

[Writing Bldg.](#)
[Art & Design Bldg.](#)
[Music & Sound Bldg.](#)
[Acting Bldg.](#)
[Directing Bldg.](#)

SCREENPLAYS
 WRITING BUILDING

[home](#)
[discuss](#)
[chat](#)
[read](#)
[review](#)
[submit](#)
[your submissions](#)
[hall of fame](#)
[help](#)

[Read](#)
[Revise](#)
[Delete](#)

"ten weeks in the head bin"

Statistics

reads: 11
reviews: 6
opt-outs: 0
Submitted: 06/03/2003
Made Live: 06/03/2003
Last Modified: 06/03/2003

Average Scores

Overall: 6.00
Character: 5.33
Plot: 5.67
Quality of Writing: 6.33
Originality: 7.17
Cinematic Quality: 6.83

Reviews

Steven Thomas Boergadine 06/16/2003
Doug Ekblade 06/16/2003
Jon Nalick 06/25/2003
Kevin Simolke 06/18/2003
John David Stevenson 06/12/2003
James A Travers 06/11/2003

File Size: Filesize:
 163k

This screenplay has completed its 30 days on the read page and its additional 10 days listed on the review page.

James A Travers
 06/11/2003



This is my very first time reviewing a screenplay, ever. So, please let me know if it helps and how I can improve.

Here goes:

Characters: I liked Blake. She's a determined young woman and very mature for a sixteen year old, at least in some ways. Blake is a fun character that may be a little over the top when it comes to attitude but she reminds me of some kids I went to school with so she is a believable character. She is such a powerful character that she seems to have overwhelmed some of the others, such as Axle. I liked her father's character but felt that perhaps he could have been a little more strict with her (I know I would be if my daughter was going to get my family in trouble with the state.) The Chief was an interesting villain and I can see that he is not a guy anyone would want to cross. All in all, I enjoyed your characters.

Dialogue: Good dialogue. Pretty natural, for the most part. Being from the US, I'm not used to using "mum" but its enough like "mom" that I can identify with it. :)

Plot: It took me a few reads to understand what was really going on. Its complicated, at least for me, but I think that onscreen it would be pretty fun to watch fold out. People are really into computer/futuristic movies these days and I could imagine a movie being made with this plot.

Originality: Very original. I would like to know where you got your influences for this story. I kept seeing a city that looked like the game Jet Set Radio. Futuristic and cool. Especially the shoes that turn into roller blades. Fun, entertaining concept for a movie.

Screen Credibility: I can imagine a movie like this being made. Now would be the time, what with movies like the Matrix, the Cell etc...it's a wild plot but not one that's totally unbelievable. It has its own flavor. 1984 meets the Matrix meets Tron and a few other futuristic movies. (The idea behind Tron...not the movie..lol..don't get mad :)

Writing: I found no mistakes. Good format.

Overall: This was a fun read and I'm sure you will have luck with it. How many screenplays have you written? I wrote my very first one and posted it on the site. Its not as good as yours but if you ever want to review it, feel free.

Good job and good luck

James

[Back to Top](#)

Doug Ekblade
06/16/2003



(I don't review that many science fiction scripts so please keep that in mind.) This script has a good commercial potential for a couple of reasons: 1) The age is perfect for the main characters. The mistake some science fiction authors make is having too many children or not enough teenages. And the real market for a story like this is the 15-20 year olds - as least the way I see it. 2) There is plenty of fast-paced action. Some scripts get bogged down with long technical explanations that lose the audience. That doesn't happen here. I liked Blake, Alex and CD, but I think it was a mistake to keep Blake out of the story for so long. In some ways the script started out to be 'her story' and her Mum and Dad are good reality characters to give the story some balance - I would consider some changes in this area. There are a few scenes that I thought were overlong: 1) The Vent. shaft. 2) The Sim course. But this might be just me. The character of Karma is a good one and so is the Lioness. Other than that I would suggest another quick proofread for some minor errors in the descriptions, e.g. Blake's 'bearded professor' Dad was described in this manner twice. But these are really minor things that can easily be changed. Best of luck.

[Back to Top](#)

Steven Thomas Boergadine
06/16/2003



Michela - After the general remarks, I will place the page to page notes that I have taken. At the mid point of your script, I stopped taking page to page notes and began to go to more general notes which I wrote as I read along. Those notes are noted here at the beginning.

By the way, I have reviewed four plays now. Yours has received the highest marks from me.

You are loaded with talent but it needs to be refined, refined, refined.

GENERAL NOTES:

I would consider including an index with your screenplay. Some people suggest a synopsis should be placed right behind the "cover page" but I would go a step further if I were you and include an index of terms. By doing this, you would supply the Pro Reader with a means for arming himself with an understanding of your script that would be easily accessible and something that could be constantly referred to as he reads through the script, encountering the off beat terms.

