



UNITED TALENT  
AGENCY

## COVERAGE REPORT **THE COLD WARS**

By  
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**LOGLINE:** An irascible Los Angeles scientist and his surfer dude student embark on a journey to create a cure for the common cold, their five-year odyssey bringing cold-sufferers the go-to-virus remedy known as ZICAM.

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READER: Ned O'Neill  
REQUESTED BY: MC

### SUBMISSION INFO:

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### SCRIPT INFO:

BUDGET:	MEDIUM	GENRE:	DRAMA / COMEDY
PERIOD:	1990's	LOCATION:	Los Angeles CA

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

SCRIPT: CONSIDER	STORY: CONSIDER	WRITER: N/A
Characters (1-5): 4	Originality (1-5): 4	
Tone (1-5): 5	Structure (1-5): 4	
Dialogue (1-5): 3	Plotting (1-5): 4	
Visual Elements (1-5): 4	Commerciality (1-5): 4	

#### OVERALL IMPRESSIONS:

This feature film/MOW treatment surprisingly contains the elements for a potentially zany ride into the often-used, but never seriously considered world of cold remedies. The Charles Hensley/Rob Davidson 1990's medical romp has all the trappings for an off-beat, aberrant, satirical look into what was involved in independently producing what has become an iconic American medicinal brand.

**TAGS:** UNDERDOG, CORPORATE GREED, START-UP COMPANY, ENTREPRENEURS. LOS ANGELES, ANTIHERO, SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS, HOLISTIC REMEDIES

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	Role	Type	Ethnicity	Age	Description
*	DR. CHARLES HENSLEY	Male Lead	White	40s	Irascible doctor who is fired from a teaching gig at <i>Cleveland Chiropractic College</i> for his frat-house academic style. He then goes onto invent the formula behind the popular cold-cure, <i>ZICAM</i> , with the help and encouragement of a former student. Against all odds, he and his team bring the independently produced cold-remedy to market in November, 1999.
*	ROB DAVIDSON	Male Lead	White	30s	Chiropractic student who first approaches Charles with his idea of manufacturing health products. When Charles' conversation with him leads to the topic of developing/producing a cure for the common cold instead, the seeds to <i>ZICAM</i> take root.
*	LARRY KAYE	Supporting Male	White	50s	Initial venture capital investor who helps Charles and Rob open up a lab/office in the San Fernando Valley. He is a health nut/gym rat.
*	HANK LANDAU	Supporting Male	White	50s	Investor who comes on board during a crucial R&D phase of the cold remedy product. He has issues with Larry that are quickly overcome when the <i>ZICAM</i> trial samples sent out to friends come back with very favorable reviews.
	BROWN RUSSELL	Supporting Male	White	30s	Chewing gum manufacturer who joins the <i>ZICAM</i> team solely for the huge profits that could eventually come from his investment. He secures the <i>USA Today</i> story that accompanies the product launch.
*	<i>BREATHE-RIGHT</i> REPRESENTATIVE	Cameo Male/Female	Any	NA	Company man who buys the rights to <i>ZICAM</i> early on in the story. When the entrepreneurial group realizes that the deal was struck only to keep its product off the market so that it will not impede Breathe-Right's competitive brand (in-process), it severs ties under a non-performance clause in the contract.
	CVS BUYERS	Cameo Male/Female	Any	NA	National drug store chain officials who agree to carry <i>ZICAM</i> in stores across the country.
*	REPORTER	Cameo Female	Any	NA	<i>USA Today</i> journalist who agrees to print a cover story on <i>ZICAM</i> after a fact-check process. She gets cold feet at the 11th hour when a competitor seeks to rail-road the <i>ZICAM</i> product on the eve of its launch.
*	<i>Cold-EEZE</i> REPS	Cameo Male/Female	Any	NA	Cold-remedy competitors who initially don't take the <i>ZICAM</i> threat seriously, then congratulate the entrepreneurial team for a big distribution win, only to later malign the product as fraudulent hours from a favorable <i>USA Today</i> front page article.
*	ASSISTANT	Cameo Female	Any	NA	Medical journal support staff that Charles and Rob strong-arm into signing a crucial medical paper release in the hours leading up to <i>ZICAM'S</i> launch. Without the medical journal's endorsement – all other product marketing/sales efforts would be placed on hold.
	NELS RINDEN	Cameo Male	White	40s	Charles' <i>Cleveland Chiropractic College</i> colleague who decodes the lyrics of "Hotel California" to Charles' liking.
*	COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR	Cameo Female	Any	NA	<i>Cleveland Chiropractic College</i> head who constantly clashed with Charles. She fires him for holding unapproved karaoke sessions in the school's cafeteria.

