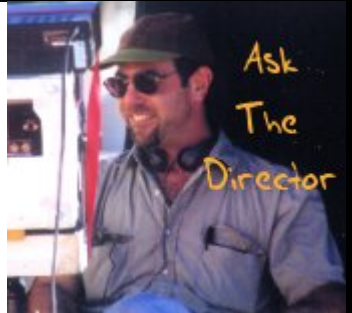


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 17

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

How does it work with the 2nd unit director and the stunt coordinator? Does the director tell the stunt coordinator what he wants to achieve or do they work it out separately and then put it together? Also, when you make the director's cut, what is your input as far as the 2nd unit director's part of the episode? Would that be something you'd have control over also?

Thank you for answering all my questions, I appreciate it.

Tanya

Dear Tanya:

The stunt coordinator works out the stunts and the 2nd unit director shoots them. Both are doing what the main unit director ostensibly wants, if they've bothered to ask for anything. I go over every shot I want with the 2nd unit director, and I assure them that if they do a really good job I'll make sure to take credit for everything. When I do my cut that includes all the footage from everywhere: main unit, 2nd unit, FX, stock shots, everything, and I have complete control, until I hand it in, then the producers can do anything they want. Luckily, I've never had my cuts changed very much.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if you have seen "The Evil Dead: Special Edition" DVD. It's got some really funny pictures of you guys on the behind-the-scenes supplement, and Raimi and Tapert make some nice comments about the

lighting you did for the end of the film. Thanks.

Dear Drew:

I don't even own a DVD machine, and I'm still listening to 8-track tapes.

Josh

Name: Tanya

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

What exactly does the 2nd unit director do and how do their responsibilities and yours come together.

Thanks,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

The 2nd unit director generally shoots anything where you can't see the actor's faces, because they don't work with the actors, they work with doubles and stunt men. All the wide action shots, all the stunts, scenic shots, all the inserts--the extreme close-ups of fingers on triggers, feet on gas pedals, knives flying through the air, etc. Plus, all the reverses on the fights, meaning if Hercules is fighting a bunch of thugs, all the shots over Herc's shoulder to the thugs, who would all be stunt men. And should the main unit director crap out for whatever reason, the 2nd unit director fills in.

Josh

Name: David Zink

E-mail: davidzink@earthlink.net

Josh--

Glad you finally got to this film. Your last comments struck me as odd... you start by describing it as a scary horror film, praise it, reflect on how rare truly good horror is... and then declare that it wasn't a great film... So, what then *is* a great film, if not something that succeeds above others in its category? Frankly, insofar as this film made me *feel*, and surprised the hell out of me, *and* has the pleasurable facet of entirely two readings (needing to be seen a second time to verify that Willis' character is indeed treated as dead -- thus giving different explanations to every seen) -- if this ain't great... what *is*?

David

Dear David:

I just laid out your credit on "If I Had a Hammer" (he plays the psycho folkie that sings "In My Time of Dying"). I say "Sixth Sense" isn't a great film because once you know the twist, you know it. It's not a film to be

watched over and over again. It's got a very tricky plot--which I think is only so interesting--and thin but OK characters. To have a great movie you must have great characters. In my humble opinion, a plot-oriented movie can never be great.

Josh

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

Hey Josh,

I've sent off my first screenplay to a few production companies that requested it. Now the rejection letters are coming in. One was not too bad, they even said that they will consider producing when they tap into funds for low budget movies later this year. The other was quite blunt in saying that it needed a lot of work, and then they attempted to sign me up for a workshop they run for \$250.00. Well after I politely declined, I just set to work writing a new screenplay, and improving from the last.

I know this is part of the biz, and I expected as much from my first outing. My question is this. "Do you have any funny or horror stories from your submissions you can share with us?" I really enjoy your articles, and they both inspire me, and show me that it happens to us all.

Also, a quick, silly question on screenwriting. I am hearing two different opinions on this one. How many spaces after a period? One or two?

Thanks Josh.
Michael

Dear Michael:

Two spaces after a period. I've had scripts rejected from every major and many minor film companies in this nutty town. The funny stories come when you actually go to these idiots' offices and pitch them. I'm a pretty snappy, succinct storyteller, if I do say myself, but film executives have about 5-second attention spans. Also, since this is the only time these low-end execs get to display their tiny amount of power, they will make this 5-10 minute pitch as miserable as humanly possible. I had a woman exec, possibly 2-minutes into my pitch, drop her head straight back, her eyes staring up at the ceiling with her mouth wide open, making little gurgly noises like she was choking or severely disgusted. I had a chubby male exec put his bare feet up on the desk and begin cleaning between his toes (this was at Chartoff-Winkler, the guys who made "Raging Bull" and "Rocky"). I had an exec at Disney tell his assistant that he didn't want to be disturbed, told me to go ahead and pitch, then took five phone calls and was interrupted by his assistant three times. He still wins for most obnoxious creep of the bunch. I stopped pitching, sending out scripts or having any doings with these schnooks years ago. That's why I'm an independent filmmaker.

Josh

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

I have a question that I wonder about everytime I read something about the amount of time it takes to set up shots from different angles. Let me preface this by saying, I have no idea how any of this works, obviously. If

I'm not mistaken, in some TV shows they use more than one camera to capture different angles. Whereas, in others they don't.

Why don't they have more than one camera set up to capture each actors reaction as they are doing their scenes the first time instead of resetting everything and having them do it over, if they indeed do? It's something I've always been curious about.