Also, I truly believe that you would get further with a "Treatment" of your story written in a narrative style. Much of your screenplay is written as narrative-action anyway, but if you focus on creating the story without being restricted to the structure of the screenplay format you may have a more marketable story.

Another thought that keeps occurring to me as I read your story is this: Animation might be a good vehicle for the style of your story. I can see this entire film as an animated feature, Michela.

In the beginning of the story you gave us "realworld" life to experience, too. As the story progressed, I began to miss the "realworld" and wished you would relieve us from the frantic pace and the stylization by taking us to "realworld" for development of the plot on that side, too. But, the occasional bounce back to the "realworld" was nothing more than a return to Blake's Mom and Dad's place for an instant or two. I would have like to see as much development in the "realworld" as was evident in the cyberworld.

As I approached the end of the story, it occurred to me how your choices appears arbitrary in many

instances when you need to change a character into this or that and how that habit can become detrimental to the logic of the story, even a stylized story where morphing into this and that is acceptable. Many times in your scenes, you have character wriggling into or out of tight spots just because you make a choice to transform time and space and one begins to wonder where you should draw the line. I think you have to integrate into the story line a set of rules which tells us what is and isn't do-able by the various characters. Otherwise I see Blade or CD or someone in a dangerous situation and I ask myself - "Why not just turn yourself into a skunk and spray hideous odor, why not become a drop of water, evaporate and disappear, why not do this and that." Do you see my point? Probably not. Granted I am awestruck by your grasp of imaginary cyber stuff, but even as fluid and versatile and magical your characters righfully are, they still have to be rooted in an organic nature for us to relate and give value to them. I think you need more "real world" scenes to go to in your story so that you can keep us informed more clearly of the story through the eyes of normal human investigation.

Another note regarding the climax of the story. It races so furiously during the fall of the Cityscape that the comparrison of an LSD trip is very easy to make. I keep thinking, who is the author - a brilliant teenager, a boored housewife, a computer engineer having fun excerising the other side of her brain. I am really very impressed with the raw grasp you have of your chosen material and your ability to imagine this full scale, many layered futuristic serio-comic world. BUT, work has to be done to make it more accessible to the layman.

PAGE TO PAGE NOTES:

A NANO-BAT, a tiny surveillance robot hangs from a branch, starts recording as Blake runs by. A GUNSHOT rings out. The nanobat drops into the air. An unkempt activist, JON, runs through the trees. He gestures, summoning another nano-bat. It films him.

(Michela, I like the way it starts out. But, since I am reading nano-bat does this and that, I immediately want to know what year I am in. Also, in the paragraph above, A GUNSHOT rings out seems to have something to do with the nanobat droppint into the air. It is a small thing, but I get a little confused right in the beginning of the story, I sort of set my jaw for, "Oh, Gosh, hope she knows how to keep me out of the mud." Everything has to be concise, economical and clear.)

He collides with Blake, grabs hold of her and yells in her face.

JON

What are you doing?! Go home Blake.

The nano-bat is shot out of the sky. Blake pulls free. The activist turns to see a DOG, with a wrap-around visor for eyes. It leaps at Jon.

(Is the nano-bat actually "Shot" by a gun and destroyed? I think so. Well, then we need to hear another shot ring out. A GUNSHOT rang out in the beginning but it apparently missed its target. Now, you have a target getting shot with no GUNSHOT ringing out. You see, I am a little sidetracked already.)

EXT. WIRRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY (REAL WORLD) - DAY

Blake runs away from the dog. The dog sees the world in infrared. It leaps at Blake. The dog rips into her jacket arm, Blake squirts its face with a spray can. The dog gags on the paint. Blake runs towards nearby burning wreckage. The dog wipes its visor clean with a paw and bounds after her. The dog sees the surroundings as glowing with heat. Blake hurdles the wreckage and disappears from its view.

(At the very beginning of the script, we need to know something about this (REAL WORLD) reference you are making. Since it is not standard screenplay terminology usually associated with the character line, it needs clarification.)

STATE TROOPER (O.S.)
(through a loudspeaker)
Nobody move.

Blake looks around desperately, shielding her face from the intense heat. The flames crackle merrily.

Gunshots and screams as the troopers open fire on Jon and the activists.

INT. WRECKED VEHICLE (REAL WORLD) - DAY

Blake crawls into the burning wreckage of a logging vehicle. She looks up anxiously as the wreckage creaks. The dog's feet come into view. The dog's infra-red view of the world is disrupted by a wall of heat from the flames. The dog sniffs around, moves close to Blake's hiding place. Blake extinguishes flames licking at her clothing. She gasps. The dog looks up and scans the wreckage, its nose sniffing the air. A high pitched whistle. Blake watches the dog's feet disappear.

("Blake crawls into the burning wreckage of a logging vehicle..." A burning vehicle, Michela? It would be about 500 degrees in there.)

