

Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 32

Name: Richard Chapkis
E-mail: richard.chapkis@verizon.com

Dear Josh:

I just wanted to let you know that I read *The Biological Clock* and quite enjoyed it. Keep on writing.

Dear Richard:

Thank you. All right, I will.

Josh

Name: FCSQKHA
E-mail:

"Dear FCSQKHA: I don't detect a question in this missive. Maybe Cindy really likes my stuff, what about that, huh?"

Josh,

You know, you're probably right. Mea Culpa. I like your stuff, too. BTW, you sure have a nice ass. Oh yeah, and I just wanted you to know that I like to smoke pot, too. And not in that order, necessarily. :-)

Dear FCSQKHA:

Oh, come on! Liking my ass would certainly have to go ahead of anything else. Get real!

Josh

Name: Stone
E-mail:

Josh,

Which one of your film scripts posted online can be done for under \$300,000?

Stone

Dear Stone:

I suppose that "The Biological Clock" or "Buds" could be done for about \$300,000. It just cost me \$350,000 to shoot "Hammer" non-SAG in three weeks, so you don't get a whole helluva lot for that money these days, but you can make a 35mm feature.

Josh

Name: Wes
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Please do me a favor and rent "Bottle Rocket." I think you might actually like it. Check out "Dogfight" too if you get a chance.

Later,
Wes

Dear Wes:

I rent like one video a year. When these films pop up in front of my face on satellite TV I'll watch them.

Josh

Name: For Christ's Sake Quit Kissing His Ass!

E-mail:

Cindy,

Geez, give Josh a handjob already, would ya!! I like everything you do!!
Wow, we're so much alike! Wow! Wow! Wow! You take a shit and so do I!
Wow! Have a great Tuesday. It's sunny today. Wow!

Dear FCSQKHA:

I don't detect a question in this missive. Maybe Cindy really likes my stuff, what about that, huh?

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: swanlandprods@yahoo.com

Hey, Josh,

Thanks for the Anthony Mann "homework" list! He really had a wide-ranging career, from your list; I'm looking forward to seeing what all those fabulous digital cable stations might be showing. And, in one aspect, I do agree with you re "A Simple Plan," which is I would have liked to have seen a different actor in the role Bill Paxton played. There were times when all that credibility I was enjoying about the storyline (you know, "yes, I could believe ordinary people could start going paranoid like this if \$4 million was at stake") was sort of, um, dissipated by, ahem, overacting on Mr. Paxton's part. But I certainly admired Billy Bob & the rest of the cast, and, as I mentioned, the technical credits.

And, true, why think about filming during the strike without financing. "Oh, that," as you often say. I guess I hoped that without studio pictures going forward, there might be more resources floating around out there...but it's probably more likely that financing dollars will be just as difficult to get as ever. :(

So, today's question is about strike "alternatives." With your tremendous love of films and knowledge of film history, of course you, like me, are a natural to work in film & TV, but I was wondering if you had ever considered directing or writing for the stage?

Well, happy Tuesday, & have a great week...

best,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

I've considered a lot of alternatives, but the only thing at which I honestly think I excel is filmmaking. I may also be the harshest movie reviewer at this exact moment, but sadly that doesn't pay. Honestly, the constrictions of theater sort of bore me. I just saw a play last week in NYC, and it was an OK original play, but I had real trouble sitting there. I simply like movies better.

Josh

Name: F. R.

E-mail: swanlandprods@yahoo.com

Howdy, Josh!

A combination of work and the flu has kept me away from posting on the board lately, but it's been great reading the variety of discussion here from new people and "the regulars." I also like the new picture of you at the top of the pages; brings you (kicking and screaming?) into the 21st century! ;)

A few weeks ago, before my brain was addled by overwork and illness (although, I must say, I highly recommend fever-induced delirium -- *that* was an E-ticket ride, whoo-HOO!), I caught two excellent films on cable that I wanted to ask your opinion of. Ah, yes, digital cable, my friend... *that* is the secret to my being able to see a movie a day, sometimes more. It's amazing what's playing on HBO 3 or Starz 7 at 1 in the morning -- usually, sure, it's crap, but sometimes there's little gems like...

