

MOVIE MAKER

THE ART AND BUSINESS OF MAKING MOVIES

» [Login](#) | [Register](#)

February 20, 2010

[ABOUT](#) | [CONTACT](#) | [NEWSLETTER](#) | Search

HOME
LATEST HEADLINES
SCREENWRITING
PRODUCING
DIRECTING
ACTING
CINEMATOGRAPHY
EDITING
DISTRIBUTION
EDUCATION
FESTIVALS
LOCATIONS
LISTINGS
ARCHIVES
HOP INTERVIEWS
ON THE MOVE VIDEOS
BLOG
FORUMS
CONTESTS
POLLS
SUBSCRIPTIONS
ADVERTISING

SCREENWRITING

Christopher Kyle Brings *The Seven Sins* to the Silver Screen

 [EMAIL](#)
 [PRINT](#)

by [Michael Walsh](#) | Published February 2, 2010

Adapting a novel for film is an arduous task that some of the business' less seasoned writers tend to shy away from. "What do I include? What can I leave out? What creative liberties can I take without compromising the original story?"



For Christopher Kyle—whose penned credentials venture from original screenplays (Oliver Stone's *Alexander*), to novel adaptations (the upcoming *Serena*), to stage plays (*The Safety Net*)—these are questions whose sheer existence serve only as unnecessary constraints in an industry that survives solely through creativity. His understanding of the core storytelling differences between literature and film can largely be attributed to the diversity of his projects and their ensuing success.

Kyle's latest screenwriting endeavor, *The Seven Sins: The Tyrant Ascending* is an adaptation of Jon Land's 2008 novel of the same name. In an exclusive interview with *MM*, Kyle talks of his writing techniques, the invaluable relationships he's formed and the advice he has for aspiring screenwriters struggling to find their own identity in the world of moviemaking.

Michael Walsh (MM): Moritz Borman was a producer on two of your most successful screenplays—*K-11 The Widower* and *Alexander*. He's signed on (along with Peter D. Graves) to produce *The Seven Sins: The Tyrant Ascending*. Is he the reason you found yourself involved with the film?

Christopher Kyle (CK): Yes, Moritz is a big reason I got involved with this. He's a very smart producer and when you find one of those, you want to work with him as much as possible. The other thing that intrigued me about *The Tyrant*—aside from the material itself, of course—is the crazy determination his [Moritz's] fellow producer Fabrizio Boccardi has to get this movie made. The best kind of movie to write is one that's somebody's passion project—star, director, producer. Because no matter how good the script is, you're going to need someone to push it up the hill.

MM: This isn't the first time you've adapted a novel. You've done so with *Serena* and *Small-Minded Giants*, too. When adapting an already successful book like *The Tyrant*, how do you manage to create something unique without deviating too far from the original author's intentions?

CK: It may sound odd, but I don't really think about the novelist's intentions much. As much as I respect the authors I've worked with, what makes a novel work and what makes a movie work are just so different. I think a screenwriter has to regard the novel less as something to "translate" into the screen, and more as raw material that's going to be refashioned into an entirely different art form. Because that's what it is. So I comb the novel for characters, sequences and story elements that I think would work cinematically and then I craft them into a dramatic story. It may be similar to the story of the novel or it may not, but you can't let yourself become tied to the novel's structure because often, it simply won't work on film.

There are many reasons for this but two of the biggest are point-of-view (a novel often puts the reader inside the character's head and it's very hard to do this in a film) and breadth of storytelling (a novel can have many more subplots or multiple narratives than a movie has time for). So I really do hate it when people say the movie isn't as good as the book. It's like saying the steak isn't as good as the bicycle—they're totally different things! The movie may be good or it may be bad, but its lack of fidelity to the novel is not the reason. Indeed, some of the worst screen adaptations are the ones where the book was so popular and well known that the filmmakers were afraid to deviate from it enough.

MM: You have experience screenwriting novel adaptations, original pieces and stage plays. Which style do you find the most interesting? How about most challenging?

CK: Well, I began my career as a playwright and, though I write plays less often than I used to, that is still my favorite form to work in. Audiences come to the theater primarily to listen (if they want spectacle, they can go see *Avatar*) so it's really a writer's medium. The working rules are different, too: I get to approve the director and cast, nobody can fire me—it's much different than working on a film. For better or worse, a play is mine. A screenplay on the other hand is generally more collaborative, a work for hire. You have to satisfy the interests of the director, producer, studio, star... and when they don't agree, you're right in the middle of it. But I have to say, I enjoy the challenge of that. It can be a difficult needle to thread, so you really have to push yourself to find a solution that will satisfy everyone and still work within the story.

