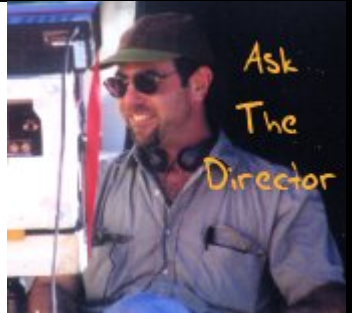


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 20

Name: Bill
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Before Anchor Bay bought up Running Time, was it very costly to self distribute the movie?

Dear Bill:

It never paid for itself. Between tape duplication, artwork for the video box, postage, and, most of all, the ability to accept credit cards over the internet, not to mention I ran an ad on IMDB that cost over \$1000 and didn't make a single sale, it was all a washout.

Josh

Name: Chris Dowell
E-mail: cdowell@earthlink.net

Hey Josh..

Not sure if you remember me. I'm the guy that borrowed your Bolex camera...its got to be pushing 2 years ago by now. My friend sent me a link today that made me think of you ..and I wanted to make sure that you got it.

<http://members.aol.com/dforeman84/page/index.htm>

Its a link to the Official Deborah Foreman website. I remembered some of the stories you told me about her and thought you might be interested. The site looks great and I'm happy to see that you've got another film in the works.

Good luck with your current project.
Yours

Chris

Dear Chris:

Yes, I do remember you, and thanks for the link to Ms. Foreman's site. She's such a babe I just wish she had a lot more photos posted.

Josh

Name: Mitzi Rossy
E-mail: seaquestsatchmo@mail.com

Dear Josh:

Hello, I just wanted to know if I could use your images with Sam and Ted in them. That's all.

Dear Mitzi:

Sure, go ahead.

Josh

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

Josh,

I see a lot of independant filmmakers with a low budget turning to DV. I was wondering your opinion on filming in DV? Does this make us look amature, or is it someday going to be the future of filmmaking?

I know you are a child of the 8mm era, but what are your thoughts on the whole DV concept?

Best,

Michael

Dear Michael:

I think DV is great and improving all the time. Digital editing systems are getting cheaper all the time, too. I don't know what happened to the new Alfred Hitchcock and the new William Wyler among the baby-boomers (we got DePalma and Spielberg instead), but I now expect them among the younger crowd. The sooner a filmmaker can get onto telling their story with a camera and juxtaposed shot, the better.

Josh

Name: Robert

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Does Rob Tapert have a cousin named Robert and do you know him?

Dear Robert:

I have no idea. His father is also named Robert, so it's obviously a popular name among the Taperts.

Josh

Name: shawn

E-mail: shawn001@aol.com

Josh,

What is your opinion of Quentin Tarantino's directing ability?

Dear Shawn:

I think it's fairly minimal. I don't think he's a particularly good shooter and he can't block actors to save his life.

Josh

Name: Ian Rogers

E-mail: ian@plastic-iguana.com

Dear Josh:

Part of Plastic Iguana Publications is a site devoted to deleted scenes and other discarded material from films, called The Cutting Room Floor.

Besides the delete scene from the fight sequence with the bikers, and the alternate opening, can we expect anything new on the "Thou Shalt Not Kill... Except" DVD? Also, can you tell us about anything else that might have been cut from the film?

Sincerely,

Ian Rogers

Plastic Iguana Publications

<http://www.plastic-iguana.com>

Dear Ian:

Other than a really good-looking picture, a commentary by Bruce Campbell and I, as well as the afore-

mentioned cut scene, the alternate title sequence, and the trailer, that's it. It's not like there was another cut of the movie that somebody made me change; what you're getting is every damn scene we shot.

Josh

Name: Ian Rogers
E-mail: ian@plastic-iguana.com

Dear Josh:

I was very impressed with your site, and was wondering if you were interested in exchanging links.

Please visit my site and let me know what you think. Stryker's War is one of my favorite movies, and I eagerly await the DVD. I have a review on my site you might enjoy, as well.

Sincerely,

Ian
<http://www.plastic-iguana.com>

Dear Ian:

I will have Shirley, the intrepid webmaster here, include your address on our link page. And thanks for the nice review.

