

## KINOWORDS

at the

Department of Mass Communication  
The New Bulgarian University of Sofia

June 2004

MA and PhD students at the *Department of Mass Communication*, NBU signed on as participants to a week's programme of seminars and workshops on the art and craft of screenwriting for both film and television commercials as led by Alan Taylor of Frankfurt, (*kinowords@hotmail.com*).

The main objective of the course was

***“To provide a holistic and practical understanding of the function and purpose of the scriptwriting process”.***

Amongst its aims was to

1. Clarify the process of reading, interpretation and visualisation of film scripts.
2. Provide a historical perspective of the development of the Hollywood film script
3. Introduce students to narrative theories
4. Apply narrative theory to actual screenplay and film analysis
5. Outline theories of genre and auteur theory
6. Provide overview account of script development in commercial television advertising
7. Apply theoretical understanding to practical team tasks in small-scale production exercises.

### ***Openings***

The 35-hour programme that was attended by Professor Rusi Marinov, NBU, began with an exercise designed to explore how a single page script can generate a range of different and alternative directorial approaches.

From close textual analysis of the script to storyboarding visual interpretations, the programme proceeded to compare narrative and technical terms in English with their Bulgarian equivalents. This led to a general overview of key narrative theories (Aristotle, Todorov and Propp) and how these can best be applied to contemporary Hollywood film beginnings - *EDtv* (1999) was used as a case example.

### ***Film Histories & Analysis***

The focus on Hollywood continued through the second day that covered the beginnings of mainstream American cinema and the emerging significance of the script as both creative foundation and blueprint document for mass-produced studio production.

The importance of audience and context was also emphasised with reference to sequences from the Criminal/Detective genre (*The Big Sleep*, 1944; *Vertigo*, 1958; *Chinatown*, 1972; *Blade Runner*, 1983) and the Western (*The Man from Utah*, 1934; *The Searchers*, 1958; *Ride the High Country*, 1961; *A Fistful of Dollars*, 1964).

Closing a busy day, Alan Taylor then took the participants through a close-up account of the scripting process as it moves from inspired first idea to the logistics of scene design and then the strictures of plot development.

This aspect of the programme drew upon his own screenwriting programme *The Script Lab 5* at the FilmHaus, Frankfurt (2002-2003).

### ***The Creative Challenges of the Television Commercial***

By mid-week attention was turned to the television commercial - its specific format and alternative creative challenges - how to "interrogate the product" or condense abstract narratives into tight visuals for a very limited time frame.

Close deconstructive analysis - covering principles of semiology and genre - focused on contemporary Bulgarian commercials as taped by the participants during the week.

### ***Theory to Simulation***

By Thursday participants were applying these separate but related strands of theory and analysis to given simulations in the classroom - how, for example, to conceive a commercial idea for an umbrella (it rained that day!) or, later, a brand-name chocolate bar that was suggestive of a certain Roman God of fertility and war.

Again, a range of possibilities formed as storyboard ideas that were analysed for their appropriateness to audience, genre and story strength.

### ***Simulation to Practice***

Returning to conventional drama, the final day was focused specifically on constructing a single dramatic scene from a given scenario as performed and recorded by the participants themselves. The aim was to work closely towards assembling sixteen digital 'trailer' shots that effectively caught a crime "in action".

The exercise allowed participants to fully explore and reflect upon the dominant codes and conventions of film practice (180-degree rules, eye-line matching) and, of course, review earlier work on genre study.

One key aim was to clarify the production and creative process "on the set" by emphasising the protocols of communication between director, technical crew and actors.

It is hoped that further programmes can be arranged with Alan Taylor in future seminars.

**END**