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*	ENTITLED MIDDLE EATERN BROTHERS	Cameo Male(s)	Middle Eastern	20s	The rich trust fund kids of a deceased man who had big ties to the pharmaceutical industry. Their arrogance and greed become immediate investment deterrents for Charles, Rob, et al. The brats are unceremoniously kicked out of a conference room meeting.
	SCIENTISTS	Cameo Male/Female	Any	NA	R&D crew at <i>Johnson &amp; Johnson</i> labs that are dismissive of Charles and Rob's cold-cure efforts. At the meeting, the entrepreneurs realize that the corporate professional hacks are way behind on the cold-curing curve.
	PRODUCER	Cameo Female	White	NA	Head production staff on the <i>ZICAM</i> commercial produced in Burbank CA at the start of 1999. Charles argues with her about having to wear a medical lab coat in the commercial.
	BIKINI CLAD BEAUTIES	Cameo Female(s)	Any	NA	Beautiful women used to market <i>ZICAM</i> at an important industry conference held in New Orleans, LA.
	HOT GIRLS	Cameo Female(s)	Any	NA	Women that both Charles and Rob flirt with in a Malibu CA bar on the day of <i>ZICAM'S</i> very successful market launch.
	HIGHWAY PATROLMAN	Cameo Male	Any	NA	Law enforcement official who gives Charles a speeding ticket along Pacific Coast Highway on the day of <i>ZICAM'S</i> very successful market launch. As he writes-up the fine, Charles asks him if he knows the real meaning behind the lyrics of "Hotel California."

**SYNOPSIS:**

NOVEMBER, 1999: DR. CHARLES HENSLEY (40s) and his business partner ROB DAVIDSON (30s) worry about the launch of *ZICAM*, a nasal spray thought to be a cure-all for the cold virus. All systems are go at the Ferndale, Washington plant that is manufacturing the product. The workday is interrupted by a Howard Stern broadcast, the radio star touting the cold medicine's effectiveness to a national audience. Television news coverage follow, reports of the breakthrough reaching as far as Great Britain. Charles and Rob are oblivious to all of this as the two surfer dudes/entrepreneurs grab a drink at a Malibu Beach bar. Charles takes a ride up the coast in his *Porsche 911*. Rob drinks and flirts with HOT GIRLS, catching a favorable *ZICAM* report on a bar television...and noticing the positive PATRON response. He grabs his cell phone and contacts Charles about the turn in events. Charles is otherwise occupied, discussing the meaning of "Hotel California" lyrics with HIGHWAY PATROLMAN who writes a speeding ticket.

FIVE YEARS EARLIER: Charles is a popular professor at *Cleveland Chiropractic College* -- as much for his karaoke parties in the school cafeteria as for his teaching style. Rob Davidson is a student who gets-up enough nerve to approach the USC scientist on his interest level in the student's natural products start-up company. Charles is far from impressed. But when Charles is fired from his job by a COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR for his rogue, frat-house academic approach, he agrees to work with the entrepreneur only after Rob agrees to develop a cure for the common cold, not just sports supplements. Other than this new partnership, the only other good thing to come out of his time at *Cleveland Chiropractic College* is fellow-academic NELS RINDEN'S cracking the "Hotel California" lyric code, thinking the song's meaning has something to do with "getting seduced and sucked into something you really don't want, but can't get out of." Charles lives on a houseboat at *King Harbor Marina* in Redondo Beach CA. Rob secures an investor. By 1995 they open *Biotem Cytotechnologies* in the Sane Fernando Valley, working on protein powders to keep the business afloat. Charles is losing interest fast. Fitness store owner/gym rat, LARRY KAYE (50s), infuses their cold remedy research with some well-needed cash. The trio hammers out a contract and their personality differences over drinks at *Houston's* in Woodland Hills CA. 1996 is a year-long learning curve, the product *Cold-EEZE* stealing much of the *ZICAM* thunder. But still Charles and Rob forge ahead with their zinc-based nasal spray. They send samples out for their guinea pigs/friends to try, believing that the product will catch on with them since the remedy attacks the cold at its source, the nose. Money is tight. Larry inserts himself into the scientific mix, riling Charles with his perceived overreach. A lackluster product response gives Charles a breakthrough moment: the zinc liquid needing a "slightly viscous" delivery system in order to stick to the cold virus in the nasal cavity long enough to properly interact. HANK LANDAU (40s) come onboard with needed R&D capital, but wants Larry ousted before he'll sign any agreement. Charles defends his gym rat colleague, Hank finally caving in the face of Charles' steely resolve. Any friction between Hank and Larry quickly dissolves with the news that the guinea pigs/friends seem to love the new and improved *ZICAM* formula.