Thanks again,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

On filmed TV shows, like Herc and Xena, we use either one or two cameras. But you can practically only shoot wider and tighter from the same angle, you never shoot both over-the-shoulder shots at the same time. The reason is that to get a decent over-the-shoulder shot you'd be seeing the other camera. Also, the D.P. never wants to light both close-ups at the same time because it's diffuse and they then can't be specific in tending to each actor's needs. Beyond any of this, it's expensive to have two cameras and two whole camera crews (operator, 1st A.C., 2nd A.C.). When we use a second camera on Xena, the D.P. operates it. I've never had a second camera on any of my movies. On studio shows where they shoot with three cameras--like all the sitcoms--the lighting is so diffuse and washed out that it never looks good, nor can they allow any of the three cameras to move beyond a certain axis so they don't see each other.

Josh

Name: Andjam
E-mail: Andjamgeo@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Someone complained about me calling you an ablist loser behind your back. To remedy this, I'll call you one to your face.

The original message was posted on egroups mailing lists whoosh (a mailing list accompanying whoosh.org, which alerted me to your "inspirational quote" and other lovely quotes by you) and distexters (a mailing list with an oh-so-PC disability spin on XWP). Not much needed to be said about your comments, but Shirely's comments led me to say a thing or two about PC. "this person hasn't kept current on their Politically Correct terminology". Too right I haven't. PC is BS. It's playing around with words rather than addressing the issues most of the time. However, telling someone that using a disability as a term of abuse is not good enough, isn't PC in my books. "use of the term "retarded" to describe our clients was no more acceptable than the older medical terms "feeble-minded," "idiot," and "moron."" should really read "we can't use the term any more because of the Josh Beckers of this world".

Question: Should I call you an ablist behind your back or to your face in future, or do you give about as much of a stuff as you do for Xena fans in general?

Dear Andjam:

You are absolutely correct, I don't give the slightest shit about you or any of the other rabid Xena fans. If all of you never came back to my website it would be a blessing because, for the most part, I have found the intense Xena fans to be obnoxious, pushy, argumentative, humorless creeps. This is a filmmaking/screenwriting site, not a Xena site--I don't appreciate you and you don't appreciate me, so why

not just stay away.

Josh

The webmaster responds: So the Andjams of this world sit in judgement of the Josh Beckers, you who think stereotyping mentally ill people as being violent with the term "psycho-barbie" is funny? I could argue it's because of the Adjams of this world that people who haven't gotten to know my wonderful, gentle brother are afraid of him. BTW, I'll thank you not to put words in my mouth in the future.

Shirley

Name: Andjam
E-mail: Andjamgeo@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Can you not use mental disability / illness as a term of abuse? I don't mind people using "psycho Barbie(tm)" as a term of affection for Callisto, but your use of "retarded" was a different kettle of fish.

Dear Andjam:

You don't like my use of the term "retarded?" Guess what? Too bad.

Josh

With Josh's permission the webmaster adds her comment: Obviously this person hasn't kept current on their Politically Correct terminology; the proper PC term is "developmentally disabled." When I worked in various group homes with these people, we were instructed that use of the term "retarded" to describe our clients was no more acceptable than the older medical terms "feeble-minded," "idiot," and "moron."

Shirley

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

That's so true about watching dramas over again, finding and appreciating different nuances each time. Whereas comedies, once is enough. Okay, except for Planes, Trains and Automobiles. The way that bathroom scene was filmed makes me laugh everytime.

Have you ever read a book that made you laugh hysterically out loud? "Watermelon Man" did that for me, the movie was forgettable, but have you read that book? I hope it's still as good as I remember it.

Thanks again,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

I was making a generalization because I also have a number of comedies I've seen numerous times: "Dr. Strangelove," "Play it Again, Sam," "Love & Death," "Annie Hall," "Unfaithfully Yours" (1948), "The Palm Beach Story," "Remember the Night," "Sullivan's Travels," "The General," "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World." I laugh out loud at books all the time. I'm reading Clarence Darrow's autobiography and he's made me laugh out loud a few times already. I got thrown out of class in junior high for laughing uncontrollably while reading Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse Five." I didn't even know there was a book of "Watermelon Man." I saw the movie when it came out, 30 years ago, and sort of enjoyed it. Pancho Sanchez' version of the song on his recent, Grammy-winning album, is very good, too.

Josh

Name: Tanya

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

I'm sorry, I was suffering from brain delay. I was just curious about a statement you made about preferring to direct comedies on Xena, unless I'm mistaken, but yet many of your movie preferences seem to be dramas. Do you feel more comfortable directing comedies, because you have a talent for that, or do you just enjoy it more. If two equally good projects came along, one comedy, one drama would you have a preference? You might have been just referring to comedies on Xena, I'm sorry, I don't remember.

Thanks again,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

This is an interesting question. I much prefer watching dramas, but I really enjoy directing comedy. I enjoy directing drama, too, but making comedies is more fun. But for me, once I've seen a comedy, good or bad, I've seen it. Whereas, a good drama I can watch over and over again.

Josh

Name: Tanya

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Just wanted to mention one of the few movies I've actually enjoyed over the past several years and nobody has heard of, "Desert Bloom" with Jon Voight and an excellent performance by Ellen Barkin. I've noticed you like several of the movies that I do, just wondered if you've seen it. Simple character story and well done. One of the movies I love is "Marty" with Ernest Borgnine, do you prefer a character driven movie over action.

Dear Tanya:

Clearly, you have very good taste in movies since it's a lot like mine. "Marty" is one of my very favorite movies which I've seen 100 times. There's no question for me, character-driven stories are always far superior over plot-driven stories--characters are far more important than plots. The second a plot becomes confusing, it's bad. And yes, I saw "Desert Bloom" when it came out and I saw it again a number of years ago on tape and I like it very much. I thought everybody in it was very good: Jon Voight, Ellen Barkin, JoBeth Williams, and particularly Annabeth Gish. It's certainly one of the better pictures of the last 15 years.

