



Writers' Couch...

...a CASCADE MEDIA DEVELOPMENT initiative

"We're only interested in one thing, Bart. Can you tell a story? Can you make us laugh? Can you make us cry? Can you make us want to break out in joyous song? Is that more than one thing? Okay!"

- Jack Lipnik (Michael Lerner)

Barton Fink (1991) - w. & d. Joel & Ethan Coen

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Executive Summary

Objective

The purpose of this initiative is to discover potential feature film projects for production as well as new writing talent. Our intention is to build long-lasting relationships with writers who we may work with on potential projects in the future.

“You must write your first draft with your heart. You rewrite with your head. The first key to writing is to write, not to think!”

- William Forrester (Sean Connery) Finding Forrester (2000) - w. Mike Rich - d. Gus Van Sant

Goals

1. To uncover hidden gems - high-calibre, feature film genre scripts that have the potential for commercial and/or critical success in the UK and international markets.
2. To provide unsolicited writers with the opportunity to break into the industry.
3. To create long-standing relationships with writing talent.
4. To advance the company’s ambitions of becoming known as a media company focusing on key talent and their creativity.
5. To build a network of organisations in the UK which actively support new writing talent.

“Like anything worth writing, it came inexplicably and without method.”

- Kay Eiffel (Emma Thompson) Stranger Than Fiction (2006) - w. Zach Helm - d. Marc Forster

The Initiative

Once a month, unsolicited writers will be invited to pitch film projects (which already have a completed script) within ten minutes to a development consultant at the offices of Cascade Media Development Limited (“the Company”). The film projects will be judged on the competence of the writer, the premise’s possibility/probability for commercial and/or critical success, as well as the suitability of the film for the Company in line with the Company’s objective to produce quality genre projects.

From this initial meeting, an unspecified number of writers and their projects will be selected for progression. Subsequently the full scripts of their projects will be read by a development consultant as well as any other nominated individual(s) who will decide which projects fit the Company's criteria and have the potential to be critically/commercially successful.

Inevitably we will only be able to take a limited number of projects forward, and therefore, in most instances, this will be as far as the projects will be taken. However, when a truly exceptional project comes to light, it will be discussed in-house with the Company's entire development and production team. If the team decides to proceed with the project, the Company may offer to option the script. At this point, the writer (s) should seek legal expertise as they are currently unrepresented.

If the writer accepts the Company's offer to option their script, the project will become part of the Company's development slate.

In the event that it is decided that the project is not suitable for the Company yet the writer shows great potential, the Company will enter into a casual relationship¹ with the individual: keeping up-to-date with their career; inviting them to pitch new projects; providing them with feedback on their scripts; and helping them to further their progress.

New Talent vs. Established Talent

This initiative is designed to connect the Company with bright new talent and will complement the development of other relationships between the Company and established writers.

Established writers will continue to be contacted by senior members of the development team, with these relationships still integral to the Company's development slate.

Project Suitability

Through this initiative, the Company will be looking for original, edgy, distinct projects. In the very competitive modern marketplace, the Company will focus particularly on projects that will be considered to have a strong commercial appeal, projects that can specifically work internationally and domestically, that will attract both established and emerging filmmakers with marketable sensibilities, and also talent with wide audience recognition and appreciation.

"You can't be a proper writer without a touch of madness, can you?"
- Madeleine (Kate Winslet) Quills (2000) - w. Doug Wright - d. Philip Kaufman

¹ In this context, casual relationship means a non-legally binding relationship.

Introducing Cascade

Mark Fisher, former Chief Financial Officer of the Icon UK Group, set up the Cascade group of companies earlier this year, with Cora Palfrey, formerly the European Chief Financial Officer of the Exclusive Media Group, coming on board as Chief Operating Officer, and Daniel Campos Pavoncelli, from Fandango Portobello joining as Acquisitions and Development Executive.

"I once asked this literary agent what kind of writing paid the best. He said, "Ransom notes.""

- Harry Zimm (Gene Hackman) Get Shorty (1995) - w. Scott Frank - d. Barry Sonnenfeld

The focus of Cascade's business will be to financially package films. It will be raising gap and debt finance and supporting independent producers in securing soft money, using international tax credits, post-production deals and working closely with sales agents on bankable and discounted pre-sales. Cascade has its eye on supporting lower to mid-higher budget productions in its year one and from that point will also move into higher-end budgets.

