

# CLYDE IS HUNGRY FILMS

Mr. Penn: I'll respond to you the same way I responded to Stacy Peralta's "notes" to my screenplay (which I'm attaching to another email, just to put them on the record). The screenplay that he apparently didn't read either. I mean if you look at his notes.

June 9, 2004

Hello Allan Weisbecker,

Yes, liked the book and wanted to be involved.

*You had not read my book at the time of the deal you made to produce it. (I'd bet my little farm Down South you still haven't.) Not only did Agi and her lawyer tell me this (having talked to Brian Gersh about it) but writers tend to sense this sort of thing when they talk to folks about their books.*

*But my point here is this: If you're going to give Sage and Morally Superior Life Lesson advice, you might consider not leading off with an outright prevarication.*

Got busy with other things, as we do in life,

*Back in the mid 80s I made a deal then "got busy with other things" and didn't live up to my end of the deal – a screenwriting job. In other words, I was given money and didn't do any work for it. It never occurred to me not to pay that money back; the folks that hired me didn't have to ask for it. I apologized and offered to add interest. Can you say the same about the 25k you got from Radar? Did it even occur to you? Of course not. (Please, I beg of you, don't claim – even to yourself -- no one asked you to do anything, nor expected the money back. You kept the money because you COULD.)*

*This observation also refers to your use of the word "entitlement" in the subject box to your email (referring to me, I assume) and to your disingenuous claim (below) that "Hollywood" is merely a place on a map. The H word as I use it and as everyone in the movie business understands it (or should) refers to a state of mind that allows someone in your position to get 25k (from Radar) and not have to do anything except show up two hours late for a breakfast meeting (at the Four Seasons) and not apologize (since you don't believe other folks' time is of any importance), except to say that you had "a pharmaceutical night" (people not subject to entitlement do not advertise their drug abuse problems) and light up a cigarette in a busy restaurant – not only a rude, but illegal move (I smoke, btw). Entitlement. You actually used this word in reference to me. Wow.*

and by the time the screenplay came to my attention, so had it come to my attention that you had published the screenplay on the internet. Whether or not that was your right to do, I don't know, but I'm not interested in projects that have been pre-read by the public at large. For me, it's akin to doing a revival, the magic lost.

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*Maybe 200 people have read my screenplay. You call this the public at large? This makes it a... revival? Wow. Here's some news. The movie you're (they say) doing about the guy who tried to kill Nixon? I read that months ago. Don't even remember where I got it. It was floating around. (It was godawful, by the way.) Screenplays get read. Hey: books get read. Did you know that Mystic River was a book before it was a movie? The story got read by the public at large. A revival? Please.*

*Are you really telling me that you wouldn't do a movie because 200 people read the screenplay?*

You seem to make an assumption that my assistant Sato is a "reader", or with your demonstratively anti-Hollywood position (last I checked it was a city on a map) a "Hollywood" reader. Let me clarify that that is not the case and emails to that effect render your Don Quixote mute. I don't know of any studio commentary that affected this situation.

*Aside from what I say above about H-wood, I don't understand the rest of the above, like the Don Quixote allusion. Do you mean moot, as opposed to mute?*

The sense I had is that Agi's original enthusiasm was genuine and that with some digestion, she and Stacy felt some refinements were necessary, how extreme they are I don't know.

*If this is true, and if you are in fact a paid, contractual collaborator on the project, and if in fact you "Get involved early in the script stage," why didn't you offer to start getting involved by reading the script. Am I out of line wondering this?*

But I would always warn a writer not to put his fingernails into hyperbolic comments made. Considering oneself a genius can be a lonely affair and create disproportionate hostilities, ie. don't let initial comments infuse the old ego. Motion picture scripts always need the personalization of the director.

*I do not consider myself a genius any more than I consider you one. Mozart was a genius; the rest of us, as you say, are just getting by. I mentioned Agi's comments as an example of my frustration level at her flip flop. In rereading my letter, this seems completely obvious. Perhaps she was right in her oft repeated comment, "Sean doesn't read."*

It is, after all, a collaborative medium into which you've stepped foot.

*Of all your doozies, this one is my outright favorite. Yes, it's a collaborative medium and guess what? Along with Peralta and Orsi, you are my other collaborator. In your Sage and Morally Superior Life Lesson Advice did it even occur to you that you are my collaborator? What level of denial are you living under, Mr, Penn? My courteous, respectful, borderline fawning letter to you was nothing more than a plea for help from my contractual, paid collaborator.*

I think you're a very good writer

*Again, I doubt that you've read anything of mine before now.*

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but I have had no interactions with Agi along the lines that you've described having had between the two of you and I'm sure you'll understand that disparaging comments made in her direction will not create great enthusiasm in me.

*Sorry but I don't understand the first couple clauses of this sentence. And I was not being disparaging (except for one parenthetical); I was merely stating facts that explained why I had to contact you this way.*

I'm sure you worked very hard on the screenplay and I know what that's like but there are people living in Hollywood who are working very hard on screenplays too. And I have found that many of them are just as genuine as those at the end of the road, at the bottom of Central America, and those in Boston, Baghdad, and beyond.

*Your denial is showing again: The other genuine people working very hard on screenplays throughout the world do not have Sean Penn as a paid, contractual collaborator.*

The "Hollywood" attack works for me about as well as the "Nigger" attack on blacks or the "Evil" attack on Muslims. None do much to move life forward and I believe that it is beneath a talented writer. But if you want to continue writing things like that, to Sato, Agi, or anyone else, I would suggest you move to the corner of Sunset and Doheny where you will find lucrative work at People Magazine or The Star or The Enquirer.

*How about this for a thought: Instead of spending whatever time you did with your Sage and Morally Superior Life Lesson advice, why didn't you spend that time reading the first 30 pages of the screenplay on which you are a contractual, paid collaborator? It might've actually taken less time.*

*Of all the ironies inherent in your message, this one is perhaps the biggie. (I made the same comment to your assistant, by the way, who did most of the talking during our calls.)*

*If you only respond to one of my comments, please do so with this one.*

I really get the sense from your communiques (which seem to include a lot of odd ducks coming up to me in odd places demanding I read your work of genius) that your present mission is one of petty self-destruction.

*Petty self destruction? How about this: I believe in the story I wrote and was seeking help from my contractual, paid collaborator.*

If you live in paradise, as you said in your letter, enjoy it. It's special. You're special. We're all special. Isn't that special. But of the many writers who are gifted, I afford my time to those of good will and unpublished screenplays.

*As anyone reading my letter would see, I wrote you with respect and goodwill. And what do I get back?*

I hope that you will re-group and spend more time with your talent and your paradise and less with bitterness and barrages. We're all just gettin' by.

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*Bitterness and barrages? Again, what letter were you reading? Did you read it or get coverage?*

Sean Penn

*My theory is that your response to my plea for help was actually motivated by a desire to put me in my place and/or make me feel badly (for reasons you may be able to fathom, but my attempts fail), not to help me improve myself or my lot in life. If so, again, it would have made infinitely more sense had you simply read my 30 pages, as asked, and sent me an email saying, simply, "Read it, didn't like it." This would have saved everyone time and – my being a writer – upset me infinitely more than your hostility. (Too late to do it now: I wouldn't believe you read it.)*

*It also would have been at least a token attempt at earning the 25k you got as my collaborator.*

*The upside to all this is that it fits perfectly with my nearly completely memoir, Can't You Get Along With Anyone? A Writer's Memoir. (I'd like permission to reproduce our correspondences in the book. Is this okay? Also, if I'm incorrect about the amount of money you received from Radar for being my collaborator, please enlighten me.)*