

JAMES SUTHERLAND

Screenwriter | Tokyo, Japan

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PROFILE

Award-recognized screenwriter specializing in psychological and moral thrillers grounded in realism and consequence. Experienced in story development, script analysis, and collaborative filmmaking. Member of the International Screenwriters Association and multiple international film festival juries. Driven by character-centered storytelling that explores guilt, corruption, and survival across global settings.

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Finalist – Dubai International Screenplay Awards (2024)
- Official Selection – Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival (2024)
- Official Selection – Dubai International Screenplay Awards (2024)
- Semifinalist – Creative Screenwriting TV Pilot Competition (2025)
- Semifinalist – Creative Screenwriting Feature Screenplay Competition (2025)
- Script requested by South Pacific Pictures for *Featherston* (2024)

SELECTED SCREENPLAYS

HANA – Noir / Action Thriller

A bullied suburban housewife walks into the robbery homicide of a loan shark and must evade both sides of the law to protect her family.

FEATHERSTON – Historical / Psychological Thriller

In a quiet New Zealand town, a washed-up journalist uncovers a string of suspicious deaths tied to a WWII POW massacre, forcing him to expose a deadly cover-up by the town's elite before he's buried with the truth.

TAKAO – Psychological Crime Thriller

A demoted Tokyo detective haunted by her daughter's death is drawn into murders that echo her own grief.

THE CLEANER – Contained Action Thriller

A disillusioned ex-operative turned janitor becomes trapped overnight in a facility as a deadly conspiracy unfolds.

FLY BY NIGHT – TV Pilot / Crime Noir

A disgraced ex-Tokyo police detective turned PI searches for a missing girl, uncovering a network tied to Japan's political elite.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Script Reader – Nashville International Film Festival (2021–Present)

Evaluate and rank screenplays and TV pilots, providing detailed development notes and scoring for competition rounds.

Development Intern – Shot of Tea Films, London (2022–Present)

Assist in film and TV development including script coverage, feedback, and project pitching.

Script Consultant – Freelance (2017–2020)

Provided analysis and notes for emerging screenwriters and film students, emphasizing structure, tone, and marketability.

Screenwriter – Tokyo (2016–Present)

Freelance feature and TV writer; multiple completed scripts and option negotiations. Continuous daily writing practice and collaboration with creative teams.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

- Master of Theatre Arts – Victoria University of Wellington / NZ Drama School (2003)

- Bachelor of Theatre & Film Studies – Victoria University of Wellington (2000)
- Professional Development: BFI Film Academy, Open University, University of East Anglia (2021–2023)

SKILLS & MEMBERSHIPS

- Screenwriting, Script Development, Film Production, Character Development, Dialogue, Structure, Pitching, Script Coverage
- Software: Final Draft, WriterDuet, Celtx, StudioBinder
- Languages: English (Native), Japanese (Basic)
- Member – International Screenwriters Association, International Dance Council (UNESCO), Jury Member at International Theatre Festivals