

PROJECT INFORMATION

FOR PRODUCTION OF A FEATURE-LENGTH SCRIPT

TITLE OF SCRIPT: CARUSO AND THE SWORD

GENRE: FAMILY COMEDY

LENGTH: 101 pages (approximately a 1.5 hour feature)

POTENTIAL RATING: PG

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CARUSO AND THE SWORD, is currently a feature-length script. As written, it is a PG family comedy about a bullied teen, with low grades and lower self-esteem, who improves his self-confidence and grades by discovering the sport of fencing.

The purpose of this project is twofold. The first purpose is to make an artistic, high-quality family film. The second purpose is to educate the public about the sport of fencing.

I. Project Information

A. Synopsis:

Caruso is a scrawny, bullied high school student. He's intelligent and skipped a grade when he was younger, but this also makes him one of the smaller students in high school. He's unhappy and sleeps through most of his classes. His teachers are recommending demotion if his grades don't improve. His best friend Bobbi, a cherub-faced tomboy, tells him he is too smart for demotion to be an option.

The school bully, nicknamed Shaq because of his size, physically attacks Caruso every time he sees him. Shaq also verbally berates Caruso because of his name, and has nicknamed Caruso "Britney."

During one altercation, Caruso is rescued by Bobbi who is dressed in a fencing outfit and wields a mop as a sword. Caruso is discouraged but accepts "being rescued by a girl, again." Caruso trudges off to gym class.

Bobbi is dressed in a fencing outfit because the physical education program is offering fencing as an alternative to the usual bowling. Bobbi is an epee fencer and attends the gym class to demonstrate fencing with Kyle, the instructor. Bobbie teaches Caruso some advanced techniques which he uses in his first bout with Shaq. Caruso scores the higher number of points and beats Shaq at fencing. Actually beating someone at something produces a sense of renewal and self-worth for Caruso.

Caruso wants to join Bobbi's fencing club. His parents won't allow it unless his grades improve. Caruso has found the motivation to study and his grades improve. Caruso takes an after school job doing yard work in order to pay the dues and buy fencing equipment.

Fencing is all he can think about and his parents are becoming concerned about his obsession. They encourage him to try other hobbies and sports with his friends Bobbi and Justin. Caruso's parents enroll him in classes. But, the more activities he participates in, the more he likes fencing. While at the fencing club Caruso meets the top regional fencer known as "The Sword."

Although Caruso's grades improve he is still bullied. Bobbi encourages Caruso to do something about Shaq. She encourages him to test the school's "no bullying" policy, but Caruso fears it will only bring retaliation. The only place Caruso feels comfortable against Shaq is in fencing. Shaq is becoming a better fencer himself. Shaq is a left-handed fencer. A left-handed fencer is harder for a right-handed fencer to beat and so Shaq is a worthy opponent for Caruso. While they are not friends, they fence without incident in class.

Caruso participates in his first competition. He doesn't win, but he learns about the Qualifiers for the Summer Nationals. Only twenty-percent of those participating in the Qualifiers qualify. Caruso has a new goal. He must at all costs participate in the Qualifiers. He literally counts the days, practicing constantly. But, while skateboarding with Bobbi and Justin, he breaks his fencing arm.

After Caruso breaks his arm he reverts to the quiet, depressed teen we saw at the beginning. He tries fencing with a cast, to no avail. His coach takes pity on him and teaches him to fence left-handed.

Caruso's cast comes off and Caruso tries to fence. His arm is so weak that he has difficulty holding the sword. He practices, lift weights, and does everything he can to strengthen his arm.

It is the day of the Qualifiers. Caruso has worked his way up through the bouts and direct eliminations, but his next opponent is The Sword. Caruso is losing against this formidable adversary. The Sword has watched Caruso and understands Caruso's style. Caruso's dream of qualifying for the Summer Nationals seems lost.

But, during the one-minute break, Caruso borrows Shaq's left-handed equipment and fences against The Sword left-handed. The Sword has not seen Caruso fence left-handed and by the time The Sword has picked up on Caruso's new style, Caruso has scored enough points to qualify.

A. Company and Producer:

Prior to the start of pre-production, CARUSO AND THE SWORD, LLC will be formed. The parent company will be Script 2 Screen, LLC. In filmmaking the parent company is often set up and each feature film is set up as an individual separate company under the parent company. The name of the company under the parent company is usually the name of the movie, so the LLC will be CARUSO AND THE SWORD, LLC.

Paula Smith (Producer, Writer)

Paula has spent most of her adult life in the Kansas City area, but has also lived in Connecticut, the D.C. area, Maine, and the L.A. area. She has a BA in Psychology from the University of Connecticut (UConn) and an MA in Management from Webster University. She took up screenwriting as a hobby and her scripts have placed in over 3 dozen screenwriting contests including 3 wins and 7 times as a Finalist. After a number of years in management she made a career change to pursue filmmaking. She also has five years experience in theatrical exhibition. She is a past Board member of the Independent Filmmaker's Coalition (IFC) and a Board member of Kansas City Women in Film and TV (KCWIFT).

