

# Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive  
Page 36

Name: Aaron  
E-mail: [agraham83@hotmail.com](mailto:agraham83@hotmail.com)

Dear Josh:

Just going through your favorite films list and saw "Pi" there and was curious if you have seen Darren Aronofsky's second film "Requiem For A Dream" yet? He seems to have his three acts down, but his characters are so damn boring. Ellen Burstyn did give an incredible performance, but you don't really care what happens to her. Anyway, with all the praise this film was given, was just curious to your opinion.

Thanks!

Dear Aaron:

Sorry, I haven't seen it.

Josh

Name: August  
E-mail: [joxerfan@hotmail.com](mailto:joxerfan@hotmail.com)

Dear Josh,

I know you aren't big on remakes or adaptations of existing works, but I think a lot of the visitors to your site, who enjoy your reviews, often wonder "what if?" about a lot of films. So I'll ask this anyway - is there any film (or adaptation of a novel or historical event) that you've really thought "Man,

that had SO much potential! If only...." If so, what might you have done differently? (I asked you this once about "American Beauty," I think.) Nothing wrong with a little Monday morning quarterbacking, after all.

Also, I wanted to thank you for some help that you gave me that you didn't even know about. I just finished a grad class in museum administration, and the final project was a hypothetical exhibition, complete with gallery guides, object descriptions, etc. My topic was depictions of Hercules throughout history, starting with Greek vase painting and going all the way up to Steve Reeves, Disney and Kevin Sorbo. The theme was how the same motifs turn up again and again (the Hydra, Cerberus, etc.) and how different eras and art forms have depicted them. So of course there was a reference to the "lost classic" Hercules vs. Atlas story, and how the old vs. new would have been especially ironic if an older muscleman actor had played Atlas. There would have been quotes from you all over the place (if the exhibition had actually existed.) Got an A, so something must have sounded interesting. So thanks, dude!

August

Dear August:

You have misunderstood me. I have no problem with adaptation of novels, plays or short stories, or even poems, to film. I don't like sequels or remakes. Historical events are just about my favorite subject for film stories. The most recent one that could have been good due to subject matter, but sucked due to treatment was John Milius' TNT film "The Rough Riders." Another would be the TNT film "Gettysburg," which blew, but the book it's based on, "The Killer Angels" by Michael Shaara, is brilliant.

Josh

Name: Noelle

E-mail:

Hi Josh,

Ok I see your point about the special effects. I guess what I was trying to get at was whether or not anyone had really accomplished a completely realistic drug experience on film. Not that that total realism is always the desired effect. Fear and Loathing (yes its a crappy film) made a few attempts at it. I haven't seen Altered States so I can't comment. I'm in my twenties so I haven't had time to see everything dammit. lol

This is an unrelated question but have you seen the documentary The Ed Wood Story (aka Flying Saucers over Hollywood). I loved Sam Raimi and Scott Spiegel's You Bet Your Life reenactment.

Thanks for putting up with me, Noelle

Dear Noelle:

Well rent or buy the DVD of "Altered States" and let me know what you think of the tripping scenes, which were done by effects supervisor Bran Ferren, pre-digital effects. No, I haven't seen or even heard of that Ed Wood thing. I assume Sam and Scott are doing Tor Johnson on "You Bet Your Life," which Scott has on audio tape and we've all listened to a thousand times. It's pretty damn funny.

Josh

Name: dixie launder  
E-mail: a12sragnet@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

what is the structural differences between a comedy and tragedy in a play?

Dear Dixie:

There is no difference. Tragedy and comedy are structurally the same thing, which is drama.

Josh

Name: renee  
E-mail: insect\_bub@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

oh, regarding what the heck i'm talking about, right. i forgot to mention that i'm directing a short film with a pool game in it.. that's why i was asking about whether or not to be overly concerned with the continuity. heh. sorry to confuse.

Dear Renee:

If the pool game is not crucial to the scene, then don't bother about any sort of continuity. As long as you have cut-aways, meaning shots that don't include the whole pool table, like close-ups of the people playing, as well as shots of various balls hitting each other and going into holes, you can cut it any way you want.