EXT. WIRRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY AERIAL VIEW (REAL WORLD) - DAY

Jon and several activist lie dead in the forest. From the air, urban sprawl threatens the bushland from all sides. The Department of the Environment and Network Resources (DENR) logo - a tree whose roots blend into integrated circuitry - is marked on the side of a bug-like transport vehicle rising up out of the smouldering forest. The transport speeds away towards the skyline of Sydney in the distance.

(TYPO "Jon and several activist..." More than one activist is dead.)

MAIN TITLES

We move down along the edge of the bush into suburbia.

(Just use- CUT TO.

EXT. EDGE OF SUBURBIA - CONTINUOUS)

Dad chokes on his dinner. Blake, all cleaned up, walks through the holographic projection and sits down. The Chief stares at Lana.

BLAKE

Sorry I'm late--

MUM

Shush!

CHIEF

I am sorry. What you mean?

("...What DO you mean." TYPO)

(Let me stop here to say that beyond my nitpicking thus far, you have started a real great yarn, Michela. The action is pretty clear and easy to follow. It evokes emotion in the reader (me) and keeps me keen to go to the next page. I am taking notes as I read, so some of my notes might be flat-out wrong off because you will have cleared up whatever my issue is. But I will leave all the notes that I offer on here in place so you can see that I had a momentary problem following your story. However, in many cases, my notes will just be notes. You know, TYPO's and logic problems, etc.)

DAD

(his mouth full)

Watch him worm his way out of this one.

MUM

Shush... Daniel!

Lana hesitates and fumbles through her papers. She is losing her nerve. The Chief gives her a patronising smile.

(I was curious when the CHIEF first showed up - Is he the Chief of Police? Or did I miss that. So far, I read a reference ongoing to Chief but don't know what he is Chief of. Do you want your readers to be puzzled over such trivial challenges. Why not fully introduce all your characters when they first enter the story?)

LANA

I'm referring to Dixon's theory of mental containment. Published in 2012. He describes a method of

exporting thought out of a human brain. And storing it digitally.

(Ahh, finally I know it is Year 2012. Not putting the year up in the beginning is fine for the movie viewer, but for the reader of the script (Producer, Director, Pro Reader) it is a good idea to spoon feed them little pieces of information that will make a more clear picture come into their minds eye asap.)

INT. BLAKE'S BEDROOM (REAL) - NIGHT

Blake's room is a mess of teenage paraphernalia and photos. A dog-eared photo is being blue-tacked to the wall. It shows the activists, Jon and Dad are clowning around with baby Blake in the photo. Blake sobs quietly.

(Awkward structure above. "It shows the activists, Jon and Dad are clowning around..." There was so little of Jon in the beginning that you need to devote one sentence to describing and reminding us who he is - that is if it is important that his photo ring a bell to the reader. I am going to push on, hoping it will be easier to visualize as the story unfolds. I will let you know when I am really getting it. However, I am having no problem enjoying your story in and of itself, Michela.)

EXT. CITYSCAPE SKYLINE - NIGHT

A hyper-real virtual city, a simulation of the area encompassing the old cities of Sydney and Canberra, now known as the State. A massive sports stadium looms ahead, lights dazzle. The crowd roars.

(SORRY, BUT THE INTRO OF THE VIRTUAL CITY IS CONFUSING. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO SUGGEST A BETTER DESCRIPTION, BUT I KNOW I HAVE COME BACK TWO TIMES ALREADY TO GET A MENTAL PICTURE OF "A HYPER-REAL VIRUTAL CITY, A SIMULATION OF THE AREA ENCOMPASSING THE OLD CITIES OF SYDNEY...." YOU MUST BE VERY CAREFUL TO PAINT THE PICTURE VERY CLEARLY.)

CD

Hey Blade, check out this dodgy server will ya? I'm getting indigestion just thinking about it. Ooooh!

CD's stomach bulges and undulates. Blade ignores him. She examines a State file which features a photo of Blake.

(I am going to risk giving you the following note, knowing that you might have a perfectly good reason for giving two characters names that have only one-letter different and that reason will turn out to be a brilliant move on your part....but just in case you don't have a perfectly good reason, then here is the note.

Your characters names should be easy to distinguish from each other. Two characters with similar names like Blake and Blade will give a Pro Reader a big headache in trying to follow a story that you forget other people are not familiar with, as you are. So, on the page, the character's names will be more acceptable to the Pro Readers tired brain if they are very different.)

(Additional note. I have now finished reading your story and have to say that I grew accustom to the Blade/Blake thing even as I thought it might be a problem in the beginning. I will leave the note above for your general file, however.)

INT. BLAKE'S BEDROOM (REAL WORLD) - DAY

Blake is asleep. Her bedroom walls are plastered with antiauthoritarian posters and teen pin-ups. An artificial NANO-MOTH clings to the face of a twenty-something guy with a gravitydefying coif, near a slogan "Love life, Hate State".

