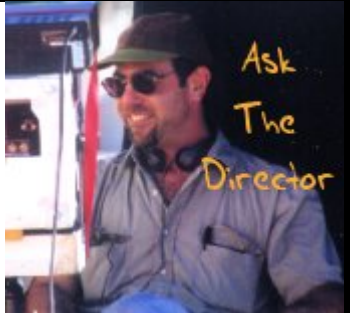


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 19

Name: Amiee Collier
E-mail: aecollier@yahoo.com

Josh,

I heard a nasty, nasty rumor that you were fired from Renaissance Pictures (<http://xena4ever.tripod.com/JoshBecker.htm>)... say it ain't so.

-Amiee

Dear Amiee:

It ain't so. Rob Tapert and I had a fight, as people who have been friends for 25 years often do, and we got past it. That's it.

Josh

Name: Benedict
E-mail: ben@berneusdavin.com

Dear Josh,

When you write a script, obviously the ultimate plan is for you to shoot it eventually. Knowing that, do you spend time on camera angles and shots and whatnot, or do you write it just to tell the story? Does including that stuff early on complicate things? Also, Q. Did you hear about the blond who wanted to break into movies? A. She slept with a screenwriter. BTW, last week I sent a question about "Chill Factor" and no big deal if you didn't see it, I was just expecting at least a "Didn't see it and I have no plans to."

Thanks for your time,
Benedict

Dear Benedict:

There's no guarantee here at Beckerfilms that if you ask a question it will absolutely be answered. If I didn't see the film you're talking about, or there's no real or interesting question, I may just ignore it. When I first heard that joke, 25 years ago, it was a Polish girl who went to Hollywood and slept with the screenwriter. I have four or five of my screenplays posted and you are both encouraged and welcome to download them and study the style. I NEVER write in camera angles, which don't help explain the action and don't help anyone reading it. Another false idea about screenwriting is that you should only work in part-sentences-- "Door opens. Gun fires. Fred falls dead." This is still for other humans to read and hopefully understand and complete sentences help this process a lot.

Josh

Name: S.C.
E-mail: scornett@yahoo.com

Hi Josh,

I was just reading some of the Q&A's on your page, and they brought up two questions in my mind that I'd like to ask you:

- 1) In a film crew, what in the hell is the "Best Boy"?
- 2) Regarding Elvis films, what do you think of (if you've seen) "Change of Habit" (especially the 'rage reduction' scene, where Elvis cures little Amanda of her autism with his "Biiiiig girl, love you, Amanda..." powers?

TSNKE For All Mankind,

Sean

Dear Sean:

The Best Boys, and there are two of them, are the the Key Grip's second in command and the Gaffer's second in command. As to "Change of Habit," which is probably Elvis' worst and most embarrassing film, just shows that he had made as many movies as he ever needed to make. As far as his film career went, he didn't die a moment too soon. For those that haven't seen it, in "Change of Habit" Elvis plays a guitar-slingin' doctor working in the ghetto that is assigned several novice nuns to work with him, among them is Mary Tyler Moore. It's so awful it's breath-taking.

Josh

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

Josh,

This is a totally foolish question, but could you tell me what a "Grip" is on a film crew and what they do?

Thanks,

Michael

Dear Michael:

I think it's a perfectly reasonable question, actually. Grips are the big dudes that move all of the heavy equipment around, including the dollies and the cranes. The head of the grip dept. is the Key Grip, who frequently doubles as the Dolly Grip, the guy that pushes the dolly around. The Gaffer, BTW, is the head electrician.

Josh

Name: Jo
E-mail: cgbb10@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I was wanting to know if you had the whole article of Clarence Darrow's autobiography "the Story of My Life" that was printed in the New Republic on December 13, 1993 pg. 10?

Dear Jo:

I don't have the article I have the book.

Josh

Name: Lindseigh
E-mail: flklksnau@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

How do you come about choosing a cast for your movies??? (that was short and simple, YEA?)

Dear Lindseigh:

I use a casting director who puts out a notice on an internet casting service, as well as placing some ads in the acting magazines (Dramalogue, Backstage), then we hold casting sessions.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: swanlandNOSPAMprods@yahoo.com

Howdy, Josh!

Some excellent advice in the last few postings re: "getting your big break." To add in my two cents worth, I'd

say that when you're looking for a break, don't forget that there are times you might have to take a step back in order to go forward. I was a production coordinator on low-budget films for a few years, climbed my way up to UPM on two nonunion shoots, then didn't work for a while when the people I'd been hired by most often started switching to Canadian crews. To try to get back in the game, I switched from film to working in TV, but immediately had to take a step "back" to production coordinator till I could rebuild my resume. Now that I want to join the Directors Guild, I'm even doing occasional "interning" (read that, "working for free"), just to get the opportunity to observe/network/get more experience as an AD.

