



EMR

Intro

As I mentioned on the call, if I was a puppet then these scripts would be my life. After the end of my 12-year marriage, I had no idea if I would ever find love again, if I was desirable, or if I even knew how to date in this new world of liking, swiping, poking, and ghosting.

The only thing I did know was that I needed to get my mojo back. So while on a job in London, I signed up to the apps and found myself taking trains to God-knows-where to meet God-knows-who.

I've already told you about tripping and breaking my wrist while valiantly recovering my first date's stolen purse from a thief, then returning to a hero's welcome and free drink at our restaurant, only for my ungrateful date to bemoan the loss of her AirPods and then end the evening by saying that I seemed like a 'nice guy', but that unfortunately she didn't date nice guys.

That is just one of many disastrous dates both on your side of the pond and mine. But despite these experiences, I still have that irrational romantic hope. And just like Miles I always find myself getting carried away and wondering what might be as I set off for that first date. Don't we all?

It's that emotional relatability, both in the date spot and the work one, that grounds these funny scripts and gives us the freedom to push the comedy in the dream sequences and the rest of the film. Here's how I intend to do it...

Tone

Comedy is at its best when it comes from a place of emotional truth. Thankfully, we've already found this truth in the setups for the scripts. So the next question is where do we take it and how?

For me, these spots should feel unexpected rather than telegraphed. So we're not getting a joke from the first frame, but as these scenes gradually unfold and reveal themselves in unexpected ways. Like they would in a film, rather than your typical commercial.

Both the date and work spots will be bookended by a sweetness, vulnerability, and sense of hope that endears us to Miles and his real-life situation, but we'll get our laughs in the outlandish dream sequences that show Miles' imagination running wild with the best-case scenario only for reality to bite. And bite hard.

Approach

For the date spot dream sequence, there are two scenarios we could pursue. *The Naked Gun* joke-after-joke approach in which typically things aren't going well for Detective Sergeant Drebin or the sequence in *Dumb and Dumber* where Lloyd is the hero and life and soul of the party.

I would suggest the latter, tapping into that endearing, relatable human trait of hoping for the best rather than expecting the worst. Having him look and feel like 'the man' as he gets lost in the romance of it all and overconfidently imagines marriage, kids, hell, maybe even grandkids.

This makes the reversal from confidence to anxiety that much more potent when we end with an awkward meet-cute that feels grounded and relatable. You can see that he is nervous and she is nervous too, but you can also tell there is a connection and some hope for the future. This could be done with a mere look. The kind of look someone gives you when they're interested. Just enough to let you know they want more.

It's vital that we give Miles and his date this emotional arc, as it will make the comedy that much more satisfying and the spot feel like a beautiful short film rather than an ad.

For the office spot dream sequence, let's go full *Wolf of Wall Street* and have Miles celebrated as if he has saved the world or, at the very least, revolutionized the industry.

It starts with him and his ideas being applauded and cheered in the boardroom, then when he enters the office he is lifted up by his CEO like Simba in *The Lion King* (or perhaps even carried like a baby) as his colleagues go crazy and chant.

Everything gets bigger and bigger. Miles looks surprised but you can see he is loving it. And then he is unceremoniously dragged back to reality but still somewhat in the moment as he notices his outstretched arms with embarrassment.

The Puppets

I agree the film will be a lot more funny and charming if Miles moves through the real world and interacts with it in a way that feels specific to him as a puppet, whether that's

the limited movement of his arms or the ease with which he can be picked up by a human.

But I also think it could be funny if we shoot Miles and his date like we would real people, perhaps with a shot over her shoulder on him or a two-shot dinner scene between the two of them.

And given that everybody is on dating apps these days, including Miles in this story, I think it makes sense to see his date's face in the dream sequence. As he would have seen it on her profile when they matched and would picture it when he envision their future together.

This story is about that sense of connection that everyone can relate to, so by limiting how much we see of her we risk the comedy only working one level and Miles' emotional journey failing to connect.

From a filmmaking standpoint, there are a million ways to make it clear that he is the protagonist and that his date is there to support the story. This could mean only showing a part of her face such as her eyes and instead focusing on a couple of his brave, endearing, and funny attempts to get a reaction out of her.

Technical and Post Approach

Instead of trying to humanize Miles and his performance, I think some light-touch CGI to create subtle cues in the eyebrows, face, and mouth would help to capture his sensitivity and convey his emotions, so the audience can invest and the comedy lands.

And when it comes to Miles' date, let's take inspiration from how Disney has done it for decades with films like The Lion King. So rather than a wig and lipstick, we'll use subtle visual clues, such as a belt to give her a cinch waist silhouette or shape her eyes to give the puppet that feminine look.

The Look

I don't want to shoot this like a traditional comedy spot, with locked-off shots, excessive coverage, and bright, flat comedy lighting that makes it feel like a sketch and stops the audience from taking it seriously.

Instead, I want to give it a rich, sophisticated, filmic look. Not one that is overly stylistic or tries to force the comedy, but something pristine that makes you feel like you're watching a cinematic comedy about a puppet.

The Dream Sequence

In terms of the dream sequence, I don't think we need to go too crazy on the visuals to make it clear what is happening. Just a gentle push in on his face as he looks down at his date's profile so we know that we're going into his thoughts, perhaps followed by a dissolve. Then, if we feel like we need it, we can put a subtle filter on the dream sequence in the color grade to differentiate it from the real world.

Locations

Like many Americans, I had a very different idea of what London was and what it looked like when I was growing up to when I eventually came and worked here. What we're trying to do in the date film is strike that balance between locations that instantly read as London without the cliched landmarks and signifiers. So the parks, architecture, and perhaps even the statue of two lovers at King's Cross station, rather than Big Ben.

Meanwhile, for the office spot let's opt for something a little more corporate and nondescript that offers up a funny counterpoint to the outrageous, overzealous response of Miles' colleagues.

Sound and Music

I'm not gonna lie, I would have loved Starship's 'Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now'. But whatever we end up with, let's avoid a generic library track or an obscure 80s song and find a hidden gem that we all know and love, and can't believe we forgot. A love ballad reminiscent of a John Hughes rom-com that instantly puts us in that fun, nostalgic mood and also works without the lyrics as an instrumental piece for the :20 office spot.

Outro

I'm tempted to reel off a few more of my disastrous dating stories to round this out, but perhaps I'll save them for when we're in the midst of production and really in need of a laugh.

Ultimately, I want to make a couple of East Midlands Railway spots that pay homage to what has come before, but that take a big, bold leap forward with funny yet emotional short films that look and feel like theatrical movies.

At the heart of these movies will be our main character, Miles, as we take him from a character that audiences know and like to someone they love.