Josh

Name: Tanya
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

I have absolutely no idea how this works, but I am very curious. There was suddenly a question about the future of Xena, would there be a full season six because of Studios USA apparently thinking about ending it early. I've read the decision was made to do the entire 22 episodes. What can Rob Tapert do with the show if he wanted to continue into season 7 and Studios USA didn't want to, just using that as an example.

Thanks,
Tanya

Dear Tanya:

I must admit that I know very little about what goes on at the executive/ corporate level of these TV shows. I would guess that if Studios USA doesn't want the show to continue being produced, then it will not be produced. I don't even know that's it's Studios USA that makes that decision, it may well be the syndicator, Tribune-United. I honestly don't know how it works.

Josh

Name: Revolvo Spinz
E-mail: GODofPULF@aol.com

Dear Josh:

You know, I used to think at first that you were just a complete asshole. Recently I've realized from your reviews, rants, etc. that actually you just say what you think and it makes sense. Nothing's gonna get any better until people realize what's wrong and you have the balls to say it. Keep kickin' ass

Dear Revolvo:

It makes my day to know that you no longer consider me a complete asshole. Thanks.

Josh

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

Josh,

Thanks, Josh. I see your point. It was very unprofessional of me and I should have stayed.

As always, thank you for your honesty. It helps us learn the ropes of the biz so we don't make stupid mistakes like I just did.

Best,

Michael

Dear Michael:

But I don't think you should worry about it, nobody holds it against an extra that calls first to say they won't show up. All will be fine.

Josh

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

Josh,

From your experience with film, and working many positions on the crew, I would like your personal opinion on something.

Last week I received a call from a casting agent wanting me to do some background work for the film "Feast of All Saints." They asked when I would be available and I said "All week." So I called my work (who is very good with stuff like this) and took the week off. I was told I could work on "Feast" the next 4 days. At this

time, I have had a cough (cold) for 3 weeks, but felt fine. Anyway, I went to work and during my first day, I was coughing at least once every few mins. This was rough when we were doing those scenes where you are to make no noise at all.

Anyway, to be blunt, I pulled the casting agent aside, asked her what I was contracted to work. She said you are not contracted, just on call and can work the next 3 days. I asked if I could skip tomorrow and go to the doctors and get something for this cough and then work the next 2 days. I made it clear that if this was a problem, then I would not go. She assured me that it was okay, and that she was handling the calls so don't worry about it. I asked when to be in on the 3rd day and they said they would call.

Next day I come home from the docs and have a message from someone on set, wondering where the hell I am. They left me no number so I just had to wait for the casting agent to call me to tell me when to come tomorrow, and I would explain.

The call never came. But I did receive a call today letting me know I was wrapped.

I feel like I handled this totally wrong and damaged my future working on any other films that come to town. What did I do wrong and how should have this been handled in your opinion?

Thanks,

Michael

Dear Michael:

Look, you need to see a doctor, then you go. I doubt anyone is going to hold any grudges against you. Extras are a notoriously irresponsible group--you put out a call for 30 extras and if you get 25 you're lucky. The bottom line with any job in the movies--unlike other things that just go on and on--if you say you're going to be there, then be there. I have directed and written and crewed various positions straight through severe bouts of colds and flu and I have never taken a day off from work to go to the doctor. There are many guys and gals on TV crews that have never missed a day in years (I believe that Donny Duncan, D.P. of Xena for many years, missed one day because he was arrested for not paying his taxes, otherwise he was ALWAYS there).

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: swanlandNOSPAMprods@yahoo.com

Howdy, Josh!

Thanks for your helpful comments on post-production. Now I figure it's a good time to jump over to *pre*production. Do you storyboard during prep? For a feature, how much time do you like to spend in "active" pre-production for a feature (as opposed to the weeks & months & years spent writing & polishing a script and then scraping up financing for it)? Is there any step you cover in prep that might not be considered "standard operating procedure" but that you find useful?

Thanks so much for informing & inspiring all us visitors to the world of BeckerFilms! By being accessible to all our burning questions, you're really enabling a lot of people to make films, and teaching us to make films a lot better.