Of course, balance that with making sure you're not being exploited. You'll know when you're being "used;" it's when you wake up in the morning growling like "the world's angriest dog" as you trudge to work 20 minutes late because you just don't care about those bastards anymore -- THAT'S your warning sign it's time to leave. If you ask me.

Josh, couldn't agree with you more about "High Noon." Every time I drove past that billboard on Sunset plugging the remake, I just kept thinking, "Well, at least the leading lady doesn't look like she's Tom Skerritt's *daughter,* compared to Grace Kelly & Gary Cooper anyway." And TPTB at the studios still keep mismatching leads age-wise -- that wretched "Autumn in New York" thing that's out now or the equally hideous "Entrapment" come to mind. (Of course, Catherine Zeta-Jones mismatched herself age-wise in *real life*, too, but I digress...) What did you think of either the original or remake of "The Thomas Crown Affair"? At least in both of those versions, the leads were about the same age.

Also: the films out in theatres right now all seem pretty weak. Do you have any recommendations among current releases?

well, keep the faith,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

I worked as a production assistant from 1976-1993, during which time I wrote and directed two feature films. For a while there it seemed like I was either the top guy on the crew or the bottom guy. Basically, you just do what you have to do to keep going. As to new movies worth seeing? I don't think there are any. I just watched "Atlantic City" for the 20th time and it's terrific!

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Well, for whatever foolish reason, I watched the TV remake of "High Noon," and of course, since it had a decent plot and a decent actor (Tom Skerritt) in the lead, it was an OK TV movie. But then another station ran the *original* film later that evening, which I hadn't seen in many years.

Obviously, the original was about a hundred times better than the remake, and once again proved something you've often commented on - the folly of remaking classics. But this leads to my question - your opinion on the original "High Noon." Some of the things you've said you enjoy in films - interesting transitions, use of light and dark and shadow, clear character motivations, solid structure and theme - seem to be all over "High Noon." The repeating of the cuts to the empty traintrack, shot at ground level, really got ominous after a while. Comments ?

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

My comment? "High Noon" is a good movie and terrific example of film editing (Elmo Williams and Harry Gerstad, who both won Oscars for this film). Having seen the film many times over the years I do find it all a bit dry. Also, Grace Kelly seems WAY TOO YOUNG for Gary Cooper, but that's the extent of my gripes. I also like and respect director Fred Zinneman more and more as I grow older, particularly "The Member of the Wedding" and "From Here to Eternity."

Josh

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

Josh,

I just wanted to make a few comments to your readers regarding breaks.

About ten years ago, I seriously decided I want to get into this crazy business called the entertainment industry. But the idea of breaking into film and television was a bit daunting to me, what with the busloads of eager young people rushing into Hollywood every other day of the week, looking for their big break.

At this time, there was this new burgeoning world of computer games just taking off around me. I enjoyed playing some of the many adventure games of the time (SpaceQuest, KingsQuest, PoliceQuest, CheeseQuest, etc.) It occurred to me that this was a virtually untapped market for writers, and if I could break into the gaming industry, then maybe I could get a foothold into the entertainment industry. Basically, I was trying to create my own break.

I convinced a programming friend of mine to make one of these adventure games just so I could write the script for it. Using his contacts in the gaming world, we found an animation student to draw the graphics for it. After searching for six months, we found a distribution company who bought the rights to the project.

After a year and half of hard work, the company shelved the project and bid us all goodbye. I was out about \$7000. Hardly the big break I had been hoping for.

The programmer, animator, and I had enjoyed working together and we began working on other projects and went around the industry trying to sell an idea. Again, we were still trying to make our big break.

We went through about 10 to 15 projects before finally our programmer gave up on computer games and left to make a killing in the world of dot com and e-commerce. Our animating friend graduated and went to work for a major animation studio in California.

It was at this time I decided to go back to school. Specifically, to film school. This would of course take money, so I got a job slugging chicken wings for the next two years. During this time, my animating friend and I continued our collaborative relationship, now concentrating on developing concepts for a cartoon series which he hoped to pitch to his superiors. I wrote many scripts over that time period for many different shows that have not and will never see the light of day.

Last year, my friend received the green light for one of his cartoon shorts, and excitedly called me to tell me he was giving me a job as a writer for his show. I was ecstatic. My big break had finally come.

It was only two weeks later that the network decided to back out of the deal. Despite the fact that it was so positive, so REAL I could practically touch it, my big break had gone bust once again.

