



## TV DRAMA (60m) REPORT

Note: this report has been edited to make it fit for public download.

PROJECT TITLE:	<b>THE AGREEMENT</b>
WRITER:	Jeremy Sole
MAIN GENRE:	Sci-fi
SUB-GENRE:	Thriller
SETTING:	USA
PERIOD:	Various – 2009-2019
POSSIBLE BUDGET:	Medium
PAGE LENGTH:	50
FORMAT:	TV Pilot
LOGLINE:	Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline Logline
COMPARABLE TITLES:	12 MONKEYS, HOMELAND, SENSE8
PROJECT VERDICT:	Pass
CONSULTANT:	FYZ
REPORT WORD COUNT:	3,382
REPORT DATE:	03/26/19

### **Project Overview**

THE AGREEMENT is a thriller series that takes the kind of political conflict and paranoia we might expect of something like 24 or HOMELAND and gives it a neat sci-fi twist with the addition of time travel, a la 12 MONKEYS. There are definitely some solid base ingredients here – the way in which the time travel works, specifically, feels distinct in a sub-genre that can sometimes feel a little same-y. The problem facing the concept at present, though, is its focus on playing around with structure. The fractured narrative sometimes works well, but the pilot leans into it so much that it feels like we lose sight of some fundamental narrative elements. THE AGREEMENT/Mission conflict that forms the backdrop for the series, for example, feels a little ill-defined,

and even by the close of the pilot, we haven't quite got a handle on the core characters to the degree we need to.

## Notes

### Premise/Series

As above, there are some effective base ingredients here. The pilot introduces this throughline of political paranoia right from the opening sting across p.2/3, in which we realise the President is in the pocket of our antagonists, the Mission. Immediately, we're establishing the sheer reach of the enemy, and this is something the script builds on nicely later on with a moment like the betrayal on p.46/p.48, when Philip reveals his true allegiance. This is effective. It sets a key precedent for the audience across the broader series. We're now *constantly* going to be questioning whose allegiance lies where, which imbues the story with genuine tension.

More broadly, the core concept here draws on the kind of narrative framework and themes we've seen before in comparatively more grounded narratives like 24 or HOMELAND, even MR ROBOT – conspiracy (p.2/3), uniformity (p.36), even something as pertinent as media manipulation and fake news (p.14). These are meaty, relevant topics, and as such are often narratively explored, but THE AGREEMENT wisely makes sure to put a twist on things with the inclusion of time travel. This is really clever, in that it actually ties perfectly into the idea of trying to construct a narrative, i.e. the idea implicit in a lot of the above themes. Just as conspiracy and fake news rely on building a story you want others to buy (something we see actively in play on p.14, when David is convinced that THE AGREEMENT are terrorists, for example), the time-travel serum is used to *literally* alter the narrative course of events in the travellers' favour. It's a sci-fi premise that seamlessly builds on the ideas the script seeks to explore.

And it's worth homing in on the specifics of that time travel, too. It's probably one of the more ubiquitous sci-fi sub-genres, and that immediately puts a burden on the script to do something inventive with it if it wants to stand out. Even on the most superficial level, the script clearly recognises this: using a serum rather a piece of tech feels distinct, particularly the way it works as described by Janine on p.33, and this idea that the volume consumed affects the temporal distance travelled. More significant, though, is the way the concept addresses changing the past, with the traveller merging into the new timeline as their prior memories crumble (again, as we see on p.33). It's a particularly great detail that the newly merged traveller is physically

impacted by the actions of their now non-existent self, something we see in full force on p.43, when the amalgamation of timeline A Nicole into timeline B Nicole leaves the latter in a med-bay.