However, a central strand of the Cascade vision and business plan is to source new and emerging talent, supporting them in bringing their ideas to the screen and finding new projects which the company will be able to fund. Cascade Media Development which will option, develop and package film and television projects is also opening a development fund in the form of a Seed EIS fund.

The Team

Sam Cheetham – Development Consultant & Manager of Writers’ Couch



Sam is responsible for managing applications to the Writers’ Couch, the pitch process, the progression of scripts that are taken forward into development and providing on-going support provided to writers, as well as marketing responsibilities. Having set out in the industry to carve a career in script analysis and development, Sam has worked within leading media companies, including the Pinewood Studios Group. Most recently he worked with the new production and sales company Altitude Film Entertainment.

Daniel Campos Pavoncelli – Acquisitions & Development Executive



Daniel is responsible for evaluating and assessing the projects that are submitted to Cascade Media Development, concentrating primarily on the commercial prospects in the international marketplace. Having started his career at the Rome International Film Festival, Daniel moved to Exclusive Media working predominately with the sales and marketing team on films such as *Let Me In*, *The Woman in Black* and *The Ides of March*. Prior to joining Cascade he worked at Fandango Portobello (the sales arm of Domenico Procacci’s successful production company Fandango, in Rome), being involved with Nanni Moretti’s *Habemus Papam* and Matteo Garrone’s *Reality*. Daniel is fluent in four languages.

Mark Fisher – Chief Executive Officer



Mark started his film industry career as financial controller for UK distributor, The Feature Film Company which released titles such as *The Blackout*, *Dazed and Confused*, *Withnail and I*, *Quadrophenia* and *It’s a Wonderful Life*. He later joined Icon Film Distribution taking responsibility for the financial aspects of releasing films including *What Women Want*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *Apocalypto*, *Transporter 3*, *30 Days of Night* and *Precious* and also set up Icon’s DVD distribution arm, Icon Home Entertainment. Later, as Group Finance Controller, Mark took on responsibility of all the UK Icon businesses, encompassing the distribution, international sales, production and servicing companies, working with finance institutions and equity investors in the productions which the companies were involved in. Mark left Icon after the sale of the Icon companies in 2009.

Cora Palfrey – Chief Operating Officer



Cora is responsible for the day to day management of Cascade and works alongside Mark Fisher on the company's financial matters as well as developing business relationships. Entrepreneurial Accountant with extensive UK and US experience in independent and feature film production and distribution environments. Cora's career also started in the independent sector as Financial Controller for the UK distributor, First Independent Films working on notable releases such as *Dirty Dancing*, *Dumb & Dumber*, *Misery*, *City Slickers*, *Gl Jane* and *The Lawnmower Man*. In working for Hammer Films, she managed the due diligence process of the Hammer Film sale to Exclusive Media. She held the position of European CFO with Exclusive, she was involved in closing the finance of a number of UK and US productions including the UK's biggest ever home-produced horror film *The Woman in Black*, *The Ides of March*, *The Way Back* and *Let Me In*.

Nadia Cook – Acquisitions & Development



Nadia recently graduated in film studies from Oxford Brookes. Her experience in the film industry includes general assistant at Exclusive Media Group, and currently working at Cascade. During her degree she also worked as a general assistant for production company Pari Passu Films. Nadia is a strong force within the Writers' Couch team, directly engaging with new talent, supporting them with their projects and careers.

The Process

Applications

In the first instance, writers will be asked to provide basic contact details and a logline, brief character profiles specifically for the project they wish to pitch, as well as the first ten pages of their script which will serve as a writing sample. Applications will be received via an electronic form in a specific section on the Company's website. See Appendix A. After reaching the limit of 150 applications, the submission window for that particular month will close. All 150 applications will be considered.

Please note only the merits of the particular projects submitted will be judged at this stage - if the writer has any previous credits, these will not be taken into account. If any applicant is unavailable to attend or the Company was unable to contact them, another applicant will be given their place.