During all this time I've been hard at work at school writing and producing films. My last film cost me about \$3000, and has thus far been rejected from every film festival it has been entered in. All of this effort has been towards earning me my big break.

And now, this week, it appears my friend has been given the green light for another series. Will this turn out to be the big break I've been working towards for the past ten years? I'm excited, but I can't yet wash the bitter taste of last year's disappointment out of my mouth. I'm excited, yet antsy. Anything could happen to kill this opportunity.

My point (and I do have one) is this:

Quit waiting for your big break to jump up and bite you in the ass. You've got to WORK for it.

And if you're not willing to die trying, then give up now. You're getting in my way.

That is all.

Gord

Dear Gord:

I hope things work out and you get the gig you want. To those reading and wondering about their "break," this is what it's about.

Josh

Name: jesal

E-mail: jes_babe21@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

i'm looking for a career in directing "films" but i need to know where to start what subjects i need qualifications, experience and what a directors main responcebilites are?i've taken media studies and business studies what do i need to do next?

Dear jesal:

I'd say you have to start off by sounding a tad more interested in "films" than that. If you don't really love movies, do something else.

Josh

Name: john

E-mail: mahatma_ghandi007@hotmail.com

hey josh,

i'm not gonna blab on about how great your shows i'm sure u've heard it all anyway i think people can benifit

more if u can put more career advive on.and about u and your colleuges since people would apriciate havin advice of a person who already had expirience which is very rare

Dear John:

I'm here, dude. You have a question? Ask it.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: swanlandNOSPAMprods@yahoo.com

Hi, Josh!

Same F. "Not D." R., new e-mail address. Anyhoo, this is just to announce (and congratulate) Joseph LoDuca, who won an Emmy Award Saturday night for his music composition (dramatic underscore) for the "Fallen Angel" episode of "Xena." Yay, Joe!

I was reassigned at the last minute and didn't get a chance to meet Joe myself tonight, but I think it's great that he finally got recognized for the wonderful work he's done all these years. Thanks, Josh, for a forum to put the spotlight on your friend's proud accomplishment (what my ancestors would have called Joe's "nachus"). Hope you and your projects are well...

best,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

Yeah, Joe LoDuca is the greatest. It's about time he was given the awards he deserves.

Josh

Name: AJW
E-mail: FearFactory5@FSMAIL.com

Dear Josh:

I'm a film student and am worried about not getting my 'break' in the industry. I am confident that I have enough creativity, but I doubt my luck.

I would just like to ask how you got your break and, on a seperate note, the best way to get a film from script to screen, without spending millions.

Dear AJW:

I've never gotten a break in the film business. I make my movies because I make movies and nobody can stop me. If you sit around waiting for a break, you'll grow old and die. Make your own luck and make your

own movies. As to not spending millions, limit the amount of actors and locations, then plan like hell and shoot as quickly as possible.

Josh

Name: Andrew Benjamin
E-mail: hkb@nais.com

Dear Josh:

I heard that Jack Of All Trades may be canceled. Is this true?

Dear Andrew:

I believe that it is true, although final word doesn't come down for another month.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Josh What became of director T.J.Scott who helmed some of the more action oriented Herc and Xena episodes in the early days?He had flair and a pacy style.

Dear Alan:

I think T.J. worked on Xena already this season. He does a lot of TV and he may have just done a feature, too, if I'm not mistaken, but I don't know the name.

Josh

Name: Peter Macaluso
E-mail: pmac@frontiernet.net

Dear Josh:

When it comes to directing a film, what is the most important thing to make the movie as authentic as possible?

Dear Peter:

Authentic, eh? I suppose that would be intelligent writing and a smart director.

Josh

Name: Tony Mitchell
E-mail: tmitchell@jbwere.com.au

Hi Josh,

I notice that "JFK" is one of your favourite films. Would you be able to explain what it was you liked about this film? Don't worry, I don't intend to get into an argument with you about conspiracy theories, etc.

Dear Tony:

It would be my pleasure. First, I think "JFK" is Oliver Stone's 2nd best movie, next to "Platoon." In a word, "JFK" is provocative. It makes you think. It provokes thoughts. I was five years old in 1963 and I clearly remember Kennedy getting killed and even then I didn't buy what was coming down. I didn't think too much about it, really, but when the Zapruder film was finally released it seemed beyond a shadow of a doubt that the bullet that killed Kennedy was NOT coming from the book depository, but was obviously coming from the grassy knoll, where every single witness in Deely Plaza said they both saw and heard the bullet come from. Given all of that, I was really, really happy that someone had the balls to stand up and ask, loudly, "What's going on?" which the film "JFK" does. Also, I think Mr. Stone's use of intercutting black and white and color is the best use I've ever seen of it anywhere. Furthermore, it has great photography, an astounding cast with Gary Oldman so perfect for Oswald it's still incredible. I'd also say it's the best Kevin Costner has ever been in anything. I think John Candy is terrific, and so is Kevin Bacon. But when you leave the film you leave thinking. All in all, I'd say that "JFK" is just a darned good movie.

