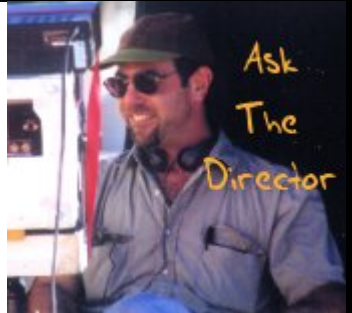


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
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Name: JON
E-mail: JL1FG@aol.com

Hi Josh,

My question is simple. I must be a filmmaker. I can't afford film school. I don't know where to turn. Basically, how the hell do you get into this industry with no connections. How'd you do it?

Dear Jon:

Thomas Edison once said, "Good things come to those who hustle while they wait." Make movies and write scripts. Read my [structure essays](#), commit them to memory, then practice, practice, practice. You can't spend enough time working on writing.

Josh

Name: Gord
E-mail: gord@gordzajac.com

Josh,

Not so much a question but more of a comment in regards to all these folks who are interested in the name of a good film school. I'd like to give the following advice.

I'm currently enrolled at Sheridan College in the Media Arts program (aka Film and TV Production) in Canada. Despite a few problems, it's a very good school for film production. Here are some things you should try looking for in a good film school:

When it comes to learning how to be a director/producer/dop/gaffer/etc. Josh is absolutely 100 per cent right. You learn best by being on set. Fortunately, our program is based entirely around producing material throughout the school year. And let me say you learn a LOT more shooting a film than you could ever pick up in a classroom. So wherever you're thinking of going to school, make sure it's a program that emphasizes the

practical and technical side.

All of our instructors are required to stay active in the industry, so their information and production knowledge is current.

And go out and shoot shoot shoot. This year, I've made six short films (4 shot on video, 1 on 16mm and 1 on Super16mm). My final film for the year has been my most ambitious to date. And I'm damn proud of the results, if I do say so myself. But I couldn't have honestly done it without the technical knowhow of my instructors (not to mention the hard work my friends/classmates and I put into it!)

For me, the film school route has been a great way to get my feet wet in the film industry. I had been fumbling around in the dark for a while, trying to figure a way into the business before I finally settled on going back to school. And it's definitely been worth it.

So yes, film school can be helpful in getting into the industry. But film school or no, if you can't get off your butt with at least a video camera to go out and shoot something (and I mean REALLY put some effort into shooting something), then give it up and get a real job now, cuz you're only kidding yourself.

That's my 222 cents.

Gord

Dear Gord:

Thanks for jumping in and giving a decent answer to that question. You've got just the right attitude, keep up the good work and the best of luck.

Josh

Name: paranoid

E-mail:

Mr Becker,

I have read your most interesting story involving the running of various drugs in the '70's. Were you not the least bit scared of doing time in jail? I would be scared out of my mind. I know this is long before the 'Just Say No' Nancy Regan era but you guys had a ton of blow, pills, and weed in your car. I loved the story, it was very well written and funny as all hell. I also think you are brave for admitting you were a disco dancing fool. Thanks, Josh, I've read the story 3x's now!!

Dear Paranoid:

It's OK, we're not all against you . . . just some of us. Actually, I don't recall ever being scared, but then I was so stoned it makes sense. I'm glad you enjoyed the story, I've been meaning to write it down for almost 24 years.

Josh

Name: Nancy Funkhouser

E-mail: lafunks@erol.com

Dear Josh:

I am going to be a director. I would like to know what you consider the best school to that can give me proper education. I would like a formal education. However, I'm open to many suggestions.

Dear Nancy:

I get this question a lot and, honestly, I don't know. Nobody I'm acquainted with learned what they know at film school, including me, so what can I say?

Josh

Name: Jeff Quest
E-mail: Wonkyj@aol.com

Josh,

I enjoy the site and the various essays and reviews that you have here.

I was wondering what your opinion on writers directing their own work. After the success of "The Sixth Sense" do you see this as becoming more common as writers see this as perhaps the only way to get their film made?

Having done it before do you think that a writer/director combo makes a film stronger than it otherwise might be? I know that one of my favorite directors Billy Wilder also worked with his partner I.A.L. Diamond on the scripts and I think that his movies were always very tight script-wise. I find it interesting that when a movie works it's because of "the vision of the director" yet when it sucks it's because of the writer and the script. It's also kind of funny because it's the exact opposite of the theatre where the playwright is god. I think the only way writers will ever get any respect from the masses, and see their script turn out the way they envisioned, is to be a director also.

