

FEATURE FILM SCREENPLAY COVERAGE

TITLE	Hit Man
LOGLINE	A college professor's double life, posing as a hitman for his city's police department, leads him to becoming romantically involved with one of his clientele.

SUBMITTED TO	Jeffrey Hirschberg	AUTHOR	Richard Linklater & Glen Powell
SUBMITTED BY	Samantha Tocke	COVERAGE DATE	4/8/25
READER	Samantha Tocke	DRAFT DONE	5/24/24
LENGTH	105 pages	TIME PERIOD	Present
LOCATION	New Orleans	BUDGET	Low
GENRE	Romantic Comedy	SIMILAR PROJECTS	Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Grosse Pointe Blank, Mr. Right, True Romance, Date Night
ATTACHMENTS	N/A		

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PREMISE	X			
PLOT	X			
PRODUCTION VALUE	X			
CHARACTERS	X			
DIALOGUE	X			
SETTING	X			
STRUCTURE	X			

CASTING POTENTIAL	X			
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	RECOMMEND	CONSIDER	PASS
SCRIPT	X		
WRITER	X		

SUMMARY:

GARY JOHNSON is a meek wall-flower in his thirties, living with his two cats, bird-watching, wearing jorts (jean shorts), and working as a psychology and philosophy professor at the University of New Orleans. The only action he gets is working part-time with the New Orleans police department, assisting with murder-for-hire sting operations. The script is catalyzed once Gary is thrust into the role of “hitman” when the usual undercover detective, JASPER, is suspended for police brutality.

With his background in psychology and observant nature, Gary is a natural at playing the part of a hitman, curating the perfect and ideal persona for each of his unique clients. Gary ends up falling for MADISON, a woman trying to leave her abusive husband in any way she can, under his charming hitman alias, RON. Instead of turning Madison into the police, a sympathetic Gary/Ron encourages her to leave her husband instead of kill him and use the hitman fee to start a new life. Gary’s caring actions causes much confusion amongst the sting operations team, Jasper, CLAUDETTE, and PHIL, and ends the first act.

Act II begins with Madison starting her new life and romantically seeing Ron/Gary, never revealing his true identity to her. Gary upholds Ron’s hitman appearance by teaching Madison how to use a gun and how to aim for the heart properly. After a date at a nightclub, Gary and Madison run into Madison’s husband, RAY. The encounter gets physical, and Gary pulls out his gun to defend Madison, scaring off Ray. The tensions rise between the two lovers when they run into Jasper, who questions and is skeptical of their relationship. The second act’s midpoint strikes when Gary receives a new hit from Ray, wanting to kill Madison. Ray recognizes Gary as Madison’s boyfriend, Ron, and runs away, declaring he’ll take care of Madison himself.

Gary tells Madison about his encounter with Ray, but Madison is doubtful Ray would follow through with that threat. Shortly after, it is discovered that Ray has been killed. When Gary goes to tell Madison, Madison reveals that she killed Ray. Panicked, Gary reveals his true identity to Madison in the midst of the second act’s crisis.

Madison ends up kicking Gary out; however, Madison is now the primary suspect in Ray’s murder after the police discover Ray had increased his life insurance policy by one million dollars and named his wife the sole beneficiary. Jasper, who has been jealous of Gary since

he took over his job and aware of Gary's romantic entanglement with Madison, suggests the police wire Gary and send him out as Ron to extract a confession from Madison.

Gary and Madison act out an interrogation as Gary gives Madison cues on his phone that he is wired. The two sell the act, convincing everyone that Madison is innocent, except Jasper. The third act's showdown starts when Gary returns to Madison's house to find Jasper sitting on the couch. Jasper does not buy Gary and Madison's act and attempts to blackmail the duo. Jasper gives Gary and Madison an ultimatum: prison or give him Ray's life insurance money. Jasper passes out, and Madison reveals she drugged his drink. Gary ties a plastic bag over Jasper's head and frames his murder as a suicide.

In an epilogue, Gary and Madison live together, telling the story of how they met to their two children. Before the script comes to an end, it is disclosed that despite Gary Johnson being a real person, he, thankfully, never killed anyone.

COMMENTS: The romantic comedy is seemingly overproduced to the point where the recent films of the genre become a parody of itself, but *Hit Man* brings glory back to the rom-com's name. Its screwball beats make the script a pleasure to read and love. *Hit Man* is fresh, flirty, and fun, and it would be difficult for someone to not fall in love with Gary Johnson, or one of his aliases.

Hit Man excels at its theming and character arc. A rom-com's theme can simply be romance, but *Hit Man* juggles the themes of identity and confidence exceptionally. Gary Johnson is bland at the start of act one. His personality, which is generous to say he has one, is dull. Through his narration, his life is mundane, but Gary doesn't take issue with that. However, if the character is content with their normalcy, how will that character change? Gary's confidence and boldness begins to grow as he dons different personas, seeing the fun in life, wanting more. Once the writing team, Richard Linklater and Glen Powell, are able to get Gary out of his comfort zone and recognize his acting and psychoanalytical talents, it's an entertaining and endearing arc to watch Gary find himself.

While Gary's arc is spectacular, it would not be possible without the script's brilliant structure. *Hit Man* is a coming-of-age tale for a guy in his mid thirties. The motivation that drives Gary to be the confident Ron is Madison. The guy wants to get the girl. That's his goal. It's a classic, but it works very well. The more Gary plays the part of Ron for Madison, the more he realizes that he can do anything that Ron does because Gary is Ron.

As much as this is Gary's story, *Hit Man* champions and highlights Madison too. From the moment Madison's introduced, she gets the reader's immediate sympathy. She is a woman that finds herself in a vulnerable and helpless circumstance. She is desperate to leave her husband, Ray, but doesn't know how to. Gary and his empathy are Madison's motivating factor. It's beautiful how Madison and Gary continue to strengthen each other and build each other's confidence throughout the script. Madison finds herself with the help of Ron, and Gary wants to be more like the Ron that Madison fell in love with. There is an instant spark and chemistry between the two, and that is just on the page. The characters of Gary and Madison are page turners alone based on their charm and likability.

On the topic of characters, *Hit Man* has a fantastic villain that is just a good, old-fashioned villain. Jasper is so unlikable that it is a testament to Linklater and Powell's phenomenal writing. He oozes sleaze, and the fact that his antagonistic qualities are rooted in modern-day social issues is unexpected from a rom-com but refreshing to read.

The dialogue perfectly balances the romance and the comedy. The script is belly-laugh worthy, but then the next page, it could have the reader swooning. It shows a true talent and appreciation for the craft of screenwriting. The use of narration as Gary's inner thought is an ingenious bit that feeds into Gary's likability.

The script is funny enough to sell any actor on the project, but the role of Gary Johnson will have actors campaigning for it. Gary is an opportunity to show off the actor's chops, explore their identity as a character actor, and assume the spotlight as a Hollywood leading man. If cast right, the part of Gary Johnson will be a career starter for any actor wanting to try their luck playing multiple characters and personalities. *Hit Man* has commercial prospects and the opportunity to be the perfect date night movie.

PASS, CONSIDER, or RECOMMEND

Recommend