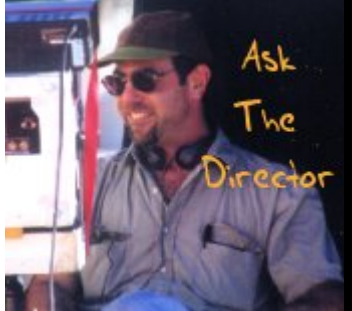


# Josh Becker DGA

## Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive  
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Name: pam  
E-mail: pam86@webtv.net

Dear Josh:

Hi Josh, Um, well if you thought the Mania Mag. reviewer lacked a sense of humor - I think your going to be a bit more peeved at the TVDaily reviewer....these on line mags have "response" emails -- perhaps you should talk to these guys...they're really killing ya with this negative stuff...

Dear Pam:

What's your point? Basically, you can't please all the people all the time. And, as they say, fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

Josh

Name: Angie Holloway  
E-mail: bobgirl2@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

How did you become a director? Did you attend a school for it? Do you get to play with that thing that snaps shut when you call "cut?"

Dear Angie:

Of the six colleges that I attended without graduating, I did go to one semester of Columbia College and learned how to properly coil a cable, and one semester of Sherwood Oaks Experimental College and didn't learn anything, but had a swell time meeting real film directors and actors (Francios Truffaut, Martin Scorsese, Robert Wise, Robert DeNiro, etc.). I became a director by making my own movies.

The "thing that snaps shut" is called the slate and you use it before you call "action," not when you call "cut." I don't do it, the assistant camera-person does.

Josh

Name: Scott Wilde  
E-mail: orton@altavista.net

Dear Josh:

What advice can you give a group of fellas seriously trying to make their own film company and at least one film that makes it to the big-screen??

Dear Scott:

- A). Read my essay entitled "The Need For Structure" and commit it to memory.
- B). Make damn sure you have a good, solid script.
- C). Pay no attention to trends or what you assume people want to see, but instead make a film that you would really like to see. As Stanislavski said, "Love the art in yourself; not yourself in the art."
- D). Hire the very best actors you can get.
- E). Put 110% effort into all aspects from the writing to the editing.
- F). Pray to whatever God you feel is appropriate.

Good luck,  
Josh

Name: pam  
E-mail: pam86@webtv.net

Dear Josh:

Did you know that Another Universe provides Mania Mag on line they post reviews of XWP etc

Dear Pam:

Thank you so much for sending that crappy review of "In Sickness & In Hell," it's very gratifying to know that there is one more asshole out there with no sense of humor.

Josh

Name: David Brooks  
E-mail: Chakram71201@sprynet.com

Dear Josh:

Hey Josh. I read where you recently said you were pretty sure there would be no romance between Joxer and Gabrielle. Steve Sears has said this as well. Well at a recent convention your buddy Ted stated that Joxer and Gab would get together. Now don't get me wrong, I know Ted is a kidder and he has been known to pull our chains in the past. I was just curious to whether you were still under the same impression that there would be no romance between the two.

Take care.  
David

Dear David:

Quite frankly, both my and Ted's opinions are worthless on this subject. If Steve Sears says so, though, I think you should listen, he is one of the head writers and co-executive producer, which outranks both director and actor. Ted and I shoot the scripts we're given, we do not make editorial policy.

Josh

Name: Tony Brooks  
E-mail: Chakram71201@sprynet.com

Dear Josh:

I have a question about how long it takes to shoot certain scenes. I know different scenes take different amounts of time to shoot so I will use the opening scene from "In Sickness..." as a reference. The scene where Gabby sticks her foot in Xena's face and discovers Xena's lice was only about a minute long, but approximately how long does it take on set to get that minutes worth of footage. I know there were about three different camera angles used which takes some time. I've actually heard that some of the big fight scenes take up to an entire day to film.

Also, I recently asked Bruce Cambell this question; when you are directing, since you have a schedule to keep do you ever get annoyed or frustrated when actors/actresses screw up and forget or flub their lines or is that something that just goes with the territory.

Thanks for your time.  
Tony

Dear Tony:

There are actually four camera set-ups in that scene: the 2-shot of Xena and Gaby, over-the-shoulder to Gaby, over-the-shoulder to Xena, and the very first shot which is an extreme close-up of Xena sleeping that is slowly pulling back. If I recall correctly it took about 2 hours to shoot that scene as it was already starting to get dark and it had to be lit. Then, even though it was rapidly getting very dark, we shot one more scene that day which was Joxer approaching the Scythian camp holding his pot of stew. On a basic level, as fast as you can possibly move, it's going to take at least 30 minutes to get a single shot.

The opening fight scene in my episode "Blind Faith" took an entire day to shoot, and I'm sure at least an entire day of 2nd unit as well. The bar fight in "Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur" (which I believe still stands as the longest fight scene in any Herc or Xena -- 7 minutes) took 2 days of

shooting, plus 2 days of 2nd unit.

Actors flubbing thier lines simply goes with the territory and it never bothers me.

Josh

Name: Tony Brooks  
E-mail: Chakram71201@sprynet.com

Dear Josh:

I have a question about "In Sickness and in Health." Their is a debate going on on the internet, and since you directed the episode, I want to see how the scene in question was supposed to be played. It deals with the scene where Xena and Gab are bathing in the mineral springs and Joxer comes in. My question is was Gabrielle supposedly naked in that scene or did she supposedly have a towel covering her pertinent areas. Now I know Renee was wearing something, it was clearly visible, but was the charecter supposedly wearing something. I would have seemed a little weird for them to let Joxer come in them if she was naked. Just wondering how you envisioned that scene.

