

GOING UNDERGROUND



SCREENPLAY BY STEPHEN HALL

The Story

Format: Animation Comedy

Written By: Stephen Hall

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Going Underground is a feature-length animated comedy adventure about three sixty-year-old Edinburgh men — Danny, Ricky and Peter — and Ricky's dog, Buddy, who take a tour through the city's underground tunnels and emerge in 1984. There, they come face to face with their younger selves and are pulled back into the clubs, music, fashions and reckless energy of their youth. What begins as a surreal second chance quickly becomes more complicated as the men navigate the shock of the past, the differences between who they were and who they have become, and the chaos caused by Buddy, who can now talk and seems perfectly at home in this strange old-new world.

At the same time, a bungled jewel heist by a gang of bikers led by Baba Fatt collides with the old men's adventure when the stolen Blood Stones are hidden inside a stuffed panda that ends up in Buddy's jaws. From that moment, the story spirals into a madcap chase involving bikers, police, a ruthless Dame Conceitayda Lott, and two generations of the same men, all converging across Edinburgh's pubs, football grounds, streets and underground passageways. Blending nostalgia, parody, music, action and absurd comedy, the story builds toward a frantic race back to the portal — and a final return that leaves the men changed, amused, and quietly more connected to the lives they thought they had left behind.

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Logline

When three sixty-year-old friends stumble through an underground tour and emerge in 1984, they relive their punk-fuelled youth—only to become hunted across Edinburgh when their talking dog accidentally steals jewel loot from a biker gang, triggering a three-way chase between criminals, police and time-displaced men racing to get back home in this hilarious caper.

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Tone, Genre and Style

Genre: Animated time-travel comedy adventure / cult fantasy caper

Tone: Irreverent, nostalgic, anarchic and character-driven, balancing absurd humour with warmth, momentum and light-touch emotional resonance

Visual Style: Stylised Edinburgh realism colliding with heightened fantasy — underground tunnels, gothic clubs, while surreal hallucinations, caricatured figures and musical set pieces turn the city into a warped comic playground

Comparable Films: Back to the Future, Withnail and I

Going Underground is an animated comedy adventure built around time travel, nostalgia, and comic collision, blending the wish-fulfilment of older men meeting their younger selves with the escalating chaos of a jewel-heist caper. Set between present-day Edinburgh and a vividly reimagined 1984, the story begins as a playful plunge into memory — clubs, music, old friendships, and youthful recklessness — before widening into a madcap chase involving bikers, police, a criminal dame, and a talking dog with a stuffed panda full of stolen gems. The tone is mischievous, eccentric and fast-moving, but always grounded in character: Danny embraces the past, Ricky tries to manage it, and Peter is repeatedly thrown into situations that test his dignity, safety and sense of control.

Visually, the film would thrive on the contrast between a recognisable Edinburgh and a heightened comic-fantastical version of it. The Royal Mile, underground tunnels, student flats, clubs, football grounds and pubs all feel rooted in a real city, but the world is constantly tilted through music, caricature, surrealism and altered perception. The style invites bold colour, strong period design, expressive animation, and fluid shifts between grounded reality and comic subjectivity — whether in Peter's hallucinatory "jungle," Buddy DJing in a gothic club, or a city-wide chase turning into an absurd cat-and-mouse sprint back to the portal. Rather than aiming for family-animation sentimentality, **Going Underground** plays as a cult-leaning animated caper: funny, specific, musically infused, and rich with enough parody, atmosphere and character detail to reward repeat viewings.

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Themes

Nostalgia vs. Reality – The story explores the allure of returning to youth, only to reveal that memory is selective and the past, when fully re-entered, is messier, stranger and less romantic than it first appears.

Aging and Identity – By confronting their younger selves, the three men are forced to measure who they were against who they have become, exposing the compromises, comforts and quiet disappointments of later life.

Friendship Across Time – The bond between Danny, Ricky and Peter is tested and reaffirmed through the absurdity of the adventure, showing how long friendships evolve but still retain their old rhythms, loyalties and tensions.

