

# RAILS

A 30-MIN SINGLE CAM COMEDY PILOT  
WRITTEN BY CRAIG DOUGLAS MILLER

# LOGLINE

Fed up with the conservatism of her megalith employer, a rebellious advertising creative director leads her team of brilliant misfits on a kamikaze mission to burn down the entire ad industry from within, only to find themselves becoming more successful than ever.

# PROTAGONIST



## REESE RAILS

Group Creative Director

Reese Rails exterior is tough as nails and tomboyish, with a biting wit that can bring anyone down to size. But she carries a deep sadness over the untimely death of her father, also an advertising exec, and the man who passed down his rebellious spirit to her.

She's a bit like Kill Bill's "the Bride" in her ability to supremely tough rebellious, while remaining fetchingly feminine when it suits her needs.

It's clear that if she weren't female, Reese's sheer talent would've sent her skyrocketing to the very top of the ad industry. So, while she carries a deep love of what great advertising is, she's got a deep hatred of the misogynist "boys clubs" that ad agencies still are in the mid-1990s.

**REESE'S TEAM**



## **SCOOP**

Copywriter

A literary-minded young hipster, Scoop brings all the anarchic, rebellious spirit and unfettered arrogance of his heroes Hunter S. Thompson and Charles Bukowski, at least until he's put in his place by Sean or Della. Throw in John McEnroe's temper and complete lack of brain to mouth filter, and you have Scoop, the catalyst for heaping helpings of chaotic brilliance, or sometimes just plain chaos.



## **DELLA**

Art Director

Indian-American art director Della suffers no fools. As an amateur kickboxer, she can take you down easily with a pointed barb or a sharp right cross. She's part Rhonda Rousey and part Parker Posey. Unlike so many pseudo-rebellious Indian-American female characters who defy their traditional upbringing by playing soccer or marrying the wrong guy, Della rebels full force. She's physically imposing, impossible to frighten, and completely unapologetic about who she is. And while she embodies feminism in her life and actions, she never wants to be called a feminist. She's too busy kicking ass.





## **KHALID**

### Account Executive

Like most ad industry account execs, Khalid is a pragmatist through and through. And while he wants to be the guy worshipping at the same altar of creativity as Reese, he sometimes lacks the courage of his convictions, and wishes she could tone it down a little in the name of job security. After all, he needs a very steady paycheck to keep himself drinking expensive Scotch, driving German sports cars and listening to rare John Coltrane vinyl.



## **HARRINGTON**

### Strategist

Harrington is a proper British ginger kid, with the complete lack of street smarts that have come from living his first 18 years exclusively in his hometown of Oxford, England. But despite his sheltered life up to now, Harrington has a surprising lust for all things new, and an uncanny ability to adapt to those around him, even if their drug-fueled antics are like nothing he's seen before.

# **OTHER CHARACTERS**



## **MATTHEWS**

President, CEO

Matthews, the son of the agency founder, has the false bravado and arrogance of a man who underneath knows he's ridden on others' coattails his whole life. He's the embodiment of old school "boys club" fat cat advertising executives, who are only concerned with lining their pockets. His main motivation in life and at the office is showing everyone that he's in charge, even when he isn't. Trump wasn't yet a politician in the 90's when the show is set. But you can bet that Matthews supported him 100%.



## **TEE BALL**

Agency Drug Dealer

Drug dealer to the ad industry, outlaw Teeball paradoxically shows more professionalism than anyone IN the ad industry, remaining stoic, cool and in control of every situation. At 4'10, he is often mistaken for a dwarf/little person/midget, or whatever other offensive term people hurl his way.





## **BIG DONNY**

Founder, DonnyBurger

Big Donny started with one DonnyBurger restaurant in Abilene, TX, and grew it into a huge national chain during the economic boom of the 90s. Like many other narcissistic, yet successful people, he's convinced himself that all his success is 100% due to his own potency, with no credit given to the luck, being in the right place at the right time, or to others who helped him along the way. He portrays himself in the media as a classic Texan small-town Christian good family man. But when he's off the clock, he's usually in Las Vegas betting ridiculous sums of money and patronizing the escort industry with reckless abandon.