Thanks.  
Tony

Dear Tony:

It was written that they were supposed to be naked, however you can't shoot anyone that's really naked on TV, certainly not the lead actors. So, you can either pretend they're naked and put them in flesh-colored wet suits or say that they're wearing some sort of underclothing, which is what I generally do.

Josh

Name: Debbie  
E-mail: Texwedchi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Kudos to you and the cast for "In Sickness and In Hell".....it was by far one the funniest episodes of "anything" I've seen in a long time. Was there much add libbing done in this episode or was it pretty much to script ? Thanks again & keep up the good work.....

Debbie

Dear Debbie:

There's no ad libbing during shooting. I stray from the script constantly, adding what I feel are the punchlines to the scenes. For instance, in that episode in the scene where Xena and Joxer are collecting wood, Joxer says that the villagers paid him to do the job so he's doing it. Xen a replies, "I

once knew a warrior that took on the Scythians and they buried him in Athens, Sparta and Carthage." That's where the scene ended in the script. I added Joxer then saying, "I don't get it," Xena repeating her line and Joxer saying, "Oh, is this a riddle?" Ted Raimi then added, "I've got one, a beaver, a tortoise and owl . . ." or whatever he said. I make my additions during my two weeks of prep work and bring them up at the cast read-through so that the actors will have them before we shoot. Sometimes ideas are conceived during rehearsal and worked in, but not while the camera is rolling.

Josh

Name: Talaria  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Fins, Femmes, and Gems how much of the swimming did Lucy actually do? It looked like she was a good swimmer!

Thanks, talaria

Dear Talaria:

Lucy did all of her own swimming in that.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

My husband and I really enjoyed watching "In Sickness and in Hell." I can't remember the last time we laughed so hard for so long!

Thanks,

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

Thank you, I appreciate it.

Josh

Name: Carol  
E-mail: xenaAlways@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I just wanna tell ya I absolutely loved ISAIH. It was a riot and it had me rolling out loud with laughter. You did a great job as did Lucy and Renee of course.

I was wondering if there were any anecdotes or humourous stories that happened when you directed this one that you might tell us about. I know the outtakes must be hysterical and I hope they show up on a blooper tape sometime.

Thanks for a delightful and hilarious episode.

Carol

Dear Carol:

We didn't really end up with any funny outtakes on that episode. What's in the show is much funnier than the outtakes. Also, the episode was so rationally conceived and written that we just bopped straight through the shooting without much incident at all. I'm pleased you like it.

Josh

Name: Wendy  
E-mail: winturbine@compuall.net

Dear Josh:

Maybe this has all ready been answered and I just didn't see it, but I saw "In Sickness and In Hell" and I noticed (hopefully) that Nora Kay Foster wrote part of the episode and you directed it. Because most writers have their own ideas on how they would like to see certain things happen, do you work with the writers when you direct stuff or is it all separate?

Thanks!  
Wendy

Dear Wendy:

It's all separate. I'm in New Zealand, as I am now, and the writers are in L.A. I am at this very moment directing my 5th Nora Kay Foster & Adam Armus script. It seems to have shaken out over time that they write the zany comedy episode and I direct them. However, once I start directing the show, for the most part, it's mine to do with what I like, as long as I'm secure that the powers-that-be will like it. Although it would take permission that I don't feel like securing, someday I would like to post one of their shooting scripts in its original form so you folks out there can compare it to what ended up on TV. It's pretty different. I change lines all over the place and I add jokes and gags into almost every scene. I watched "For Him the Bell Tolls" with Nora Kay and I asked her afterward what she thought? She replied, "It's not how I envisioned it." I smiled, "No, it's how I envisioned it."

Josh

Name: Pastor Deb Grant  
E-mail: revdeb@compuserve.com

Dear Josh:

Is it more satisfying for you as a director to produce a good film that is close to your original vision or a good one that is significantly different from the original vision because of the insight of others? Thanks for your Xena work, by the way, outstanding entertainment for those of us immerse in death,life & relationship stuff on a regular basis.

Dear Deb:

The only way a film of mine, based on my script, would come out "significantly different" from my original vision is if I screw it up. The entire point to me is attempt to capture my vision on film. I listen to actors, but I'm not really interested in the "insight of others." If other people on the crew have some sort of filmmaking insight, let them make their own movies.

Josh

Name: Shelley Scott  
E-mail: ShelleyS64@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Will you be directing your buddy, Bruce Campbell, in the near future?

Thank you,  
Shelley

Dear Shelley:

I am at tis very moment down in New Zealand directing episode #13 of Xena and Bruce is directing episode #13 of Hercules. I just got off the phone with him. He'll be here in a few minutes and we're going out to lunch. As yet, Bruce and I have never worked together on either of the shows. It's not up to us, it's up to the powers-that-be, namely Rob Tapert.

Josh

Name: Travis Link  
E-mail: tbl107@psu.edu

Dear Josh:

Thanks for replying about the Anthony Quinn thing; now that I am quite interested, how can I get a copy of Maze of the Minotaur? I saw the other movies for sale but I haven't seen that one. I would like to see how this all unfolds.

Dear Travis:

I don't know what to tell you, "Minotaur" was not released in the U.S. on video. It was released elsewhere in the world, I have an Australian copy. What's odd about this is that it was the 2nd highest-rated of the TV movies. Oh well. Maybe they'll show it again on TV.

Josh

Name: Tony Brooks  
E-mail: Chakram71201@sprynet.com

Dear Josh:

Hi Josh. I have a pretty simple question concerning the shooting schedule. Since Xena is my favorite show I'll use it as an example. Let's say you guys have a whole day of shooting planned with Lucy and Renee. What happens if either Lucy and Renee get's up that morning and is sick. I'm sure if they could they would try and make it even if they were sick, but if they couldn't what happens to the production schedule. Do you guys just take the day off or do you rearrange the scenes you shoot that day and film scenes without whoever is out sick.

