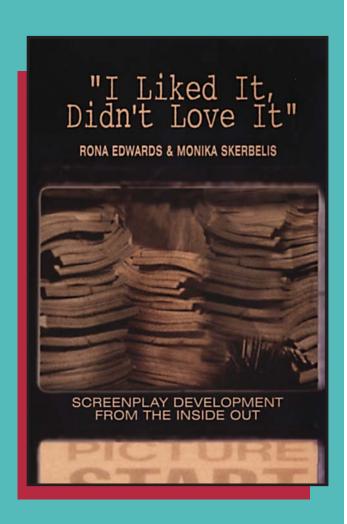# " I Liked It, Didn't Love It"

Screenplay Development From the Inside Out
By Rona Edwards and Monika Skerbelis

Reviewed by Grant Stoner

If you've ever wondered what happens to your script once it leaves your hands, *"I Liked It, Didn't Love It"* is the book for you. Rona Edwards and Monika Skerbelis provide an incredibly useful navigational tool in your journey through "development hell." From the history of development through the art of the pitch, the authors shed light on the players, pitfalls, and skills necessary to make it through development. Whether you are a writer, producer, or executive, this book gives invaluable insights into the mindsets and mechanism of both buyers and sellers. With easy-to-read chapters and concise summary wrap-ups, the reader can't help but be much more prepared to make their dreams into reality. And if you like homework, several chapters end with fun exercises that support the information contained in the chapter. If you do them all, you'll end up with not only a better understanding of the process, but also an idea, story and pitch to take out into the marketplace!

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Laying the foundation, the authors provide some enlightening historical information on the background of development, from the onset of story film, to the early scenario writers. Surprisingly, much of the development process today is not much different than the early days of the studio system. Based on their 30 years of combined experience as studio and development executives, Edwards and Skerbelis are able to reveal the inner workings of today's movie-making machines from a first-person viewpoint. For a writer, the infamous studio "Story Department" can seem overwhelming without a solid road map. This book is as good as it gets in that department, describing the pathway of a script submission, from the readers to the VPs, it is all in here. If you are an aspiring studio executive or producer, the authors provide a "Day in the Life" section that will either inspire you or scare you off! Regardless, you'll know what to expect, and you'll know that to be a successful executive, you must "live, breathe, and sleep movies."

For those that are unsure of an agent, manager, or entertainment attorney's purpose in the Hollywood machine, the authors provide a detailed explanation of the similarities and differences between them. Agents follow the three Ss: SIGN, SERVE, and SELL, while a manager is someone who takes extra time to understand the individual client's needs. The "Week in the life of a spec script" is brilliant in breaking down what goes on when your script gets sent out, and the importance of sending it out on a Tuesday.

In pursuing a career in development, there are myriad options and pathways available to you. "*I Liked It…*" devotes a good chunk of page space in comparing the plusses and minuses of working for a producer, director, or actor as opposed to a studio. For example, when working for an actor or director's production company, much of the material a development executive is looking for is typically very specific, with an eye toward attaching your boss as star or director. This process can be very different than working for a production company that seeks a wide slate of genres and budgets. As a studio creative executive, there is a strong need to

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"fill the pipeline" with projects, so relationships with term deal producers as well as independent producers are key. The bottom line with all of these choices is to have drive and ambition because in this industry, "most 'overnight successes' have been working … for 15 years."

"*I Liked It…*" aims to help define what all of the player's roles are in the development process that not only includes the producer and writer, but also scores of other creative people along the way. No stone is left unturned and no secrets are kept from the reader. Edwards and Skerbelis even go so far as to reveal some tips and tools of their own that they implement to generate ideas, develop pitches, and get those pitches heard. The list of "Ten Things to Remember When Pitching" is worth a semester of film school itself.

Ultimately, this book is a must-have for anyone interested in participating in the development process, whether as a writer, producer or executive. Development is a necessary and creative part of movie-making and provides the outline for the giant puzzle that is a motion picture. It is a sometimes difficult, often exhilarating adventure, and as the authors claim, "the fact that anything ever gets made in this town should be celebrated." Ⓟⓖⓐ

About the Author(s):
Rona Edwards and Monika Skerbelis have lived the life of studio and development executives, having developed and sold screenplays for the past 15 years. They have taught feature film development classes at UCLA for the past seven years and have recently formed a consulting and production company called Edwards/Skerbelis Entertainment (ESE). Rona Edwards is an active PGA member and a sometime contributor to **Produced by.** *Both authors live in Los Angeles.*

For information on workshops and lectures provided by Edwards/Skerbelis Entertainment visit:
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