I'm interested in you thoughts on this,
Jeff

Dear Jeff:

Writing and directing are very different skills, although both come in handy doing the other thing. When writing a scene it's good to know if it's directable, and when directing a scene is good to be able to rewrite it if it's not working. But just because you might be able to do one doesn't mean you can do then other. My favorite director, William Wyler, was not a writer, but he knew what the writers were supposed to put there. So, I guess my real answer is--it depends.

Josh

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

Josh,

The deal with the "Script editor," is this. They guys have it in a different format and the descriptive text is way too long. Also the guys are in England and things as well as film, is kinda different over there. They want an americans point of view, too bad for them I'm Canadian, but it should be close enough eh? Lucky for me, and them, I have read "Josh Becker's essays on screenwriting!" Ha Ha so I will make sure everything is proper and the damn thing has 3 acts. Then it is off to shoot this summer on 35mm or 16. They already have financing and so I'll gladly take the screen credit. They came to me as well, I didn't even need to look for the job. Anyway, the contracts are signed and the casting started. I'll let you know how it all works out.

Thanks for the advice and help.

Best,
Michael

Dear Michael:

Make a good movie!

Josh

Name: Thomas Hefferon
E-mail: theff1@eircom.net

Hi Josh,

Thanks for answering my question the other day. Well anyway I have a few more questions for you, so hopefully you'll be able to help me. In a film course that I'm doing we have had a lot of discussions about the actual writing of scripts. Now today we learned about the three act structure and how important it is to use it if you want to get your work used by the big Hollywood companies, Paramount, Warner, etc. So my question to you is this, when you are writing scripts did you use the three act structure and if not then how did you write it. (I prefer to write myself by just letting the pen flow) Also I was curious to know is it true that the big companies only take scripts that follow this type of structure, and in your experience with them is this what happened. Thanks again and I look forward to reading your reply, bye.

Dear Thomas:

Obviously, you haven't looked around this site very much. Read my [five structure essays](#), then come back and tell us what you think.

Josh

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

Josh,

Some friends sent me their screenplay to edit for them. It will be an independant shot sometime this year. So far I know I need to put it in the proper format, cut the discriptive text, and maybe work on some dialogue.

Now I am to get screen credit for my work, I am just not too sure what credit that would be. They suggested "Script Editor" and I was wondering if this is the proper term used.

Thanks,
Michael

Dear Michael:

"Script editor" sounds as good as anything, although I fail to see why whomever wrote the script could not "edit" it themselves. Scripts are short, with wide margins, and a lot of spacing, so there's really very few words per page, what's the big deal?

Josh

Name: Lynn Ribaud
E-mail: ribaud@acsu.buffalo.edu

Josh:

You've commented on the visual aspect of films; I would like to ask you opinion of the sound aspect. What sound format do you use (e.g., how many channels in final form). Do you think multi-channel sound is useful? If you use relatively few channels (e.g., mono or two-channel stereo) is this perhaps largely a financial consideration or an aesthetic one? If financial, what would you use if cost were not an issue? Finally, I've read an interview with Michael Hurst in which he stated that Xena is recorded with Dolby surround or something similar. Do you know if this is the case? Thanks!

Dear Lynn:

There are a number of issues here: how was the sound originally recorded? How was the sound originally mixed? What are you listening to it on? For instance, "Xena" is recorded in stereo digital, then is mixed in Dolby Stereo, but if you're watching on a mono TV, it's in mono. My film "Running Time" was recorded in stereo, mixed in stereo, and on the video and DVD is in stereo, but the film prints, both 16mm and 35mm, are all mono.

Josh

Name: Ryan Bickmore
E-mail: cartman404@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I am a student of Keller High School. I have been asked to do a project in my math class about what you wish to do for a living and what colleges you must attend to become this. I have chosen Film Directing because I have a passion for it. I have also been asked to interview 3 people who are professionals at this. If you have the time I would be extremely pleased if you would answer the following questions. If you feel you do not wish to answer some of questions, I understand.

Name? Place of Employment? Contact Phone Number? Job Title? Years in profession? Job Description? Education required for the job? What Math did you take in High School? Do you have any comments on the

importance of high school? Is there anything you would have done differently in College? Do you have any comments on the importance of college work in your career? Was Graduate School necessary? Please State 3-5 ways in which you use math in your profession. Please make any comments that you feel would be of importance to high school students as they prepare themselves for their futures.

