

# Josh Becker DGA

## Directing From The Edge



### Q & A Archive Page 25

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

Dear Josh:

Thanks for the observations on "Marty" and Del Mann's seamless and "invisible" direction; as you know, I share your love of that movie.

I'm sure the next couple of weeks will be really hectic for you. But if in the remote chance that you have any spare time and access to your laptop, it would be very gratifying to hear any stories about filming, even if it's just "Ted and I had a beer last night," or "it's hot as \*&\$# in NZ!"

And also..... you've made a couple of references to the premiere of "Hammer" in Detroit, and then an LA screening for the cast and crew? Any details would be very much appreciated!

By the way, I get to see Bruce's ice-skating movie "La Patinoire" tomorrow in a real live movie theatre. So I have high hopes for "Hammer's" future!

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

I failed the mention the king of invisible directors, Robert Wise. Anyway, it wasn't the premiere in Detroit, just the first showing. I don't think a film actually premieres until it's released. The Detroit screening was friends and family and it seemed to play well, but who knows? Tonight is the cast & crew screening. I'll have my computer with me in New Zealand and I'll

continue to report in. I get down there two weeks before Ted.

Josh

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

Howdy,

How's things? What do you think of Clint Eastwood's spaghetti western period? I love "Good, Bad, Ugly" , "Fistful of \$s", "Few More \$s." But as far as structure and plot, what do you think of them.

Howdy John:

I loved those films when I was a kid, but now they seem severely dull to me. I really can't sit through them anymore.

Josh

Name: Jason A. Keller  
E-mail:

Josh,

Funny. no, i never intended to break in your apartment. i live in Chicago. Have you ever had a chance to see our great city? anyway, i was just looking forward to seeing you work on Xena again. I think you do an awesome job. Good luck again, and especially that 12 hour flight.

Dear Jason:

I've been to Chicago many times. I was there last year for The Chicago Underground Film Festival and got to hang around with Alejandro Jodorowsky, too. Regarding the 12-hour flight, it's not so bad in 1st class.

Josh

Name: DREW  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was in the library the other day, and I came across a book by Chris Gore, detailing the best unproduced screenplays in Hollywood; and your script for "Cleveland Smith, Bounty Hunter" was listed in the honorable mention category. Did you know about this? Thanks.

P.S. There's a movie I really dig called "The Hidden," and if you haven't seen it, you should check it out. I think you'd like it.

Dear Drew:

I did not know about my script, "Cleveland Smith Bounty Hunter," being in Chris Gore's book. And I haven't seen "The Hidden," but I'll keep my eyes peeled for it on TV.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

You have no idea how excited your fans are that you will be doing another Xena episode and that you and Ted R. will be working together again. Hope you guys have a blast, and that you let Ted chew the scenery as much as possible!

Quick question - you had referred to movies that center around style, content or both. I'm assuming films like "Pulp Fiction" would represent the style-only sort. What would be a good example or two of ones with decent content, but no style? Other than documentaries, I mean. And have there ever been any decent movies you can recall that were primarily content-based?

Thanks, and have fun in NZ!

August

Dear August:

Many of my favorite movies have little to no sense of style and I don't mind at all. The one that jumps directly to mind is "Marty," the lowest-budget winner of Best Picture. I find it's lack of style endearing. Also, I think you'd be hard-pressed to locate Howard Hawks' or John Ford's styles other than to say, "Economical," which is close to style-less. My man, William Wyler, used flourishes here and there without ever over-shadowing his content. Someone like Hitchcock, of course, has a very apparent style.

Josh

Name: DREW  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

No, I dropped out after one semester at Pittsburgh Filmmakers: a low rent, production school that's stuck in the dark ages. The whole experience was rather defeating. I was excited about going because I thought that I would finally meet kids my own age who were interested in the same thing I was, which is screenwriting, but when I got there, all I found was a bunch of misguided miscreants who thought they were God, and believed every opinion I had was foolish and incomprehensible. Plus the equipment they rented out was about fifty years old, and filmstock and accessories were so expensive because I'm too stubborn to kiss ass for a discount. I think I sent you an e-mail a few months back stating how much I liked it there, but boy was I wrong. Anyway, enough with my plight. Thanks for listening.

P.S. Yes, Terry Southern passed away in 1995. Long live Guy Grand.

