

# Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive  
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Name: Jason Roth  
E-mail: rothj@river.it.gvsu.edu

Hi Josh,

A question for you. I recently listened to you and the esteemed Bruce Campbell's commentary on *Thou Shalt Not Kill Except..*. At one point you mention that if you were to make the film today, you would have to pay for each name brand which appeared in the film, A&W Root Beer, etc. What exactly are the policies for showing name brands in your film, regarding fees and such-have they changed a lot since the early '80s? Sorry if I'm asking too many questions at once, this is just a subject I've never really been too clear on.

Thanks for any enlightenment. Your site remains highly enjoyable, one of the few places online that can really get me excited about film and filmmaking.

Kudos,

Jason Roth

Dear Jason:

I don't know what the rules are, but I simply ignore them. I don't think it's really an issue.

Josh

Name: Tony  
E-mail:

Josh.

You said: \*\*New TV shows and movies are so far into the crapper they're not even worth considering anymore\*\*

Sorry, but how can you say something sucks that you haven't seen? Seems have some preconcieved notions of the entire entertainment industry that you put EVERYTHING down. And you're working on a movie aren't you? I guess according to you, since if it ever gets made it will be a 'new movie' that we may as well not waste our time with it since it'll be crap.....according to your words of course.

Sorry, but for someone who has never been succesful in the business(what work have you ever gotten in the business that you didn't have to fund yourself cause Hollywood wouldn't give you the time of day, or wasn't given to you with the help of your buds-Rob, Bruce, Ted, etc.) I don't really think you're one to talk about what it takes to make 'good' work. I mean if you're so sure you know what it takes and what people want, how come know one knows you.

Just my opinion, but I think your just a tad bitter cause you've been shunned by everyone in the industry(with the exception of your buds) so you put the entire industry down. And sorry, but anyone who has been very critical of folks like Tom Hanks and Steven Speilberg after the work they have created in their career, yet goes on to talk about Ted Raimi like he's the greatest thing since sliced bread(funny, but Ted never seems to get any notable work either unless it's from his brother or his buddy Rob) is a tad dillusional.

You may be a great trivia man on movies, but as far as having what it takes to hang with the big boys.....well, look in the mirror and you'll see the answer to that one.

And feel free to respond with your usual profane responcees like 'f\*\*k off' or 'who the f\*\*k are you anyway and what do you know' like you always do when folks post something you don't like. Again, it just further proves your maturity level and reiterates that you'll never have what it takes.

Tony

Dear Gutless Tony:

I would think that if one was going to legitimately take me on, one might minimally have the cojones to list their email address. So, as I interpret it, I'm not allowed to have an opinion until I've made a lot of money, is that it? Then I guess you're not allowed, either. John Cassavettes financed his own movies, does that make them any less viable? This is my website and represents my beliefs. If you disagree that's entirely OK, but you'd have to have an opinion to make your side of the discussion worth considering. To just put me down without stating what you think Spielberg or Hanks or

whomever has done that's worth considering, makes you an idiot.

Josh

Name: Chopped Nuts  
E-mail: danjfox@hotmail.com

Dear Josh: Re: Seven: Picking on the fed-ex part seems odd to me. That's just a delivery (literally) device for part of the plot. But it's cool, shall we agree to disagree?

My question(s) for the day go:

Concerning using NZ directors on Xena. Was that a studio or production company idea? And was it from a WANT or NEED to hold residuals back?

Would you consider putting up something like your journal entries concerning how you put together a script (past or future)? It seems I write like you, tumbling ideas around, then writing the story, then the script. What I (and I hope others) might be interested in is how you focus on different aspects at different points in the writing.

Thanks for your time.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

Since "Seven" is ostensibly supposed to be taking place on the planet Earth in contemporary times, the rules of this planet apply. FedEx won't deliver to the middle of nowhere, therefore you can't use it as a plot device. Simple. And if you do, you're saying fuck you to the audience's intelligence.

Regarding NZ directors, Renaissance Pictures hired all the directors, as well as deciding how they would allot the money per episode. By hiring Kiwi directors they then had more money for special effects and such. It's not an issue of holding residuals back, Kiwi directors and actors just don't get them.

I really don't want to post my journal.

Josh

Name: Jim  
E-mail: starion106@aol.com

Hey Josh,

Am I alone here in thinking that the upcoming strikes might actually be a good thing for the tv industry? Seems to me that tv has been in the shitter

for years. There's this complacency to the shows right now that really bugs me. No one's taking risks anymore. There are maybe 2 good shows that are worth watching, ER and The Sopranos. And even they seem a bit fucked by the system. ER in particular seems more about huge ratings ploys than solid storytelling, and Sopranos hasn't really been all that great since the end of the first season. And these are the two best shows on right now.