"The Tin Star," with Anthony Perkins and Henry Fonda. This was directed by Anthony Mann, whom I believe is one of the directors you admire, and, based on seeing this film, I would have to agree. I was really struck by how Mann filled the whole frame with action -- he had this cool device of putting giant picture windows in the sheriff's office, so that the timid sheriff (Perkins) and the world-weary bounty hunter (Fonda) would be discussing something in the office, but in the meantime you could see out that big window behind them that a lynch mob was gathering in the town square. Mann also used a great trick in a scene where the frightened sheriff had to confront the town bully -- he shot it from behind the bully, using forced perspective to make the bully look huge and the sheriff look like a little boy. Later in the movie, when the sheriff had been schooled by Fonda's character, the forced perspective was reversed. I also enjoyed seeing subthemes -- particularly one about racial prejudice -- that seemed way ahead of their times. What do you think of this film, Josh? Are there other Mann films you would recommend?

The other film I caught and was really floored by was "A Simple Plan," directed by your old pal Sam Raimi. It was just mesmerizing how much deeper and deeper the characters kept digging themselves, like something from Russian literature, yet the whole time I kept thinking, "my god, what would I do in that situation?" I think that's what made the film so emotionally powerful -- that the characters were really ordinary people, so that I could constantly picture myself in their place (of course, not that I think a plane with \$4 million in drug money is going to drop out of the sky into an empty field anywhere near *me* anytime soon...but you know what I mean). I was also impressed by the cinematography; I remember that

"Fargo" also did some great work with shooting those vast white fields of snow, but "A Simple Plan" managed to keep the look more muted, which just reinforced how colorless or, well, *simple* their lives were before they found the money. Any opinions on this film?

On another topic: since you have so many scripts that are already written, and you obviously work independently, do you think you might be able to make a film during the strike...if there's funding for one, of course?

Anyway, have a great Income Tax Day kinda day...

best,
F. R.

Dear F.R.:

I like "The Tin Star" very much. I think Anthony Mann was a terrific director. The bad guy, BTW, is Neville Brand, one of the most decorated soldiers of the Korean War. Other great Anthony Mann films are: "Raw Deal" (48), "Side Street" (49), "Winchester '73" (50), "Bend of the River" (51), "The Naked Spur" (52), "The Man from Laramie (55), "Men in War" (57), "Man of the West" (58), "The Fall of the Roman Empire" (64) (the film "Gladiator" ripped-off the most).

Regarding "A Simple Plan," since Sam is my friend let's just leave it at it wasn't everything I was hoping for. If you were moved by it, that's great.

Since I have no financing, why think about shooting during the strike?

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

That's a bummer to hear that your parents don't embrace your choice of profession. Know that you have friends who support you everywhere. I thought it was an interesting coincidence that you're reading "Post Office," I just finished that myself. Bukowski makes me feel like my life isn't so bad. Man, I've had some shitty jobs!

Regarding your script for "Buds," I don't know how autobiographical (read--your opinion) it was, but for the record, women do have a sense of humor--just not very many of them. I, for example, have one, but other women think there's something wrong with me, and I don't really get along well with women in general. So. We exist, and we're rare. And I smoke pot, too. These things are not necessarily related, but can be. At any rate...your hobbies are mine. Reading, watching old movies, talking, smoking pot, writing, and not necessarily in that order. And my writing is mostly non-fiction. And I shoot a lot of photos and make music, too. So. Have faith.

I really liked the opening sequence in the car, where the seasons change, and there they are, always the same, in the car, smoking pot, having the same conversation over and over again. God. So brilliant and concise and true. Thanks again for existing. Have a lovely Monday.

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

Thank you for making me smile. Yes, I think it's a good opening in "Buds," but it's kind of better than the rest of the script, which is a problem I could never quite solve.

Josh

Name: Tom Gerber
E-mail: tomg@hotmail.com

Hi Josh,

What do you think of the writing of films like Looking for Mr. Goodbar, Cool Hand Luke, and Body Heat? Do you consider these films any good?
Thanks.