Josh

Name: Noelle  
E-mail: apple4pear@aol

Dear Josh:

I liked Delirious alot, but wouldn't it have been difficult at the time to do the acid scenes without looking cheesy?(before computer effects were ubiquitous.)

Dear Noelle:

"King Kong" was made in 1933 and no one has yet made a better effects movie. I don't see what computer effects have to do with tripping scenes. "Altered States" still has the best tripping effects, none of which are computer effects, and you really couldn't improve on them. It's not like special effects didn't begin until the advent of computers. Look at what Ray Harryhausen was doing in the 50s and 60s, without computers. Anyway, I'm glad you enjoyed the script.

Josh

Name: Homer  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

You've worked with both of these guys.

So tell me, IN YOUR OPINION, if Kevin Smith and Kevin Sorbo got into a fist fight; who would you bet your money on?

Just a fun question, and there's no right or wrong answer; so don't be scared to answer honestly.

Homer

Dear Homer:

When I was in junior high school this was the sort of thing we enjoyed speculating about, which of the two biggest dudes in school could beat each other up? Both Sorbo and Smith are very friendly, nice guys, I truly can't imagine them fighting each other or anyone else. If I had to bet, however, I'd put my money on Kevin Smith, in that he's younger and hasn't had the health problems that Mr. Sorbo has.

Josh

Name: renee  
E-mail: insect\_bub@hotmail.com

hey josh,

any films you can remember off the top of yer head with interesting pool/snooker sequences ?????? also, i can't decide whether to worry over the continuity of the game or just let it go, seeing as the game isn't the focus of the scene. advice?

Dear Renee:

Obviously, for pool scenes there's "The Hustler" and "The Color of Money." As for the rest, I don't know what the heck you're talking about.

Josh

Name: Tim Gibson  
E-mail: funcrew@yahoo.com

Josh,

Your movie reviews are brutal - you rule!

I am directing a series of 5 to 10 page shorts in Houston. My very talented writer spends a lot of time to get each script as funny (or scary, or whatever), fast-paced, character-driven, and SHORT as possible.

We have read your essays on structure - you are absolutely right on all counts. Thanks a million for such a terrific resource as your essays. I always balked at the need for the 3-act structure, but you have made me a true believer.

Two questions - I just saw "Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels (1998, rent @ Hollywood Video)." I liked the gimmicky plot and artsy-fartsy camera effects (mixed real speed, slow-mo, and freeze frame in the same take).

Q1. Did you see this movie, and if so, did you like it?

Q2. The movie mentioned above had some voice-over narration that I liked. Do you feel that voice-over narration is always a cop-out, or can it be part of a good script?

Thanks!

Dear Tim:

You know, I saw "Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels" and it went in one ear and out the other. As to voice-over narration, I'm actually a fan in many cases, if it's being used as character revelation. I particularly like it in "Taxi Driver" where it's him writing journal entries and Christmas cards greeting cards and stuff that tells us who he is. Then you have something like James Whitmore reading the book "The Red Badge of Courage" over the film, and I still think that works pretty well, too. I don't like it, however, when it's pointless and just filling space.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Wow! I figured Pearl Harbor would be just about the last movie you'd ever see. Why did you choose that film?

A short script of mine has been selected for a reading before "industry professionals", whatever that might mean. What I was wondering is this: have you had any of your works done in a reading and if so did you find it of any use? Were there good questions asked or to be asked? And so forth...

Thanks.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

Yes, I have had my scripts read and I like it a lot. I think it's very helpful because all those lines were meant to be spoken and now you get to hear them spoken. What's amazing, if you're paying attention, is the different interpretations different actors can give to the same lines. Oh, and as to why would I see "Pearl Harbor"? Of all the people in the world, Sam Raimi called me and asked me to go with him to the opening day matinee. Sam just wrapped "Spiderman" and was eager to see a film again. Anyway, he liked "PH" better than me.