Thank You For Your Time.
Ryan Bickmore.

Dear Ryan:

I am not a school project! I'm a human being! BTW, I always hated math.

Josh

Name: Robin Goodman
E-mail:

Dear Josh,

I saw Kindred Spirits. I agree that this episode was great. I loved when Renee was all full of mud and was howling. I bet she loved being all muddy. what fun????

Dear Robin:

Yeah, she loved it. When we finished shooting the scene, Renee came up to me and before I knew what she was doing she gave me a big hug and a kiss and suddenly I too was covered in mud. It was funny.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
E-mail: McDanzz@aol.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

My gosh dude, you drove 3000 miles to see this girl?? My friend and I drove 700 miles just to surprise his girl and we thought WE were gods!! Was she at all flattered by the fact that you drove across country to see her?? Have you ever seen her since?

Thanks for your time,
Danny Cork

Dear Danny:

I guess she was somewhat less than flattered in that she dumped my sorry ass post haste. I saw her at a party years later and she was smash-ass drunk and came onto me with her husband standing there. It seemed like a bad situation and I left rather soon. That was 20 years ago and the last time I saw her.

Josh

Name: Angela
E-mail: ent.exch@dial.pipex.com

Dear Josh:

Have to agree with Melosa's comments, Kindred Spirits was great really enjoyed it. Particularly loved the ending with X&G lying under the stars at the end, it was very like the ending of Fins Femmes and Gems, did you have this in mind when you directed this??? Hope you get to direct an episode in season 6 you always do a good job and produce a very funny show. You may say Xena is a kids program but this is one adult who enjoys your work on Xena very much and is not ashamed to say so.

Dear Angela:

Well thanks. I don't think calling something a kid's show is a negative comment. As I keep reiterating, "The Simpsons" is my favorite show and it's definitely a kid's show. It wasn't me that asked for the FF&G ending, it was Rob Tapert. And I hope they hire me on season 6, too.

Josh

Name: HORSE
E-mail: horse@metallica.com

Hey Josh,

I bothered you about a month ago with a question about low-budget camera tricks. Thank you, I tried some of the stuff you suggested and I was able to get them to work (coincidentally, I have a wheelchair and that worked really well). Now I have another question. How would you recommend I go about getting funding? What are some of the ways you have convinced people to part with their hard-earned cash? Thanks Josh, you're a good man for helping poor suckers like me.

-- HORSE

Dear Horse:

I am one of you poor suckers. Other than earning the money myself, the only other method I've found is making my family and friends feel guilty and getting their money. Some people have a knack for raising money, but sadly, I don't.

Josh

Name: Michael Pearsall
E-mail: fanaka66@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Hi, I grew up with Brett Beardslee but only talk to him sporadically when we are both "home". My questions are about "If I Had A Hammer". What is it about, does Brett have a big part, is he as talented as he seemed to me in high school? When will it come out?

Thanks,
Michael Pearsall

Dear Michael:

It's the story of the end of the folk movement in 1964, Brett has the lead, and I wouldn't have given him the lead if I didn't think he was very good. As to when it will be out, I have no release date.

Josh

Name: Kim Smith (a.k.a. Melosa)
E-mail: bksmith@cyberback.com

Dear Sir,

I normally do not write to anyone in your line of work. Kindred Spirits has forced me to make an exception. I enjoyed that episode more than any other this season. You did an excellent job and I am grateful for the quality entertainment. Thank you for your hard work. And tell anyone else that worked with you on it I said so.

Very Appreciative,
Melosa

Dear Melosa:

Thank you very much.

Josh

Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Josh,

I have to agree with August, there is a point at which "poetic license" stretches a bit beyond recognition -- and the problem point, for me, is when the (even admittedly) "work of fiction" is taken as truth or even historical fact.

I think 'Braveheart' is a great example of this. Yes, there was a William Wallace, and yes he was a big pain in Edward's ass.. but was it necessary to infer that Robert the Bruce was a backstabbing prick directly responsible for his death, or that Wallace sired the next heir of England? I actually got into a heated debate with a Scottish guy in a bar about this once -- because he loved the movie, and felt (therefore) that it was 100% indisputable historical fact. I, on the otherhand, thought it was a 90s remake of Spartacus.

