

SHORE SCRIPTS

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Title: [REDACTED] **Location:** Los Angeles
Writers: [REDACTED] **Circa:** Present
Length: 116 Pages **Budget:** Medium
Genre: Family **Coverage Date:** [REDACTED]

Format: Feature

Logline:

A young teen is desperate to follow in her late father's footsteps as a mariachi, but when she is rejected by the perennially successful school band, she is forced to form her own out of the group of misfits that were likewise denied the chance to play.

Industry Scorecard:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	PROFICIENT	NEEDS ATTENTION
PREMISE/THEME		X		
HOOK/STAKES/PLOT		X		
CHARACTERS	X			
DIALOGUE/SOUND		X		
STRUCTURE/PACE		X		
PRODUCTION/REPRESENTATION /PRESENTATION	X			

SYNOPSIS:

After unpacking boxes in their new house in Los Angeles, thirty-something LENA notices the time and tries to hurry her teen daughter, BOBBI, out to go to the school fair. Bobbi does not want to go, practicing singing to mariachi records, and is unhappy with her mother for making her move to a new city where she has no friends. She goes with her mother reluctantly, and they give new neighbor BETO a lift at the behest of his mother, who cannot fit him in her car

alongside all his siblings and grandparents. Bobbi and Beto seem to get on, to Lena's surprise, and the two of them bond over their love of mariachi music.

While Lena works at a food stand, Bobbi and Beto watch the entertainment – the school mariachi band. They are extremely impressive, led by the imposing teacher ZALDIVAR, who rules the group with an iron fist. During the performance, Zaldivar announces that they will be holding auditions for new members of the band. The next day at school, an excited Bobbi attends the auditions, but when she freezes momentarily, she is immediately rejected by Zaldivar. Commiserating with one another after school, Beto, who also failed to get in, suggests that they could form their own practice band to be better for the auditions next year. This picks Bobbi's spirits right up, as does Lena, who tells the beautiful story of how she and Bobbi's father, a mariachi himself, met.

At school, Beto and Bobbi ask around to see who would be interested in joining their practice group. They have little luck with most of the students, many of whom passed the audition, but find triplets ERNIE, BERNIE, and FRED, who are talented, if far from the most organized and sophisticated bunch. They try to approach punk misfit SALLY but get short shrift when they tell her they have no cool uniforms. Meanwhile, Lena approaches Zaldivar, whom she knows. He used to play with her father before he quit when Bobbi was born. Zaldivar still holds a grudge over this and refuses to even consider giving Bobbi another chance, telling Lena that she would quit, just like her father. Bobbi, Beto, and the triplets practice in her garage, though they struggle to be on the same page or even play the same songs at the same time.

To everyone's surprise, Sally shows up, and the group gets to practice. Lena reaches out to Bobbi's father's old bandmate, and though he is busy on tour, his accomplished and talented daughter, ANGEL JR, shows up to help instead. Through various means, she manages to whip them into some kind of shape, and even organizes a gig for them at the restaurant Lena works in and enters them into the youth mariachi competition against the school band. They perform well, enough to impress and even worry Zaldivar. Zaldivar responds by inviting all of the members except Bobbi into the school band. They all jump at the chance. Lena comforts a distraught Bobbi, and between her, Angel Jr, and her grandparents, they convince her to enter the competition on her own. After watching Zaldivar's group bring the house down, Bobbi goes on last, and freezes. Time stops, and her late father appears to her to give her confidence and show her the way to go. She plays and plays well, and as she does all of the members of her band rush from the wings to support her, despite Zaldivar's threats. The crowd goes wild, and Bobbi and [REDACTED] win the competition.

Afterward, Zaldivar softens, congratulating Bobbi on her well-deserved win, letting bygones be bygones, and gifting her Bobbi's father's old guitar. He is leaving the school to take up a prestigious job opportunity and recommends that he be replaced by Angel Jr for the next year. A year on, Bobbi leads the school band at the fair with her friends while Lena watches on, proud.

FEEDBACK:

Premise/Theme

focuses on a mother and daughter, Lena and Bobbi, as they struggle to move on from the death of their beloved husband and father. Bobbi is determined to be a mariachi like her dad. After his death, having moved back to the neighborhood Lena grew up in, Bobbi tries out for the school mariachi band. When she is rejected by the teacher – an old bandmate of her father’s who still holds a grudge – she forms her own band out of the misfits who were likewise turned down, taking the school band on in a prestigious youth mariachi competition. With the help of some figures from her past, Lena supports and encourages her daughter, and the two slowly begin to come to terms with their loss. This script takes the form of a standard but well-executed ‘comedy’ story archetype, often made use of in the ‘family’ genre. Only once Bobbi and Lena have come to terms with what they have lost, moving on with their lives whilst still remembering and honoring their lost love, can they truly be happy again.

