

Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive Page 3

Name: James Flower
E-mail: skybird123@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

OK, here's my short e-mail, with one loudy question: are THOU SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT and RUNNING TIME being released in Britain any time soon? LUNATICS was cool, hope the other two are just as good,

James

Dear James:

I don't have any deals set for European distribution, nor anywhere else on Earth except the USA and Canada, for the moment. My US distributor is friends with a distributor in Germany, Atlas, and is supposed to set me up. So far, it hasn't happened.

Josh

Name: sandi
E-mail: sandiblue@hotmail.com

Hi Josh:

Also, on one page of answers you say the last script of Fins was the best and the other page of answers you say the first was the best, what's up with that?

sand1

Dear Sandi:

If that's what I said, what I meant was that the last draft of "Fins" was the best and the 1st draft of "If the Shoe Fits" was the best.

Josh

Name: Cathy
E-mail: Cathyogrady@msn.com

Hi Josh:

another question about If the Shoe Fits... What I want to know is what did you do to Renee O'Connor to make her voice all squeaky when she was the Fairy Godmother? Or was that Renee just talking high pitched?

Also, how did you come to write the the story for Locked Up and Tied Down (Shark Island Prison was a much better title IMO), is this the only time you have written a Xena or at least, the only time you have had a writer's credit?

Dear Cathy:

You should search around this website some more, your answers lurk within. I have one other Xena writing credit, on "Chariots of War," the second Xena episode of the first season. I came to write "Locked Up & Tied Down," (thanks, I liked the title "Shark Island Prison" better, too), when Rob Tapert called me up and said, "I have a great teaser and don't know where to go with it. Xena and Gaby are ambushed by bad guys whom they easily beat up and Xena asks why they attacked them and the bad guy says, 'You killed our priestess,' and they say her name and Xena says, 'Oh yeah, her, I did kill her. I'm guilty. Take me to prison.' They put her chains and take her away. End on Gaby with her mouth open. But I don't know where to go with it because if Xena turns herself in then she won't want to escape." I replied immediately, "Xena gets to prison and the priestess she was supposed to have killed is there and alive," and Rob added, "And she's the warden," and we were off and running . . .

And as to Renee's high voice, she inhaled helium immediately before her scenes, which was her idea and a very funny one, too.

Josh

Name: Maud BEAU
E-mail: DERKENN@wanadoo.fr

Buenos dias, Señor Becker

How far have you got with the distribution deal that would released the film in Europe ?

As i live always in France, what shall i do if i want to buy "RUNNING TIME" video tape or DVD on your site? I want my collector too !!!

If you want see a good recent French film [in my opinion], try "Le COUSIN" by Alain Corneau (1997). With chance, this movie could enjoy you. One never knows, we could ever dream.

Hasta la vista, Dynamic Solo
Maud

Dear Maud:

Go ahead and buy a copy, I'll send it to France. I just sent one to Australia. Only 35 left. Hurry.

Josh

Name: Bruce Harris Bentzman
E-mail: BHBentzman@msn.com

Dear Mr Becker:

I thought it might be of interest to you that I have also written a short story entitled "The Gospel According to Judas" that appeared, in two parts, in the May 1997 and June 1997 issues of The Free Cuisenart: <http://www.ccofa.org/wowzine/wowzine.html>
If you're interested, go to back issues #13 & #14.

Respectfully,
Bruce Harris Bentzman

Dear Bruce:

Well, you did better than me, mine was never published anywhere.

Josh

Name: Mike Colpitts
E-mail: JohnWoo624@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I would just like to say that you are one of the finest directors of our time. "Thou Shall Not Kill ... Except" was a great movie, as was "Running Time". I would like to order a copy of "Running Time", and I noticed that you offered to sign it. Now, Bruce Campbell has to be one of the finest actors working today (its a shame he hasn't gotten more parts). So, my question is this: is it possible for Bruce Campbell to also autograph my copy of the movie? I know it is asking a lot, but it would be the greatest thing.

Thanx ...

Dear Mike:

If you buy one of the remaining 35 copies of "Running Time" you automatically get my silly autograph.

That is the extent of the Beckerfilms.com guarantee. Take it or leave it.

Josh

Name: Kristin
E-mail: DARKTOWER14@yahoo.com

Hey Josh:

How are you? You are probably sick of hearing from me by now but I have yet another question for you. When exactly is TSNKE coming out? I have been terrorizing the staff at my local blockbuster weekly as to when it's coming out and they don't know. So I figured I'd come straight to you. Well thanks a lot for you time, you are the best.

---Kristin :)

Dear Kristin:

It's out. If you can't find it at your local blockbuster, go online. It's there I swear.

Josh

Name: Ric
E-mail: solosplace@geocities.com

Dear Josh:

I am a newcomer to filmmaking and wanted to know what the difference between reversal and negative film is?

Is there a benefit cost wise or creatively over using one over the other?

Great site!!!

Later
-- Ric

Dear Ric:

Reversal is positive; negative is, oddly, negative. Super-8 is reversal, which means that the same film that runs through your camera is now what you run through the projector--you're working with the original. With negative film, to run it through a projector you must make a print, called a workprint. Of course, now you can transfer directly from the negative to video tape, then either cut on tape or on a non-linear editing system, like the Avid. To end up with a film print you must then conform your negative to the edited picture. Basically, no one shoots reversal anymore. It was popular when TV news was shot on film, back in the 60s and 70s. If you're shooting Super-8 then you have no choice. If you're shooting 16mm or 35mm then most of the choices of film stocks are negative. Let's face it, you

don't want to be working with your original and you do want the ability to make prints, so use negative film.

Josh

Name: Carl Platz
E-mail: carnage@netonecom.net

Dear Josh:

Hello, I have a friend who wants to buy a video of the movie, "Emperor of the North (Pole)" could you supply me with any information on where I could find this movie on video tape?

Thank You for Your Time,
Carl S Platz

Dear Carl:

Did something on this website give you the idea that I am the reincarnation of Robert Aldrich (whom I met once)? Go to a search engine, put in "Video Tapes" and see what happens.

Josh

Name: Joe Bulum
E-mail: hbdef011@email.csun.edu

Dear Josh:

Who can I write/plead with for a CD release of the TSNKE soundtrack (Thou Shalt...) ????? Its a masterpeice! More! More! More TSNKE!

Dear Joe:

I absolutely agree with you, it's a great score. In fact, I think Joe LoDuca's score is the best thing about the whole film. If you close your eyes you can really imagine terrific movie going on. Sadly, it does not exist on CD.

Josh

Name: John Forde
E-mail: jforde@wppost.deapul.edu

Howdy Josh:

I'm curious about your songwriting process: will you be writing the music for your upcoming folk music

feature?

Do you play an instrument when you write songs?

Thanks!

Dear John:

Howdy, Pard. No, I will not be writing any songs for my upcoming film, I'm using all folk standards. I cannot play any instrument. In fact, I'm somewhat uncoordinated. But I do play a mean air-guitar.

