

ScreenplayCoverage.com Coverage Form

3/14/13

Title: 1099

Logline: A guy with an unconventional job tries to make his way in the world.

Writer: Gary Hanna

Genre: Comedy

Pages: 35

Reader: BP

Positive elements in this screenplay: The concept of this pilot is really great. There's something refreshing about the idea of taking the workplace comedy out of the workplace. A few of the key moments and core concepts of the script really worked for me.

Areas that need improvement: As a primetime sitcom, the tone and material are way off. As a pilot, it didn't do its most important job of establishing the template for the hypothetical TV show. This story felt random and loose. I didn't get a sense of the character, nor did I feel like you really sold the premise as well as you could have.

Scores are 1-10 (10 being highest)

Concept: 7

The concept really did it for me. What you've created here is a new-millennial take on the workplace comedy. There's a lot of room for comedy in the constant scramble of freelance work. To showcase this premise, though, I feel like you need to ground it a lot more in the conventions of situation comedy. I came expecting a story about freelancers and I don't feel like I got nearly enough of that.

Presentation: 4

Generally, TV comedies follow a slightly different format with a lot more open space. I don't think that this is a requirement. The guidelines are much less restrictive in that world but you might want to pull your formatting a little bit closer to the common denominator for sitcoms. In your formatting for this script, also consider making the act breaks clearer. This script is unconventional for TV in a lot of ways so making the act breaks clearer will give me a better sense of how you intend the narrative flow to work.

Structure: 3

I didn't get the structure of this at all. Couldn't figure out what the tease was. I didn't get a sense of the problem in act one. Throughout the script, it felt like you were just throwing stuff out there to see what would stick. Presenting your structural format is one of the key goals of a pilot script. This story needs to be a roadmap for every episode of this show that will follow. I read your mini-bible first and then the pilot. If your pilot is done right, then every one of those story proposals from the mini-bible should be instantly clear. This is not the case. I didn't get how the structural format of this story translated into, for example, Weekend Warrior episode. You simply don't provide enough structure.

The big problem with this piece is organization. There are enough plots in here for several sitcoms at least but with the story being so structurally loose, it's impossible to track what the main plot of the script really is. Is this about Mark trying to convince his landlord he's not gay or his series of bad dates or stumbling into a drug deal? You have a lot of things happening here but because the structure is weak, I never got the sense of what it was all *about*.

Plot: 3

As mentioned, you have tons of plot here. Indeed, a big part of the problem is that there's way too much going on here. A 22-minute sitcom is really only able to have one A plot and one B plot. There's so much stuff going on here that you never get to go a deeper and explore it. Again, bad dates, not being gay, a drug deal... all of these things are great stories to put your character in but do them one at a time so that we know what we're watching.

Pilots are a very specific form of TV writing. Not only are you outlining the thematic and structural DNA of what you intend your show to be, you're also introducing your audience to this world that you're trying to build. The characters, locations and even your style of humor are all new to your audience. Try to find a plot where some of this introduction is built in. Pilots often start with a milestone event, like a character moving to town or something else that lets the audience 'arrive' into the show. For a pilot, I would try to find a plot that does more to help you.

Characters: 4

The cast of characters feels like another place where you made your job much harder than it has to be. Who, in this pilot, are the regular cast and who are guest stars who won't be back next week? Your job in a pilot is to introduce the regulars. Who are we going to spend our half-hour a week with? Why do we like these characters and how are they going to make us laugh over and over again.

The other main goal in your pilot is to introduce Mark and sell him to your audience. Who is this guy? Your pilot is where you put all that character stuff; wants, needs, fears and dreams on the page. Where does this guy want to be and what the problems standing in his path? Get this stuff on the page and make him likeable. Make situations that show how Mark deals with problems.

The pilot also needs to sell the rest of your cast of characters. Who are we with every week? How do these people complete Mark's character? What are the mechanics of getting these people together every week? Is Mandy a cast member or recurring guest part? Do they date and fall in love or become just friends? Is Rob a friend and sidekick who travels with Mark through his adventures or a confidante/sounding board to share a reflective smoke with at the end of the day? Half you proposed cast isn't in this episode. The pilot doesn't give me a sense of these people or how they interrelate/work.