Tom

Dear Tom:

"Cool Hand Luke" is a great movie with a first-rate script (score, cast, etc.). "Looking For Mr. Goodbar" is sort of a one-joke idea, as we simply wait for whomever will finally kill Diane Keaton. "Body Heat" is an illogical update of James M. Cain's "Double Indemnity" and "The Postman Always Rings Twice." Considering "Body Heat" takes place in the present-day, where are all the air conditioners?

Josh

Name: Purple Haze
E-mail: freedewy@love.com

Josh,

Man, you should listen to "Heroin" by The Velvet Underground while you read "Ball Breaker". Awesome!!! Oh yeah, you remind me of Elliot Gould in a film he did with Candice Bergen. He plays a guy studying to be an English professor. Can't think of the name right now, but the character he

plays seems a lot like the way I picture you. That's a good thing dude. :-)
BTW, what did you think of Alice's Restaurant?

Best,
Orange Sunshine

Dear Various Kinds of Acid:

The movie with Elliot Gould you're referring to is "Getting Straight" directed by Richard Rush. I actually met Mr. Rush recently and complimented him on that film, particularly the snap-zooms. I loved Arlo Guthrie's album "Alice's Restaurant" and used to know the entire thing from memory. I never much cared for Arthur Penn's film, though.

Josh

Name: Bukowski
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Hey, Are you going to teach a film class or what? I think you'd be great. You probably have enough film theory stuff written down to use your own textbook as required reading. You could force all those pimply kids to buy your book. Not too shabby. BTW, great site.

Best,
Bukowski

Dear Bukowski:

Thanks. I just finished a book by your namesake, Charles Bukowski, yesterday, "Post Office," and enjoyed it. Given my economic state, I may have to return to the idea of teaching quite soon. We'll see . . .

Josh

Name: Roddan
E-mail: roddanme@aol.com

Josh,

Great page dude. I hope you don't mind, I have several questions to ask you. What projects are you working on right now? Besides filmmaking, what are your other passions? Have you ever seen a film called "Mind Walk"? If you haven't, I think you might like it. Do you think a show like the

Waltons could work on network TV today? Lastly, you seem like a guy with lots of ideas, have you ever pitched a pilot? Thanks for your time. Keep up the great work guy!

Dear Roddan:

I'm trying to get my movie "If I Had a Hammer" released. So far, I'm getting no responses from anyone. What a lovely business. Beside filmmaking, my passions are: writing, reading, watching old movies, talking, and smoking dope, not necessarily in that order. Since I didn't give a crap about "The Waltons" when it was on -- although, as a kid, I quite liked the movie it was based on, "Spencer's Mountain" with Henry Fonda and Maureen O'Hara -- I don't know if it would work today or not. I haven't seen "Mind Walk." I haven't pitched a pilot because I don't have a series idea.

Josh

Name: Wes
E-mail:

Hey Josh,

Have you seen the films "Bottle Rocket" and "Rushmore"? What do you think of them if you have?

Dear Wes:

I haven't seen "Bottle Rocket." I thought "Rushmore" was idiotic, unbelievable, and dull. I didn't give a crap about the lead kid and never believed he'd be friends with Bill Murray, or vice versa.

Josh

Name: Stone
E-mail:

Josh,

How much would you need to do justice to your "Ball Breaker" script?

Dear Stone:

Depending on who plays Brubaker and how much they receive, a couple of

million, I think.

Josh

Name: Billy Budd

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Do your family and friends (besides the ones that are in the film business, that is) ever tell you to grow up and get a real job, or to settle down and get married, yadda, yadda, yadda? My family and friends are constantly putting me down for trying to be an artist. I'm 33 now and unmarried. All my friends have good jobs, and wives and kids, and stuff. Maybe I'm too sensitive, but it's really starting to get to me. I'm sick of people judging my life, but at the same time I'm doing what I love to do. I guess what I'm trying to ask is...do people try to bring you down about your life choices? And, if they do, how do you deal with it? Thanks so much. P.S. I really dig your work. :-)

Billy

Dear Billy:

I don't have any family members in the film business. My father has never really accepted my being in the film biz. My mother finally came around about ten years ago. My Dad likes proffering the syllogism that: the film business is a stupid business, therefore anyone that would go into it must be stupid. How do you deal with this? Develop a thick skin.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones

E-mail: cynthiaejones@hotmail.com

Dear Josh,

I've just finished reading your script for "Buds," and I enjoyed it. It would appear as though you've made a movie about two people I know, or possibly an amalgam of quite a few people. It sounds like Pete's character is based on one of your "V.B.U.A." friends, the Very Bright Under Achievers. I have many such friends.

