

PROGRAMADIC (THE MUSICAL)

Written by
Tom Triscari
Fiction

Summer/Fall 2023

PrograMADic is written as a movie script to first build out the story and then layer on the various elements to convert the story into a musical at a future point in time.

This script and musical is a work of fiction based on real-life events. Artistic liberties have been taken to enhance the narrative and create a compelling experience. Certain sequences, dialogues, and character interactions have been fictionalized or altered for dramatic effect. While certain elements and characters might be inspired by true stories, the portrayal of events, people, and circumstances has been dramatized and fictionalized for entertainment purposes and does not intend to present a factual account of the events, and any resemblance to real people, places, or incidents is purely coincidental.

FADE IN:

"The people heard it, and approved the doctrine, and immediately practiced the contrary."

— Benjamin Franklin, The Way to Wealth

FADE TO:

1 INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM -1999

1

A college kid is plugging away on a desktop computer. Beige UPS packages are everywhere. Jonas Goodrich, a junior at a fancy Ivy League college, is on financial aid. But you would never know it. The camera pans to a poster on the wall of Milton Friedman. It says, "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

JONAS

(Turns around from desktop,
speaks directly to the
camera) Everything is free
on the internet.

JONAS spins his desk chair back around and gets back to typing like a madman. We'll meet JONAS later.

The voice that walks us through the beginning of it all is smart and to the point. Probably very good-looking too.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

The first banner ads appeared on Wired's website, HotWired.com, on October 27, 1994, featuring brands like AT&T, MCI, Club Med, 1-800-Collect, and Zima. Most advertisers were confused by the web and suspicious of who these web-crawling users were. They bought ads anyway. By the boatload. It was the future of advertising and everyone knew it.

CUT TO:

2 INT. AD AGENCY - 1999

2

We see the nameplate of Milner Vincent Bennett McNamara Schulman on the door. A group of fat cat agency executives sit around a conference room table. They aren't actually fat. The men are wearing nice suits, no tie. The women are in grey pantsuits.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

These ad agency people placed some of those first banner ads without telling clients, they figured it would be easier to explain after the fact. By the late '90s, advertising on the Internet was big business. Websites had banner ads, which were sold by agencies, while search engines had text ads, which were sold through automated auctions. This roughly corresponded to a bicoastal divide.

SMASH CUT TO:

3 INT. SWANKY L.A. OFFICE - 1999**3**

We zoom in from above on a super cool open office in a retrofitted warehouse in Culver City. The parameter of the interior has glass wall offices. Casually dressed busy bees are buzzing about the place.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

The techies on the West Coast decided it was best to charge advertiser clients when people click on ads.

We end up zooming in on a young surfer dude's computer screen. If Jeff Spicoli from Fast Times and Ridgemont High was a designer, we just found him. He's designing a banner ad called "Punch the Monkey."

DESIGNER

(Turns toward the camera)

No, seriously, dude. Back in '99, clients were all like, 'We want clicks, man!' They were so totally stoked on clicks. So we made ads that got clicks. Lots of clicks. Even if they were kinda, like, meaningless clicks. It's supply and demand, bro. Now take a hike. I'm like totally busy, dude.

(Gets back to work)

SMASH CUT TO:

4 INT. SWANKY NYC OFFICE - 1999

4

Now we're quickly hovering down Park Avenue around 20th Street in the Flatiron District. We hear traffic and horns. It's New York, could the cliché be any other way? We enter a brick interior loft office through a floor-to-ceiling window. Worker bees buzz about. Everyone is fashionably dressed. It's like they just came out of a Vogue/GQ photo shoot.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)

Agency madmen wrote the rules on the East Coast. They developed a different model. Typical magazine publishers like Time or Newsweek or newspapers like USA Today or The New York Times were, quote, unquote, "going digital." It was easy money everywhere.

A man and a woman are looking at the same computer screen. NYT.com is on the screen. We zoom in on an office phone. We hear a voice coming through the speakerphone.

VOICE

Look, I can sell my ad inventory to you or someone else. Either way, I'm getting a \$25 CPM. Are you in or out?

WOMAN

Give us a second, Bob.
(hits mute button).
What a dick. He's totally fucking us.

MAN

Because he can. Look, they told us to get the campaign booked by end of day. Fuck it. It's not our money.

WOMAN

(hit mute button again)
OK, Bob, you gouged us, again. Fax us the insertion order.

VOICE

That's what I thought. It's my pleasure to serve you.

WOMAN

Fuck off. Just fax us the insertion order.

(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(ends the call with a
forceful click)

SMASH CUT TO:

5 INT. NEW YORK TIMES SALES OFFICE - 1999 5

We enter a busy ad sales floor. Several sales reps are on the phone getting deals done. Bob the ad sales guy is dialing a number on a fax machine.

BOB
Remember these. It's called a fax machine. I sold millions of dollars of ad using this beauty. I have a boat now, it's really nice. Supply and demand baby, it's a beautiful thing.

6 EXT. DORM ROOM - 1999 6

We see a printed logo scotch taped to the outside of a dorm room door. It says "Dealize." We enter the room.

7 INT. DORM ROOM - 1999 7

JONAS is facing a desktop computer screen. We get a good look around the place. JONAS swings around in his desk chair to face the camera.