Probably the greatest example of this is Shakespeare's Richard III. I don't know if you read historical fiction much, but (if so) I heartily suggest "Sunne in Splendour" by Sharon Kay Penman -- it basically brings to light

the fact that Shakespeare's hunchback, fratricidal Richard is pretty much unfounded, historically. A sad testament to the fact that entertainment, given enough popular exposure and time, can eventually become "historical fact."

Pretty sad, huh?

JT

Dear JT:

I don't think you ought to be picking on Shakespeare for his historical inaccuracies, it's pretty damn impressive that he knew what he knew, given that there were very few books around in 1600. As to "Braveheart," I don't know the true story, I simply didn't like the movie. It was fine as long as his girlfriend was around, but as soon as she was dead, about 60 minutes into the film, I lost all interest. It seemed like the entire next two hours was bashing people's skulls in with big sticks. I thought "Rob Roy" was a much better picture that came out at the same time--John Hurt and Tim Roth are both great in it, and the central relationship between Liam Neeson and Jessica Lange is MUCH stronger than anything in "Braveheart."

Josh

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

Josh,

I'm setting up an area at my website called "Friends & Fellows." It will be a links page to places on the web I used to learn my craft. I would like to include a link to Beckerfilms.com and will also ask Bruce for permission. My website deals with screenwriting, filmmaking, acting, and the promotion of myself and my career. I feel it meets your guidelines, but I still wanted to ask you first.

Thanks,
Michael

Dear Michael:

Sure, go ahead.

Josh

Name: Elizabeth
E-mail: elizabethannebennett@hotmail.com`

Hey Josh,

Do you have any amusing stories about Ted Raimi, when he was younger or from recent experiences? If so, would you please tell some, or one? Thank you kindly.

Take care,
Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth:

Actually, there are an enourmous amount of funny Ted stories since most everything he does is funny. He loses five scripts a day and I won't let him touch mine--I'll hold it up for him to look at, but he can't touch it. One day down in New Zealand Ted came out of his apartment and couldn't find his rental car. He looked up one side of the street, then down the other side, then concluded it must have been stolen. He told the folks in the office, who in turn called the police and Ted filed a report. As he and I were being driven home that night, we turned down the street a block over from Ted's street and lo and behold, there was Ted's car. Once, a long time ago, Ted went to see "The Elephant Man" at an inner-city Detroit theater. The crowd must have thought they were about to see a horror film because when the nurse first sees the Elephant Man and screams, someone in audience yelled, "Kill her, Elephant Man!"

Josh

Name: Don Samuels
E-mail: salfan2@aol.com

Hey Josh,

What do you think of Robert Trebor's work on Hercules and Xena? And do you know why he was written out of both shows? Is it true he got into some kind of fight with Lucy or Rob? That's what some rumors are saying..... Also, have you read his book Dear Salmoneus: The World's First Guide To Love and Money? Thanks for your time.

Dear Don:

I don't think Salmoneus was ever funny. To me, the character was always the pretense of humor, not actually funny. I think others felt the same way. Bob Trebor sure knows his movie trivia, though.

Josh

Name: August
E-mail: joxerfan@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Please add me to the fans who defend you here, even though you hardly need assistance!

A quick observation or two on the couple of Xena-obsessees who've posted questions/tirades recently. Just remember - most of the viewing public doesn't even know of the existence of the "fan" world, debates on Joxer or subtext, or even the names of most of the performers. They just happen to surf over to that channel and enjoy a fun show. For all the online temper tantrums that the "dedicated fan base" may have, there are countless more who hardly even know what the internet is. At the one fan convention I've attended, there were several hundred fans who appeared to derive their information exclusively from magazines and newsletters, and not even half that who were actively involved on the internet. So illegitmi non carborundum, dude. They'll get a fuckin' clue sooner or later.

On the other hand, I do enjoy your Don Rickles-style observations! May I amend the guy's comment on your being his favorite director. You're my favorite opinion to read, because invariably you make me think. Plus

you have bothered to put thought into your opinions. And of course you don't hesitate to say what you think, and that is rare enough in life, not to mention show business. It's very refreshing, and always enjoyable.

By the way, ironically, I watched and thoroughly enjoyed "I Claudius" as a child, or a teen anyway, but enjoy Xena, Herc, etc. as an adult. Go figure.