Josh

Name: Kristin
E-mail: DARKTOWER14@yahoo.com

Hey Josh,

When i read in the article about the making of Running Time that Janie's apartment is acctually your apaartment I thought that was soo cute so i watched running time for the 6th time your apartment is so cute I love the pictures on the walls they are cute. Also last night I rented Lunatics from my local Video store I was amazed that they had it. It was so funny YOU are a genius (seriously). Now I have an acctual question when Running Time is released what will be the difference between the version that you sold and the version that the store will sell??? thanks a lot for your time

--Kristin

Dear Kristin:

There will be no difference other than the packaging. It will be duplicated off the same master.

Josh

Name: Christine
E-mail: bcimiar@aol.com

Hi Josh:

After reading that the apartment used in Running Time is your actual apartment, my friend Kristin(darktower14) and I decided to examine it closely and see if we can find the real you..and I just think that your apartment is so great. I love it! If those pictures on the walls are really yours, then you have great taste, and everything else is just so cool. We rented Lunatics: A Love Story last night, and that was great as well. You are such a brilliant man :) Now for the question...Who wrote the poetry used in Lunatics? Was that original stuff or what?

Thanks a lot,
Christine

Dear Christine:

Other than the movie posters, the pictures on the walls were chosen for the movie. They are all of empty places. The poem in "Lunatics" is mine. I wrote it when I was 18 year old and I think it's the best poem I ever wrote, which isn't saying much.

I originally had an obviously bad poem in there and over the course of writing the script I came to feel that it was both disingenuous and a cop-out, so I replaced it with the best poem I ever wrote. It may well still be a bad poem, but it's the best I can do and, therefore, the best that Hank can do, too.

Josh

Name: Heath Opper
E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Hi. A couple of days ago I received a copy of your movie 'Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur' from a place in England. I haven't gotten a chance to watch it because I won't be able to get it converted for a couple of weeks. My question is how much of the movie is new scenes and how much of the movie is scenes from the other four Herc movies? Also is it easier to direct a 'clip show', like 'Maze of the Minotaur', or an entirely new show, like any of your Xena episodes?

Thanks,

Heath

Dear Heath:

There is 65 minutes worth of new material and 25 minutes of clips in "Minotaur." I was able to cut out all of the clips and make a very solid 60 minute episode out of it. The most difficult part of doing a clip show, in my opinion, was getting an idea that was dramatically solid in and of itself that would still support the clips. As a little note, I wrote the story for "Minotaur," but due to a contractual problem did not get credit. (I also wrote the story for the 1st season episode of Hercules, "The Path to Freedom" and didn't get credit, but that's a different story). From a directing standpoint, it makes no difference to me what I'm directing--a clip show, a Hercules, a Xena or an independent feature--I take things one scene at a time and try to make it as good as I can. By the way, you may get some weird freeze-frames from the PAL to NTSC conversion. I hope you enjoy it when you see it.

Josh

Name: Brian Phillips
E-mail: PsychoCid@Hotmail.Com

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if you could actually confirm this for me. I found this at the Australian Xena Info Page

<http://xenite.simplenet.com/rumours.html> and it has been nawing at my skull!

"Oh check this out....In Fins, Femmes & Gems Gabrielle was originally going to be obsessed with Xena and she would "come out"! This was going to be the "Ellen" episode of XWP!!!!

The TPTB chickened out so we ended up with Gabrielle obsessing about herself and it's one of my favourite episodes. It was funny. Personally if Gabrielle was to come out I would prefer it not in a comedy but in a serious episode and none of that slapstick comedy.

This has been confirmed by Josh Becker - the director of FFG <http://www.beckerfilms.com>"

Is this true!?! I was hoping that it was, but I havent heard anything about it anywhere else!

Dear Brian:

Dealing with this issue got me into severe trouble with many Xena fans, as well as the Xena producers. It's exactly as you've explained it, and let's leave it at that. I don't write them, I just direct them.

Josh

Name: Joe Bulum
E-mail: hbdef011@email.csun.edu

Dear Josh:

How can I get ahold of the original 8mm pilot of "Strykers War"? The letterbox mastered copy is AMAZING! please help the Stockton T.S.N.K.E. fan club celebrate in style!

Dear Joe:

I was just discussing this very issue with the nice folks at Anchor Bay Ent. I suggested that they include "Stryker's War" on the "Thou . . ." DVD. Sadly, the music clearance is a big enough issue so that I'm not at all sure they'll actually do it. The problem with all of our old movies is that we scored them very liberally with every great film score we could get our grubby hands on. "Stryker's War" has hunks of: Jerry Goldsmith's scores for "Patton," "MacArthur," and "The Sand Pebbles;" John Williams' "Close Encounters" and "1941;" Elmer Bernstein's "The Great Escape;" Bernard Herrmann's "North By Northwest," "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad" and "Taxi Driver," not to mention Herbie Hancock's cool score for "Death Wish" and Denny Zeitlen's "Invasion of the Body Snatcher's." Are you getting the idea as to how much music clearance is involved here? We'll see what Anchor Bay does?

Josh

Name: Victor Cayro
E-mail: gccayro@mwci.net

Dear Josh:

You forgot to list John Woo's classic, *Bullet in the Head*, instead you listed the inferior *Broken Arrow*. If you took the time of daylight or *Light of Moon* and viewed *Bullet in the Head*, and didn't like it, you're a clump of pubes short of a full bush...But if you haven't, do yourself a favor, rent it, or order it through Jaiseng Video....you'll thank me! either that or your cursing me right about now....

hasta luego,

Victor Cayro

Dear Victor:

There are no John Woo films on my list. The "Broken Arrow" referred to is Anthony Mann's 1950 film starring James Stewart, Jeff Chandler and Debra Paget, which is shockingly similar to "Dances With Wolves," although it's better, and an hour shorter and bolder, too. John Woo's "Broken Arrow" was garbage. I couldn't sit through "Bullet in the Head." I guess that makes my bush a few pubes short, eh?

Josh

Name: Red River

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

What's your take on Rob Tapert's decision to remove "The Way" episode? Did Studio USA force his hand on this issue? And lastly, will faxing, e-mailing, and writing the show's affiliates help to reinstate the abandoned episode, or is it just a waste of time?

Sincerest thanks,
Red River

Dear Red River:

An episode of *Xena* costs over a million dollars, so no one wants to abandon one. I don't know what pressure was brought to bear on Rob, but probably a lot from many directions. There is talk, however, that it might have parts reshot, then be re-edited and aired. We'll see.

Josh

Name: Filippa

E-mail: flasheart@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I recently purchased the original script of "For Him the Bell Tolls," my favorite episode of "Xena," and couldn't help but notice many of the differences. The opening fight scene, for example, is much more played out in the final version, and Aphrodite is made to sound more like a Valley Girl. How much input did you have in making the final version, as this was one of the episodes filmed after *Lucy Lawless'*

accident?

