MILLION DOLLAR Script

RULEBOOK

THE WORLD OF THE GAME

It's the time of year when big Hollywood studios are greenlighting new screenplays to become next summer's worldwide blockbusters. Screenwriters—often working in teams—struggle for their big break. If they're hired, the job will earn them millions.

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Million Dollar Script takes place in a lavish Hollywood office. Through extensive market research, the studio has identified a perfect hero, an equally perfect villain, and the tried-and-true structure seen in every blockbuster of the past decades, guaranteed to make millions. But what the studio needs are the details.

Two writing teams have been invited to pitch to a studio executive—the Exec. During the meeting, both teams are working on the same movie, pitching their ideas for five traditional story events. Each round, the Exec picks the Pitch they prefer, which then becomes part of the shared storyline. The losing Pitch gets discarded and treated as if it never existed.

GOAL

Each writing team competes to win the majority of five rounds, and secure the writing deal for themselves.

COMPONENTS

36 Heroic Character cards

36 Villainous Character cards

6 Exec Persona cards

5 Exec Pitch cards

1 Hourglass

This Rulebook

5 Green Team Pitch cards

5 Red Team Pitch cards

5 Navy Team Pitch cards

4 Green Team Task cards

4 Red Team Task cards

4 Navy Team Task cards

SETUP

1. Pick the Exec

The player chosen as the Exec is a combination of referee and master of ceremonies. Chances are that the more extroverted & high-energy somebody is, the more fun they'll have in the Exec position.

2. Choose an Exec Persona

Choose an Exec Persona card that appeals to you, or draw one at random. This is the Exec that you will be role-playing throughout the game.

The front of the card depicts the Exec and is public. The back of the card shows a secret list of what you, as the Exec, particularly love about movies. Be sure to keep your secret list hidden from the Writers.

3. Form Teams

Split the remaining players into two Teams: a Red Team and a Green Team. The members of each Team should sit together.

A third, Navy Team, is included if you want to split up into 3 Teams. This is a great option if you want to play a 4 player game with 1 Exec and 3 Teams. There is no change in gameplay when playing with 3 Teams, but for simplicity, the remainder of the rules assume you are playing with 2 Teams.

4. Prepare the Play Area

- Seperate the Pitch Cards into three decks—one for the Green Team, one for the Red Team, and one for the Exec as shown in the picture on the next page—with Pitch cards in order from 1 to 5 beginning with 1 on top.

- Take all Heroic and Villainous Character cards, shuffle each deck separately, and place them face down as shown below.

- Place the Task cards nearby.

- Place the hourglass in the center of the play area.

5. Agree on a Genre

In the screenwriting business there are many Genres at your disposal, but if you're new to Hollywood, we recommend you begin by playing in Blockbuster mode. This allows you to incorporate elements from any Genre into your Pitch. You might come across a cowboy in a Western, a cyborg in science fiction, and a vampire in a horror movie, but the only place you'll encounter a bionic vampire with a magical six-shooter is Blockbuster mode.

Once your group is familiar with the game, it can be a lot of fun to restrict your story to a specific Genre. Players may pick from the following options:

- Blockbuster
- Drama
- Action / Adventure
- Crime / Thriller
- Science Fiction
- Western
- Fantasy
- Horror

PLAYING THE GAME

The game lasts a total of 5 rounds. Each round, the Exec draws the top card from the Exec Pitch deck, and you play through 4 phases. The phases are described in detail below. Once the final Exec Pitch card is resolved, the script is complete, scores are tallied, and the winning Team is declared.

1. The Briefing

The first thing that happens each round is the Briefing. The Exec draws their first Exec Pitch card and reads it aloud so everyone knows exactly where you are in the story.

NOTE: Once you're familiar with the Exec Pitch cards, subsequent games may be sped up by the Exec reading aloud only the text in yellow.

Each Exec Pitch card describes a Story Event followed by 2 questions. The Story Event is what the Exec wants the Writers to build upon and present in an entertaining and memorable way. The 2 questions summarize exactly what the Exec is looking for.

During the Pitch, it will be each Team's primary focus to answer the 2 questions. They can also be found on each Team's Pitch cards.

2. The Brainstorm

The round's Exec Pitch card has been read aloud, Characters have been created, and Pitch cards have been distributed. Now it's time to brainstorm.

Each Team has 3 minutes to brainstorm their Pitches. Once the Exec flips the hourglass, each Team discusses among themselves how to address the Exec's 2 questions. The answers should be as specific, clear and memorable as possible.

