

**FULL SAIL STUDIOS**

**ANALYST'S REPORT**

**TITLE: THE KING'S SPEECH**                      **GENRE: DRAMA**  
**AUTHOR: DAVID SEIDLER**                      **TIME: IMMEDIATELY PRE-WWII**  
**DRAFT: 2010**                                      **LOCALE: BRITAIN**  
**SUBMITTED BY: JOE AGENT**                      **FORM: SCREENPLAY**  
**SUBMITTED TO: JANE PRODUCER**                      **PAGES: 90**  
**DATE: MARCH 16, 2016**                      **ANALYST: WILLIAM TOLSON**  
**BUDGET: MEDIUM**

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**PREMISE: A desperate King needs the help of a failed actor to overcome his seemingly incurable speech impediment before he can address a nation at war.**

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**ANALYST'S EVALUATION**

	<b><u>EXCELLENT</u></b>	<b><u>GOOD</u></b>	<b><u>FAIR</u></b>	<b><u>POOR</u></b>
<b>PREMISE:</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>STRUCTURE:</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>CHARACTERIZATION:</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>DIALOGUE:</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>COMMERCIALITY:</b>			<b>X</b>	

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**PROJECT: CONSIDER**

**WRITER: CONSIDER**

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**COMMENTS:** The deep characterizations and stunning dialogue do an excellent job of showing the universality of struggles with public speaking in a way that a wide audience might empathize with, but the premise might be so abstract that audiences won't give it a chance in the first place, and the dialogue-driven nature of the plot makes it highly reliant on the highest levels of acting talent to have any appeal at all.

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## SYNOPSIS:

After a stunning broadcast opening to the 1925 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Stadium, Prince Albert, also known as BERTIE (UNK), fails miserably to even start his speech he stammers so badly. The pseudo-scientific treatments of the day fail to fix the problem, so Bertie is left feeling completely helpless to live up to his political role, and his wife ELIZABETH (UNK) is at a loss to help him.

Elizabeth meets with LIONEL LOGUE (UNK) under a false name. But her cover doesn't last long when she can't handle being treated as a normal customer by Lionel. She is put off by his demeanor, but is willing to try pretty much anything, so she still sets up an appointment with him for Bertie.

The Prince is immediately put off by Lionel's demand that they act as peers during his sessions, and becomes basically adversarial when Lionel insists on calling him "Bertie"; a name reserved for only the Prince's closest family members. Lionel breaks the ice by betting Bertie that he can read Shakespeare without stuttering at all, proving that the problem is all in his head. Lionel has him read it with headphones blaring in his ears though, so he can't hear what he's actually saying. Afterwards, Bertie doesn't even want to hear it he's so convinced he performed terribly, and says he's not coming back. But Lionel at least gets him to take the as yet unheard recording as a "souvenir."

After KING GEORGE V (UNK), Bertie's father, gives an articulate Christmas address over the radio from his own study, he pulls Bertie aside for a private conversation. The King expresses his distaste for the fact that they have nearly become actors, but points out that Bertie is obligated to figure it out anyways. Especially since Bertie's older brother DAVID is likely to forfeit his position in favor of chasing divorced women. And so the King says that he sees World War II on the horizon, with Bertie sitting on the throne. But when Bertie tries to recite the speech the King has just given, he can't even get past the first sentence.

Feeling especially helpless, Bertie decided to give the recording from the meeting with Lionel a listen. He and Elizabeth are shocked to find that he read the words perfectly.

Bertie and Elizabeth go back to Lionel, but still demand only physical instruction instead of approaching the psychological problems that Lionel has pointed out as being the root of the problem. Lionel agrees to help in that way at least, even though it's clear he knows it won't help if that's all they do.

Bertie goes to visit his ailing father. His brother David, who is about to inherit the throne, is much more concerned about his current girlfriend than he is about his father or politics. WALLIS SIMPSON, the woman David is pining after, is an American divorcée. When King George passes, David's first concern is that he's stuck in Britain away from her.

Bertie goes to see Lionel, completely distraught by the situation. Lionel finally manages to get Bertie to open up about the root of the anxiety that causes him to stutter so badly when he's under pressure to perform: how tough his childhood was. Lionel learns that Bertie's father was very tough on him, both his left handedness and knock knees were treated as defects, his nanny was so abusive she starved him, and his little brother died when he was young. In the process of talking all of that through, it becomes clear that Bertie and Lionel have started to be fairly close friends.

Bertie goes to a party at the residence of his brother, the new King. In the process, Bertie becomes progressively more frustrated with David's childish approach to his responsibilities. And when David claims he's going to marry Wally, Bertie points out that he can't do that as king. So David cruelly mocks Bertie's stutter in return, and accuses him of his speech lessons being part of a plot to overthrow him.

Bertie, even more distraught than before, meets with Lionel to talk it through. But when Lionel suggests that he could and should be the king instead, Bertie gets so upset that he rattles off every personal insult he can think of at Lionel. They part ways, angry.

Bertie, speaking with the top cabinet members, becomes keenly aware of the war brewing and how little his brother seems to care about it. So he meets with him about it, only to find the David has already turned the throne over to him so he can marry Wally. At the speech to turn over the throne, Bertie sees Lionel but ignores him.