Josh

Name: Robert Boyce  
E-mail: CelticCross@email.com

Josh,

Great site! Some advice... There is a huge Xena fan base out there looking for a home, and with my interest in and fan interest in the Amazon Warriors, I've been trying to grab some interest from TNT, UPN, USA and WB in a series concept of mine called "TRIBE", which picks up a year after

the fall of the Amazon Nation. So far, no one that counts has ever been to a Xena convention or talked with fans, as an Amazon series would pick up most floundering Xena fans. What am I doing wrong? Am I contacting the wrong studios, is New Zealand no longer a great location, what? I have spoken with ALOT of fans and TRIBES would work.

Any words of wisdom, leads, your pov, are welcome. Thanks for your time.

R. Boyce

Dear Robert:

Everyone and their brother wants to get a project going out here, why would anyone pay any attention to you? They sure don't pay any attention to me. Rob Tapert shot a pilot film for a possible series called "Amazon High" that was just dreadful, maybe he ruined it for all amazon stories.

Josh

Name: Donny

E-mail:

Dear Josh: 2 questions.

First, was Renee having any problems with morning sickness or any other pregnancy related problems when she was filming "SP"?

Second. Let's say your down in New Zealand getting ready to direct a Xena. I assume the days for shooting are scheduled ahead of time. What happens if on the morning of a scheduled day of shooting where Lucy and Renee(since they are the stars) are supposed to shoot several scenes, one of them turns up sick? I know they work when they are sick, but let's say Lucy or Renee get larangitis and simply cannot talk. If you can't talk, I'd assume you couldn't do you your scenes. If that situation occurs and you are the director.....what do you do; what steps do you take?

Donny

Dear Donny:

That never happened to me on Xena. Clearly, if your star is sick and can't speak, they must reschedule their scenes. It's not just the director's problem. As to Renee, she seemed absolutely fine all the time I worked with her.

Josh

Name: noelle  
E-mail: apple4pear@aol.com

Josh,

I caught Wyler's Mrs. Miniver and Mann's Marty this weekend. Both were quite good. Thank you for the Wyler essay, which made me realize that I was a William Wyler fan and didn't even know it. I've seen many of his films but never really paid attention to the credits I guess. Did you know that Greer Garson married the guy who played her son in that film?

I also read the new journal entry. Wow. Like you said its not like Kerouac at all. I guess you can't write anything about hitchhiking without being compared to On the Road. I read quite a bit of Kerouac when I took classes from one of his biographers, and I must say that I like your style much better. It's more honest, blunt, and clear than anything I ever read of his.

Ok I guess I really do have a question. I talked to my grandfather this weekend about what he thought of the Pearl Harbor movie, which neither of us saw or will see. I asked because he was stationed at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed and also fought at Guadalcanal and won three medals for his service. He seemed kind of insulted about the movie, I guess because its clear that the filmmakers are using that incident as fodder for what is obviously a flimsy throw away summer flick. The last movie he saw in a theater was in the 70's and he's still sharp enough to spot a dog when he sees it. As I mentioned I saw Mrs. Miniver and thought that was a really good treatment of the subject matter and just plain good filmmaking. The question then: What is it that separates a bad exploitative pap like Saving Pvt Ryan, Thin Red Line, and The Patriot from stuff that really has something to say about war? Miniver was made very close to the time of the Battle of Britain, and at least served as a bit of an uplifting propaganda piece whereas Pearl Harbor serves no earthly purpose other than to show off some nifty special effects.

Whew. This is getting long; Do I ever shutup? lol Noelle.

Dear Noelle:

Greer Garson marrying the kid who played her son in "Mrs. Miniver" is wonderful old gossip. It's true, but people were very shocked at the time. I think Ms. Garson is astounding in "Mrs. Miniver." What's the difference between this film and "Pearl Harbor"? You already said it, Wyler is giving you fully dimensional characters that are reacting honestly to their situation. Bruckheimer & co. only use characters as a way into the action and effects. All three of the leads are just utter bullshit. The one potentially interesting character, Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s character, gets no characterization and no screen time. "Pearl Harbor," in my opinion, is the definition of an exploitation movie, in that all the entertainment is based on watch people die for the sake of watching them die.

