SHORE SCRIPTS

COVERAGE REPORT

Title: -----
Writer: ----
Form: Feature Script
Length: 125 pages
Genre: Romance

Location: London/NY/Sydney
Circa: Present Day
Budget: Medium
Coverage Date: ----
Reader: ----

Logline: The relationship between an actor and an actress, who seem just about perfect for each other, is put in jeopardy when one's dedication to method acting begins to make it look like he's gay and in a relationship.

Grading/Verdict:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PREMISE		X		
STORY			X	
CHARACTERS			X	
STRUCTURE			X	
DIALOGUE		X		
MARKETABILITY			X	

Evaluation: This feels like a solid romance piece that provides an interesting and new setup for fans of the genre. But once we've gotten past the premise, the slow pace of the story really hampers what dramatic and emotional content there is. Too much time has been spent on overly naturalistic scenes and dialogue that simply aren't moving the story forward and although it works well to create the tone and mood of the piece, it also risks audiences losing interest as it feels like there's too much time in between something compelling happening on screen.

Formatting is a big issue; thankfully, it's something that can easily be fixed with practice. A couple of the secondary characters, John and Michael feel underused and could both be useful when developing a more filled out subplot or for introducing some more gripping drama into the plot. A lot more conflict is needed to keep viewers hooked but during the moments of drama there are in the script, the writer has done well to enhance feeling

and the writing reads very emotionally. More of this is needed throughout.

SYNOPSIS

On set in Sydney, famous British actor PHIL (45) dismisses a warning from fellow actor JOHN that if he continues to submerge himself into method acting, he risks losing the real Phil altogether. Phil Skype calls old friend CATE (40) in London to tell her about a new play that he and John are starring in on the New York stage after shooting in Sydney. He and John are to play gay lovers, a role that Phil is already trying to study for. In the morning, Cate's abusive ex-boyfriend MICHAEL turns up on her doorstep, insisting that things aren't over. He gleefully announces that he'll be playing opposite her in the mini series she's starring in!

Cate flies to New York for a short break and meets up with Phil and John. Cate sight sees with Phil and it's clear that there's a lot of love between them, but somehow they're never been able to more past just being friends. Back at John's, Phil slips into method acting mode again and starts to camp it up, hugging and fondling over John in front of a surprised Cate who begins to believe that Phil really is gay. Phil lets her leave without telling her how he really feels.

Weeks later, it's Phil and John that are visiting London. Both Cate's mother and John question her over why she and Phil haven't ever gotten together. Cate says there was a kiss once, but at that point didn't want to take it any further. She was black, he was white, and that sort of thing didn't happen very often in those days. During an evening of drink and dinner, Phil's method acting gets the better of him and Cate walks in on him passionately kissing John. Shocked, she runs off to her mothers and refuses to take any calls from Phil, who has to return to Sydney to finish filming without being able to talk to her.

Phil drowns his sorrows and feels angry. He thinks that even if he was in a gay relationship (which he's not), that Cate should support him and be happy for him regardless instead of childishly ignoring him. Phil doesn't believe John who tells him that Cate's only acting this way because she's in love with him and feels hurt. In London, Cate begins shooting scenes with Michael who grabs her and kisses her in front of photographers. Phil is angered further when he see's the photo in a magazine and thinks she's back with the bully. But when Phil hears the news that Michael has attacked Cate in her dressing room and been arrested, he can't but help return to the UK. Supported by her director, Cate gets back to work on set. The surprise comes when the replacement for Michael's role turns up. It's Phil! Cate falls into his arms right there and then. The two go on to get married, have a

family and love conquers all.

COMMENTS

Premise

You have a solid romance here, involving two people whom everyone knows should be together except each other. While this common scenario is something everyone will be able to relate to and share empathy for, you've also made it unique and unexpected by using Phil's fluid sexuality as the primary antagonistic force. The script shares similarities with other popular romances such as 'Before Sunset', '500 Days of Summer' and 'Manhattan', where two people who are ideal for each other perhaps need some convincing that they should be together in the first place.

The script is a slow moving and atmospheric piece but at present, errs more on the side of setting the mood rather than it does developing drama. While the script certainly does well to adhere to genre conventions and has the potential to please its target audience, at the moment, there's just not enough happening in terms of conflict or drama to ensure that audiences will be kept hooked sufficiently throughout. Even though you have a great setup with the question of Phil's sexually being the major obstacle standing in the way of him and Cate getting together, making the core concept a clear one, is this going to be enough to carry the entire film?