Dear Drew:

Your experience sounds similar to mine at Columbia College here in L.A. It seemed to me that they were training the future production assistants and cable-coilers of the film and TV industry and I bailed after a semester. Just keep writing, the hell with everybody else.

Josh

Name: Tommy Jr  
E-mail: thancherjr@hotmail.com

Hello Josh.

I just have a quick few questions.

1)Are you gonna work with Bruce Campbell on any more movies in the future,or Jeremy Roberts?

2)When does "If I had a Hammer" come out.

Thanks and good luck. I just also wanted to say I love Running Time alot. I've watched it so many times and I hope you do another movie like that.

Dear Tommy, Jr.:

I certainly hope to work with Bruce on more movies. Jeremy was great to work with and if I ever have a part for him, I'll offer it to him. "If I Had a Hammer" is done and I showed it once in Detroit and I will show it again

this Friday in L.A. for the cast and crew. Beyond that, I don't know.

Josh

Name: DREW

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Long time no see, I was wondering what your thoughts are on the writings of Terry Southern, author of "Magic Cristian," and co-author of "Dr. Strangelove" and "Easy Rider." Thanks.

P.S. You were right about film schools.

Dear Drew:

I liked Terry Southern's writing quite a lot -- he's dead, right? He was very funny. "Dr. Strangelove" is incredible. Elaborate about film schools. Are you presently attending one?

Josh

Name: Michael Pearsall

E-mail: fanaka66@yahoo.com

Josh,

What is your take on the possible upcoming actors/writers strike? In a potentially related question, how is your shopping around of 'Hammer' going? Do you think the potential strike will have any effect on your trying to sell your movie?

Dear Michael:

I can't see how it would effect me or the film. So far, I haven't shopped "Hammer" around yet, I've just showed it once. I will show it again later this week to the cast and crew. A distributor is invited to the screening also, but I don't know if he'll be there or not. We'll just have to see what happens . . .

Josh

Name: Patrik Syversen

E-mail: waltermand@hotmail.com

Hi Josh.

I don't know if you got my last mail, so I'll try again: I'm an 18 year old norwegian student who's writing a paper on you and your films. My questions would be:

- is the structure of a film the most important thing, even if it overshadows the realness of the picture?
- won't the creative aspect of motion pictures disappear if everyone thought that the structure was the most important thing?
- would you ever consider making a highbudget film if you got the offer?
- what do you think about the independent film-trend, where new and young filmmakers with no experience enter the market and release bad copies of original pictures? (im mostly referring to the Tarantino-wannabes who in fact seem to copy a guy who copies other filmmakers)
- have you ever heard about any norwegian filmmakers, or seen any norwegian films? if you have, what do you think of them?
- you say you're mostly inspired by books and other films. Still, are there any other things that inspire you to make films? (music, personal experiences, political opinions)

Well. Thats it. Thank you for your time.  
Patrik Syversen

Dear Patrik:

I did answer your previous questions, and they ought to be posted now, but the Q&A was down for a few days due to changing servers. Now let's see, these aren't exactly the same questions as last time. Your first two questions are variations of previous questions, but I'll reiterate, structure does not inhibit creativity, exactly the opposite, creativity is the adding of structure to where it was not. Even if you're telling a completely true story, it's not in story-form in real life -- the writer must add it. I'll go one step further: if you don't know where your acts begin and end, you don't know how to tell a story. Period.

--I've been waiting my whole life for someone to offer to put up the money for one of my movies, low- or high-budget.

--I answered the next question.

--I've seen at least one Norwegian film, but I can't remember the title. It was "Tracker" or something and I believe it was nominated for an Academy Award and I thought it was intense and well-done.

--Everything that enters my brain is potential inspiration for a story.

Josh

Name: Jason Adam Keller

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

I was wondering the date you are leaving for New Zealand? Good Luck.

Dear Jason:

Why? Are you intending to burglarize my apartment or something? Jan. 27th, as of this moment. Leave the jazz CDs, OK?

Josh

Name: Nancy  
E-mail: nky\_12@hotmail,.

Dear Josh,

I read the Q & A pages of your website. Well, I hope you don't mind what I wrote. So, what will you think about a movie that has too much violence, shows bad parts of a human body, bad language, & is Rated R or PG-13?

Dear Nancy:

I don't believe there are any bad parts of the human body, nor do I think there is any language not worth using, if needed. MPAA ratings mean nothing to me.