The Chaos Beneath Respectability – The film contrasts the ordinariness of the men's present-day lives with the unruly energy of their youth, suggesting that beneath settled routines and domestic respectability, the old recklessness still survives.

Courage Through Discomfort – Peter's journey in particular reflects the idea that bravery is not always bold or glamorous; sometimes it means continuing through fear, embarrassment and confusion when every instinct tells you to turn back.

Myth vs. Mundanity – Characters like Baba Fatt project danger, grandeur and legend, only to be punctured by ordinary realities such as landlords, domestic mess and social embarrassment, revealing the comic gap between self-image and truth.

Past and Present in Collision – The story thrives on the tension between then and now: old men and young men, old girlfriends and future wives, past ambitions and present realities, all colliding in ways that are comic, awkward and quietly revealing.

Time as Opportunity and Burden – Going back offers the thrill of a second chance, but it also brings pressure, consequence and the realization that the past is not something to inhabit freely without risk.

Instinct vs. Control – Through Buddy, and through the increasingly chaotic chain of events, the film repeatedly pits impulse against planning, showing how instinct can both disrupt and unexpectedly save the day.

Home, Change and Acceptance – For all its madness, the story ultimately leads the men back to the present with a renewed, if understated, connection to their lives, suggesting that understanding where you came from can make returning home feel different.

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The Characters

Danny Allbright - the most impulsive and openly nostalgic of the three older men, still carrying the swagger, appetite and romanticism of youth beneath the compromises of age. Where others hesitate, Danny leaps, embracing the chance to relive 1984 with the enthusiasm of someone determined to reclaim the energy he feels life has dulled. He is bold, excitable, occasionally vain, and often the first to see adventure where others see danger, making him a key driver of the story's momentum.

Peter Wright - the most anxious, physically uneasy and socially fragile of the trio, which makes him one of the script's richest comic engines. He is cautious, fussy, polite under pressure, and repeatedly pushed into situations he would never choose for himself, yet he keeps going despite fear, embarrassment and discomfort. Beneath the neurosis is a deeply human character whose resistance to chaos becomes its own kind of courage.

Ricky Newman - is the calmest and most grounded of the three old friends — practical, observant, and often the one trying to impose order on events that keep spiralling out of control. He acts as the group's stabiliser, balancing Danny's recklessness and Peter's panic with dry humour and steady judgment. Though less flamboyant than the others, Ricky's common sense, loyalty and quiet resilience make him the emotional ballast of the trio.

Buddy - far more than a talking dog gimmick: he is instinctive, opinionated, self-assured, mischievous and often hilariously confident in his own judgments. He moves easily between animal impulse and dry commentary, causing problems one minute and solving them the next. As both chaos agent and unlikely hero, Buddy becomes a genuine plot engine, carrying the stuffed panda, triggering chases, spotting danger, and ultimately helping the men get home.

Baba Fatt - is a wonderfully self-mythologising antagonist: a hairy biker who treats every inconvenience like epic betrayal and every criminal scheme like grand legend. He projects danger, vanity and theatrical authority, but his menace is constantly undercut by pettiness, embarrassment and his inability to control the ridiculous world around him. That mix of swagger and vulnerability makes him both threatening and deeply funny.

Baba Grunt - is Baba Fatt's fiercely loyal but dim right-hand man, a hulking presence whose literal-mindedness and delayed understanding make him a perfect comic foil. He echoes ideas without always grasping them, supports his boss with unquestioning seriousness, and often turns tense moments funnier simply by misunderstanding their emotional tone. He is half-enforcer, half-innocent, and consistently entertaining.

Dame Conceitayda Lott - is cold, theatrical, patrician and faintly terrifying — a woman who carries herself with the hauteur of someone who expects competence and despises being disappointed. She exists in sharp contrast to Baba Fatt's grubby biker mythology, bringing a grander, more controlled form of villainy to the story. Whether as landlady, criminal force or looming presence at the climax, she is defined by command, disdain and a refusal to be made ridiculous, even when the world around her insists otherwise.