A lot of writers/producers seem scared of this reality tv trend. To be honest, I've found shows like Survivor and The Mole endlessly more interesting to watch than most of the scripted shit on right now. Nothing in scripted television surprises me anymore, it just feels so generic. I'll honestly take the pseudo-reality of a show like Survivor to the poorly-scripted-reality of a show like The West Wing or The Practice. So I dunno, I guess I think these strikes could be a good thing. Shake things up a little, maybe give the writers something to write about. I'm not a believer in the idea of inner pain being necessary for good art, but perhaps a little inner pain would be better than complacency.

I should mention that there are a couple writers I do respect. In particular, David Chase of the Sopranos. This is a guy that has said many times that he actually does have an arc to his series. That it will go 4 seasons, and that will be the end of it. How often do you see that? That's the kind of stuff we need more of. Guys that are willing to keep a small amount of dignity in the work they do. This is a stark contrast to people like Matt Groening of The Simpsons and Chris Carter of the X-Files, who keep their shows on way past their expiration dates. Tv doesn't HAVE to be about making cash cows, does it? I don't know, I haven't worked in tv. But from my outsider position, it seems like a wrench being thrown in the works can only be a good thing.

Jim

Dear Jim:

I don't give the slightest shit about any of that crap, with the exception of "The Simpsons," which I still enjoy, but feel peaked a number of years ago. New TV shows and movies are so far into the crapper they're not even worth considering anymore.

Josh

Name: Kris

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Hi, I had a question regarding the upcoming Xena episode you just recently directed. Since it is set in the future and looks to pick up some time after Deja Vu All Over Again will it address Ares entombing at all? I have heard that it will deal with flashbacks back to the time after Hope/Gabrielle fell into the lava pit, but since this is Kevin Smith's last

episode I was just hoping that maybe they might have made reference to that as well. I am very much looking forward to this episode having enjoyed many of your other episodes for this show, particularly Fins Femmes and Gems and Kindred Spirits.

Thank you for your time,  
Kris

Dear Kris:

Sorry, no references to Ares' entombment. I received the editor's cut and will go in and do my cut starting tomorrow. I'm proud to say there's some very silly stuff in this ep.

Josh

Name: Chopped Nuts  
E-mail: danjfox@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I've just started to check out your site a couple of days ago, so a couple of these comments go back a bit, but all have to deal with things you've dealt with repeatedly.

The Matrix. I enjoyed the action and the overall "world" they created. But story-wise I thought they totally betrayed the film when they go to rescue Mobius. You know the scene, Neo has just stepped through the metal detector, whips open his coat, lots o' guns. My thing is, if they're out to protect and save humanity, what are they doing ripping into the security guards? If they were going to stay true to the saviours of mankind angle shouldn't these people be trying to get upstairs through another route, instead of through twenty human beings? (Remembering of course, you die in the computer world, you die in the ugly real world.)

Theme/Point: People are still asking "Can't i avoid this? It's going to make things hard." Being a writer I've found the opposite. Knowing what your character represents means you know what they want or need, and that means you know how to knock them down and kick them when they're on the ground, which of course is the essence of drama.

Do you have any thoughts on Seven? I thought this was one of the tightest scripts I've ever read. Everything revolves around the quote from Hemmingway, (I'm not sure of it exactly, it's something like), "The world is a grand place, and worth fighting for." Followed by Sommerset saying that he agrees with the second half.

Thanks for your time.

P.S. Reading that breakdown of Bridge Over... now I have to go back and redo my script. Darn you! Thanks.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

If you work with the structural rules of scriptwriting it makes the process of writing MUCH easier. If you're always thinking about your theme, point and act ends--and hopefully irony, too--you know what and why you're writing. Sitting down and starting from scratch everyday is for amateurs.

Regarding "Seven," my friend nailed it, I thought, by referring to it as "a mystery for idiots." Nobody ever figures anything out, they just keep getting calls in the middle of the night saying, "There's been another one," then showing up somewhere completely covered in blood, where they scratch their heads. Finally, the killer just turns himself in, which is damn lucky for the cops because they had no clues. I found the finale completely idiotic, where FedEx guys deliver a box to the 300th phone pole in the middle of nowhere.

