

# From Pitch to Pilot

## Retreats for mid-career screenwriters

### Hosted and facilitated by Philip Ralph

(Einstein and the Bomb, 8 Days: To the Moon and Back, Deepcut, Doctors, Casualty)



**Autumn retreat: 7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September**  
**Winter retreat: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November**  
**The Dyfi Valley, Mid-Wales**

**'From Pitch to Pilot' are screenwriting retreats aimed at supporting mid-career writers to develop their own original TV series pilots in a safe, relaxing and supportive environment.**

**'From Pitch to Pilot'** emerged as an idea for me after the cancellation of BBC Doctors - [which I'd written on for nearly 20 years](#) - as I took advice from colleagues across the TV industry on what to pursue next as a 'mid-career' writer. In the current punishing industry climate, all the advice I received suggested that what writers of every stripe really need to stand out and get noticed is **an original spec pilot script, unique to their own distinctive voice and style.** Sounds easy, right? I mean, I've got ten of those on my hard drive, hasn't everyone?

But seriously, folks... Experienced writers all know that writing a killer original spec script whilst working alone without script editor or producer support is incredibly hard, often next to impossible. Add to that the pressures of everyday life, the responsibilities of family and paying the bills, and our writing must be squeezed into whatever time is left over - and even when we do manage to write, we have to hope and cross our fingers that what we're producing is worth reading...

**I conceived 'From Pitch to Pilot' specifically to support mid-career writers with these challenges. Each participant will spend an immersive week-long retreat living and working together with four other experienced screenwriters, pitching initial ideas, bouncing them around in a 'writer's room', working on a great one-pager, before breaking down your dream pilot episode, act by act.**

*The aim is for every participant to end the week with – at minimum - a thoroughly detailed beat sheet/outline breakdown of their pilot that they can then confidently write in their own time.*

After the retreats, I have experienced industry producers and script developers lined up who will be happy to read and feedback on your pilot scripts for an affordable fee.

**This retreat is for you if:**

- **You have produced credits in film, TV and radio**
- **You're looking for a relaxed, supportive space in which to work**
- **You've got an idea for a TV series pilot but just can't seem to focus and get it written**
- **You're looking to make the next step forwards in your career**

N.B. These retreats are explicitly not intended to be TEACHING SPACES. The assumption is that you already have experience writing scripts to production standard. No time will be spent explaining or teaching how to write scripts.

**ME!** - I am an award-winning writer for screen and stage with over 20 years of experience, as well as being an experienced facilitator of group retreats and workshops. I will be working alongside participants on my own pilot ideas, as well as guiding our development process.

For more on me and my career – [www.philipralph.com](http://www.philipralph.com)

**WHERE?** - The retreat will take place at the Emergence micro retreat centre (photo below), a beautiful secluded rural smallholding in the hills near Machynlleth in mid Wales, that I run alongside my partner Fern. This is a space of peace, calm and tranquillity in which to work and rest.

For more details on Emergence - [Emergence \(emergence-uk.org\)](http://Emergence(emergence-uk.org))



**HOW MUCH?** - Each retreat will have just **four spaces** - three places at £600 and one place at a subsidised rate of £300 for those on no/low income allocated for each retreat on a first-come-first-served basis. Retreat fees include seven night's accommodation in your own private room (or luxurious bell tent for the autumn retreat), all guiding and facilitating, evening meal on the first night, self-catering thereafter.

**WHEN?** - The dates for the two retreats are:

**Autumn: Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

**Winter Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November**

N.B. Participants will only be accepted if they are able to commit to attending for the full week.

**WHAT?** – The schedule for our week together will break down roughly as follows:

- Saturday - Arrivals in the afternoon, welcome meal, evening gathering to discuss the shape of the week and hear initial series/pilot ideas from each participant.
- Sunday - Morning: group writer's room - participants pitch their series idea, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to write 1-page series pitch.
- Monday - Morning: group writer's room - participants offer first thoughts on pilot outline, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to write a 'vomit' 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the pilot beat sheet.
- Tuesday - Morning: group writer's room - participants offer first thoughts on Act 1 of pilot beat sheet, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to write Act 1 of pilot beat sheet.
- Wednesday - Morning: group writer's room – mid-week check-in, then participants offer first thoughts on Act 2 of pilot outline, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to write Act 2 of pilot beat sheet.
- Thursday - Morning: group writer's room – participants offer first thoughts on Act 3 of pilot beat sheet, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to write Act 3 of pilot beat sheet.
- Friday - Morning: group writer's room – participants reflect on pilot beat sheets, receive thoughts/suggestions:  
Afternoon: solo time to hone and polish pilot beat sheet.
- Saturday - Morning: final group writer's room – participants share their beat sheet outlines, get chance to reflect on the process and where they are now. Final lunch together, tidy up and departures after lunch.

Each evening of the week we will watch and discuss a classic pilot episode of a returning TV drama series from the UK and US. An opportunity to reflect together on what works, what doesn't, how and why some pilots 'hit' and some 'miss'.

## Logistics

### Travel

The Emergence micro retreat centre is four miles outside Machynlleth in Powys, mid-Wales. Machynlleth has a mainline train station, two hours from Birmingham and four hours from London. I can collect and drop off at the station so you can travel via public transport. Alternatively, if you come by car, there is space for you to park on site.

### Payment and cancellation

I ask for a non-refundable non-transferable deposit of £200 at the time of booking. Full payment is required one month beforehand, by 10<sup>th</sup> August for the September dates, or by 5<sup>th</sup> October for the November dates. Cancellation up to a month beforehand will mean a refund of the fee minus deposit. Cancellation within a month of the retreat will mean no money will be refunded.

### House & Food

The house has two indoor bathrooms as well as a compost toilet in the garden.

I will cook a welcoming meal for the opening night gathering. All meals thereafter will be self-catering in the fully equipped kitchen. Machynlleth has a Co-op supermarket, a Spar, plus many smaller food shops.

This is a 'dry' retreat – i.e. we won't drink alcohol with meals except for our final night's celebratory meal together. This is to help facilitate a restful, focused space to work in together.

All bedrooms are single occupancy with all bedding and towels provided. The September retreat will offer one participant a luxurious 'glamping' space in a bell tent. For the November retreat, all participants will have their own room.

The house has many warm and comfortable spaces for participants to write and relax in, both inside and outside in the gardens.

### What to Bring

The weather in this part of Wales can be unpredictable so I highly recommend bringing waterproofs, walking boots/shoes and warm clothes for those much-needed walks outside.

And, obviously, you'll need toiletries, and any medications.

Please bring your preferred method for writing – laptop, tablet, journals, pens, crayons and anything you might want to use to record your work.

The retreat centre sits in an area with extremely limited mobile phone coverage. We are on a landline and can be reached by families and friends in the event of emergencies.

### Arrivals and Departures

**You are welcome to arrive between 2pm and 4pm but by 5pm latest** on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> September or Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. I will welcome you, show you your accommodation, orient you to the house and area before we all gather for our first meal and then come together to begin the retreat.

We end with a shared lunch on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September or Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November.

I will happily coordinate lifts and pick-ups to and from Machynlleth train station.

### Dogs

We have two very friendly, small Jack Russell terriers who enjoy company, walks and strokes. They are part of the community here and will be with us throughout the retreat.

To discuss further and to secure your place, please contact me:

Phil: [info@emergence-uk.org](mailto:info@emergence-uk.org)

*I look forward to welcoming you!*