

Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
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Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Heya Josh,

One comment and one question : first off, the comment. I have to agree with the "strike the music" post, it's kind of a pain in the ass. Second, the question, how many takes do you typically plan for when you're shooting one of your films? Understanding that film and time are expensive, do you ever find yourself in a position of "oh shit, we HAVE to get it done in this take or were screwed?"

Thanks.

JT

Dear JT:

When you work on a TV schedule, which is the same sort of schedule I use on my movies, you can generally get about three takes of things. Sometimes it will go as high as six, but rarely does it go past that. I am one of those guys who will accept the first take if I like it, which always freaks everyone out a tad. It's not an issue of how many takes you plan, it's how much time you have and how much film you have. On this last Xena I accepted a number of somewhat bogus takes from day players, because A). I didn't have time to screw around, and B). they were never going to get any better.

Josh

Name: Dan Cork
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Nah dude I was commending you! Usually you tell the ignorant people to simply 'go away', now you seem to be on a highly amusing sarcastic trip.

Danny.

Dear Danny:

Oh. Well then, thanks.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

How are you? I'm glad to see that you watched "American Movie" at my request. My favorite part of that film was Mike. If you watched the DVD there were tons of deleted Mike scenes that cracked me up.

"I was so glad to have Mark as a friend 'cos then I would have someone to drink Vodka with me," is one of the saddest things I've ever heard.

On a completely unrelated note, I rented the Bryan Singer debut "Public Access" last night. The movie ended, my roommate and I were listening to this fabulous 30's song on the soundtrack, and I said, "This is cool, I wonder where they got this song." As soon as I said that, there it was on the screen: "Rachel My Dear" sung by TED RAIMI! Good God! Is there some sort of Bryan Singer/ Raimi connection? It was as cool surprise, I've never heard Ted sing before. He has a lovely voice, perfect for 30's songs.

Speaking of which, did you hear that the "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack is out-selling country records all over the US? It's actually possible to go into a record store, ask for the Soggy Bottom Boys, and have them tell you, "They's all sold out!" Life is rad.

Have a wonderful Tuesday.

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

Ted and Bryan Singer know each other from somewhere, an acting class

or something. And yes, I think Ted does have a good singing voice. He does a very silly Sinatra impression in this new Xena, "Soul Possession."

In "American Movie," I liked Mark's buddy Mike, too. When no one else shows up, he does, I like that in a friend. Bruce, Sam, and Ted were always like that for me, although we never drank very much together (and even when I did drink, I never liked vodka).

Josh

Name: Pulit

E-mail:

Josh,

What's the best car chase scene you've ever seen in a film?

Dear Pulit:

I'm particularly fond of the car chases in Walter Hill's "The Driver." I also like the car chases in "Mad Max" and "The Road Warrior." "The Seven-Ups" has a good one, too.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork

E-mail:

Dear Mr. Becker,

Wow! Your wit seems to have become incredibly sharp lately, particularly when mocking the 'People Who Ask Stupid Questions'. What's up? Have you mellowed? Where's the barbed tongue Josh Becker I know and love!?! Write a comedy while in this state of mind! Keep up the good work,

Danny.

Dear Danny:

I can't make out if you're commending me or giving me shit. Does it seem like I'm getting snottier or mellow?

Josh

Name: Roby
E-mail:

Josh,

What is Rob Tapert working on now that "Xena" and his other shows have been cancelled?

always,
Roby

Dear Roby:

Rob Tapert is very busy directing the final two episodes of "Xena." After that I don't know what he's doing. I think he and Lucy are going to take a well-deserved vacation.

Josh

Name: Curious
E-mail:

Josh,

How much money would you need to do "Devil Dogs" justice? Could you do it for less than a million? Do you have any other investors interested at the moment? I guess what I'm asking is how much would you need to get the ball rolling?