This is a delightful script with a charming premise, focusing on a world and culture not often enough depicted in mainstream film and television. Something of a mariachi ‘School of Rock,’ though told from different perspectives alongside the very different world it depicts, it has a huge amount of heart and soul to it and some excellent levels of character and humor. While the mythological world may not be familiar to everyone, the themes at play here of overcoming grief, passion, and determination are universal and ensure that the film could resonate with a great many people. Its dual protagonists of Lena and Bobbi, alongside its sharp, clever humor and charm, also means that it truly is a ‘family film,’ one that all ages could enjoy. The only worry about this script, premise-wise, is that the story itself is a fairly familiar one, making use of a formula used to great effect by films such as the above-mentioned and many others – ‘bunch of misfits taking on a far more popular and successful outfit’ etc.

As a result, it is fairly predictable and unsurprising for most of the runtime. This is far from a deal breaker – this is a classic structure that has been so successful for a reason, it works, and this script is a particularly accomplished example of it. However, in the extremely competitive landscape that is the screenplay market, it may be the case that more could be done to help set this script apart from others like it.

Hook/Stakes/Plot

Something that is touched on slightly in the script but never seems fully explored, were the themes surrounding immigrant culture and how it is passed on through generations, as well as what is lost (typified in Lena’s pronunciation of ‘tamales’ – very funny – and her regrets that neither she nor Bobbi ever learned Spanish). This was a fascinating element of the script that never felt like it was brought to the forefront of the piece. This is the kind of theme and subject that, if made more present, might add a little more individuality and complexity alongside those universal themes discussed earlier. And given the script’s focus on a Mexican-originated style of music brought over to the USA, with its characters largely second or third-generation immigrants, this script is uniquely placed to perhaps explore such a subject.

Expanding on a theme like this that might not be so prevalent in other, similar projects, might be exactly what this script needs to set it apart and mark it out, and bring a layer of meaning to the script that will attract interest in and of itself.

Characters

The characterization in the script is one of its real strengths, with its diverse array of eccentric characters introduced and established by their actions extremely well. Each feels distinct and unique on the page, with their different quirks and personalities shining through. This is even more impressive given the absence of 'character intros' in the script. On the page, the characters are described very sparsely and functionally, which, while they do become clearer and more visual as we spend more time with them, makes it quite difficult to immediately envision and understand them. This is why the 'character intro' can be the most useful weapon in a screenwriter's arsenal, and it is one of the few areas where, traditionally, the old adage of 'show, don't tell' isn't applied as rigidly when it comes to the screenplay. This allows for a fuller description of the character, and, even better, a concise, imaginative statement that describes the essence of who they are.

A good example of this comes from the script for 'The Matrix,' where Neo is introduced as 'a man who knows more about living inside a computer than outside one.' This is not only far more interesting to read than any physical description or backstory, but it also ties in incredibly well with the themes and subject of the film. Most importantly, it creates an immediate and non-prescriptive image of the character in the reader's mind, telling the reader who they are from the word go and helping them understand them before they have done anything or said a word (much as seeing a character on screen can do). A statement like this for each of the named characters in the script, but especially Bobbi, Lena, Beto, Sally, Angel Jr, and Zaldivar, will make a huge difference in helping the reader visualize the piece and get to know the characters more quickly, with their actions then expanding on this. This could then take the characterization here to an even higher standard and the piece as a whole with it.

Dialogue/Sound

The dialogue in the script felt authentic, heartwarming, and very funny throughout. Not every joke landed, but that's to be expected in a feature script, and was completely outweighed by a few laugh-out-loud. There were also moments, however, where the dialogue just didn't seem as polished or effective as it was in much of the remainder of the script, where opportunities for humor or drama seemed not to be taken, or where it just didn't stand out. Take on page 98, for example, where Bobbi emerges, finally dressed as a mariachi – a huge moment, both for us and the characters – and Lena says, 'you look so nice, Bobbi'. Similar to some of the issues discussed later in structure and pacing, occasionally, the writers make enough of big, emotional, or memorable moments on the page, and this is one of them, characterized by this line of dialogue.