Thanks.  
Tony

Dear Tony:

There is no such thing as taking the day off. For one of the leads to not show up due to illness they would really need to be in the hospital before anyone would accept them taking the day off -- like when Lucy broke her hip. However, if a lead actor should become sick enough to not show up, then you simply shoot with the other characters that day.

Josh

Name: Tammy  
E-mail: TLJ102@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I would like to make a movie and direct it but I'm not sure as to what the first step should be. Could you please help?

Dear Tammy:

The first step is finding a story you want to tell and working that into a script. If you think you can write it yourself, then write it. If not, find someone that will write it for you. And then you must confront the most horrible and daunting aspect of filmmaking -- getting money. Once you have a script and money, make



your movie. Two good basic books about directing are "The Film Director" by Richard L. Bare and "Shot by Shot" by Steven Katz.

Josh

Name: Tony Brooks  
E-mail: Chakram71201@sprynet.com

Dear Josh:

Hey Josh. I have a question dealing with your work on Xena. Everyone including Lucy and Renee themselves always speak of how close they are in real life. When you are on set with them, can you tell that they are very close friends or is it all business. And as a director, do you feel their real life friendship adds a little something extra to chemistry between the two characters on screen.

Thanks and take care.  
Tony

Dear Tony:

I don't know if I'm betraying some sort of confidence here, but Lucy and Renee aren't best friends or anything. I mean, they like each other and work very well together, but they don't hang out together. Then again, neither one has very much time for hanging out these days since they shoot for 10 months a year. As to chemistry, well, what you're really seeing is two professionals doing their jobs really well.

Josh

Name: Travis Link  
E-mail: tbl107@psu.edu

Dear Josh:

In being a director how hard is it to keep your cool when an actor cocks off thinking he knows exactly what the post-production shot will look like, ie Tony Quinn I read the little story about him (granted he is a legend) but tell me you didn't get a little pissed off at him. By the way it sounds like you handled yourself quite well.

Dear Travis:

I'm writing this from down in New Zealand where I'm about to start directing another Xena. Quinn sort of pissed me off, but, then again, he's Anthony Quinn and he'd won two Oscars before I was born, so I lived with it. But, for the most part, I really like and enjoy actors and find that they will do most anything I ask them to because they respect the work I've put in planning the shoot. I think if an actor senses that the director wants to make each scene as good as it can be they're right there with you. Getting everyone in the cast and crew to do what you want them to do without getting pissed-off is how you play the game.

Josh

Name: Angela  
E-mail: gelarmo@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hi Josh! My question pertains to the actually length of time the Xena season is shot. I know that you all experience hiatuses during your shooting of the show, so I wanted to know how long are you all actually working on the season episodes and when do you begin and when does it end for that year? Do you start production in September straight on until March and then a break? Sorry for the babbling, but it's difficult to carry my question across. 8-) Thanks alot!

Dear Angela:

Basically, Xena and Herc shoot for 10 months a year with two one month hiatuses, one of which just ended. Since I am not there for a lot of the season, I don't really know the schedule. Shooting, however, does not begin in September, it begins many months earlier. I directed episode #10 this season (and will be doing #13 in a week) and it was shot in August. So, by the time the show begins to air in September, half of the season is already shot.

Josh

Name: michelle cline  
E-mail: spc1636@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I think Bruce Cambell would be great in a modern remake of 'The Thin Man.' i think he'd make a great Nick Charles. you could co-write with him and direct, what do you think? or do you think the remaking of old movies is cheesy?

Dear Michelle:

I absolutely think that remaking anything is cheesy. If you can't find a new idea you should find a new business.

Josh

Name: Debbie  
E-mail: Texwedchi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

After reading your comments about your positive working relationship with Renee, what advice would

you give her in her pursuit to become a director? Also read she spent time behind the camera during the first couple of episodes of season 4, could you explain the type of things she would have learned to aid in her in the future. Thanks as always for taking the time... Debbie

Dear Debbie:

Honestly, how am I supposed to know what Renee learned? (It's like reporters asking the white house press secretary, "What do you think the president thinks about this?"). We won't actually know what she's learned until she actually directs, right? Renee and I spoke of her directing a little bit, but she wasn't asking my advice. She did apparently spend some time with director T. J. Scott when he was last down there.

Josh

Name: David Wolber  
E-mail: OOPs@Izzynet.com

Dear Josh:

Is the John Manfredi in "thou shalt not..." the same John Michael Manfredi who's been an award winning stage actor in Detroit? How did you find him? and why hasn't he been in other of your projects? I've seen his stage work and he's very intense. Also, how did "rope" influence running time? Thanks, great fast site!

Dear David:

Don't shit me, dude, you know it's the same John Manfredi. In regard to "Rope" influencing "Running Time," read "The Making of 'Running Time'."

Josh

Name: John  
E-mail: johnk92@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hello Mr. Becker, Listen I have obtained a copy of SGT. STRYKERS WAR from VSOM what does this version differ from Thou Shall.... Just curious. (The URL is) [www.vsom.com](http://www.vsom.com) if you want to yell at them for selling your film! Its only Good quality also! Thanks

Dear John:

The difference is that there is a matte painting near the beginning that was replaced by a stock shot, the title sequence, and the barf scene. All of this extra stuff is on the end of the new, letterbox version coming out in a few weeks.