When Bertie talks the situation through with Elizabeth though, they come to terms with the fact that they need Lionel's help. They show up at Lionel's house. They both apologize, and Lionel reassures Bertie he can help. A light-hearted family conversation afterwards helps them all get comfortable with each other again; as much as "commoners" can be with royalty.

When Bertie insists that Lionel have a seat in the king's box seats during the coronation, the archbishop that used to be in charge of Bertie's treatment is insulted. He points out that Lionel isn't actually a Doctor. Lionel tries to explain the value of his experience treating shell-shocked soldiers with the same issues Bertie has, but the King can't seem to get over the fact that he hasn't been working with an actual doctor. In an attempt to demonstrate how little titles really matter, Lionel sits in the throne and points out that many of the sacred relics around it aren't anything special in reality. Bertie takes the disrespect personally at first, but then realizes that it really shows that he is perfectly capable of doing his duty as king.

Bertie's first major speech over the radio is the initiation of World War II with Germany, and he calls Lionel in for help. Lionel talks him through it, projecting his own confidence, and having Bertie deliver the speech like it's just the two of them in the sound box. Bertie performs perfectly.

The ending title card explains that Lionel was there for every single one of the king's speeches, and was even knighted for his service.

## COMMENTS:

The beauty of the premise of *The King's Speech* is that it shows that even some of the most famous orators in the world have struggled with public speaking, in ways more extreme than most of us have, but still overcome it. Since nearly everyone has struggled with speaking in front of an audience at some point in their lives, the struggle is one that will be easy to empathize with. But on top of that, seeing a polarized version of it through a character much more prestigious, but much more disadvantaged with speaking, overcome those problems could be extremely uplifting. The struggle to overcome that problem is also one that fits naturally to a strong archetypal plotline, so no questionable circumstances need to be added to force a rising level of engaging conflict.

The concept is somewhat unique, as well. It is rare to find a film that humanizes royalty as well as this story does. And when they do, it's normally in the form of some sort of violent or extreme palace intrigue, rather than through a struggle that every day people can so easily identify in their own lives. It is also difficult to find a film centered on World War II that the stakes are something so relatable, instead of a level of life and death that is often difficult to relate to on a personal level. So the story's approach to both the royalty and wartime settings is refreshing.

However, the problem with that premise is that—on the surface—it might not sound exciting enough to audiences. A stammering king practicing for a speech might be hard to frame in a way that makes it sound very exciting. And the fact that the movie is almost purely driven by dialogue might make it difficult to encourage prospective viewers to overcome the preconceived dullness they may assume of the idea. So the overall concept has strong upsides in the impressive depth of the characters it offers, but has relatively high risks in the realm of commercial viability.

The script itself has extremely well-developed characters through believable but emotionally memorable dialogue, which is part of what gives it a chance of success without much action or spectacle. Not only do the characters have very distinct tones, accents, and attitudes, but the tone of their dialogue changes brilliantly in reflection with the character's mood and setting at that exact point in the script. Also, although the obstacles to clear communication that come along with royalty in an instruction environment is an issue that has been approached in many other films, this story does a superior job of it. The morphing nature of the dialogue between Bertie and Lionel, using the tension of the odd relationship to either comfort or undermine each other, takes dramatic advantage of the situation to the fullest extent possible.

The script does have some inconsistencies in format and style though, with mixed results in terms of effectiveness.

The most noticeable is a sharp change in detail around the point where Lionel is introduced: the first few scenes have a much higher level of visual detail and camera direction than is usually preferred, but after that the screenplay balances visual detail with directive clarity superbly. The upside is that this script encourages the reader to think

very visually in a few short pages. And outside of adding more “black space” than pleases the eye, and possibly irritating actors and directors, the descriptive wording is beautiful. The biggest downside is likely that those first few pages can give a strong impression that the script is written by a novelist who is casually trying his hand at screenwriting, rather someone capable of the professional level of screenwriting that is demonstrated throughout the remainder of the screenplay.

The author also utilized a somewhat unique technique when it came to Bertie’s stuttering, with mixed results. After the first dialogue illustrating the stammering with punctuation, there is a note indicating that it is to be assumed from then on even though it isn’t explicitly included in the dialogue. Anyone who has read through a script that includes the punctuation for speech problems through the whole script will be instantly relieved in reading that decision. However, in actual execution, that technique had a few unfortunate side effects. The most obvious is that it cuts a script that would normally be around 110 pages down to only 90. So the production crew would have to remain keenly aware that the page count is atypical, since pages with a great deal of dialogue from Bertie at a stressful point in his arc could last almost two minutes, while pages without any stuttering would be the usual minute. The less obvious, but still distracting, side effect is that it forces extra action lines describing Bertie’s changes in stuttering depending on the scenario. Through in-dialogue punctuation, the point that he only has trouble under pressure could be illustrated exactly. Whereas with the exception made for that, there are tense but fairly private points in the script where the reader is left to wonder exactly how much trouble he might be having at the moment. There may not be a perfect solution for this kind of dialogue, and this solution saves both a great deal of time and leaves the actor with much more freedom, but it is not without disadvantages that must be considered.

Surprisingly, there were a few typos, formatting problems, and punctuation errors sprinkled throughout the script. Some of them fairly hard to miss, like almost completely omitting the ages of any of the main characters. However, they distracted minimally from the readability of the script, and were very forgivable in light of the polished style shown in the vast majority of the writing.

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