RON PODELL

Ron Podell - **Pulp Science Fiction**

Where are you from?
I currently reside in Ypsilanti, Michigan, but grew up in Valparaiso, Indiana. Well, it was Morgan Twp., a school in the country, but Valpo is the closest city and people recognize the name. Morgan Twp. just draws blank stares and shrugs, but it was a great place to grow up. Outside of half a year of kindergarten in Valpo, I lived in Morgan Twp. until I graduated high school and went to college.

What are you watching now?
Of late, I haven't been watching as many movies as I would like to. I just recently saw "We Are Marshall" and John Ford's "How Green Was My Valley." Both were quite good. The theme in both was different communities pulling together in the wake of tragedies. Don't ask me why. I just realized the coincidence.

Tell us your latest news?
I am currently seeking representation for my script, "Pulp Science Fiction." My script has received some good response in films festivals and screenplay contests. My script was named best screenplay at the "It Came From Lake Michigan" Film Festival in Milwaukee, Wisc., Oct. 26-28. It also was named a finalist at the Queens International Film Festival (Nov. 8-11), the Writer's Desk Film Project, sponsored by Little Lip Productions; and, of course, Progress Writers. Thank you. I just learned this week that my script has been named a semifinalist in the WriteMovies.com contest. We'll see what happens.

I recently finished a short script, "Time and Tide," a family drama about a 72-year-old woman who opts to live on a cruise ship rather than a nursing home. It is 360 degrees different from "Pulp Science Fiction."

When and why did you begin writing?
I began writing as a sophomore in high school for the student paper, The Cherokee Chatter. I covered sports for three years and was sports editor as a junior and senior. I had a column, "Podell's Picks," in which I predicted the winners of local high school basketball games. When I consistently did better than the local sports editor at the then Vidette Messenger in Valparaiso, he invited me in to talk and divulge my formula for

picking games. I eventually covered a few basketball games for him and later had an internship there during college. I received a journalism scholarship and some grants to go to college, so that kind of told me that writing was probably the career I should pursue. Plus, I enjoy it.

And I've always loved movies. So, I think my writing just progressed to another creative outlet, screenwriting.

How did you come up with the title?

Well, I just thought, "What movie do you want to see that hasn't been done?" I've always loved horror and science fiction movies, but I usually don't care for how banal and inane (there are exceptions; "Alien" comes to mind) many of the characters sound when they talk. It's just like they're filling air time with mindless blather as they wait around to get killed. I wanted to see smart, funny characters with some depth in a horror/sci fi movie. You see such characters in other genres all the time. I am a fan of Quentin Tarantino's dialogue, at least in "True Romance" and "Pulp Fiction." So, I thought, "why not write a horror/sci movie using that blueprint?" Thus, the title "Pulp Science Fiction."

What do you see as the influences on your writing?

Honestly, and sad to say, I don't read much beyond the daily newspaper and Entertainment Weekly. I'd love to have time to read books. But, i just don't. So, I don't see any particular authors as influences on me. Most of it just comes from my imagination. As for movies, I've been watching them ever since I was a boy. Some of my earliest memories were of seeing "Sleeping Beauty" with my Dad at the old Premiere in Valparaiso. I can still remember how scared I got when the evil queen morphed into a fire-breathing dragon. Of course, most of the early movies I saw were what my Dad watched: WGN's "Creature Features," which showed all of the old Universal horror classics, and "body chompers" at the 49er Drive-In. I'm sure some of those memories subconsciously made their way into "Pulp Science Fiction." It's funny. Today, my Dad watches most of the movies that come on the Sci Fi Channel.

What was the hardest part of writing your screenplay?

Just making sure all of the out-of-sequence timelines added up, made sense and connected the three stories. Like "Pulp Fiction," you've got three stories with overlapping characters and timelines out of sequence, yet that movie made sense. And to do that, you have to have those "oh yeah" light-bulb moments that let the reader (hopefully in time, viewer) know they're following the story the way the writer intended.

Did you learn anything from writing your screenplay and what was it?

From my perspective, writing is fairly easy. Rewriting is hard, but absolutely necessary.

What films have most influenced your life?

Tons. Subconsciously, I think I take something in from every movie I see, good or bad. But, most influential? For different reasons, I'd say "Rocky," "Casablanca," the first two "Godfather" movies, "All the President's Men" and the original "King Kong."

What is it that you're exploring in this story?

Good science fiction or horror entertains on the surface, but slips in some timely messages to the viewer. I think, in many ways, I'm exploring the current state of America. For anyone who reads this, they're going to see some horror/sci fi staples — a mummy, man's attempt to play God through science; and otherworldly creatures. But beneath the entertainment, some of what I am exploring are the perils of dating today; our obsession with technology that outpaces our ability to keep up and understand it; and an allegory on America's current occupation of Iraq. What are we really fighting for and doing there? Heck, I think I even make a statement on how our movie action heroes have gone from the black-and-white morality of a John Wayne to today's anti-heroes who are murky shades of gray.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say?

If you want to know in which eight movies John Wayne died and how, you have to read this script! (hint to producers). And, of course, thanks to Progress Writers for thinking highly enough of my script to name it a finalist and give me this opportunity to share my views and opinions.

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