Once you've established the premise, the story quickly descends into the traditional 'will they, won't they' narrative and it's at this point you perhaps need to work on giving the audience something they haven't all seen before. A couple of devices are used repetitively, Cate sees Phil and John presented as a couple in the news and vice versa, Cate observes Phil fawning over John at several different apartment visits, Phil asks Cate whether she's gay or not and vice versa etc. Instead of using the same scenario more than once, is there any way to help keep the story feeling new and fresh by turning over some new places, new people, or new events too?

Character

You have two good characters in Phil and Cate. They both come across as being realistic people that we can relate to and understand. Neither of them are perfect making them all the more truthful to watch and you've been able to create some interesting conflict by making them both as

equally stubborn as one another. However, the third wheel in this supposed love triangle, John, doesn't particularly shine off the page as much. In fact, John reads a lot like Phil, except he's younger, and American, making it often difficult to differentiate between the two, particularly at the beginning of the script.

What's refreshing about John, is that by all accounts he acts just like a straight guy and isn't as overtly camp as Phil is when he's trying to act gay and this adds a really interesting layer to the piece. But do consider making John stand out a little more than he does at present. He's a good guy, but he also feels somewhat bland and boring as his only purpose seems to be something for Phil to play with. Do you possibly need to develop some scenes, which allow us to see John's personality stronger? Should he have his own mini 'hero' moment within the story too? At present, John feels like a passive character that's simply there as a plot device rather than really getting involved in the story. Instead of being an emotional support for Phil, is there potential for him to create some conflict too?

While the story centers around dual protagonists, Cate's character manages to stand out a little further than Phil's making it more her story than his. She's the one that's struggling with the though that Phil has somehow betrayed her, she's the one that has a manipulative ex lover stalking her and she's the one that seems to have the most to lose if her and Phil's friendship falls apart. What makes this difficult to ascertain until some way through the script, is that you start the story with a scene involving Phil rather than Cate. In most cases, a movie starts by introducing the protagonist straight away so the audience can quickly grasp whom it is they're supposed to be rooting for. Although not absolutely necessary, do consider what the impact of starting with Phil has on the script and whether changing things around would help direct the viewer's attention onto the character you want them to focus on more.

Try to create more memorable character introductions by telling us a little bit about their personalities rather than physical descriptions (although knowing a characters age is very helpful) or what clothes they're wearing when possible. A short but effective essence statement will help both reader and actor gain a better understanding of a character rather then knowing that they're wearing "a blue silk jumper and a pair of skinny jeans". Try to build a clearer picture of their character, not their wardrobe.

While it's great that you're putting lots of action into your scenes and trying to keep the audiences eyes busy, be mindful not to delve into over direction of the actors. Filmmaking is a collaborative process and actors don't

generally appreciate being instructed on every single movement they must make. Take "She grabs the water bottle from the floor, opens it and takes a sip, closes it and puts it back" on p11 or "Cate boils water in the red kettle. She takes her favorite mug from the kitchen cabinet and pours the water onto the tea bag and adds milk" on p14 for example. They both sound like we're reading a step by step instruction manual when essentially all you need to say is "Cate sips water" and "Cate makes tea" and let the actor do the rest for you.

Although the majority of conflict is coming in the form of a series of misunderstandings; such as Cate thinking Phil's gay and vice versa, Phil thinking that Cate and Michael are a couple and she thinking the same about Phil and John, the conflict that's really gripping to read are the scenes involving Michael. Yet this character barely features throughout. Things feel like they're just about to get interesting when Michael turns up at Cate's flat and announces that not only does he believe that things aren't over between them, but that he's also going to be in her face day on day for the next eight months while they work together. Yet we have to wait until about ninety pages in before this promise of conflict is finally paid off. Are you possibly missing out on creating more upset for Cate by not having her life invaded more by this compelling antagonist?

Dialogue

Overall, dialogue feels natural and appropriate to the time and location, with character voices being consistent throughout. You've done well to use dialogue to express exposition well but try to squeeze in more instances of subtext where you can. Romances are the perfect place to have characters say one thing but mean another. Although speech feels real, you've possibly overdone it by having far too much talking for the sake of talking and idle chitchat happening in your character's dialogue at present. "Could you pour me another glass, please Phil?" on p60, which is followed by four more lines of dialogue that aren't moving the story forward. Look to trim out greetings or the "How are you?" questions as well as "Thank you" and goodbyes.

There's a lot on Q & A dialogue happening too. This is when you have someone ask a question and someone else answers it. Good dialogue tries to answer the question but leapfrogs over the obvious answer and gives us new information, while still answering the question at the same time. "What's the message?" on p79, is an example of a character needlessly asking a question. We already know that Cate's mother is going to give her the message so ask yourself whether you need to waste three lines on the page

here when a look would do, as would going straight into Cate's mother's line "He says he's sorry…" too.