But that brings up your observation on historical accuracy, as in "The Hurricane." I remember this debate came up when Stone's "JFK" came out. There was the usual disclaimer saying that it was a work of fiction, but many made the point that due to Stone and Costner's prominence, kids seeing the movie will assume that it's a foregone conclusion that there was a vast govt. conspiracy to kill Kennedy. And LBJ's family is all still alive and well, and couldn't have been wild about the film's implications about him.

On the other hand, "The X-Files" does that every week, but no one minds. Is it because that show is widely understood to be "sci-fi" and therefore speculative or fantastical in nature? Also, I wonder if there is some statute of limitations on accuracy. "I Claudius" for example portrays Livia as an evil murderer, and we see it as a fascinating hypothesis. What if a work portrayed Jackie Onassis thus? Or Hillary Clinton? I was watching the old Heston/McMurray movie on Lewis and Clark recently...."The Great Divide," I think? It portrayed, very inaccurately, Heston and Sacajaweya as lovers just to spice up the movie. But there is no outcry, nor was there in the '50's to my knowledge.

So in the case of "The Hurricane," since it's not a story I'm familiar with, the inaccuracy doesn't bother me a bit. There was a TVM some years back called "Nighmare in Columbia County" based on a murder in my hometown, and much was changed for dramatic purposes (the name of the county, for example!) including the entire personality of the main character. But no one really minded, because it was understood that it was "for TV."

Sometimes I think that the films that say "inspired" or "suggested" by a true story may have the right idea. So are there some other contemporary films that you feel have overstepped the boundaries?

Thanks,

August
(the inquiring mind)

Dear August:

Rob Tapert made sure to check early on as to what percentage of viewers had computers and went online and it was less than one percent, so we've always known that the online Xena fans are not to be taken seriously. They make a lot of noise, but don't represent anything.

Another somewhat recent film that distorted it's facts was "Hoffa" with Jack Nicholson wearing very silly false teeth. Bruce, Sam and I grew up two miles from the restaurant where Jimmy Hoffa was kidnapped and it was one of the most expensive places in town, a place where you could order a \$1000 bottle of wine. In the movie he's in a diner. Anyway, "The Hurricane" bothered me in a number of ways: I wanted to be on Hurricane Carter's side, but am I honestly supposed to believe that the chief of police in Patterson, N.J. singled him out as a small child, then persecuted him his entire life? That this guy spent most of his life in prison because of an evil cop? And most evilly portrayed by Dan Hedaya. Also, I'd like to be able to feel like I can trust Norman Jewison at this late date.

Josh

Name: Thomas Hefferon
E-mail: theff1@eircom.net

Hi Josh,

Well this is my first visit to your message forum but I've been on your site a few times and must say that it is refreshing to see a successful filmmaker contribute advice and material from his experiences in the business. My main purpose for this post is that I wanted to get an insight into what you think of Film courses in College, do you think their good and what are the good ones as far as you know? I ask this because you seem to be a nice guy trying to warn us wannabe moviemakers of the pit falls of the business. Personally I have heard that USC in California and NYC in New York are good, what do you think of them? Finally I was wondering how you got into the business, did you go to a college to study film or did you do it another way? Thanks for anything you might say in advance, and keep up the good work.

Dear Thomas:

The schools with the big film programs are: USC, UCLA and NYU. Myself and my buds went to none of the above. We simply began making Super-8 movies as kids, which became 16mm movies, which became 35mm movies. I'm not sure what they can teach you in film school that can't be learned from watching a lot of movies and making a number of short films leading up to a feature. I really do feel that filmmaking is a trial and error process, and it's important to start making films ASAP so you can make every mistake ASAP and get them out of your system. Nevertheless, you must pursue your dream in your own fashion, and if you see film school in your future then pursue it.

Josh

Name: Jason Roth
E-mail: rothj@river.it.gvsu.edu

Hi Josh,

I was just curious about the status of the TSNKE DVD. Did you have any luck with acquiring musical rights for the original Super 8 version? It's been awhile since I've heard any mention of it anywhere. The Running Time DVD is quite great, fun commentary with you and Bruce. Keep up the good work, your site is one of the best on the web!

Jason

PS Did you get those Running Time fliers I mailed you quite belatedly?

Dear Jason:

No word on anything from the folks at Anchor Bay. We made a beautiful Digital Beta transfer of TSNKE, so it ought to look terrific on DVD. I'm out of the loop. And yes, I got the flyers.