Josh



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

Dear Josh:

Whoa! Spring cleaning for the main page? Nice change from the black. I like the hip font choice.

I enjoyed watching In Sickness and in Hell the other day. I wanted to ask you about the old cliché in show business, "Never work with kids and animals".

It seems, with your positive experience with the little gal in If the Shoe Fits and the beautiful shots of Tilly (Argo) in ISAIH, you defied that rule.

Was the shot of Argo rearing up in the field, that far away shot, stock footage? Or did you have a trainer just off camera getting her to rear? (It was beautiful, by the way).

And I am awestruck that you got Tilly to nibble on the apple tree \*right on cue\* just after Lucy finishes her line about "How did they manage to win you over"...

How in tarnation did you do that? Luck? Lots of takes?

Also--The day before Soul Poss. airs, I am planning on having myself a Becker party, and am watching all your Xena eps with a big-ass bowl of popcorn. In ISAIH, I loved the way you had Campbell Cooley shooting up screaming from being drooled on and it morphs over into him shooting up in the jail cell. You mentioned that you do a similar carry-over in Fins Femmes and Gems. I consider it your trademark maneuver. Are there any other scenes in the other eps where you do this, that I can look out for during my party viewing?

Dear Diana:

Thanks from Shirley and I regarding the main page. Liven things up a bit. Sure, they say never work with kids or animals, but writers are constantly using them in scripts. My experiences with both have always been quite positive. That shot of Argo (Tilly, if you will) was done on 2nd unit, but I'm sure they had wranglers immediately out of frame. I'm glad you brought up Argo nibbling on the apple because that was sheer luck, or Tilly understanding the scene. I was anticipating having to go in for a final close-up of Argo eating the apple, but didn't have to bother. And finally, as to my trademark transitions, just watch "Warrior . . . Princess . . . Tramp" and see how I'm getting from Xena to the princess to Meg. I did all kinds of transitions in the upcoming "Soul Possession" because the whole episode is going back in forth in time.

Josh

Name: Rick Allender

E-mail: [rick@gaffrig.co.nz](mailto:rick@gaffrig.co.nz)

Giddy Josh

Cool site ya got!  
They were good times on Herc eh!  
Have a look at this - [www.gaffrig.co.nz](http://www.gaffrig.co.nz)

Rick

Dear Rick:

Long time no hear. For the readers, Rick Allender was the 2nd unit director of photography on "Hercules" for its entire run. He and I worked together at the very beginning of Herc when I was 2nd unit director. Rick could light anything as well as the main unit DP, only four times faster. Thanks for dropping by, Rick.

Good-on-ya,

Josh

Name: JR

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Just a few simple questions.

Is Renee O'Connor as gorgeous in person as she appears on screen? Also she seems to be a very sweet and kind lady in interviews; is that how she really is? Also I've heard you say you visited some parties at Rob and Lucy's home in New Zealand when you were down there. Did Renee and/or Steve also attend any of these parties at Lucy's you attended?

Thanks.

JR

Dear JR:

Renee's attractive, certainly, but she's not drop-dead gorgeous. She is one the sweetest people I've ever met, though, and always in a good mood, always knows her lines, her fight blocking, whatever. And she seems to really like getting useful bits of direction and always thanked me for them, so I think she's great.

Josh

Name: S.C.  
E-mail: scornett@yahoo.com

Josh,

I just read the Q/A about Steven King. I haven't read much of his stuff. What I have read, I've generally enjoyed... until the endings. I thought the endings to his stories were always horrible cop-outs. The one exception, though, was "Misery". I thought it was a great story, with a great ending. Also, I thought the film version of it was quite good. Have you read/seen "Misery", and if so, what did you think?