Josh

Name: Laurel  
E-mail: chalkgardn@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Hi, I'm doing a preproduction proposal and budget for a 1 hour documentary for my film class and I was wondering if you knew the average price of a 450 ft roll of 16mm film and the average price of development. Just a plain development, no dailies or anything. Thanks for all of your help

Dear Laurel:

Does anything on this website even faintly intimate that I retail film stock or have my own laboratory? Use the yellow pages.

Josh

Name: michelle cline  
E-mail: spc1636@aol.com

Dear Josh:

thanks for answering my questions. i'm glad you're proud of the xena and hercules episodes, because they are great. maybe you should have a section in your web site just about who knows who. i just read in another question you grew up with Sam Raimi. it seems all of you like the Raimi's, and you, and Bruce, and bob tapert do a lot of projects together. I can't keep them all straight!  
michelle cline

Dear Michelle:

Yes, the whole deal is rather incestuous. Let's see, it sort of begins like this: Sam and Ted Raimi and I grew up around the block from one another, since I was 9, Sam was 8 and Ted was just born. In junior high school Sam's and My paths crossed with Bruce Campbell and Scott Spiegel (who co-wrote "Evil Dead 2" and just directed "From Dusk Til Dawn 3"). In high school we hooked up with John Cameron (who has directed Herc & Xena and was the Line producer on "Fargo"). In college, Sam's brother Ivan was roommates with Rob Tapert. There it sort of is.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

While reading your Evil Dead Journal here on the website, I couldn't help but notice several parts that were missing from the booklet version (included with the limited edition video). Who's decision was it to exclude those parts, and why?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

The good folks over at Anchor Bay Video decided what to put in and what to leave out.

Josh

Name: Michael Anthony Lee  
E-mail: mal@kingston.net

Dear Josh:

I was wondering when you start a production company like Renaissance Pictures or your company, where do you register it? I am gathering the funds to do an independint and want to be pointed in the right direction. Or just please tell me where I could find such info.

Thank you for your time,

Michael

Dear Michael:

You need to start a limited partnership, wherein you would be the general partner and for making the film you will own 50% (or however you arrange it) and the investors are the limited partners and own 50%. The limited means "limited liability," which means that they are only liable for the amount that they invested. Whereas, if you as the general partner default on all of your debts, you can be sued, but not the limited partners. I suggest that you speak to a lawyer and get your hands on some limited partnership paperwork and study it. You can also study a book called the K regulations, which explains the different types of partnerships. Once again, speak to an attorney.

Josh

Name: michelle cline  
E-mail: spc1636@aol.com

Dear Josh:

what are the chances of you sending me an autographed script of "A Fistful of Dinars"? i loved that episode, it's a sentimental favorite. i mean Petracles kept the wedding bracelet! i think it is an underrated episode in that not too many people talk about it. i love Xena, and i loved that episode, but i wonder as a director are you proud of your Xena episodes, or would you rather be doing something else like film? i mean when someone like me tells you that i love a certain episode, do you just want to

roll your eyes?

michelle cline

Dear Michelle:

I'm very proud of my Xena episodes and it pleases me greatly when people say they like them. Yes, I'd prefer to be making feature films, but I don't regret a second I've put into Xena and Hercules. It's really been the best training I've ever received.

As to my sending you a copy of "Dinars" -- No.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. How much of an influence has Sam Raimi been on you as a director? Also, do you have a favorite film that Sam Raimi directed?

Thanks,

Heath

Dear Heath:

Sam has always been something of an inspiration to me. To grow up obsessively driven to be a film director and have a kid right around the block every bit as driven to do the same thing was, I believe, somewhat coincidental.

As for Sam's films, I like the first "Evil Dead" the best for it's sheer, raw terror. I do hear that his new film, "A Simple Plan," is very good. I missed the preview screening as I was down in NZ doing Xena.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

Just a comment on the availability of "Lunatics"- It can be purchased from reel.com for \$67.99 plus shipping.

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

Excellent detective work. My films are ridiculously difficult to purchase, given that they weren't made in the silent era and I'm still alive. Luckily, "Thou Shalt Not Kill . . . Except" will be back in the stores soon and it will only be \$19.95, and that's letterboxed, too.

Josh

Name: Beth Smarr  
E-mail: bsmarr@ramlink.net

Dear Josh:

Ok, Josh, thanks for the answers about Lunatics, even if I didn't like them. Since Columbia Tri-Star owns the rights but has no plans for Lunatics, nor use for it, how could I get their permission to have my Lunatics page as an official one? Maybe enough web buzz would create a demand for a re-release.

Beth

Dear Beth:

What do you need their permission for? If you want to start a site, go ahead. It's a free country. I have no contact with those people and anytime I have attempted to contact them -- I've had several companies interested in re-releasing "Lunatics" -- there's no way to get to anyone in charge, it's too big of a company. Anchor Bay, who is re-releasing "Thou Shalt Not Kill . . . Except," as well as the "Evil Dead" films, would happily put "Lunatics" back out, but they can't cut through the red tape. I'm glad you like the film, though.

Josh

Name: Beth Smarr  
E-mail: bsmarr@ramlink.net

Dear Josh:

Thank you for having an official web site. I surfed onto it while searching for possible links to my Lunatics: A Love Story page. (Thanks, Gerry.) Why is Lunatics such a hard movie to find? Will it be rereleased? If it is, will you be able to offer it through your site ala Running Time? How easy/hard is it to direct Ted Raimi?

Beth

Dear Beth:

Let's take this piece by piece. Why is "Lunatics" hard to find? Because no one bought it. Will it be re-released? The film is owned by Columbia Tri-Star and they don't seem to have any plans or use for it. If it was re-released, God willing, would I be able to offer it thru my site? Probably not. As for Mr. Ted Raimi and how easy/hard it is to direct him, well, nobody on Earth makes me laugh as much as Ted. Bruce Campbell can make me laugh harder if he feels like it, but Ted makes me laugh like an idiot more often, which is basically whenever I'm around him. I've got Super-8 movies with Ted in them at 6 and 7 years old. So the answer is, yeah, Ted's OK.