Dear Flippa:

This script was written in an extreme hurry due to Lucy's injury, so it was very rough. Basically, all changes from the text are my changes. I make my changes in the margins of my script throughout the two weeks of prep. I make a number of suggestions at the read-through the night before we begin shooting and the one's that the producers and actors like go into the script. Then, anytime an actor has difficulty with a scene, I show them my change and nine times out of ten they go for it.

Josh

Name: Jason
E-mail: olekszyk@umich.edu

Hello Josh:

I recently had the chance to listen to Bruce Campbell speak at a local film festival here at the University of Michigan. He commented on his somewhat distain for the "hollywood" type movies. He commented that he enjoys doing "real" independent films and recommended to me "Running Time." Now I respect Bruce Campbell's work and opinions and I was wondering what your take was on the whole "hollywood" image of movies? Thanks for your time.

Jason

Dear Jason:

I believe that it is impossible for any company in Hollywood to make a good film, the system will not allow it. Since "Jaws" in 1975, then "Star Wars" in 1977, Hollywood has geared itself entirely for the blockbuster, which means aiming their films exclusively at 12 to 14 year old boys. Since no executives are 12 to 14 year old boys, younger and younger executives are hired straight out of college with the idea that they are closer to that age and will have a better understanding of it. Since a 26 year old really has no clue what a 14 year old wants, what you have are people second-guessing other people. Since movies cost so much money now and take so long to develop, whatever might have been good about the idea to begin with is stripped away draft by draft, writer by writer until all that remains is a meaningless mishmash. If something interesting mistakenly slipped through the cracks and got shot, it will be removed as the film is subjected to focus group screenings. Beyond all of this, the entire Hollywood process is humiliating as complete know-nothings force the writers and filmmakers into doing things as they "ought" to be, so that "they" will like it. This amorphous "they" is a retarded 12-year old that can't read a stop sign. In an attempt to retain some measure of my self-respect, I have stopped putting myself through this process entirely. I no longer care whether I ever get a movie made through this process. I would much rather make a quarter of a million dollar indie feature that I have complete control over than a \$75 million Hollywood movie that must be subjected to a committee's approval, which basically amounts to being forced through a meat grinder from which all that comes out is ground crap.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

It's interesting that your next project will be music-oriented, since you've added music as an element into many of the Xena episodes you've directed. Now obviously, if it's Gabrielle doing a "Beverly Hillbillies" parody, then it could pretty much be improvised. But what about some of the more elaborate numbers? Like the "Joxer the Mighty" song in "For Him the Bell Tolls," or the Sigmund Romberg operetta-style duet in "If the Shoe Fits?" (I think you had said that you added that to the script once you were already starting to shoot.) Since Joe LoDuca isn't there to compose a tune, how does it work? Do the performers dub in the actual vocals later, once it's been orchestrated and everything? How much do the writers write, how much of it is you or the performers improvising, and how much is actually the composer?

Dear August:

All right, here's how this goes: "For Him the Bell Tolls" was written in an extreme hurry due to the fact that Lucy broke her hip on Jay Leno's show, which is why she is almost not in the show. Given this, I thought it was a pretty good script, but I felt that it needed something more. I decided that Joxer ought to have a theme song. I came up with the first verse of "Joxer the Mighty."

Joxer the Mighty
Roams through the countryside
Never needs a place to hide
He's Joxer, Joxer the mighty

I then had to sing this to Rob Tapert, the executive producer and Liz Friedman, the co-producer. Neither seemed thrilled, but they didn't say no, either. I then sang the song to Ted, who loved the idea, and I told him to come up with more verses, which he happily did over the course of the next few days. During post production, I called Joe LoDuca, the composer, and suggested that he do a big orchestrated version over the end titles with a big male chorus, then I played him the main theme to "Down to the Sea in Ships." Joe then added several more verses. The irony, of course, is that the song is now credited to Joe and Ted, but not me.

In regard to "The Song of Gabrielle" in "Fins, Femmes & Gems," it says in the script:

"I sing the song of Gabrielle!
A diamond like none before!
The Bard without peer!
A sight beyond compare! A temptress of renown
A woman with no -- "

Then Xena covers her mouth because she's scaring the fish away. At the read-through the night before we started shooting, Renee pulled me aside and said, "I have a few problems with this 'Song of Gabrielle'." I asked, "Like what?" Renee said, "Well, it doesn't rhyme, it hasn't got a melody and I can't sing." I smiled reassuringly and said, "No worries, when the day comes I will have a song for you that you can sing." Renee smiled and left seemingly reassured that all would be well. On the day of the shoot, and of course that scene was very first up at 7:00 A.M., I set my alarm clock for 4:00, got up, drank a cup of coffee, and wrote the present, "Beverly Hillbillies" version of the song. I sang it to Renee, she laughed and all was well.

Regarding "I'm in Heaven" (the sheet music is posted in the Xena section), as well as the disco

number, the waltz before it and the Baroque dance before that, it was rather apparent from early on that the script was timing out significantly short. I made one of my bold, reassuring statements to everyone, "I'm going to make a big deal out of Joxer's telling of the story and I'll make up all the time, I just need the assistance of a choreographer," whom they were kind enough get for me. I called Joe LoDuca and told him what I was up to and he sent me a perfect piece of Baroque music he'd written for something else. For the other dances I made my own temp tape for playback on the set which had "The Blue Danube" for the Waltz with a hard cut going into Donna Summer's "MacArthur Park" for the disco, which is indicated in the script thusly: "Tyro suddenly break into an UNUSUALLY BOLD dance number." After this the script indicates that Tyro breaks into song, which is written like this:

"Tyro the Mighty
From a dysfunctional family
They work me hard and call me names
Yet I'm the one who got the fame . . ."

I felt that the "Joxer the Mighty" song had, at this point, been driven into the dirt and so I decided to go in a completely different direction. As you so aptly point out, August, it is of the Sigmund Romberg-operetta parody. I wrote the lyrics on the set, called Joe and sang it for him. This was followed by a long, trans-Pacific pause that was finally broken by Joe quietly saying, "Huh." Three days later on the set I was handed a cassette tape that was the fully orchestrated version of the song with actual operatic vocalists. Ted Raimi, who sing very well, replaced the male vocal with his own.

That's the story of the songs. I'll have ten musical numbers in my new film.

Josh

Name: Mia A. Carlson-Danner
E-mail: MIACARLSON@aol.com

Dear Josh:

As a former broadcast professional (14+ years in radio, with final 8 years as news director for a network of three AM/FM combos) who is now "retired" at the age of 33 to focus on screenwriting, having the chance to ask such a talented director/writer as yourself is a rare, yet totally appreciated opportunity. So I will try to keep it short, although as a writer it may be difficult!

I have written three Xena screenplays and am working on three feature-length action/thriller screenplays. I have run into this problem and am hopeful you have some words of wisdom for me...