While on the whole you've kept paragraphs of dialogue short and sweet, watch out for moments of overindulgence that may hamper the pace. The Shakespeare quote on p27 for example, while works well to show off Phil's abilities as an actor, the half a minute of Shakespearian talk feels rather longwinded and for anyone who's not a fan, could easily go over their heads. Pick a short paragraph, much like the ones before hand, keep it relevant and with strong emotions running through it, and that should be enough. Keep things short and punchy as much as possible. Make the point and then move on rather than drawing out a scene with talk that isn't taking the story anywhere. (Also make sure that you script every line of dialogue you want the audience to hear, such as Sinatra's song p19/20. If an actor is to say the lines, they need to be able to read them in the script)

Structure

As with dialogue, every action, line of scene description, every scene, sequence and act, must be either advancing the plot, showing character growth or delivering necessary exposition. At the moment, there's a lot in this script, which isn't doing this yet. Take the sequence starting on p106 for example. Here we have Phil arriving at his London apartment, having a shower, waking up the next morning, listening to the radio, having another shower, getting ready to go out and having a cup of tea, none of which is fulfilling any of the aforementioned rules. You may argue that these vignettes are helping to establish the mood and atmosphere, but ask yourself whether they're interesting enough to keep the audience engaged or whether you're using these scenes as space fillers to bump up the page count?

With the script being crammed with so many 'everyday' moments, the major story beats are fairly clear to see, yet because of the page count being off-kilter due to the bad formatting, beats aren't quite hitting all the expected page numbers. You start well with Michael threatening Cate on p15, making a big emotional impact but you possibly need to make it clearer that this is the incident that has propelled Cate into Phil's company. As it stands, it doesn't feel like she's running away from anyone nor does she seek to tell Phil about the incident either. The next visible turning point involving Cate getting annoyed at Phil camping it up is slightly late on p43 as is your midway point of no return, which comes in very late on p73 where

Cate runs off after witnessing Phil kiss John. Addressing the issues with formatting will go a long way to help you solving these problems.

The central story line does well to advance in a logical and clear fashion, but have you paid enough attention to your subplots too? At the moment, there seems to be only one subplot, which shows a variation on the theme and that's John's personal love life. This story thread has a good beginning, middle and end to it and certainly works well to intertwine with the main thread in the third act but is there enough of it being shown on screen? Could this subplot be another place in which to throw some captivating conflict too? At the moment, things have been kept quite simple and easy for John. His boyfriend breaks up with him in act one (which made for a good reversal, as we were expecting the other couple to turn up) followed by absolutely no complications, strife's or upsets and in the third act, John very conveniently bumps into his future husband. Consider whether adding more obstacles, twists, setups and payoffs into this subplot will both give you the opportunity to further explore the central theme as well as provide more engaging and dramatic scenes for the viewers.

Pace

Watch out for any instances where you may be repeating information unnecessarily. We hear Big Ben strike three times on p4, you then tell us in the scene heading that we're at Big Ben and that it's three in the morning, so do you then need to also write this in the scene description too? And as you already tell us that Phil "turns back to Cate" on p13, realize that you don't then need to repeat this in the following parenthetical too. Things like this are again, wasting precious space on the page as well as hampering the pace.

Don't feel that you need to list every item or object in a room. By all means mention the style or atmosphere if it's relevant but knowing that we're in a living room is usually enough for us to picture a room with a lamp and a couch in it without you needing to tell us this too. Similarly with character clothing, unless what someone is wearing is pivotal to the story, this is a decision for the wardrobe department to make. You don't have be so specific with the details either, "Phil points with his right hand finger", p29, "they…find two top seats halfway to the right", p32, none of these details matter and if removed, wouldn't affect the story in the slightest, plus this is something the actor or director will decide. Screenwriting is all about conveying a story as affectively as possible. Because every inch of space on the page is precious, this means using as few words as possible. Your sole

job is to tell the story; you don't need to do everyone else's job for them at the same time too.

When trying to condense the story to make it move along faster, consider removing some of the many traveling scenes. Again, the audience doesn't always need to know how a character gets from one place to another, it's not something they'll question, plus these scenes aren't particularly advancing the plot either. Do a pass and cut out as many instances as you can such as the scene where Phil and John leave Cate's place on p63 or take the whole of p67 as another example. One minute is a long time to sit and watch some people get out of a taxi, enter a building, travel up an elevator, and enter an apartment. You'll quickly realize that the story won't be damaged in any way by removing these traveling scenes.

