

Title: NATURAL BORN KILLERS

Form: SP

Author(s): Quentin Tarantino

Draft Date: 3/12/91

Draft Info: 3rd Draft, Revised

Genre: Crime/Satire

Pages: 127

Circa: Present

Submitted by:

Locale: Los Angeles; New Mexico

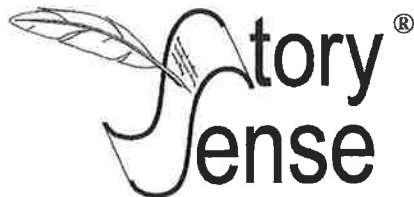
Submitted to:

Elements: Sean Young to star. Quentin Tarantino to direct.

Date Submitted: 7/27/91

Date Returned: 8/1/91

Log Line: A TV journalist interviews witnesses and experts for a documentary about a young married couple who kill people for fun, and the reporter is finally taken hostage in a prison break as he interviews the killers themselves.



Premise/Idea

Characterization

Dialogue

Story Line

Set/Prod. Values

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Premise/Idea		X		
Characterization			X	
Dialogue		X		
Story Line				X
Set/Prod. Values			X	

Budget: Medium

Script: Consider

Writer: Consider

Synopsis:

Harassed by three red-necks in a truck stop cafe, MALLORY KNOX responds with two fatal punches. Her husband MICKEY KNOX slices up the third with his buck knife, then blows away the Cook and the Waitress with slugs from his .45. Leaving a Pinball Cowboy alive to tell the tale, the two killers kiss and drive off in their Coupe De Ville. They have left a trail of 45 persons dead in their brief, carnage-strewn career, which began when they offed Mallory's parents for forbidding them to marry. Confined to prison for the past year, the notorious couple are the subject of a TV profile by WAYNE GAYLE, a commando journalist à la Geraldo Rivera. Having killed five inmates, eight guards and one psychiatrist, they have recently been declared insane. DEWIGHT MCCLUSKY of the California Prison Board assigns famous detective JACK SCAGNETTI to ride shotgun on their transfer to an insane asylum, where the couple will be lobotomized. Promising Mickey he will expose the relocation as an attempt to shift blame away from the system, Wayne secures his cooperation for a live mini-cam interview the night of the broadcast.

The journalist and his three-person crew screen a rough cut of the footage assembled thus far. They have home movies of Mickey and Mallory spliced in with photos of their victims, film of their arrest, a massacre at a convenience store captured by a surveillance camera, plus testimony from a surviving patrolman. Mickey acted as his own counsel during the trial. JUDGE BURT STEINSMA remarks that the defendant proved to be an excellent amateur attorney. Bodybuilders SIMON and NORMAN HUN express their admiration for Mickey's "edge," despite the fact that he chainsawed their legs off. Clips from the movie *Thrill Killers*, Hollywood's version of the Mickey and Mallory story, are shown. Director NEIL POPE rationalizes the suicidal ending, while actress BUFFY defends the film's violence. DR. REINGOLD discusses the magnetic appeal which Mickey and Mallory seem to have on American youth. A wicked twist to the story comes with the case of GRACE MULBERRY, the lone survivor of a slumber party massacre. Intimidated by Mickey during cross-examination, she ends up being stabbed to death with a pencil. On the subject of transferring the prisoners to an insane asylum, Dr. Reingold supports Wayne's contention that it points to a failure within the system.

Arriving at the prison for the live interview, Wayne and his crew set up equipment in an empty supply room. Superintendent PHIL WULITZER has eight deputies stationed there, but for the sake of intimacy Wayne negotiates him down to four. Elsewhere in the facility, Scagnetti torments Mallory by vulgarly reminding her that Mickey will never give her "the high hard one" again. She reacts by breaking his nose. Mickey proves to be a wily subject, forcing Wayne to use his ingenuity. The killer refers to his crime spree as "an instant of purity." He describes the moment when he first realized he was "a natural born killer." With Wulitzer distracted by a riot, Mickey busts loose, killing the deputies and the cameraman. He frees Mallory from her cell, killing Scagnetti with a vengeance. Holding Wayne as a shield, the two lovers make good their getaway in the news van. The last bit of cinema vérité has Wayne recapitulating their escape before he, too, falls victim to a shotgun blast.

Comments:

What *This Is Spinal Tap* did for rock band documentaries, this screenplay attempts to do for TV profiles of serial killers. The concept is an interesting one, not unlike the approach Woody Allen took in *Take the Money and Run*. It provides an opportunity to satirize the criminal justice system, America's glamorization of murder and how the media itself feeds off crime. In this respect, the first half is the funnier and more unique portion of the story. It follows a Geraldo Rivera-type reporter in his crass pursuit of sensationalism. In the interviews with various witnesses and experts, many of whom appear enamored with the killer mystique despite their victimization, the script shines with tongue-in-cheek humor.

It is less successful in its second half, when it steps out of the documentary mode and assumes a more traditional cinema format. All humor is lost during the climactic jail break, when carnage again dominates the scene. While the action is undeniably gritty and exciting, the shift in technique and mood comes as a brutal shock.

Much more could be done with the premise than is explored here. For example, we know virtually nothing about Mickey's and Mallory's childhood or family life. The approach tends to be limited to opinions of various criminal experts and testimony by witnesses. Mickey's poetic talent and sharpness of wit help to make him a fascinating personality, but he could use additional fleshing out. Mallory remains little more than a love interest.

The writing is uneven, with some scenes working better than others. While the dialogue has its wry moments, it often becomes preachy and inane. The legal system does have its share of absurdities, including the idea that a mass murderer could cross-examine witnesses in court. However, the lengthy sequence involving Grace Mulberry, with its specific instructions to shoot everything in arch close-ups, comes off as a self-indulgent exercise in bad taste. Although it needs considerable work, this script's portrait of criminality has the potential for being a uniquely original black comedy.

CONSIDER script

CONSIDER writer

Michael Ray Brown

8/1/91