Dear Curious:

I don't know what "get the ball rolling" means. As to making the film, I don't think it could be done for any less than \$5 million, and that would be without a recognizable cast.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

On Corman and B-movies. I saw Bogdanovich's "Targets" recently, and didn't find much in it (although it was nice to see Karloff in a decent role) but was fascinated by its history.

I gather Corman gave Bogdanovich a tiny budget and pretty much complete freedom, except that he had to use Karloff for the 2 days of shooting he still owed, and he had to include a bunch of clips from one of Karloff's old films.

Again, not an especially deep film, but I was impressed at the way he managed to do it. Any comments?

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

Yeah, I always kind of liked "Targets." I think it was a good late role for Boris Karloff, and I enjoyed them watching "The Criminal Code" and Bogdanovich waking up beside Karloff and getting scared. It's certainly one of Mr. Bogdanovich's best films. I really love "The Last Picture Show," which was, by the way, quite a cheap film and is both brilliant and gorgeous. Almost everything else he ever made I can easily live without.

Josh

Name: JOE
E-mail: JSERNIO49

Dear Josh:

THOUGHT YOU MIGHT KNOW WERE I CAN AUDITION FOR THE
SAPRANOS OR A SHOW I AM VERY INTERESTED

THANKS

Dear Joe:

In your dreams, and I'm sure you'll get a good part, too.

Josh

Name: Jim
E-mail: Starion106@aol.com

Josh,

This is more a website question, but could you maybe get rid of that sound file on the main page? Really slows down the page loading when I'm

dropping by to see if there's any updates. Java applets are notoriously slow and can cause crashes. Maybe the web team could use javascript music instead, which wouldn't affect loading at all.

I guess I should make a film comment here too. Enjoyed your American Movie review. Did you happen to see it on DVD? I'm guessing you did since you mentioned seeing Borchardt's finished 'film'. Some of the deleted scenes are hilarious as well, especially some shit Mark says on his early morning paper route. I've been finding that documentaries are sort of the last vestige of good filmmaking anymore. Like Gene Siskel used to ask about talky dramas, "Is this movie better than a documentary of the same actors having lunch?" I mean, can you imagine American Movie being made today as a scripted feature? You'd get something like Ed Wood basically, lacking all the personality and insight we got with Chris Smith's film. If you've got an interesting subject to follow as a documentarian, your work is basically done. Granted, it takes much more skill (at least I believe) to make a great drama than a great documentary. But with few great dramas being made anymore, documentaries serve as a good alternative. Some that I've enjoyed recently include Crumb, Mr. Death, and The Big One.

I suppose this sort of relates back to my last observation that 'reality' tv programs now interest me more than all the scripted shit. We can agree that all tv sucks, but I believe there's a hierarchy to that suckiness. Some stuff doesn't suck as much as other stuff, and reality tv and documentary films often suck less than their scripted contemporaries. I suppose that's a sad state of affairs, but it is what it is, and I don't see that changing any time soon.

Jim

Dear Jim:

I suppose we remove the music, it's been up a long time. I'm glad you mentioned "Ed Wood" in regard to "American Movie," because I meant to make that connection and forgot. I've always resented Tim Burton's film because it makes no attempt at explaining WHY Wood was the worst filmmaker of all time. All we get to see is this gung-ho guy that really likes movies that's in a big hurry due to his low budget. Well, that sounds like almost all low-budget filmmakers and doesn't explain anything. If you don't know what you're doing, the process of filmmaking can overwhelm you at every turn, as it does to Mark Borchardt, as I'm sure it did to Ed Wood, too.

Josh

Name: Shirley Johnson
E-mail: sapphire1217@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

I am trying to find information on how to open a 99 cent store. Do you have any information that I can start with or know of any website where I can get

this information? I would appreciate your help

Shirley

Dear Shirley:

Clearly, since I wrote a comic essay on 99-cent stores I must be an expert. I say, go to mainland China, hire as many slave laborers as possible (perhaps you just purchase them outright), then make products that can be wholesaled at .49 cents each. Easy.

