



# HOLLYWOOD scriptwriter

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(From L to R) Robert Nelms, writer, and Chadwick Clough, Script P.I.M.P.

*Internet Resources*  
provide Quick Study for one  
Screenwriter who learns to accept mixed reviews of his work.

by Rhonda Mitchell

Before **Robert Nelms** added writer to his list of occupations, he made and sold soap at local Farmers’ Markets. He’s also admitted to being a model, a bartender and a cook. About his experiences, he comments, “I think you have to be creative when you make your own path in life.”

Nelms has indeed created his own path as a bona fide Hollywood screenwriter. His latest offering **Between**, a psychological thriller produced and directed by David Ocañas debuted at the **2005 Sundance Film Festival**. It was met with negative reviews, citing the cryptic nature of the film, editing and dialogue problems. In response to the criticism, Nelms says, “The people who read

the script, including the actors and my new agent at **Innovative** fell in love with it. Good writing got the film greenlit. A lot can happen in translating it to the screen.”

Before writing, Nelms spent several years pursuing an advanced degree and exploring the world. While reading the prologue to a John Irving book in an English bookstore in Milan, Italy, Nelms had a moment of clarity. “One of his writing teachers once told him [John Irving] that he’d be vaguely unsatisfied with whatever he was doing unless he became a writer ... That about summed up the way I felt about everything I’d done, and I’d done a lot of things.”

In addition, he sought outside services for assistance and found that Internet resources can pay off.

“Script P.I.M.P. delivered in a way that many companies in Hollywood can only dream of doing. They worked with my script with a tireless approach, offering honest and

thorough notes, yet never taking the story out of my hands. With their help I’ve signed with an equally aggressive agent and have begun making the rounds around town. I couldn’t have done it without them,” says Screenwriter Robert Nelms.

Since, Nelms became serious about writing and **Between** is his first produced work. He wanted to write a story about somebody being in a coma but didn’t know how to tell it until meeting a new colleague. “I met **David Ocañas** (director/producer) and he wanted to do a story about a lawyer who goes to Tijuana to investigate the murder of her twin sister. I thought about it for a few days and then it hit me, why not marry the ideas? Which is what we did.”

Developing the idea was another matter because Ocañas wanted the script in three months. Nelms says it was actually very difficult to do. Although he doesn’t recommend developing the story as it is being writ-

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ten, Nelms learned a lot about himself as a writer by listening to his instincts. “There was no time to second-guess or censor my ideas; they just fell on the page,” he says. “Ironically, that’s the script that has gotten me the most notice. I’ve become more of an instinctual writer since.”

Nelms also admits to having that feeling of failure that often plagues writers. He admits, “I’m probably my worst critic. The only time I don’t think I’m going to fail is when I’m actually writing.” While writing, he can become totally engrossed in the characters; but once he puts his pen down, it is a different story. “I want to crawl into a fetal position and listen to sunny, happy music,” he says. “But I’ve gotten to the point in my life where I don’t need Hollywood. I can always write a book and that helps.”

The Hollywood machine has always been daunting for fledgling writers.

Nelms acknowledges three things about the industry he has learned to be true:

1. “L.A. is the only town where you can die of encouragement ... if I could bottle the hope that surrounds L.A., I’d be a rich man.”

2. “It helps to know people ... it’s not going to make you a superstar, but it helps.”

3. “It’s all about insecurity... that’s why I moved to San Francisco. I had to give myself mental space, to find the guy I was before I moved [to L.A.]. He was a better writer than my L.A. counterpart.”

Nelms is currently working his word wizardry on a psychological thriller that takes place in San Francisco. He won’t say much more about the story, because he believes

that talking about a story satisfies your need to tell it before you write it.

While he doesn’t regret any of his travels or experiences, if he could do it again, he would have moved to Los Angeles right after high school to get a job as a reader. “There’s no better way to understand the inner-workings of Hollywood—or a screenplay—than to be on the frontlines,” he advises.

Nelms sees himself as someone “who writes intriguing, mind-challenging stories that could happen to anyone.” It is this ability that will attract the industry. “Within a few years, people will know me as a consistent, dependable writer,” he says.

With a promising career in screenwriting ahead, Nelms has come a long way from selling soap.