Regarding Danny Elfman: I agree that his soundtracks tend to move around a lot, without much focus. I think, though, that when used correctly, they work well with certain films. ...That might have something to do with my taste in music, though. I like a lot of chaotic stuff, and can hear melodies and repetition in places where most people would be overwhelmed and annoyed. I enjoyed his soundtrack to "Midnight Run". ...Thought it was a bit over-produced, but good, none-the-less, and worked well with the film

-S.C.

Dear S.C.:

Yeah, "Misery" was pretty good. The last 15 or 20 minutes turn into a rather run-of-the-mill horror film, with -- she's dead -- no, she's not dead -- wait, no she's dead -- nope, she's not dead, etc. "The Dead Zone" isn't bad, either.

Josh

Name: Jim  
E-mail: Starion106@aol.com  
Dear Josh: Josh,

It seems like you were really into journal writing for awhile there in the 70s (ED Journal, Alaska). Do you continue to write in a journal? With Alaska Journal especially, I was reminded a lot of Keruoac's writing style. Had you read On the Road or Dharma Bums or Big Sur prior to this journal writing? And have you ever considered doing a road movie? Off the top of my head, I can't think of many good road movies. I can think of a lot of road movies that have sucked though. I find this style of writing to be fascinating, and imagine it's near-impossible to translate it adequately into movie form. Might be a fun challenge to try though.

Jim

Dear Jim:

I had already read "On the Road" and "Dharma Bums" when I wrote the Alaska Journal, but it wasn't a huge influence. Just one of them. I am an avid journal-keeper and have kept it going now for over twenty-five years. It's probably between 20,000-30,000 pages long, like the Durant's 12-volume history of civilization, only FAR duller. I hardly ever go back and read it anymore. As to road movies, I've certainly thought about them, but I can't get past how linear they are. That structure ultimately bores me.

Josh

Name: MELANY LOWE  
E-mail: lowfam@xtra.co.nz

hi!HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE MOVIE/DIRECTING BUSINESS? AND AT THE ANCHOR PARTY IF YOU REMEMBER WHAT IS CRISPIN GLOVER LIKE?I HEARD HE IS REALLY STRANGE? do YOU MEET ALOT OF FAMOUS PEOPLE DIRECTING?AND LASTLY WHAT DO I NEED SCHOOL WISE TO BECOME A DIRECTOR?

Dear Melany:

Are you screaming at me? How did I get into the business? I don't think I am. I'm dangling precariously on the edge. Crispin and I rode in a limo to the party together and he was very nice. His girlfriend is sort of odd (and cute), in that she's a mortician, but I guess someone has to do it. No, I haven't really met very many famous people. And school has nothing to do with being in the film business, certainly not as a director.

Josh

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

Josh,

What is the aspect ratio of "If I Had A Hammer"? You shot it in Panavision, right? Isn't that 2.35:1 ratio? I'm curious why you picked to shoot in whatever aspect ratio you ultimately chose?

I'm kinda of curious on this too. Do you think "Chinatown" is as great as all the critics have said over the years? Many say it's one of the best screenplays ever...I don't really understand this. I really like the film, but I've always wondered why critic's are so absolutely taken with it. To be quite honest, I think it'd be better 10 minutes shorter.

A good one to you.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I shot with a Panavision camera, but I didn't shoot wide-screen, I shot at 1.85:1, which is the standard format of most theatrically released movies. Since I was making such an oddball film (a folk musical with non-SAG actors?), I decided to do everything else pretty much normally: color, 35mm, 1.85:1, just in case someone actually wanted to release it.

As to "Chinatown," I think the critics were so blown away seeing an intelligent, well-written, well-made detective film -- there hadn't been one since the 1940s and there hasn't been one since -- that they heaped every bit of praise they could muster on it, and it's a darn good film and worthy of most of it. Yes, it's a bit flaccid and could use a little trimming, but it's still pretty damn good. I'm the world's biggest fan of detective films, but I'd say "Chinatown" goes right up there with the best, like "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big Sleep."