The Exec keeps an eye on the time by watching the hourglass. Once the hourglass runs out twice, the 3 minutes are up. Do not argue with the Exec. Hollywood is a fast-paced world, and as the saying goes, "if you're not ready, you're not worthy."

Now, before you begin, you need to know about Character Creation. It is one of the first things the Exec Pitch cards instruct you to do. And honestly, without characters all you'd have is scenery.

CHARACTER CREATION

In Million Dollar Script, both Teams work on a single story with specific characters. Unlike the rest of the game, Character Creation is collaborative—not competitive.

A new Character is created whenever a round's Exec Pitch card instructs you to do so. Character Creation is done by drawing three cards from the Heroic (orange) or Villainous (purple) Character decks. Each Team draws 1 card and the Exec draws 1 card. The Character cards you draw are indicated on the Exec Pitch card.

Place the three Character cards next to each other in the order they were drawn. You will see that each card is divided into three sections, labeled 1, 2, and 3. Only a single section of each card is used: section 1 from the first card, section 2 from the second, and section 3 from the third.

You will notice that section 2 has several options listed. Always use the one next to the symbol of the Genre you are playing, including the top symbol for Blockbuster mode.

Card 1

An eccentric... 1

Werewolf
Heir
Sheriff
Cop
Explorer
Newspaper Editor
Warrior
House Sitter
2

... who is taking medication with unexpected side effects 3

Card 2

CHARACTER

A cruel... 1

Chameleon
Collector
Rogue Military Commander
Hijacker
Saboteur
Patriarch
2

Viceroy

... who will stop at nothing to climb the ranks of a nefarious organization 3

Card 3

CHARACTER

A creative... 1

Shapeshifter
Romantic Rival
Plastic Surgery Patient
Mental Asylum Escapee
War Hero
Young Lawyer
Medusa
Boogeyman
2

...who is determined to make history 3

EXAMPLE: ON EXEC PITCH CARD 2 YOU SEE A GRAPHIC TELLING YOU TO USE 1 HEROIC CHARACTER CARD AND 2 VILLAINOUS CHARACTER CARDS TO CREATE A SIDEKICK:

1 **2** **3**

YOU DRAW THE CARDS SHOWN ABOVE—FROM LEFT TO RIGHT—AND YOUR GENRE IS FANTASY, SO THE RESULT IS AN ECCENTRIC VICEROY WHO IS DETERMINED TO MAKE HISTORY.

To finish Character Creation, pick one Team to decide on the Character's gender and name. Then the other Team decides the Character's age, as well as an actor to cast for the role. This actor may be dead or alive. It's also okay to say something like: "The Character is played by an 8-year-old James Dean."

3. The Pitch

The Exec decides which Team Pitches first. Each Team has 90 seconds (1 hourglass duration) to impress the Exec with their exposition of the round's Story Event. This is not just about answering the 2 questions posed by the round's Pitch card. It's about storytelling—it's about casting the film into the Exec's innermost imagination and bringing it to life so vividly that they think they're sitting right there in the cinema.

The Pitch is made up of a Main Narration, various Supporting Tasks, as well as the Exec's Follow-up.

Distribute the Task cards to the Teams by placing them face up on the table. Each player chooses the Task they want to perform:

• Main Narration •

- The Main Narration is performed by the Lead Pitcher, and may be seen as the main Task—it is the central part of the Pitch.

- The Lead Pitcher is always supported by their Team. Any Teammate is allowed to jump in and help out if the Lead Pitcher stumbles or needs that extra bit of inspiration.

- Team members should be careful not to overtake the Main Narration. Few Execs would look at that kind of undisciplined Pitch kindly, and it might well result in point deduction at their discretion.

• Supporting Tasks •

- Improvising Lines of Dialogue, Sound Effects, and Musical Score are the Supporting Tasks. These Tasks are taken by Team members and provide various ways to support their Lead Pitcher. The goal is to create as much atmosphere as possible. It's an open secret that Execs are suckers for overall presentation—often more impressed by it than the content of the Pitch.

- The Lead Pitcher may call upon specific members of their Team to perform their Supporting Task at specific points in the story. If they choose to, they may add their elements independently—as long as it doesn't get in the way of the Main Narration.

NOTE: Listen, we can't tell you how to Pitch, the above way to distribute Tasks is just a suggestion. If your friend Francesca is a lovely person, but you understand she just isn't up to perform the Main Narration, don't force her. Same thing if your friend Dominick just doesn't like this type of game; maybe give him the Task of Sound Effects or Musical Score, so he can grunt and growl to his heart's content.