3-Act Structure Summary

Act I – Return

Three sixty-year-old Edinburgh friends — Danny, Ricky and Peter — and Ricky's dog Buddy enter the city's underground tunnels and emerge in 1984, where they come face to face with their younger selves. Drawn back into the clubs, fashions, music and chaos of their youth, the men are swept into a surreal second chance that becomes even stranger when Buddy begins to talk. As they immerse themselves in the world they once knew, a bungled jewel heist by a gang of bikers led by Baba Fatt sets another story in motion, one that will soon collide with their own.

Act II – Pursuit

When the stolen Blood Stones are hidden inside a stuffed panda that ends up in Buddy's jaws, the adventure spirals into a city-wide chase. The older men discover they can return home through a portal at Scotland Street Tunnel, but only under strict conditions, and their attempts to keep hold of Buddy, the panda and their way back become increasingly chaotic. As bikers, police and the formidable Dame Conceitayda close in, the men's nostalgic adventure gives way to growing danger, comic near misses, and the realization that getting home will be far harder than simply retracing their steps.

Act III – Collision

With the portal window closing, the older men, their younger selves, Buddy, Baba Fatt and Dame Conceitayda all converge in a final scramble through Edinburgh's streets and underground passages. After confrontations, chases and one last race against time, the men must recover the knowledge and courage needed to open the portal and return to the present. Back where they began, the experience leaves them changed in small but meaningful ways, as the madness of the past gives way to an unexpectedly gentle and circular ending.

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Mood Board



Bikers steal the jewels



The old men dancing at The Underground



Buddy with the panda



The men arrive into 1984



Why This Film

Going Underground tells a time-travel story that feels both joyfully nostalgic and sharply original — a collision between the reckless energy of youth and the uneasy compromises of later life. Set between present-day Edinburgh and a vividly reimagined 1984, the film uses music, clubs, football culture, underground tunnels and comic criminal chaos to explore what happens when three ordinary sixty-year-old men are forced to confront the people they once were. What begins as a surreal trip into the past gradually expands into a fast-moving adventure involving a talking dog, a biker jewel heist, a stuffed panda full of stolen gems, and a desperate race back to the portal before time runs out. Beneath the absurdity, the story taps into something recognisable and human: the fantasy of going back, the shock of seeing youth without nostalgia's filter, and the question of whether the lives we ended up with are so different from the ones we imagined.

With its distinctive setting, eccentric ensemble, layered humour and strong sense of comic momentum, **Going Underground** occupies the space of cult-leaning animated comedy adventures that combine character, music, parody and action. The film draws on the pleasure of period nostalgia and pop-cultural recognition, but uses them as storytelling tools rather than decoration, building a world that is both specifically Scottish and broadly accessible. At its heart, it is a story about friendship, aging, identity and the strange grace of returning home with a different understanding of yourself.

Going Underground is not just a time-travel caper; it is a comic portrait of memory, mayhem and middle age, where the past comes alive in all its excitement, embarrassment and danger — and where one impossible trip changes how three men see the lives they thought had already settled into place.

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Going Underground

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Status: Complete Feature Screenplay – Seeking Representation / Development

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“Going Underground delivers a wildly original premise, a vivid 1984 Edinburgh setting, sharp character-driven comedy, and a fast-moving adventure where nostalgia, music, time travel and criminal chaos collide.”

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The Writer

Stephen Hall is a screenwriter based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Since December 2021, he has completed nine screenplays, including eight feature films and one television project, reflecting a strong commitment to long-form, character-driven storytelling.

His work has received international recognition, with awards from the Cannes World Film Festival, the RED Movie Awards, and the Austin International Film Festival. His scripts often explore moral tension, identity, and the psychological forces that shape human behaviour.

His genre interests include historical narratives, crime stories, and period drama, with a focus on textured worlds and thematically ambitious storytelling.

Alongside screenwriting, he spent over 25 years as a web developer, a background that informs a disciplined approach to structure and long-form creative development.

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