying your passion for the material.
3. Determining what the script is really about.

STEP ONE: READING THE SCRIPT - THE SCRIPT WASH

You've already read the script one or two times, and now I'm suggesting that you read it in a very different way. It is important to remain open, unbiased, uncritical, and nonjudgmental. It's what I call "letting the script wash over you." This is not the time to judge, rewrite, cut or add, design scenes, think of casting or locations. Just allow the script to have its full impact on you.

This is a crucial step in the beginning of a long (and hopefully fruitful) relationship between you and the script. A relationship doesn't get more intimate than this. You need to allow the script to get inside you, to stimulate you, please you, anger you, strike a nerve. You want to find the passion that will carry you through the next year or two that it will take you to make this movie. Let the script be your guide to that passion. It will constantly inform you and fuel your imagination, energy, and vision.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFYING THE PASSION

As you are reading the script, record your impressions, reactions, and feelings in your director's notebook without judging them or the script. If you feel bored or restless, put it in your notebook but don't try to analyze it. If you're excited, pleased, frightened, intrigued, or angry, write it down. Don't get into fixing or editing, just read and respond. It's not quite as simple as it seems because it is difficult for directors to resist the temptation to analyze, fix, judge, or rework the material. We want to stage scenes in our mind, cast roles, and design camera moves and editing patterns. But it is crucial at this point that you do this very intimate, very personal work in a naive manner, putting aside your agenda, craft, and needs. Allow it to be extremely personal. You'll be thrilled and intrigued with the results.

Now, having let the script affect you and having made a record of it in your director's notebook, you are ready to respond. It's time to bring your reactions and experiences to the script. Start talking back. Write to the script, to the characters. Tell them what you think of them, of their actions, and their behavior. Be honest.

This dialogue is not intended to be in the form of a critique. This is not the director suddenly imposing a vision. This is you, as an audience member, genuinely responding to the material. You are establishing a viable and vital relationship between you and the story. Think of

the script as a new friend, someone you want to get to know, and someone that you want to get to know you.

The more detailed the writing, the more connected you will be with the script. Don't sit down with preconceived ideas, just write. Be impulsive! Be spontaneous! Write! Don't think, don't intellectualize, just write.

This writing is not meant to be shared with anyone. You don't even need to read it yourself. What is important is that you establish this dialogue with the script and maintain it throughout the making of your film.

For example: My initial reactions to my first reading of *Forrest Gump* (the first draft screenplay after having read the novel): I'm shocked. Where I found the novel to be interesting and intriguing, it seemed to be totally void of the magic in the screenplay. In the book I found myself pitying Forrest. He was such a big lump of a man stumbling through life, like a Lenny (from *Of Mice and Men*), but my pity had little empathy in it. I really wasn't too concerned about what happened to him, and his brushes with historical characters seemed totally contrived and just clever. But in the screenplay I found myself seduced by Forrest. I couldn't help but like him and admire him. Now I want to go on this journey with him. I may even want to be like Forrest. When I finished the book I was relieved, glad to have the journey over. When I finished the screenplay I wanted to start the journey over again.

These initial reactions were important to me. It made me realize that Eric Roth (screenwriter) had defined something within Forrest that had connected with me in a visceral way. And if he (Eric) could do that to me then I could do that to the audience. The power of a story well told.

Note: Throughout this book we will be using two established screenplays and films (*The Fugitive* and *Forrest Gump*) as models.

It is important to state at this point that we are not trying to come up with definitive decisions as to the values or interpretations of these films under discussion. What we are examining here is a process of analysis that is intended to lead you, the director, to your own interpretation and personal identification with the material. The fact that three different directors would make three very different (and possibly all very valid) versions of the same script is what makes this entire art form so exciting. It is what certainly makes the theatre such a live and vital art form and why different productions of the same play can each carry a powerful yet markedly different message to an audience. It is sad that most films are given only one production. Wouldn't it be fascinating to see a Scorsese production of *The Player* or a Merchant/Ivory production of *Age of Innocence*?

I suggest that you familiarize yourself with *The Fugitive* and *Forrest Gump*. At minimum, rent the videos, but if you want to get the greatest value from this book, read the novel of *Forrest Gump* and the scripts for both films.