JONAS
Hi, I'm Jonas Goodrich. Me and my brother Nolan started the mess advertisers are in today. We're the O.G.s of programmatic. We figured out how to turn internet deals for all kinds of stuff into an irrationally profitable newsletter. Companies like Barnes & Noble paid us commissions for referring customers. eCommerce companies in their infancy needed to show constant growth. So they didn't try very hard to stop people like us from signing up, even multiple times, with bogus email addresses just to get freebies. There was an easy trade in play
(MORE)

JONAS (CONT'D)
 and we were on the other side of
 it. That's when it clicked.
 These guys are paying us to give
 away their stuff. It seemed crazy
 because it was.

MUSIC: Something hip hoppy like "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS
 by Diddy and Notorious BIG.

*What y'all want to do? Want to be ballers, shot callers,
 brawlers, who be dipping in the Benz with the spoilers.*

Hundred-dollar bills fall in slo-mo from the dorm room ceiling
 like confetti to cue up our storytelling CONSULTANT.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)
 For two kids used to working
 minimum wage, it was intoxicating.
 But they needed to figure out
 how to get more people into their
 database. They needed to do
 advertising. So, the Goodrich
 brothers started buying ad space in
 other email newsletters. It was
 magic. Anything they spent on
 advertising quickly converted into
 new subscribers who quickly
 converted into commissions. They
 ran ads and generated revenue
 virtually instantaneously. It was
 one of the greatest arbitrages of
 all time. They couldn't buy ad
 space fast enough, literally.

8 INT. NEW YORK SPORTS CLUB - 1999

8

We stroll through a large gym floor full of machines. Men and
 women working out. The place is packed. Everyone looks great.

CONSULTANT (V.O.)
 If it were 2023, the Goodrich
 brothers could easily have
 purchased ads at the prices they
 wanted on an ad exchange. Kind of
 like a stock exchange.
 Think of it as a democratized
 platform that gives publishers and
 advertisers of all sizes
 (MORE)

CONSULTANT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 unprecedented access to a massive marketplace, where there are sellers and buyers at every price point. Deals are done in milliseconds. Only a few people know how it really works, but we'll get to that part later.

A PERSONAL TRAINER comes into view. We see his back. He's giving a lesson to a hot middle-aged woman. She looks like a pampered housewife. She's working on squats. She's wearing a New York Yankees ball cap. He's probably nailing her on the side. Wait... maybe it's more like she's nailing him.

SMASH CUT TO:

9 INT. FANCY HIGH RISE APARTMENT, NYC - NIGHT OR DAY 9

We see the same woman standing in a living room doorway. The skyline view behind her is spectacular. She's wearing nothing but high heels and a New York Yankees ball cap.

WOMAN
 Are we doing this or what?

CUT BACK TO:

10 INT. GYM 10

MARK WALLACH
 That looks great, Sheryl. Really great.
 (turns to speak directly at us)
 Twenty-some years ago ad exchanges didn't exist.
 Not until I came along.
 The bulk of advertising on the web were annoying banner ads, and those were being sold over lunches and dinners in New York City at prices far above what the Goodrich brothers wanted to pay. I changed all that.
 Yeah, I was working as a trainer at the time.
 So what. It had its perks.
 Then the American dream happened.

It's lunchtime. We meander through a busy restaurant, probably an upscale Italian place like Emilio's Ballato or a Frenchy place like Balthazar. We hear internet ad chatter and see deal-making in action as we pass through the place. Our CONSULTANT Sherpa is sitting at a table. We finally meet him.

CONSULTANT

I told you we'd meet. Too bad it's in a place like this. Back then it was banner ads. Today's all "programmatic" ad exchanges.

(uses air quotes with a dose of skepticism)

In '99, the Goodriches needed to expand their business as fast as possible. And they needed to do more than find people like this

(gestures to the dining room)

who only sell overpriced banner ads. They needed to find a guy who could goose an ad server. Ad-serving technology was at the center of it all. Do you even know what an ad server is? I didn't think so. So, who better to explain it than The Godfather of Programmatic himself, Brian O'Kelley... aka "BOK".

(uses air quotes, again)

We close in on BOK. A kind-looking motherly woman is sitting next to him at the table with our CONSULTANT. It's BRIAN's mom.

MOM

Go ahead, Brian. Explain what that ad server thingy does like you did for me in 1999.

(looks directly into the camera)

I had no idea what my smart son did for a living, but I had to tell my friends something.

BOK

Ok, let's give it a go, Mom. You like reading the newspaper, right?

MOM

I never miss a day... you know that
(silly, dismissive)

The waiter places various starter plates on the table and pours water.

BOK

Well... the internet is just like a newspaper only much bigger with lots of articles and pictures. Some people want to put their advertisements in this huge newspaper to show them to lots of readers. In your newspaper, like this New York Times right here,
(pick up folded newspaper off the table)

it's people who decide which ad goes where. An ad server is just like that person in charge of deciding where and when those advertisements should go in the newspaper. When someone like you or me opens this endless newspaper called the Internet, the ad server tries to understand who you are and what you like. For example, if you like gardening, which I know you do, the ad server will make sure you see ads about gardening tools. If you like baking or sports, the ad server wants to show you ads about baking items or sports products. That's it. That's how an ad server works. Only difference is it does that job billions of times every day.

MOM

(looking into the camera)
There you have it. That's why he's the Godfather.

CONSULTANT

Back to the Goodrich brothers. They needed to find a guy who could trick an ad server and create money from nothing. That's called an "arbitrage." And that's what Wallach saw before anyone else. But they also needed a tech guy to code it.

(MORE)

CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

That's where this guy came in
handy.

(thumb points to BOK, he's
eating a forkful of twisted
pasta)

Brian invented a whole new
technology for the Goodriches. And
not just any technology. He built a
technology that would change the
way the entire advertising business
works and open a can of worms worth
billions of advertising dollars.