Josh

Name: dave
E-mail: overseer2@aol.com

Dear Josh:

What do ya think of Troma?

Dear Dave:

I think their movies are garbage and the folks that run the company are idiots, but otherwise they're fine. I spent months trying to make a deal with them on TSNKE, and they finally reneged on everything they said. Quite frankly, I was happy to see them go away.

What really gets me down is that just because people are making cheap, B movies, like Troma or Corman, is that their aspirations are so damn low. The late Stanley Kramer started off producing cheap, B movies and made some truly great films, like "Champion," "The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T," "The Member of the Wedding," "So This is New York" and "Cyrano de Bergerac." My own films may well be cheap, B movies, too, but I'm trying for just a bit more than crap.

Josh

Name: Jerry Teleha
E-mail: daddy@buckeye-express.com

Dear Josh:

Hey, few things..

1. Just bought TSNK...E on DVD; maybe I spent too much on this thing, but your commentary with Bruce is well worth it. I don't particularly thank

you for the movie, but the DVD is alright in my book.

2. Just read your review of Private Ryan, and I have to say that you definitely have hit the nail on the head about the movie and Spielberg too.

Looking forward to seeing Running Time....Take Care.

Jerry T.

Dear Jerry:

Well, thanks for buying it. I'm sorry it wasn't everything you hoped for, but we did our best given the circumstances. RT is much better, if I do say so myself. But for a total production cost of \$12.95, TSNKE isn't so bad.

Josh

Name: Chae Se-kwang
E-mail: csk-20@hanmail.net

Dear Josh:

I heard that William Wyler became Christian after he researched the Bible, and He made the film Ben-Hur. Is it true? If it is true? Can you explain clearly the process of his belief? I don't know whether you are Christian or not. If you announce me about above. I will use it for my Sunday School service sermon source. I think William Wyler can be the model of being repented by love of God. I hope that as possible as fast you can send me the answer about my question. God's bless with you, I hope. ^^

Dear Chae:

Having just gone back through the recent biography of Wyler, "A Talent for Trouble" by Jan Herman, I find no mention of any conversion or even interest in Christianity by Wyler. As far as I know, William Wyler was born a Jew and died a Jew, just like Jesus, but with more Oscars.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Seeing as how you're looking to raise funds all the time, did you ever consider setting up a script-consultant/reader business? I'm extremely

wary of these ventures because you have no idea what you're getting from someone who has helped out with "hundreds of scripts". Swell. What if you get the person who consulted on Species or Armageddon? Anyway, just a thought.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

Funny, I was just discussing script reading with a friend of mine today. I was a script reader for about six weeks, oh, I guess about 14 years ago, for a small agency in Beverly Hills. I was ready to kill myself within two weeks. That I stuck it out four more weeks only indicates how poor I was. I was getting \$40 a script and every single script was completely terrible. Quickly, I began dreading waking up in the morning, and soon I decided I'd rather starve than read another completely horrible script.

Josh

Name: Diana
E-mail: sdhawkes@penn.com

Dear Josh:

My dear man! You just scored ~ a hundred points with me. After I submitted my nudity-in-film question, a little birdie directed me to your archived response regarding "Mostquito". You poor fella! Now your "do they tape it to their leg?" comment is put in better context. You know the pre"dic"ament first hand! I am betting you wished Gary Jones had cast an over the hill skank to make your job easier. I hope you at least got to go home to a certain special someone at the end of that day. Brave of you to share!

I once read a blurb that there are specially made trunks that have re-reinforced panels that keep the pony in the starting gate. Perhaps most A-list heartthrobs are simply gay though, and don't have to work against the tide!