(You already described Blake's bedroom. I believe it is best to not do it again. If you have additional elements of the bedroom that you want to introduce at this point in the story, re-think that. Go back and make a complete intro of the bedroom in the original and thereafter you don't need to refer to it unless it's to mention that something has been added since the original intro. For instance, the NANO-MOTH is new, isn't it. So, simply capitolize (like you did) NANO-MOTH and edit the scene description so it isn't redundant.)

The moth flutters away, tracked by a webcam in a ceiling corner. The nano-moth lands on a CD lying on Blake's messy desk. The CD's printed label reads 'FRANC - Federal Reactive Agent (Non- Classified)' and has a crude stick figure sketch on it. Crammed under the desk is a mess of computer hardware. A monitor screen is on, laid on its side. It displays a fly-by over rugged mountains. The nano-moth

flutters over the screen. Blake's eyelids flutters.

(TYPO - "Blake's eyelids flutter.")

EXT. WILDERNESS SKYLINE - DAY

Blade flies with CD (back in stick figure mode) over the rugged red mountain range. This is her private world. CD yawns and mocks the ambient music. He looks across at Blade with a gleam in his eye. CD grows a banjo out of his stomach and starts a toetapping tune.

("Back in stick figure world?" Have we been introduced to "stick figure world" or is this new? I am getting confused. You are spinning a really nice new-age story but because your terms are so unfamiliar to the layman you must be sure to be totally clear with your reference to all the details of the fantasy world which you have stylized for your wonderful adventure.)

CD

(singing)

Oh well I'm glad to live in this State of mine. But I wish that I was free. And I wish that I wuz just a dawg and the Chief was just a tree. I--

Blade gives the banjo 'the flick' with a gesture. It dissolves. The ambient soundscape resumes. CD looks frustrated. He clears his throat noisily.

(Very cool. The little interplay between CD and Blade is beginning to become comfortable to me and I am reminded of some of the Star Trek characters (R2D2?).

CD (CONT'D)

In a floating window, Dad has his ear to the door. He knocks again.

BLADE

I better run. See ya. CD looks sad and neglected.

CD

Whatever...

CD transforms into a compact-disk icon with a sad smiley face. Blake and her bed begin to materialise. Blade jumps onto it.

(Okay, I see. I sort of thought you were up to something as a writer who names the real world character, Blake and the unreal world super-character, Blade. Well... Superman and Batman and Spiderman didn't have names that were similar, so it is proved to not be a necessarily cliché formula. I think you can justify either choice, Michela so I withdraw the severity of my criticism of the choice and will follow your choices to see what else you come up with. The story is starting to take on an easier to understand nature and for me that's good. I don't want to be confused all the while that I am reading a script.0

INT. BLAKE'S BEDROOM (REAL WORLD) - DAY

The monitor screen shows a composite view of the bedroom and Blade's space. Online material fades out as the real world objects fade in. On-screen, on the bed, Blade rolls into Blake, merging with her. Blade is Blake. Blade is her avatar. An LED on the ceiling camera, labelled "RIG - Reactive Interface Grid", goes from red to green. In the real world, Blake's eyes open. The sound of drilling intensifies. As does the knocking at the door.

(I believe that you have to remember who is reading the script as opposed to who is seeing the movie. Readers, Directors, etc are reading it. They need to be well advised who these characters are up front. That is my opinion. Of course, you want your audience to be pleasantly surprised the Blake and Blade are the same and for them to appreciate the tricky transformational aspect of the character, but the first Readers are not audience. They are I/Readers watching for clarity of story line. If you confuse them, they might or might not have a generous spirit when finally getting the clarity on page 17.)

On-screen, FRANC, a dour-faced Federal Reactive Agent (a better drawn version of CD) appears wearing a trench-coat in the style of a detective.

DAD (CONT'D)

Hey FRANC. I need you to baby-sit.

(Nice touch with Dad. I wouldn't have thought that he was up on the double I.D. of his daughter. I like the surprise. Now, I can tell you that I am losing the tendency to think that your story is predictable because it isn't. Not right now, anyway. Good.)

DAD
Maggie? Have you been in here? Tidying my desk?

MUM (O.S.)
Not likely. Why?

DAD
I'm missing something. A CD.

(Just so you know what I am now thinking. I recall Blake hiding the CD earlier when her Dad was at her bedroom door. Now I am thinking. Ahh, so she stole his CD. But how does that fit the profile that I have established in my own head regarding Dad? Now, I am wondering what is going on again. I will be looking for an answer to that question as I read on.)

(Seems the issue of the CD was never resolved, Michela. Am I wrong. Did I miss it. As the story went forward, did we ever learn what became of it or how it connected or are we supposed to just know?)

MUM
God I hate computers. I don't understand any of this.