How the hell does a screenwriter break through the steel wall between writing a screenplay and getting an agent to consider representing you? It seems that unless you have had success, you can't find an agent - yet without an agent, there is no success. No matter how talented a screenwriter is, they can't go over, under, around or even through the wall.

So, my favorite director, do you have any suggestions? Any help you can offer is very much appreciated - although I'm afraid I won't be able to reciprocate in the manner of your joke in your article "The Need For Structure" on the Hollywood Lit Sales site! ;)

Thank you for your time and consideration! And may you find only the greatest of success in the future!

Mia A. Carlson-Danner <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Land/7619/home.html>

Dear Mia:

Boy oh boy am I the wrong person to have asked this question. Having never broken through that "steel wall" myself, I really have suggestions to offer. I absolutely can't stand agents, having had eight at this point, and not one of them has ever gotten me a job. I feel that the system whereby a screenwriter might get their work seen in this town is so fucked up that it's not even worth bothering with anymore. And even if you were to get your script read by someone at a studio in a position to greenlight it (which seems like a ten million to one chance), the next step in the process is shitcanning the original writer and hastily disemboweling the script until there's not a trace of whatever was good in it to begin with. The entire process is so disheartening that it's not worth it. That is why I strictly pursue independent films now. Financing is not easy to get, but it's not impossible. Making a good film in Hollywood at this point is indeed impossible.

Josh

Name: Kimberley
E-mail: KDRector@aol.com

Dear Josh:

No questions at this time -- just a few quick words on how impressed I am by the articles, rants, and reviews I've read thus far. You raise some intriguing points -- as a writer and an archaeologist, I was particularly struck by "Stories & Society" -- and you do so in an intelligent, cagey, and challenging fashion. (For what it's worth, I've done a couple of essays for Bruce Campbell's web site airing some of my own grievances with mainstream flicks, so I have a distinct admiration for your curmudgeon's soul.) The really cool part is with the few instances in which I do disagree, for once it's not due to a lack of honesty and insight in the arguments presented. I can't tell you how much I enjoy reading essays that make me work to keep up, to better think through and further clarify my own positions, while still affording such fun in the process.

Great work, Josh. Don't ever lose that edge--

--Kimberley

Dear Kimberley:

Thank you, it's nice to know that someone is getting something out of it all.

Josh

Name: Nolan
E-mail: SCCComics@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Hey, Just had a chance to watch "Thou Shalt Not Kill...Except". The flick was a lot of fun, i even showed some of it to the people in my high school film class, who liked it as well. I'm just wondering, (and I'm not sure if this has been asked already) If THOU is released on DVD, will you include the original short?

-Nolan

Dear Nolan:

It should, but someone would have to pay for the clearance on the music. If Anchor Bay, who is releasing the DVD cares, then it could happen. We'll see . . .

Josh

Name: Barry Green
E-mail: barry6@abac.com

Dear Josh:

I read your "making of" Running Time page, it was fascinating and I appreciate your taking the time to document the process. It was inspiring.

My question is, what did you do about guilds and unions? I'm planning a micro-budget film, and I am facing the question, "To SAG or not to SAG." On such a low budget, the Hollywood Film Institute (Dov Simens) says "forget 'em, hire scabs", but you said you used SAG actors. I assume that means you went with one of the SAG agreements. Did you use the "experimental" or "limited exhibition" agreements, and if so, did the "distributor assumption agreement" (with its double residuals) make it more difficult to sell?

Thanks for making this forum available!

Dear Barry:

On "RT" I went with the standard SAG low-budget agreement. The "experimental" deal doesn't apply to a feature-length film and the "limited exhibition" agreement offended me--I will not have some outside force dictating to me what I can and can't do. Therefore, I say either go with SAG all the way, or skip it. On my new film, "If I Had a Hammer," I'm skipping it entirely. Let's back up. On "RT" I had ten speaking parts over the course of a ten day shoot with everyone working for SAG minimum (including Bruce Campbell, who NEVER works for the minimum) and ended up spending just over \$40,000 on the actors. However, I had good reason to do this. A.) I really wanted Bruce to star in it and he can only work SAG, B.) Since I was shooting in these excessively long takes (5-8 minutes long), I absolutely had to have actors that could handle this odd, difficult situation and not screw up (and they didn't, either) . On this new film I am shooting in the regular fashion and my two leads are supposed to be 18 and 19 years old. I intend to use actual 18 and 19 year olds and at that age most actors have not yet gotten into SAG. Also, everyone else in my cast has to be a musician that can deliver a few lines. Most musicians are not SAG members. Now, this is important so pay attention--if you decide to go SAG and then you use non-SAG actors, you first of all have to pay them and treat them as SAG actors, plus they then have gone Taft-Hartley which is the first step toward joining SAG. If you do this more than a couple of times SAG will fine you. But worse than any of that, if you go with SAG then you had better have professional 1st and 2nd A.D.s that can keep all of the SAG rules straight so that you don't break them all the time--meal penalties, turnaround, overtime--which can end up costing a LOT of money. Also, if you use SAG actors you really can't shoot on Saturday since it's now time and a half for the first eight hours, then double time for the next four hours. No matter how small your cast or how short your shoot, going SAG will cost (with at least one real A.D. thrown in) minimally \$50,000.

If you are not prepared to handle the SAG rules properly, which is not easy, then I say go non-SAG. You'll have much more freedom, you can go overtime if you need to, you can shoot on Saturdays and Sundays and you don't necessarily need topnotch A.D.s. For me on my new film, going non-SAG is a big enough savings to to shoot a third week and bump up to 35mm. I think it's worth it.

Josh

Name: Luke
E-mail: skywalker@aol.com

Dear Josh:

What is a typical day like for you when you are between film engagements? And how long does it normally take you to finish a screenplay? Do you use Scriptware or Dramataca Pro software, or just a regular word processor, to write your scripts?

Thanks a lot,
Luke

Dear Luke:

My days are odd and varied. Right now I am preparing my next feature project, "If I Had a Hammer," so lately I have been tracking down potential crew members, scheduling, doing the breakdown, working on music clearance, as well as conceiving the visual approach to the script.

This script took me six months of constant work, consisting of three sub-drafts, then four drafts. There were also about 25 outlines done during that time. The actual writing, to me, is secondary to thinking and outlining my way through the story. As far as I'm concerned, the really important parts of screenwriting do not occur sitting at the computer--to have a strong structure and thematic material weaving it's way through the story, it all has to be dreamt up and figured out previous to turning the computer on. If you do not know exactly what you're writing and why, it probably won't be any good. Good screenwriting does not occur as inspiration at the keyboard. Just pounding one's way through 120 pages of script means very little.

Being an old-timer at this point and having begun writing on a manual typewriter, I use four tab settings, which is all that a screenplay consists of. I honestly don't see how any of that script software can of any real service. If you don't know what you're doing, it won't help you; if you do know what you're doing, it's of no value. As I've said, the real writing occurs with the computer turned off.