Josh

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

Josh,

Sorry Josh but I must rant here for a bit. Please bare with me for a few lines.

A little under two years ago I plugged into the internet for the very first time. I was watching a show called "Xena" that came on Saturday afternoons here in Canada. I soon discovered Bruce Campbell Online from one of the fan websites. I saw that you could email Bruce himself, and immediatly declared this bull. I said "This is some crazed fan or computer nerd pretending to be Bruce." Well time proved me wrong. When things interest me, I research everything I can find on this subject. Within a month I discovered the company called "Ren Pics, and the filmmakers called Shemps." This led me to the discovery that one of my favorite, late night, horror flicks, The Evil Dead, was indeed made by these talented people when they were just breaking into the buisness. The fact that you guys just went out and did it, impressed me and gained my respect. I have always wanted to write, or to be more accurate, I have always wanted to create in every medium I could. Bruce gave me some advice I am sure you can agree with. "If you want to break into this buisness and make films, then go out and make one." Hey it worked for them! So at age 25, I decided to do just that and write a screenplay. I did not go to any fancy school, I did not read all the "How to," books, I just took my years upon years of watching movies and though to myself "What did I really like, and why?" Bruce emailed me his little notes on format and sent me over here. I read all your essays relating to everything on film took notes. I joined a few mailing lists and listened, watched, learned. I taught myself with no support from friends, or family. In my small town up in Ontario, NOBODY knows what a screenwrite does, or is for that matter. But in this buisness we must never give in. I have been told by everyone who wanted to waste breath, "I would never make it, I don't have the talent, nobody would even look at my first script, bla bla bla" but I always kept in mind that you and Bruce and the gang must have heard the same at one time or the other. Learning proper format and structure are a must, but I also had to realize that this is a buisness and not an art. It is a craft. Learn your craft, perfect your craft, never stop learning, and then conduct yourself in a professional manner. These are things I have learned from the online contact I have had from both you and Bruce. I have sent you about 10 emails total in the past 18 months, and your advice has always been honest and welcome.

To end this little story, I am writing my second screenplay at this moment. My first is currently at five production companies, by request. Will I get an option? A sale? Who knows in this crazy lifestyle, but the point is, I did it. I made something out of nothing, I learned the proper format and the proper procedures. I fulfilled a lifelong dream of getting something from inside my head and out onto paper. I have made contacts with agents and managers and have even taught myself HTML and put up my own website. I have artists that work for me and bring visuals to my creations, and I even registered and opened my own local production company. Not bad for less then two years and on ones own.

Once I sent you an email siding with you agianst the constant slander you get here from people who do not agree with your opinion. I mentioned that I admire your honesty and even though I might not always agree with you, I respect you taking the time to share with us your insight. I also mentioned that I was working on a screenplay of my own.

You responded with the following. "Good luck, you have the right attitude as far as I'm concerned." That sentence has stuck with me quite some time. To hear from someone who is, to be blunt, quite hard to please, was another reminder that my hard work has been worth it all, and that I am on the right track.

What impresses me the most about you guys, is the bridge you open between fans and yourself. That you take the time for good or bad to have contact with us. For that I would like to thank you again.

I am not an ass kisser Josh, and I am not kissing your ass, even though is sounds very much so. But I will give you points for posting such rants from fans like "david" and others that act like they have been brought here at gunpoint and made listen to your opinion and have it declared the gospel. I have learned in my internet travels that none are more serious, protective, and stubborn then the adult Xena fans. I really enjoy the product Rob Tapert has givin the public and have for years. Personally I do feel it has lost some of its magic and I do not like the last few seasons, but I do still enjoy the show. To have people come here and rip into you for reaons only known to them, and try and twist your words and have you say something bad against one of your friends, and co-workers is beyond me. Honestly I wish there was a way to filter out certain messages and I would not blame you if soon you stopped posting the crap we have been reading of late. I thought the whole "American Beauty" thing would never end, but it has now been replaced by this other guy and his supporters in an even more assanine cause. I think they are here for no other reason but to

try and make you look out to be an idiot. Even though you have given them this place to come to, and reply to messages most people would have deleted long ago. I don't understand this, but I do think they should seek treatment for it. Maybe not take the show too seriously, especially when it will be ending soon.

So in closing I just wanted you to know that some people not only enjoy your advice and opinion, but you have inspired and helped myself and perhaps others with your blunt, honest take on this buisness.