Josh

Name: Patrik Syversen  
E-mail: waltermand@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hi. I'm an 18 year-old student from Norway who's writing an assignment on you and your work. I guess my questions would be:

- You are quite hung up in the structure of films. A film without the correct structure seems to be crap to you. Still, do you think that a tight structure could sometimes overshadow some of the "realness" of certain films?

JB: No, I don't. It will only enhance it. Story structure is just like joke structure--if you want to get a laugh, you tell a joke a certain way and in a certain order; if you want to get impact from a story you also tell it in a certain way and a certain order. Proper structure will not negate reality in anyway. Bad or no structure will almost always sink a story no matter what the storyteller's intentions are.

-Should for example an important emotional scene be cut down just to

maintain the overall structure and balance between acts one, two and three?

JB: It's not an issue of ever cutting a scene down, it's an issue of where does it go? If the scene doesn't fit into any of the three acts--meaning, it's not setting-up your drama, confronting it, or resolving it--you can be reasonably certain it shouldn't be in the script.

-Do you find most commercial films with big budgets to be less important or real than the independent films?

JB: I'm equally unimpressed with both independent and Hollywood films at the moment. As Ingmar Bergman said in a fairly recent interview, young filmmakers are technically adept, "but they won't pick the scab," which I thought was very well-said.

-Do you see the independent film-scene itself falling into a well known path in which far too many young directors repeat themselves ( and each other ) by adding an independent feel to their pictures, sometimes just for the overall look of it?

JB: That doesn't seem like the problem, it's that no one seemingly has a story to tell. There are three sorts of films: films that are just about content and have no style, films that are just about style and have no content, and films that are stylishly about content. Obviously, as far as I'm concerned, the optimum is a balance between content and style. In lieu of that, I'll take just straight content. Style without content is jerking-off and doesn't interest me in the slightest, and that's what there are presently a lot of in the film world, as well as stupid, meaningless stories that I don't feel like hearing.

-Do you feel that your work is appreciated the way it should be, or do you sometimes feel misunderstood?

JB: So far, I think I've basically been ignored. I'm not sure, however, that anything of mine that's come out as yet is worth very much attention. I thought that "Running Time" outdid Hitchcock on his own terms, which maybe should have gotten a bit more attention, at least within film circles. My new film, "If I Had a Hammer," actually has something to say, so that's kind of big step for me. And now that the film's finished, we'll see if that matters.

It would help me a whole lot if you would answer these questions. Thank you for listening.

Patrik Syversen, Oslo, Norway.

Name: Roger Clough  
E-mail: rclough@erols.com

Dear Josh:

If you're looking for a method of obtaining story structures, I have one,



based on metaphors. See Semiotics of Music and Drama  
<http://members.density.com/rclough/index.htm>

It's just a rough draft, but perhaps should give you an idea. It's not just a theoretical framework, it gives you content, and it works.

Best,  
Roger Clough

Dear Roger:

I'm not looking for a new story structure, the old structure works just fine for me. If you've discovered a new one, God bless you and I hope it works for you.

Josh

Name: Michael Anthony Lee  
E-mail: [mal@kingston.net](mailto:mal@kingston.net)

Josh,

A question about writing. When you have a fight scene in one of your scripts, or when you were directing one of the Herc scripts, how did those scenes look on paper?

I mean, do you go into much detail like, Herc throws guy1 here, spins guy2 over his head, punches guy3, etc... or do you just jot down a general idea and then a fight guy comes in and organizes the whole battle during shooting?

I just always wondered how much detail to go into during those situations, and what the shooting scripts looked like as far as fight scenes were concerned.

Thanks,

Michael

Dear Michael:

It depends on what you're doing. In one of my own scripts that I intend to direct myself, I put in a lot of detail, which can be seen in my [Teddy Roosevelt script](#). In a Xena script it usually just indicates that a big or small fight should go there, then the fight choreographer works out his own fight and tells me and I ask for any changes I might want. Peter Bell, who did the fights for years on Herc and Xena, used little toy people to demonstrate what he had in mind.

Josh

Name: Daniel Neumann  
E-mail: neumann@hellseals.de

Hi Josh,

One of my all-time-favorites is the movie "Grosse Pointe Blank" and I was wondering if you have seen and liked it. I think that even the characters who appear for just a few minutes are better shown than most of the main characters in the "big movies".

What do you think?