As we proceed with these scripts (and others that we will refer to), remember that the analysis is mine. You may or may not agree with me, but that is not the point. Our focus is on the process. Apply the process. Come to your own conclusions.

STEP THREE: THE CORE QUESTION

The most important question you are going to ask concerning the script is, "What is it really all about?" This is the core question. We will be asking this question of many other elements of the script (the acts, sequences, scenes, characters, events, etc.) at a later date, but at the moment we are asking it of the script itself. We know what the events are, the scenes, the relationships, but what is the internal theme or premise that is driving all of this? How does this story of

total strangers affect and touch each of us personally? What is the writer really trying to say underneath it all? Are there universal truths here? Universal experiences, attitudes, beliefs? There is a heart and soul at the core of every good script, and it fuels every aspect of the script. You just need to find it.

It often happens that the writer isn't totally aware of what's pulsing at the heart of the story. Many times writers, and some of the best writers, are coming from such an organic subjective place and are so true to their impulses that they have little awareness of the universality of their work, or how the work is truly affecting their audience. There have been times I have told a writer what he or she has written, either in the entire script or a particular scene or sequence, and the response will be "Really? That's what I wrote?" This is not to put the writers down in any way. Not at all. It is said with the deepest respect for writers and their craft. Writing and acting are the two most vulnerable, dangerous, and exposing endeavors within this art form. They need and deserve our deepest respect. But we do have to understand that the process of writing is markedly different from that of directing. And because writing at its best is personal, intuitive, and subjective many writers create without awareness of the resonance of their work.

Let's look at *The Fugitive* for a moment with the purpose of determining what it is really about.

Written by Jeb Stuart and David Twohy and directed by Andrew Davis in 1993, *The Fugitive* is a remake of the television series of the same name. It is the story of a very successful doctor, Dr. Kimble (played by Harrison Ford), who is wrongly accused of the murder of his wife and is intent upon proving his innocence. And we have an investigator, Lt. Gerard (played by Tommy Lee Jones), whose sole objective is to capture Dr. Kimble regardless of his guilt or innocence. A pretty simple story. A chase story. But is that what *The Fugitive* is really all about? Just one man trying to prove his innocence and another trying to catch him? If we look deeper we will find a story about honor and

pride, integrity and tenacity — a story about ethics, both personal and professional. Dr. Kimble could easily leave town after he escapes from that spectacular bus and train crash, but he chooses to stay. Why? Why would he take the risk of being shot, killed, or incarcerated for life just to save his own reputation and the esteem of his relationship to his murdered wife, when he could quite easily escape? The core of this story lies in the core of our main characters.

Let's look for a moment at Dr. Kimble. What do we know about him? He's a doctor of some distinction, highly respected, and has a happy marriage that is full of passion, romance, trust, and youthful fervor. He is not (as far as we can tell) an adventurer. Dr. Kimble is a man in the public view and very comfortable with this, an honest man with no dark clouds or questionable past. As a model citizen he has most likely had no run-in with the law. Any one of us would like to have him as our doctor, friend, or neighbor. We would like to be like Dr. Kimble — happy, successful, respected, and respectful. Here is a man with no worries. Until one day . . .

Then suddenly he is tested. The test itself does not matter, but the severity of the test does — and this is a brutal test. So, how is our model citizen going to respond? How would each of us like to respond were we in his place? What are his priorities? This is not so much about proving one's innocence as it is about proving one's self. There is a code of ethics that is being tested and it is not the success or failure of the actions taken that really counts but rather the actions themselves. Dr. Kimble chooses to risk everything he has to clear his name and his marriage. *The Fugitive* is about placing your reputation, the reputation of your family, and the belief in your own innocence and integrity above your own safety and future.

Think of it this way. How often have any of us been falsely accused of murdering our wife or husband? How often have we had to put our life at risk in order to prove our innocence in such a situation? Chances are there are only a handful of audience members out of the

millions of people who saw or will see *The Fugitive* who can relate to it on that level. Now look at it another way. How many of us have ever been falsely accused of an action and that accusation has put our reputation at risk? And how many of us attempted or wished we had attempted to clear our names of this false accusation? I would question any audience members, adults or children, who claim they have never been in that kind of situation. Suddenly, *The Fugitive* relates to all of us, and only because we have looked beyond, or beneath, the surface story to find out what this story is really all about.

