



## INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN CURRAN

Writer Stephen Curran has been attending Euroscript's Script Development Workshops regularly to develop his screenplay Black Jack. Here's how it has been going.

**Euroscript:** How did you hear about the Development Workshop programme?

**Stephen:** I have had connections with Euroscript for a number of years. I first heard of Euroscript in 1998 when someone posted a leaflet to me about a workshop in Greece. I attended this workshop and as a result I came up with my first treatment for a film. The rest is history. I was a winner of the Euroscript Screen Story Competition in 1998/99 and was able to take that script to a full first draft and have it promoted professionally. The Euroscript programmes have really helped me develop my work.

**Euroscript:** At what stage was your idea when you decided to start attending?

**Stephen:** My idea was quite developed. I had characters, a basic story and a good setting. However, I had not written a proper treatment. At the first workshop, there were many things to sort out and confront that had not been thought about.

**Euroscript:** Could you describe how the evenings go? How you prepare for them and what happens at the event itself?

**Stephen:** Each script/treatment is looked at in the order it was received by the participants. Everybody is given an equal amount of time which makes it very fair. The atmosphere is always positive. Criticism is to be given in a constructive and helpful way and a good example is always given by the leader of the workshop in this respect. It is essential that the work of other participants is thoroughly read beforehand, so all work is circulated by email to allow this to happen. Once each participant has made their comments and suggestions, it usually opens into more open debate about the script/treatment being discussed. This is very helpful as it often stimulates the writer and makes them face up to the problems they have to solve in the story. Each time I have gone, I have found new insights and helpful comments that have stimulated my creativity and given me fresh impetus. It is crucial to have feedback from other writers if you are to succeed as a writer. I don't believe that writing can be done in total isolation.

I don't take on board every idea, but I do find that the things people say make me think more clearly about the issues and direction of the story and the development of my characters.

**Euroscript:** What kind of material is presented by writers attending the workshops?

**Stephen:** The material ranges from fledgling idea right through to first drafts. Most people are somewhere between an idea and a script. Once a first draft is completed it is probably necessary to seek more specialised script development work through Euroscript or some other script development agency.

**Euroscript:** How has the story changed?

**Stephen:** When I came to the first workshop, I did have a fair idea about the major turning points in the script, but the characters and the story have come to life as a result of the input I have received.  
**Euroscript:** What have you learned about writing a screenplay as a result of attending the Development Workshops.

**Stephen:** I have learned that to be a successful screenwriter you must be disciplined and write to a plan. Workshops can help you do this. The important thing is to keep going through the highs and the lows of writing. The most important thing is to write to engage the emotions of the reader. It is crucial to 'hook your fish' - the reader and ultimately any agent or studio executive. I do not believe people watch films for cerebral but emotional reasons. That is not to say a film cannot have a message that has intellectual content. However it cannot be communicated without engaging the emotions of the audience.

**Euroscript:** What advice would you give other writers starting out on a new idea?

**Stephen:** It is crucial to write to some kind of schedule otherwise it will never happen. I write one section of my treatment/draft for each workshop. e.g. The treatment was divided into four parts: Act 1/Act 2 - 1st half/Act 2 - 2nd half/Act 3 - Resolution. I divided the first draft up in the same way once the treatment was written. This meant I had about thirty pages to write over two weeks. This was difficult but I managed it. I committed myself to this programme and then I found the script was there after eight months.



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