Dear Daniel:

With all due respect to your liking the film, I thought it was an idiotic piece of crap. I never believed John Cusack was a hit man for a single second and, being from Detroit, I know there are no radio stations in Grosse Pointe, so that's a non-existent job for Minnie Driver, whom I don't like anyway. I also found the whole affair to be a very uneasy mixture between unfunny comedy and violence.

Josh

Name: Gerry  
E-mail: gerry@icweb.com

Dear Josh:

As well you know, I don't normally write. But, I had a need to post my thoughts on a recent letter to you. The comments about Bruce Lee being a great actor just bothered me. Bruce was a personality with one of the single greatest artistic skills in the world. Acting was not that skill. If fans want to point out talented Asian actors, they need to learn more about Asian cinema and the names of some "real" actors from that side of the planet whom have garnered awards and acclaim for their skills. The single greatest actor to come from the Orient, in my simple opinion, was the Chinese born Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune. A man proclaimed as "Japan's Spencer Tracy", Mifune opened what is still one of the most respected acting schools in the world and remains so even after his death a year ago. This from a photographer whom walked into a TOHO casting call by accident and was infuriated when the table full of directors asked him to smile on cue. Storming out of the room, calling them silly people, he left an indelible imprint on the mind of two of at least two of Japan's greatest directors. One of the single most interesting things to me was how Mifune's relationship with director Akira Kurosawa nearly mirrored the relationship between John Wayne and John Ford, their American contemporaries. Something that seems less than accidental to me after learning more about Kurosawa and his fascination with Ford.

I too recently went to see Crouching Tiger and was so disappointed that I nearly walked out. I didn't because I was with a group and because we had

traveled an hour to see it. The flying around on wires was just fucking stupid for a film trying to be serious. I like Chow Yun Fat, but only as a toothpick-spitting tough guy. Some folks have no range, like Harrison Ford, and both Fat and Ford are definitely limited to the roles they can play.

But, here are a handful of Asian actors worthy of mention and IMHO are great at their skills as actors:

- 1)John Lone (M Butterfly & Last Emperor)
- 2)Joan Chen (Year of the Dragon & Golden Gate)
- 3)Tatsuya Nakadai (Ran & Kagemusha)
- 4)James Hong (Chinatown & Blade Runner)
- 5)Kieu Chinh (Joy Luck Club)
- 6)So Yamamura (Tora, Tora, Tora & Gung-Ho)
- 7)Dennis Dun (Year of the Dragon & Last Emperor)
- 8)Victor Wong (Last Emperor & 7 Years in Tibet)

Gerry

Dear Gerry:

Let us not forget Sessue Hayakawa, who is so great in "Bridge on the River Kwai" and was a big silent star, and also Takashi Shimura, Kurosawa's other favorite actor, who is the lead in "Seven Samurai" and the brilliant "Ikiru."

Josh

Name: Brett Copes  
E-mail: Brett@commidiots.com

Dear Josh:

I'M From Ortonville, MI...now in LA. I did a production of the Three Musketeers with John Michael Manfredi, from THOU SHALL NOT KILL... ACCEPT, and ended up friends with the guy. Nice guy. On his recommendation I watched the Movie...it was cool to see a younger version of the man I had to swordfight with each night, and the other soon to be famous people involved in the movie. And since I am not asking for jobs or submitting scripts, I wondered how the film ended up selling domestic and internationally? How long it took to shoot? Who where the other main actors and how did you find them? (ie: friends of yours already, or did you cast them) What happened to them? (ie: have they been involved in your other productions) and... Whats your take as a midwest guy on LA and working "In Hollywood"?

Thanks,  
Brett

Dear Brett:

Welcome to L.A. fellow Michigander. TSNKE was a six week shoot, the end of October through early January 1984, with quite a bit of pick-up shooting going into March of 1985 (for further details please read "The Making of 'Thou Shalt Not Kill . . . Except'"). Please give my best to Mr. Manfredi. TSNKE has sold throughout the world, although I don't think it ever knocked anyone's socks off. The first video distributor, Prism Video (now extinct), sold about 10,000 videos at \$49.95 in the U.S., then they sold the U.S. video rights to a cheapo video distributor (called a sell-through), that moved at about 20,000 more tapes at \$9.95. It was then off the market for ten years. It is now for sale from Anchor Bay Ent. on video and DVD and, once again, isn't knocking anyone dead, but it's doing all right. Regarding the cast, the only person I'm still in contact with is Ted Raimi. I found most of the cast through casting sessions. Where most of them are now I can't say.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Your comments regarding "CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON" surprise me. I saw it the other night and found it to be a master work. If any other actress in the history of cinema has been able to convey so much emotion via facial expressions as Michelle Yeoh does here then I would like to know who it is or was! When martial arts films first hit western audiences in the 70s the birth of a new genre was witnessed and in my opinion cinema itself was only marking time until the arrival of this exciting and innovative genre which in its first wave saw the arrival of the most charismatic individual (Bruce Lee) who ever stood in front of a camera. That this sort of movie has survived 30 years later and has influenced the work of so many of those who work in cinema and TV these days (witness XENA) speaks volumes and I think you have misjudged a movie which will take the martial arts movie by the scruff of its neck, kicking and screaming its way into the new millennium.