Josh

Name: ALAN
E-mail: picquickstudio@aol.com

Josh

Good to see that you include GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS amongst your film favorites;it is THE MATRIX of dialogue driven movies.One thing intrigues me about this movie though.Alec Baldwin makes such an impression in his brief role that his impact resonates throughout the entire movie yet in other films in which he has starred and appeared all the way through he barely registers and his best days would already seem to be behind him.Can you think of any other performances by stars that were so powerful that the rest of their career output pales in comparison?

Dear Alan:

I just watched "Glengarry Glen Ross" again and Alec Baldwin is really good. "My watch cost more than your car." Anyway, I think there are many, many examples like that. The two that jump immediately to mind are both George Chakiris and Rita Moreno from "West Side Story" and both won supporting actor Oscars, too. How about F. Murray Abraham in "Amadeus" or Paul Scofield in "A Man For All Seasons" or Ron Moody in "Oliver" or even Boris Karloff in "Frankenstein." There are lots.

Josh

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hello Josh,

I have a question about the director's responsibility to an actors performance. There was a recent episode of Xena where I felt the character's personality changed so rapidly, and the acting so bad, it was distracting. I would assume an actor or actress has many options how to portray a character. Where does the director step in and say, your playing it all wrong etc. or do you have to let them play it the way they want to, to some extent? I kept thinking, why didn't somebody stop her, unless of course, that's the way they wanted her to play it. I was thinking about what you said in "Kindred Spirits" when you had them change the delivery to a question. When I watched that episode , I actually loved that scene because of the interesting delivery, so I loved reading that it was intentional. Also, in that episode, my favorite funny moment was Joxer flicking the road apple at the little girl, the timing etc. was hysterical. Was that your idea.

Thanks so much,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

Actors need direction and most really appreciate it. Lucy and Renee love getting good direction and are terrific at running with ideas they like, which is part of why enjoy working with them so much. As I've come to understand, most directors now have nothing to say to the actors, they're only interested in the camera. Well, cameras aren't anywhere near as important as actors. Regarding "Kindred Spirits," in the script the kids threw dirt at him and Joxer finally kicked a clod of dirt back at them. I gave the kids the line, "Pervert! Weirdo! Fat creep!" and changed the dirt to shit. It was highly amusing watching the art director skulk around near the horses collecting a box full of shit.

Josh

Name: Herschell Rabinowiczxcxsteenstienbergman
E-mail: up@yours.com

Dear Josh:

In our modern times, there has been a great drive by theological students to attribute nationality and racial characteristics to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have made Him a Jew, others, an Israelite, or a Galilean or a gentile. Three hundred Bishops of the Church and learned teachers of the Bible, meeting in the Council of Nicaea, formed the Nicene Creed in the year 325 A.D. and declared Jesus as "God of God, Very God." Nowhere in the Bible does an angel, a prophet of God or an apostle call Him a Jew. He is spoken of by them as the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God and Jesus of Nazareth - not of Judea. We remember that when Christ came before Pontius Pilate and he asked Him, "Art thou King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest it." When the inscription was put by the Roman soldiers at the top of the cross, "King of the Jews," this did not make authentic His racial lineage, for the Jews themselves asked that it be taken down. They did not refer to Him as a Jew, nor by any stretch of the imagination did they consider Him part of their racial or religious identity. They charged Him with being an imposter, a Samaritan, a devil. One might look for proof to the Samaritan woman, but there is a question by many writers whether she said: "Thou being a Jew?" Some say that she used the terminology "Thou being a Judean," for the Judeans did not associate with the Samaritans. And truly she was no authority, for we find her, a few minutes later, in a jittery state, almost on the border of hysteria. We remember at Jesus' exposure of her life, she fled immediately unto her menfolk and called them to come out and look at Him. Along with this, we must remember that Jesus never responded to the name "Jew" being placed upon Him, but in the Garden, when He said, "Whom seek ye?" and they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," He immediately answered "I am He

Dear Herschel:

I did not open the attachment connected to this missive as I suspect it has some sort of ancient, biblical virus, or possibly a voodoo curse. I didn't detect a question, either. But if you're asking if Jesus was a Jew, of course he was, everyone knows that. And if you'd like to know if there's a heaven or an afterlife, sorry, there isn't. Anything else I can clear up?

Josh

Name: Tuna
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Does Sam Raimi ever visit your site? And, are you guys still good friends?

Best,
Tuna

Dear Tuna:

I don't know who visits my site unless they write me a letter, which Sam has never done. I talk to Sam once or twice a year now.

Josh

Name: Louise
E-mail: SomeSwellTrash@aol.com

Hi Josh,

I was wondering what you thought of the movie "Happiness". How about "Suspiria" and other work done by Dario Argento? Sorry to be repetitive if you've already answered these questions - - I just started checking out your site.

I too watch numerous films from the '20s & '30's which no one else seems all too interested in! Glad to know that I have such a talented ally.

Also, I find music is a great impetus to the creative process - - is there anything you listen to that you find gets the creative juices flowing?

All the best,
Louise

Dear Louise:

I didn't finish watching "Happiness," it seemed unrelentingly miserable. I didn't like "Welcome to the Dollhouse," either. And I don't think I've ever sat all the way through any of Dario Argento's, or any other Italian horror director's, films, although I've seen parts of a lot of them. It's not my cup of tea. I did watch "Show People" the other night on TCM, which is 1928, directed by King Vidor, and starring Marion Davies. It's actually not that good, but you get a fairly clear view of Hollywood in 1928, which was fascinating.