Josh

Name: ItchyBetty
E-mail:

Hello Sir Josh,

Hey, what "Xena" director do you admire most, and what episode did he/she direct?

Thanks,

ItchyBetty

Dear ItchyBetty:

I haven't seen most of the Xena episodes. I did laugh very hard when I first saw Michael Levine's "Warrior . . . Princess."

Josh

Name: Kristin
E-mail: DARKTOWER14@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

What type of film would you suggest using in order to make short films to learn the film making process and how to use a camera ect. Video, 8mm, Super 8, 16mm, or what??

thanks for your time

--Kristin

Dear Kristin:

I am a filmmaker, I like film. Sadly, Super-8 is too much of a specialty item these days and not very cheap anymore. Therefore, I say go with 16mm. It's not as easy as video, but it looks much better, can be blown-up to 35mm with better results and can be edited cheaply.

Josh

Name: John Forde
E-mail: jforde@wppost.depaul.edu

Dear Josh:

Congratulations on the distribution deal for 'Running Time'; it is a film that deserves a wider audience. Will this deal get you closer to breaking even? Also, I've brought the order form for 'R.T.' to a local Blockbuster. I truly loathe that chain but if it can help you, it's worth it. The responses I get from the clerks up to the managers have varied from indifference to laughter. Thus far, the film has not been added to their inventory (no, they do not have a Bruce Cambell section, go figure). My question: who at Blockbuster do I have to pay(ola) to get your film into their inventory?

Howdy John (sorry, I can't help it):

I think Blockbuster may stock it once Anchor Bay releases it for real. I certainly do appreciate your efforts, though. By the way, I saw "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" again the other night and liked just

much as always. Good work.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

- 1) I was fascinated by your "Real Stories" story. Have you worked on other TV series (other than XWP) or feature films (other than your own?)
- 2) Without prying, I'm just curious - are you financing your next project on your own, or did you come up with some investors?
- 3) Great job on "If the Shoe Fits" - the stuff you added for Ted Raimi was some of his best work! You've said it yourself, and it shows - you're an "actor's director."
- 4) Great answer to Mr. Fat Dick!

Dear August:

I did 14 appearances as an extra on the 2nd season of "Beverly Hills 90210." I worked 6 days as an extra on John Cassavettes' film "Opening Night." I had one line on "Step By Step." That's about it, other than "Real Stories," Herc & Xena.

As to the financing for "If I Had a Hammer," I will personally put up most of the money, but I do have one investor that I'm talking to.

Thanks for the nice comment on "If the Shoe Fits." Ted certainly doesn't need much urging to chew up all of the scenery. I simply guide him toward which hunks of scenery I feel need the most chewing.

As for Mr. Fat Dick, it's a helluva lot easier to call people names than to actually back up your opinions. If I say I don't like something, I'm always perfectly happy to explain why.

Josh

Name: Sheri
E-mail: lovingtate@airmail.net

Dear Josh:

Okay .. while strolling through your site today, I actually found something that I had never noticed before. You directed some episodes of Real Stories of the Highway Patrol and that was news to me. Very cool. So? Don't suppose you would care to tell me what that was like? Did you ever get to film anything interesting? "Murders.. Killings.. Homicides.." Love to hear more about this one. And one other note .. while at the video store the other day, I picked up a lovely little flick entitled "Mosquito." I'll bet that role (roll) was sheer torture.

Thanks Josh!
Sheri

Dear Sheri:

You see how varied my talents are. I directed re-enactment segments on the first season of "Real Stories," so I didn't actually see any real action. My job was to go to a state, sift through hundreds of police reports until I found action-packed crimes that I could potentially shoot in the course of one day or one night. My crew was me, a cameraman and a sound man. All of the parts in these re-enactments were played by policemen and policewomen, who were generally quite game, but the worst actors of all time. I actually shot one segment entirely in Spanish and I don't speak Spanish.

As for "Mosquito," what can I say? My good buddy, Gary Jones, the director, asked me if I wanted to be in his film? I said, "Sure." He said, "You'll have to be naked." I said, "Gary, I'm too old to be doing nude scenes." And Gary replied, "Oh, OK." I show up to shoot in an old tool & die factory in a terrible part of Detroit. Everybody in the crew, all of whom I knew rather well, came up to me and said, "I can't believe you're going to do a nude scene," and I'd say, "No, Gary said I don't have to be nude," and each person would mutter, "Huh," and move on. Finally, Gary came up to me and I said, "I don't have to be nude in this, do I?" and Gary replied, "Oh, yeah, you do." The woman with whom I was to do this nude scene had been hired in a topless bar. She and I spent 8 hours in a tent in the middle of a stage pretending to have sex. Let me just inform you that doing a nude sex scene is 100% more difficult for a man than a woman. There are certain physiological events that one expects to occur under these circumstances that suddenly seem entirely inappropriate, particularly with a whole film crew around. I ended up with one of the worst headaches of my entire life. Every member of the crew said to me at one point or another during the day, "I couldn't do that." Anyway, it was a learning experience.

Josh

Name: Simi
E-mail: Harriss@grimsby.ac.uk

Dear Josh:

How did you get into film and television? what's been your best and worst moment? and what advice would you give to people who want to enter the media world of film and TV

Dear Simi:

First I was a film fan, then, when I was about 12, I began making Super-8 movies. I would like to believe that whatever is my best moment is to come. The worst was directing "Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur," with the crabbiest crew on Earth. My advice would be: see as many old movies as possible and read as many books as possible, to see how stories can be told, then tell your stories. To paraphrase Norman Jewison from the Oscars, "Forget grosses, tell good stories."

Josh

Name: Heath Opper

E-mail: heo96001@uconnvm.uconn.edu

Dear Josh:

Will you be involved with the new TV show "Love Police" that Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, and Shaun Cassidy are currently developing for the USA Network?

Thanks,
Heath

Dear Heath:

I don't know if I'll get another Xena episode, let alone anything else. To quote what I think is the most popular phrase in Hollywood, "We'll see . . ."

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

I finally got around to viewing THOU SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT and absolutely loved it. But I am a little confused. All the information I read about this film described it as a horror/suspense film. However, upon viewing it, I saw it as a splat-stick comedy/exploitation movie (in the same vain as Evil Dead 2). Was this how you intended the film to be?

Dear David:

Splat-stick is a good term. "Thou . . ." was shot two years earlier than ED2, but certainly in the same vein, or artery, as the case may be. I mean, how seriously can you take the premise, the Marines Vs. the Manson Family, right? It's being listed as horror to get it into the same section of the store as ED.

