

## VIDEO TREATMENTS – AN OVERVIEW

A treatment consists of a written condensation of a proposed film or TV dramatic production. It covers the basic ideas and issues of the production as well as the main characters, locations, and story angles.

In part, its purpose is to sell the proposal to financial backers and major stars. Treatments should be attention-getting and interesting to read. They are written in the present tense, using active language and often read like a short story. To help understand how a treatment should be written, imagine that you are describing exactly what the video will look and feel like to someone else. Treatments cover the full story sequence. They typically contain some key scenes that help to entice the reader and sell your idea.

### **EXAMPLE #1: "LEAP YEAR" MUSIC VIDEO**

This music video is all about time and friendship, losing friends and those who never lose hope or stop waiting for those that matter. We begin by focusing on a boy, pondering a picture on a window sill (digitally). The picture flies from his hand in a gust of wind, music begins. A montage of urban scenes flash by, starting with a sun rising very fast, mixed with short flashes of character remembering his two friends.

There are three main shots that remain constant scenes. One, a candlelit room with a large frozen clock taking up the entire background, where the boy occasionally sings along with mixture of mystery, longing, and sadness. Next, a simple framed shot of the boy centered between his female and male friend, both facing them, only the backs of their heads and shoulder blades are visible as the stand halfway outside the spotlight. The boy now sits up in an old, grey tree, centered in a gated off abandoned schoolyard. Numbers of a clock circle around him and certain things hang on the branches like a Christmas tree.

These very fantasy like, slow motion; whimsical, a little detached from reality shots of the boy striving to find the true friends as he remembers but not clearly enough. The girl friend is a manikin through most of the video, symbolizing how girls grow less honest of themselves around old friends in awkward meetings, and at the climax of the song she becomes real as he finally finds the way to see her the same again.

Now the climax of the song and at an abandoned closed down establishment the two stand together, just beginning to speak, suddenly a car turns towards them, the headlights blinding bright. From this point on, several flashes, like camera flashes, creating a sense of the clock getting faster and slowing down to normal at the end of the video. Finally, we see a close up of the character's hands reaching for one another, silhouetted by a bright headlight. This image fades to "The End" written in Christmas lights.

### **EXAMPLE #2: McDONALD'S TV COMMERCIAL**

A Commercial Treatment by John Mastro Monaco

"Chain Reaction" is all about how one simple moment can spark a continuous, natural series of events. When we open the spot, we're mid-stride, a woman on her way to work as she crosses the street. It's morning, it's a nice day—we're right in stride with her. A simple camera move or cut reveals to us what she sees—in the stopped car she passes at the red light, the passenger is eating an Egg McMuffin. For just a moment, we move in slowly—now we see the Egg McMuffin in its wrapper, familiar golden arches – unmistakable.

Now we know it's morning. Then when we cut back to the woman, she's at a subway platform, enjoying her Egg McMuffin as the subway pulls into the station. So with a few simple shots—we've started our Chain Reaction. From there, our job is to let our continuing series of vignettes unfold as effortlessly and as simply as that. As the subway pulls into the station, we see a teenager who is inside, he sees the woman eating, enjoying her Egg McMuffin.

When we cut back to the teenager, we've shifted time and place again with minimal intrusion. Our teenager's now stepping off the elevator inside a large, modern building—and he's enjoying his Egg McMuffin. Cut to well-dressed businessman who sees the teenager stepping off the elevator. When we next see him (businessman) he is sitting in a beautiful European garden on a bench, eating an Egg McMuffin. In turn, the gardener notices the businessman then—chain reaction. The next time we see the gardener he's selling fresh flowers with one hand, holding an Egg McMuffin in the other. And so it goes.