Josh

Name: James  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Here goes: Is there any chance of getting Running Time autographed by you and possibly Bruce? It'd be a real prize to a lot of us, and worth a premium price!

I realize there are distribution problems involved, but I'm hoping!

Thank you,  
James

Dear James:

I can't speak for Bruce, but I'll be happy to autograph any tape if it is specifically requested.

Josh

Name: MQBlank  
E-mail: Starion106@aol.com

Dear Josh:

love the site content, nice and quick too. Anyway, a suggestion: how about discussing the contemporaries of Spielberg? In particular, you've pointed out very well how Steven is technically adept but not a good storyteller, and often quite unrealistic in his portrayal of characters. There are many directors with a Spielberg style out there, such as Joe Dante and Ron Howard. These two seem to grasp the storytelling aspect better though. Howard tends to follow Steven's lead though in avoiding the gray areas. Any comments?

Dear MQBlank:

How you can lump a guy like Joe Dante in with Spielberg is a bit surprising to me. Dante has made one OK 'B' movie in my opinion, "The Howling," and the rest of his films are for the birds. Ron Howard is a reasonable director. I liked "Apollo 13" a lot more than most movies of the past several years. Nevertheless, most of Howard's pictures are of no particular value or interest to me (I did like "Splash"



at the time). As far as our other living, big-time directors, Stanley Kubrick hasn't made a good movie in 30 years, Coppola hasn't made a good film in 20 years, and Scorsese hasn't made a good film in 10 years. Who else is there? Rob Reiner is a pretty good filmmaker that can, occasionally, tell a decent story. Clint Eastwood surprised the shit out of me with "Unforgiven," which I think is terrific. Oliver Stone had a couple of good films in him, the last one being "JFK," which was seven years ago. The two best films I've seen in the last year were both made for cable: "Elvis Meets Nixon" for Showtime and "Don King: Only in America" for HBO. None of the new, young guys have a single, solitary clue, in my humble opinion.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. I read somewhere that you will be directing the Xena episode 'If The Shoe Fits'. Could you please tell me if this is true and, if it is, what the episode is about.

Thanks,

Heath

Dear Heath:

How do you know all this stuff? That episode hasn't even been written yet. It's sort of a "Cinderella" kind of a thing.

Josh

Name: Terry Thome  
E-mail: ttho@sgi.net

Dear Josh:

A long while ago, I obtained a video entitled "Sam Raimi Short Films". Upon watching it, I found that almost every short was directed by you. I love all of them and I still watch them when I need a great laugh. My Question: In the short film "The Blind Waiter" (my of my absolute favorites, by the way), there's a scene where Sam Raimi's character stutteringly asks Bruce Campbell's Character if he has 15 minutes for a 5 minute conversation. The both then each put a donut in their mouths and lift a pot of coffee to their faces as they turn away from each other. Is that an in joke or is there something I'm overlooking? This has been bugging me from day one.

Dear Terry:

It seemed funny at the time. It was just a silly way out of a dumb joke, that's all.

Josh

Name: Dan Adsit  
E-mail: nitzere88@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I just checked in at Bruce Campbell's and saw Running Time for sale and jumped out of my bed. I shot and over here and fell to the floor when I saw the price (or maybe it was just gravity). Ever since I read about it months ago, I have been dying to see it. Unfortunately, I am a college student on a tight budget. Is this movie going to be for rent or for sale any cheaper any time in the near future? The fact that I can't buy it right now kills me because I want to see it so bad, but I really really want to see it and would love to own it. I know this sounds poor on my part to even bother to ask this, but it's just that important to me to try and get this movie. Thank you in advance for your time.

-Dan Adsit

Dear Dan:

What you need to do is get your local video store to purchase the tape, then rent it.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. I have a question about one of your movies, 'Lunatics: A Love Story'. There is a scene near the end of the movie where Hank (Ted Raimi) finally get up the courage to leave his apartment and look for Nancy (Deborah Foreman). When he is walking on the street he takes a wrong turn and ends up out in the woods. I think Hank said something like, 'I guess I made a wrong turn'. Was this an inside joke on the 'Evil Dead' movies?

Thanks,

Heath

Dear Heath:

No, there's no inside joke there that I know of. It just seemed incongruous to me to turn a corner in a city and suddenly be in the forest.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

After reading your "Saving Private Ryan" article, I was a little surprised to see a few Spielberg movies in your list of favorites. I'm curious- what did you like so much about Jurassic Park that earned it a place in your list?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

"Jurassic Park" scared me several times. It's a completely inane story, but it's not pretending to be anything other than that, and several scenes work very well on the visceral level that the opening of "Ryan" works on. Spielberg is technically very adept, he just can't tell a story. If he starts off with something where the story doesn't matter -- like "Jurassic Park" or "Raiders" -- then he doesn't have very far to fall.

Josh

Name: Debbie  
E-mail: Texwedchi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Two questions for you: 1) How often does the dialogue have to be redubbed after shooting episodes of Xena/Hercules and is it primarily with the exterior scenes especially the fighting sequences? 2) Could you explain how you coordinate the action scenes with Peter Bell? Thanks for taking the time.....