Dear Alan:

People do seem to like this film, but I wasn't one of them. I never cared about Michelle Yeoh or Chow Yun Fat or their unspoken love, the Green Destiny sword seemed like a lame, half-assed McGuffin that no one really needed or even wanted, and the cute, young girl was not a particularly engaging lead other than that she was pretty. There was certainly no mystery, and from the first second you saw the ninja sword-thief you knew who it was. And the flying over the cities and through the trees was just idiotic. I don't care how good your martial arts are nor how much you've studied with a master, humans don't fly. The story wasn't set in Never-Never Land, it was in ancient China, which was a real place. "The Bride With White Hair" and "Chinese Ghost Story" both have a surreal sense of mystery and the fantastic which CTHD is sorely missing. Ang Lee is a VERY LITERAL filmmaker, and did quite a good job on the very literal

films, "Sense & Sensibility," "The Ice Storm" and "The Wedding Banquet," but his style seemed to me to be totally wrong for the subject matter of this film. I happen to like Bruce Lee, but to say he was "the most charismatic individual who ever stood in front of a camera" might possibly be a slight overstatement. Personally, I'll take Bette Davis, James Cagney, Cary Crant, Katherine Hepburn or Edward G. Robinson any day of the week. I don't want to pop your bubble, but even though Bruce Lee was a master martial artist, he couldn't act worth beans ("You have insulted my fam-o-wee and my temp-o!").

Josh

Name: josh billings

E-mail:

Dear Josh,

Thanks for your reply, I must say that the directors of the old school are the ones that have broken the most ground, your Wylers, Hitchcocks and fords and so on. I must mention that the greatest living director working in American cinema, Martin Scorsese, has not only broken hard ground (TAXI DRIVER, MEAN STREETS) but is still creating some of the greatest motion pictures to date, Goodfellas, casino, bringing out the dead, I am myself shaking with anticipation for Gangs of new york and the more reclusive Dino (with none other than Nicholas pillegi scripting). I have noticed the style of Scorsese popping up in Paul Thomas Andersons work (your fast Zooms, very lengthy tracking shots-I know tracking shots did not start with Scorsese, they were perfected) Do you enjoy his work? If not , you should give him a second chance. Another thing, do you see Sam Raimi often? Word is you are good friends. thanks.

Dear Josh:

I have very great respect for Martin Scorsese's earlier work: "Mean Streets," "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," "Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull," and "Goodfellas," but that's where it ends. I don't think he's made a decent, worthwhile movie since "Goodfellas" in 1990. I just watched "Bringing Out the Dead" and it completely sucked. There is no character development and it is nothing but a string of uninteresting scenes, none of which are as good as any episode of "E.R." I also believe that a clear sign of an over-the-hill director is the misuse of pop songs all over the place for no better reason than the director likes them (the worst offender of this is Spike Lee).

Josh

Name: josh billings

E-mail: don't know

Dear Josh,

no joke, my name is Josh billings, anyway, do you have some pre-disposed hatred of anything that isn't made for under \$100,000? There is no denying the fact that all big budget films lack the reality feel of low-budget works but I still think that alot of mainstreamers have alot to say. Give them a chance my main man.

P.S I absolutely loved "Running time"

PPS. I think that Noteem Portant guy or girl is a creep. do you? alright , stay slinky.