Josh

Name: Kristin
E-mail: DARKTOWER14@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Thank You so much for the autograph it means so much to know that you took the time to send it I'm gonna frame it. I was just wondering how you and Sam and everyone learned how make the super 8s that you made when you were young? Did you take classes or what? Cause I really really wanna be a filmmaker but there is no where to take classes for people my age(14) and I live in NY no less so what did you all do to learn? thanks for taking the time to answer my question you really are the best.

---Kristin >>

Dear Kristin:

Nobody taught us how to make the Super-8 movies, we just made them. And the more we made, the better and more ambitious they got. There is no better classroom for filmmaking than actually making a film. Write the best 10-minute script you can, using locations and actors you think you can get your hands on, put it all together, shoot it and cut it. Between what you originally had in mind and what you end up with is the lesson. Then do it again.

Josh

Name: Donald Alao
E-mail: www.The7thAmbassador@Hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I hear you like Boyz N' the Hood. Would you give me your analysis on that film, because I can't find anything good about it.

Dear Donald:

For me, "Boyz N' the Hood" gave a clear, believable view of a place and a situation that I thought was interesting. It doesn't stick with me very well, but I enjoyed it at the time.

Josh

Name: Justin
E-mail: rmops@rmg.com.au

Dear Josh:

what are the reasons for not being able to order copies of Running Time outside of usa and canada. The reason i ask is because, if there are any extra costs in sending overseas i am sure the buyer would be willing to cover the extra charges.

Also can i please have your thoughts on the films of Jim Jarmusch. thankyou for your time.

justin
melbourne australia

Dear Justin:

I'll send these last few copies out anywhere. I think I have 50 left. As for Jim Jarmusch, I liked "Stranger Than Paradise" quite a lot and think it's a rather exceptional low-budget movie. But I feel that Mr. Jarmusch shot his wad with that one picture and hasn't had a thing to say or show us since.

Josh

Name: Mary Leah
E-mail: xpower35@juno.com

Hi Josh!

I'm a senior in high school who really wants to go into film. I am trying to decide which college to go to based on my desire for a strong film program which will help further my career. What would be your suggestion between Duke and University of Miami? Which school would give me the most opportunities to really make some contacts in the film industry and make me a standout among all the other individuals aspiring to enter this field. I'd really appreciate some advice and thank you for your time.

~Mary Leah

Dear Mary:

I don't know anything about film schools. I attended one semester (fall 1976) of Columbia College here in L.A. and learned how to properly coil a cable, and I spent one semester (winter 1977) at Sherwood Oaks Experimental College, where I got to meet a bunch of cool people (Francois Truffaut, Martin Scorsese, Robert Aldrich, Robert DeNiro, Robert Wise), but didn't really learn anything. Everything that I know about filmmaking I picked up making or watching movies. When everything is said and done, it's not where you went to school, it's what you know. I don't think it matters even slightly whether you have a degree from Duke, University of Miami, USC or UCLA, because that's not how people get jobs as filmmakers. In fact, of all the filmmakers I know, I'm not sure any of them have college degrees--I don't. I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with going to film school, but unlike Med school where if you follow the proscribed steps you'll emerge at the end a doctor, at the end of your tenure at film school you'll simply be one more person that wishes to be a filmmaker, no closer to your goal than someone that just got off the bus in Hollywood.

Josh

Name: David Rogerson
E-mail: grover@wantree.com.au

Dear Josh:

What were your favourite cult TV shows from the 60's, 70's and 80's and why?

Kind Regards
David Rogerson

Dear David:

What makes a show or a film "Cult?" I hear this term applied to Quentin Tarantino and the Coen Bros., whose cults seem to be the viewers of the world. How can a TV show that is being broadcast to

hundreds of millions of people have anything to do with a cult? Anyway, back in the 1960s when I was a kid I liked all the standard stuff: Star Trek, Green Hornet, Batman, Combat, Green Acres, Gilligan's Island, Lost in Space. By the time I was a teen in the 70s I pretty much stopped watching TV except for movies and didn't pick it back up in the 80s. Now, however, I like The Simpsons and ER and most everything on Turner Classic Movies.

Josh

Name: Matt
E-mail: mf@stratford.webgate.net

Dear Josh:

Really looking forward to the DVD release of Running Time. Can you tell me what Special Features (if any) it will include? An Audio Commentary with yourself and Bruce would be great, and how about a documentary on the making of Running Time. Also What is the status of your Western Project Warpath? Any closer to getting made. You need investors I'm there man.

Dear Matt:

If Bruce is available it will be he and I doing the commentary track. There are no plans for making a documentary. I hope to get to "Warpath" next year, after I make "If I Had a Hammer," my period folk musical. And I ALWAYS need investors.

Josh

Name: Tamara Clay
E-mail: thactress@hotmail.com

Hey Josh.

I am so glad I get to send email directly to you. I would like to know if you have any projects you plan on directing soon. I am a young actress (21 yrs. old) and have dreams of being in movies. I would like to know if you would please help me. I would appreciate it so much if you just give me a chance. I can act-I can deliver the goods. Please contact me at: thactress@hotmail.com. I just want a shot :)Thanks and take care!

Dear Tamara:

If you REALLY want a shot, take it, don't wait for someone to give it to you. If you're waiting for someone to give you a break, you'll grow old and die waiting.

Josh

Name: Jon Bayless

E-mail: jbayless@fiber.net

Dear Josh:

I appreciate your honesty in criticizing legends like Kubrick and George Lucas. However I don't remember seeing any comments on Spielberg. Do you enjoy his work, or is it too mainstream (Hollywoodish)? Also, do you think it's best to go to a film school to learn how to make movies or to work and finance you own film work? One last question, what kind of music do you like?

Dear Jon:

You obviously missed my review of "Saving Private Ryan." This will answer all of your questions concerning my view of Spielberg.

I personally think you'd learn a lot more putting your own movies together than going to film school. I also suggest watching and paying attention to as many old movies as possible.

In regard to my musical tastes, I generally listen to KUSC, which is classical, most of the day. I particularly like: Ralph Vaughn Williams, Aaron Copland, Chopin, Beethoven and Rachmaninoff. I'm also a jazz fan and like: Dave Brubeck, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Gerry Mulligan, Stan Getz, Lester Young, Duke Ellington, Johnny Hodges. And, I still listen to mainly older rock & roll like: Bruce Springsteen, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Van Morrison, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, Santana, Jethro Tull. I quite like R.E.M.'s new album, "Up."

Josh

Name: Donald
E-mail: Donbot32@aol.com

Dear Josh:

In a recent response you claim kubrick hasn't produced anything of value since clockwork orange. Bullshit. Full Metal Jacket is the blueprint for most modern war movies, and has a valid stance for being Kubrick's 2nd best film (naturally 2001 beats all). Suck my fat dick, dorkmeier.