Keep the cinematic (& other) faith!,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

Thanks for the nice words. Regarding pre-production, this is where you'll make or break your picture, particularly a low-budget film. I am the king of pre-planning; I do it as much as anyone ever has. A few weeks after I directed the pilot of "Jack of All Trades," I spoke with Bruce and asked how it was going? He said, "Fine, but no one has their shit wired like you do." The director simply can't read the script enough times or envision the scenes often enough. I storyboarded everything I directed up to the episode of Xena, "Fins, Femmes & Gems," when I got the shooting script the morning we started shooting. That was when I realized that I could keep several hundred shots in my head clearly and no longer required storyboards. Nevertheless, that was 20 years into my directing career. To everyone else I recommend storyboards highly because they force you to visualize your shots, plus they give you a sense of the cutting in advance. Also, if you expect anything to be there when you shoot, whether it's mentioned in the script or not, you should have discussed it with whomever is supposed to have that thing there. NEVER ASSUME things will just be there. If you haven't specifically asked for it, then it probably won't be there.

Josh

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

Josh,

I'm currently working background on "The Feast of All Saints" television miniseries for Showcase. On the set I noticed that quite a few people were AD's. I always thought that the Assistant Director was the second hand man, but I swear their had to be between 5 and 10 of them here, running all over, yelling to each other in their little mic's. Can you explain what and who a typical crew consists of. I could see the grips and PA's doing their thing, but why so many AD's? I always thought their was just maybe one or two. The first AD and his underling. Is this typical?

Best,

Michael

Dear Michael:

Typically, there are three A.D.s: the 1st A.D., the 2nd A.D., and the Second 2nd A.D. (Which, in New Zealand, they oddly call a 3rd A.D.). You get extra 2nds and Second 2nds to wrangle the extras when you have large crowd scenes.

Josh

Name: Jay Kelley
E-mail: jay@kelley.com

Dear Josh:

Wow Josh. Your article on Quinn was wonderful. If people want a "real" slice of a day in the life of a director then your writing is perfect. So many young directors think "I'll direct and I'll be in charge just like Lucas, or Cameron". Reality is different. Thanks for taking the time to write it down.

Dear Jay:

That experience I had to write down.

Josh

Name: Fatt

E-mail: mbulleri@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

hello Will there be a special edition of 'thou shalt not kill... except' on dvd. I saw that a widescreen version comes out oct. 10th, but there is no commentary, The commentary on 'running time' rules, it would be cool if you did that with all your films. thanks,

p.s. 'running time' is a sweet film, you are a true master of film making!

Dear Fatt:

Yes, there is commentary on TSNKE, and, just like "Running Time," it's myself and Bruce Campbell yaking our heads off. I hope you enjoy it.

Josh

Name: Rich Ferrando

E-mail: mrboy@mrboy.com

Dear Josh:

I'll be an evil bother one more time, just to make you squirm. :-)

Any idea as to whether or not you'll drop back in on the old Michigan stomping grounds to make a movie?

Yes, I know that the Michigan Film Office isn't the most well-funded or helpful organization (I've tried working with them for my films- usually unsuccessfully), and I know it's cheaper to shoot elsewhere (like Toronto or Minnesota), but still, I ask.

Will metro Detroit ever be, once again, graced with your presence, welcoming you with open arms and heavy artillery?

Dear Rich:

I'm not going to shoot in Detroit again simply for the sake of shooting there. I do have a script that takes place in Detroit and Ann Arbor and if I were to get financing for it, I'd shoot it in its proper locations.

Josh

Name: Rich Ferrando
E-mail: mrboy@mrboy.com

Dear Josh:

And by the way (in case anyone cares and if you remember and/or know the names I'm about to spout off) My boss, Dick Rockwell, is best friends with John Prusak who directed Sam Raimi and a few others in a pretty bad film called "Hefty's." And I went to high school with Bart Pierce's son, Drew (who remembers you guys doing "Evil Dead" effects work in his basement.) I say this not to impress nor to get votes of sympathy nor to say that I can do "The Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon" from myself thru you, but just to illustrate that this is a very small world we live in. Not that anyone besides me really gives a crap either. :-)

Dear Rich:

That's not six degrees of seperation because I do know John Prusak and Bart Pierce. John let me borrow some equipment for free when I was making TSNKE, and Bart did the special effects on my films "Cleveland Smith Bounty Hunter" and "Torro, Torro, Torro!" I also assisted Bart when he did the effects on "Evil Dead." Part of helping Bart was holding his newborn baby, Drew, so that he'd have his hand free. Bart also lived with my sister for about a year. Yes, it's a small, small world.