Josh

Name: John
E-mail: jforde40@hotmail.com

Howdy

Are there any Elvis Presly films worth watching?

Thanks

Howdy, John:

I think so. I've always liked "King Creole" and I also have the record (on vinyl, of course). "Jailhouse Rock" is good, too (gotta love that black and white CinemaScope).

Josh

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

It's been a little while, but I read something that made me curious about what your opinion is as a director. I have to quote something that I read that Rob Tapert said, so bear with me, there is a question here. "...,but the beauty of television is you get to produce all the time. Even if you did one movie a year, you're doing two hours of film a year, as opposed to 40-50 hours of film a year in television. I love producing and I'm not sure that all the time that gets spent on features makes the product any more or less entertaining than a television show."

As a director, do you prefer films because you are more in control and there are less restrictions or for other reasons, just curious?

I hope you and Rob are mending your rift, just a little, there's always Illusia, can you sing?

Thanks again,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

Rob and I getting along fine now, we've gotten past our little rift. He may even hire me to direct a Xena later this season. TV is a producer's medium and feature films are, sometimes, a director's medium. Since they change directors every week on TV, nobody can ever get used to how a single director works. As the production designer on Xena told me, it's like re-inventing the wheel every week. I have never made a studio feature so I can't comment on that, but it sounds more oppressive than directing TV, where, if you understand the system, you can kind of waltz in and waltz out without anyone noticing. If you're spending upwards of ten million dollars (or 50 million, which is the average big-budget Hollywood piece of crap now) there are going to be a lot of people very concerned about the money, dicking around with the process at every turn. TV is shot so quickly that there's probably a lot less dicking around. My indie features are shot just as fast, so the same thing goes. I'm not sure if I answered your question.

Josh

Name: debora smyth
E-mail: benaxena@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I NOTICE THAT THE NAME'S OF THE PRODUCER AND WRITERS ARE ALWAYS THE SAME, HOWEVER THE DIRECTORS CHANGE WEEKLY. WHO DECIDES ON WHAT DIRECTOR IS GOING TO DIRECT WHAT? MICHAEL HURST ALWAYS SEEMS TO DIRECT THE MUSICALS, DO YOU HAVE A SPECIALTY?

Dear Debora:

My specialty, I suppose, is the slapstick comedies. Michael didn't direct either of the Xena musicals, though. As to who chooses the directors, it's Rob Tapert, the executive producer.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: freakafied@my-STOPSPAMdeja.com

Howdy, Josh!

From the postings I just read, it must be your birthday, and I hope you're having a very happy one!

Just wanted to report that your much needed verbal kick-in-the-ass is making some waves around here. You had advised me (all of us reading your Q&A, really) that instead of waiting around for some studio weenie to buy/steal my project, I should just get a videocam and shoot two people sitting in a room. Well, curious to know more about your work, I found a copy of "Lunatics" on eBay, and now I see what EXACTLY you mean, how you can make a virtue out of a low budget so long as you have great actors and a strong script. ("Lunatics," btw, was that: great acting and a charming story [I actually *cared* what happened to those two characters] -- nicely done, Josh & Ted & Bruce & Deborah!)

So, now I'm going to meet with the writer/actor friends of mine whose script I've been trying to peddle for about a year; we're going to talk about what it would take to grab a camera, shoot a couple of scenes from the script featuring just them in some ultra simple locations, and end up with our own little short film/trailer to try to generate more interest & \$ for the full-length version of the film (as you said, "funding -- oh, that."). That way, we'll have a short film (which seems to be coin of the realm these days), more shooting experience, and something to show potential suckers/er, uh, investors. Thanks for the reality sandwich, Josh; you got me out of my rut!

I've also turned some other aspiring filmmaker pals of mine on to your website; hope they'll be posting soon (this means you, Tom!). Anyway, enough shouts out to my homeys; enjoy your birthday, and let's pretend I'm buying you a round at your favorite bar to celebrate!

Many happy returns,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

Thanks. Make a good movie and have a good time doing it.

Josh

Name: John
E-mail: jforde40@hotmail.com

Howdy-

Happy Birthday Josh! I hope you have a great day. As always, thanks for answering my questions.