Dear Debbie:

Basically, you replace the sound when the location sound is no good. Graham, the sound man on Xena, is very good, so if it's possible to get a usable soundtrack, he'll get it. However, that's not always possible. In the ep I just did, "In Sickness & in Hell," there is a scene where Xena and Joxer are collecting wood and talking. For a visual change of pace I let them get further and further away from the camera (since TV is shot predominantly in close-up). Well, the further the actors get from the camera, the less room there is for a boom man to get any close to them. So Graham rigged the actors with wireless mikes, which almost always suck, and in this case even more than usual because they had to hold the piles of sticks against their chests, directly against the microphones. So Lucy and Ted will loop (dub) the scene, but we all knew that going in.

In the summer in New Zealand the cicadas are a big problem to sound recording. The post sound people frequently keep the noisy cicada tracks by adding more cicada sounds on top of everything to keep it consistent. Also, it's getting harder and harder to find places in and around Auckland where civilization hasn't totally encroached. We've had to stop using several locations because of all the construction nearby, which ruins the sound.

In regard to the fight scenes and Mr. Peter Bell, whom I think does a really swell job, he and I have

worked differently on different fight scenes. Way back at the beginning, on the Hercules TV movies, I used to spend a long time discussing every move with Peter, as in the enormous bar-fight in "Maze of the Minotaur" (which still may be the longest of all fight scenes). Now, however, I'm perfectly happy to let Peter do everything. I just tell him whether I want a short fight or a long fight.

Josh

Name: Dave  
E-mail: Algaion@netscape.net

Dear Josh:

About The Oscars: what could have won and what should won. I would really like if you could update this article up to 1998. I'd really like to know your opinion on lat(er) awards.

Dear Dave:

I really and truly don't give a shit about anything that's won since then. Also, to not have my friend Rick around to argue with makes it seem pointless.

Josh

Name: Helen R.  
E-mail: stargazer\_10@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

OOh, so many questoins to ask:) Ok, here goes...  
I was wondering how you got your start in directing and what sort of schooling/training did you seek. Also what kind of advise would you give young people, like myself, interested in becoming directors or what have you:) Thank you vary much and may you keep on directing more eps. of my fav. show :):)(Xena!Xena!Xena!)

Dear Helen:

I began at the age of 11 making Super-8 movies with my buddies (Bruce Campbell, Sam Raimi, etc.). At 14 I began taking writing very seriously and have continued to write daily ever since. I never did go to film school. My approach to filmmaking is to do as much of it as often as possible and through practise, hopefully get better. It also looks like I may have another Xena episode this season, presently entitled, "If the Shoe Fits . . ." which is a variation on "Cinderella."

Josh

Name: Robby Cox  
E-mail: koi@magicnet.net

Dear Josh:

I was wondering, with you being a movie guy and all, what are your views on different film formats, such as VHS Vs. Laserdisc Vs. DVD.

Thanks,  
Robby Cox

Dear Robby:

Here's my opinion, for what it's worth: laserdiscs are a dead issue, VHS will be around for a lot longer than anyone would like because it has proliferated so much, and DVD is the obvious next format, which is simply having some early compression problems, but will straighten those out soon. For me, as soon as I can buy the DVD of "Lawrence of Arabia" and "Bridge on the River Kwai," I'll buy the DVD player to go with them.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. I was wondering if you will ever release on video the version of 'Thou Shalt Not Kill...Except' with Bruce Campbell in the lead role. Thanks.

Heath

Dear Heath:

Bruce and I have considered it, but the problem is that the music is all stolen and it's not worth it to pay the clearance. The same thing goes for all the rest of our super-8 movies.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. After 'Shark Island Prison' and 'In Sickness And In Hell', will you be working on any more future episodes of Xena or Hercules this season? Thanks.

Heath

Dear Heath:

I am hired one episode at a time. When and if they contact me to do another one, I'll do it.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

How much do you figure on selling the "Running Time" tapes for? (And if someone asked you real nice, would you autograph a copy?)

--Shirley

Dear Shirely:

I'm glad you asked because I'd like to explain how video tapes are sold. On "Running Time's" initial release it will cost \$49.95. This is because one is hoping to get as many video stores as possible to buy it, and once a video store buys a tape they get to rent it as many times as they want to until the tape wears out. After generally about 12 months the price of a tape will drop to \$24.95 or even \$19.95 (as my first film, "Thou Shalt Not Kill . . . Except" will cost on it's upcoming re-release). I will do this, too, with "Running Time." So, if you want to be first person on your block to own this film, it's \$49.95, plus \$4.00 shipping and handling. Otherwise, you might consider suggesting to your local video store that they purchase the tape.

Josh

Name: Eric Martin  
E-mail: emartin@hemisfear.com

Dear Josh:

What's going on with "Running Time"? When is it going to be released? When it does where can I see it? Is it to be a wide release? Will it be released on video?

Eric

Dear Eric:

I intend to begin selling the video tapes over this very website within a month. Keep your eyes peeled and tell your friends.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper  
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. I was wondering you could tell me a little bit about the Xena episode you wrote 'Shark Island Prison'. Will the episode have the shark from the 'Jaws' pictures in it. Thanks.

Heath

Heath:

"Shark Island Prison" is a prison like Alcatraz or Devil's Island, in that it's on an island and surrounded by shark-infested waters. It's a pretty good, women's prison story, I think. I think it will be a good episode of Xena.

Josh

Name: Mary  
E-mail: mary@bfd.com

Dear Josh:

RE: Directing Anthony Quinn.

I met Anthony Quinn in an airport elevator. He was wrangling several children. Overwhelmed, I said, "Wow, Anthony Quinn, I just love you. I think you're the greatest." He shook my hand and said, "It doesn't matter, (referring to the kids) they still don't do what I tell them to do."

Of the actors you've worked with, do you like the challenge of working with opinionated actors, or those that do what they're told... and for that matter, do those actors exist?