Josh

Name: Rich Ferrando
E-mail: mrboy@mrboy.com

Dear Josh:

Why no mention on the site of the really old shorts that you co-directed with Scott Spiegel, and starring just about everybody? Those might be of interest to... someone. :-)

Dear Rich:

I guess I don't list them because they are unavailable. Since they are not in release now and probably won't be any time soon, why mention them?

Josh

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

G'day Josh,

I'd be interested to know your thoughts on the use of narration in a screenplay. Several films I've seen here in Australia recently have begun with narration by the main character which I feel is a very lazy way of telling a story. I would rather be shown things than have to look at a screen and hear things.

What do you think?

Dear Tony:

It's definitely an over-used storytelling technique, as are flashbacks. Nevertheless, both techniques can be good if used properly. The narration in "The Magnificent Ambersons" and "To Kill a Mockingbird" are both great uses of it. Generally, though, I think it should be avoided.

Josh

Name: TAMMY MENSER
E-mail: mensers@bestweb.net

Dear Josh:

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF I COULD SEND YOU SOME INFORMATION ON MY 10 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER. SHE IS ALLREADY IN ENERTAINMENT.SHE WANTS TO WORK WITH JULIA ROBERTS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
TAMMY

Dear TAMMY:

Is there something about me that reminds you of Julia Roberts? If your daughter wants to work with Julia Roberts, why are you writing to me?

Josh

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

Hey Josh,

You use the term "answer print" a few emails down.. if you don't mind, could you elaborate on what this means (as opposed to, I guess, the first "work" print?)

JT

Dear JT:

I really like questions I know the answers to. In the old days when making a movie, you would shoot negative film stock and each day they would print what you had shot to positive stock, which you could then watch and these were called "dailies." The editor would then use this positive print to cut the film and this was then called the "workprint." Now, however, everything is cut digitally and the workprint is now called "the Avid output" or "the digital cut." Once the film is edited and you want to make 35mm prints, you must go back to your 35mm negative, conform it to match the digital cut, then the next process is called "Answer printing." At a cost of a dollar a foot (my new film is 10,000 feet, which is about 2 hours), the lab prints the negative while setting the various color dials, or lights, to get the colors how they ought to look. This frequently takes several tries and each of these prints are "answer prints." Once the color timing is complete, then--if you're making

multiple prints--you take all that color timing information and instead of making a print you make an Inter-Positive or I.P. >From the I.P. you now make duplicate negatives and from each of those negatives hundreds of theatrical prints can be made.

Josh

Name: Paul Dykstra
E-mail: mahasunn@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Becker

I am a serious type musician, classically trained, very imaginative, who has imagined all sorts of musical vistas to accompany films I have seen. I can compose and produce cost effectively. Are you ever on the lookout for better film music?

Thank you

Paul Dykstra

Dear Paul:

Better than Joe LoDuca, who has composed all of my scores and just this year won an Emmy Award? With all due respect, sir, I scoff at you.

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: swanlandDON'TSPAMprods@yahoo.com

Hi, Josh!

Hey, I finally saw a film this year that I really enjoyed. Low-budget and independent, of course. It's called "The Tao of Steve," starring Donal Logue (very good performance), and the usually jaded Hollywood crowd in the theatre I saw it all dug it, too. So, an actual recommend!

And a reply to Ben's post: Keep looking for a copy of "Lunatics;" it's really good! Shows you don't have to have a huge budget to make a film, just interesting characters doing interesting things. I think Amazon sells it (VHS), and maybe you can find used copies somewhere like Videofinders or eBay?

Questions, Josh: do you have a preferred "format" of editing -- flatbed, Avid, etc.? If so, what are the advantages that you like about that system? Do you tend to "edit in the camera," or do you shoot a lot of coverage and then experiment in the editing room?

hope you are well,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

Nobody edits in the camera, that's a fallacy. Should you actually shoot a long shot, then push in and shoot

the close-up, you'd still have a slate stuck between them you'd have to edit out. Besides, everything in film is shot out of order, that's simply how it's done, so you have to edit just to get things back in chronological order. But that's all fundamental--editing is an artform, and comes directly beside writing, directing and acting. I've never had time to cover any scene a lot, nor do I really care to. What I most enjoy in movies is that which is specific, so just randomly covering a scene then putting it randomly together in the editing room doesn't interest me in the slightest. I shoot exactly the shots I believe I need and no more (though usually several takes of each). I have also decided in advance where all the cuts are, so, like Hitchcock, I don't give the editor all that much to work with, then it pretty much has to come out the way I want it. Also, having begun filmmaking first on Super-8, then 16mm, then 35mm, I cut for years on rewinds and a moviola, then moved to a flatbed, then to digital and digital, whether it's Avid, Lightworks or whatever, is FAR easier than cutting on film. And cleaner, too. Editing rooms used to be filthy and full of 20 people. Now it's 2 people and it's clean. And you can save early versions. I like non-linear digital editing MUCH better. My neighbor has a Matrox system, which is way cheaper than Avid, and it's a darn good system, too.

