

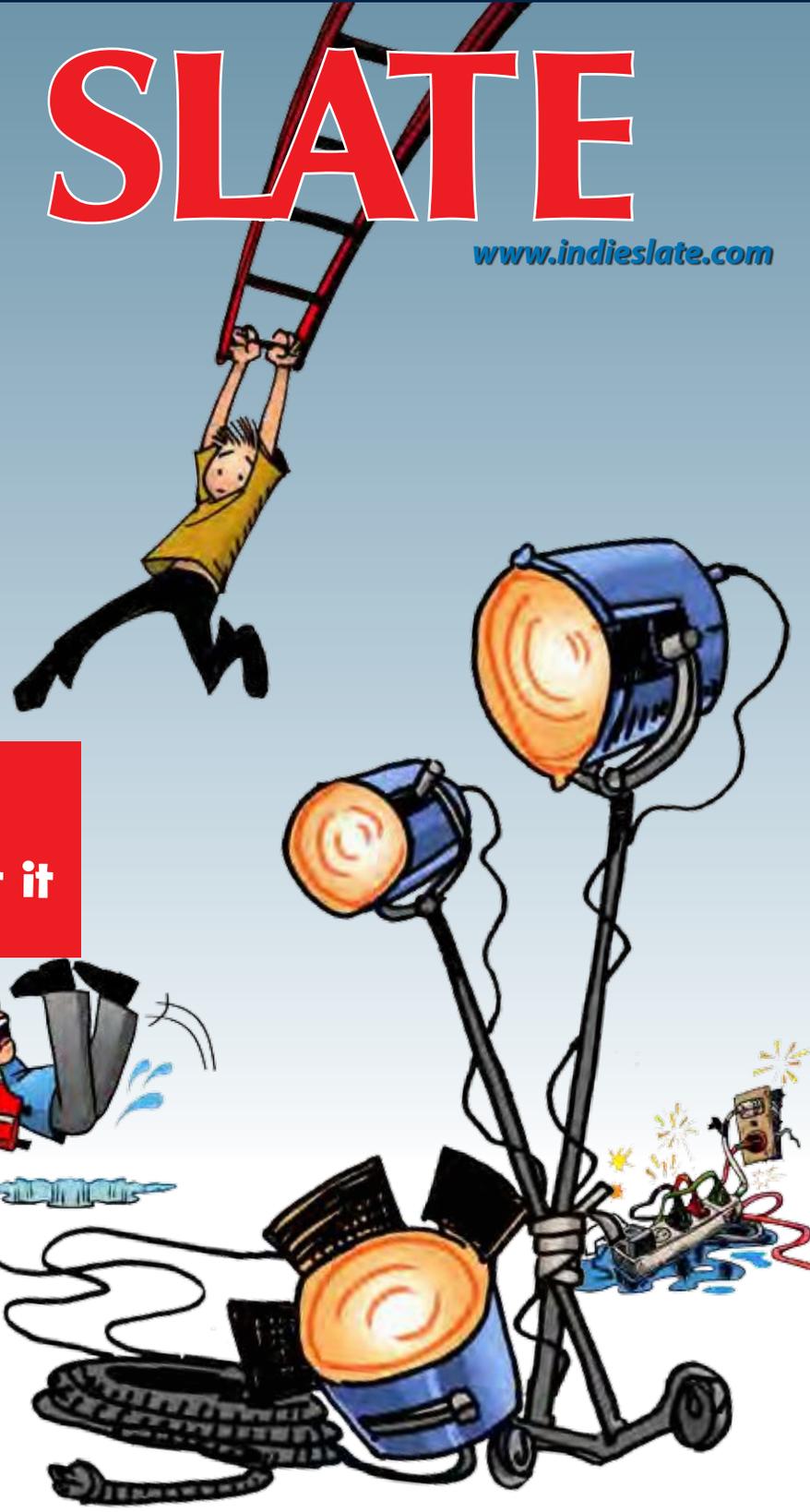


# INDIE SLATE

Movie & Story

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Producer Tom Adelman

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Inspirational stories and hard-earned advice

**REEL LIFE** Indiemaking

*Silver Tsunami, Savageland, Miasm, Swimming with Sharks, What Matters*

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# Producer Thomas D. Adelman

By E. Collins

“You always have to strive for excellence.” These words were first ingrained in Thomas Adelman’s mind when Joseph Papp, the great theater producer, spoke them at Adelman’s NYU graduation ceremony. “Papp’s words have stayed with me throughout my career,” says Los Angeles-based Adelman, who has worked in film and television production for over 20 years.