Different question: I have a theory. Truly entertaining comedy is more difficult to achieve than drama. I came to this conclusion while attempting to watch the remake "We're No Angels" with DeNiro and Penn. (I also didn't care for Bogart's version--I know I'm in the minority). Since I find DeNiro to be top notch otherwise, that he cannot pull off comedy must mean it is a tall order(see the latest "Meet the Parents", and do I have to mention "Bullwinkle"? WHAT is he thinking lately?)

I realise there are different types of comedy, but would you in general agree?

Dear Diana:

I didn't care for either version of "We're No Angels," either. I did think DeNiro was pretty funny in "Midnight Run," and somehow found 500 ways to deliver the same line, "Shut up!" to Charles Grodin. I also think he gets a few good laughs in "Mad Dog and Glory." I do agree that comedy, particularly a feature-length comedy, is very difficult to do. I haven't yet found an appropriate story for the feature-length comedy I'd like to do with Ted and Bruce, and I've been actively looking for years. I think Ted, Bruce and I all have a facility for comedy, but we can't find the vehicle.

Josh

Name: Crispy
E-mail:

Dear Josh,

I was just wondering if you have some very good foreign movies to recommend. Oh and do you enjoy french movies?

Dear Crispy:

Not necessarily. For the most part, I'm not a big fan of French films. I do like "Forbidden Games" (1951) directed by Rene Clement. As for other foreign films, I like: Kurosawa's "Ikiru," "High & Low," "Dersu Uzala," and Luis Bunuel's "Los Olvidados," "The Exterminating Angel," "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," and Vittorio DeSica's "Bicycle Thief," and Bertolucci "The Conformist," and Fellini's "8 1/2" and on and on.

Josh

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

Josh,

I stand corrected. Of course it's Charles B. Pierce! I knew that!

Another question. Have you ever seen the movie "Nightmare Alley"? Tyrone Power is the lead. It isn't available on video through movies unlimited. I've always heard this is a tremendously good, yet for the most part un-noticed film. Have you ever seen it play on T.V.? Say on TCM or AMC?

I think you ought to see (if you haven't already) "Traffic". I thought it had a great story with a sound, 3 act structure...A structure in EACH story. I want to see if you agree...After all I really didn't notice these things until reading your essays. To me, "Traffic" fits perfectly into your three act requirements. (By the way, I was very leery to watch it at first due to the hand held camera work, but to my surprise it worked and didn't come across as

sloppy or "Blair-Witchy")

If you don't agree, I'm lost as to what you consider a good three act story.

The best,
Blake Eckard

p.s. Did you ever wind up watching "Boys Don't Cry"?

Dear Blake:

I'll see "Traffic" sooner or later. Still haven't watched "Boys Don't Cry," either. I did see "Nightmare Alley," however, and was disappointed. I think the director, Edmund Goulding ("Grand Hotel") was the wrong guy for the job. As I recall -- it's been 20 years -- it had nice photography.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Re: The Harder They Fall

Do you think it's possible to use a scene like the boxer interview scene in a modern movie? I think most people would feel it is too blatant.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

The film is of its time period. Budd Schulberg and Elia Kazan were trying to expose the seamy underbelly of the boxing game, and for 1957 it's pretty raw. Now, we've all seen this story many times. But there's definitely a modern boxing expose to be told.

Josh

Name: Matt Serafini
E-mail: MattS1979@webtv.net

Hello Mr. Becker,

I've been quite a big fan of all things Renaissance Pictures for quite some time and this is how I stumbled upon your body of work. I've really enjoyed your three releases and am looking forward to seeing "If I had a Hammer", my question is just this: can we look forward to seeing Lunatics: A Love

Story released to DVD in the near future. This has been a favorite of mine for a while and I've been waiting for it to make it's way to DVD. I've emailed Anchor Bay with the suggestion. Any news on that?

Thank you for your time and I wish you the absolute best of luck with 'Hammer'.

Sincerely,
Matt Serafini

Dear Matt:

Thank you very much. Sadly, there are no plans whatsoever for "Lunatics." I would love to do a new, digital transfer in 1:1.85, the way it was shot. Oh well.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

I'm not too keen on films about politics--I just meant films with politics in them. Artists with something to say are the best artists of all.