The group heads to a business conference in New Orleans, LA where BIKINI CLAD BEAUTIES promote *ZICAM* to CONVENTION GOERS. *Cold-EEZE* publicly welcomes the competition, but privately wants to crush the start-up operation in order to maintain a 100% hold on the market. *BREATHE-RIGHT* REPRESENTATIVES approach the *ZICAM* business partnership on the matter of licensing its product. Charles and Rob bail on a planned meeting and drink the night away on Bourbon Street. A schism develops among the key players, especially when Larry and Hank override Charles' licensing reservations with their combined majority vote. By 1998 it becomes apparent that *ZICAM'S* deal with *BREATHE-RIGHT* parent company *CNS* is a Trojan Horse of sorts, the nasal spray bought-up by the cold remedy company with all other similar products so as not to compete with their own R&D projects. *ZICAM* terminates the contract, citing a non-performance clause. Charles encourages the other company players to bring the product to market on their own. Larry and Hank voice reservations, but eventually agree. More investor meetings follow, the *ZICAM* foursome turning down the deep pockets of ENTITLED MIDDLE EASTER BROTHERS because of their arrogance and incestuous ties to the pharmaceutical industry. Charles and Rob head to San Diego where

*Johnson & Johnson* SCIENTISTS prove to be equally disappointing...as well as way behind on the cold-cure curve. *Gumtech International*, a chewing gum company out of Phoenix AZ, becomes an unlikely venture capital fit, company head BROWN RUSSELL wanting-in solely for the potential profit, not the scientific prestige. *Gel Tech* is born!

JANUARY, 1999: The pace of entrepreneurship quickens. A *ZICAM* television commercial is produced with Charles serving as an effective product spokesperson despite his arguing with PRODUCERS over his having to wear a lab coat. By March, *CVS* BUYERS are so wowed by a *ZICAM* presentation that they agree to carry the product for next year's cold season. Even *Cold-EEZE* REPS can't help but be impressed by the distribution coup. In July, the prestigious PR firm, *Edelman World-Wide*, is hired to guide *ZICAM'S* extensive marketing efforts; the product launch dated scheduled for November 1<sup>st</sup>. By September, business pressures start to fracture the group, the entire enterprise hanging on an all-important medical journal paper needed prior to launch. Charles locks himself in his bedroom, working day and night to compile years of R&D into a comprehensive document. In October, *USA Today* agrees to print a front page story on the *ZICAM* phenomenon provided its fact-checking process matches the entrepreneurs' claims. Twenty-four hours prior to launch, *ZICAM* hits a snag. Charles has been unable to find a medical journal ready to sign-off on the product; a move necessary for *USA Today's* moving forward with its national cover piece. Desperate, Charles and Rob pull a fast-one on an interested medical journal, waiting for its EDITOR to leave and strong-arming AN ASSISTANT to sign and fax the authorization on the boss' behalf. They return to their office and spend thirty painstaking minutes waiting for the crucial paperwork to arrive. It does and the *USA Today* story goes to press after Charles refutes *Cold-EEZE's* copyright infringement claims to a somewhat hesitant REPORTER.

PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY: Charles finally picks-up one of Rob's many call, the good news received over the phone making his hefty traffic fine insignificant by comparison. After listening to a favorable *ZICAM* news report on the car radio, he celebrates with a walk on the beach, drinking out of a bottle of *Jack Daniels* he has stored in his trunk.

SUPER-IMPOSITIONS: In the wake of the SARS outbreak, Charles Hensley is invited by Taiwan officials to assist with the epidemic's eradication, his efforts there leading to the development of a flu treatment that rivals *Tamiflu*. Rob Davidson owns and runs a pharmaceutical manufacturing plant in Oxnard, CA. Larry Kaye invented a popular piece of exercise equipment. Hank Landau moved to Utah and opened a spiritual retreat. Brown Russell is an internet start-up consultant.

**COMMENTS:**

This feature film/MOW treatment surprisingly contains the elements for a potentially zany ride into the often-used, but never seriously considered world of cold remedies. The Charles Hensley/Rob Davidson 1990's medical romp has all the trappings for an off-beat, aberrant, satirical look into what was involved in independently producing what has become an iconic American medicinal brand. Hensley's bombastic persona and frat-house appeal work in tandem with many off-grid Los Angeles locales to paint an eclectic film canvas in the vein of Oscar-contender "The Big Short." And though not quite mastering the cool scope of "The Social Network," this treatment nevertheless supports its anti-thesis pitch for further development into a subject matter that essentially encompasses one of the broadest global threats (and market) ever known, the human cold virus. When has one ever seen that dramatized before!?

If placed in the right writer's and director's hands, this dramedy could actually connect with audiences that have grown tired of the kind of corporate establishment ties the pharmaceutical industry represents. And the fact that this anti-insider cold remedy product was developed in the West San Fernando Valley only adds to the story's WTF appeal. Granted, this treatment is penned by ZICAM'S creator so...let the fact-checking begin! But if events plays-out as chronicled in this presentation, then the story definitely lends itself to some kind of film/television exposition – be it a straight-out drama or one layered with more satirical, comedic tones. Additionally, the fact Dr. Charles Hensley has most recently pleaded guilty to charges that he illegally marketed his Tamiflu-like drug treatment without FDA approval only adds to his (and the treatment's) charm. One suggests that the author not shy away from this fact, because it only enhances the treatment's aim with its concerned-citizen bent.

In an era where reader/audience is daily bombarded with just how often bureaucratic, red-tape greed is hindering life-saving care and treatments by many institutions sworn to protect the public, this address of the more holistic approaches available may have just the right amount of luck and timing on its side to strike a seat-filling chord – even if its protagonist has more than a few antihero moments.