Josh

Name: Ashley
E-mail: aschleymartel@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

I need to know if Xena is going to be cancelled after 16 episodes this season. Thank you.

Aschley
<http://scroll.to/xenafan>

Dear Ashley:

I don't think so, but I'm not the best source.

Josh

Name: Action Barbie
E-mail: radavies@hotmail.com

Hi Mr Becker,

When will you be downunder shooting on Xena or any other Pac.Ren projects? Are you working on anything in the States at the moment, and have you, are you or will you be doing anything in the UK?

Dear Action Barbie:

My new film, "If I Had a Hammer," is nearly complete and I'll be running the first answer print next week. I haven't been hired to do any more Xenas, so I have no plans to go back to NZ. I have actually never been in the UK, although I certainly would like to go.

Cheery-by,

Josh

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

Josh,

I wasn't clear. I meant that I wanted to read the screenplay for "Lunatics." I've read some of your others that you have posted and L:ALS sounds pretty interesting. Internet distribution of a feature film is kind of pointless. I read the "making of" and noticed that the movie came after the title. While the title comprises, in a sense, an extremely small portion of a movie, it's still the label and often the first thing a person is aware of. The title can't make a bad movie good or vice versa, but it can definitely be used effectively (as in L:ALS) to draw in a person who might not have been interested otherwise.

Dear Ben:

I'd post in in a second if it were on my hard-drive. However, I wrote the script 12 years ago on an Apple-2C and nothing in existence will recognize that software, not to mention it's on a 5 1/4 disk I can't access. Now, if my scanner had halfway workable OCR I'd just scan it in, but the OCR I have turns everything in to comic book swearing, so there you have it.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Any plans of putting "Lunatics" online for download? I saw in a previous answer that Sony owns the film. What exactly does that mean? I did some research on imdb but Sony didn't seem to appear.

Dear Ben:

As for Sony owning "Lunatics," in actuality it is owned by Columbia Tristar, which is in turned owned by Sony. I made the film for Renaissance Pictures, Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi's company, and they sold the rights in perpetuity to Columbia Tristar. There you have it. Regarding putting my movies on the internet, hey, I just got some of them available on video and DVD (which looks great), why compress the crap out them until they look awful to put them on the internet?

Josh

Name: ZEEV DRACH
E-mail: lobbyci@home.com

Hi Josh,

In your "paper" Jews in Film, you make some statements that are factually WRONG. I also disagree with some of your opinions. The following is one example from each category:

1. Volumes have been written on the subject of Chaplins' Jewish origins. The bottom line is that there is absolutely no evidence to the claim that he was a Jew, rumors and wishful thinking notwithstanding. By making an unequivocal statement that Charlie Chaplin was a Jew, as you did, you prove that you have done very little reading on the subject, or , that your mind is made up and you don't want to be confused by facts.

2. You wrote that casting Gentiles actors in Jewish roles was a "silly" practice. How sad. In the same token, Jewish actors ought not to be cast in any role depicting an ethnically non-specific "WASPish" character(see the dozens of romantic comedies of the 30's and 40's starring Melvyn Douglas), and certainly not in a role of a specific non-Jewish character(like Kirk Douglas on Spartacus). See what I'm getting at ?

Now don't get me wrong, I agree with the observation that the moguls tried to downplay or obscure their Jewishness and this was reflected in their choice of movies, and casting decisions, as you have pointed out. But lets not go overboard an insist that only Jewish actors play Jewish characters. It's a double-edged sword.

Best regards,
Zeev.

