

Business of film



The screenplay contest primer

Optimizing your chances of winning

by Michael Barmish



mypocket
guide FILM, TV & MEDIA

Introduction

You've typed "The End...Fade Out" and finished your screenplay. Job well done! Of course, the question becomes, now what? The last thing you want to do is to put your script away "in a drawer" and never let it see the light of day. Chances are you don't have a relative who is a studio executive that can get your script onto the must-read pile. You may not live in LA, where every other person at Starbucks has a connection. And, even if you do live in LA, you're one of hundreds, if not thousands, trying to peddle their screenplay. What's a writer to do? One of the best routes to success is to enter your script in a screenplay contest. But which one is best? How do you maximize the opportunity by doing all the preparation to show your best work?

In addition to providing a complete list of the major screenwriting contests, this guide will explain the advantages of screenplay contests and how to develop a strategy to enter your screenplay into a contest that will maximize your script's potential and, with any luck, get you that industry exposure you need.

5 key advantages in entering -screenplay contests

Why enter a screenplay contest? With so many scripts by writers around the world, submitting your script to a contest offers several important benefits:

1. Recognition - win or, depending on the contest, placing in the top group and your script, and you the writer, get immediate

recognition from the industry. This can lead to acquiring an agent and/or manager, getting important producer and studio meetings, meeting directors, and possibly getting your script produced or being offered a writer-for-hire position on another project.

2. Financial - no one is going to get rich off of contest prize money, but most contests do offer a cash prize. Every screenwriter's goal is to get paid for writing. Winning a cash prize is a start that can lead to what your true goal is, a career as a working screenwriter.

3. Feedback - some contests include important feedback from industry pros that you can use to write your next draft. The opportunity to receive valuable critique is immeasurable.

4. Niche scripts - When submitting scripts to producers and studios, it's all about