Whenever I get to do some cool assignment or something, my friends say, "I wish I had a cool job like you." or "You're lucky to get to work at a newspaper," to which I want to yell, "No, I'm not lucky, I've been shooting photos for over ten years and honing my skills and putting together a portfolio so I could get a job like this someday and here I am!" Luck had nothing to do with it. Ah, well. And then they go off to their jobs that they

hate, and come home and escape, escape. And they all have extremely high I.Q.'s and all of us have no money. But I'm working on it.

So, cool. Job well done. Enjoyable read. Do you have PDF versions or something? I copied it from your site and pasted it into Microsoft Word so I could print it (I hate reading things that long on a computer screen), but then there were a lot of extra spaces I had to delete, you know, internet text. I could've sworn you had text versions a few weeks ago...

Oh, yeah, Happy Easter! I'm sure you'll be attending mass all day like all good Christians. But seriously, what are you doing today? I'm thinking about going to the river later... have a lovely deserted day. I like it when the people disappear.

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

The characters in "Buds" are based on myself and my friend Paul, with whom I wrote the script. Paul is the one who is about 80% through shooting a feature in 16mm with his Bolex, so he no longer qualifies as a VBUA. I didn't do anything for Passover, so you can be certain I'll do nothing for Easter. Have a good one.

Josh

Name: XenaHerc
E-mail: XLWH@aol.com

Hi Josh.

Isn't Garth Maxwell a Kiwi? As far as directing at least one episode every season, he lives in the "neighborhood". You have had to travel a good mile all 6 seasons to get there to direct your episodes. I think you deserve accolades for that.

Take care,

XenaHerc

Dear XenaHerc:

Yes, Garth is a New Zealander. But, for a second there, I thought I was special. Oh well.

Josh

Name: MTZ
E-mail: lucyfer@idirect.com

Josh,

Thanks for clearing that up. I know you don't watch the show so I was wondering where you got your info from. The credits for every episode can be found at www.whoosh.org including a list of directors.

Good luck with your life after XWP!

MTZ

Dear MTZ:

Pacific Renaissance Pictures sent out a complete list of Xena eps with the wrap party invitation. I just looked at it again and gosh-darn if Garth Maxwell's name isn't listed there for each and every season, just as you said. I simply didn't look close enough. Thanks for the correction.

Josh

Name: Ted
E-mail: ecryan@holycross.edu

Josh,

why do you think everyone is using hand-held camera work these days? every movie i see, it seems to be used to convey a stressful situation. even in 2001, kubrick uses it when the astronaut is about to disconnect HAL. in your opinion, what do you prefer to do in high action sequences? you said you like "specific shots"?

i know lots of directors who storyboard films. do you do that?

and by the way, i agree about not talking about camera work in a screenplay. to everyone who writes scripts on the sight, DO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME PROVIDING CAMERA ANGLES--NO ONE CARES. focus on the things that really matter in a script--good dialogue, good characters, good story, etc.

--TR

Dear Ted:

I storyboarded everything I directed for many years. It wasn't until several episodes into Xena -- when I got the script the day I started shooting -- that I finally stopped. I think it's really important to young filmmakers to

storyboard, which makes you think about your shot selection and gives a chance to see what the shots cut together will sort of look like. Kubrick using a hand-held camera for one sequence (actually two, he uses it when the find the monolith on the moon, too) is quite different than using it all the time. If you use it occasionally, then it has impact because you can differentiate it from the steady shots. In RT I used steady-cam for acts one & three and hand-held for the heist in act two, which makes it different and edgier. If you shoot everything hand-held it is, in my opinion, boring.