Josh

Name: Tarmon
E-mail: not available

Dear Josh:

Will you be doing any work with Sears on his upcoming Sheena project? Now there's a lad who seems to like the fanfic writers as evidenced by his recent stint lurking around the X:WP forums and fanfics sites scouting out writing talent for Rob Tapert. Is that where Tapert is going to be hiring his producers from too?

Dear Tarmon:

Look, I don't know what anyone other than myself is doing, and I don't really know what I'm doing, either. I actually put a call in to Steve about Sheena, but I had the wrong number.

Josh

Name: Cathy
E-mail: purple.logic@virgin.net

Dear Josh:

"If you begin with someone else's idea, you've crapped-out on a major part of the job."

So where does your view leave H:TLJ, which was based on the pre-existing character Hercules? Where does it leave X:WP, which copies so much from The Bride With White Hair (among others)? Where does it leave every generation's version of Robin Hood, from Douglas Fairbanks to Kevin Costner (not that Prince of Thieves was any good, imo). Where does it leave Autolycus, the King of Thieves and blatant Robin Hood rippoff? Crapping out, obviously.

Dear Cathy:

So what are you, the front man for the Unoriginal Thinker's Caucus? Attempting to be original is not such a bad concept, I think. If you ever intend to be better than mediocre, then your intentions when you begin mean a lot. If you start off thinking, "Well, I'll just use somebody else's characters and situations," then you're lost from the outset. Look, I completely lifted Hitchcock's visual concept for his film "Rope" in my movie "Running Time." But I used it as inspiration to tell an entirely different story. The old expression goes, "If you're not directly inspired by something, then you're just stealing." Think about it.

Josh

Name: Rickey
E-mail: rickeya@jps.net

Dear Josh:

I get the biggest kick out of your Q&A. Now, I hate beating the dead horse but... you speak about the value of originality in film/writing/TV (fanfic waste-o-time horse). So what's your take on films based on books and on historical events/figure. These are quite common (Gone with the Wind, Lawrence of Arabia, etc.)among film goer favorites, and judging from your list of favorite films, many have ranked very high with you too.

Completely different topic: What do you think of strange shots - a la Tarantino showing only listener's reaction and not the speaker? Interesting? Gimicky?

Thanks for the laughs & good luck in the future.

Rickey

Dear Rickey:

History, novels, and short stories are all good places to find film stories. I object to remakes and sequels because they are inherently unoriginal and, as William Goldman so aptly put it, they are "whore's films" in that the entire point is making money. If there's absolutely no hope of any originality, then who cares? Regarding strange shots, if you can make them fit into your picture, then great. To me, though, Tarantino has NEVER done an interesting or strange shot. Just staying on the listener is Mike Nichols' idea in "Carnal Knowledge," not Tarantino's. But look at Orson Welles, who did odd angles all the time and they're always wonderful. But Welles never forgot that first and foremost he was telling a story. I did some pretty whacky angles in "Running Time."

Josh

Name: James
E-mail: lowe727@aol.com

Dear Josh:

When is "Lunatics: A Love Story" coming out on DVD? Will there be a director's cut? It's my favorite movie!

Dear James:

There are no immediate plans, but I have heard that it might possibly happen. I know that Anchor Bay would like to re-release it, but Sony, who owns the film, hasn't been very cooperative. I'm glad you like the film, though.

Josh

Name: SlickWilly
E-mail: slickwilly48@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hmmmm.... I once read that an asshole, if it actually had a mind of it's own and was capable of rational and cognitive thought, wouldn't realize it's an asshole because of it's singular view of the world and wouldn't be able to accept its roll as anything less than center of it's universe. Seems like some if not most producers are of this same ilk. A producer, without a good director is just a plumber with shit on his hands.

Take care Josh and keep the chin up.

Dear SlickWilly:

LOL! However, producers and directors are both in the crapper without a good script.

Josh

Name: Cathy
E-mail: purple.logic@virgin.net

Dear Josh

So why do you reckon writing fan fiction's a waste of time? After I read your comment I went and totted up the number of emails I've had from folk thanking me for writing my stuff (I keep them because criticism's useful - even the "that was funny as shit" one-liners in response to a comedy :)) I've received over 500 by now, and they only represent the people who bothered to drop me a line. People have been writing and sharing fan fiction for decades - it's just a modern equivalent of folk-tales etc., the telling and re-telling of shared stories. Some professional writers enjoy it too, and it's for fun. What's the matter, do you think fun's a waste of time?

Dear Cathy:

Look, I'm a writer. A big part of my job is coming up with ideas, hopefully new and original ideas. If you begin with someone else's idea, you've crapped-out on a major part of the job. We're in a day and age where no one seems to care anymore, but I still do. People may find "MI-2" to be a "fun" movie right now. To me it is nothing but the sequel of a remake of a TV show, and therefore hateful, awful garbage. Everything that flies in the face of originality I hate. I repeat, writing stories based on the characters from a TV show is a waste of time. Come up with your own characters and ideas.

Josh

Name: rob
E-mail: tuna300@aol.com

Josh,

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A PRODUCER IS LYING?

Dear Rob Tapert:

If he's moving his lips, right? Although some producers are so good at lying they can do it without moving their lips. Look, all I had to do was make a few snotty comments and I got Rob Tapert to visit my website.

Josh

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

Hi Josh,

You mentioned not too long ago that you haven't made back your investment on Running Time yet. That got me curious, because I would have thought you would have gotten a fair chunk of change out of the video/DVD deal. Does a video distribution deal w/ a company like Anchor Bay bring any kind of residuals, or is it just a flat amount of \$\$\$? Just trying to learn more about business end of indie filmmaking.

Thanks,
Jason

Dear Jason:

It was a fairly decent chunk of change, just not enough to cover the cost of the film. I am due to receive what they call "overages" if the film recovers its costs, which it apparently has not done yet.