Josh

Name: Go Go  
E-mail: xtianito@aol.com

Yo Josh...

knowing you're from the MotorCity...  
What are the chances of you ever doing something of the Boxing World?

Dear Go Go:

I'm a big boxing fan so the idea of a boxing story interests me. I don't have one, but I like the idea.

Josh

Name: Jack McClure  
E-mail: mcclure\_jack@elsva.com

Hi Josh;

I found your site through Whoosh!, being a XWP nut and an occasional contributor thereto (Issue 39 - "Xena's Calander, Month of April, Year Unknown" and Issue 50 - "Report of Findings, Second Expedition" in my letter to the editor).

I started writing a SciFi, tentatively titled "Puss & Boots in the 23rd Century", and am working with an on-line writer's critique group "Hatrack Writer'Forum" hosted by Orson Scott Card. This is my first crack at writing, and I am having a ball! And have over 100,000 words down so far.

Now to my question, Sir. I was at Pasadena on Sunday in the back of the room when Lucy talked about her future direction(s), and was totally blown away by her telling us of a scenario she had on her mind, in which the wife of the operator/director/whatever of a biological weapons storage facility is trapped in a room when things go bad due to an accidental release.

She can talk to her husband on the intercom, but she can't be saved by him or his men, and has only 45 seconds to live. Lucy said, 'I know I can make you laugh, now I want to make you cry, in 45 seconds...'

On my long flight back to D.C., I thought about that, while making notes for "P&B", and started wondering if I could write a screen play. Later, I remembered a real-life instance about a person I knew in college the early '60s, who was a girl very much like women are today (Lucy or Renee, or my daughter for instance - who is in their a same age & attitude group), and so was ahead of her time back then.

Her name was Brenda, and she a nice, gently strong, pretty young woman who wanted to do and see everything she could - and was killed by a world that wasn't ready for her type of woman. She was shot in the back as she ran naked through a field in Turkey. She was about 25 years old.

I have decided to try writing "Brenda's Story", mainly because I know about it, and think it needs to be told. Now having now found your page and read your essay on selling "Cycles", and the frustrations thereof, I would like to know if you have a general recommendation on a direction to take to offer the script, if I accidentally do produce something worth looking at?

Josh, thanks in advance for your time,

Jack McClure  
(I think that "In Sickness and Hell" was the funniest XWP ep Ever!!!)

Dear Jack:

With all due respect, buddy, I hope your script is more interesting than your letter. Thanks about "In Sickness . . ." I've never sold a script since "Cycles" and I've written quite a few, so I have no recommendations. Good luck.

Josh

Name: Noelle  
E-mail: apple4pear@aol.com (same Noelle new address)

Hi Josh.

I came across this glowing tribute to Running Time. If you aren't sick to death of hearing about Running Time you might want to give it a quick read.

Excerpt from March 2001 online review by Clifton Davis:

"The movie I have selected for your edification is the 1998 heist-flick **RUNNING TIME**, starring the coolest of cool cats, Bruce Campbell, of **EVIL DEAD** fame. I feel confident when I say that roughly eight people have seen this, director included. At first glance, this film appears to be another bastardization of the Tarantino-bred, guys-with-guns genre. At first glance, this is a movie that you would pass over on your way to renting more familiar fare, like the latest offerings from your Eddie Murphy's or your Harrison Ford's. Believe me when I say, friends, that first glances can be very deceiving. This movie is different with a vengeance, not to mention the fact that it's probably more entertaining than seeing our man Eddie in a variety of wacky costumes.