Let's look at Lt. Gerard. What do we know about him? Lt. Gerard is a man of singular vision, tenacious, a bulldog. When he has a job to do he doesn't stop until it's done. He listens to everyone but follows only his own advice. He doesn't question the morality or the ethics of his job. He is unconventional, difficult, yet compassionate and considerate. He abides with no variance from the means he has chosen. By whatever means necessary might be his code. When Dr. Kimble says "I'm innocent," Lt. Gerard says "I don't care." He knows it is not his job to pass judgment, but rather to catch his prey by whatever means necessary. He is insightful, intuitive, and even with a loyal following, basically a loner. We get the feeling that he is respected for his work but not necessarily for his person.

Now, at the beginning of the story Lt. Gerard has absolutely no personal relationship with (and very little knowledge of) Dr. Kimble. All he knows is that Dr. Kimble has escaped and it is his job to catch him. As a matter of fact, it is simpler for Lt. Gerard if there is no personal relationship -- just the hunter and his prey. Gerard will not stop until he has Kimble, dead or alive.

So, from Lt. Gerard's point of view, what is this story about? Catching an escaped criminal? On the surface, yes, but below that it is more. Remember, in each story, every character is being tested in some manner and the test for Gerard is not whether or not he can catch Dr. Kimble. He is being tested far beyond his expertise as a detective. No one

would blame him for giving up the chase after Dr. Kimble jumped out of the culvert, presumably to his death. Lt. Gerard, however, has a higher standard that he has to answer to, and this higher standard exists only within himself. So, again, we have a character that must answer to himself and his own code and must maintain that relationship with himself, or he will die. Perhaps you are thinking this sounds a bit severe, but that is the nature of these characters. And that is the way we must look at them. They are not going to necessarily physically die if they abandon their own ideals, but such abandonment would cause severe damage to their sense of self and self-esteem.

Lt. Gerard is doing more than trying to catch Dr. Kimble; he is attempting to maintain and even strengthen his sense of his own value, not just as a detective but as a person.

What we're looking for here is not the details or the events of the script, but the forces that drive our protagonist and antagonist — their passions and needs, their priorities and values. We are looking for the values that we can all relate to, the universal core of each character.

I don't know what it would be like to be unjustly accused of my wife's murder. But I do know what it is like to be unjustly accused and I take great pride in my sense of morality and fairness. I empathize with Dr. Kimble.

I don't know what it would be like to be pursuing a convicted murderer. But, like most adults, I have a job to do. Sometimes simple, sometimes difficult. I take great pride in doing my job well, in completing an assignment. So, I do understand Lt. Gerard's position, and his attitude, his sense of responsibility. And I admire it.

THE EMOTIONAL CORE

The point is: We cannot proceed with other work on the script until we have established an understanding of the morality, the values, the very essences that are driving our primary characters (and thereby our entire story). As we do this work, we are identifying the very core of the project, the heart and soul of the story — the emotional core. It is the director's passion for the story plus the passions, needs, desires, and drives of the main characters that will inform every decision the director makes. When you are in trouble and are trying to answer the difficult questions, go back to the emotional core.

When decisions and choices are made with disregard for the director's passion and the emotional core, the project will begin to veer off track.

Anecdote: I was sitting in a Warner Bros. executive's office discussing the most recent cut of my film, *Going Under*, an adult comedy that the executive wanted to recut for a younger audience. We were viewing some of the scenes on the executive's office television monitor (not an advisable idea). After viewing one brief scene he turned to me and said "Now, that's funny. They'll find that funny. Leave that in." I turned to him, having grave reservations about his assessment and asked, "Do you find that funny?" "No", he answered without hesitation, "but they will. That's what they find funny." I knew I was in deep trouble. This man, who was not a filmmaker, fashioned himself a surrogate audience for teenagers, although to the best of my observation he shared little with them. We were making a comedy that he didn't find particularly funny, but he was convinced that he knew what our potential audience would appreciate.

Regardless of what studio executives, producers, and marketing people say, I don't believe that you can make a film for an audience with whom you do not share certain sensibilities. Please your sense of humor, honor your morality — then and only then will you make a film that will touch others, and go beyond mere entertainment.