Jerry's a fun character. I liked him and he's leaving. Why waste pages introducing him as a character? Why not start with Mark going home to a half-empty apartment and realizing his roommate has bailed? Or keep Jerry. The point is, don't fill the cast of your pilot with non-characters.

Pacing: 5

Separate and apart from the structural issues, the pacing of the script is okay. The scenes run about the length that they should for television and movement of the story doesn't drag the script down. Even though I wasn't always sure where we were going, the script always felt like it was moving somewhere.

Dialogue: 4

The dialog is often good. The biggest problem I had, in reading this piece, was not understanding the situation or subtext of the scenes from the outset. If you can do more to front-load your scenes with meaning; you'll find that the dialog has to do a lot less of the heavy lifting and you're free to just make comedy.

Theme: 4

I didn't feel like I knew the character enough to judge his journey through this episode or his hypothetical journey over the course of a series. Reading your initial document, I was really hoping that you'd go for strong thematic content here. I think that the world you chose to write about, this economy of freelancers and contractors has the potential to make some compelling points and

Tone: 3

In the mini-bible you pitch this script as a prime-time sitcom. There is something high concept about the pitch that makes me think that you're on the right track there. There's something deep down in this character and your handling of it that feels more like a prime time network show than anything else. The cast of characters and choice of locations and simple problems within the scenes add to this vibe. The extremely crass language and explicit content, on the other hand limit your script to pay cable or nothing. This doesn't read like pay-cable material. Tone this way down. You can be really dirty on the networks, you just have to be more subtle; which I think, in this case, will lead to more laughs anyway.

Tone is another place where this pilot isn't doing its meta-job as a blueprint for a series. Why are there Vietnamese gangsters running a drug operation in the middle of all this other stuff? Is that something that's going to happen in every episode? There are so many disparate pieces to this that it's impossible to get a sense of the whole.

Commercial Potential: 5

There are a couple of places for me, where a genuine sitcom shines through in this script. The world that you describe, particularly in your mini-bible is one I'd like to spend some time in. I think that, in the current environment, there is definitely a market for this concept done right.

Advice for executives would be:

RECOMMEND

CONSIDER

PASS**Ways to improve this screenplay, additional advice:**

There are a couple of simple fixes to this script that I think will do a lot to improve it as a sales tool for your series. Start with the plot. What is the story of this episode? Focus on a simple A plot and B plot that can introduce ALL of the main characters for this show. Spreading the B-plot to the supporting cast takes some of the pressure off Mark to carry the whole show. Keep guest parts to a minimum in your pilot, this is about getting to know the key players. Also make sure you introduce this world. Make it clear how the 1099 freelance world works and how it differs from traditional workplaces. If you can build your pilot plot around a unique 1099 circumstance, that's all the better... Compiling taxes or an audit might be a funny place to start, also; needing to get a bunch of money together fast to make rent shows the kind of crazed scramble that marks this lifestyle.

As a reader, the most resonant sitcom scene in the entire piece was the coffee shop where weird freelancers try to market their own goods. The well-intentioned but desperate girl who makes the vagina cookies and then cries when people don't see that their butterflies is exactly what I'm looking for in this script. If I were you, this shop, peopled entirely with weird 1099'ers is the centerpiece of your show, the non-office of your non-office comedy. Again, for a network sitcom, you want to present your idea as fresh, different and totally out of the box but provide a show that feels as comfortably in the box as we've come to expect when we turn on our TV's for 8PM entertainment.

Try to make Mark either an outsider stepping into this world and experiencing it for the first time or deeply inside of this world and really a part of it. Some of the moments that really didn't work for me were the parts where we're calling people commies and filthy hippies. Mock those archetypes by showing what they do that's funny not but explaining that they're losers, jerks, etc...

I can't recommend enough cleaning this thing up. There are maybe three outlets, aside from the internet, for a comedy this dirty and they're looking to do stuff that at least seems more highbrow than this and they're only programming a night or two of shows a week. The big networks are doing three hours of prime time five or six days a week. Even basic cable is at least an order of magnitude cleaner than this. You're not getting the comedy mileage out of the penis shots or F-bombs that justifies cutting off your odds that way, particularly when you've got such a high-concept and marketable idea.