The Pitches

One day, each calendar month, 24 applicants will be invited to the Company's office. Each applicant will be allocated a ten minute time slot to "pitch" their screenplay. During the actual pitch session the writer will be asked to describe their project in more detail: the plot; the characters; the potential audience.

No decision will be communicated to the applicants at the end of the pitch session.

The Outcomes

Within one week, all applicants who pitched their projects will be contacted and told if they were successful or not. This will be done via the telephone and/or email.

Hard copies of scripts will be requested from successful applicants and must be received within the following ten working days. It will always be the intention to have read all requested scripts before the start of the next pitch session. It is acknowledged, however, that this may not always be possible.

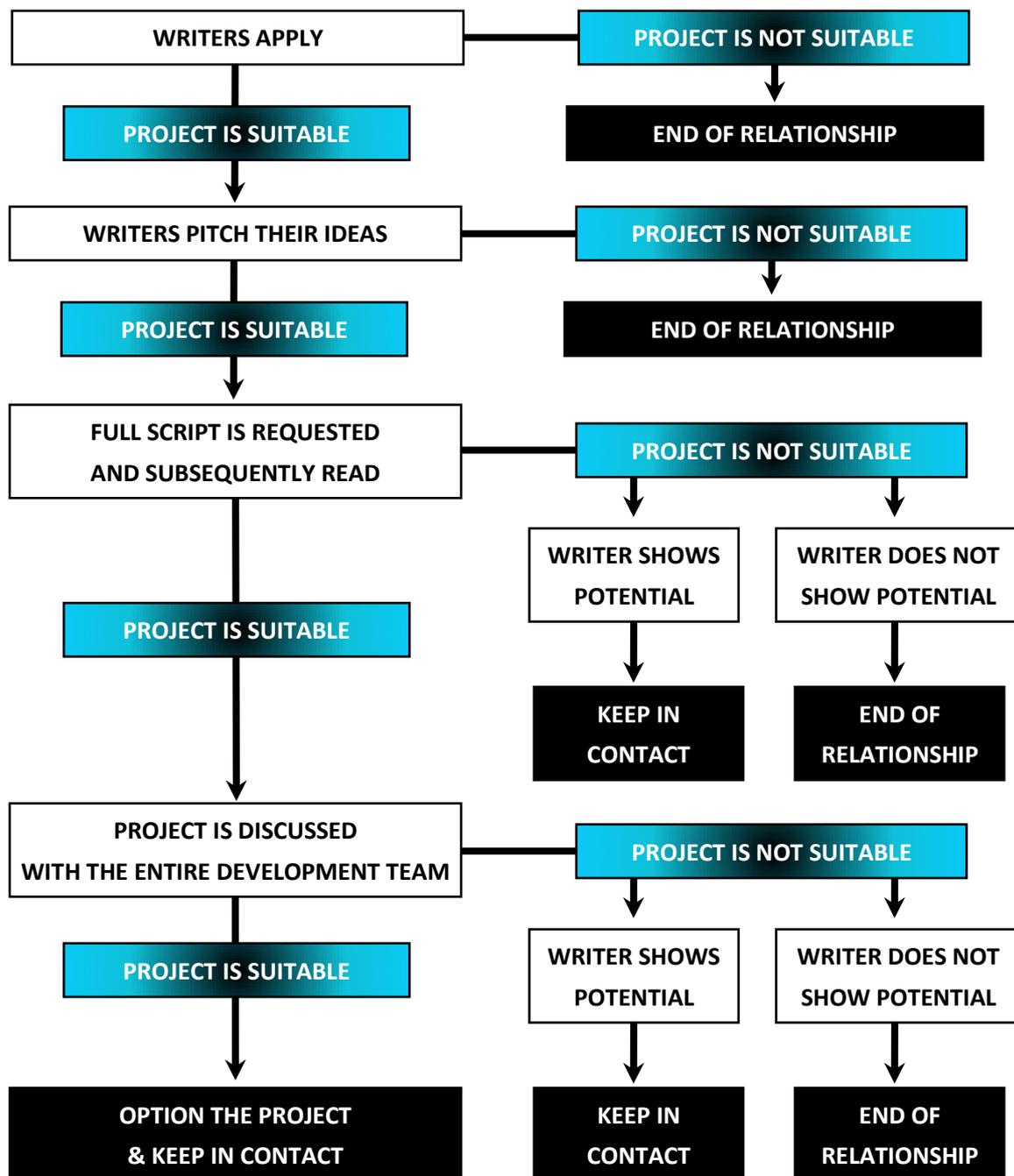
The Script Analysis

The requested scripts will be read fully by a nominated person on the Company's development team. Work that impresses will be analysed further and a script report will be written by the person who initially read the script (where possible). If the project is not suitable but the writer shows potential, a meeting will be arranged between the writer and a member of the team to discuss why the project isn't suitable for the Company; the writer's career path; other completed and uncompleted projects; as well as how the Company can help support the writer.

The Development Team Meeting

If the project is suitable, it will be discussed with the entire development team and seriously considered to be optioned by the Company with the intention of producing the material. The Company will not be restricted as to the media the material can be produced for. The result of this meeting may lead to the Company being formally interested in the project and the wish to option it.

The Process Simplified



Terms and Conditions

The below has been written with the purpose of being considered by entrants before submitting their application.

By agreeing the terms and conditions set out below, the applicant(s):

- Understands and agrees that if he/she/they do not accept each and all provisions set out below, together Cascade Media Development, Cascade Pictures and Cascade Media Productions (hereafter known as “the Company”) will not accept, consider or otherwise review his/her/their application.
- Acknowledges that this scheme is free to enter.
- Acknowledges and agrees that he/she/they reside in the United Kingdom and is/are over the age of 18 years old.
- Acknowledges and agrees that he/she/they do not currently have literary representation.
- May only apply once at any given time.
- Applications are open on a rolling basis. Deadlines for the upcoming six months will be clearly stated on the Company’s website.
- May apply individually or as a writing partnership. If submitting an application as a partnership, a primary contact will be stated on the application form but both writers must be named on the application.
- Warrants and represents that the screenplay has not been previously produced.
- Acknowledges that a completed feature-length script (of between 80 and 140 pages) must have been completed by the time of the pitch meeting. Please try to use professional script formatting software if possible.
- Accepts that all screenplays and applications must be written in the English language. Dialogue in any other language should be subtitled in English.