Dear Mr. Fat Dick:

Is your dick being so fat a genetic problem, or does it get fatter every time you say something stupid? Obviously you don't know much about Mr. Kubrick's career. To seriously believe that "Full Metal Jacket" is his 2nd best film is pure ignorant foolishness. First of all, half the story is spent in boot camp, which seems completely excessive, and there isn't one new idea put forth that hasn't been in 50 other movies. To have the Vincent D'Onofrio go crazy and kill the D.I. is a meaningless conclusion to the first half since in reality this never occurs. Since it is not representative of anything that ever happens in reality, there's nothing to learn from it. Second, to then begin following a photographer (Matthew Modine), to me seems like a total rip-off. Then, to have the entire story come down to a single sniper shooting at them in what is clearly and obviously NOT Vietnam, but instead the chilly gray suburbs of London, seemed completely foolish. That the sniper was a girl, to me had no resonance or irony. If someone is shooting at you and killing your buddies, you have the right to shoot back. As far as Vietnam war movies go, the ones I think have some value are: Platoon, Go Tell the Spartans,

Apocalypse Now, and Born on the Fourth of July.

As far as Stanley Kubrick's films go, my list would go like this: 2001 (Hey, we agree), Paths of Glory, Dr. Strangelove, A Clockwork Orange, The Killing, Spartacus, Lolita, The Shining, Full Metal Jacket, Barry Lyndon and Killer's Kiss.

And as to your fat dick, perhaps occasionally using your brain might cause the swelling to subside.

Josh

Name: Kristin
E-mail: torib00@animail.net

Hi Josh,

I will be traveling to New Zealand and would love to be an extra on Xena. I heard that the extras are fan walk-ons. Is this true? Also, when does the filming of the show take place? If I can be an extra do you know where I should go when I get there? Thank you very much for your time in answering my questions. I have loved the episodes that you have directed and written!!!

Kristin. :)

Dear Kristin:

I don't know where you heard that the extras on Xena are "fan walk-ons," but that's entirely untrue. They are all hired New Zealand extras. If I am not mistaken, and I could be, an American cannot go down to New Zealand and work unless you have a work permit, and you can't get one of those without having the job before you leave. Sorry and good luck.

Josh

Name: Spartacus
E-mail: spartacus69@email.com

Dear Josh:

Star Wars takes a big crap down your throat. You know, for somebody that hasn't made a single movie his entire career that anybody gave one little shit about except for some two bit weak ass critics, you sure have a big mouth. If Star Wars was such a terrible set of movies, then how come so many people love those movies? Lucas must be doing something right. If you ask me, maybe YOUR criticism is misplaced, and 99% of America would say exactly the same.

Dear Spartacus ("No, I'm Spartacus!"):

Since 99% of America has chosen you as their spokesperson, I guess I better shut up.

Josh

Name: John Forde
E-mail: jforde@wppost.depaul.edu

Dear Josh:

Speaking of "the creepy, right-wing, conservative assholes were all let off the hook scott free", let us not forget a certain young actor who started his political career at the HUAC trials. Who is this young actor? Ronald Regan. He was a rat and it certainly has not tarnished his American hero image.

Dear John:

Good call.

Josh

Name: Sarah-Louise
E-mail: princex40@hotmail.com

Hi Josh,

I was just wondering, how do you become a Director? How did you start out? How did you get to Direct Xena and are you enjoying your life?

Dear Sarah-Louise:

I began by watching every movie I could possibly watch and developing a critical sense of what I considered good. I then began making Super-8 movies, which I did intensely for 15 years. I then switched to 16mm short films, then a 16mm feature, then 35mm (then back to 16mm for "Running Time" and now back to 35mm for "If I Had a Hammer"). I began on "Hercules" as the 2nd Unit Director, then, seemingly haven proven my worth, became a Main Unit Director. Herc lead to Xena. Of course, I did grow up with Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi, the show's Executive Producers, so there is a whole aspect of "it's not what you know, it's who you know." Quite frankly, however, I think it's a combination of both. As to, "do I enjoy my life?" Sure, it's the only one I've got.

Josh

Name: Anders
E-mail: andersbjorlin@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Ok, I'm from Sweden. Which is pretty far away from Santa Monica. What would be the best way to make sure we get to see Running Time in Sweden (and Europe)? Any suggestions?

Dear Anders:

Yeah, buy a tape from me, I'll send 'em anywhere now.

Josh

Name: Daniel Titmus
E-mail: Titmus@onaustralia.com.au

Hi Josh, nice to talk to you,

I am living in Australia and very keen to see your film Running Time, I would even love to buy a copy but I dont live in the US, as a film student I am very eager to see your work, I have heard nothing but praise, is there anything I can do from way over here to see it?

Dear Daniel:

Well, I just made the U.S./Canada video-DVD deal and next I will attempt to sell the rest of the territories in the world. I have contact for Europe, but sadly, I don't have one for Australasia. I don't know what the postage would be, but if you want to buy a tape from the website here, just do it, I'll deal with customs. I don't take Australian Dollareedoos, so you'll have to use a credit card.

Josh

Name: Beth Smarr
E-mail: bsmarr@zoomnet.net

Dear Josh:

I just read that you have a deal with Anchor Bay Entertainment to release "Running Time." I just ordered my second copy from your site as a keeper as I use my first as a loaner to gather more fans for you. Will you sign my new copy for me? I also want to know what is next your your directorial plate. Any positive news on the projects I read about a month or so ago? Keep up the good work.

Beth

Dear Beth:

Thanks for buying two copies. As of this moment, I begin shooting my new film, "If I Had a Hammer" on Aug. 1, although much could happen between now and then.

Josh

Name: Cathy O'Grady
E-mail: Cathyogrady@msn.com

Dear Josh:

Having seen the Xena episode, If the Shoe Fits fairly recently, I was wondering if you enjoy working with children? I was very impressed with the little girl who appeared in this episode, has she acted before do you know? Secondly, I was also surprised to read that the script went through so many changes as I thought this was a very funny episode. Do you think last minute re-writes are necessarily a bad thing?

Dear Cathy:

I enjoy working with everyone on a film shoot, young and old, as long as they do what I tell them to. Going into this episode I was very concerned about the little girl's part. If we couldn't find someone good (down in New Zealand) the whole episode would be in trouble. Di Rowan, the NZ casting director, who always does a good job, found Olivia Tennant, the little girl that played the part. I think I looked about 8 or 10 little girl's auditions. Several of these little girls were really beautiful, but Olivia was the only one that knew what she was saying. Olivia is a terrific little actress, always knew her lines, listened to what I said and remembered my directions, never became bored with the process (which is amazing) and was simply a joy to have around. Also, Lucy really took Olivia under her wing and was goofing and talking with her all the time.