Howdy, John:

Thanks. My pleasure. Good questions.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

I know it's a day or two early, but just wanted to wish you a very Happy Birthday! Thanks for all the entertaining films and episodes and essays, and good luck with "Hammer!"

August

Dear August:

Thank you, you're very thoughtful. Good luck to you, too.

Josh

Name: Lauren
E-mail: salsop@vtown.com.au

Dear Josh:

I am studying drama as a major at high school and are studying the female role. We are using a small scene from American Beauty (the one where Lester meets Angela for the first time in the carpark). Would you please be so kind to send me the script for that scene please? Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Dear Lauren:

What on Earth do you think I have to do with "American Beauty," and why would I have the script? Perhaps you need to drop the drama class and take a class in reading because nothing on this website would indicate in any way, shape or form that I have anything to do with that film.

Josh

Name: Tony Mitchell
E-mail: tmitchell@jbwere.com.au

Hi Josh,

Maybe you can write your next article about the appalling decline of spelling and grammar in society today! Do you have any thoughts as to the cause?

Dear Tony:

I don't think there's a whole article in the subject. Very few people have ever been very good at grammar and spelling, and now there are a lot more people on the planet who are suddenly writing, meaning emails. I'm just pleased that it's brought people back to writing.

Josh

Name: Andy Hawkins
E-mail: andyhawkins@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Firstly, great site and thanks for answering my question(in advance)

me and a friend are currently writing a script for a film that we hope to start shooting in november/december . the film will be a cross between evil dead and dusk till dawn, could you give us any tips before we start?..

also, what do you think of they live, i think it is a great film.

Thanks

Andy

Dear Andy:

I like the idea of "They Live," but I thought it was very badly written and the stupid fight scenes went on forever. Why not try coming up with what YOU think is scary, as opposed to basing your film on other films. Use other movies as inspiration, don't base your own stories on them. You've got to look into your own heart and mind for what you *really* think is good, then everyone else will think it's good, too.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: freakafied@my-deja.com

Dear Josh:

This is regarding your reply about your upcoming projects being finishing "If I Had A Hammer" (I believe you've said it's in sound mixing stage) and a new Bruce Campbell-Ted Raimi film (that sounds totally cool!). So I was curious: are you also going to continue work on the World War I project you mentioned in passing earlier? It really caught my attention when you wrote about it because the early 20th century is a period of history I find particularly fascinating.

Hey, BTW, I start work tomorrow on a show that Joe LoDuca will be more or less involved with. You've spoken so highly of him, he must be a very cool guy as well as a talented one. If I get the chance, I'll try to say "hi" to him!

Keep that independent flag flying!,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

Joe LoDuca is the coolest guy. As to my WW1 script, "Devil Dogs: The Battle of Belleau Wood," I've written the script that I like (which took me four years), now all I need is the financing--Oh, that!

Josh

Name: Bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

Glad to see you not only liked Savior, but Shadrach. I thought for awhile I was the only one who had seen those movies. My nephew forced me to watch both of them and I enjoyed Shadrach thoroughly, although Savior was kind of a downer. There are very few people I trust when it comes to movies..such as all the people that said I HAD to watch "My Own Private Idaho" which I think I'm finally giving up on (about 1 hr and 7 mins into). I've still got Raging Bull, so hopefully it will be redeemed. Have you had a chance to see Space Cowboys? I expected to like it simply because I'd relate to the old guy humor, but it actually seemed to be pretty well made as well. From the numbers, others seem to be agreeing with me.

Dear Bill:

I haven't seen "Space Cowboys" yet, but I'd like to. Clint Eastwood is one of the last big filmmakers left that doesn't make his films for kids, not that they can't watch them, too. Even his films that aren't that good, like "True Crime," can still be easily watched. For me, though, a film doesn't have to be a happy experience, a "downer" is perfectly OK if I'm caught up in the story and characters. You don't have to get a snow-cone at the end of every story.

Josh

Name: Laura
E-mail: foxy@ski.com.au

Dear Josh:

Hey, i'm doing a media studies exercise and i have to reasearch a director, and i choose you. all i need to know is what you do as a director and how you actually do it? thanks

Dear Laura:

I tell everybody what to do and I use my mouth to do it.

Josh

Name: BFilmStar
E-mail:

Hey Josh,

Saw your buddy Bruce Campbell on TV the other night and he was directing an episode of VIP. Is he thinking of making a full-time career out of TV directing like Anson Williams and Robbie Benson? Do you have any series television gigs coming up? And, would it be possible to add a Future Plans' section, so that we can keep up with your up and coming adventures?