(Sometimes I feel like your Mom as I read your screenplay, Michela :)

On-screen, cueing back through FRANC's memory, Blade crosses the Avatar Gallery. The image of Blade freezes and enlarges.

(This is all really clever. I really wish it were easier to understand all of this. You have to figure out a way to present the story so it is easier to follow and understand and at the same time not lose its quality of energy and originality of concept.)

INT. DENR VENTILATION SHAFT - NIGHT
CD has literally tied himself up in knots and rocks back and forward in the shaft. He wears an inane grin. The lioness is stalking him in the darkness nearby.

(Michela, I am going to take a moment to make this note: It is not a note so much about this section but rather about the entire concept, story, etc up to this point. It is clear to me that you have a wonderful inner vision of the story you want to tell. Your vocabulary for this sort of writing is magnificent. BUT, you should start thinking about film making. I mean beyond writing a screenplay. Actually learning the ropes so that you can produce and have a hand in getting your story beyond the Zoetrope system. My feeling is, if you pin your hopes on this screenplay being picked up as is, then although it may happen, it is such a stylized screenplay that you have to hope for a lot to happen. Odds are terrible. But, if you roll up your sleeves and learn the in's and out's of film making, you will have a better chance of realizing your great story telling ability.)

Axel peers down into the cell. There is a crunching noise below. Axel squeezes the ball between his hands and holds out his palm. The script thing transforms to match the colour of his hand.

AXEL (CONT'D)
Pretty cool huh?

Axel reshapes the script-thing into a ball and winds up to pitch it into the tomb.

BLADE
Axel, don't--
The ball arcs down into the tomb.

(I am starting to feel that the story is not achieving any new plot dynamics. Blade and the others may be inching their way to some sort of climactic event but along the way there has to be more than just action for action sake. Sure you have relationships being tested here and there, but tension is lessening now instead of growing. Your trouble may be that you arc'd to such a frenzied pace so early that there is no where to go except to the end resolution and if that is not planned until page 100 plus, then something new has to happen plotwise to keep me from growing weary from the same old, same old.)

Thanks for the incredible energy you have infused into this story, Michela.

Steve Boergadine

Back to Top



Kevin Simolke
06/18/2003



It looks like "ten weeks in the head bin" is aimed primarily at a somewhat younger and less discerning crowd than your hard-working reviewer. Starting with its lack of punctuation in the title, it seems very interested in challenging authority and having fun and not at all interested in offering solutions or playing by the rules, any rules.

Take, for example, Blade's excursion into the sanctuary that opens the script. It's okay for them to smash up things and raise a little innocent hell but they seem genuinely shocked that somebody might want to kill them. After all, they have rights. Important rights, not like those silly rules about respecting someone else's property and not ripping up someone else's stuff. Just kids out to change the world. Hurrah for youth. So you've made the point that Blade is really opposed to what we might call horizontal growth-- suburban sprawl out into the unspoiled wilderness on the border of the city.

Okay, next scene. She comes across an old 7-11 being redeveloped into a high rise building. But she doesn't like this either, does she? Vertical growth on an old brownfield site. Can't have that either, can we? So where does humanity grow? Into the virtual world? Now we're in the absolute heart of what she really doesn't like. Developing a space, a proprietary space, in the virtual world is also verboten and to be opposed with all her wise-beyond-her-years efforts.

So where does humanity go? I can see her shrug. She doesn't know. She doesn't care. The only thing she's sure of is that she doesn't like the way other people want to run things. Instead, things need to be run the way she wants them. Not that she's willing to do the dirty job herself, she just wants to exercise her personal veto over everybody else's choice.

Let's look at the scene she makes at the virtual stadium-- packed to the rafters by people who are there voluntarily for enjoyment of the virtual game. What does she do? She ruins it for everybody else because she doesn't like their choices in entertainment. How would she feel if the Chief were to intrude on her entertainment choices or start broadcasting embarrassing intimate details about her private life to the crowd?

As you can see from the above, I don't think you've done a good job of painting your heroine as sinned against rather than sinner. Her actions are all overtly offensive in nature rather than reluctantly defensive. You haven't shown why she is so oppressed. Instead, it is she who is doing the oppressing and we don't really have any reason for it other than a visceral and apparently irrational dislike of the Chief. What has he done to her? Nothing, so far as I can tell. What has she done to him? Plenty. How does she get into the "head bin"? She breaks in voluntarily and seems rather offended when the Chief isn't inclined to just let her resume her career as nazi anarchist.

Well, enough ranting, here's some things that need work:

Anachronisms. This is set sometime in the future, at least beyond 2012, yet your cops are running around with batons and bullets in their video game. Rather out of date and unfuturistic. Same for the F-

16 fighting the Foxbat. What do these futurians want with a Carter-era antique such as the F-16, which incidentally has never lost an air-to-air combat duel? Why do they spend their time playing virtual reality versions of 1990s "Mega Race"? Way to go, Enforcer! You start with all of these high tech future devices and then drop back into a familiar and somewhat dated reality.