Dear Zeev:

I am simply lazy about rewriting that essay. I have since read Chaplin's autobiography where he says he was brought up as a Protestant and not only makes no mention of his mother being Jewish, but said she was a somewhat religious Christian. Since his mother wasn't Jewish, Chaplin was not Jewish. His father might have been, but that doesn't cut it. However, in Colleen Moore's autobiography "Silent Star" she quotes Chaplin as saying "I am a Jew," this regarding him wanting to play the part of Jesus in a movie. I think he was kidding. Anyway, I will delete the section referring to Chaplin's Jewishness. As far as Gentiles playing Jews, it seems no different to me than white actors playing Native Americans or Asians--it's simply bad casting. And never casting a Jew as Jesus is simply pure cowardice. When you bring up Melvyn Douglas playing parts that were not specified as Gentile or Jewish, well, that's an open market--they could just as easily have gotten Cary Grant. I am speaking of parts that are specific in their religious reference. Jesus was Jewish; Moses was Jewish; Charlie Chan was supposed to be Asian; Cochise was a Native American, not Jeff Chandler (even if he did a good job). The point of casting is, on a certain level, to try to be appropriate. As time moves along, inappropriate casting simply becomes worse. The use of whites in blackface in "Birth of a Nation" is a perfect example, it's absolutely insane to the modern viewer. Jeff Chandler as Cochise gets more ridiculous by the day. And, as far as I'm concerned, Jeffery Hunter and Willem Dafoe as Jesus become become more absurd by the minute, too.

Josh

Name: Danielle
E-mail: beefystar@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Thanks so much for the response regarding script supervisors and the numerous ways they can screw things up by getting in a director's way. I knew you were the guy to go to for honest and practical advice.

Dear Danielle:

It's my pleasure to bitch about most anything.

Josh

Name: Alan
E-mail: alan@sexgoremutants.f9.co.uk

Hi Josh,

We've been covering Anchor Bay's forthcoming DVD release of 'Thou Shall Not Kill...Except' over at our site Sex Gore Mutants, and (as well as the fact that I reckon it's been horribly under promoted) I was wondering why the disc isn't going to include the full pilot for 'Strykers War' as an extra ?

Hey, I couldn't care if it doesn't come in a nice limited edition tin (the Evil Dead 2 tin is great for keeping biscuits fresh!), but it would have been cool what with all the fancy DVD shenanigans that the full pilot could have been included.

Just wondering,
Alan
<http://www.sexgoremutants.co.uk>

Dear Mr. Sexgoremutant:

Hey! They didn't include the pilot, "Within the Woods," with "Evil Dead," either. Both "Stryker's War" and "Within the Woods" are literally coated with stolen music from other movies and no one wants to deal with the clearance issues. There it is, G.I.

Josh

Name: valentina
E-mail: valf14@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I am really interested in becoming a director but i'm still young and in high school. What do you think is best for me to do , in order for me to get some experience in the field? Any particular thing I should check out?
thanks a lot!

valentina

Dear Valentina:

See as many movies as humanly possible, make as many movies as you can, and write as much as you can. Become obsessed.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Kevin Smith and Willa O'Neill were in London over the weekend and were both highly entertaining, charming and witty with excellent anecdotes and insights about their experiences living and working in NZ. What are your memories of working with these guys and would you like to work with them again on future projects?

Dear Alan:

I've never worked with either one of them. I've met Kevin a few times, though.

Josh

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

Heya Josh,

Long time. Anyway, I hit the QT film festival down here in Austin last week, and I was lucky enough to view a great print of the 1966 heist film, "Gambit" with Michael Caine and Shirley MacClaine. Have you seen this film? If not, I would highly recommend it. The script is tight, clever, and made me sincerely wonder where all the good writers have gone.

JT

Dear JT:

I saw "Gambit" as a kid on the 9:00 O'Clock Movie and I recall not buying Shirley MacClaine as a Eurasian. Nevertheless, I probably ought to see it again. As to where are the good writers? They all died or retired and no one came up to replace them. That's why I push the issues I push on this site, I'm trying to get the next generation of writers and filmmakers to see the big picture which they presently cannot.

Josh

Name: Blake Eckard
E-mail: bseckard@hotmail.com

Josh,

Just wondering what you would say the five do not miss films of the decade (the 90's) are? Since you don't seem to like very many contemporary films, I'm curious as to what your picks would be. Also have there been, in the past ten years, in your opinion, any worthy best picture academy award winners?