Formatting

A reader can often assess a writer's level of ability right from the first page, so it's essential that you do everything you can to immediately create a great first impression. Correct formatting isn't just an expected requirement, it's a must! And mistakes such as not writing your scene description in capitals, and not capitalizing the first mention of a character, creates the impression that you haven't yet gotten to grips with the basics of screenwriting, creating the risk that the reader won't continue on any further.

One of the best ways to familiar yourself with formatting is to read as many screenplays as you can. There are tons of free resources available online as well as books on the subject. Shore has many links to scripts on our website. Don't underestimate reading or feel that it's taking up precious writing time; it's also the best way to learn dramatic structure, emotional momentum, how to captivate the reader and will improve every aspect of your writing at the same time.

Try to only tell us what we can see on screen. Remember that the audience isn't reading your screenplay; they're watching it, so description such as "expected blockbuster", p1, "her favorite mug", p14, or "the costume and stage assistants are sitting in Church" on p120 becomes wasted space on the page because it's not something that is visible. How will the audience know that these people are stage assistants or not exactly? Equally don't try to disguise what we *can* see on screen in your writing at the same time. Take the instance where Cate is "talking to a man. The man seems agitated...He grabs her arm" on p64 as an example. We've already met Michael and we

know what he looks like, so we'll easily recognize him immediately. Don't risk confusing the reader; your description could easily suggest Cate is being attacked by a stranger here, when it's not.

Another big no-no is naming song tracks in your script. Unless you happen to have obtained the rights to use the music, it's likely that these will be cut. While you can certainly suggest a track by saying "music in the vein of..." or by naming a style of music, musical decisions will usually be made by the director or the producer who is able to decide whether the production can afford it or not. Also consider that the reader may not be aware of the mentioned artist and therefore the insert creates no real impact and again, becomes wasted space.

Correct formatting will also help your script have a more realistic page count. At the moment, things are spaced out so far apart, partly because of all of the CUT TO:'s you're filling the page with (cut these, they're considered old fashioned and as mentioned, take up too much space); your page count is significantly longer than it would normally be. Consider that one page of script is supposed to be the equivalent to one minute on screen and then look at the Skype scene intercut between Cate and Phil on p6. It takes over three pages of script for you to reveal that Cate's hunting for her charger. That's a long three minutes for audiences to be watching this. Proper formatting will help you bring that down to ideally half a page.

Marketability

This story is very character based, where the plot is more emotionally driven rather than action driven, this should make the piece very attractive to talent and in fact, it almost reads like you've written the script with specific actors in mind. With actors increasingly running their own production companies specifically looking for films to feature themselves, it's becoming more common for writers to approach talent directly and bypass the major studios, which as we know, is very difficult to access. Once this script has reached its final draft, it may well be worth trying to contact any actors you already have in mind or think the script would appeal to directly. Having a script with an actor attached to it makes the project even more appealing to prospective producers.

But in order to seal the deal, you possibly need to work harder to create roles that are more challenging to play than they are at present. What could you add that would really take an actor or actress even further out of their comfort zone? How can you charge your scenes with even more emotional

content in order to push the performance into becoming an award winning one? At the moment, the most harrowing and emotional scenes are the ones involving Michael, where there's a sense of danger, unpredictability and we're scared for Cate and the other characters. In a way, this makes Michael the most interesting character to play (the bad guys often are), putting your main characters into more harrowing scenes like this or developing more powerfully emotional scenes will help make these parts more attractive to play as well as watch.

Conclusion

One of the biggest things standing in the way of this script going any further is also the easiest thing to fix; the formatting. At the moment, any reader is automatically going to think that they're reading a script written by an amateur writer who doesn't yet know the basics of screenwriting and may potentially decide not to read any further than the first ten pages and never discover that this in fact an interesting atmospheric neat little drama. Become more familiar with the correct layout by reading other spec scripts, as opposed to shooting or already produced scripts, if you can. As mentioned, proper formatting is an expectation, not a desire.

Once you've adhered to the industry standard layout, cut back on any repetition, unnecessary dialogue, and trimmed out the many actions, sequences and scenes that simply aren't moving the plot forward, you're going to have a much shorter screenplay. This is the time to start thinking about inserting more of the much-needed conflict into the story. Either look to insert more subtext or drama into the moments where characters are busy going about their daily lives or are engaged in everyday chitchat, or risk the reader skimming ahead or the audience tuning out during these moments.

The dramatic scenes that you already have work well. They're powerful and emotional and it's clear you know how you want the audience to be feeling during these scenes. We need more of this in the rest of your script to really make this an unforgettable romance.