The Producer's philosophy is that every film should have a professional look and sound. "I like films where every frame is suitable for framing and hanging on the wall. I know local cinematographers who can achieve that goal.

Another factor affecting the look of the film is locations used. Locations should be real. Have you ever seen one of the old black and white tv shows? Older shows such as Bonanza, Star Trek, and others were obviously shot on a set with backgrounds painted on canvas. The trees and grass look fake. A real location looks real. It has depth. The chair upholstery is used like real upholstery. You can see through the windows into the outside traffic.

Locations should be real and have variety and depth. The script for "The Donor" won the Rod Serling Twilight Zone Short Script Contest. It was shot at the now closed Missouri State Penitentiary. This prison is historic and housed Sonny Liston, James Earl Rae, and Pretty Boy Floyd. I don't skimp on locations.

If you have a huge budget you can recreate an exact replica like Steven Spielberg did with LAX in "The Terminal." But unless you can recreate even the smallest detail, it is better to use real locations.

In addition to the prison, I have shot in a grocery store, a toy store, a college, an underground office complex, a motel, a television news station, and a mall. All of these locations were obtained to shoot short films. I had permission for all these locations.

My philosophy on actors is to obtain not just actors who can act, but actors with on-screen charisma. It's that hard-to-define quality that produces instant likability. Not every actor has it. It's what propelled Brad Pitt to stardom in "Thelma and Louise" and Tom Cruise in "Risky Business." But it's not about good looks and is also what propelled Danny DeVito in the sitcom "Taxi" and Dustin Hoffman in "The Graduate." I will be very careful in casting. I will be looking for actors who can act, but also who have a charisma.

My non-film experience is also very relevant. I have worked in Management for a number of years. I have been a director in Social Services. I have written and executed budgets of over two million dollars and have been responsible for budgets of over ten million. I also have experience as a manager in theatrical exhibition

CARUSO AND THE SWORD will have the look and sound of a film with a substantially higher budget. I plan on shooting primarily on weekends. Since this is low budget,

most adult actors would not be able to take time out from their day job for a film that is paying a low budget rate. Also, the teens would not be able to take time off from school for filming and the budget won't allow for a tutor. "

C. Crew Positions

Because this is a low budget film, there is not the luxury of the large crews utilized in big budget Hollywood films. Key positions will be filled with local experienced filmmakers and local film students or new filmmakers will be utilized in assistant positions. Every crew member will be paid reasonable wages for their time.

Instead of the full-time schedule of shooting for several weeks, CARUSO AND THE SWORD will be filmed on weekends over a 6 month period. Local cast and crew will therefore be able to maintain their regular day jobs.

The Kansas City area has a number of film professionals with experience on features. Professionals are available with experience shooting film and also high end digital. Members of the filmmaking team, and the cast, will be confirmed after a percentage has been raised.

Key positions include the following:

- Associate Producer – will be responsible for limited, specific producing duties delegated by the Producer.
- Director – the individual who visualizes the scenes and directs the cast and crew in getting the vision achieved.
- Director of Photography-The person responsible for the "look" of the film.
- Camera A (run by DP)-The main camera which will also be controlled by the DP
- Camera B -Two cameras will be used to cut down on the time for the overall shoot. By using a second camera and camera person twice the footage can be obtained within the same time. Close-ups or medium shots can be taken with the B camera at the same time as the wide shots from the A camera.
- Gaffer-responsible for lighting the set. This includes running power cables.
- Grip- The key grip works closely with the director of photography and the gaffer to sculpt the desired look of a film by diffusing and cutting the light. The key grip is also in charge of camera movement whether on a dolly, camera crane or mounted on the hood or bumper of a vehicle.
- Script Supervisor- Assure continuity from take to take, make notes during the shoot.
- Prop Master – responsible for all props
- Wardrobe – responsible for obtaining, maintaining, and continuity of costumes.
- Set Decorator – responsible for the look of the set. Assuring those items of furniture required in the script are on set.
- 1st AD-assists the director in scheduling and other duties and may direct some scenes or groups.
- Key Makeup-makes sure hair and makeup looks good.
- Sound-makes sure the audio captured is of high quality.
- Boom Operator-holds the microphone during filming.
- Editor-individual who puts the scenes and music together in a viewable order.

- Set photographer-takes still photos of the shoot.
- Location Manager-This individual will be the go to person for the locations.
- PAs – Production Assistants. In the non-film world these people are known as the gophers, the jack-of-all-trades, the assistants. If a boom operator doesn't show it is the PA who fills in. If a prop breaks it is the PA who runs to the store. They often not given the status they deserve and are crucial to any shoot.