He launched his career at New York’s Group W Cable as senior producer and director, and during his tenure there garnered ten ACE Awards and an Emmy nomination. From GWC, Adelman moved into line producing and worked on music films with Taylor Hackford (*Hail! Hail! Rock ‘n’ Roll*) and Roy Orbison (*Black & White Night*).

In the mid ‘90s, Adelman became President of Production for Cineville, overseeing the development and production of more than ten award-winning independent films. Adelman left Cineville in the late ‘90s and worked as an independent producer on films such as *Murder in the First* and *The Usual Suspects*. He has contributed to numerous projects throughout the years, championing quality storytelling at studios and networks such as Paramount, ABC, Spyglass Entertainment, USA Network, Cinemax, and others. Among his producing achievements in 2001 was *Focus*, Paramount Classics’ silver screen version of Arthur Miller’s classic novel.

From 2001 until 2010, Adelman served as Senior Vice President of Development and Feature Production at Handmade Films, the production company formed by former Beatle George Harrison. While at Handmade, Adelman oversaw the development and production of their entire slate, which included the award-winning films, *Eloise at the Plaza* and *Eloise at Christmastime*, starring Dame Julie Andrews. Adelman also produced all of the main lead voice sessions for Sony’s animated feature, *Planet 51*.

In 2011, Adelman launched Storytime Films, his own production company, which

he runs with fellow Handmade Films alum Carrie Layne. Through Storytime and his own development company, TDA Pictures, Adelman has a variety of feature film, TV and comic book projects on tap. He is producing one of the films, *Zendog*, with William H. Macy, who is also starring,




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**An independent producer or writer who wants to move a project forward is facing a paramount challenge—an obstacle field, a slippery slope of development ... key is not to give up**

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Adelman believes that there are four essential ingredients that must come together in order for an indie film to be successful:

1. an original and engaging story with compelling characters;
2. a passionate, experienced and fresh thinking creative team attached to the project;
3. a realistic understanding and approach to the strategy for packaging and financing the production; and
4. a respect and thorough understanding of the distributors as well as the public’s appetite at a certain time for a particular genre of story.

“Moving a film production from start to finish is about passion and determination by the human engine or engines behind the work, along with great writing,” says Adelman. “Someone once said, ‘If it’s not on the page, it’s not on the stage,’ and that’s true. Writing is everything, and wonderful acting and directing are no substitute or buffer for a project if the blueprint of the story is not thoroughly well developed, honed and crafted to its highest potential.”

Adelman points out that contemporary examples of excellent storytelling are not difficult to find, singling out recent feature films such as *The Dallas Buyers Club*, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *The Theory of Everything*. “There is a high bar of writing in both tele-

vision and theatrical productions that the public has adjusted to and has come to expect,” he says enthusiastically. “This is all good news.”

With the wealth of his experience in development and production, Adelman has words of advice and encouragement for indies. “An independent producer or writer who wants to move a project forward is facing a paramount challenge—an obstacle field or slippery slope of development rife with land mines and quicksand that can stop one’s progress in their tracks. The key though is to not give up, or become overly discouraged and lose one’s confidence. The Sistine Chapel was not painted in a day, and if one believes in his or her canvas, brushes and paints, than they can paint or sculpt their masterpiece, no matter what may lay ahead.”

In addition, Adelman advises, there is one other essential element that a producer, writer, director or anybody who endeavors to work in a collaborative medium such as film and television must try and maintain. “In this game, everything depends on your reputation and how others view you,” he emphasizes, “so you must be honest, transparent, and have respect for colleagues and, above all, for the project. I cannot stress this point enough to creative people with aspirations for success in this industry.”

Anyone seeking a pro’s guidance for your vision or project can connect with Tom Adelman via [tom@tdapictures.com](mailto:tom@tdapictures.com) or by phone at 310-913-5274.