In this case, could Lena being lost for words be more effective? 'Oh, Bobby. You look... (Beat, tearing up) You ready?' Some description may also help here, telling us how Lena is reacting and using that instead of (or in concert with) the stated dialogue and parentheticals. Generally,

with dialogue, less is often more, even in a more comedic piece, and actions or reactions can often be far more powerful than a line or speech or a response. This is especially true in more dramatic or emotional moments, though.

The writers are encouraged to go through each line of dialogue in the script with a fine-toothed comb, judging whether every line of speech is doing its absolute best to squeeze every last ounce of drama, humor, subtlety, and subtext out of the situation and whether it could be cut down, rephrased or reworked. Generally, the dialogue is done well throughout the script, but it could benefit from another round of review and rewrites to bring it to the best it can be.

Structure/Pace

The script is structured exceptionally well in terms of classical Hollywood standards. So, well, in fact, that it threatens at times to feel a little formulaic and familiar. However, despite this, the focus on some of the smaller characters such as Sally in particular, and her story helps to break the mold a bit and keep it fresh, and if the writers can develop the range and depth of themes more thoroughly then this could well be enough to offset any impression of formulaic narrative development and provide a good balance of familiar and unique.

What is also impressive, is the visual and cinematic way the story is told on the page, revealing that the writers must have a very complete and specific vision for the way the story is to be told on screen. This is true most of the time, but as mentioned regarding dialogue the script isn't always as evocative and readable as it might be, with certain moments of action feeling a little rushed and not reflective of the emotion or pacing of the scene. Take on page 22, with the description of Beto's audition. It all just feels a little quick and rushed, shoved into a single paragraph or two and not spaced in a way that translates the images into a reader's mind as effectively as it could.

A recommended technique to address this is to try to limit each line/paragraph to one shot or short sequence, and each paragraph to four lines. This forces conciseness but also ensures that paragraphs are broken up, letting the action come in short, sharp sentences on each line in a way that is more conducive to a flowing read.

Whilst writers are always conscious of page count and want to keep things condensed so the script doesn't look overlong, in important moments of drama or big, physical comedy it is even more important to let the script breathe and make the action easy to follow, with plenty of white space and a pace that matches how the action would unfold if it was being shown on a screen. Most readers would rather read a script that is slightly too long, page-wise, but that is paced appropriately on the page, instead of one that comes in under a threshold but doesn't evoke the same visuals and images. The more easily a reader can envision the script, the more likely they are to enjoy it, and therefore the more likely they are to recommend it.

Production/Representation/Presentation

The 'family' genre, and specifically animation, is one of the few areas of the industry in which original projects not based on an existing intellectual property are still being made regularly by

major studios. This means that there is a demand for spec scripts like this out there. Added to this is the recent growth in the appreciation of, and the demand for more, diverse film and television. The massive success of Pixar's 'Coco' demonstrated the potential for such a script and as a result, this is a script that has a huge amount going for it.

One thing that wasn't quite clear from the script, however, was whether this script was intended (or whether the writers would be open to producing it) as an animation.

Some of the visual storytelling in the script felt very evocative of an animated piece (such as the sequence with Lena describing how she met Bobbi's Dad), but given it was submitted under 'family,' and there was no mention in the script, it wasn't clear if the writers intend to market it as an animated film. If so, then it should be labeled and submitted as such. Animated projects are by their very nature often cheaper and more practical to make, hence why more original content is made as such than live-action equivalents (alongside Pixar's influence), and as a result, it might give the script an even better chance of succeeding as a spec script in the current market than it might otherwise.

Current Predicted Industry Outcome:

RECOMMEND	CONSIDER	PASS
	X	

Conclusion

This is a thoroughly enjoyable read and it is very close to becoming an exceptional script with a huge amount of market potential, especially if labeled as an animation. If the writer can develop some of the more interesting and intriguing themes that are present in the script but not fully explored, then this will take a step towards marking it out and making it feel more individual. Additionally, better use of character intros to ensure that the excellent characterization is more immediate on the page, and honing the dialogue, will polish the script nicely. Lastly, the writers are encouraged to work on spacing out the description somewhat, especially in moments of heightened emotion, comedy, or drama, to allow the reader to better envision the script in their mind as it would be seen on screen. If the writers can do all of this, this will become an extremely strong script with a very high ceiling when it comes to potential.

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