Best,
BFilmStar

Dear BFilmStar:

I've got nothing coming up other than finishing "If I Had a Hammer" and seeing what it looks like. I'm starting to formulate a new, super-low-budget idea that will star Bruce and Ted Raimi. Those are my present and future plans. Thanks for wanting to know.

Josh

Name: Heathyr Wolfe
E-mail: fireeater69@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Thank you Josh Becker! (re:America-land of stupid cowboys) America the free my eye. We have spent way too much time incarcerating others for governmental excuses and assholes like the NRA. Thank you for making the pen mightier than a goddam gun and speaking out in such a truthful fashion. So many things that can be changed only too easily, yet narrow sightedness and greed linger like a bad case of poison oak. Here's hoping that life is treating you well, and that you are having a medicinal moment as you read this. Have a shempin good time and keep on with the indie's, we need 'em!

Another goddam outspoken radical in California

Dear Heathyr:

I'm glad you enjoyed the essay, I haven't really heard much response on it except having been called, as though it were an insult, a "liberal." Well, I would much rather be a liberal, who is looking for new ideas to improve things, as opposed to a conservative, who not only want everything to stay the same, but would like to go back in time to a simpler day and age, which is entirely impossible, completely unreasonable and unrealistic. We only move forward, there's no going back.

Josh

Name: Benedict
E-mail: berneusdavin@usa.com

Dear Josh,

There is a lot of video and audio editing equipment where I work, and I'm trying to persuade a co-worker to help me get something going. Question: How valuable is a partner of some sort? Did you do "all things organizational" on your first project (producing, casting, directing, prop-making)? Is it natural to want a partner or is it a sign of weakness? Secondly, I have some musical abilities and while I know I'm not capable of scoring a film, I'd like to collaborate on the music. However, even if I get a great composer and a musician, an orchestra is hard to come by. I haven't seen many of your films, but it seems you get a mix of orchestral and well, however you would describe the opening to Running Time-kind of modern and rhythmic. Do you have any suggestions for a production for which an orchestra is not a possibility?

Dear Benedict:

Having a partner is a good thing because you simply can't make movies by yourself -- it's a collaborative form, plain and simple. Make sure to define the job positions clearly, though, so everyone knows where they stand. In regard to the music score, most scores are now done exclusively on synthesizers and don't use orchestras, which indeed are expensive. The score for "RT" was done entirely by Joe LoDuca, he wrote it and is playing everything. You do need to find someone that understands how to score in synch, however, and has the proper equipment to stay in synch. Good luck and make a good movie.

Josh

Name: Punam
E-mail: moonfaceprodns@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Got your reply! you're a special and rare person for offering your site for all of us... thanks i'm just about done the short film i mentioned. i have your name in the thanks section bec your website has been hugely informative and your advice has been incredibly generous. thanks for putting this site together! it must take a lot of your time and you are helping so many people pursue their dreams! thanks again. i'd love for you to see the film! it is only 5 minutes! do you think short films are a waste of time? i felt like i had to do it to see if i really could enjoy making films. i really loved (and hated!#@) the experience and have started writing a feature while the short is with the sound mixer!

with care,
PS

Dear Punam:

Are you kidding? I love short films. It's the ones over two hours that I have trouble with. BTW, my movie is almost done, too. Yes, then right on to the next one. That's the spirit! Tally-Ho!

Josh

Name: Lee
E-mail: Ash_Zombie_killer@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

plz can i have your permission to publish "The Josh Becker Jornal" from the first evil dead movie on my site...
www.evil-dead.8k.com

Thank you
Lee(Love your work!)

Dear Lee (Love your work!):

Sure, go ahead.

Josh

Name: jason angeles
E-mail: flipdangelo@hotmail.com

Josh,

Have you ever heard of Trent Harris? He's this filmmaker from utah, an independent one at that. really. he did this really funny cult classic, "rubin and ed", with crispin glover. you should check it out if you havent already.

also, in an unrelated note, i too would like to be a filmmaker. i have big ideas, see, and i would like to know what you think of this title "American Cheese". it's going to be about kids and young adults and the pop-culture in which they live by. it's going to take place in seattle.

anyway, blah blah...
take it easy and good luck with your next project.

jason

Dear Jason:

I have not seen "Rubin & Ed," but Leonard Maltin sure couldn't have given it a worse review, not that that means all that much. I did hang around with Crispin Glover recently at a party in Las Vegas. As to the title "American Cheese," well, have you got a point to make? To just say that pop culture is cheesy is not saying anything, you really must have a point. That this cheesy culture causes . . . whatever, apathy, stupidity, you name it. But it doesn't mean anything to point out something that we all know and agree with.