Josh

Name: mandy
E-mail: amp56@bellsouth.net

Dear Josh:

hi. i go to south miami middle school and i need to make a report on careers for language. but first i need to research about what i want to be when i grow up. i want to be a director, but its very difficult to find information on directing films. can you send me information on directing films and shows please?

thankyou
mandy

Dear Mandy:

No.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

How has film stock changed over the years? I've always noticed a difference in film from the 60's and 70's to ones from the 80's to the present. Is it something to do with digital technology or are they just using a higher quality of film? I kind of like the look of the older films better.

Dear D.:

Kodak keeps improving the film stocks, making the grain finer, the color range wider, adding faster film stocks that will expose in ever-lower light conditions.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

An interesting development has occurred regarding the film my friend, Rob, and I are making this summer: Rob's grandmother died a few weeks ago. As stipulated in her will, she has left Rob a house to live in, a car to drive, and a large sum of money to start his life with (he has a kid due in a few weeks--yes, the new dad wants to make a movie, too...). Fortunately (or whatever you want to call it), we now have some money to make our film with. So.

Since we're shooting digital video, and ideally shooting on location...where are the expenses on a low-budget film for the most part? From what I understand, it's usually the film and processing that makes it so pricey, so where should our money go? Our actors are all working for free, I certainly am, and...we may be able to take a month off of work and live off of Grandma's generosity, so there's some money there. I know, this is a silly question, but I guess I'm asking where the best investments in a non-budget film lie--equipment? food? travel expenses? alcohol? drugs? film school?

Any advice regarding budget usage would be helpful. Until then, have a lovely Thursday. The sun's coming back now!

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

To end up with a finished product of broadcast quality you'll have to spend some actual money in post production. Also, even though you may be able to get free actors, you may want to pay the actors to get a better quality of actor, which is crucially important. And, of course, make sure you have a solid script, which won't cost you anymore. Good luck.

Josh

Name: MTZ
E-mail: lucyfer@idirect.com

Josh,

In your report on the final wrap of Xena, you said "I am very proud to say that I am the only director to have worked on all six seasons of the show. A number of directors did many more episodes than I, but not in all six seasons."

How can you make that claim? Garth Maxwell also directed at least one episode in all six seasons.

His episodes are as follows:

S1 MORTAL BELOVED
S2 THE EXECUTION
S2 LOST MARINER
S3 FORGIVEN
S4 PAST IMPERFECT
S4 DEVI
S4 ENDGAME
S5 SEEDS OF FAITH
S5 LOOKING DEATH IN THE EYE
S6 HAUNTING OF AMPHIPOLIS
S6 GOD YOU KNOW
S6 LAST OF THE CENTAURS

Seems you're not alone.

MTZ

Dear MTZ:

Jeez, I thought I checked the list pretty well (I don't have it on hand right now), but I guess I'm wrong. Well then, Garth and I are the only directors to make it through all six seasons. Sorry for the erroneous information.

Josh

Name: Colleen Kosinski
E-mail: colleen@myartsite.com

Dear Josh:

Hi, I wrote a screenplay and now i am trying to sell it. I have it registered with the WGA. Is that sufficient protection. My approach is going to be to send it to the agents of the actors that I would like to star in the film.

Thanks for any suggestions!

Colleen

Dear Colleen:

No, registering your script with the Writer's Guild is not sufficient. Copyright it with the Register of Copyrights at the Library of Congress. It costs \$20 and is the official and proper way to protect your material.

Josh

Name: Bob Lee
E-mail: bob_lee@qscaudio.com

Dear Josh:

"If I Had a Hammer" sounds really interesting (not just because I know Drew Daniels). I'm looking forward to seeing it. When do you expect it to be released? Thanks.

Dear Bob:

Ah! Isn't that the question of my life right now. If only I had an answer, or a hammer, for that matter. Drew's really good in the film, me thinks.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Oscar disappointment became a pastime for me in 1991, the first year I really cared what won. I wanted "Goodfellas," one of my favorite films, to be best picture and the ridiculous and pandering "Dances with Wolves," (don't get me started on the self-righteousness of Kevin Costner) came out ahead instead, taking home the Academy Award. Scorsese? Whatever...uh...hey, that "Field of Dreams" guy made a movie! Hooray! It makes me feel guilty about being white, so it must be good!