How do you feel about Todd Solondz? I liked "Happiness" a great deal, and "Welcome to the Dollhouse" was an excellent portrait of my own life.

Have you seen "Pi"? It's by Darren Aronofsky, who also directed "Requiem for a Dream" (haven't seen it--only ran for one week in Sacramento). I thought "Pi" was fantastic. The closest to pure art I've seen in a long time, at least in American cinema.

And speaking of modern black and white movies, what about "Suture?" But then that could be cinematography over substance...

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

I didn't like "Welcome to the Dollhouse" or "Happiness." I was kind of going along with "Dollhouse," but then the little sister disappears and it all went straight to hell. "Happiness" just seemed simple-minded to me. I did like "Pi" quite a lot, though. I don't know about "pure art," but it wasn't a bad little story and nicely shot.

Josh

Name: D. Huffman
E-mail: L5g@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

How is a demo reel set up? Should I include the best clips or scenes, all from short films, or should I include the whole flick?

Dear D.:

Demo reels are tough. I've put together four or five in my life and never done a very good job. I don't think they should exceed 3 minutes, and should sort of be like a movie trailer. I just saw Lucy Lawless' demo reel (apparently stars need them, too), which was 5 minutes, and I thought it was 2 minutes too long. I think "snappy" is the key word.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

More comments than questions. About crappy movies: The thing is kids today (does using that phrase mean I'm getting old?) may not know any better. Who is around to guide them to classic movies. So they pay for what they know. Crap in means crap out.

Writing: I just saw The Harder They Fall last night. If ever one needed an illustration of something causing something here it is. Not a moment wasted throughout. Add in the related character development and presto: a good movie.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

I always loved "The Harder They Fall," which was Bogart's last movie, BTW. I used to have the poster on my bedroom wall as a kid. I like the interview with the old boxer, seen on a moviola, and when asked about his future, replies, "Future? What future?" That's Elia Kazan and Budd Schulberg, who together had already done "On the Waterfront" and "A Face in the Crowd," which I love.

Josh

Name: Blake Eckard

E-mail: bseckard@hotmail.com

Josh,

Since you mentioned it, do you realize that "Boggy Creek" and "Town that Dreaded Sundown" were both made by the same guy, Charles B. Smith? Just thought I'd run it by you. I personally like both films.

Just started reading Faulker, and didn't bother researching the film bit. Should have, but it was easier to ask you since you seem to know those things. I'm curious, you may or may not know this, but I'm assuming you've seen "Barton Fink"? The author in the movie that is Judy Davis' husband is a take on Faulkner...Do you know how accurate that depiction is to the real man? In the film he's an extreme drunk that dosen't even write very well...His wife does most of the writting. Happen to know if this is true?

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

That's Charles B. Pierce. And I'd say that the John Mahoney character in "Barton Fink" is not an accurate, or fair depection of William Faulkner. Although I believe he was a drunk, he was still quite a skilled screenwriter, which is why a great filmmaker like Howard Hawks kept working with him, and getting good scripts, too. F. Scott Fitzgerald's movie career was closer to the "Barton Fink" character.

Josh

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

Josh,

You seem to get frustrated when things in movies don't reflect real-life physics (people flying across China). When I watch an action movie, as long as it's reasonably exaggerated, I usually don't pick on it. M:I2 was a joke. But that isn't the real question.

How do you feel about slapstick? I'm sure you have a different opinion of Chaplin as opposed to Nielsen, but do you enjoy Naked Gun or Hot Shots movies? They capitalize on events that could/would never happen in reality. (Let's assume that they are properly structured).

Thanks.