MM: What do you hope becomes of *The Tyrant*? Do you hope for a very faithful adaptation of the book or do you wish for a more expanded interpretation with its own distinguished identity?

THIS STORY WAS SPONSORED BY

NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY

LEARN

FILMMAKING

ACTING FOR FILM

PRODUCING

SCREENWRITING

3D ANIMATION


DOCUMENTARY

BROADCAST JOURNALISM

WWW.NYFA.COM • 1-800-611-FILM

BLOG
FORUMS
POLLS


Latest from the blog:



CHAD FITZGERALD

[Cinema Law: Screenwriter Rights](#)


posted 12.14.09



JEFFREY GOODMAN

[Adventures in Self-Releasing: Live Stream Days Away](#)


posted 11.13.09



JEFFREY GOODMAN

[Adventures in Self-Releasing: Social Networking & Paranormal Activity](#)

posted 10.23.09



TOM DICILLO

[Notes from Overboard: Spanish Caravan](#)

posted 10.22.09

[BLOG](#)

SITE DELIVERY OPTIONS

[NEWS FEED](#) [NEWSLETTER](#)

- RELATED ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES
1. 2/1/2010: Kristopher Belman Learns It's *More Than a Game*
 2. 1/29/2010: Editor Brian Kates Goes *Boating*
 3. 1/25/2010: PGA and SAG Announce Winners
 4. 1/22/2010: Xavier Perez Grobet Carries *Mother and Child* to Sundance
 5. 1/21/2010: 50 Best Blogs for Moviemakers

FILM SHOBBY

A Voice for Indie Film

scriptapalooza

screenplay competition

Over 90 producers reading every entry that comes in.

[ENTER NOW](#)

[Screenwriting Program](#)

Earn A Master of Fine Arts From Brooks Institute. Get More Info!

Brooks.edu/Screenwriting

Ads by Google

Filmmakers Wanted

Discover A New Way To Distribute Films Online. Visit YouTube Rentals

www.YouTube.com/!YouTube_Rentals







CK: I think I may have answered this in your second question. What I want is something that works as movie. How faithful it is or isn't to the novel doesn't matter to the vast majority of the people who come to the theater to see it, because they haven't read the book in the first place. So I think the movie of *The Tyrant* will expand on the ideas in the book and tell the story in a different way. The great thing this novel has is a truly compelling main character—one I can imagine as the protagonist of more than one movie.

MM: What's the one piece of advice you'd offer to aspiring moviemakers looking to break out in today's marketplace?

CK: This word "marketplace" is one thing aspiring filmmakers should really try not to think about. When you're starting out, you should never try to guess what's commercial or what the studios want. Believe it or not, what the studios are looking for is talented, original writers and directors—not hacks regurgitating last year's hits. So don't worry about whether it's going to sell (very few writers sell their first screenplay anyway). Find something to work on that you have a real passion for, something you are willing to bleed for because it's a story you just *have* to tell. The only way your talent is going to emerge is if you work on something that matters to you. Believe me, there will be plenty of opportunities to sell out after you've established yourself.

For more information on Christopher Kyle, visit <http://christopherkyle.net>.

|||

SHARE THIS STORY	TAGS
 Del.icio.us  Digg	alexander avatar christopher kyle
 Reddit  StumbleUpon	fabrizio boccardi film adaptation jon land
 Yahoo  Facebook	k-19 the widowmaker moritz borman
	moviemaker oliver stone peter d. graves
	screenwriting serena small-minded giants
	the safety net
	the seven sins: the tyrant ascending
	tips for screenwriters

ADVERTISEMENT

<p>Study Film Production Begin Your Film Career Today! Learn Filmmaking at LA Film School.</p>	<p>Write Screenplays Fast Download the step-by-step guide to writing a screenplay in 10 days!</p>
---	--

COMMENTS | [POST A COMMENT](#) ▼

POST A COMMENT

OUR PRIVACY POLICY | We will not publish or sell or share your email address or other personal information. [Read more.](#)

Name:

Email:

URL:

Type the word you see below:



Comment:

Remember my personal information

Notify me of follow-up comments?

[HOME](#) | [LATEST HEADLINES](#)

[SCREENWRITING](#) | [PRODUCING](#) | [DIRECTING](#) | [ACTING](#) | [CINEMATOGRAPHY](#) | [EDITING](#) | [DISTRIBUTION](#) | [EDUCATION](#) | [FESTIVALS](#) | [LOCATIONS](#)
[LISTINGS](#) | [ARCHIVES](#) | [HOP INTERVIEWS](#) | [BLOGS](#) | [FORUMS](#) | [CONTESTS](#) | [SUBSCRIPTIONS](#) | [ADVERTISING](#)

[About](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact](#)

© 2010 MovieMaker Magazine
 Web site design by Hop Studios