As for last minute rewrites, well, generally they're not very good. The script was in such bad shape that this shoot got pushed back a day, which has never occurred before or since. We had gone through three white drafts, a pink, a blue, a green and two yellows. On the Sunday before we began to shoot, Rob Tapert came by my place and the two of us sat there for about 6 hours picking the best page from each draft--none of which connected to each other--and I was given carte blanche to make everything fit together. I then stayed up until midnight or 1:00 A.M. each night trying to get it all to connect by the time I was picked up the next morning at 5:45 A.M. This was by far the most difficult Xena I've ever done (pushing "Hercules in the Maze of the Minotaur" to number 2). A few examples of elements I put into the story that were not in the script (any of them): the Baroque dance number, the waltz, the disco number (represented by one line in the script, "Joxer does a bold dance step"), the song "I'm in Heaven" (which was supposed to be yet another verse of "Joxer the Mighty," a gag that has been driven into the dirt), as well as Gabrielle's problem, which is usefullness. I also completely rewrote the bathroom scene between the queen and the princess, which made no sense at all. I also changed the messenger scene in Aphrodite's version of the story, where Joxer delivers the message from the king. Originally, he was supposed to do a Keanu Reeves, valley guy-sort-of-thing, to which Ted completely objected. I suggested that he approach the scene as though he were in Frank Sinatra's rat pack, calling them "koo-koo, crazy chicks," and Ted took it from there. I love his moment of first seeing Gabrielle as Tyrella and saying, 'Oooh, that chick is square.'

However, on the positive side of last-minute rewrites, I like the one we got on "Fins, Femmes & Gems," which was better than all the previous drafts.

Josh

Name: Virginia Kelly
E-mail: vkellyian@compuserve.com

Dear Josh:

Actually, this is a compliment. I absolutely loved Xen ep "In Sickness and in Hell." And, forgive me, I haven't looked closely at the credits yet and I don't know if you were involved, but I just saw "The Play's

the Thing" and I ALMOST like it better than "In Sickness and in Hell." I also loved "Fistful of Dinars."

Dear Virginia:

Thanks, but I had nothing to do with "The Play's the Thing."

Josh

Name: Chris
E-mail: bertbarkely@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I just thought I'd tell you that you can save your time and skip "Eyes Wide Shut" if you go rent "Billy Bathgate" with Dustin Hoffman, Bruce Willis, and features two nude scenes by Nicole Kidman, including a full frontal. You'll wear out the pause button...

Dear Chris:

Sadly, however, that would entail me having to sit through "Billy Bathgate" again, and that's not humanly possible, naked Nicole or not.

Josh

Name: Slick Willy
E-mail: dba@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

What do you think will be the next major break through for film? As you wrote in an earlier article, it has been decades since anyone has done anything that really revolutionized film and showed their real genius. Is there anyone you feel flips the bill in the industry or is film on the way of the Dodo bird?

Dear Slick:

I think movies, whatever format they may be shot on (film, video, digital), are a very powerful form that will not be replaced soon by anything else. That nobody is really doing anything with the form at the present time is a temporary set-back. Everything moves in cycles and we're just in a valley at the moment. At some point soon we will march out of this valley and up to the top of the next hill. This will not be based on faster cutting, more special effects, shakier hand-held photography or more explosions or more automatic weapon fire. It will be based on someone actually using a bit more of their brain and taking the medium to a new place. It can and will be done.

Josh

Name: Jason Armadillo
E-mail: armadillo@mail.ptd.net

Dear Josh:

I just found out that Kazan was a anti-Commie Narc! I am amazed at this, although I don't know why. I admit I don't really know much at all about what went on in those trials. I know some people got blacklisted (Dymytryk?) but I thought the creative types (directors, writers, etc.) in Hollywood kinda stuck together through the whole thing. It was the outsiders who pointed the fingers. I had no idea Kazan ratted out 8 colleagues! I almost want to watch the Oscars (hey, it would be my first time ever!) just to see what happens. I guess I could tape it so I wouldn't have to sit through that garbage.

Dear Jason:

Hey! Lay off Elia Kazan! He is a great, great director and anything but evil. The point that is quickly being forgotten is that he was on the good side of that ugly event. The creepy, right-wing, conservative assholes were all let off the hook scott free, people like Richard Nixon, Cecil B. DeMille, Adolph Menjou, Gary Cooper and John Wayne. These were the ones that were screaming for a blacklist and loyalty oaths and other fascist, unconstitutional things. Kazan had been a communist party member in the 1930s, during the depression when democracy was clearly failing and people were in bread lines and starving all over America. Anyone with any brains at all was searching for a better system at the time. The fact that communism was not the answer made itself known over the course of time. And lets not forget that Russia was on the allied side during WW2. Kazan broke from the communists in the late 30s because the party was trying to dictate to him what plays he should direct and which plays he shouldn't direct. Once he broke off, the communists became highly vindictive and made serious attempts to sabotage his career. Kazan came to realize that not only was communism not the answer, but that these people were creepy assholes. The HUAC hearing began in earnest in 1947. When Kazan was called on to testify in 1951, the blacklisting had been going on for several years and had proven fatal to those people that didn't talk. Kazan was now forced to name the names of the people that had earlier tried to ruin him and if he didn't name them, he would never work again. These were not his friends, they were his enemies. Under those circumstances I believe that I would have named those names, too, and so would you, and so would most everyone else. It's very easy, 50 years later, to say "I wouldn't have named names, my career be damned," which is akin to saying, "If I had been a soldier during D-Day, I'd have been a hero." Oh yeah? Kazan did what he felt he had to do and I don't blame him. As a metaphor, blaming the HUAC hearings and the blacklist on Kazan is like blaming the holocaust on an Auschwitz survivor for hiding under the dead bodies in the showers. You do what you have to do to survive. Let us revile the name of Richard Nixon, creep extraordinaire and destroyer of many, many lives, not Elia Kazan, who was a victim as surely as the Hollywood Ten. The man has spent 50 years being treated as an untouchable.

Josh

Name: itchybetty
E-mail: ivy@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

What is your screenwriting process? What I mean is...how do you start a screenplay? Do you write a short story or do you outline? Keep up the great work!!

itchybetty:-)

Dear Itchybetty:

After jotting down as many ideas as I can get on the topic, I then write a treatment, which is essentially a short story without a lot of attention paid to the prose. Once I believe that I'm telling a complete story, I begin outlining. When I feel that I have three complete acts, with proper act breaks, as well as understanding my theme and point, I start the actual writing. Once I have a completed draft, I let it sit for a week or two, then attack it again and make every change that seems reasonable and let a few trusted people (like Bruce Campbell) read it, then I attack it again, and again, and again until I think I've got it down. If you don't know your entire story and your ending before you begin, it is not possible to write a good script. In a good story, everything is leading to the ending.

Josh

Name: Sarah
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

You are SOO cute!! My question is: What was the first film that really made you want to be a director?

Sarah

Dear Sarah:

Awww, you don't mean it. The first film that really moved me--this is previous to me even knowing that there were such a thing as directors--was in 1963 with "How the West Was Won" in 3-screen Cinerama. I still have the hardcover program, in which I wrote my name in crayon. Soon thereafter I saw "The Longest Day" on a re-release (this was probably 1965 or '66) and was also highly impressed.

Josh

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