

LOUISIANA FILM & VIDEO MAGAZINE

Search

This issue's articles
Article archive

News

News tip
Letter to the editor

Advertise

Subscription &
Advertising Info

Visit

Louisiana
Production Index

Contact Us

Staff Directory

Home

Home

Executive Producer Teaches Screenwriters How to Pitch a Movie

*From the 2005-04-01 issue of Louisiana Film & Video Magazine
Copyright© 2005 Media Index Publishing Inc. All rights reserved.*

By Gary Michael Smith
Guest Columnist

New Orleans-area screenplay writers got the unique opportunity last month critiqued by one of the film industry's hottest properties, "All the King's Men" executive producer Mike Housman, in the eighth Master Series Workshop at the Robert E. Nims Center in Harahan, LA. Mr. Housman—along with New Orleans Access Television director of operations Elton Jones, NOATV education coordinator Mimi Loftus, and "Father of the Cajun Film" Glen Pitre—allowed the first 10 of 18 local screenplay writers to present their ideas in a mock pitch session to this board of industry executives.

Presenters were given three to five minutes to convince the panel of the success of their projects, providing the writers an exclusive educational experience and the pros and cons of selling the merits of a variety of film projects. Those pitch ideas were graded on presentation as well as storyline in a realistic setting including two interrupting phone calls taken by the A-list Hollywood producer himself.

Such valuable advice given to these aspiring screenwriters included suggestions to pitch to their friends first to ensure that the storyline is easily followed and to provide different perspectives from those of the writer. Also, it was recommended that writers thoroughly research the production company to which they are pitching to ensure that the company produces such works and that the actors recommended by the writer are represented by the company.

Closing the pitching session, Mr. Housman announced the winner based on storyline, thoroughness of presentation, and overall marketability of the project. Willie Stark, writer of "Cards of the Horseman," was awarded a collectible Willie Stark button printed exclusively for "All the King's Men." Mr. Stark is a ninth grader who attends the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts. Runners up were Gabriel Dayan for "Frontline Principal" and Kerry Mansell for "Hus-

After the pitching session, Mr. Housman introduced his lead accountant for "All the King's Men," Ben Adams. Mr. Adams related how he always wanted to be involved in the film industry and had humble beginnings, with much of it being on-the-job training, as first an accountant clerk, then accounting assistant. He came with "Stuart Little" where he worked as first assistant accountant before relocating to New York for "Stuart Little II." With ten years experience in film, Mr. Adams revealed how he also aspires to work as an executive producer.

Getting into the weeds, Mr. Adams divulged that shooting a film in New York commonly accounts for a five to ten percent increase in production costs as opposed to California. He also described how print and advertisements, known as P&As, often result in up to 60 percent of a film's publicity budget. At the end of this workshop, Messrs. Housman and Adams read through a 36-line production budget accounting log, explaining each line item and how they affect production costs.

Gary Michael Smith is executive director of Chatgris Press, and drafter of the state-wide Film & Video Industry Awareness Month proclamation.