Because of cost, and CARUSO AND THE SWORD being an Indie low budget feature, some of these positions may be filled by the same person. The Producer also may add positions not listed here depending on need.

D. Cast

The Producer is keeping the budget as small as possible but still paying the cast and crew reasonable wages.

The producer has decided to shoot on weekends in part to offer a part-time shoot schedule to local cast and crew. Because the shooting will occur on weekends, actors are free to go to school or work their day jobs during the rest of the week. Most actors working in low budget indie films do not work full-time in acting. Cast will be auditioned and chosen when the project moves into the pre-production phase.

Below is the cast (in alphabetical order)

Beautician (one scene)
 Bobbi (female lead) 14-15 years old
 Bobbi's Mom (one scene) 40-50 years old
 Caruso (male lead) 12-13 years old
 Charlene – early 20's
 Coach
 Cooking Instructor (one scene)
 Elaine - female, 35-40 years old
 Fencer (extras)
 Fencers (extras)
 Grandma (one scene) 65+
 Grandpa (one scene) 65+
 Jack - male 8-10 years old
 Jaded Cashier (two scenes) 70's
 Jimmy - male, 35-45 years old
 Judge
 Justin – male, 14 – 15 years old
 TEEN – male, 14 – 17 years old
 Kyle – male, 25-35
 Nick – 8 – 10 years old
 Nurse
 Old Man Jones 65+
 Older adults (extras)
 Pet Zoo Keeper (one scene)
 Sandy – female, 14-15 years old
 Shaq - male, 15-18 years old

Skinny boy with glasses (extra)
Students (extras)
The Sword – male, tall thin, 19-25
Young Beautician (one scene)

E. Locations

The following are the locations for CARUSO AND THE SWORD:

Art Class (high school or college)
Art Class Hallway (high school or college)
Beauty Shop
Exterior - Bobbi's Home
Interior – Bobbi's Home Bobbi's Bedroom
Exterior - Caruso Home, driveway
Interior – Caruso Home – Caruso's bedroom, kitchen, living room
Cooking class
Cooking class hallway
Exterior - Fencing Club
Interior – Fencing Club, gymnasium, hallway
Exterior – Large Fencing Gymnasium,
Interior – Large Fencing Gymnasium
Exterior – High School
Interior – High School, boy's bathroom, cafeteria, classroom, gymnasium, hallway
Hospital exam room (can be a well-equipped doctor's office)
Exam room – (can be a well-equipped doctor's office)
Justin's home – garage, laundry room
Mall
Exterior – Old Man Jones' House Back yard
Exterior – Old Man Jones' House Front yard
Petting Zoo (one scene)
Exterior High School
School Bus
Exterior Skateboard Park
Interior Movie Theatre

II OTHER

A. Production Schedule

The production schedule is available. Again, this is a good faith effort but is subject to change during development, pre-production, production, and postproduction.

The shoot is scheduled for 26 days. Because the shoot is scheduled chronologically, editing will begin immediately, unlike most shoots where editing does not start until after principle photography is complete. Those scenes shot will be completely edited including music. It is anticipated that once principle photography is complete only the last scenes shot will need to be edited.

Local musicians will also be utilized for the soundtrack.

B. Budget:

Line items may change during the project. The budget is a good faith effort on the part of the producer but is subject to change throughout the project.

Before the advent of prosumer digital cameras, there were not a lot of independent films made. Those that were made were usually filmed on 8mm or 16mm because the cost of 35mm was (and still is) prohibitive. The quality of digital cameras continues to improve. Movies like "Pieces of April" and "Super Size Me" were filmed on lower-quality cameras than are available today, even at the consumer level.

Filming in the Kansas City area costs substantially less than filming in California. The producer plans on shooting in High Def (films such as COLLATERAL, SPY KIDS, ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO, and SIN CITY have been shot on high def) as this is the future and there are a number of professionals in the Kansas City area with exemplary skills in this format.

There are 91 scenes and a total of 279 instances of actors in these scenes. There are 27 speaking roles. These actors do not appear all at once in any scene. The most number of paid actors in a scene is six and the least is one. The number of paid cast is significant as fewer cast per day decreases the associated costs. As an example, if actor A only appears in 3 scenes, 10, 12, and 14 and that actor's scenes are all shot on the same day, it is more cost effective for the production than if those scenes were shot on three different days. Sometimes that won't be possible because of location issues, but it is something that will be considered when scheduling.

A substantial amount is included in the budget for the camera department. In keeping with the film look two very high quality camera's will be rented either from a rental house or from the crew as a kit rental.

C. FUNDING

CARUSO AND THE SWORD is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization. Contributions in behalf of CARUSO AND THE SWORD may be made payable to Fractured Atlas and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.