This mode of time travel is one that has a *tonne* of potential across the broader series, especially when it comes to a particular rule outlined by Janine on p.33: the fact that changing something substantial in the past immediately sets a timeline merge in motion. It's easy to imagine effective set-pieces in future episodes in which time-travellers on a mission to prevent or cause some specific event are at risk of being scuppered by changing something too soon. And, of course, there's the brilliant confusion these changes cause, as we see on p.44, when Nicole can't understand why her parallel self would have wanted to scupper an assassination attempt on the President because, of course, in the new timeline that doesn't suffer the consequences of the alternative, she can't see its value. These conceptual building blocks give the series so much to play with, which goes a long way to convincing of the premise's potential to sustain a longform narrative.

However, it's when we home in on some of the specifics of the story that the concept isn't yet hitting the mark. The biggest overarching example of this is the conflict supposedly at the very core of the story: THE AGREEMENT vs The Mission. Simply put, these two groups don't feel clearly enough established. We have to bear in mind that this is *the* series throughline in which we're asking the audience to invest. We have to give these two sides enough context for them to care about that fight. As it stands, we barely know what either side stands for. We get a little insight into The Mission via Gergory's speech on p.36, and later Philip's line about 'sinners' on p.48, but it's not yet enough to build a clear picture of who this group is and what they want. They're painted as religious fundamentalists, but with what goal, specifically? Gregory's speech suggests they want to unite people under a shared ideology, and Philip gives that a religious dimension later on, but what is that ideology? Bar the Christian implication of their name and a few choice lines, we don't yet have anything tangible to go on.

This is really important if we want the audience to invest in THE AGREEMENT's quest to fight back. We need to understand what our heroes are trying to prevent, to defeat. And this speaks to the even broader issue of world-building. There are implications in dialogue that some *really* significant, catastrophic, society-altering events have taken place - Janine talks about preventing a civil war on p.40. But as it stands we don't actually get much of a sense of the environment in which this story is taking place. What does this version of 2019 look like? There are hints in moments like p.9, when

the armor-clad men pause in front of the coffee shop and no-one seems to react – this suggests that perhaps open conflict is a norm, but more broadly we're given very little to latch onto. Take p.14 as another example. David speaks about THE AGREEMENT as if they're terrorists. But what does that mean tangibly? What do they stand accused of? Just the assassination ten years back? What significance do they have in the wider world?

For comparison's sake, think of something like, say, CHILDREN OF MEN. So much of that narrative's success stems from the incidental details of the narrative world. We infer the way in which the 'Fishes' have been characterised culturally because Theo immediately attributes the attack in the opening scene to Julian. We understand the borderline livestock status of immigrants by the cages and dogs and armed forces littering the backgrounds. We don't get that kind of aesthetic detail here, so it ends up feeling like the story is taking place in a vacuum. THE AGREEMENT is trying to prevent a civil war, but we haven't really seen the effects of that war and so can't quite invest in what they're trying to change.

And, like *The Mission*, it's never quite clear what they stand for themselves. What do they represent beyond just opposition to *The Mission*? Again, this is crucial context if we want the audience to buy into some of the pilot's key beats. Across p.12-14, we have David discovering that his father, whom he believed dead, is actually a member of this supposed terrorist group. It's an important revelation, but its significance is going to be a little lost on the audience if they don't know what THE AGREEMENT actually *is*. To be clear, this doesn't mean we need to laden the pilot with every piece of information about these two sides – maintaining some mystery is a good thing. But, we have to ride a line. The job of a pilot episode, beyond telling a solid story in its own right, is to sell the audience on coming back for more, and for us to do that here, we need to give them a clear enough sense of that central conflict that they care about its result. Ultimately, it's a case of expanding on the elements of the story that will add context to that arc between THE AGREEMENT and the Mission.

### **Story/Pilot**

Some of the above issues have a basis in some of the more moment-to-moment aspects of the script. Obviously, the thing that sticks out most about THE AGREEMENT's pilot is its fractured structure. In some instances, this works really well. The opening sting on p.2/3, for example, does a great job selling us on the significance of *The Mission*, *while* laying the foundations for David and Nicole's episode arc later on when they find themselves working

to save Danielson come p.25. The way the script first introduces its time travel, too, plays on fractured narrative really well. We see David and Nicole appear out of nowhere on p.4, wound in David's side, and that builds inherent tension into the next time we see them in the coffee shop on p.8. It's a technique often used in horror, showing the audience the supernatural element early on before cutting into the as-yet-unaffected lives of the protagonists, and it's an effective way of building suspense by making the audience question how on earth we're going to get from one to the other.