~Mary =)

Dear Mary:

Anthony Quinn is really a great actor and it was an honor to work with him, but he was a royal pain in the ass. I much prefer actors that take direction and do the scene the way I want them to do it. I was willing to listen to Quinn because, A. he is Quinn, and B. I had no choice. However, given the schedule that I must stick to generally, I'm not usually willing to change the scene into something other than how I planned it.

Josh

Name: Beau Maud from France  
E-mail: DERKENN@wanadoo.fr

Dear Josh:

Hello sir. About Smoking Cigarettes , I think that everybody could have the choice of his way of death. More seriously I'm a fan of Jeremy Roberts (may be the only one on the Earth but I hope not for him) and I wonder if you could speak of him to me. It's very hard to find any information about him; and my perfect practise of the english language don't arrange the situation. Mais pourquoi tout le monde ne parle-t-il pas français sur Terre  
?!?

Bonjour Beau Maud:

It's very cool getting mail from France. Paris is one of my favorite places. As for Jeremy Roberts, I've worked with him twice, the 1st time on the Xena episode "A Fistful of Dinars," the 2nd time on my film "Running Time." I think he's a really good actor that makes interesting decisions all the time and uses his space very well. When he's on-screen you watch him. Plus, he gives great line-readings.

Hasta la vista, baby,

Josh

Name: Jana  
E-mail: jdb@telepath.com

Dear Josh:

By all accounts, Lucy and Renee have very different styles of acting. (One recent description I read described Lucy as 'visceral' and Renee as 'methodical'.) Do you find that as a director you have to approach them differently because of their differing styles?

--Jana

Dear Jana:

Yes, I deal with them differently, but then I deal with all actors differently, they are individuals after all. Most actors, I've found, like and enjoy as much direction as they can get (as long as it's sensible), which is the camp that Renee's in. She actually thanks me everytime I give her a piece of direction -- she's one of the truly sweet, lovely people I've ever worked with. Lucy is a joy, too, but doesn't like much direction. After my initial comments, that's all she wants to hear so that she can then go through some actor process of her own (I've heard that Robert DeNiro is like this, too).

Josh

Name: Phil D. Hernández  
E-mail: [broadway@tvi.cc.nm.us](mailto:broadway@tvi.cc.nm.us)

Dear Josh:



I read both sections of this article and was extremely impressed. You are certainly right about the quality of movies; I very rarely bestir myself to go to the theater these days and spend \$7.00 for the trash out there. I may give "Saving Private Ryan" a shot.

Television seems to have the same "cookie-cutter" effect, and I find that the same ideas crop up on three or four shows simultaneously. At least XWP provides "points of no resolve" at the commercial breaks.

I assume the same principle of three discrete acts applies to the "hour" long TV script but with one of the acts divided into two parts (I forget how many commercial breaks there are). Quinn Martin shows, as I recall, actually put the act number on screen.

The article was very useful to me as a writer, though I do not write scripts at this time, only short stories. The general principles are the same, and I will endeavor to remember that in my own writing.

Thank you again for the article (and for directing my favorite XWP episode of all, "For Him the Bell Tolls"), and Break a leg,

Phil D. Hernández

"All experience gained elsewhere fails in New Mexico." - Lew Wallace

Dear Phil:

Yes, you are exactly right about TV, there are 4 acts, but acts 2 and 3 are really two halves of an act 2. Read my posted stories, "Judas" and "Then There Were None" and let me know what you think.

I like the Gen. Lew Wallace quote.

Josh

Name: Debbie  
E-mail: Texwedchi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I've noticed in a few outdoor scenes in Xena, a light rain falling. Does the rainy weather of NZ play havoc with your shooting schedule, for example has it ever washed out a day of shooting and put you behind?

Dear Debbie:

It rains all the damn time in New Zealand, particularly now, in the winter. However, since NZ is a thin little island in the ocean, weather has a tendency to blow right over. Exterior shooting is almost never called off due to rain. I just shot 4 days of exteriors and was rained on everyday. C'est la vie.

Josh

Name: Rhana McConnell  
E-mail: quinrhan@ucinet.com

Dear Josh:

On Xena: Warrior Princess episode Fins Femmes and Gems, character Gabrielle seemed to flourish in beauty. Other episodes throughout the series have shown her in varying degrees of this. Is it lighting, makeup or filters that cause such dramatic differences in the appearance of the actors? Thank you for making yourself available to us, the audience, to understand how directing is done. Most of us have never even seen a film camera.

Dear Rhana:

Renee is a babe, a wonderful actor and a really sweet, nice, kind person. If she doesn't look good it's because the script calls for it, so make-up and lighting make her look less than beautiful. In my new episode, "In Sickness & in Hell," Gaby looks like hell throughout a lot of it, with foot rot that spreads across her whole body. Renee is VERY funny in it, I think.

Josh

Name: mnemosyne  
E-mail: mnemosyne19@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

You and Ted aren't the only ones who think the G&J relationship is a good idea. I and plenty of people I've communicated on the internet think it's a great idea.

Dear Mnemosyne:

But it won't happen, I'm pretty sure. No one thinks very much of Joxer as a love interest, simply as comic relief. Too bad.

Josh

Name: lostchord  
E-mail: mcblack@sprint.ca

Dear Josh:

First, my appreciation for your willingness to engage with people, and my sympathies for the tasteless tantrums to which you were exposed as a result.

My question concerns editing an episode and how you reconcile visual continuity discrepancies from angle to angle - for example, hands or bodies in noticeably different positions, lighting differences from angle to angle in the same scene. Is this a time-difference problem from take to take? Do you simply make the best compromise choices?