## **CHANT MCRAE**

Porsche Salesman

If cocaine was a person, it might be Chant McRae. He's bipolar disorder in a shiny suit. His cocaine habit is a thinly disguised effort to numb the pain of a life of psychological torture from his ornery, senile mother Misty, who owns the Porsche dealership where he works.

# THE ADS

The advertising that Reese's team come up with is shocking and seemingly insane. But, it works because it tells the truth. So much so that the advertising almost becomes another character in the show. There's hints of George Carlin, Wanda Sykes and Norm MacDonald in the ad writers' voice. And the ads represent the "id" of the team, in that they tell the truth of the world, with no mind given to the consequences.



Better than our vapid, shallow  
fame-obsessed culture deserves

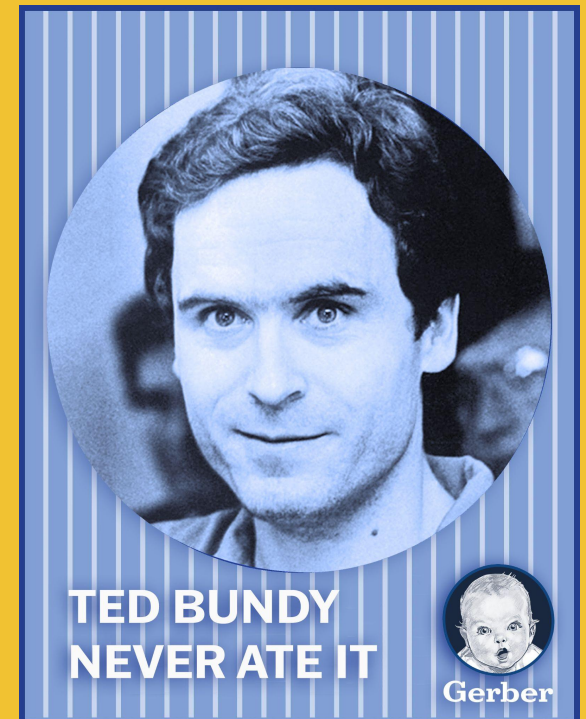
**OLD FOURTH DISTILLERY**

*Bottled in Bond*  
STRAIGHT  
BOURBON  
WHISKEY

100  
YEARS

ALC. 50% BY VOL. (100 PROOF) / 750ml  
Produced by Old Fourth Distillery  
Atlanta, Georgia