Josh

Name: Bjorn Zock
E-mail: Uliq@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I have just been reading your "genius in film" text. You named most of the people who brought new perspective to movies, but there is one that i am missing.... Where is David Lynch in the whole story??? What is your opinion about him and his movies? It a person i personally think that he is also someone who made a contribution to the whole 'moviescene' as it is today.

Dear Bjorn:

Not only is David Lynch is no genius, he's not even a particularly good filmmaker. I do appreciate "Elephant Man" and "Blue Velvet," and to some minor extent "Eraserhead," too, but I don't think there's a great film among them. Nor do I believe he's had much of an impact on the filmmakers around him. I hear "The Straight Story" is good, but I haven't seen it, nor do I think it would change my opinion.

Josh

Name: Kurt Rauf

E-mail: Vegasdp@aol.com

Josh,

Greetings from the baking desert. Hey, Do you make a cameo in Gary Jones bug epic "Mosquito"? It looks like you cooking weiner's in the campfire scene and a night scene.

Later,
Kurt

Dear Kurt:

Yes, that's me. What can I say?

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: freakafied@my-deja.com

Dear Josh:

Thanks, again, for telling it like it is. Yep, no shortcuts, and no mercy from the big guys. You're right; you want a film done in a way that won't make you throw up, you've got to do it yourself. And the only way to do it yourself...is to do it yourself! OK, I guess now it's time to become a human truffle pig, sniffing out money everywhere. Cool!

Anyway, was wondering: did you see "Magnolia"? Any thoughts?

best,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

A truffle pig, a good metaphor for raising money. No, I haven't seen "Magnolia" yet. Enough people told me it was like Altman's "Short Cuts," which I couldn't stand, but it's not as good, that I avoided it. Also, I completely didn't like "Boogie Nights," so I knew I wouldn't like it. I also have a BIG problem with films that long. If you can't tell your story in a reasonable amount of time, say 100 to 130 minutes, you probably don't know what your story is. "Citizen Kane" is 118 minutes long, does "Magnolia" have more to say than that?

Josh

Name: Ambrosha
E-mail: Ambrosha@webtv.net

Dear Josh:

Who does the apparel design for the vintage Emlia Rothchild has on throughout most of the episodes? What is purposely designed for her, or, rather, purchased?

Dear Ambrosha:

All the costumes on "Xena" and "Jack" are designed and created for the shows. The costume designer is nick-named Beany, but I don't recall her full name.

Josh

Name: Jan de Man
E-mail: jan-de-man@bluewin.ch

Dear Josh:

Subject: Background music

I find the background music in films often as disagreeable as the silly laughter that accompanies some.

Do directors never make films without music? I would like to see one.

Jan de Man

Dear Jan:

I've never made a movie without music, but I'm sure there are some, I just can't think of any off hand. Film scores rarely if ever annoy me unless they really suck or it's just a series of pop songs strung together. In my film "Running Time" the first dramatic music cue doesn't occur for almost 30 minutes.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: freakafied@my-deja.com

Howdy, Josh!

A reply, and then a question. While I do have not one but two middle initials, neither of them is "D." It's just that rat bastard FDR tryin' to ride my coattails to fame...ok, he's been dead for about 55 years, but still...

Now, the road to my question begins: My primary career goal is to produce my own films. The things I'm learning as an AD and production coordinator/script coordinator, the people I'm meeting, etc., are all to help me do a decent job on my own projects. (Oh, yeah, and pay the rent, too; silly me, I have this habit of eating 2, maybe 3 times a day!) I'm all about getting useful experience so that I don't become just another knuckleheaded, uninformed asshole producer. And, I've actually managed to find some decent scripts written by friends & friends of friends, and some original ideas/true stories, all of which I'm passionate about, to submit to big production companies/studios/networks, which have led to some swell pitch meetings, which have led to lots of phone calls that can be summarized as, "Wow we love you, we love you, we really almost like you...now, remind me: who the hell are you, again?" In other words, all talk, no action. I read your essay on writing & selling "Cycles," and other essays on other "adventures in the screen trade," so I KNOW you've been there & can relate.

I'm thinking now the thing to do is not to find a big production company to partner up with, but just to scrape

up the money somehow and make these projects completely independently, as you've done often (one of the reasons for my extreme interest in your website & experiences...). So, my big question is really big: how in the Sam Hill do you find serious investors, and then actually part them from their money? Jeez, seems like all my friends (and their parents & families, too) are broke, or at least in no position to finance a film. I'd really appreciate any wisdom and/or inspiration you might have to offer!

Thanks for being open to discussing everything from 99Cents Stores (gotta love 'em!) to suckers with a million or two to plop down on a low-budget film.

best,
f. r.