Dear Josh:

No, I have no pre-disposed hatred of any film over \$100,000, nor do I have any particular predisposition toward independent films, which seem no better than Hollywood films to me, just cheaper. In 1950 my taste in films would have been considered very mainstream and run-of-the-mill since the biggest of all Hollywood filmmakers, William Wyler, is my favorite director. I don't really have very eclectic taste. Liking Wyler, Zinnemann, Wilder, Hawks, Hitchcock, Ford and Fleming makes my taste very mainstream, just not contemporary. But considering that the population of the world has nearly tripled since 1950, shouldn't we now have three Wylers and three Hitchcocks and three Fords? Instead, we have none. What's going on?

Josh

Name: Noteem Portant  
E-mail: none

Dear sir,

Maybe I phrased the question wrong. I apologise. I got angry, i was upset, I tried to vent upon you dear sir, YOU JADED LOW-BUDGET HACK! sorry, sorry. Like I was saying, I have emotional problems and when someone criticises the "Q" i genuinly believe I am the angel of death, I come from a broken home, I grew up on mainstream speilberg and Cameron best picture nominees, its not my fault!!! Any way, I see an oscar in you future. HA HA HA HA! (ahem)I would like to share a poem I wrote about Quentin Tarantino if you will:

Boundless talent,  
and a jaw line to match  
he may steal from your favourites  
but there is a slight catch

He has indie beginnings  
and dogs had that low budget feel  
but this clearly doesn't phase  
an old hand at that wheel!

I enjoy your films  
they make me feel good  
If junk like this can make it  
then maybe I should?

But to gain acceptance  
From one Josh Becker Sir!  
I must confess my hatred of mainstream  
and spit out Quentin slurs!

So if there is life after pulp  
Q.T has yet to show  
He pays tribute to all his heroes  
maybe Kubrick is all he knows?

Oh dear Mr Becker,  
why can't you accept  
that when someone is famous  
they've earned all they get.

Maybe you feel  
that you have worked harder  
well that maybe so  
But Tarantino is smarter

HE knows how to steal  
and play it cool  
if you would conform  
you might be revered too.

swallow your pride buddy boy....till next time,

keep up the low-budget work.

Dear Noteem Portant:

Considering you haven't got the guts to say your actual name, I think you've chosen an apt pseudonym -- "Not Important." You obviously feel that conforming is the way to success, and perhaps it is in this day and age, but I haven't got the slightest interest. If you consider Quentin Tarantino smarter than me because he's a better and bigger thief, than you can have him.

P.S. You are a bore.

Sincerely,

The Jaded Low-Budget Hack

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

Josh,

Just so you know, Swank in "Boys Don't Cry" looks more like a boy in the film than the real girl did in life. I live within 100 miles of where the actual crime took place, so read and heard all about it when it happened. Besides, as stupid as the folks were that she\he hung around with, it's no wonder they didn't know he was really a she. It's worth popping in and giving a look. It's certainly better than the 5 films you saw in 2000.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

OK, I'll watch it.

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: swanlandprods@yahoo.com

Dear Josh,

Howdy! Hope you are doing well. Your reply to Arlene about your upcoming "Xena" episode brings up an interesting point. You mentioned that you'll be doing the episode in a few weeks, but at this point haven't even seen a script yet. I believe I'd read elsewhere on this site that you even had a case where, basically, the night before shooting, the script still wasn't ready.

How long do you typically get to sit down with a script and prepare it for shooting? Do you ever participate in story conferences, or do the producers just hand you a completed (or almost completed) script? If you were able to give your preference, IDEALLY, how long would you like to have to be able to prepare for shooting an hour-long episodic -- one or two weeks? more?

Also: how involved do you get in editing the episodes you direct? It's been very interesting to read about your editing experiences on "If I Had a Hammer," so I'm curious to compare that to what happens on a TV series.

Thanks, as always, for taking the time to share your experiences, advice and opinions (p.s., you were \*so\* right about "Gladiator"...I mean, come on, \*why\* is this hunk o' junk being touted as "one of the year's best" [OK, it was a lousy year, but still...!?!]).

Well, take care, and all the best,  
F. R.

Dear F.R.:



As per executive producer Rob Tapert, the comedy scripts are the most difficult to prepare. I have frequently not gotten the script until just before shooting. The idea is get the script two weeks before shooting so that when the director arrives in New Zealand there is what to work on. If there isn't a script, then you simply guess. For all the department heads, the more time they get the better it will be. Most of what I bring to the set with me is preparedness. In lieu of that, I have my wits. The first cut of an episode is done by the editor, the second cut is done by the director -- we get three days for this -- then the final cut is the producer's cut, which, in the case of the eps I've done, have all been very similar to my cuts.