Photo by Marc Hankins

British film.' When you dig deeper, big successes are often derived from American money, or a least American *control*," says Spence. "The good thing about the American business is that people make

films to make money and not to conform to a set of criteria designed to appease those providing subsidy. Mind you," she smiles, "the UK tax credit for film is very useful and some of the creative talent in Britain is simply unmatched anywhere. Music, post production, acting talent — it's all strong in Britain, albeit very London-centric."

She accepts that starting with literally nothing to embark on a production career in film is not a bad thing and has strengthened her resolve to work at the highest level. "James and I reflected and laughed at what we'd been through the other day; he made the remark that we'd not just come up from the gutter of business, but probably the sewer, so now at least we really know what shit is! I've been involved with some pretty diverse and even weird projects, many of which were filmed on incredibly low budgets: promos, corporates, web videos — from interviewing celebrities in five-star hotels to crawling around the floor of a factory, trying to get a shot for a promo about refrigeration products. Many clients see the production value of million dollar commercials every day on television, so when they come to you with five bucks for

their film, that's the expectation they have. A little coaxing back to reality is usually required.

"On the upside," Spence continues, "there are fantastic moments: when a screenplay receives great interest from credible companies or an edit magically comes together for the most subtle of reasons. Like a novelist, the creative aspect — building ideas from nothing — is a wonderful way to earn a living, though it is all laced with the business of making money, as well as the harsh world of criticism and competitiveness."

Broaching the subject of 'the sharks' (an apt analogy, since Spence is a nature enthusiast having dived with sharks on a number of occasions) and the diverse characters encountered within the business, she is candid about the people you bump into on a weekly basis.

"It never ceases to amaze me how some people think they can behave unprofessionally, and be taken seriously. I was speaking to a guy the other day in a meeting. He wanted to collaborate, but when he used the 'c' word to describe someone he didn't like, it was all over as far as I was concerned. I'm not a prude but there are limits. Another person who called himself



Thomas D. Adelman

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With over thirty years of producing experience in Film, Television, & Feature Animation, TDA Pictures consults with established writers, directors and producers as well as novice writers and other new creative talent to package and produce your project. Through a daily process of talent agency and artist management inquiries and exchange, as well as location shoot production feasibility studies and working together, we will take your project through every creative, technical and financial phase, with a goal of setting up the production for principal photography, post production, completion and delivery and ultimately global distribution.

## FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN

NEGOTIABLE AND INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED PROJECT CONSULTATION SERVICE PACKAGES MAY INCLUDE:

- Movie script development (Live Action, Animation, Documentary)
- Theatrical & TV Packaging & development
- Identify & attach Directors & Actors
- Script Coverage
- Preparation and distribution of industry Standard Actor Offers
- Crowd Funding Attack Strategy
- Social Media Management
- Film Sales & Financial Model analysis and preparation
- International Film Market Exposure

- Feature Film Slate Guidance & Development
- Option Guidance and Purchase Price Consultation
- Screenplay Breakdowns and Scheduling
- Screenplay Budgeting (Professional vendor quotes on film department required equipment and goods)
- Business Plan and Project Bible Preparation
- Location Feasibility Studies
- Crew, Stage, Equipment, Site Rentals, Post-Production analysis and cost projections
- Interaction with A-Level Legal Firms & Publicists
- Tax Incentive evaluations
- Film Commission Script Breakdowns and Location Scouting

- Digital and 35mm Film, 3D, Visual FX bids
- Agent & Management Introductions and project exposure and coverage
- Exposure to Domestic and International Foreign Sales Agents & Distributors
- Project Sizzle Reel, Style Guide, Look Book Design and Preparation
- Post Production Budget Preparation and negotiated music and sound re-record quotes
- Crew team build based on principal shoot location
- Completed Film element delivery guidance both domestically and internationally
- Introduction to Completion Bond guarantors, production insurance and payroll companies

- Introduction to and preparation of guild and union signatory application packages including SAG, DGA, WGA, IATSE
- Analysis and preparation of soft money tax incentives applications domestically and internationally
- Production budget preparation in relevant currencies for your project