Benedict

Dear Benedict:

As a storyteller you must be true to the world you establish. If you set up a slapstick tone, like "Airplane!" or "Police Squad," then you must follow it, meaning you can't go back to the real world. However, once you've established that we are in the real world, then those rules apply. "Crouching Tiger . . ." did not establish a fantasy world, it went with ancient China as its setting, and in ancient China no humans could fly. Period. "Seven" is not set in the future, it's set in the present-day, real world, and therefore you must follow those rules. I'm having a discussion now with a friend about John Woo-style shoot-outs, where everyone can fire a million rounds with pistols and never need to reload. Each time you suspend reality in a movie, it's like having the boom drop in -- you are taken totally out of the story, and after a couple of times, there's no getting back into the story. The most important thing in a story is its believability, and each time you blow that, for whatever reason, you're screwing up your story.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Regarding your direction of Xena episodes: are you just a 'hired gun' or do you imprint your own style into each episode? Does it matter? Do you bring more mirth to the set, which could lead to a better episode in general... or what?

As far as "Where your brain is" as an artist, what do you recommend I see to know how you are now? Speaking here in this forum rocks, but I'd like to look at recent work that you are proud of/feels represents yourself. My work can be found at <http://cynthiaejones.tripod.com/> if'n you'd like to know what's up with my own art. I feel that we are contemporaries, yet in two different media. Do you photograph? How involved are you in your films' cinematography?

Okay. "Bad Movies We Love" by Cynthia E. Jones:

"Can't Stop the Music," starring the Village People and Steve Guttenberg. Still looking for that widescreen DVD transfer, somehow thinking it's never going to exist.

"Starship Troopers" by Paul Verhoeven. Look! It's a Noxema commercial! No! It's a Nazi propaganda film! No! It's an episode of Doogie Howser, M.D. with vinyl!

"Bucket of Blood" by Roger Corman. This is walking the line, here. I actually enjoyed this film, but it is technically "bad."

Okay, that's all you get for now. Speaking of such things, how do you feel about the phenomenon that was "Mystery Science Theatre 3000?" Have you heard about the new "Ghostbusters" DVD? You have an "MST3K" option, where the guy's (Bill Murray et. al) silhouettes appear on screen and they yell at the movie. Cool beans.

Oh, and you still haven't answered my question: how do you feel about politics in movies? I'm curious.

thanks,

cindy

Dear Cindy:

I much prefer any artist with something to say, call it political, radical, or whatever. As to films *about* politics, well, I don't think it's the world's best film subject. "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" is fun. I liked "JFK," but that's really a detective movie. "The Last Hurrah" and "Advise and Consent" are both OK. Oh, I like Franklin Schaffner and Gore Vidal's "The Best Man." I did not like "Bob Roberts," "The Cradle Will Rock," or "Dead Man Walking," for that matter. For me, they couldn't kill the Sean Penn character fast enough, and lethal injection seemed far too nice.

Regarding "Mystery Science Theater 3000," which was sort of humorous, but seems like one more example of young people's apathy to me. Back in my day we could think of our own funny comments to yell at the screen. If someone's doing it for you, what's the point? It's about expiating one's own derision, I think.

And even though it's painfully cheap, I rather like "Bucket of Blood," which is sort of witty.

Josh

Name: Aaron

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Just finished "[Devil Dogs: The Battle of Belleau Wood](#)", and really enjoyed it! There haven't been too many WWI films, and I'd love to see something like this made. I particularly liked the character Arbuckle (tribute to 'Fatty'?) who liked Chaplin films. And on a side note, just wondering your opinion on Orson Welles' "The Lady From Shanghai", just picked up the dvd and there's a fascinating commentary by Peter Bogdanovich. Anyway, great script!

Dear Aaron:

Thanks. Know anybody with a spare ten million dollars to produce it? I have never been a fan of "Lady From Shanghai." I absolutely can't bear Welles' phony accent and he made Rita Hayworth look awful, perhaps because she'd already left him.