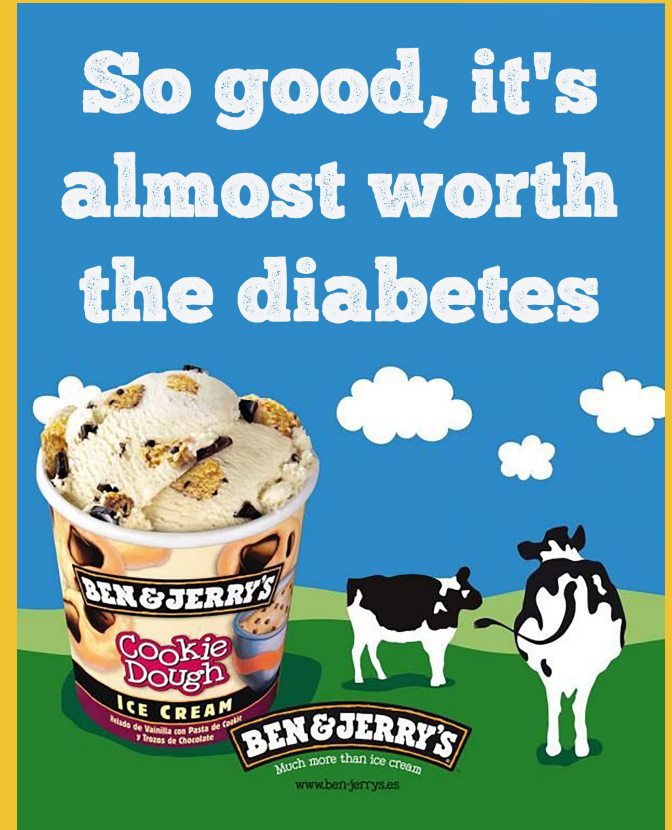
**OLD FOURTH DISTILLERY**



**TED BUNDY  
NEVER ATE IT**

Gerber



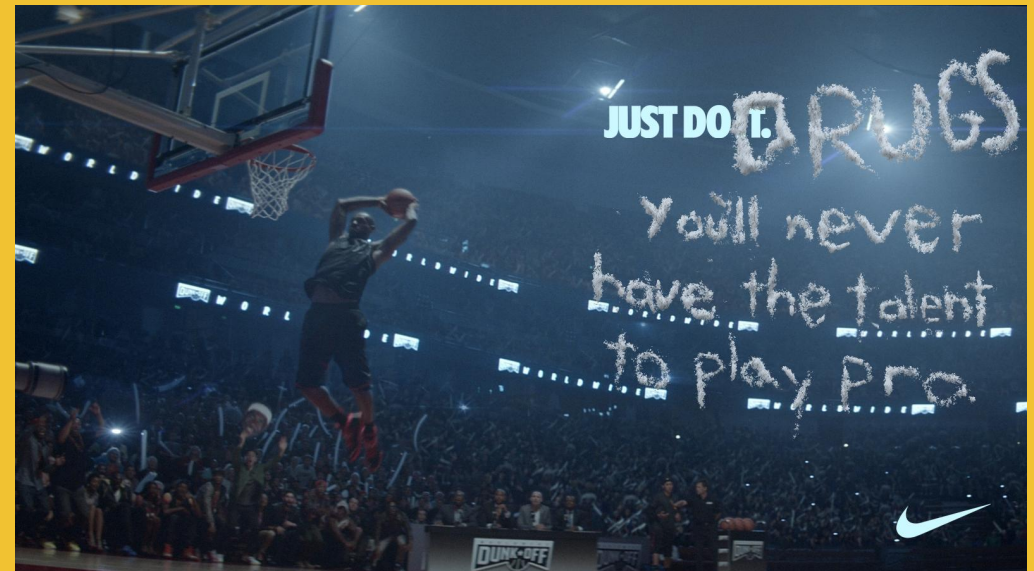


**IT TAKES A REAL TURD  
TO NOT AT LEAST SPRING  
FOR THE GOOD STAPLES**



**BOSTITCH**

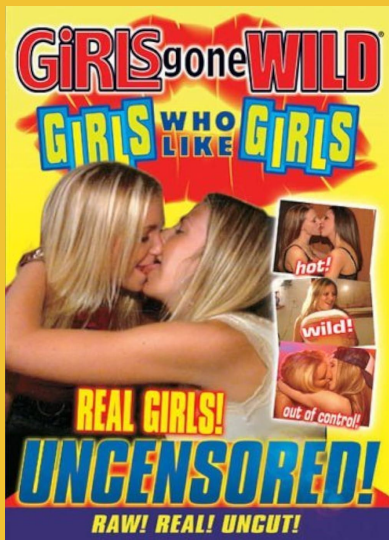
**BUY SOME, YOU CHEAPSKATE**



# THE WORLD

The mid-90s in the city, a time when 80's excess culture was being dragged out kicking and screaming. But the economy was still booming, and lots of people were making lots of money in the dot.com gold rush, creating a new class of nouveau riche young New Yorkers trying to outdo each other. It was before #metoo, or pronouns, or Black Lives Matter. And sexism and racism, while normally hidden beneath the surface, ran rampant.

For a brief moment, it seemed as though a new more sensitive, caring, authentic and powerful movement might have a chance to truly change the world. But by 1995, Kurt Cobain was gone, and authenticity and individuality themselves became commoditized, leaving us all to wonder how it all went kaput so quickly.