- Acknowledges that all entrants must be available for the stated date of the pitch day for the month for which he/she/they is/are applying.
- Acknowledges that when the limit of 150 applications has been reached, the submission window will close for that particular pitch window. No submissions will be able to be submitted via the online form once this limit has been reached until the following submission window opens.

- Acknowledges that time slots are allocated randomly. If an applicant is not available for their particular time slot, they must alert the Company as soon as possible, in order for them to receive an alternative time.
- Acknowledges they must present proof of identity in the form of a driver's license or passport on the day of pitches.
- Understands the Company is not liable for any payment by way of travel expenses to the successful applicants in relation to activities/meetings directly for this scheme.
- Understands that they may apply once within a submission period.
- Understands that if they are considered at any stage of the process but are ultimately unsuccessful, they may only apply once more in a period of one year from notification of rejection.
- Understands that if another company options an applicant's project or enters a writer's agreement with them whilst they are a participant of the Writers' Couch initiative at any stage, the entrant(s) must inform the Company as soon as possible.
- Understands not to send us the only copy of their script if one is requested. The Company cannot be held responsible for the safe return of your script.
- Grants the Company the right to read and evaluate their application plus any and all accompanying Work with the understanding that the Company has no obligation to so develop or produce it. In addition, it is understood that no confidential relationship is established by submitting the Work or any material to the Company.
- Warrants and represents that (a) the applicant(s) is/are the sole owner(s) of the Work submitted and its intellectual property rights and the Work is original to him/her/them and (b) has full right to submit the Work to the Company upon all the terms and conditions stated herein. The applicant(s) will indemnify, defend and hold the Company harmless from and against any and all claims, loss, damage or liability (including responsible attorneys' fees) that may be asserted against the Company at any time in connection with the Work and/or any material or and use thereof, arising from any breach or alleged breach of these warranties.
- Acknowledges he/she/they retain all intellectual property rights to their Work and are under no obligation to option their Work to the Company if the Company wishes to enter such an Agreement. Likewise, the Company is under no obligation to option any projects submitted to this scheme.
- Acknowledges that the Company is exposed to many stories, ideas, concepts and other literary materials, through various means. The applicant also accepts that many stories, ideas and concepts are similar or identical, and that different stories, ideas and concepts frequently relate to one or more common underlying themes and may closely resemble other works.
- Acknowledges and agrees that he/she/they will not be entitled to any compensation or other consideration because of the use of such similar or identical material, stories, ideas and/or concepts that may have come to the Company. By applying to this scheme, he/she/they release the Company from any and all claims, liabilities and demands that may be made by the applicant(s) asserting that Cascade has used or appropriated the submission, or any portion thereof.

