



**February 2013**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

We have not stopped, it seems, for the usual winter down-turn in production activity. That never happened for us in December and January, hence this "late winter" rather than "winter" newsletter. For others in the media industry with whom I have chatted, they seem to be noticing the same trend. Is Winter the new Summer for production activity? This is not a complaint but an observation of a trend which I'm sure we all hope continues, it is a sign of a robust industry. This year I will return to the National Screen Institute for a day-long teaching gig and am extending the visit somewhat in order to meet some long-standing clients in Winnipeg. The NSI has kindly moved my gig from February to March this year, thereby slyly sweetening their invitation by nudging the date closer to spring. We continue to work for the Canadian Film Centre as well, shepherding the Short Dramatic Film Program scripts through the clearance process and then sprinkling a little bit of title search on them and moving them on their way to release. As a consequence of both of those affiliations, I continue to look for articles of interest to those learning about the clearance process. Imagine my surprise during a literature search a few months - *(continued in next column)*

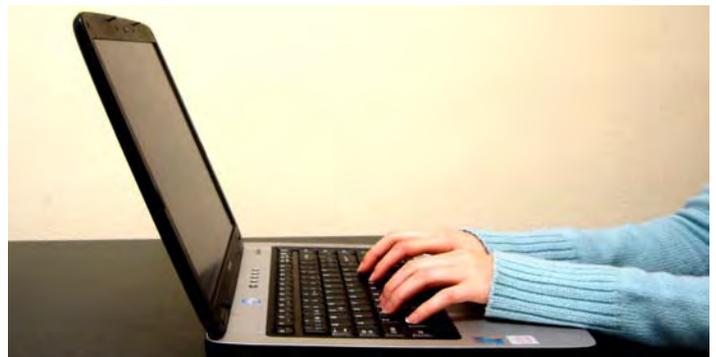


ago to find that a current UCLA (my Master's degree alma mater) doctoral candidate is actually writing on the topic of script clearance work - its history and impact on produced works. With his permission I have included an excerpt from it on pg 2. It is interesting reading for anyone in this specialized line of work.

**"INCOMING" -A NEW EMAIL ACCOUNT FOR CLIENTS**

We created a new email account "incoming@easternscript.com" that will be the go-to mailbox for client requests: series that are sending new scripts, script revisions, art department requests, featured product contact information requests, title search orders, etc. This account will be the place to send everything and will funnel

client requests through one account, increasing our efficiency and removing your need to figure out who gets what. It will be monitored throughout the day Monday through Friday.





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**FEATURED ARTICLE - SOME CLEARANCES HISTORY - WOW!**

In recent internet searching, I discovered an interesting bit of research underway by a current UCLA PhD student. His dissertation title is: Script Clearance and Research: Unacknowledged Creative Labor in the Film and Television Industry. Could I have stumbled across any more compelling bed-time reading? With Michael Kmet's permission we reprint here an excerpt from a dissertation to which we hope to contribute whatever he might need:

"During the height of the vertically integrated Hollywood studio system, script clearance and research was conducted internally. By the late 1940s, however, the major studios had either downsized or closed their internal research departments. In 1950, just as the industry was at this turning point, Kellam de Forest who would eventually run the largest script clearance and research firm in the business made his way to Hollywood. He had recently graduated from Yale, earning a degree in American History in 1949, and was looking to work in a creative industry. Eventually de Forest found a job with a short-subject producer who was venturing into independent production after being laid off by MGM. Although de Forest would later do research for such notable productions as *The Godfather* (1972) and *Chinatown* (1974), the first film he worked on was a modest one: a short subject on traffic safety. However, the market for theatrical short subjects was drying up, and after the film was completed de Forest found himself out of work. This led him to seek employment in the nascent television industry and to found his firm, de Forest Research...