Make the movie for you. This seems like a simple and obvious idea, but it is actually a profound notion, one that in the months to come will keep you grounded. Some people, with all the best intentions, will try to get you to make the movie that will please them. Listen to them — and then follow your own heart.

Identifying the emotional core of your script is the first step toward making the movie that will please you.

With each element of the film, each event, each character choice, say to yourself, “What do I want? What pleases me? How do I want to see this?” If you can do that and answer the questions honestly, then you will stay on track. You will stay in touch with the emotional core.

Here are the questions you must avoid asking: “What do they want? What will please them? How will this affect them?” Or even worse: “What does he or she want? What will please him or her?” This hypothetical him or her being some studio executive, producer, writer, or any other person associated with the project. You’re not making this film for them, any of them, individually or collectively. If they want it a certain way, let them make their own movie. You have to make yours. That’s your job, and the only reason you’re there. You have been hired because you have the sensibility, sensitivity, willingness, desire, ability, and ultimately the courage to make the film your way - for you!

We see films every day that have been marketed for a particular audience — and they feel that way. They may work to a certain extent, but there is always a feeling of compromise and it leaves us all with an emptiness. The film will slip away from us shortly after we leave the theatre. But look at a film like *The Crying Game* or *Pulp Fiction* or *The Player* or *The Professional*. Look at the works of Scorsese, Coppola, Allen, Sayles, Altman, Stone, and Bergman. These are films that were made to please the filmmaker and it shows.

So now you've completed these three initial steps:

1. Letting the script wash over you.
2. Finding your (the director's) passion for the material.
3. Determining what the script is really about.

The initial relationship between you and the script has been established. You have a bond, a contract, an obligation between you and the story. You are now ready to explore telling the story.

TELLING THE STORY

Telling the story is a process that you can employ from now until the film is completed. Without the script in front of you, start at the beginning and tell the story to a friend, an associate — anyone who has not read the script. This may sound like an unusual exercise but in the telling of the story you will begin to embellish certain scenes, certain moments. You may find that you skip certain scenes or events, and you may find yourself working extra hard to make certain events or story points clear. Be aware of these alterations and embellishments, when your listeners are engrossed and when you are losing them, which story points capture their interest and which seem redundant or unnecessary. You are the storyteller and these are your first audiences. Trust your instincts and their responses. They will guide you if you will let them.

This process can be employed throughout the making of the film, even while in production and postproduction. Keep testing your abilities to tell the story and the strength of the story itself as you relate it verbally to the uninitiated listener. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

We are now back to the one-on-one relationship that we emulated, the storyteller and listener. And as we approach this ideal storytelling situation we have to be cognizant of the role of the listener, our audience.

THE AUDIENCE

The audience is an integral part of the storytelling relationship. It is more than a receptor and like any other character, has its own particular needs and desires. It wants to be entertained, intrigued, captivated, and kept involved. If we lose our audience's interest and involvement then the relationship between the storyteller and the listener will suffer and may eventually die.

Within the audience is the deep-seated need for resolution. They want the good guy to catch the bad guy, the two lovers to get together, the innocent man proven innocent, the guilty party punished, etc. We all want that. We all want resolution and balance. But, paradoxically, the moment we get the resolution we so desire we lose interest in the story.

When you are telling people a story in person you are in direct relationship with your listeners. It is a give-and-take. You get immediate responses. You can tell when they are interested and when they are bored. You know when they are engaged, irritated, intrigued, or frustrated. And, like a good scene partner, you will adjust to their responses. You will do what the best storytellers do: keep them intrigued and interested by not giving them the resolutions they want, yet without frustrating, irritating, or annoying them. It is a fine line we walk when the story is on that dangerous edge. It is much easier to stay there when we are in direct and immediate relationship with our audience. Theatre has that immediacy; the actors on stage can actually gauge and adjust to the audience's reactions, and every performance will vary because of that. But in the making of a film, we have no immediate audience. We, the directors, have to become the surrogate audience.

Once we have established a viable bond between the director and the script, and have created a flexible yet dynamic understanding and appreciation for the story to be told, we are ready to include the writer in our process.