Characters. Unfortunately, you have a very black and white set of characters populating the landscape. Everybody on Blade's side is well, Good. And Nice. Everybody on the Chief's side is Not Nice. Look at Blade's caring, involved, supportive, loving but (because they're old) hapless parents. Walking, talking stereotypes that wring their hands and wait helplessly on the sidelines while their daughter saves the world. No Grays walking around. No people changing sides or at least wondering if they've done the right thing.

Plot. What is Blade fighting for? What is at stake that she is willing to risk her life for? Why has she become involved in this struggle in the first place? For that matter, what is the Chief trying to get away with? His efforts to have things run his own way don't seem very fraught with compulsion or menace. You're basically making him out to be some sort of super-sized developer rather than some sort of malevolent fascist. A little shady a la Bill Clinton with secret files and dirty backroom deals but not exactly erecting a Stalinist utopia sans dissenters. Think about upping the stakes a little bit and defining the issues a little more clearly.

Drama. Assuming that you have youth, beauty, super computing skills, incredible kung fu moves and a bevy of friends and gadgets that add even more punch to your super powers, is there going to be any doubt that you will win sooner or later? What is Blade's Achilles Heel? Answer: She doesn't have one. How has the Chief cunningly exploited this heroic fault to bring her to the brink of defeat before she rallies, overcomes her handicap, and triumphs in the name of truth, justice and the English and/or Australian Way? Answer: Didn't happen because she has no faults or weaknesses. In my mind, I'm rooting for the average joe fighting against the overwhelming superiority of the super beings. Who's the super being in this script? Sure isn't the hard-working, fault-ridden, ordinary guy hiding behind the curtain Chief, is it?

Menace and Time Pressure. Not only is it a question of what is at stake and why is Blade involved, but there needs to be a reason for action now. Why does she have to do these things NOW rather than later? Are her parents tied to the railroad tracks? Is her house scheduled for demolition next Thursday? There doesn't seem to be a reason for her to move, except her own desire to tear things up. If there is no time pressure or deadline, there is no excuse for her to act in the extra-legal manner which so amuses her. Plenty of time to write her congressman or MP and show up for the spontaneous demonstration scheduled for five o' clock Wednesday afternoon. Her options haven't been exhausted and her back is most definitely not to the wall.

Comprehensibility. You've drawn an involved world operating on three different levels (Virtual, Maintenance, and Real realities) which requires some careful explanation for the unwashed masses to grasp. Contrary to the usual practice, I think a little more coaching needs to be put into your stage directions. Some of what you describe isn't going to make sense to anybody other than the most technically-oriented reader. Also, be careful about introducing anomalies or inconsistencies in your various worlds. They all need to hang together a little more tightly. Some of your shifts between the levels takes place for the convenience of the script rather than the physical rules of the reality.

In conclusion, I'd start with a more serious look at the underlying reasons for this world to exist and its characters to act. A firmer foundation that will make the action more logical and understandable. What makes the Matrix so interesting? Is it the slow motion kung fu sequences or the depth of the world it shows? You have an alternate reality and it needs an unbreakable set of alternate physical rules binding in all circumstances on all characters, then you can go forth and fight oppression. Put a little more on the table for Blade to risk and have her lose a little and learn a little along the way. Get rid of the super grrrl aspects and make her fight to win.

[Back to Top](#)



John David Stevenson
06/12/2003



REVIEW FOR 10 WEEKS IN THE HEAD BIN

by John Stevenson

I'm on page 33, and I'm going to start recording my notes as we go along, so you'll know my response while I'm reading the script. At present, I am both excited and frustrated by what I'm reading. The log line sounded interesting, so I bit. Right now, I would compare the reading of your script to the feeling I had reading the first few chapters of *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess. That book simply immersed you in its world without bothering to explain the particulars of its environment. As a result, the book started out both interesting and tedious. I am having a similar response to your script. It is difficult for me to fully envision exactly what is going on (even though the underlying plot seems to be the standard futuristic "young rebel fights the totalitarian leader who has sedated the populace with shallow entertainment, gadgets and strict discipline". Which is fine. It's a perfectly good plot, and its familiarity allows us to try to follow exactly what is going on in the cyberworld you are describing) I am sure the visual representation of the world would help clarify things, since right now, I may be imagining a totally different universe than what you have in mind. Which is a point of consideration with films like these. Like *BLADE RUNNER* or *JOHNNY MNEMONIC*, for example, the realization of the world is key to the film's success.