Dear LostChord:

That's what movie (and TV) editing are about. As an example, you shoot the entire scene in a wide-shot, then you get the close-ups of the entire scene. Then, when you want to cut from the wide shot to the CU, you match the action, like a head-turn, or bringing a cup to the lips, or whatever.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

How in the world did you happen to co-write the Joxer theme anyways?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

I directed the Xena episode starring Joxer called "For Him the Bell Tolls," which is where the Joxer theme first appears. As I was planning my shots, it occurred to me that Joxer ought to have a song to sing, so I wrote the first verse. I gave this to Ted Raimi and he added several more verses. Then I asked the show's composer, Joe LoDuca, to use the song over the end titles and he added even more verses. Somehow in the credits, the song was then attributed to Joe and Ted and not me. C'est la vie. I've added yet another verse in the episode I'm directing now, which is called "In Sickness and in Hell."

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

I'm eagerly awaiting my chance to see Running Time. What are the chances of it being distributed anytime soon?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

In regard to your first question about seeing or getting "Running Time," presently I have no distribution deal of any kind. No one seems to want to handle the film because of its relative shortness (70 minutes) and because it's in black & white. Nevertheless, I'm still working on it.

Josh

Name: Mary McDonough

E-mail: mary@bfd.com

Dear Josh:

At what point in your life did you say, "What I really want to do is direct?"

~Mary =)

Dear Mary:

I decided that I wanted to be *IN* movies when I was ten years old. This was based on seeing Carol Reed's film "Oliver." I specified the particular end of movies I preferred, direction and writing, at the age of twelve when I began making super-8 movies.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: data@powerlink.net

Dear Josh:

Can you describe what directing a "typical" (-insert laughter here-) Xena episode is like?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

It's like playing Hamlet on stage for 12 hours a day for seven days straight, with everything you do being recorded so that others may judge it.

Josh

Name: Natasha Lake  
E-mail: natashalake@geocities.com

Dear Josh:

I've worked as a videographer for about five years in TV news. I'm curious as to what the key differences are between videography and cinematography... (aside from the amount of time you get to set up your shots!) How difficult would it be to switch over from shooting news, to shooting for TV shows or movies? Does this happen often?

--Tasha

Dear Tasha:

I don't really know. I don't think it much matters what format one shoots in, it's how it looks. Most of what a DP does is lighting, which is not the case for shooting video, is it? News and documentary stuff is generally available light, or one or two little lights aiming in someone's face. Being a film DP (even

on TV -- Xena and Herc are both shot on 35mm film) means using a lot of lights, reflectors and mirrors to create a look, plus running the lighting and camera crews.

Josh

Name: Natasha Lake  
E-mail: natashalake@geocities.com

Dear Josh:

You mentioned earlier that you use a non-linear editing system."Avacus" by any chance?--Tasha

Dear Tasha:

On Xena they use Avid, on Herc it's Lightworks. Never heard of "Avacus," sounds like a bad guy's name on the shows.

Josh

Name: Debbie  
E-mail: Texwedchi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I've noticed in a few outdoor scenes in Xena, a light rain falling. Does the rainy weather of NZ play havoc with your shooting schedule, for example has it ever washed out a day of shooting and put you behind?

Dear Debbie:

It rains all the damn time in New Zealand, particularly now, in the winter. However, since NZ is a thin little island in the ocean, weather has a tendency to blow right over. Exterior shooting is almost never called off due to rain. I just shot 4 days of exteriors and was rained on everyday. C'est la vie.

Josh

Name: Angela  
E-mail: kaippe@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Whenever you have an actor who you know is not giving their best performance on a scene, for whatever reason, for their own good, and the good of the film, how do you get it out of them?

Dear Angela:

That's an interesting question, one that cuts to the heart of what directing is, I think. Choosing blocking and camera angles is part of the job, but getting the performances you want is the key part of the job. I'll do damn near anything to get a performance out of an actor: goof with them and make them laugh before the take, discuss the meaning of the scene, tell them which words I think should be stressed, I actually do the performance for some actors and get them to imitate me. However, since I cast the actors, I must then trust them since there's no time for acting lessons on the set. If they totally stink it's my fault for casting them and I accept that responsibility.

Josh

Name: John  
E-mail: [jdwpalle@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:jdwpalle@uwaterloo.ca)

Dear Josh:

You've got the product (the hard part) and if it's a decent film, people will want to see it. If normal distribution methods aren't working, have you thought about alternative forms of distribution?

Some of the greatest fortunes were made off of decent product that just happened to be marketed and delivered in an original way.

Ta,  
John

PS: Yeah, yeah, I KNOW you know this stuff, but I'm actually just curious to hear what you've tried.  
<grin>

Dear John:

Well, I took RT to as many festivals as I could get into, which did not include any of the major festivals, then I rented a theater in L.A. and ran the film for a week, thus getting reviews. I got terrific reviews from the major newspapers of L.A., and after all that I can't get the film distributed.

It's been out to quite a few distribution companies, as well as overseas sales agencies. What are you referring to when you say "alternative forms?" I spent as much money as I intend to spend on that movie, so if it costs money I'm not interested. Someone must now give me money. Quite frankly, this late in the game, I'd rather sit on the movie than get ripped-off again.

Josh

Name: Shirley LeVasseur  
E-mail: [data@powerlink](mailto:data@powerlink)

Josh,

You mentioned you used a "non-linear editing system" for Running Time. What is that, and what's the advantage of using that over, say, a linear editing system?

--Shirley

Dear Shirley:

You sure have a lot of questions right out of the gate. Why is non-linear editing better? Because you don't have to wind through 1000's of feet of film. Finding your footage is like finding the tracks on a CD instead of winding through cassette tapes from beginning to end.

Josh

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