In related notes, Tom Hanks? Okay. 'Nuf said regarding Oscar. And since I've only recently met you and been unable to talk about these things 'cos they're not recent, do you hate "Forrest Gump" as much as I do? I have found that me, and maybe two other people on this planet didn't like that film. Perhaps you could be the third.

Once I realized that there was this "near-Grammy" thing going on, I stopped thinking that the results even mattered. Clearly, that shifts when my favorite actors or directors are nominated, but I don't think it really adds to their clout at all. It just means that the Academy agreed with me for a change.

So...what did you do on Evil Dead 2, exactly, and might I be able to find you in the behind-the-scenes footage on DVD? Seeing Ted at age 20 or so, miserable and wanting to kill Sam, is terrifically amusing.

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

I must be brief today. Add me happily as your third on the I-Don't-Like-"Forrest Gump" Club. I am basically an extra in ED2 and I don't think I'm included in any of behind-the-scenes stuff. I am one of the knights in armor looking down at Bruce when he first lands in 1300. My hand is also the very last thing you see before it cuts to black and goes to the credits.

Josh

Name: Nick k
E-mail: sousa_inc@yahoo.com.au

Dear Josh:

The problem with the script is it's very predictable. You have a skeleton, but it needs more guts. The characters are very one dimensional. But it has potential.

PS- I'm talking about stryker's war

Dear Nike K:

Hey, guess what? We shot the film 16 years ago. Too late to fix it now.

Josh

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

Josh,

Just finished reading "Ball Breaker"...Quite a story. Real rough. I liked that about it. Not sure that I felt comfortable with the cartoon humor, but I suppose it could work when actually seen rather than read.

Just wondering, from the very start, I saw John Heard as Joe. Wondering who you envisioned playing the role?

You say it's the script that's been around the most...Did it ever come close to being made? Would you still make the scrips you post, or is the whole idea of posting them basically mean they are the stories you're no longer interested in?

And by the way, are you a Micky Rooney fan, or was it meant to be poking fun at him?

Thanks for a memorable read.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I'd make any of these scripts if someone offered to put up the money. The scripts of mine I don't like I'm not posting. BB came pretty damn close to being made for a while there in the early 90s with good old Roger Corman. Alas, the head of production quit and BB immediately vanished. And yes, I like Mickey Rooney a lot. He also produced and starred in a bunch of terrific B pictures in the 40s and 50s, like "Quicksand." The idea of using him for that part is somewhat based on a film he made with Carl Reiner called "The Comic," where he and Dick Van Dyke play a game with the stars on Hollywood Blvd.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

"GOAT CHEESE MILKSHAKES" eh? The mind boggles.

I'm leaning toward our favorite hippie-lovin' gal Gab (Maddie) ordering one in a health food bar. At some point it is inevitable that it gets spilled all over Joxer.

Sir, could you tell us about anything taught to you when studying to be a director that, once you got into your own experiences and tried to apply it, was WRONG? i.e. What is still being taught today that shouldn't be?

And since you seem to indicate you were an observer of film since a child, is there any preconceived ideas about filmmaking that you have come to find you were "right on" about?

Dear Diana:

These are weirdly vague questions, however I still try to answer them. I wasn't taught film directing, I learned it on my own. It's a long process and most of it is learned by doing it. The thing I feel "right on" about is having learned the techniques of telling a well-structured story.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Thanks to the wonders of half.com, I was able to order a nearly-new (watched only once) copy of TSNK...E on DVD! Hooray! I should be receiving it soon, and then I'll have the voice-modulation part of the Josh Becker software completed.

Also...having a blast watching Evil Dead and Evil Dead II on DVD with commentary. (Obviously, I'm gearing up for the Xena convention in my own special way.) So much fun!

Regarding Myrna Loy... has she ever won anything at all, Oscar-wise? I think she's terrific in everything I've seen her in. I also love how her leading men always seem to look like William Powell....

have a lovely rainy weekend!