Josh

Name: Harry
E-mail: hermesfeet@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Hi! I was wondering why after doing MAZE OF THE MINOTAUR you never returned to direct any Hercules episodes? Did they not ask you or did you not want to?

Harry

Dear Harry:

"Minotaur" was the worst shoot of my life, and although I don't believe it was my fault, I still took the blame. I caught the crew at the end of seven months of shooting and they couldn't have been grumpier. C'est la vie. Subsequently, I was never asked to work on the series.

Josh

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

Josh,

Have you ever seen "The Legend of Boggy Creek"? Watched it last night. Hadn't seen it since I was a young boy. It scared me! I couldn't believe it. I think it's the best bad movie ever made. Do you have a guilty pleasure movie like that?

Now, here is something you may or may not know. Have any of William Faulkner's books been shot? I'm thinking specifically about "Sanctuary"?

The best,

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I haven't seen "Boggy Creek," but I remember when it came out. It was one of those "The Town That Dreaded Sundown," Crown International Pictures, if I recall correctly, which were the bottom of the bottom of the barrel. I still went and saw a bunch of them, though. As far as guilty pleasures go, I rather like "Point Break." I think it's really well-shot. I also

kind of like "Diggestown," for some unexplained reason.

Regarding William Faulkner, "Sanctuary" has been filmed twice, once as "The Story of Temple Drake" in 1933 and again as "Santcuary" in 1961. Other books to be filmed were: "Intruder in the Dust" (1949), "The Tarnished Angels" (1957), "The Long, Hot Summer" (1958), "The Sound and the Fury" (1959) and "The Reivers" (1969). Faulkner also wrote quite a few screenplays for Howard Hawks, including: "The Road to Glory" (1936), "To Have and To have Not" (1945), "The Big Sleep" (1946) and "Land of the Pharaohs" (1955), as well as other scripts, too.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Have you seen "Britannia Hospital?" I feel it is an excellent, thought-provoking anti-government film, and can be watched without the other two in Lindsay Anderson's "Trilogy" to much delight. Besides "Zero for Conduct," are there any political films that you enjoy, to recommend? (I'm assuming "Zero" is political if it was "re-made" as "If...")

Where do you feel a director stands in the world of artists as far as making political or social statements? I feel that there isn't nearly enough of that sort of thing, it's mostly escapist crap so we can forget about how fucked up the world is. But Tim Roth chose "The War Zone" as his debut film, to say something about incest, an ignored topic. Are Americans discouraged from being political because it will never make any money? Tim Robbins is doing what he can with films like "Cradle Will Rock" and "Bob Roberts," and I applaud him for it. Do you think, as a resident of Los Angeles, that political thought and ideas about revolution are only cherished if producers think that "the kids" will pay for it?

"The kids" sure could use it. If it weren't for foreign films, I'd never know political dissent existed in this day and age... kids don't watch the news. The WTO kids need film heroes, too! And not just David Finscher, with his "Fight Club" Adbusters messages being taken by ad execs as a way to sell aviator glasses and cool clothes to Details readers.

Don't get me started on TV. Nothing personal, but I hate it. "The Simpsons" is good, but I agree that it's on it's last legs and should be put to sleep. While we still think highly of it. And as for "Xena," well...I've never actually watched an episode. I'd be interested to see the one you just finished, just so I can see what your brain is like now, but I'm more interested in "Running Time" and "Hammer." And, of course, that upcoming project with Ted that you guys will do sometime in the next ten years.

Have a lovely Tuesday. Remember...reading is fundamental!

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

I haven't seen "Britannia Hospital," but I'll keep my eyes peeled for it. "Zero for Conduct" isn't really a "political" film, although it is somewhat anarchistic. It's really more of a fantasy, as it's about 6-10 year olds taking over their boarding school. It's somewhat surrealistic, too, and only 44 minutes. I've not seen "The War Zone," either. As to seeing the newest Xena ep I've done to find out "What your brain is like now," I didn't write the show, I just directed it.