However, there's an important line to ride when it comes to withholding information. The two examples above work well because they serve as simple, initial narrative hooks that dramatically pay off later on. What's crucial here is that the context-less scenes themselves are brief enough that the audience's confusion doesn't outstay its welcome. But in some cases the re-ordering of events proves more of a detriment to the story than a benefit. For an example of this, we can turn to David and Nicole's quest to save the President from around p.22. Currently, we see the mission unfold across p.22-29, but *without* knowledge of why they're here, how they got here, or why saving Danielson matters to them. The question we have to ask is: what are we gaining by holding this information back until p.32/33 (when we explain the time travel) and later p.39/40 (when Janine explains the mission to save the President)? The problem is that, without knowing some of the context of the mission, it's difficult to really buy into the p.22-29 sequence itself. We don't know what's at stake, what will be lost if they fail or gained if they succeed. Without that understanding, the sequence doesn't really have any tension, because we don't know why it's important. And in this case, we don't actually have the character motivation in play, either. The last we've seen of David and Nicole before the attack in which they zap back in time is them being unwillingly inducted into THE AGREEMENT across p.15-17, and now they're suddenly on a mission for that same organisation. Withholding the set-up is therefore stripping the mission of everything the audience needs in order to care about it.

We can pinpoint the problem by looking at other narratives that mess with linearity. Take something like *MEMENTO*, for example. Withholding certain elements of context is pretty much the whole hook of that film, but it works because we *are* given one overarching piece of motivation for Leonard. We know he's looking for the man who killed his wife. We know why he's looking for them (final twist aside), via his V.O and flashbacks to that fateful night. That clear, emotive motivation is always in play, driving the story, and we can read each of his actions in that context. The problem with David and Nicole's mission to save the President, or later David and Bridget's mission to

save THE AGREEMENT, is that we're holding back some of those foundational things like what their plan is, or why they, personally, are doing this. As such, it's really worth considering letting the audience in on the significance of these time travel missions before they unfold. As above, the key is to make sure we're analysing whether shifting the order is building tension or sapping it. In the case of the missions themselves, audience investment is contingent on their knowledge of what our characters are attempting, and their motivations for doing so... So, it feels like we're losing more than we're gaining.

All this ties back to the kind of context we looked at in the above section, too. Even though we're told that David and Bridget are working to prevent the slaughter of THE AGREEMENT on p.34 and p.40, it's difficult to parse what effect that slaughter has had in the present day. We don't really get to see how dire the situation is in the 2019 B line, so it's difficult to parse the significance of preventing it. An interesting point of comparison here would be X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST. What that film does really well at the front end is show us, unequivocally, just how dire the current timeline is. So, when Logan is sent back, we have a really clear understanding of what outcome his actions in the past are looking to prevent. This is the kind of context that could really benefit the missions at play in the pilot.

One way of helping us work this into the story would be to simplify the pilot's arc itself. Currently, there's *a lot* going on, to the extent that we don't quite have time to build up each plot development as much as we could. For example, we have two time travel missions, first to save the president from assassination, and then to prevent the destruction of the Capital building and save the Commanders at Lake Anna (p.40). This forces the first to unfold really quite rapidly, to the detriment of the story. We don't, for example, get to see what it is that convinces the newly initiated David and Nicole to suddenly risk their lives for an organisation they, up until hours before, considered terrorists. We have Janine filling them in on p.39/40, at which point they're still questioning whether the time travel thing is even true, before the explosion that, we assume, leads chronologically into the situation we see on p.19/20. By the end of *that* sequence on p.22, they've injected the serum and begun their mission to save Danielson. This is a little difficult to buy, given David was still at the 'Even if this is all true...' stage moments before. It's too rapid a shift.