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

Myrna Loy never won an Oscar, which is a great crime. The other horrible crime of the Oscars (pre-1980) was in 1950 when Judy Holliday got Best Actress over Bette Davis for "All About Eve" and, get this, Gloria Swanson for "Sunset Blvd." I'm still so offended I can't express it.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Here's a site that might interest you. It allows you to send in loglines to an assortment of Hollywood-type producers, then puts your loglines up on the site. I know there are other sites like this, but in this case the producers are associated with movies you've heard of, and it's free. Anyway, the address is: <http://www.hollywoodlitsales.com/>

Dear Chopped Nuts:

I know the guy that runs that site, he lives in my neighborhood. I believe he has links to some of my essays.

Josh

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

Josh,

I feel compelled to write you and find something out. You only read non-fiction these days heh? Well, I just completed the best non-fiction book ever written...Have you ever come across "The Long Walk" by Slavomir Rawicz? It's the true story of seven POW's who escaped from a Russian prison camp in Northern Siberia and WALKED all the way to Northern India where they meet up with the British. It's brutal, funny, mysterious, and epic. And it's all TRUE! It really happened! What a story. What a film it would make if translated faithfully! I'm tellin' ya, if ya ain't read this book, you gotta!

The best,
Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I saw a movie recently that's sort of like that. It's called "The Truce" with John Turturro and it's the true story of the Italian writer Primo Levi. Once he was released from Auschwitz by the Russians, the prisoners are shipped back to Russia and quickly forgotten. They now must all struggle to get themselves back to their homes across war-torn Europe, which, in some cases takes over a year.

Josh

Name: That "Old Friend"
E-mail: dnelson@donerus.com

Josh,

Nice writing. Your stories are pretty funny. I've never been able to find a poster of Lunatics, but it's cool that it's out on video. I just watched "The Blind Waiter" yesterday. Cameron over-acted a bit, but it's still funny.

Good Luck.
- DN

Dear Dan:

Good to hear from you. Dan Nelson, for those of you who don't him, was a collaborator on the earliest films Bruce, Sam, Scott and I made in Michigan, many years ago (the earliest of which, Dan, are nearing 30 years old). When we were 10-year old kids, in 1968, a thirty-year old film was from 1938, before Humphrey Bogart became a star.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Do critics look at unsolicited, independent films? Just wondering how all these pictures that play at Sundance or Toronto have critical praises splashed all over the press books before they play the festival? I thought you may have an idea, or might even be so lucky right now with "Hammer"?

Also, do you still make money off of all your films? I guess this may be sort of a personal question that you wouldn't want to answer. I was just wondering if you still make some sort of percentage everytime someone buys an \$80.00 movie called "Lunatics: A Love Story"?

Sincerely,
Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

No, I think that's a perfectly reasonable question. I haven't made a cent on "Lunatics" since my one and only payment for directing it in 1989. I did not receive any compensation of any kind when it was sold to Columbia in 1991, other than the personal satisfaction of knowing that I had made an independent movie that had broken even. I never even got a copy of the video tape.

Regarding critics viewing unreleased films, they don't generally do it. Critics generally watch movies that are being shown somewhere or are soon going to be shown somewhere.

Josh

Name: Chris Peacock
E-mail: metaphysicalpickle@earthlink.net

Hello Sir-

I will soon be in the position of directing a feature with stars for the first time. It's a foreign pre-sales deal for a script I wrote. Basically, if the budget comes in before our holding agreement with the star runs out, then this thing is a go. Now, to be sure, I am ready to dive into this thing. However, having only directed a couple shorts so far, the sheer amount of people involved and things to do is making me wonder where to begin. I want to be smart about this. As an experienced, and obviously successful director, how do you begin each project?

Dear Chris:

That's quite a big, open-ended question. It makes me want to answer it with one word like "Cautiously" or "Eagerly." Preparedness is your weapon. When I'm on the set I know for a fact that no one present has thought about this scene, these lines, and these camera moves more than me. Even on a TV schedule I know that I have read this scene and thought about it more than everybody, therefore I feel secure. And communicate with your department heads -- anything you envision in your planning, make sure someone else knows about it: every special prop, any extra that has special business, anything visual like a really wide lens, a crane move, anything, tell the department head and it will be there when you want it. Good luck.

Josh

[BACK TO Main Archive Page](#)

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