

ell, as the name of the column implies, usually, I look out the window, and if I can't see the sign, I don't write. Lately, it's been hazy around here, and to top it off, this may be my last column. Really. As opposed to John Dvorak's 'Last Column' that appears in the back of MicroTimes each and every month. Most of the time I do want it to be his last. At least we don't have to suffer through him in the back of MacUser every month.

Well, I went to the ShowBiz Expo last month. I know that most of you are expecting a report on the Macworld Expo, but that's in New York, and I'm in LA. Too far to walk. I'm sure my colleagues will have a few things to say, and I'll pick up the ball next month, in case they missed anything. Not too much to report on the homefront, as I was only there for a couple of hours. I was able to speak with the fine folks at BCSoftware, and found it interesting that they upgraded the current version of Final Draft on the Windows side to make it look more like the Mac version. This brought a smile to my face, and if I can get out from under my current hell, I'll do an updated review of the new version.

Also stopped by the PowerProduction booth, makers of StoryBoard Artist, and StoryBoard Quick. Spoke with Paul, the CTO (that's chief technology officer), and he may come through with a long-sought after review copy of StoryBoard Artist 3.0. Pray for this one, as he's not returning my e-mails. Paul, are you reading this?

Got a free t-shirt from the Movie Magic people, makers of Dramatica, and Hollywood Screenwriter, among others. They promised me a review version of Screenwriter when it becomes available for the Mac, which they said would be anywhere from two months to the end of the year. Of course, they've been saying this for a year now, so don't hold your breath. They also promised me an update to Dramatica, so I'll review that one as soon as it arrives. And I didn't really have to do anything too degrading to get the free shirt, short of a live striptease in the aisle. Apparently, it was the only way to get out of the thirty minute line. They said I was the best one they had so far, and they even got it on film. I don't know if they've put it up at their website <<http://www.movie-magic.com>>, but a visit might be in order. Let me know if you see me, because they didn't ask for a model release...

The thing that scared me the most was, 99.9% of the demos were being done on Windows machines. And yet, when push came to shove, the companies admitted to selling more Mac software, so go figure.

Stopped by a few booths, just to check locations for my opus, Diamond in the Rough. Some of the people had a rough time navigating their own websites. Jean at Universal Studios was extremely helpful, however, and you can check out their site at <<http://www.UniversalStudios.com>>. I managed to find Los Angeles in 1939, so I'm happy. Of course, I'll probably end up shooting in Toronto. By the way, the amount each of you readers

has to contribute to finance the thing is down to \$6 per. So, if you can find it in your heart to go without lunch one day...

Now, as to why this might be the last you see of me for awhile...well, the other day I was asked if I wanted to accept a transfer to Newport Beach. The implication was, be transferred, or be outta work. Of course, the resulting financial burden a round trip of one hundred miles a day would put on me wasn't discussed, furthermore, I wouldn't see my family anymore. I'm told that one day, my contractor may give me a raise, but who knows?

Now, it hasn't come to a point where I have to make this decision, but the writing is on the wall. And, since I don't have 'net access at home, and probably won't 'til I get a new job, this may be Ta Ta For Now.

Of course, our division has merged with another, so, the Site Manager that offered me this golden opportunity may be himself looking for other work. It turns out that one division doesn't need two Site Managers. I've got a couple of interviews this week, but if it's anything like the one I had at Showtime, I'm not holding my breath. It seems the fine folks that bring you Stargate SG-1 among others, have a one-hundred-and-fifty-person user base. All Windows. '95 on the laptops, NT on the desktops. Somehow, they thought I could do this. Not wanting to go to the darkside, I politely answered all their questions, and received a form rejection letter the next week. Would I have taken this job had it been offered? Hell yes. I'm reminded of the guy that follows parades around with a shovel, cleaning up the elephant droppings. Someone asked him why not find something else, he replied, "What? And give up show business?"

68 and hazy in ElSegundo.

e Ya next month.

Maybe.

Disclaimer: Mike will accept praise, flames, and job leads at: <[mshields@atpm.com](mailto:mshields@atpm.com)>. e wants to stay in the LA area and would prefer some sort of Mac job in the entertainment industry.