Josh

Name: Charles  
E-mail: cscorder@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

What's your opinion on the seemingly endless disputes over screenplay credits in Hollywood? Is the WGA arbitration process fair? Should every writer who works on a script receive credit?

Thanks for putting "Devil Dogs" online. I look forward to reading it.

Charles

Dear Charles:

The problems are endemic to the process. The most important aspect of a film is it's story and script. Since Hollywood treats writers like their a dime a dozen and completely interchangeable, you'll obviously get credit disputes. The WGA rules make perfect sense regarding credit -- you have to have substantially changed at least 33% of the script to receive credit -- and I think it's amazing they can handle as many arbitrations as they do a year.

Josh

Name: Nicanor Loreti  
E-mail: nikkiseven@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

When will "If I had a hammer" be released on DVD? I'm from Argentina, I

already own "Running time" and the only chance I have to see it is on DVD!

Dear Nicanor:

I don't know when it will be released on any format. By the way, did you buy RT off the internet and you have a multi-region DVD player? I'm just curious.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones  
E-mail: cynthiaejones@hotmail.com

Dear Josh,

I'm so glad to know you love Schlesinger. I've never seen "Darling," is that Julie Christie? I'll have to check out "A Kind of Loving."

Okay. Big movie geek time here. Lindsay Anderson. He did "This Sporting Life," a black and white exploration of working class soccer player Terence Stamp, fantastic. Then there's his "Trilogy," three movies starring Malcolm McDowell called "If..." "O Lucky Man!" and "Britannia Hospital." These are three of my favorite films. "Britannia Hospital" is available on video as part of some sort of "Malcolm McDowell" collection--but the other two are out of print as far as I know, or at least "O Lucky Man!" In my universe, I am the only person besides my best friend Jeff and my roommate Fred who has seen and appreciated these films. Do you know of them/have you seen them/what do you think?

I had a feeling you wouldn't like Greenaway. He's a hard pill to swallow. You seem like more of a Cassavetes-type dude, that is to say, grittier than Greenaway's overly theatrical "I'm smarter than you" movies. "Blue Velvet" is an excellent surreal film, one of my favorite films of all time. Don't get me started on David Lynch. I feel bad, though, I haven't caught "The Straight Story" yet, I can't find it on DVD for rent and don't want to buy it without having seen it. I love Dave, but he hasn't made me passionate and excited for a while.

All right, gotta run. Newspaper calls...

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

Yes, "Darling" stars the young, gorgeous Julie Christie, who won an Oscar for it. As far Lindsay Anderson, sorry, I'm not a fan. I much prefer Jean Vigo's "Zero for Conduct" to Anderson's remake, "If." The whole story makes a lot more sense with little kids. "O Lucky Man," which I saw in the

theater when it came out, did nothing for me. I liked when he pulled back the sheet and the guy had the body of a pig. I don't really care for "This Sporting Life," either. And I do like John Cassavettes, particularly "Faces" and "A Woman Under the Influence."

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: swanlandprods@yahoo.com

Howdy, Josh!

First off, I must agree with Cindy -- this board is becoming a great "salon" for us film geeks! Yes, I confess, you must add me to that list of people who doesn't consider it odd to see 7-10 films a week in theatres or on cable (when employment OR unemployment allows me the time!), and then just \*has\* to talk about them afterwards. Obviously, I see too many movies (as if such a thing is possible), but, hey, everybody's got to have a hobby!

I also am very excited to have read more about your project with Gary. I am going to India and Nepal for three weeks this fall (!), so I'm totally intrigued by anything I can find out about the region. Keep us posted!

Re: Ed Lachman's cinematography -- I vividly remember "Less than Zero" as an interestingly & beautifully shot film, so I have to conclude that the theatre where I saw "Virgin Suicides" had a weak bulb in the projector. Hey, it happens. Thanks for directing me to Ed's other work.

Re: Oscar nominations -- yeah, it is a pretty weak lot, but it was such a weak year, what can you say? Of the nominees, I did indeed enjoy "Traffic" -- talk about "a interestingly shot film." As you'll see, there's a strong design to the film, where each subplot gets its own "look;" it could be distracting to some, but I got into it as the film started rolling. Benicio Del Toro is great in it. "Wonder Boys" is interesting, too, since it's one of the rare films focused not only on characters, but on "the life of the mind" as well, with a good, dark sense of humor. It's nominated for editing, but I actually found the cinematography much more compelling than the editing. I liked "O Brother, Where Art Thou," which \*is\* up (and rightly so) for cinematography (Roger Deakins), and "The Contender," which, although it had a convoluted plot, was very well acted by \*everyone\*, and even characters with only one or two scenes were three-dimensional & textured. "Quills" was well-acted although the plot was 100% spurious, so I can't really recommend it, & "Vatel" had amazing art direction, though the plot was not very compelling. "Requiem for a Dream" was an unrelenting nightmare, a 2-hour commercial for "just say no" ending in gore & a nasty porno-like sequence (the really icky kind of porn that makes you never want to have sex again), but with real cool editing effects & just an awesome performance from Ellen Burstyn.