- Acknowledges that under English Law copyright is an automatic right and, as the Company is a company registered in England and Wales, the applicant's work is protected by the Intellectual Property Laws of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Acts 1988 (as amended).
- Understands he/she/they will retain all rights to put forward the submitted Work or similar material to entities or persons other than the Company.
- Acknowledges and agrees that the Company is under no obligation other than to assess the material submitted and has no further obligation whatsoever to the applicant .
- Acknowledges that literary evaluation is a subjective process, allowing for reasonable disagreement as to the relative merits of the submission. If any feedback is given to the applicant, the applicant(s) understand the evaluation may or may not be complimentary or positive in its judgement.
- Acknowledges that the terms set out within this document shall be interpreted in accordance with English Law and in the event of any dispute, the Courts of England and Wales will have jurisdiction.

Data Retention Schedule

As a division of Cascade Media Development, the Writers' Couch is subject to the Data Protection mandate set out within the Employee's handbook, which states a pertinent need to not only abide by but also promote the data protection principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 (as amended). All members of the Writers' Couch team (including employees of the Cascade Media Group; authorised third parties; temporary workers and volunteers) agree to satisfy the guidelines set out within the aforementioned internal document at the time of the engagement of their services.

This Data Retention Policy has been specifically created for the application process of the Writers' Couch to ensure all information; records and data of the scheme are retained and stored in compliance with legal, industry and business regulations.

Specifically in terms of the application process associated with the Writers' Couch, the Company handles personal data and other confidential information (some of which is covered by intellectual property laws such as The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended)). This data is collected via a dedicated Writers' Couch page within Cascade's website and initially deposited within a secure, private online database. Within ten working days, this information is transferred to a secure offline database (hosted within Microsoft Access) and deleted from the online database. Both the online and offline databases are password protected. Time-stamps on all applications will be recorded along with all applicant submitted data.

Archived files will be stored at the office of Cascade Media Development in London, UK.

Data Collected

Brief personal information (full name(s); address; postcode; country; contact number; email address), project details (project title; genre; logline; main character profiles) will be kept for the foreseeable future. After six months from the date of notification that an application has been unsuccessful, these brief details will be archived in a secure manner. If and when the initiative is formally terminated, all data will be destroyed.

Signed acknowledgments of the terms and conditions of the initiative will be kept in conjunction with the personal information and project details schedule above.

Writing samples (works created by applicants and given in support of their application to be a participant of the scheme) shall be held for only six months from the date of the unsuccessful application. If an applicant is successful (defined as being asked to meet with the team after completion of stage 3), the full application – including the writing sample – will be kept until communication with the applicant lapses for an uninterrupted twelve month period.

Any data collected from the Other Notes section of the application form will be handled in the same manner as writing samples.

APPENDIX A

Application Form

Contact Details

Full Name of Primary Contact

Full Name of Any Other Applicant

Address

Postcode

Country

Contact Number

Email Address

Project Details

Project Title

Genre

Logline

Main Character Profiles

Other Notes

Writing Sample (First 10 pages of your script):

Upload

Please upload your signed standard release form. Please read carefully before submitting your application.

Upload

Please make sure both documents are in .pdf or .doc format. Thank you.

Once your submission has been received, you will automatically receive confirmation direct to your email address.

Submit

All applications must be made via this website. Entries delivered to our offices via courier or by hand will not be accepted.

If you have any further questions in regards to this scheme, please consult the frequently asked questions section of our website (www.writers-couch.com). If your question isn't answered on the website, please contact us at writerscouch@cascaudemediadevelopment.com

Good luck with your application!

Contact

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