Josh

Name: Diana Hawkes
E-mail: sdhawkes@penn.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

I feel compelled to apologize for some of the dreck you get in your cyber-mailbox, I squirm in my seat when I read through those, criminy, some people's kids...

I so enjoyed the [pics from Soul Possession](#) and yes indeed, you all look like your positively melting, despite the smiles! (Crazy- is that HOT coffee you're holding?) We Ares fans were so hoping he would be cast in the final episode, but it appears he shaved off his goatee for the button Euro-trash thing on his chin. They wouldn't have him shave that off unless he was done being Ares, eh? If he's now on to The Blue Room, I guess that's it for him in Xena. Don't edit out a moment of him and I'll slip ya another c-note!

Onto my real question, can I ask you to expound on nudity in film making. Specifically, have you made decisions regarding it in your projects? When is it "right" to show? Examples? When is it "gratuitous or exploitive"? Examples?

I personally felt Kelly MaGillis' brief breast exposure to Harrison Ford in "Witness" was more gratuitous than some scenes that show genitalia.

(nervously pondering how to word this...) WHY is not male frontal nudity used more to cue to the audience vulnerability, seduction, whatever? Although I think I know the answer!

~Warm Regards~

Dear Diana:

Yes, that is hot coffee. It doesn't matter what the temperature is, coffee is a necessary part of filmmaking, as well as daily living, for me. Although it was ridiculously hot when I was just down in NZ--100% humidity and it rained every day. However, on it's hottest, wettest day, NZ isn't as hot as Florida.

As for Kevin Smith, he was appearing in a movie directed by Michael Hurst while doing "Soul Possession," so he didn't have time to grow a very good beard. The film, BTW, was called "Love Muscle," but is now titled "Goopy Fish."

Regarding nudity and sex scenes in movies, I have big trouble with this stuff. I feel like 99% of all movie sex scenes are shot exactly the same way -- lots of flesh on flesh close-ups dissolving to more fleshy close-ups, and frequently I don't know which parts of the body I'm looking at. When I see two naked people humping in a movie, I always wonder what's being done with the man's genitalia? Is it taped to his leg? What? I like my sex scene in RT, which is all acting. I also like the sex scene in "Five Easy Pieces" between Jack Nicholson and Sally (Ann) Struthers. Nicholson directed a terrific sex scene in his film "Drive, He Said" -- we're in an a very tight close-up of Karen Black, who is sort of wincing, then we slowly pull back revealing her chin is resting on a steering wheel, then we realize she's sitting on someone's lap and having sex. Paul Verhoven has some good sex scenes in his early Dutch films. For the most part, though, they just make me nervous and take me out of the story. Why is female nudity more prevalent than male nudity? It's our society, obviously.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Just a couple of observations on recent letters. I too really appreciate the whole "film geeks" salon environment here. It's supremely cool to be able to get feedback from you on virtually any topic!

As for gutless Tony, he sounds very much like any number of hecklers over the last couple of years here. What do you want to bet that A) it's the same guy over and over again, and B) it's either a would-be actor that you failed to cast, or that Maori whom you ripped off in "Commando Raid?" (Funny story - I just read it for the first time.)

By the way, I think you may have inadvertently left out something in your response to him, so I'll be happy to do it for you. Hey "Tony" - FUCK OFF! Who the fuck are you anyway, and what do you know?

Regards,

August

Dear August:

Thanks for the help in responding to Tony, those specific words just wouldn't come to mind. Hey! I didn't rip off any Maoris -- we intended to, but we didn't.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Concerning the tv scripts you wrote, did you work them around themes?
And if so do you feel the produced shows kept to that theme (once they've
gone through the script grinding mill)?

Dear Chopped Nuts:

I only wrote the story for two Xenas, not the scripts. In both cases my story
was followed pretty closely, but I can't really say I had a strong theme in
mind for either one, not that the writer would have necessarily followed it
anyway.

Josh

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