Josh

Name: Taylor
E-mail: taylor_cl@yahoo.com

Dear Josh,

I read on one of your replies recently where you made some comment on Cleopatra 2525. I was wondering what you really think of it?

I have to admit to being a regular watcher, but that's mainly because it seems like it knows that it's pure, unmitigated crap and delights in it. Same goes for 'Jack of All Trades' (though I'm not a fan of the Benny Hill style of humour.) Whereas 'Xena' seems to be always pretending to be more than it is, which is why I kind of agree with your assessment of the comedies being better than the dramas (but I much prefer the more subtle humour of 'For Him The Bell Tolls' than 'In Sickness and in Health.')

Final question, (apologies if you've been asked before or if you aren't a sf fan) do you watch 'Farscape' and what do you think of it?

Thanks,
Taylor

Dear Taylor:

"Cleo" is particularly distressing to me because it's based on a story I loved as a child, "Tumithak of the Corridors" by Charles Tanner, and so much of what I liked about the story has been dispensed with. One of my biggest problems with the age that I live in is that I do not delight in crap. I much prefer good things to bad things. And I've never seen "Farscape." And, quite frankly, I think "In Sickness & In Hell" is pretty damn funny.

Josh

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hello Josh,

I've read several interviews with writers and directors etc. of Xena. Many of them have mentioned that scenes were cut or entire sections filmed and not used. Some of them seemed vital to the story. It seems like such a waste all the way around, but I assume there is a good reason for it. On an average, how many scenes are shot and not used, or does it vary. Is that something that the director has the most control over, if not, who would, and how do they judge how much to film? Have you watched the episodes you've directed and been disappointed in editing decisions they've made? If so, any examples?

Thanks so much,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

This used to be a much bigger problem in the first couple of seasons because the scripts were too long. My first episode, "A Fistful of Dinars," came in 15 minutes too long, which is two days of shooting wasted. Now the scripts have been more standardized to the proper length and this doesn't occur nearly as much. The way it works is, the editor assembles the show, then the director gets 3 days to do their cut, then the producers do whatever they want to it. If I deliver a show that's pretty close to the proper length, generally, with a few minor adjustments, that's the way it stays.

Josh

Name: Dave Woods
E-mail: mage@clara.co.uk

Dear Josh,

I think it is wonderful that there is this opportunity to ask questions of successful director such as yourself. Thanks for your support to all of us out here. My question is this. I have found a lot of sites with scripts for form and content. I am considering working with a friend on a tv series. I know that there is a need for continuity, and am aware of the idea of the writer's brief. Where would I be able to find examples of such a thing? Sorry the question came out so long winded.

Dave in Edinburgh

Dear Dave:

Man, I'd sure like to get to Edinburgh some day. I've never been to any part of the U.K. Anyway, I don't know what you would write regarding an entire TV series. You'd probably need all kinds of things including sample scripts. The thing you first write for a single episode of a TV show, which I've done, is commonly called a "beat sheet" here in swingin' Hollywood. It's about 14 single-spaced pages, broken into 4-acts with three to four paragraphs a page, each paragraph detailing each and every scene of the show, without the dialog. There are generally 35-40 scenes in an hour show. Good luck.

Josh

Name: Jessica Goodman
E-mail:

Dear Josh,

When is your big wedding day? seriously, With this being the last season of Xena. At least that's what we have heard. Is Rob planning any more t.v. shows or movies in the works? Because, he really is in need of a great director.

P.S. Rob- If you see this / Josh is number #1.....

Dear Jessica:

I sat here looking at that wedding comment, thinking, "What the hell is she talking about?" But now I remember. I don't know what Rob's plans are, and quite frankly, I don't care. If "Cleo" is any example of what's to come, who cares?

Josh

Name: Kelly
E-mail: chrisevans@prodigy.net

Dear Josh:

I'm really disappointed in Xena and the whole religious segmentation it has "discovered". The show is rotten - awful even. Not because it's based entirely in some odd religious guru shtick (well, okay, maybe) but because it's lost it's originality. I think it's too big for it's britches. TPTB now opts for New Zealand directors (what? like the show doesn't pull in kazillions of greenbacks?) to save more money in Tapert's pocket...I'm rambling and I'm pissed. I think you've done a terrific job with what you had to work with. You were the only reason to watch. I sincerely hope things move forward for you. Things always have a way of turning out for the best. By the way, here's my question. Will you marry me? Be well and take care!

Dear Kelly:

If in fact they aren't going to do anymore comedies (as opposed to just telling me that), then they're total idiots, because that's what that cast does best. In my opinion, there's no way a show can be completely serious that's set somewhere between 3000 B.C. and 1000 A.D. This scattershot attack on history is utterly ridiculous--although amusing--but not a basis for serious drama. My opinion, folks. Oh, BTW, are you a female? In which case, sure, let's get married.

Josh

Name: Campbell Evans
E-mail: chrisevans@prodigy.net

Dear Josh:

Not looking for work, not a retarded fan, not a writer, certainly not an actress. Question: Were you star struck by anyone in your pre-director days? (sorry next question) How do you compare New Zealand vs United States according to attitudes and work ethics?

Dear Campbell:

I'm still star-stuck. It's not like I've worked with many stars. As far as Lucy Lawless or Kevin Sorbo go, I knew them both before they hit, so that doesn't count. The same goes for Bruce Campbell. In fact, I've met very few famous people, now that I think about it. Regarding the different working conditions between here and NZ, well, they don't do overtime in NZ and we almost always do it here. They don't have craft service there, but they do have a tea break at 4:30. 1st A.D.s are nice down there, but they don't really kick ass and keep things moving, either. Otherwise, it's pretty much the same. Oh, they say "Turn-over" instead of "Roll camera."