But I just don't get how "Gladiator," "Erin Brockovich," "The Patriot" & "Billy Elliot" got to be so overrated. I thought they were just recycled & fluffed-up crap (though Albert Finney & the young dancer in "Billy Elliot" were good in their respective roles). (An early candidate for next year's pantheon of the



overrated: "Hannibal." What a pointless flick; no character depth, no plot, no logic -- blech! But I do credit Ray Liotta with taking \*the\* most thankless role imaginable...)

Frankly, I thought the "best film of the year," at least among Oscar-nominated films, is one of the feature-length documentaries: "Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport." It's very simple, direct, honest, well-researched & amazingly powerful. And, guess what? It's \*well-structured\* -- as you have pointed out, even documentaries need to observe the rules!

So much for Oscar recap; like you say, such awards are meaningless & silly vanity exercises... well, at least they provide salaries to the people who work on them. Here's a question: with as genuinely crappy as last year's films were, was there any film that you saw in 2000 that you would recommend as "best," or at least had a number of redeeming qualities? Are there any films scheduled for release this year that you are looking forward to (aside, of course, from "If I Had a Hammer!")? Or, is it just back to the video store & AMC for more of the classics of the past?

Well, keep the faith,  
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

You make me feel like a total slacker. Yes, from my early teens through my mid-thirties I saw 7-10 movies a week, but no longer. A few comments: I found Albert Finney's Amercian accent in "Erin Brockovich" utterly distracting and really poor (the same goes for Michael Caine in "Cider House Rules," BTW, Oscar or no). I thought "Wonder Boys" was dull and idiotic -- you absolutely cannot use the gag that there is only one copy of his 1000-page book and it blows away anymore, it's too old and hoary, and, while we're at it, why on Earth would they put the dead dog in Tobey McGuire's bed? Stupid! Oddly, I may well find the Oscars foolish now, but I can still name every Best Picture from 1927 through 1980.

Josh

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

Josh,

Every couple of months I write in to get an update on Hammer. I hope you don't mind. Have you been shopping it around?

How does it feel when you screen a movie for the actors involved? Are you worried at all with what they think of your cuts? How did Hammer go over?

Did Brett Beardslee make it to your screening?

Dear Michael:

Well, "Hammer" is done and I'll pick up the video dupes today, then begin sending them out next week. I've had two screenings of the film, and both went well. I think the actors enjoyed it, at least that's what they said. No more news to report as yet.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones  
E-mail: cynthiaejones@hotmail.com

Dear Josh,

That's cool to know that Ted's directing. Could you possibly let me know the name of the band? I've never seen anything he's directed or written and would like to know if I think that he's as talented as you and Bruce think, if it's possible to check anything of his out.

In other news, as far as that other dude ("Rule number two sucks!") is concerned, I thank you for NOT making this into an ass-kissing forum of "can you help me get a job?"-ness. I understand that you are a human being who got where you are your own way, and it's up to people who want to be directors to find their own path as well. There are no "easy ins" unless, of course, you're Sofia Coppola.

With that said, I would like to thank you for giving the world a forum to discuss movie geek things in general. I have far too much film knowledge to not be able to discuss it with others, and my friends are sorely lacking in geekness sometimes, so you fill a nice void there.

I watched "Oleanna" last night. Man, William H. Macy did an amazing job playing off of an awful actress. She read her lines like high school girls in my drama class used to. I don't think that Mamet is good at directing women. It was far too theatrical for my taste (no ambient sound--at all), but Bill Macy is always worth watching.

What do you think of "Midnight Cowboy?" I bought it on DVD and it's always good, every time I see it. Those subway black-and-white scenes when Jon Voigt is running around looking for Dustin Hoffman look like they could have been shot today. Gorgeous.

Are you into Peter Greenaway at all? Or any abstract/metaphorical filmmakers? I noticed you like good French cinema, but it's pretty much New Wave, good stories, not too surreal. How are you on weirdness/what do you consider to be good examples of surreal filmmaking?