Like yourself, I will never stop trying, and will continue to write and learn and re-write and learn. Nothing is better then doing what you love for a living. I hope someday I can pass on what I have learned to others as you and Bruce have so kindly done with me.

You may post this online if you want, if you do not, I understand. I just wanted you to know you have indeed made an impact and a differance. Bruce also told me "Don't get stars in your eyes." and advice like that is priceless. I just wish more people would listen to what you say, and not get mad because it was not what they wanted to hear.

Keep fighting the fight. I'll see you in the credits someday soon.

Best,
Michael

Dear Michael:

See, you do have the right attitude, I knew it. Well, I certainly am pleased that I may have accomplished more here than arguing about "American Beauty" and "Xena." I was beginning to think this was really Insults.com and I was standing in for Don Rickles. And if nothing happens with your first script, then you write a second script, and if nothing happens with that, write a third, etc. The first script I got made was my fifth and the second one I got made was my fifteenth. I've now made four out of 28. It's like Tim Robbins in "The Shawshank Redemption," if you just keep pounding on the wall with your little hammer, eventually you'll break through the wall.

All the very best and thanks for the encouragement on this end,

Josh

Name: Xenamour
E-mail: Xenamour@cs.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

Again I thank you for your prompt replies and your accessibility. I read your responses with interest. I found some movies on your last list of films (chick flicks) that I have seen and *loved*. I don't know if there was an earlier version of "Funny Girl" or not, but I loved the version with Striesand. It was really the first musical film I ever saw in the theatre and I have loved Barbra Striesand ever since. And if her portrayl is true to form... I am sorry we don't have Fanny Brice on film somewhere... I would have loved to see "the real thing".

There are some others I have yet to see, but I am taking your list with me to the video store next time I go to check them out.

The question of creative liscense vs. lie is an interesting one. And, yes, I do believe that has been debated on that forum from time to time. In my own opinion, any movie, tv show, book, that casts itself in the catagory of "biography" or "true to life" has an obligation to play it straight with the facts. I don't think "history surfing" in the case of Xena or other shows that have never touted themselves as other than "Sci-Fi" or "Sci-Fantasy" should be held to those standards however. I think the issue begs us to define "truth".

Truth, it seems to me, is based in part on perspective. My perspective is different than yours and so how I view a specific event, my recall of what actually happened, will be different. My truth, is different from your truth. This brings me back to a question I asked on my last post, and one I would really like your response to.

Doesn't the audience and what they bring to a movie have as much to do with defining its meaning as the content of the movie itself?

It also seems to me there is more than one type of truth. There is the factual truth and there is an emotional truth... or center to a piece. Is it ok to sacrifice technical facts for the sake of moving the audience to a place where they can "feel" or "find" the emotional center of a story? Maybe some facts but not others? Does the end justify the means? Surely even "Funny Girl" didn't get all the facts right.

How do we decide what it is ok to leave out or alter for the sake of getting the story told?

Is it better sociologically speaking to teach the audience a moral lesson, even when it means omitting or altering some facts, or to be true to all facts regardless of whether they make a point? Does the "lesson" ring less than true if the facts are skewed? (Why do I think it would depend on which facts are altered or omitted, but I couldn't tell you with any certainty which ones?) I realize, that ideally you would have no compromise... tell the story, make a point, move your audience, and keep the facts intact. Seems, however, a nearly insurmountable task to me.

Xenamour

Dear Xenamour:

There's only one "Funny Girl" that I know of, directed by my man, William Wyler, and starring Barbra Streisand. The real Fanny Bruce wasn't all that much like Streisand, but she can be seen in a few films, such as: "The Great Ziegfeld" and "Ziegfeld Follies."

As to defining things, I think the less definition the better. Why not just take things for what they are? That's why I stopped fighting this silly issue of "kid's show" vs. "adult show." Who cares? Once again, "The Simpsons" is a kid's show and, in my humble opinion, the brightest show on the air.

Regarding the "Truth" in a true story, it's not a simple task and the facts really can't stay intact. The second you tell a story that covers some amount of time--a day, a week, a year--and you jam it into 2 hours, you've messed with the facts. But to say Ghiardello was a bloody mess and the audience was screaming "Travesty!" when in fact they weren't, while Ghiardello is still alive, I think is going too far.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
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Dear Mr. Becker,

To what extent do you appreciate symbolism in film? I've seen dozens of movies that incorporate metaphors and such like into its characters, but I feel there are some films that substitute symbolic meaning for a good story. Do you think that the theme of a story should be presented with subtlety through a story? Or should it have characters that act and react based upon what they represent rather than who they are.