# PILOT SYNOPSIS

REESE RAILS is not your average advertising creative director. First, she's a woman in the misogynist "boys club" that is the advertising industry in the mid-90's. Second, she's hyper-talented, courageous, unflinchingly honest and brilliantly nihilistic in her work. But, when we find her, she's nearly reached her breaking point after a decade plus being pushed aside by her so-called superiors at old-school megalith ad agency, DMB&BO.

She's got a team of equally rebellious and talented misfits under her wing, including literary hipster SCOOP, a copywriter who longs to be Hunter S. Thompson, but has a temper more akin to John McEnroe. There's DELLA, art director and up and coming MMA fighter. She's the Indian-American woman who defies every stereotype of the Indian-American woman. Then, there's Reese's account guy and sidekick KHALID, whose cautious professionalism masks an burning desire to say screw it all and let it rip. Lastly there's the newest member of the team, 18 year old proper British ginger HARRINGTON, the Doogie Howser of advertising strategic planning.

After an important presentation to her client BIG DONNY of Donnyburger goes horribly wrong, her upstart nepo-baby superior MATTHEWS relegates her and her team to the dreaded Urostream account. And when Matthews adds insult to injury by taking his borderline sexual harassment one step too far, Reese has had enough of this shit, and she's not gonna take it anymore.

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# PILOT SYNOPSIS

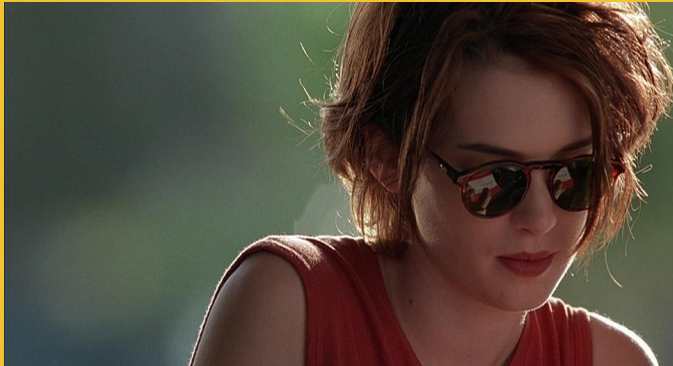
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She and the team vow to go down in a blaze of glory with a final “futile and stupid gesture,” a kamikaze mission designed to destroy the agency from within, and their careers along with it. Through a bit of forgery and corporate espionage, they produce and air a twistedly brilliant yet completely inappropriate TV commercial for local Porsche dealer and major douchebag CHANT MCRAE, featuring a father snorting a huge rail of cocaine right off the family breakfast table before ripping down Highway One at breakneck speed in a new Porsche 911.

The team’s ad succeeds beautifully in getting them all fired. And it succeeds in making Chant so enraged that he literally burns the agency down. But the ad does something else too. It sends Porsche sales skyrocketing overnight. So ,when Porsche CMO JENNIFER QUINN comes calling to give DMB&BO the Porsche account, Matthews is forced to grovel at Reese’s feet and beg her and her team to stay on.

# LOOK & FEEL

The show should draw from both comedic and dramatic shooting styles. And since it's set in the 1990's, we're thinking it should be shot with have a retro 1990s flair, with lots of dramatic backlighting on our characters, and a gritty muted color palette.



# STORY ENGINE

Each week we'll find Reese and her team taking on another new client, each stranger than the last. Not only that, but they'll also take on a host of enemies sprung from the entire rotten ad industry, a cesspool of jealous, greedy corporate sell-outs, who would like nothing more than to see Reese fall flat on her face.

The ads they make will be almost like another character in the show, as we see Reese's nihilistic approach applied to corporate ad campaigns, a form of communication that's normally too terrified of offending anyone to say anything truly entertaining or honest.

