

SCRIPT to
SCREEN

ZOMBIELAND

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2020 / 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
with RHETT REESE & PAUL WERNICK
(screenwriters/executive producers)





The post-apocalyptic zombie road trip comedy *Zombieland* (2009) centers on four survivors of a viral pandemic: Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson), Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), Wichita (Emma Stone), and Little Rock (Abigail Breslin). After most of the world's population has turned into zombies, surviving humans are locked in an ongoing battle against the hungry undead. The seemingly-mismatched central characters journey towards an alleged safe haven in Los Angeles, following a strict set of survival rules and zombie-killing strategies as they travel.

Script to Screen is delighted to welcome screenwriters/executive producers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick for a virtual Q&A. The conversation will be moderated by Pollock Theater Director Matt Ryan.

Zombieland can be streamed on Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, and iTunes.





Screenwriters/Executive Producers Rhett Reese & Paul Wernick

Writer-Producers Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick met in high school in Phoenix, Arizona and have been creative partners since 2001. The pair wrote and executive-produced Twentieth Century Fox's *Deadpool*, starring Ryan Reynolds. The 2016 superhero action-comedy remains the highest grossing R-rated movie of all time and was nominated for Best Picture (Comedy or Musical) at the Golden Globe Awards and Best Adapted Screenplay by the Writer's Guild. Reese and Wernick subsequently co-wrote and executive-produced *Deadpool 2*, which became the third highest grossing R-rated movie of all time.

Reese's and Wernick's first feature collaboration was *Zombieland*, which they wrote and executive-produced for Columbia Pictures in 2009. Reese and Wernick also wrote the screenplay for its sequel *Zombieland: Double Tap* (2019). Other screenplay collaborations include *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* (2013), starring Dwayne Johnson, Channing Tatum, and Bruce Willis, for Paramount Pictures, and *Life* (2017), starring Ryan Reynolds and Jake Gyllenhaal, for Sony Pictures.

Reese's and Wernick's initial partnership occurred on Spike TV where they created, wrote, and executive-produced *The Joe Schmo Show*. The series drew Spike's highest-ever ratings and was named to numerous Best Of lists, including *TIME Magazine's* Top 10 TV Shows of the year and *Entertainment Weekly's* 50 Best TV Shows Ever on DVD. Reese and Wernick followed up with *Joe Schmo 2* and *Invasion Iowa*, a high-concept comedy hybrid starring William Shatner.

Reese has worked on scripts for Pixar Animation Studios (*Monsters, Inc.*), Walt Disney Feature Animation (*Dinosaur*), and Warner Brothers (*Clifford's Really Big Movie*), among others. Wernick has produced several network reality shows. He won three Emmy awards for his work in news.

Moderator Matt Ryan

Matthew Ryan has been the Pollock Theater Director since the theater opened in October 2010. He created and hosts the *Script to Screen* series, which has welcomed prestigious guests such as writer/director/producer Jordan Peele (*Get Out*), writer/director Damien Chazelle (*Whiplash*), screenwriters Emily V. Gordon and Kumail Nanjiani (*The Big Sick*), and writer/director/producer David Mandel, actor Tony Hale, and actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus (*VEEP*).

Ryan oversees the Pollock Theater Internship, which offers industry-level experience in live multi-camera television production and event planning. TV shows produced by students through this program have generated 15.1 million online views on the UCTV broadcast cable station.





Production Team

director	Ruben Fleischer
screenplay by	Rhett Reese & Paul Wernick
producers	Gavin Polone
executive producers	Ryan Kavanaugh, Rhett Reese, Ezra Swerdlow, Paul Wernick
director of photography	Michael Bonvillain
editors	Alan Baumgarten
casting	John Papsidera
production designer	Maher Ahmad
art direction	Austin Gorg
set decoration	Gene Serdena
makeup department head	Tammy Ashmore

Cast

Jesse Eisenberg	Columbus
Woody Harrelson	Tallahassee
Emma Stone	Wichita
Abigail Breslin	Little Rock
Amber Heard	406
Bill Murray	himself

FLAGSTAFF (V.O.)

Moments like these made me glad... glad I chose that suitcase with the little rollers. I was done being the idiot with the duffel bag.

EXT. 10 FREEWAY ON-RAMP, WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA - DAWN

FLAGSTAFF hikes up the on-ramp onto the freeway, shotgun under one arm, suitcase-on-wheels pulled behind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 10 FREEWAY, WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA - DAY

FLAGSTAFF walks from abandoned VEHICLE to abandoned VEHICLE, looking carefully for a new ride. Nothing suits his purpose.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 10 FREEWAY, WEST COVINA, CALIFORNIA - DAY

An exhausted FLAGSTAFF trudges on, more slowly now. Then, as if by magic, he hears the distant rumble of an ENGINE.

On the western horizon, a black CADILLAC ESCALADE threads its way through the abandoned freeway traffic, heading EAST. On each side and hood of the Escalade, written in WHITE SOAP, is the number 3 (in memory of the late great DALE EARNHARDT).