Josh

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

Josh,

With the Oscar announcements on the way, thought I might ask you what movie of 2000 is the best one you've seen? (Even if it wasn't great, what's the best movie you HAVE seen so far?)

As for last year, did you see "Boys Don't Cry"? I thought it was great, even though it gave me a sick feeling when it ended. Extraordinary performances!

Do you watch HBO's "The Soprano's"? How do you feel about it?

Another thing, have you had cameos in any of your own or someone else's movies? Watching RT the other day and thought maybe you were the guy on the street that the heroin addict sells the van to just before Campbell kicks the shit out of him. If it isn't you, I apologize. That dude looks like hell!

The best,

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I saw a total of five films released in 2000, and I didn't like any of them. I saw "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" yesterday, which has gotten the best reviews of the year, and thought it was a big nothing. People flying through the air on wire rigs is an idiotic bore to me, and the story is worthless. As for the other four films I saw ("Space Cowboys," "The Patriot," "The Perfect Storm" and "Gladiator"), I wouldn't give you ten cents for the whole bunch. I have had the tape of "Boys Don't Cry" sitting here for nearly a year and haven't watched it. This is probably due to Hillary Swank not looking anything like a boy. Swank looks as much like a boy as Katherine Hepburn did in "Sylvia Scarlett" or Greta Garbo in "Queen Christina," which is not at all -- for me, the short haircuts just made all these women sexier for me. I've watched one episode of "The Saprano's" and didn't care, although it may well be good if you watch it regularly. It

seemed like the soap opera version of "Goodfellas." Regarding cameo roles, the drug dealer in "RT" is Craig Sanborn, the film's art director, although I dubbed his voice. Since I'm not an actor, I'm not terribly interested in taking parts in things. I do not have cameos in my own films. I did little bits in the three "Evil Dead" movies and I have an actual part in the film "Mosquito," but that's it.

Josh

Name: Arlene Pina  
E-mail: dp928@earthlink.net

Dear Mr Becker,

I know that the 6th Season of Xena is the last. HOwever, I have also heard rumors that there might be a 7th Season. Is that true? PLease make another!!!

I have also heard rumors that Ares or Xena might die. Is that also true? If so, Please don't kill anyone off. I just love the idea that Ares and Xena might be together one day. Please make Xena and Ares be together. Tons of Xena fans (like myself)would like that to happen, and that would make the season end GREAT!!! I know that everyone would like the seris to end like that. Would you please consider the idea? Thank you for your time. (Say Hi to Lucy Lawless for me)

Sincerely one of Xena: Warrior Princess Greatest Fan,

Arlene

Dear Arlene:

I will be leaving in a few weeks to go do one of the last Xena episodes. I'm afraid this is indeed the last season. I know Kevin Smith and Ted Raimi are both in this episode, but since I don't have a script, that's the extent of my knowledge. They don't like me discussing the plots on the internet before they come out anyway, if I knew what the plot was, that is. As to how the show will end, I don't know that, either. I'm just glad to be working on the 6th season, which makes me the only director to work on all seasons of the show.

Josh

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

Josh,

On weekends I usually stay up late and watch independant films on

"Showcase", or "Bravo", or other stations that shy away from the Hollywood crap.

I just watched a film called "Exotica", by a filmmaker named Atom Egoyan. Just wondering if you have seen this and if so, what did you think?

Thanks,

Michael

Dear Michael:

I have yet to make it all the way through an Atom Egoyan film, so I can't really comment. From what I've seen, though, he seems both dull and pretentious, which I think is a bad combination.

Josh

Name: Michael Anthony Lee

E-mail: mal@kingston.net

Josh,

Silly question time, but I feel you can help me here. I just read your article on the hardware you have been using and wanted to know a few things.

I've been using a home computer for the past few years, but but it is old and out dated. I've always considered buying a laptop or notebook like you have, but worried about the screen and the keyboard. Can you see all right, or is it hard on the eyes after awhile? Also, as a writer, how do you find the keyboards.

Thanks in advance.

Best,

Michael

<http://www.michaelanthonylee.com>

Dear Michael:

I like my laptop computer very much. It has a large, bright, color screen and a full-size keyboard. As I mentioned in the essay, my last computer was a sub-notebook that had too small of a keyboard, and I don't recommend that. But any full-size laptop is fine. The new Sonys and Toshibas look very cool to me.

Josh

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