And finally, I've directed an independent film which is not going anywhere. I finished it 2 years ago and still have not played a festival or screening room. Now, I'm fed up and getting ready to shoot another film. What are you doing to get HAMMER out and seen? Do you apply to festivals, hold screenings for distributors, or hire a producer's rep? Answers would be greatly appreciated!

Dear Blake:

The 90s were a rotten decade for movies, even worse than the 80s. People used to think the 50s were bad and boy were they wrong! All right, here's my list of best pictures of the 1990s, in no particular order:

1. Unforgiven
2. Blue Sky
3. The Shawshank Redemption
4. Groundhog Day
5. Mad Dog and Glory
6. Crumb
7. Goodfellas
8. JFK
9. Howard's End
10. Life is Sweet

Josh

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

Howdy, Josh!

Good call recommending "Atlantic City." I had seen it a long time ago, but it was really wonderful seeing it again and truly appreciating the thoughtfulness that obviously went into the characters, the dialogue, the plot structure, the look (locations, sets, shot compositions, etc.), and so on.

I stumbled across an interesting film myself that seems to just be hitting the U.S. It's a 1998 British/German/South African film called "Croupier," directed by Mike Hodges. Film noir-ish, heavy voiceover flashback-retelling of the events that brought the guy to where you see him in the opening scene. It wasn't the caliber of "The Usual Suspects," but it certainly held my attention, and was very entertaining. Have you seen it?

Anyway, hope you are well. Very glad to hear you and Rob are cool again; fights between old friends seem unavoidable, but it's such a relief when things get back to normal!

groovy!,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

I have not seen "Croupier" yet. I did just watch "Three Seasons" with Harvey Keitel that I rather liked. The entire picture is in Vietnamese except for a Keitel's lines and is four little tiny intertwining stories that are all interesting and well-shot. Keitel was executive producer. As for fighting with friends, yes, it does seem inevitable, but it's never fun. I'm pleased this fight is over.

Josh

Name: Detective Nobody
E-mail: detectivenobody@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

So, per you last letter to Amiee, does this mean you WILL be doing work for RenPics again? Or is it that you and Rob patched it up personally, never was told you were fired, and you just won't be working on any of the shows?

I know I for one want to see more of your work, not just what you have done on film, and it seems the only way was when you were directing Xena or JOAT episodes.

Any luck with Hammer? How is that progressing?

Anyway, take care.
Detective Nobody

Dear Detective Nobody:

If I get hired, I get hired. If I don't, I don't. Cie la vie. I will have my new film, "If I Had a Hammer," with complete picture and sound, transferred to digital beta video tape by the end of next week. Then it is, for all intents and purposes (except projecting on 35mm), finished. Then we'll see if anybody gives a rat's ass.

Josh

Name: Danielle
E-mail: beefystar@hotmail.com

Hey Josh,

I'm about to start my first gig as a script supervisor on a low-budget feature film. Since it's my first time attempting such a crazy, demanding task in the real world of film production, I'm both nervous and extremely excited.

Would you have any tips as far as how to avoid common mistakes that you have seen other first-timers make? I realize that dealing with set politics and understanding how to conduct oneself comes with experience and good old instinct, but I thought you might have a few words of warning/wisdom/encouragement based upon your past working relationships with script supervisors.

Thanks so much.

P.S. Thanks for the review of SPACE COWBOYS. I hate feeling alone in my disdain for a particular movie.

Dear Danielle:

Good work on getting yourself the gig. If you've gotten yourself to the stage of actually doing the job then you must understand continuity and screen direction and keeping good notes. As it happens, I have not gotten along with several script supervisors over the course of time and it's been for different reasons. First and foremost, however, is a script supervisor making directorial suggestions. I'm not interested and I don't want to have to say so because I'm too busy. Should I want a script supervisor's opinion on anything I'll ask for it. The only time I should be hearing from them is on continuity and screen direction issues. And me personally, I've got screen direction down and don't want to discuss it, either. If a script supervisor gets pushy with me about anything it makes me mad. And they must always be paying attention--I don't ever want to see the script supervisor reading or doing crossword puzzles, as I have. I had one that bitched loudly about my smoking, outside mind you, and that REALLY drove me crazy. I had another one that was in a crappy mood a lot and that seems entirely unacceptable. There have been many wonderful script supervisors, too, and they were a

joy to sit next to. Anyway, those are my gripes and I hope you can make use of them. Good luck.

Josh

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