Josh

Name: Paul
E-mail: samo_korine@yahoo.com

Dear Josh,

I watched the Deer Hunter for the first time yesterday, and I must agree with you: it is entirely overrated. I mean, the Russian Roulet (sp?) scenes were incredibly tense, but the movie felt so sloppily put together. After it goes through that incredibly awkward cut from the wedding to the war, I spent too much time wondering if my tape was defective rather than paying attention to the story. And I understand the point of the cut, to put you in the middle of the war with out a clue, but I just felt it didn't work. Would this happen to be a similar reason for your disliking of it? best wishes

Dear Paul:

Basically, I didn't believe a word of it. I found the first 45 minutes stultifying, then all of the war scenes to be utterly cliched, then all of the returning home stuff to be melodramatic nonsense. The man that gave me my first lessons in screenwriting actually used the concept of playing Russian Roulette as cheap, badly-conceived suspense because it has nowhere to go. On the other hand, I always admired Vilmos Zsigmond's cinematography.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

So you are going to try WWI? I love that era. So much going on in the world. The complete restructuring of life after the war. I wish I had the wherewithal to help finance you (Devil Dogs is an interesting title - gives rise to all kinds of images "letting slip the dogs of war"), but the most I can do is offer moral support. Or five dollars a month.

Beth

Dear Beth:

Thanks, but you keep the five bucks a month. The full title of the script is: "Devil Dogs: The Battle of Belleau Wood." This was the first battle the Americans were involved in in WW1 and the Germans termed the U.S. Marines out of total respect for their courage "Teufel hunden" or "Devil Dogs."

Josh

Name: Jessica
E-mail:

Dear Josh,

Sorry to hear about your falling out with Ren Pics/Rob Tapert. It just seems such a waste. You have been friend a long time. You stood up at Lucy and Robs wedding. Are you on speaking terms any more? Also, was curious if you will be attending Renee and Steve's wedding? What other plans do you have through summer? Any directing possibilities? I think you're a great director and not just comedies.....

Dear Jessica:

Gosh, people are so nice or so rude and there seems to be no middle ground. Thank you for your comments. Rob and I are in a weird place. We've known each other for almost 25 years, but I feel like he takes advantage of me and abuses me. I've tried to put my foot down, but I don't know that it really means anything. We'll see . . .

And no, I haven't been invited to Renee's wedding, but we're just working acquaintances, I wouldn't expect to be. I do like her very much and wish her happiness, though.

Josh

Name: Aaron R Davis
E-mail: samuraifrog@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Not a question, really, and not anything I need answered. I read something recently in which you railed on about people who write Xena fan fiction and getting obnoxious hate mail from the obsessed fans. This really made me feel bad, because I am a Xena fan, and I hate that there are pushy, obnoxious loudmouths coloring people's opinions of me. Certainly you made some great episodes, and you are one of my favorite directors.

I love this site, and your essays on writing have been invaluable. And, "Running Time" is one of my favorite movies. My girlfriend went to see it when you brought it here to Chicago, and we bought it the second it came out on DVD. So, instead of being a fanboy, I just wanted to say thanks for inspiring me.

Peace
Aaron Davis

Dear Aaron:

My pleasure, sir.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail:

Hey Josh,

Have you had a chance to catch either Cradle Will Rock or One Man's Hero. Neither are great films but I found them both very, very interesting. Thanks for the answer Mr. Forde.

Dear Bill:

Nope, I still haven't seen either one. But speaking of Orson Welles, I did see "RKO 281," which I found rather interesting. I never got the real sense of inspiration behind "Kane," but it was factually very accurate and Liev Schriber was pretty good casting. They made the DP, the great Gregg Toland, seem like a pain in the ass, which I not only don't think he was, but I do think he was one of the inspiring forces. I enjoyed Malkovich as Herman Mankiewicz, although that's not what he looked like at all.

Josh

Name: Annie
E-mail: Maryion@Hotmail.com

Dear Drew:

I'm sorry to take up space on your site Josh . . .

Drew, You failed to leave your Email address, other wise I wouldn't do this through Josh's page (I apologize again). You seem to have an interesting take on this, He may have not created the show (By the way, Cussing just shows, how bright you aren't) But he directed it, now I'm sure it must have given him SOME money, but if he didn't like the show, what was the whole purpose? After all, if he didn't approve of the show, or whatever the thing is, he wasn't duct-taped to the set, he didn't have to stay on. He could (I imagine, unless I'm missing something) leave, not direct . . .

Not that hard . . .

Be smart, don't start.

Annie

Either take pride in your work, or don't. One way you feel great the other, you feel like A educated donkey.

Dear Annie:

Obviously you're looking for a fight, but I will not accomodate you. I take great pride in the episodes that I directed and wrote, it's all those other episodes I'm not interested in. Take this information, process it and get lost because no more of your letters will be posted.

Josh

Name: laura legrady
E-mail: legradi@aol.com

Dear Josh:

hello, i've heard some rumors that you are no longer directing for the xena series? when they gave a list of all the episodes you have directed, i was stunned, as most of them, are my favorite episodes, will you be doing anymore work at all on the show,or is it finished?, i would like to know, if there is anything new you are up to, i like your work, and hope for all your happiness, you seem to always know what is called for in each scene, thankyou for your time

laura legrady

Dear Laura:

Thank you, that's very nice. I wish you happiness, too.

Josh

Name: E. Hawks

E-mail:

Josh,

Now that your association with Ren Pics is over, what exactly do you plan to do for a living? Will you take that UCLA job now? How will this affect the completion of your indie film "If I Had a Hammer"?

All the best to ya, whatever you do.