Still, I am excited, because I feel that this is possibly something special that I am reading. You have clearly created this world fully and completely in your own mind, and I respect that you are not dumbing down the presentation to make it more comprehensible for the reader (although you may ultimately need to do that... unfortunately, I have known a few too many people in the film world without the patience to wade through something this dense. For the moment, though, the script's descriptive complexity is my favorite thing about it.) However, if this script does not pan out in the plot direction, it could easily become one of those overly elaborate baubles which everyone remembers for its visual design but nobody actually likes. We'll see. I'm looking forward to reading more.

p. 59 Love this fight between the Monk and Blade. This is the first time in the script I have not been tempted to skim. I particularly liked the "hard-on" bit.

Very exciting and entertaining script. I actually didn't have many comments along the way. The biggest issue is that the script is very difficult to read, follow, and fully comprehend (not necessarily a bad thing). The script is very jargon-heavy, and the descriptions require so much imagination that I cannot be sure if the movie I was imagining is the same one you have in mind. My biggest worry is that the complexity of the wording will dissuade readers. On the other hand, perhaps that is a good thing; this film would only be successful if made by people who actually "got it".

Done properly, this movie could join *TRON* and *THE MATRIX* as the classics of cybercinema. Done wrong, it could be *JOHNNY MNEMONIC*. So much of the success of this piece depends on those special effects.

At present, I don't have any suggestions for changes, partially because I'm not sure I understood everything. Which I like, actually. I'm tired of reading scripts which are too easy to understand.

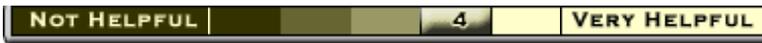
The biggest downside to the script is that the overall plot is as simplistic as the descriptions are complicated. Plucky young rebel takes on evil ruling megalomaniac. Been there, done that (although such a complicated read almost requires a simple plot). Anything which could be done to deepen themes or core ideas would be beneficial. Right now, this does seem to be ultimately just a popcorn movie, and it is awfully hard work for just a popcorn movie.

The other weakness I noted is character. Not that the characters are a problem, they are all fairly entertaining, however none of them has any real depth... Blade is the smartass teenage grrl, Chief is the grinningly charming villain... few characters (other than that thing with the Monk????) really go against expectation, and none of the character seem to have any real depth. Now, a film like this does not require deep characterization (and, in fact, it could hurt the film if done incorrectly). Still, anything which can be done to increase the weight of the movie without hurting its zip would be helpful.

Keep up the good work! I wish I had more to say. My best suggestion would be to get a diverse array of feedback and see what response people are having to this, since I can't imagine how others would react. But I liked it.

Back to Top

— YOU RATED THIS REVIEW AS —



Jon Nalick
06/25/2003



Hi, Michela,

A warning about comments: I am usually fairly brutal, but having said that, I'm not here to trash work, or criticize just to criticize and/or pass myself off as a know-it-all.

What follows are *opinions* only. If any of them are helpful, use 'em. If you think they're crap -- chuck 'em in the trash and don't look back. The only opinion that really matters is yours...

Regardless, keep writing :-)

Okay, here goes...

ten weeks in the head bin. Great title. Evokes an image, can see it on a marquee. Has a whimsical tone to it.

Pg. 1. Need a tighter age range age for Blake - 13- and 19-year-olds are both teens, but would hardly evoke the same image. Would also prefer more description for your main character. Just a few word-images that paint a quick picture. Same comment for Jon if he's an important character.

One excellent description I read recently was something like, "SKAGG, 22, a rock'n'roll arsonist in black leather." Short and it doesn't limit the actor who could play it, but it's memorable and it's a great image.

Here's the description of Susan Sarandon's character in BULL DURHAM, which illustrates what I mean:

"ANNIE SAVOY, mid 30's, touches up her face. Very pretty, knowing, outwardly confident. Words flow from her Southern lips with ease, but her view of the world crosses Southern, National and International borders. She's cosmic."

Pg. 2. Your writing style seems very prose oriented, as though you're writing for a novel instead of a screenplay. The latter typically use a good deal more sentence fragments and spare description to avoid gray pages and commit to the page on barest possible essentials. This is not a bad thing per se, but some studio readers may penalize you for it, so it's something to be fully conscious of.

That said, you're using strong action verbs in your description and have a knack for wry description: "Someone has been playing with explosives," on Pg. 1 for example.

I also like the odd techno-flavored real word you've created. Intriguing.

Pg. Most professional screenplays eschew the "we see" construction, opting instead to simply describe what we see.

Pg. 3. Same comment as earlier on character descriptions for Mum and Dad.

Pg. 4. Odd. Blake doesn't seem to be emotionally disturbed by her friends' summary executions.

Pg. 5. Aha, she's 16.

Pg. 6. Now she cries over Jon's death. Still, her reaction doesn't seem realistic. It's a fairly muted response to a horrific incident. Plus, wouldn't the first news out of a person's mouth once they got home be the telling of the police-sponsored murders of unarmed civilians?

Pg. 7. Like the image of the Kens and Barbies with different faces. Really enjoying the world you've created. Very visual and well suited to the medium; nothing static here: this movie will move.