Have a lovely Thursday.

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

Ted told me the name of the band, but I forget. I'll ask him again. It pleases me greatly that this can be a meeting place for serious movie geeks, which I am happily one of. I agree with you about William Macy, whom I think is a fine actor, but he was left high and dry in "Oleanna," which really sucked. I think Mamet is a bad director for both men and women. And Mamet's book on directing particularly blows. I have enjoyed his books of essays, however. I must say that I'm not a very big fan of his writing, either. Even "Glengarry Glenross," which is clearly his best piece of writing, is highly repetitive and obvious.

Regarding "Midnight Cowboy," I am a fan. I think it's loaded with wonderful writing, acting and filmmaking. I absolutely love Voight having sex with Brenda Vaccaro on top of the TV remote and just seeing the channels change--that's a witty film sex scene. "Midnight Cowboy" also makes a great double-bill with John Schlesinger's earlier film, "Darling," which I also like very much (I also think his film "A Kind of Loving" is one of the best "angry young men" films of the late fifties and early sixties).

I am not a fan of Mr. Greenaway, and have yet to make it through an entire picture of his. I believe that one can still tell a rational story and be metaphoric, without reverting to confusion. A film that honestly seems surreal to me is "Blue Velvet."

Josh

Name: James

E-mail:

Josh,

I'm having trouble trying to get myself to write a screenplay. Do you have any suggestions for procrastination? What do you do to get yourself to sit down and just start writing? Do you write everyday? What do you do when you come up against writer's block? I guess what I'm asking is for you to tell me your particular formula for writing. Thanks so much.

James

Dear James:

I write everyday, frequently just in my journal, but that's where I work my ideas out. I find that the best way to write a script is to work your way into it. Start by outlining so you can figure out the chronology of events and what the act ends are, then write a treatment, meaning prose, like a short story, and let it come out wherever it comes out. Mine tend to run about 10-12 pages. Then you take your treatment and expand it into a script. This is a good, workable method. At least I like it.

Josh

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

Howdy Josh,

"There's nothing stranger and more fascinating than reality, and I'm always looking for interesting stories. That's where the cool stories are to be found"

I couldn't agree w/ you more. I highly recommend you read George Jone's autobiography called "I Lived to Tell It All." It doesn't matter if you are into country music, his story is unbelievable. Each page contains so much truth it hurts.

John

Dear John:

Thanks for the suggestion.

Josh

Name: Russ  
E-mail: russghill98@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Thanks for the reply regarding my filmmaking at university. Well we shot the 16mm film and I just got the rushes back yesterday, they came out very well. I was relieved they came out!!! I am going to spend the next week editing on a steenbeck. How did you edit 'Thou Shalt Not Kill...Except' and 'Running Time'? Do you prefer digital editing? Do you have any handy tips? I watched 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' again last night and it has some fantastic shots in it. Good stuff!!!  
Thanks again

Russ

Dear Russ:

I cut "TSNKE" on a flatbed, as was "Lunatics," but "RT" and "Hammer" were cut digitally. I much prefer digital editing, it's quicker and much easier to get at the footage. But there's nothing wrong with cutting on film, particularly when you don't have a lot of footage. i really have no suggestions, just jump in and do it, and have fun.

Josh

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

Howdy, Josh!

Glad to hear you're back at work on new projects! I hope your writing session today (um, "yesterday" by time you read this?) goes well. I'm not familiar with Gary Jones, whom you mentioned a few days ago, but I can't help but think that a collaboration between you and Ted Raimi would be more than just \*slightly\* off the beaten track, which would be absolutely fantastic, considering how beaten-to-death the "beaten track" is looking right now. I mean, at this point, merely having a strong structure, with beginning, middle and end, and characters that are clearly delineated, would be enough to be better than 95% of the films currently out there!

Also a quick comment re the discussion about "The Virgin Suicides": I agree with you, Josh, on this one. I couldn't care less about any of the characters, although actually I thought the cinematography was a little murky, but maybe I saw a bad print or there was a bad projector in the theatre. The whole time I was watching "TVS," I kept thinking about "Almost Famous," also a flawed film set in roughly the same time period, but at least with a focus (i.e., the kid has to write his piece for "Rolling Stone") and some distinctive (albeit one-dimensional) characters. I tremendously enjoyed Frances McDormand's performance in the latter film, but I thought Kate Hudson, although she was truly pleasing to the eye, just kept, annoyingly, playing the same note over-and-over again, doing something of an impression of her mother: the fey flower child with a heart of gold & a brain of oatmeal.