"De Forest's most important professional relationship was with Desilu, the production company run by Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. This relationship significantly increased the profile of de Forest Research in 1957, when Desilu bought out RKO. Along with studio space in both Hollywood and Culver City, the acquisition also included RKO's shuttered studio research library. Desilu ended up handing de Forest control of the library, along with office space on the studio lot, rent-free. Not only did this guarantee de Forest the business of every television program produced by Desilu, it also guaranteed his firm the business of all the production companies that rented out studio space from Desilu.

"At the same time that Desilu took over RKO, television was growing increasingly popular in the United States. In 1950 only 9.7 million television sets had been sold in the U.S.; by 1959 that number had skyrocketed to 67.1 million. As a result of this rapid increase in the popularity of television, the chances of litigation due to the use of names, copyrighted material, and plagiarism also increased. While many television shows didn't require a significant level of research, every television show needed to have its scripts cleared so that the production company "could prove that due diligence had been made." If a script featured a character named Edward Bunker living in present-day New York, for example, de Forest Research would have to check New York telephone books and directories to ensure that nobody had that name, or that the name was so common that no individual could sue, claiming they were personally maligned. (In this particular example, a man named Edward Bunker did show up in a Queens telephone book, leading de Forest to come up with the now-familiar name of Archie Bunker as a replacement.)"



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### INS AND OUTS

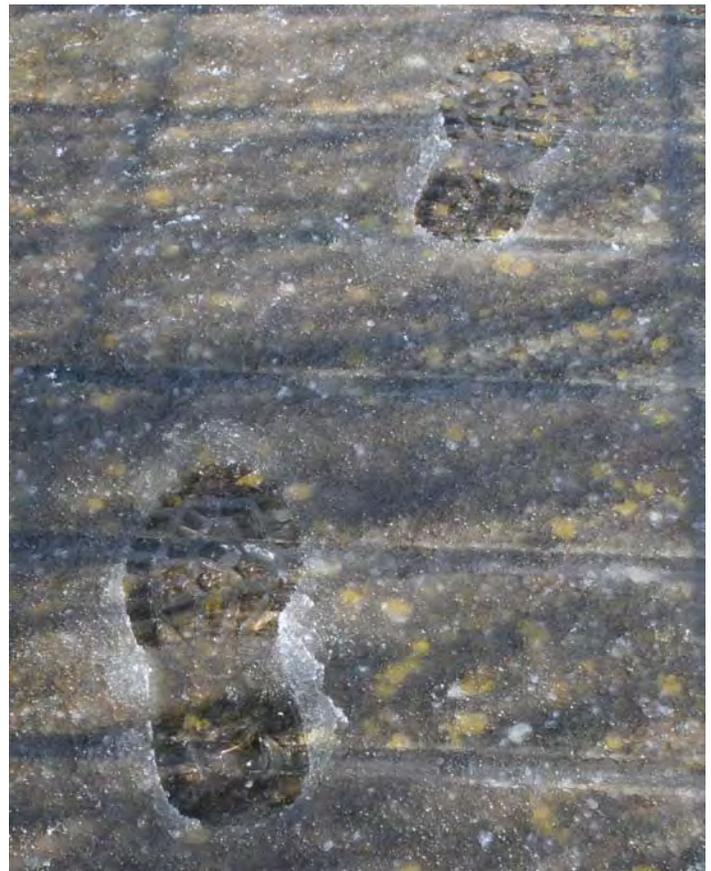
Just hired -- so "in" rather than out -- is Mark Woodland whose varied work history gives him unique skills that should help all of us here at eastern script and you, the client! He recently completed an intensive course at Ryerson called "Grammar Essentials for Writers & Editors" so might soon be able to improve our probably botched uses of commas, semicolons, and dashes -- , ; ? He has job experience from the U.K., Canada, and New Zealand that include varied research projects as well as editorial and writing requirements. During his first week on the job, he had the "Murphy's Law" luck of getting as his first assignment what is typically a light-on-clearances children's animation script that was full of business and product names. His feet are now thoroughly wet, the baptism has happened, welcome to Mark.