All movies that are successful have some form of hook to get you interested, no matter how small it might be. The hook might be a kid that sees dead people (like the critical darling **THE GHOST AND MR. CHICKEN**) or a cop that must go undercover as a sassy black woman (as in **CHINATOWN**). **RUNNING TIME** has what I consider to be the big, bad, granddaddy of all hooks: It's all shot in one continuous take, a trick not tried since Hitchcock's **ROPE**. (Yes, the movie **TIMECODE** did it too, as did **THE BOSTON STRANGLER**, but those movies sucked, so they don't count. My column, my rules.) Where this movie differs from **ROPE** is that the camera is in near-constant motion; through alleys, in and out of cars, etc, etc. Of course, a modern camera cannot hold ninety minutes of film, so the shots are broken up into six and ten minute takes. This brings up all kinds of continuity problems and plus, one screw up and it's back to square one. It's a truly breathtaking feat of directorial prowess that should only be attempted by those skilled in the craft or by those with the patience of a monk. In the all-you-can-eat-buffet of filmmaking, writer-director-producer Josh Becker deserves double heapin' helpin's of the praise and glory hot dish, with the option of a free trip to the salad bar of fame and fortune.

But what of the plot? The story is fairly simple, as movie set-ups go. Bruce Campbell's character has just been released from jail and, after being picked up by his friends, goes to rob the bank vault of the prison that just released him. (I know, it's a plot strikingly similar to that featured in **PORKY'S 5**, but don't let that bother you) Complications arise in the form of the police being there and shenanigans ensue. There are deaths and chases. There's a hooker with a heart of gold. There's even the best darn film-noir set piece that's shown up on screen in ages (The tunnel. You'll know it when you see it). After seeing this film, I had a feeling similar to that which my father had after he saw **BLOOD SIMPLE** for the first time: The feeling that modern, innovative cinema may in fact not be doomed.

I feel that would be remiss if I didn't point out one slightly annoying fact; This movie is **EXTREMELY** hard to find. I happened upon a copy while working at a video store, but that was by pure chance. You'd have better luck finding a nun at a Judas Priest show. (You know, if you were looking for nuns in the late 80's.) However, as daunting as the task is, I beseech thee to seek out this nugget of filmic joy and watch it with someone you love. I also suggest a frothy mug of Mello Yello and bowl of Better Chedders, but that's just a personal preference and not really integral to

the enjoyment of the movie."

-end-

Dear Noelle:

Thanks for sharing that. I'm not sure why he had such a hard time finding the film, it is available at obscure places like Best Buy and Amazon. I'm not sure what his reference to "The Boston Strangler" is about, it certainly wasn't shot in one shot.

Josh

Name: Noelle  
E-mail: sparky1977@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

The best script you have up so far, at least in my opinion, is Devil Dogs: Battle of Belleau Wood. I have some questions about it so feel free to answer some, all, or none of the following as you see fit:

1. What were some of the sources you used to create your portrait of Daly? How much was guesswork and how much solid fact? For instance, did he ever really wax philisophical with his fellow devil dogs?
2. From what I know about the historical records of Belleau Wood, the military reports were a bit sloppy at the time, which is understandable under the circumstances. So did you have a hard time determining how to balance the marine actions with the efforts of the doughboys?
3. If this film got made, it seems like it would be really long. Did that concern you as you were writing it?

Thanks from your faithful reader, Noelle

Dear Noelle:

It pleases me that you liked "Devil Dogs" in that it was very difficult to write. I believe that I've read everything extant on Sgt. Dan Daly, which isn't much, let me tell you. As for him reading philosophy, that's my addition. Regarding the involvement of the army as opposed to the marines, those records are very clear--the army came in late, almost lost Belleau Wood, and were then reinforced by the marines. It's pretty clearly a marine victory. As to the length, earlier drafts of the script were much longer. It's down to a very managable length, I think. I don't think it would exceed 150 minutes. It certainly wouldn't be as long as "Magnolia."



Josh

Name: Joe  
E-mail: jklangley@aol.com

Josh,

What do you think about Stephen King's writing? Do you like any of his novels or short stories? Do you think his stories translate well to film?

Another question, please: What exactly about the filmmaking medium attracts you? You obviously have a creative need to express yourself in large scope, but why did you choose film as apposed to say novel writing or painting or photography?

thanks,  
joe

Dear Joe:

I was an early fan of Mr. King and throughout the late 70s and early 80s I eagerly read each of his books as it came out. When I got to "Christine," however, I realized that I was reading a 20-page short story stretched out to 500 pages and gave up on Stephen King. I've liked a few of the films made from his writing, like "Carrie" and "The Shawshank Redemption."