As the ESCALADE approaches, a nervous FLAGSTAFF grabs a TOPPLED MOTORCYCLE, props it up on its kickstand, kneels behind it, and aims his shotgun warily at the SUV.

The Escalade pulls up near the motorcycle and STOPS. The driver's door opens, and a square-jawed, broad-shouldered bad ass, ALBUQUERQUE, steps onto the running board.

Albuquerque is in his mid-thirties. He wears ironic thick librarian-appropriate eyeglasses. He stares at the motorcycle with curiosity.

Flagstaff stands up from behind the motorcycle with his shotgun AIMED at Albuquerque.

FLAGSTAFF (V.O.)

Here's the thing about scared people. They're great at hiding it. Imagine an apple: nice and shiny on the outside, a greedy little worm chewing up the inside. That's me.

Albuquerque raises an eyebrow, then shrugs matter-of-factly, as if to say, 'If that's how you want to do it...'

Albuquerque calmly reaches into his car, pulls out a no-shitting-you AK-47 AUTOMATIC RIFLE, lifts it to his shoulder, and points it RIGHT BACK AT Flagstaff.

Flagstaff's eyes widen. Uh-oh. Albuquerque's finger goes from the trigger guard to the TRIGGER.

Flagstaff quickly wipes sweat from his temple with his sleeve, starts to tremble, then all at once GIVES UP, lowering his shotgun and RAISING HIS HANDS, ashamed.

Flagstaff smiles embarrassedly, then STICKS OUT ONE THUMB questioningly in the universal sign for HITCH-HIKING.

Albuquerque rolls his eyes, lowers his gun, and motions to Flagstaff with his head: 'Get in.'

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - DAY

Inside the SUV, ALBUQUERQUE sits behind the wheel. FLAGSTAFF sits in the passenger seat. There's an awkward silence, punctuated by Flagstaff's careful look INTO THE BACK SEAT.

ALBUQUERQUE
Whatcha looking for?

FLAGSTAFF
Nothing. I have this list...

Superimposed onscreen: A TITLE: **31. Check the Back Seat.**

ALBUQUERQUE
No one back there but my duffel bag.

Flagstaff blinks.

FLAGSTAFF
What's your name?

ALBUQUERQUE
Stop. No names. Where you from?

FLAGSTAFF
Arizona. Flagstaff.

ALBUQUERQUE
Hullo, Flagstaff. I'm Albuquerque.

The two SHAKE HANDS.

FLAGSTAFF
You're from Albuquerque?

ALBUQUERQUE

I am.

FLAGSTAFF

You don't want me to call you by your name? You want me to call you Albuquerque?

ALBUQUERQUE

I do.

FLAGSTAFF

May I ask why.

ALBUQUERQUE

Keeps us from getting too familiar.

FLAGSTAFF

So if I'm calling you Albuquerque, what happens if we meet someone else from Albuquerque.

ALBUQUERQUE

Haven't thought that far ahead.

FLAGSTAFF

(smiles)

If I knew I was gonna be Flagstaff, I'd have said I was from a cooler sounding place. Like Pocatello. Or Winnemucca.

ALBUQUERQUE

You can switch to Winnemucca.

FLAGSTAFF

No, I'm Flagstaff.

ALBUQUERQUE

Sure?

FLAGSTAFF

(nods)

Flagstaff.

ALBUQUERQUE

Flagstaff and Albuquerque almost had a gunfight.

FLAGSTAFF

Yeah.

ALBUQUERQUE

Where you headed?

FLAGSTAFF
Flagstaff. You?

ALBUQUERQUE
Albuquerque.

FLAGSTAFF
(nods knowingly)
Going home?

ALBUQUERQUE
Nah, home's back there.
(indicates West Covina)
They say you know home by the way it
makes you feel when you leave. I'm over
it. Further I get, the better.
(shrugs)
Albuquerque's just my birthplace. Not a
destination. More like a... direction.
Anywhere but here.

FLAGSTAFF
Y'know, Flagstaff's on the way to
Albuquerque.

ALBUQUERQUE
Yeah.

FLAGSTAFF
So... Albuquerque... wanna stick
together? Least as far as Flagstaff?

ALBUQUERQUE
Here's the thing, Flagstaff. I'm not
easy to get along with. And I'm sensing
you're a bit of a bitch. I give this
relationship 'til Quartzsite.

FLAGSTAFF
So you'll take me as far as Quartzsite!

ALBUQUERQUE
If you lose the excited face.

Flagstaff loses the face. Albuquerque turns on the ignition.

FLAGSTAFF
I have a small bladder.

ALBUQUERQUE
Clench and hold.

The Escalade's tires CRUNCH the gravel as it pulls away.



This event is sponsored by the Carsey-Wolf Center, the Department of Film & Media Studies, and the Scott Frank Fund for Screenwriting.

Script to Screen

The Script to Screen series examines the screenplay and its transition to the screen from the perspective of writers, directors, producers, editors, and actors. The Pollock Theater connects artists to our audience of aspiring production students, and Guild & Academy Members. Our Q&As transform into a television show that airs on UCTV. The series is hosted by the Pollock Theater Director, Matt Ryan, and co-produced by the Pollock Theater student staff.

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