And the soundtrack will be a string of 90's punk and post-punk women (Sonic Youth, Romeo Void, The Waitresses) who like Reese, kicked ass on their own terms.

They won't always succeed, but they'll always be fun to watch, as they fight to overthrow every tired and insulting ad industry convention, fighting the good fight with guts, heart courage, and a dash of sex, drugs & rock'n'roll.

# SEASON ONE

## **SEASON ONE: Anarchy in the U.S.A.**

**Episode 1:** While embarking on a kamikaze mission to destroy their agency from within, Reese and team strike gold with an extremely unconventional ad for Porsche.

**Episode 2:** When the team's second Danny Boyle directed Porsche commercial is put into focus group testing, Scoop and Tee-Ball and team set out to break into the testing facility and rig the test.

**Episode 3:** Chant wins "Marketer of the Year" at the Advertising Age Awards and the team from DMB&BO are forced to try to save him from his own worst tendencies.

**Episode 4:** The team recruits drug-dealing Tee-ball to fake having cancer for a National Cancer Society pitch video. But things get dicey when the National Cancer Society seeks to make him the face of the organization.

# SEASON ONE

**Episode 5:** Reese and Matthews are forced to hide their contempt for each other when they are recruited to give a joint presentation to the industry at the Cannes Festival of Creativity. Meanwhile, Scoop and Della try to land the McCormick spice account without offending the entire nation of India.

**Episode 6:** A starstruck Khalid loses respect for his hero, and loses the team's pitch for the Lovesac account when he hires Donald Fagen of Steely Dan fame to do the music for the new campaign.

**Episode 7:** Reese has to race home early from her trip to Greece and come to the team's rescue after letting Scoop and Della run the Bostich Staples Account in her absence.

**Episode 8:** After his father retires, Matthews is finally let go, finding himself with few career prospects. Reese is again passed over for promotion, and decides to leave for a new agency: her own.



# SEASONS 2-5

## **SEASON 2: Jumping Someone Else's Train**

Rails, Reese's new agency, hits the ground running, with an especially controversial and especially effective campaign for Beef Jerky. So, the behemoth ad industry titans do what they always do to upstart agencies on the rise: They try to swallow it up and make it go away with huge buyout offers.

## **SEASON 3: Bizarre Love Triangle**

In an attempt to stave off the corporate wolves at the gate of Rails, Sean hires the Machiavellian and business savvy Keisha to fight them at their own game. Somehow, the agency becomes even more chaotic in the process.

## **SEASON 4: Truth Hits Everybody**

Truckloads of chickens simultaneously come home to roost, Reese and the team deal with the repercussions, both good and bad, of becoming simultaneously the most beloved and most hated ad agency on the planet.

## **SEASON 5: Smash It Up**

Finding themselves with as many lawsuits as creative successes, Reese and team set out to sabotage Rails and go out in a blaze of glory.

# WHY MAKE THIS?

Despite all the advancements society and culture have made, much of life, and most of advertising is more banal, formulaic, and downright cringeworthy than ever before. Rails gives us the vicarious thrill of fighting back against the conformity, fear and drudgery that keeps us all down by keeping us from being honest with ourselves.

And while we've seen many heroines out to fight misogyny and patriarchy, we haven't seen one like Reese, who isn't trying to "make it in a man's world," but instead, wants to blow up her entire diseased industry, gender be damned.

The world is full of beaten down people these days, who are aching to see another Howard Beale or Jay Bulworth type of story and character who just says screw everything and tells the plain truth. That's who Reese Rails is, and that's what we'll do with this show.

# THE WRITER



Craig developed his own dark and rebelliously comedic tone over a twenty-year career as an advertising creative director, not to mention five years doing standup comedy, and a stint touring the country fronting an alt-rock band. His first four screenwriting projects, ("Uncle Ron & The Ryan Express", "Rails", "Grant Park," & "Weekend at Bernie's III") all earned 2nd Rounder status at Austin Film Festival along with other many other accolades He lives in Atlanta, but misses New York City terribly.

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