Keep the faith,
Hawks

Dear Hawks:

Yes, it will affect the completion of "Hammer" since I no longer have an income (I still have residuals coming, thank God). I already turned down the UCLA gig, not that it would have paid much anyway. I'm trying to put together a movie deal with my World War One script, "Devil Dogs." It's out at a company right now. Also, I'm attempting to make TV sales on "Running Time." All the best to you, too.

Josh

Name: Jody Fedele

E-mail: wopbopper@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Man Josh, what's the matter with you? I don't see "Jason and the Argonauts" or "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad" on your list. I can almost understand "Godzilla" not being there but no Harryhausen? My hole world suddenly doesn't make any sense.

Dear Jody:

I appreciate Ray Harryhausen's effects, but I don't think he ever worked on a particularly good movie. The acting and the scripts in these films are just awful. "Mysterious Island" may be his best and it's still not a very good film. Sadly, Harryhausen never had a "King Kong" to work on (he has "Mighty Joe Young," but that ain't "King Kong," either).

Josh

Name: Pepper Anderson

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Do you ever watch IFC or the Sundance channel? Do you have a favorite Indie film? If so, what did you like about it?

Thanks,
Pepper

Dear Pepper:

I always check what's on those channels, but I don't watch all that often. Indie films are in just as bad a shape as Hollywood films, but they don't have any production values. Indie films were at one point more artistic, if you will. Now they are grim, downbeat and badly written. I just watched "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" which I haven't seen in many years. Although it's an A-picture (possibly a B+, but not a major studio), that is what I think indie or art films should be trying to do--a dance marathon in the 1930's as a metaphor for all of life--that's an interesting, arty story that has points to make. Anyway, I enjoyed "Pi," "Wild Man Blues" and "Love and Death on Long Island."

Josh

Name: PooPoo Head

E-mail:

Dear Josh,

We are not going to change your mind on issues of Xena anymore than you are going to change our minds. This is your web site and you are entitled to your opinions, I might not agree, but it's your house so I'll leave or deal with it. I've chosen to still love Xena, even when it sucks because I'm obsessed. I will continue to visit your site on issues other than Xena because, being nuts, I'm interested in what you have to say about other topics. I've found your structured essays very interesting, among other insights that I wouldn't have had a chance to read anywhere else. So, if everyone would please, enjoy Xena, I do, but move on.

Thank you,
PooPoo

Dear PooPoo:

You have a very healthy attitude. I sit here watching utterly obscure B-pictures from the 1920's, 30s and 40s, that I know most people wouldn't like, nor would I expect them to. But I enjoy them and that's all that counts.

Josh

Name: DREW

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

This is to all you "Xena" fans out there who are insulted by Becker's opinion of the show. Don't get your panties all in a bind because his opinion of the show isn't very high, it's not like he created the damn thing for Christ's sakes, he's just a guy that worked on the show. I hate Joel Schumacher's movies, but if he asked me to write his next film I would, because the money would be good and it would get my name out there. Don't think that just because he directed for the show that he is bound by God to praise it a every turn, and don't let his rants question your ability to like what you want to like. Everybody I talk to hates the "Evil Dead" trilogy, but that didn't stop me from buying the special editions when they went on sale. Thanks.

Dear Drew:

Thanks for the support. The check's in the mail.

Josh

Name: E. Hawks

E-mail:

Josh,

Bruce not only starred in, but also produced JOAT, what exactly is the difference financially? Even if the series ends next season, will he be set financially for life?

All the best,
Hawks

Dear Hawks:

I don't know the specific details of Bruce's deal, and I'm sure being co-executive producer brought him more money, but I would venture to say that Bruce is not rich and certainly not set for the rest of his life, or even five years. If the show had run for five years and he got raises every year, then he'd be well-off. Bruce never stops working, though, so he'll be OK.

Josh

Name: Mandy

E-mail:

Dear Mr. Becker,

You know, I have to say that comedy really is your strongest point. After all, I laugh my ass off at almost every reply you give.

I only have this to say...Fan Fiction and the people who write it are obviously not a waste of time. Xena's most popular fanfiction writer just landed a job to write an episode. Which, might I add, is one more job than you will be having with RenPic this season. Oh my, did somebody say sour grapes??

By the way, I'll be highly anticipating your spirited response. If I don't see a four letter expletive every other word, I will be extremely disapointed!

M.

Name: Annie
E-mail: maryion@Hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Becker-

Thank you for responding, and thank you for proving to the Xenite world How much of A jerk you are.

I'm Glad you don't work on Xena, Your work, is... Well, I'll keep this G rated. I'm sure that you won't answer this, I just noticed reading through some of your responses that you, like US (most people wanted to know what US meant, I mean the Xena Bards, Like Missy Good)

You (snipped from response) "Write everyday whether I'm working on a script or not." You really write, everyday? Gee what are you working on? Your Resume?

Don't Cut me down sir, I can match you any day. Challenge me, and just maybe I will.

Annie

Dear Mandy & Annie:

I take it that you two like this TV show, "Xena: Warrior Princess." That's fine. Some people like to tattoo their faces, others enjoy sticking pins through their genitalia. It's a big world. I've directed and written the show, that doesn't make me a fan. You like it? God bless you.

Josh

Name: Otere
E-mail: otere@webtv

Mr. Becker,

I am aware you wanted to express yourself about Xena online fans but why may I ask did you decide to go the tactless route of the people to whom you were obviously reacting too? Have you ever heard of the saying...Be Cause,Not Result?

Dear Otere:

If I was smart I would ignore all the obnoxious Xena fans, but I want my regular Q&A readers to be amused. I got two today, which I was considering ignoring, but I guess I'll post them for the fun of it.