OK, on with the questions. With your last episode of "Xena" already in the can (I \*assume\* you've completed your cut by now), are you going to seek out other TV episodic opportunities? Or, are you going to concentrate on features for now? Would you ever consider directing a TV-movie, whether of the HBO/Showtime caliber or the more "problem-of-the-week," network type?

Well, thanks as always for your time & lively electronic "conversation"!

best,  
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

I haven't seen "Almost famous" yet. I really ought to, as well as "Traffic," before the awards. I don't particularly care about the Oscars, but I still like having seen the nominees first. As far Ed Lachman's photography being "murky," check out "Less than Zero," which I think is gorgeous. Regarding what I will pursue next, I think it will be in the feature world. I don't think I'd fare very well on TV shows shot here in Hollywood. If I don't like a line in the script, I just change it and you simply can't do that here. Who knows what the future holds in store?

Josh

Name: Paul  
E-mail:

Josh,

You said you were writing a new script with Gary Jones in one of your posts. I'd like to know if you prefer writing with partners? Or do you prefer writing alone? Also, can you tell us a little bit more about what you and Ted Raimi are working on together? Got any plans to write or work with Bruce Campbell any time soon?

Thanks so much,  
Paul

Dear Paul:

Gary Jones and I just wrote a story called "Hell Up in Hyderabad," an action-romance that takes place in Hyderabad, India (where Gary just shot a film called "Death Roll"). Gary's putting that deal together. I completely enjoyed writing the story with him, which took a couple of weeks. If he gets some money he'll hire me to write the script, which I would then do on my own. Ted and I, meanwhile, have been searching for another film to make together since we did "Lunatics" in 1989, and particularly after having done eight episodes of Xena together. Working with Ted is about as much fun as you can have while shooting. he keeps me in stitches all the time. And Bruce has too many things going on to write with me right now. His book is coming out this summer, I believe.

Josh

Name: S Jones  
E-mail:

Josh,

Why don't you read fiction anymore?

Dear S Jones:

Because there's so much history that I don't know. There's nothing stranger and more fascinating than reality, and I'm always looking for interesting stories. That's where the cool stories are to be found.

Josh

Name: GAZ  
E-mail: D.G.FOXON@student.salford.ac.uk

Dear Josh:

HOW CAN YOU TELL BY READING A SCRIPT IF IT WILL BE A HIT OR NOT?

Dear GAZ:

I'd say you can't. I can tell if it's properly structured and well-written, but that certainly doesn't mean it'll be a hit.

Josh

Name: Fransebr♦d  
E-mail: mjelkemann@pakistanmail.com

Dear Josh:

Isn't rule nr. 2) "No, I don't want to read your script, no how no way." a bit cocky? I mean, you're only directing the wackest show on earth. Stop fooling with this bullshit, do more cool stuff like Running Time. I had to admit tho, i thought the movie was from 1987, because of the music. You should really try to work with some more talented musicians, mail me if you're interested. Cause this stuff just isn't up to par.

Dear Fransebr♦d:

No, I don't think Rule #2 is "cocky." I don't want to read anybody's scripts and I don't want people thinking this is a place to send their scripts. This Q&A has been up and running for two and a half years and at the beginning a lot of people were trying to get me to read their scripts. The rule didn't develop from nothing. As to "Xena" being the "whackiest show on Earth" and that I ought to "stop fooling with this bullshit," well, the show's cancelled, so that's all she wrote with "Xena." But it's been a great experience and I've loved working on every one of my ten episodes, plus the two others I co-wrote. Regarding your comment about the music in "RT," I absolutely love Joe LoDuca's score. I think he's one of the really talented film and TV composers working.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones  
E-mail: cynthiaejones@hotmail.com

Josh,

I was the one who told you to watch "The Virgin Suicides." I had a feeling you wouldn't like it, but you must admit that it's better than "Life Without Zoe."

Your comments about "Suicides" made me realize something. I'm really hung up on good cinematography. I thought that Stefan Czapsky's camerawork in "Ed Wood" was amazing, which subsequently made me appreciate the general campiness of the film much more. Lush visuals do a lot to make up for cartoonish acting. I guess all of my favorite films are beautifully shot...it's pretty much the most important thing to me in filmmaking, as a photographer myself. Good writing is second, and the interpretation of the writing by good actors is necessary to make the whole thing work, so casting is third. But if one of those three fails, the whole thing kind of sucks.