### DANGER HIGH CLEARANCE

Visitors to the "Library" page of our website <http://www.easternscript.com/articles.html> will now find additional articles there offering further insight into the clearance process. One of them in particular might be of special interest, it is called "Danger High Clearance," author Lynn Ermann. I came across the article many years ago when reading a 1998 issue of *The Independent*, the AIVF's then-monthly magazine. This fascinating article includes horror stories about promising student films that never saw the light day because of a lack of understanding about the issues at stake. Thanks to writer Lynn Ermann who has given us permission to include a scanned .pdf of this 1998 article at our website.

*See our featured article on pg2:*

*"...a man named Edward Bunker did show up in a Queens telephone book, leading de Forest to come up with the now-familiar name of Archie Bunker as a replacement."*





#### **BIG SCREEN:**

**Queen of the Night** directed by Atom Egoyan, starring Ryan Reynolds. "A man (Reynolds) and his wife are presented with the most concrete evidence of their abducted daughter's 6-year absence by a detective duo who share a similarly estranged relationship" (Deadline Hollywood, uncredited). **Copperhead** - "Unlike any Civil War movie to date. It is a film of the war at home—of a family ripped apart by war, of fathers set against sons and daughters, of a community driven to an appalling act of vengeance against a man who insists on exercising his right to free speech during wartime" (from the movie's website). Stars Angus Macfadyen, Billy Campbell, Peter Fonda. **Nightrunners** is described as a psychological thriller at the film's website; it tells the story of "a young woman volunteering in a malaria plagued region of Kenya (who) believes she is being terrorized by the witches known in local folklore as Nightrunners." **Toad Road** - at IMDb is this storyline: "A portrait of contemporary youth culture, where the lines between reality and fiction are blurred with often frightening results." It is currently working the festival circuits. **Baby How'd We Ever Get This Way** (working title/could change) - the most recent project from acclaimed director Bruce McDonald. "A darkly comic drama about a man left to care for his infant son when his wife is imprisoned for cheating on him with a minor" (from IMDb's plot synopsis).

#### **SMALL SCREEN:**

**The Day My Butt Went Psycho** - from Scholastic's website (publisher of the books upon which this t.v. series is based): "Zack Freeman is ready to tell his story... the story of a brave young boy and his crazy runaway butt. The story of a crack butt-fighting unit called the B-team, a legendary Butt Hunter's formidable daughter, and some of the ugliest and meanest butts to ever roam the face of the earth." **Peg + Cat** - from the PBS website: "This fall, PBS KIDS will premiere PEG + CAT, a new animated preschool series that follows the adorable, spirited Peg and her sidekick Cat as they embark on adventures and learn foundational math concepts and skills. Co-creators Billy Aronson (Rent, Postcards from Buster) and Jennifer Oxley (Little Bill, The Wonder Pets!) have teamed with The Fred Rogers Company to bring young viewers a new way to experience math." **Orphan Black** - from BBC America, currently in production in the greater Toronto area: "Sarah has always lived the life of an orphan outsider. But a clone is never alone. Sarah hopes that cleaning out a dead woman's bank account will solve all her problems. Instead, her problems multiply – and so does she." **Numb Chucks** - from the producer 9story's website: "Numb Chucks is a new animated comedy about two half-witted woodchuck vigilantes, Dilweed and Fungus, who use their non-existent kung-fu skills to protect the lives of all the citizens in Ding-a-Ling Springs, whether they need it or not!" **Archer** - sometimes we get to work on adult animation too! Here is [tv.com](http://tv.com)'s synopsis: "Sterling Archer is the world's most daunting spy. He works for ISIS, a spy agency run by his mother. In between dealing with his boss and his coworkers - one of whom is his ex-girlfriend - Archer manages to annoy or seduce everyone that crosses his path."