Is there scope, then, to structure the entire pilot around David and Nicole's induction into THE AGREEMENT and their first mission to save Danielson? Simplifying the plot in that way could give the script the time it needs to flesh

out the world and the characters a little more. As it stands, we're forced to do so in these quick, broad strokes that don't quite land. David and Nicole's conversation on p.8/9, for example, can't help but feel a little clunky and expository, essentially just having them state their emotional backstory directly. This is very clearly geared to fill in the audience rather than a believable exchange between these two characters. If we took our time a little more, we could build up our understanding of David and Nicole with a little more nuance. We can take a similar view of the revelation that David's father Wayne is alive and a member of THE AGREEMENT on p.13/14. Conceptually, this could work really well, but we haven't had the time to really sell the audience on the idea that David is struggling with the loss of his parents (beyond him just stating it back on p.9). We haven't established whether there's any mystery surrounding that death, whether there's some unanswered question that's now finally being answered by the reveal that he's actually alive...

This is, really, a microcosm of the problem facing the pilot as is. There are some good plot points here, but plot shifts come so thick and fast that there isn't enough groundwork in place to make them feel like they really matter. There are quite a few moments in which a character suddenly and unceremoniously dispatches members of the opposing side, for example, like Janine on p.20, Julius on p.22, Captain Spates on p.47, and Philip on p.50. We have two missions that feel functionally quite similar, i.e. go back and prevent an event (president's death/Mission attack) that costs THE AGREEMENT dearly. While it's nice that both of those missions start with David arriving on scene wounded, in a fountain, and needing assistance from his female partner (p.22/23 and p.34), the broader point here is that it sometimes feels like we're rushing over the same ground rather than making sure we've built up base character traits, motivations, dramatic stakes, the wider narrative world...

Of course, there's still scope to play around with structure. It's a really nice idea to have the two timelines run in parallel after saving Danielson, with the original memories fading (e.g. p.30, p.33) and the new ones replacing them (p.30/31), for example. However, paring down the pilot's story and really focusing on establishing David and Nicole; building up that reveal about Wayne so that it feels like a real gut punch for David; showing us the process by which these reluctant inductees are convinced to lay their lives on the line for THE AGREEMENT; showing us in the details of the world why it's so important that they change the past; laying out their plan a little beforehand so we can build tension out of any moment that doesn't adhere to it... This will really help the script get its hooks into the audience. The ideas are there,

but there isn't yet enough depth and detail to the world and characters for the concept to really fly.

### **Conclusion**

So, an effective core idea here, putting a neat sci-fi twist on the political thriller. However, there's work to do to develop the concept to a viable standard. The key areas are:

-Building up the narrative world a little more. What state is the modern world in when we join the story? There's talk of civil war, and little glimpses of its effect like the armor-clad men in the street on p.9, but we don't get a sense of what this alternative present is really like more broadly. We need to get a feel for this if we want the audience to invest in our heroes' quest to change it.

-Fleshing out the central series conflict between THE AGREEMENT and The Mission. We need a clear understanding of what each group stands for, and how they're viewed in the wider narrative world, too. For example, when Janine says, on p.32, that The Mission invented the serum to prevent 'resistance to their plans and gain greater power', we need to understand more specifically what that means.

-Simplifying the story arc of the pilot. Homing in on that first time travel mission to save the President, for example, rather than immediately jumping into the next mission, will give each plot point more room to breath. That will let us devote a little more time to characterisation, the above world-building, and making sure the audience has the context to invest in the mission in the first place.