Dear F.R.:

I just had dinner with my buddy from Michigan, Craig, who is the co-executive producer of "Survivor" (I've known Craig since we were both seven--my Dad built his family's house). Anyway, Craig is a hot commodity right now and He really likes my WW1 script, "Devil Dogs," which he suggested taking to a big company. Very quickly, however, we both realized that if a big company should be interested (which I sincerely doubt since there isn't another WW1 movie around making money to show them the way), the first thing they would do would be to shitcan me, then second would be to shitcan Craig--and Craig's hot and has been around for 20 years. What do you suppose would happen to you? The only thing that I can be certain of is that I will continue making my independent movies. I don't know why big film companies do what they do, nor do I care. I can be sure of what I do, though. Anyway, how do you get money for movies? You must become a total pain in the ass to anyone that seems like they either have money or know where money is hiding. Even if you don't get money from someone, be sure to get the name of someone else that has money. It is also incumbent upon you to figure out how to make movies with whatever money you can come up with, which means if you have to shoot with two people in one room with a digital handycam, then you'll do it. If your attitude is that you will not be stopped, then you will not be stopped. Good luck and make some terrific movies.

Josh

Name: Peter Macaluso
E-mail: pmac@frontiernet.net

Dear Josh:

I'm 13 years of age and a couple of friends and I are making our first film together. Do you have any tips or information on making a film look as real as possible with inexpensive equipment?

Dear Peter:

Here are three things that will definitely help: 1. Rehearse the scenes until the flow a little bit; 2. Do some kind of lighting, and one light from a single direction always looks good, and; 3. Get coverage, meaning shoot more than one angle of each scene, and close-ups of the actors are always good things to have. Now it's up to you to tell a story that's worth listening to.

Josh

Name: Tallula

E-mail:

Josh,

Could you please add your recommended screenwriting book list to your current reading list?

Dear Tallula:

Sadly, there aren't any. I got something out of Lajos Egri's "The Art of Dramatic Writing," but I don't think it's very well-written or easy-to-read. That's really why I wrote my structure essays, and that's what I recommend that you read.

Josh

Name: Lisa

E-mail: lfimbres@kjcsolar.com

Dear Josh:

Thanks for the great laughs! I too am a 99 cent store regular. I bought a "trimmer" for 99 cents but didn't have the guts to use it on the area I intended to trim :-)

Don't be afraid of the chicken! It's good. My 4 year old son loves the Underwood deviled chicken in the can (sells for \$3 in the store).

Happy shopping and good hunting!

Dear Lisa:

If it's a brand you recognize like Underwood, then fine. The canned chicken I'm referring to is a non-brand canned in Indonesia. I didn't even know they had chickens in Indonesia. They probably use poisonous snakes and just call them chicken.

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: freakafied@my-deja.com

Dear Josh:

Hey, thanks for the advice, about not being an asshole. It's an excellent point: you *don't* have to be nasty & overbearing to get people -- especially people you trusted well enough to hire in the first place! -- to do their work in the way and at the time you want. I think that's something a LOT of people could use being reminded of...I've worked for lots of producers (I've been a production coordinator and script coordinator for the last few years) who just can't get through the day without being a yelling, insulting troll. Oh, well.

Well, anyway, back to the pleasant business of discussing other folks' films. I was wondering: did you see "The Limey"? If so, what did you think? Not to bias you or anything, but it was my favorite film of last year...

All curious-like,
F. R.

Dear F. R.:

Your middle initial isn't D. is it? Having spent many years working as a P.A. on film crews, I've been yelled at by snotty asshole A.D.s many times and it always seemed unnecessary. Sorry, I haven't seen "The Limey" yet.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: freakafied@my-deja.com

Dear Josh:

I have been getting a lot out of surfing your site; I work in "the industry" (how ominous sounding is *that**!), am now pursuing a DGA card (as an A.D.), and find your insights into both tv and low budget feature filmmaking incredibly valuable. Although I do not agree with everything you say, I am greatly enjoying the honesty with which you state your opinions.

And on the subject of agreeing/not agreeing with you...I just couldn't agree with you more about "The Patriot." I've been complaining loudly for the last few weeks that, while there was no patriotism on display in the film, there was a perfectly sickening lust for revenge being exercised. With a hatchet, no less. Yummy! Should have been called, "The Vengeance-Crazed Berserker" -- much more appropriate.

Anyway, keep up the good work...
F. R.

Dear F. R.:

Just remember, you don't have to be an asshole to be a good A.D. The best A.D.s I've worked with (Simon Ambridge and Paul Grinder, both on Xena) are really nice guys. Good luck to you.

Josh

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