Have you seen "American Movie?" It's a documentary about this guy who's making a movie, and the documentary itself is better than the movie that's being made. It's so ironic it's hilarious. It's just one of the funniest, saddest, most inspiring movies I've seen. It makes you feel really good about yourself. Check it out if you have time...

p.s. Do you know what Ted's going to be doing now that Xena is done? Not that that was his whole life...just curious if he was writing, directing, acting...

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

I love good cinematography, too, but it will only get me through about 10 minutes of a film. Feature films are a story form, and without the story they are ultimately nothing, and nice production values won't save them.

Ted Raimi recently directed a music video, I don't recall for which band. He and I are supposed to be getting together today to work on a script idea. And no, I haven't seen "American Movie" as yet.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones  
E-mail: [cynthiaejones@hotmail.com](mailto:cynthiaejones@hotmail.com)

Dear Josh,

I just had a wonderful weekend at Dillon Beach, a little way North of Bodega Bay. I pulled a "gonzo journalist" move and felt that I was on a better -- more appropriate for myself, anyway -- path than Hunter S. Thompson. As much as I admire the man, I don't think I'll ever get to the point where I'm pulling a gun on someone in my front yard. I hope. Or getting drunk at a college when I'm supposed to be on stage speaking. But



I might.

Regarding Johnny Depp and your perceived vision of him as being too aware of his "pretty-boy" status: You're friends with extremely good-looking people, aren't you? Do they seem too self-aware? I think Depp is pretty good at NOT being the Pretty Boy, which is why I like him as an actor. Especially in "Fear and Loathing," I don't think he was afraid to be ugly, or unappealing. "Sleepy Hollow" sucked, but "Ed Wood?" I feel he delivered a great performance in that film, and it was not that of a 'beautiful' boy at all.

There's a problem in Hollywood when you're good-looking. No one wants you to be a great actor. That's why "ugly" people are called "character" actors. So Brad Pitt knocks a tooth out to get taken seriously, doesn't take a bath, wishes people would stop calling him "The Sexiest Man Alive." 'Cos it fuckin' sucks to be that guy. Now, Philip Seymour Hoffman gains or loses 20 pounds and it doesn't reach the tabloids because he's a "character" actor...

But I digress. The point is, film and television care TOO MUCH about how people look. I caught a show on the WB network last night as I was turning the TV on to start watching "Princess Mononoke" (cool flick--not as good as "Midnight Cowboy" which I also watched last night) and I saw LARGE-SIZED WOMEN on TV. It was amazing. Of course, they weren't white, that's still not allowed (unless you're a sidekick or a mom), but the fact that large-sized young, beautiful black women were on TV, being allowed to look sexy and flirt with men amazed me. That never happens. The Beauty Machine is churning in L.A. and N.Y. and there is too much beauty in every single human being to think that only media-pretty people fall in love and have adventures worthy of film.

So. The point is, yes, of course, you and your friends, and I and my friends, have an infinitely better time on acid than was portrayed in "Fear and Loathing." We have revelations, we think of film plots, camerawork, story moments and self-confidence-raising ideas, and take great photos. We realize that THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS CELEBRITY. It is our own fault. We decide that "Brad Pitt" (I use him as a sample because I see him at the grocery store--he's ubiquitous) is "better" than us. WHY?

gotta run

liquefied petroleum on the streets!

cindy

Dear Cynthia:

You make some interesting points, but I still disagree with you about Johnny Depp. I think he gave a totally one-note performance in "Ed Wood," and though I really blame the problems on the poorly thought-out script, Depp didn't help anything. To me "Ed Wood" was a huge missed opportunity -- I really do believe that Ed Wood was the worst filmmaker of all-time and the movie doesn't explain this at all. The closest explanation we get is that he had to work quickly. Guess what? We all have to work quickly, that explains nothing. And Depp going at every scene in his smiley,

ra-ra approach, gives no depth to the underwritten character. I don't blame him necessarily, but I don't think he brings anything extra to the party beside his good looks.

Josh

Name: Emily Blunt  
E-mail: emilyblunt@mediaone.net

Dear Josh:

I am movie critic Emily Blunt...Actually comedy writer Erika Bolin... I would like to interview you for my site. I receive 10,000 hits weekly and blah blah blah...Take a look and see if you think it would be fun.  
[www.bluntreview.com](http://www.bluntreview.com). Let me know. We can do it via email=real simple. I will be at oscar 22mar-26 mar but before or after would be great

Thanks and good work by the way.