### **Your Project's Statistical Performance:**

	<b><u>PERFORMANCE AREA</u></b>	<b><u>RATING /100</u></b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Premise</b>	50/100
<b>2</b>	Market Potential	40/100
<b>3</b>	Originality	60/100
<b>4</b>	Clarity of Genre Positioning	50/100
<b>5</b>	Marketing Capability	40/100

<b>6</b>	<b>Structure</b>	50/100
7	Scene Flow	40/100
8	Sequence Flow	30/100
9	Originality of Structure	60/100
10	Cliché avoidance	50/100
11	Pace	40/100
<b>12</b>	<b>Character</b>	30/100
13	Distinctiveness from one another	50/100
14	Originality	40/100
15	Empathy generated	30/100
16	Casting potential	40/100
<b>17</b>	<b>Setting/Milieu</b>	50/100
18	Visual Ambition/Flair	40/100
19	Originality of setting	40/100
20	Cinematic moments	60/100
21	Match for the genre	60/100
<b>22</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>	30/100
23	Authenticity/Credibility	40/100
24	Succinct, says a lot with a little?	30/100
25	Character Dialogue Distinctiveness	40/100
<b>26</b>	<b>Themes</b>	60/100
27	Originality of themes	50/100
28	Sophistication of theme exploration	60/100
29	Clarity of theme exploration	60/100
30	Relevance/topicality of themes	80/100
<b>31</b>	<b>OVERALL % AVERAGE:</b>	<b>47/100</b>

To put your score in context, here at Industrial Scripts we rate some of the following scripts as follows:

THE SOCIAL NETWORK	89/100
SE7EN	93/100
THE TERMINATOR	90/100
THE GODFATHER PART II	96/100
THELMA & LOUISE	88/100

## About Your Consultant: FYZ

Your analyst is an experienced pro script consultant who has assessed material extensively for Industrial Scripts, Disney, Paramount and is also a screenwriter with several projects under option.

## Useful Resources

There's already a plethora of information online about screenwriting, so we thought we'd cut to the chase in this section and describe the best link for the scenario you might find yourself in.

- What you need if you're **struggling to see the wood from the trees** and want to get back to the essentials of screenwriting – the really important stuff: our [ULTIMATE Screenwriting Online Course](#) (free with FFN).
- What you need if you're **looking for inspiration**: our list of [31 screenwriting books](#) you might enjoy.
- What you need if you want to know which of your ideas should become your next script: our [Which Logline? Service](#)
- If you feel like you have a precise idea of what your project should be, but can't get it there yourself, for whatever reason...consider our [Script Doctoring and ReWrite service](#)
- If you just need a good ol' pick me up! Our article on "[10 Great Tales of Screenwriting Determination](#)" will get you there!

## Glossary of Script Development Terms

### Overall Rating

Note: we give our script consultants great leeway in terms of the verdict they deliver. Their decision is based on myriad factors, and no one score in any column is decisive.

- **PASS** – the script is not ready to be shown to agents, managers or the industry yet and to do so would be foolhardy. Upwards of 80% of the scripts we receive are Passes. Many scripts have, through a thorough development process with us, improved their rating significantly and been upgraded to Considers and Recommends. Whilst a Pass is by no means the death knell for a project, it's important not to shy away from the script's shortcomings, at least at this stage.
- **LOW CONSIDER** – the script *might* be ready to be shown to the industry, but it could be risky. In this case the script displays significant promise, but is letting itself down in a few key areas. Plenty to build on for the next draft.
- **CONSIDER** – this is a strong script, which is likely to provoke a favourable reaction from the industry, without blowing anyone away. The script has a number of strong attributes, but isn't "taste-proof" yet. Many will like it, a smaller number will have a lukewarm reaction.
- **RECOMMEND** – this script is pretty much good to go, or very close to being so. Scripts at the higher end of Recommend will be essentially taste-proof: even if the project itself isn't for that agent or that executive or that producer, they can't fail to be impressed by it, and good things will entail when they tell their friends about it. Less than 1% of script we assess receive a Recommend verdict.

### Statistical Performance Explanations

- **MARKET POTENTIAL** – How well does the script fit into the marketplace? Is it in a genre likely to attract an audience? Do the concept and characters have demographic appeal?
- **ORIGINALITY** – Does the script stand apart?

