

Douma thinks Pitch Perfect will be particularly helpful for those who lack access to meetings in Los Angeles. But he also feels it can be useful for "those entrenched in the business who understand what a fickle market it can be." To provide more incentive for executives to peruse the site, he's made the service complimentary for WGA members.

As for security, Douma says the potential buyers on the site must have industry credentials and are pre-screened before being granted access. An added security feature is the View Log, which shows writers who has viewed their pitch.

Subscriptions are restricted to one video pitch at a time, locked down by title for security and logistical reasons. Pitch Perfect offers three plans: a three-month, six-month and one-year plan for \$39.95, \$69.95 and \$119.95 respectively.

The website is clean and user-friendly. And it includes forums where screenwriters can connect online. One of the congenial groups is the bargain-hunter group for thrifty writers, where members share information about free screenings and other great deals. Pitch Perfect also functions as a source of information, notifying members of contests, events and other news.

As a writer who hates to see myself on camera, I felt most comfortable using Virtual Pitch Fest ([virtualpitchfest.com](http://virtualpitchfest.com)). This site is a vehicle for submitting query letters to industry professionals. Writers gain access to agents, managers and production companies. A notable distinction of Virtual Pitch Fest is that it puts the writer in the driver's seat. Unlike the first two sites, this one lets the writer target his or her company of choice. Writers select the company from a list of more than 150 industry professionals — and it's a desirable list. The website provides information on the name of the potential reader, recent projects and what they are seeking. Five query letters, guaranteed to be read and replied to, costs \$50. Ten letters costs \$90, with the added bonus that owner David Kohner Zuckerman will edit a letter free of charge.

The turnaround is fast. Industry profes-

sionals respond to the pitch within five business days. The recipient has two options. The first is a yes to the writer, at which point the writer is invited to send in a script or treatment. At that point, the correspondence is directly between the writer and the buyer. The other option is no — the reader is not interested. There's a form to include the reasons they're passing on the script and a place to provide comments.

The site has been in business for two years and displays a "scoreboard" that



quantifies its success stories. Also, there's no ticking clock at this service; the writer pays for a given number of submissions and uses them as needed. The client mix includes both WGA members and newer writers.

There are some pretty big players on the site. Intellectual Property Group, Marc Platt and Hyde Park Entertainment are just a few

## virtual pitchfest

bringing Hollywood to you

of the production companies on the list. Zuckerman encourages new writers to also think of smaller production companies as part of their strategy, pointing out that they can be more accessible and may have more time to work with writers. "They're looking for a diamond in the rough. A small producer can be a really good friend to the writer," Zuckerman says.

I submitted two queries for my own projects. The first production company passed, and I received a detailed response on the weaknesses in my pitch letter. Armed with this knowledge, I made big improvements in my second query, and the next company requested the script. At this point, according to the site's policy, I can correspond directly with the production company.

I also used the editing service provided by Zuckerman. For me, this in itself was a worthy investment. Zuckerman was able to cull from my draft letter the essence of my story and make it more coherent.

More importantly, his notes made my story appeal to a buyer. This is training that I'll keep with me.

One of Zuckerman's strengths is that he can offer perspective from the buyers' side. He is the president of ScriptCoach, a screenwriting consulting company that assists and supports writers. He's produced movies, including *All I Want for Christmas* and *Chump Change*, and has served as head of development for Silver Lion Films, where he worked on *Man on Fire*. As a seasoned executive, he designed the system to be efficient and comfortable for time-pressed executives. Built to be friendly to the writer and useful to the buyer, Virtual Pitch Fest strikes me as a win-win prospect. It adds access

and speed to the old-fashioned way of approaching a buyer with a well-crafted query letter.

As more people adopt a digital way of doing things, the Internet can be a vehicle to advance your career. A website and its functions, from pitching to community, can make a world of difference. It can help writers improve their technique on the "business" side, while cultivating camaraderie in what can sometimes be a lonely endeavor.

And while putting your precious idea online may seem precarious to some, in this fast-paced, digital age, writers are able to pitch the idea but protect the body of work until the actual meeting. ■

**PitchQ:** one video pitch, \$19 per month; each additional video, \$10 per month.

**Pitch Perfect:** one video pitch at a time; three months, \$39.95; six months, \$69.95; one year, \$119.95.

**Virtual Pitch Fest:** guaranteed response to query letters within five days; five letters, \$50; 10 letters plus editing, \$90.