Josh

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

Josh,

Unlike you, I sat through "The Matrix" at a theater and kept myself from nodding off by taking notes about all the science fiction movies, tv shows, and books whose ideas/images I saw in the movie. I thought about walking out, but I refuse to spend \$10 just for sitting a few minutes in the dark.

The imagery and the special effects are fantastic, but a movie needs a cohesive plot and believable characters. Keanu (or however it is spelled) Reeves may have done well in "Speed" and "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure," but for the most part I have to agree with the critic who saw him do "Hamlet" in Canada: he got all the words in the right order. As to his character, why did the powers behind this movie feel they had to treat Neo as an idiot by having another character explain things to him that the audience had figured out five minutes earlier?

As for the rain-of-brass-casing scene, it completely violated the internal logic that had so far been set up in the movie. Neo is trying to save his mentor who is immobile in a chair with two baddies on either side of him and a wall to his back. Neo sprays the room with bullets, ripping apart the baddies, the chair, and the wall, yet his mentor is untouched. One of my students dismissed this by saying that the mentor was so adept at manipulating the matrix, he avoided all the bullets. Excuse me? He was immobile in the chair. If he had the ability to move about to dodge the bullets, he could have gotten away from the baddies by himself. Then Neo wouldn't have had to spray the room. Of course, then there would have been no excuse for the rain of brass casings.

Onto a pleasanter subject, now that "Hammer" is finished postproduction (it has, hasn't it?), what is your next project? I still marvel at how you did "Running Time," one long take, so to speak. Any other ideas for more innovations?

Beth

Dear Beth:

I guess I'm not the only pig-headed idiot that didn't like the movie (excuse me, Beth, I didn't mean anything by it).

Josh

Name: ALAN
E-mail: picquickstudio@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Of all the actors you have worked with in the Renaissance shows which one(s) would you say might have a chance at long term stardom and/or a successful if unspectacular career. Kevin Smith would seem to have what it takes and Renee but who knows? You would probably have as good an idea as any.

Dear Alan:

Beats me. Stardom has nothing to do with acting ability anyway. Arnold Schwarzenegger is a star; John Hurt's just a good actor and I'd personally rather work with John Hurt. Kevin Sorbo's got his new sci-fi TV show, so I guess he's doing all right. Michael Hurst is a helluva good actor, but I don't know that he'll ever become a star. Lucy and Renee are both good actors, but who knows what they'll do when "Xena" ends? My answer is, I don't know.

Josh

Name: Ummagumma
E-mail: ummagumma@home.com

Dear Josh:

I'm sure you've already been swamped by a tonne of flame mail about your comments on "The Matrix", but your review is so obviously biased and such a juvenile reaction that I just had to comment. There are so many problems with your tirade that I'm finding it hard to line them all up in my head so they don't jam the doorway of my mind trying to get out like the Three Stooges.

First of all, it's painfully apparent that the whole review is your childish, jealous reaction to the fact that "Matrix" is one of the freshest takes on the SF genre to come along in a long time, and that you have neither the vision nor the ability to even hope to aspire to its excellence. In every genre it takes on, from SF to Kung Fu to John Woo bullet ballet, it excels effortlessly and with great finesse. Luckily, to prevent anyone reading it from mistaking your comments as a serious analysis, you provide the usual signs of a weak, vindictive review. You call the story "stupid". Wow, what a fascinating, valuable insight to the script. You say the movie's view of the future is "moronic". Nice job, that tells me a lot. BTW, the bullet-powered future of "Matrix" you cite is not a vision of humanity's actual future, but that of a mechanical society who uses it to create a plausible present for the masses trapped in it, in order to provide a "normal" virtual reality consoling mankind's thirst for violence. But it's obvious that such allegory is totally lost on you. And what a great analysis of Keanu Reeves' performance. "A bore". How informative, you really proved your case there. I won't even get into your picking apart of the ending, as it's obvious you just didn't understand the film nor the reality it weaved for itself. The real kicker is that the ONLY positive spin you put on the film is that it had two people in it that you had worked with. Talk about self-serving!

That's what really makes me laugh. All this comes from a guy who makes his "living" cranking out some of the most shallow, inane tripe currently blighting our TV screens. This is pretty much the ultimate condemnation of your review of "Matrix"...it comes from the guy who directs "Xena" and "Hercules". But I actually enjoy watching the occasional episodes of say, Xena, at least. Because I'm able to enjoy a good fantasy thrill-ride once in a while. Too bad, in your self-absorbed, pig-headed, jealous way, you missed out on one of the greatest SF roller-coaster rides ever.

Dear Ummagumma:

We're talking about "The Matrix" here, right? That insipid Joel Silver picture that was all a big excuse for 30 minutes of automatic weapon fire at the end. Regarding Mr. Reeves so-called "performance," I suppose I could have let him have it with both literary barrels and called him: monotonous, humdrum, tedious, dreary, dismal, arid, colorless, insipid, vapid, flat, stale, soporific or lifeless, but "boring" seemed perfectly succinct to me. Oddly, though, I have not gotten a tonne (or even a ton) of mail contradicting my juvenile, pig-headed, self-serving review. As a friend of mine would say, you like the picture so much, I give it to you.

Josh

[BACK TO Main Archive Page](#)

[BACK TO Current Q&A](#)

Questions or Comments

BECKERFILMS SITE MENU

[\[Main \]](#) [\[T.V. Work \]](#) [\[Film Work \]](#) [\[From the Pen \]](#) [\[Favorite Films \]](#)
[\[Ask the Director \]](#) [\[AfterWord \]](#) [\[Links \]](#) [\[Reading List \]](#) [\[Website Team \]](#)

This site is the property of Josh Becker Copyright © 2001 Panoramic Pictures, All Rights Reserved.