Thank you for your time,
Danny Cork.

Dear Danny:

If you know your theme, in my opinion, you can't find enough ways to express it, through secondary characters, through symbolism, through metaphor, it's all good. Symbolism for the sake of symbolism means nothing. I've also got no problem with coming right out and saying what you mean.

Josh

Name: Xenamour
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Dear Mr. Becker,

I fear I owe you an apology. In sharing some of your answers and your addy at the Xena Fan Forum, I and others there seem to have generated quite an interest in this site, and an increasing number of Xena related questions posted here. I understand it isn't your favorite topic and that you yourself are not a fan of the show per say. So I sincerely apologize if I have contributed to any undo irritation on your part.

However, even with that said, it seems to me that your knowledge of Xena by your own admission, is limited to the episodes you directed and/or wrote. Additionally, the experience of the audience, what they bring with them when they come to watch, seems to me to be as much a factor in defining the meaning/impact of a story as do the contents of the work itself. Granted, Xena is not likely the most complex and sophisticated show on television... but, even if RT never *intended* to write/produce a show that moved so many adult women so deeply... that is indeed what has happened.

Do we define the show by it's intention or by its effect?

I mean, even VBUA's need a place to look for reminders of simple truths don't they?

I am not a Simpson fan... it has it's moments but mostly I find it irritating. I do like King of the Hill, Ally McBeal, and Law and Order however, and I was wondering what you thought of those shows?

OOMFA,
Xenamour

Dear Xenamour:

This all started with Xena fans picking on Joxer, which is insane to me. It's like saying, I love "Star Trek," but I hate McCoy. Anyway, I like Ted and I like Joxer, and if you don't, I don't want to hear about it. Arguing over whether "Xena" is an adult show or kid's show is pretty pointless, too. Honestly, anything--movie or TV show--that has a mandatory fight scene every ten minutes can't be taken too seriously. Also, being a student of history, the history lessons put forth by "Xena" (and "Jack of All Trades") are so bogus they make my head spin. Both shows are anti-history. Julius Caesar didn't need Xena's help, and the French had nothing to do with the East Indies in the early 1800s. Quite frankly, TV seems too insignificant to argue about or even discuss seriously. I really don't want to talk about "Ally McBeal" or "King of the Hill," which mean nothing to me.

What I would like to discuss here, for example, would be: What is dramatic license, and how far can someone go with that before it's a flat-out lie? The example I'm thinking of is "The Hurricane," where facts are being presented that are utterly false to increase the dramatic punch of the story. We see Hurricane Carter beat the snot out of Joey Ghiardello, whereas he did not beat him up and rightly lost the fight

(Ghiardello is suing, BTW). I personally think it goes too far into the realm of lying. What do you, the folks that frequent this forum, think? I would much prefer to discuss movies, books or ideas here and let's skip the TV references, OK?

Josh

Name: Xenamour
E-mail: Xenamour@cs.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

I just read your bit on the "99 Cent Store". Now this is an experience I can relate to. LOL. But if you really want to live on the edge...try the "Canned Food Warehouse".

Xenamour

Dear Xenamour:

The "Canned Food Warehouse?" That sounds scary.

Josh

Name: Xenamour
E-mail: Xenamour@cs.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

I just read your bit on "Stories and Society" and began wondering if you had ever seen, "I Know Why the Mermaid Sings", "Cold Comfort Farms", "Pricilla Queen of the Dessert", or "Like Water for Chocolate". I also noted, when reading your essays, that it seems as if the majority of films you use as examples could be catagorized more as "guy oriented films"... which is fine... just an observation. However I was wondering if there are any movies people would generally deem to be "chick flicks" that you have on your favorites list?

Dear Xenamour:

That list you put forth doesn't interest me, although I didn't see "Cold Comfort Farms" and didn't finish watching "Like Water For Chocolate." However, I don't know that you can call these "chick flicks," but they're not necessarily "guy films," either. I love: "Marty," "Tender Mercies," "Jezebel," "All About Eve," "Funny Girl," "Friendly Persuasion," "Mrs. Miniver," "Roman Holiday," "Mildred Pierce," "Black Narcissus," "The Nun's Story," "Gigi," and many more.

Josh

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