Erika,er Emily:)

Dear Erika, er Emily:

It would be my pleasure to be interviewed by you. You have a fun site, although I disagree with every review of every film we've both seen.

Josh

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

Heya Josh,

Long time. Ever read the book "Shadows on a Wall" by Ray Connolly? Its about a guy who writes a small stageplay for his girlfriend, only to have it blossom into a monstrous juggernaut of \$100m hollywood filth.

Pretty funny stuff, and worth a laugh or two. Ever heard of it?

JT

Dear JT:

Nope, I've never heard of it. I don't read fiction anymore.

Josh

Name: Nicolai  
E-mail: nf300@nyu.edu

Dear Josh,

What do you think about scandinavian movies, especially the danish movies and the so called "Dogme 2000" concept in Denmark that are followed by directors as Lars von Trier, Kristian Levring and others ?

Dear Nicolai:

I haven't seen many recent Danish films, but I do like most of the concepts of Dogme (wasn't that "Dogme 95"? When did it change to 2000?). All except that you can't use a tripod or a dolly, which is stupid. Otherwise, paying more attention to story and character is a great idea. Lars von Trier bores me.

And as a note to whomever recommended "The Virgin Suicides" at some point back, I found it to be an inept nothing of a film with a really poor script. No lead character, no story, no real drama, no theme, no point, and Ms. Coppola managed to get me to not give the slightest shit about five cute teenage girls committing suicide, which seems like a trick. What the film does have is pretty photography by Ed Lachman, who is always good.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Just saw the Michael Hurst-directed Xena episode "To Helicon and Back," which featured much of the "Private Ryan"-style jerky hand-held camera-work. Now I know you don't really watch too many Xena episodes, but my question is about a camera effect that I saw both here and in "Ryan." At times the color would become more washed out, and the action seemed speeded up. Why is that? Are the performers moving slightly slower, so as to get the complex choreography correct, and then it's speeded up? Or is it something relating to the hand-held cameras? I thought I noticed this in a few of the fight sequences in "Gladiator" as well, but thought maybe it related to some of the computer generated effects somehow? Any insight you could provide would be much appreciated!

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

The effect is achieved by altering the angle of the camera's shutter, which gives it that blurry effect, then bleaching out the colors in the color-timing in post.

Josh

Name: Davey

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Simple questions. What's your opinion of Tommy Lee Jones as an actor?

After seeing him in 'Lonesome Dove' I was amazed at his performance(along with the amazing Robert Duvall). I already knew of Duvall's greatness thought but didn't know much of Tommy at the time. He just seemed to portray this inner strength in his performance as a 'hard' man. He's got that strong voice too which doesn't hurt either.

Other question is, how would you feel about ever letting Renee O'Connor be in one of your films in the future. You obviously know her as a person and as an actress. As a long time viewer of Xena, I feel I've seen Renee do amazing things in front of the camera and for the character of Gabrielle. To be put in a show as a sidekick to a hero such as Xena, you'de think the character would be overshadowed. However she has become just as popular to fans(even more popular to many fans) than the original hero. I'm sure many facts go into that, but one of those has to be what Renee has brought to the table.

How do you feel about her and would you like to have her in one of your films?

Final question. If you could chose any book you've read that you would like to actually see on screen(that hasn't been done yet) what would it be?

Dear Davey:

I think Tommy Lee Jones is a terrific actor, who, like every other actor in Hollywood, doesn't get very good parts anymore (because there aren't any). I first became aware of Mr. Jones in 1977 in "Rolling Thunder," which I watched again recently and it's a good, solid film. Although I liked the mini-series of "Lonesome Dove" (I liked the book MUCH better), Tommy Lee Jones is miscast in that part -- he's supposed to be 70 years old. He looks like a 40-year old albino. When Larry McMurtry began writing "Lonesome Dove" as a screenplay, before he decided to turn it into a novel, it was to be for Henry Fonda and Jimmy Stewart, circa 1972. When I read the book (in 1987, I believe), Fonda was already dead and Stewart was too old, so I envisioned Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster.

Regarding Renee O'Connor, I have offered her a part in a movie I'm just writing with my friend Gary Jones (who directed several Xenas). I haven't heard back from her, however. I think she's a first-rate actor and a joy to

work with.

And, regarding what book I'd like to see as a film, off-hand I'd say Colleen McCullough's "The First Man in Rome" and the sequel. "The Grass Crown."

Josh

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