If you are playing with Teams of fewer than 4, some players will have to up their game and perform multiple Supporting Tasks. If you have more than 4 players, several of them may work together performing the same one.

• Exec's Follow-up •

- Once a Team finishes their Pitch the Exec may spend 30 seconds or so to ask follow-up questions. Specifically, if the Team didn't answer the 2 questions posed to them, the Exec might ask for further clarifications.

Once that is done, it is the next Team's turn to Pitch.

NOTE: The order in which Teams Pitch should rotate each round.

4. The Verdict

- Once the Exec has heard both Pitches, they must honestly assess them. Building suspense while roleplaying their Persona, the Exec briefly speaks about what they liked and disliked about each Pitch. They then announce which Pitch will be added to the movie's Plot.

- The Team's Pitch that is selected to become part of the Plot earns 4 points.

As for the Pitch that didn't become part of the Plot—there well may be pearls in it! Perhaps there were various things like plot ideas, characters, lines of dialogue, locations, or sound effects that the Exec does not want to see go to waste. These ideas can be purchased by the Exec to be used in the current plot or just be put on the shelf to be available for future projects.

- The Exec may buy up to 3 of these ideas for 1 point each that are awarded to the Team whose Pitch was not chosen as part of the Plot.

If the Exec wants to implement anything into the current project, they should inform the Teams how this changes the plot.

The Round concludes with the Exec calculating and announcing the score.

NOTE: Ideally, the Exec will keep up the pace and start the next round right away. They give the Teams a refresher of plot developments so far, and begin back at the Briefing phase by drawing the next round's Pitch card.

Winning the Game

The game continues by resolving each phase until the fifth and last Pitch card has been drawn and that round ends. The Teams' scores indicate the level of confidence the Exec has in each Team by the end of the game.

The Team with the higher score wins! They are awarded the job to write a summer Blockbuster that will take the world by storm and make them filthy rich!

In the event of a tie, the Exec asks each Team to confer and come up with a title of the film, along with a catchy tagline. Whichever Team is able to impress the Exec most wins!

TIPS FOR THE WRITERS

Make things specific

Introducing a Character as Lilith 'Skeleton' Jones, a seven-foot Alaskan bounty hunter in snakeskin boots certainly makes her more memorable than calling her 'woman at bar'.

Reference established information

Introduce as many new Characters, places, and events into the story as you like, but keep in mind that it's often more compelling to build upon existing content. This makes a story feel thematic, coherent and well-rounded. It'll be particularly satisfying whenever Characters reappear, or relationships between Characters develop over time.

Create an ambience

Make the world of the story come to life. What does it sound like, smell like, taste like? Describing the setting and establishing a mood is time well spent.

Say "yes, and…"

Members of a Team that manages to get into a creative flow are often building on each others' ideas, rather than competing over them. During Brainstorming, you should hear "Yes, and…" a lot more often than "No, but…"

TIPS FOR THE EXEC

Create high energy

Hollywood executives are always under pressure—or at least they pretend to be. A brisk pace is crucial, and it is your job to prevent slumps in energy at all cost. Things must keep moving. You must push everyone, mercilessly enforce time limits, and keep the Writers from rambling. When you are commenting, asking questions, or creating suspense you must keep it brief and concise.

Ideally, you will always be aware which phase of the game is coming up. If one phase flows into the next without much of a pause, there's little risk of the energy dropping.

Remind the Writers of the score

You should remind the Writers of their scores at the end of each round. The more Teams know how they rank, the more their competitive tendencies present themselves.

Keep alpha gamers in check

Extroverts may inadvertently overpower introverts. This can be avoided, however, by making sure the Lead Pitcher position keeps rotating within each Team, and by insisting that the Main Narration not be drowned out by Supporting Tasks.

You may also direct follow-up questions at quieter players, specifically.

Give your Exec some attitude

Bring the Exec on your Exec Persona card to life however you want. How much you base this on the preferences on the back of the card is entirely up to you.

The point is to have fun with it. Remember, movie executives tend to be people with insane amounts of attitude, and with completely unchecked egos. Does your Exec make up obscure movie references? Do they scream at people for no reason? Are they in it for the money or the art? Do they respect or despise their audience? Are they terrified of critics?

Wield absolute power

You have the power to overrule the game's rules at any moment. Because you are the Exec, and you are never—ever—wrong.

• **For Noa Jules Donley** •

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