- **CLARITY OF GENRE POSITIONING** – How well does the script fit into its intended genre? Does it manage to uphold the necessary conventions and tone? Is it clearly marketable as a certain ‘type’ of story?
- **MARKET CAPABILITY** – How well is the script likely to perform once in the marketplace?
- **SCENE FLOW** – How effectively are scenes constructed? Does each beat serve to lead us to a clear point of resolution? Or does the scene feel drawn out and aimless?
- **SEQUENCE FLOW** – How effective is the script’s act structure? Is there a sense of cause and effect from scene to scene?
- **ORIGINALITY OF STRUCTURE** – How cleverly is the script constructed? Does the structure serve a clear purpose to the story or the perspective from which it’s told?
- **CLICHÉ AVOIDANCE** – Does the script avoid well-worn story beats or lines of dialogue? If it’s a genre piece, does it manage to fit into that genre without falling back on tired tropes?
- **PACE** – The flow of the overall story. Do action scenes as written convey a sense of speed or urgency? Do slower sections work effectively to build tension, or do they drag? Does the speed and flow of the narrative fit with the premise/story itself?
- **CHARACTER DISTINCTIVENESS** – Are the characters sufficiently different from one another? Do they have clear, separate motivations, voices, mannerisms and so on? Or do they all sound like the writer?
- **CHARACTER ORIGINALITY** – Is this character just an archetype (grizzled male action hero; ruthless businesswoman), or are they a unique, nuanced creation
- **EMPATHY GENERATED** – The extent to which we can invest in the core characters, their motivations and their struggles.
- **CASTING POTENTIAL** –
- **VISUAL AMBITION/FLAIR** – Does the script display a keen understanding of the visual medium? Is information conveyed to the audience in a visually arresting way? Does that style feel integrated or gimmicky?
- **ORIGINALITY OF SETTING** – Does the setting feel fresh for the genre? Are we avoiding log cabins in horror films and eerily empty spacecraft in sci-fi?
- **CINEMATIC MOMENTS** – Does the story facilitate impressive moments of spectacle? Clever set-pieces? Well-staged reveals?
- **MATCH FOR THE GENRE** – How well does the setting suit the core premise of the piece? Is it a natural fit?

- **DIALOGUE AUTHENTICITY** – Does the dialogue sound believable? Or is it too obviously a vessel through which to convey story information?
- **SUCCINCTNESS** – Fairly self-explanatory. Is the dialogue concise? Does it avoid clunky, drawn-out exposition or pontification and clearly articulate the intended dramatic/character point.
- **DIALOGUE DISTINCTIVENESS** – Do the characters have a clear voice, as distinct from the work of other writers? Within the script itself, is dialogue sufficiently varied to reflect shifts in emotion or the voices of distinct characters?
- **ORIGINALITY OF THEMES** – Does the script’s core message/theme feel like something that hasn’t been fully explored before? Or are we reiterating that ‘if you believe in yourself you can accomplish anything’?
- **SOPHISTICATION OF THEME EXPLORATION** – Does the script have something complex to say about its core theme?
- **CLARITY OF THEME EXPLORATION** – How clearly is the script’s central theme conveyed? Is it clearly represented in each character and the broader course of events?
- **RELEVANCE/TOPICALITY OF THEME** – Does the central theme or message of the piece draw on something that will resonate today? Does it have something important to say about the world we live in?

## Thank You!

Thank you sincerely for allowing us to read and critique your project.

Please bear in mind that the comments and opinions in this script coverage are not intended to be the final say on the potential of the script or its writer.

*Everything in the world of script development is subjective.*

Yes, an impartial, truly trained eye that assesses screenplays 24/7 has written this report but ultimately the comments herein remain one human being’s *opinion*.

As a Hollywood screenwriter we know put it:

*“a script note is only as good as you think it is”.*

For more info on Talent Connector, *Character-Driven* (our blog) or any of the other products and services we offer just visit the link below:

**<https://industrialscripts.com>**

Thanks and we hope to work with you again soon!