Pg. 9. SHEEP BARBIE: I'm no sheep. I'm unique.

You crack me up :)

Ken's profanity - if it's supposed to be bleeped out, say so. If not, it's probably better to actually write the profanity instead of ****. A writer shouldn't be afraid of using the words they intend to be on screen.

Pg. 11. This is one of the more original screenplays I've seen in the last year. Good job. Am also enjoying the dialogue, especially of the barbies and Blade and CD.

Pg. 13. It's unusual to have two main characters with names so close to each other Blade and Blake. Makes it easy for a reader to confuse which is which. Not a big deal though.

Pg. 17. Blade=Blake. Makes sense now. I apologize for doubting you :)

Pg. 19. You've got a strong protagonist with a compelling goal. Excellent. Just need to see a major change in circumstance that forces Blake to make a hard decision soon as Act I comes to a climactic end.

Pg. 20. Again, excellent visuals.

Pg. 23. Raytracers, heh. Enjoying your playful use of computer geek jargon and conventions.

Pg. 30. Blake trapped in the virtual world. Stakes raised much higher and she's in serious trouble. Act 1 ends right on schedule. Good job. I usually have twice as much criticism by now, so you're really doing well.

Pg. 33. I know you had a brief mention of Axel on Pg. 16, but maybe something more substantial would have been better so that the audience would have the same instant recognition as Blade does. Maybe instead of a static image of him, there could be a audio-visual loop with him doing something heroic and/or saying something that's inspirational...?

Pg. 40. Nice bug bit w/ CD.

Pg. 41. This page is how typical screenplays read, BTW, very spare.

Pg. 42. "Your mind won't last a day..." Nice ticking clock. Your plotting is professional.

Pg. 49. Blake distrusts Axel after learning his background. I think it would be more interesting if Blake deliberately chose to part company with Axel over this, if only briefly, so that we could see the depth of her idealism and her unwillingness to compromise those ideals. So far, she's made several important choices but they all revolve around attacking the Chief or escaping his clutches. I'd like to see her make choices that illuminate other aspects of her character besides her determination.

For example in ALIENS, Ripley's choices generally focus on attacking the alien or escaping its clutches. But the thing that makes her such a compelling hero is her choice to risk her own life to save the young girl Newt. Her willingness to give up her main goals briefly and risk her life really give us insight into who she is and what she's all about. I'd like to see some kind of painful choice for Blake that fleshes her out a bit more.

Pg. 58. Good fight scene; who has the upper hand shifts back and forth several times.

Pg. 63. I think we're do for a reminder that the clock is ticking in the real world. Maybe a scene with mom and dad worrying about her physical condition...? Something to ratchet up the tension, like a physical manifestation that she's growing worse. Nosebleed, racing heartbeat, fever, etc etc.

Pg. 65. Not a bug, a feature. LOL.

Pg. 70. Want to see a huge setback for Blake soon. When the Worst Thing That Could Possibly Happen Actually Happens as we reach the Act II climax.

Pg. 73. Okay, got my scene of her in the real world and you're using it to jack things up for your Act II climax, which is good. But I still think a very short scene mid-Act II to show she's getting worse would help. As you have it now, there's a mention that she would deteriorate and then the next time we check, she's all but brain dead. Showing us the parents growing more and more frantic and reminding the audience of the stakes would be good around page 60 or so.

Pg. 89. Nooooooooooooo. Not the Macarena!

And we sprint to a satisfying conclusion. Elapsed time between climax and fade to black is one page. This is very good work.

I wish I had more constructive to say, but overall, it's solid.

I'm not 100% persuaded by the romantic subplot but I can't quite put my finger on why. Maybe it's because I figure she should have a scene resolving her disappointment with him not being the activist-hero she thought he was...

That's all I have for now. Feel free to drop a line to ask any questions or have me clarify anything.

Ratings:

Overall: 8.

Character: 8. Overall very good. Blake, Axel, CD and the Chief all have compelling goals and unique world-views. I wish Blake was just a bit more developed and had to face a more diverse set of challenges rather than simply escaping all the time. Good dialogue that was varied substantially in each character.

Plot: 8. Very good structure throughout. Kept the tension high. Could use some minor additions to bolster tension in the real world as Blake's time runs out.

Quality of Writing: 8. Very good at the act, scene and description levels. Lots of strong action verbs and humorous turns of phrase. But also contained unnecessarily dense description. Could probably be pared significantly for readability without sacrificing content. Lacked solid descriptions of main characters.

Originality: 9. This is the hardest scale for anyone to do well on. How many stories are really original? The last screenplay I read that rated a 10 was AMERICAN BEAUTY.

Cinematic Quality: 9. Vivid cinematic descriptions and memorable images.

FWIW, this is the shortest review I've written in six months because it's best screenplay I've read in six months. Good job.

[Back to Top](#)



© Copyright 2003 Zoetrope.com