Regarding why I chose movies, all I can say is, who chose? I've been obsessed by movies since I was a little kid.

Josh

Name: Iwantyou2wantme  
E-mail:

Hey there Josh,

What, in particular, about "The Big Country" appeals to you? Do you identify with the William Holden character? Lastly, do you plan to see the Pearl Harbor film?

Dear Iwantyou:

William Holden is not in "The Big Country." I did identify with Gregory Peck's character, though. I also think it's Charlton Heston's best picture, and it had one of the really great music scores, by Jerome Moross.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Thanks for recommending "The Crazy Man" and "The Gospel According to Judas." They were both well-written, and "Gospel" in particular was a great story. Such a concise and brilliant way of showing religion's folly. Once you prove something's existence, a faith in it is unnecessary.

Speaking of Al Pacino, what did you think of "...and justice for all?" The ending kind of left me flat. And the music had this 70s TV show feel, but perhaps that's because TV show theme song writers saw that movie. Who knows? It seemed too light for the subject matter, and therefore distracting.

Thank you as always for your time.

Continuing my quest for the perfect film,

--cindy

Dear Cindy:

I only saw "And Justice For All . . ." when it came out 20 years ago and was not impressed then, it seemed like a TV movie. I'm glad you enjoyed my stories. Regarding "the perfect movie," have you seen my man, William Wyler's films "The Big Country," "Mrs. Miniver" and "Friendly Persuasion"? I can't think of a thing I'd change in any of them, and they never fail to move me.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Did anyone ever tell you you resemble Miguel Ferrer in some of your web pics? Compare this <http://sorsha.simplenet.com/actors/Miguel/gallery/line2.jpg> (not the dopey Al Franken) with your Main page portrait.

Hey, I was pleased to see "Hud" in your favorites list. I read this in one of your essays: "As I was taught in high school, there are three forms of drama: Man against man, man against nature/society, man against himself."

Incredibly, this is what I wrote about Hud before I ever came across your site: "...I remembered my all time favorite movie, "HUD", a 1963 film, starring Paul Newman and Oscar winner Patricia Neal. This film in my opinion says everything about everything. What I mean by that is, I see it touching on every kind of relationship that mankind encounters: Parents and children, heroes and followers, man and neighbor (community), man and beast (and the earth), man and woman."

So I think I must have been channeling Josh Becker. Hud against his father (man), against the cattle's disease (nature), and against his demon streak (himself).

I'd like to know if you feel two other things you wrote apply to Hud;

"An interesting character is one that is constantly DEVELOPING. If you know exactly who someone is and exactly how they'll always respond, they're boring."

and

"Also, your lead character must be going through a CHANGE of some sort that is important to the lead character."

How would you say Hud "developed"? Did his character "change"?

(P.S. thanks Shirley, for fixing archive pg. 31)

Dear Diana:

Hud is not the lead character of that story. The lead character is the one that really must be developing and the Brandon DeWilde character is most definitely changing. Subsidiary don't really have to develop, just so long as they have an impact on the lead. Hud is the opposing force working on DeWilde, the other side being Melvyn Douglas. A better character than Hud is the Patricia Neal character, who is also developing. Hud and the father are simply representations of things. BTW, the book, "Horseman Pass By" by Larry McMurtry is excellent and also the Patricia Neal character is black in the book.

Josh

Name: Noelle  
E-mail: sparky1977@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

I just read Ball Breaker start to finish in one sitting and it's fucking hilarious. I'd lay down some cash to see Joe Ball Breaker blast someone with that old Colt Dragoon. And hey I think Mickey Rooney might still be alive I'd love to see him kick some ass for once.

On another note: One of my favorite movies is the Bicycle Thief (you

mentioned neorealist cinema to someone else earlier) Whenever someone tells me that they really loved some shitty movie they just saw I tell them to watch Bicycle Thief and then come back and tell me they still thought "Rushmore" was pretty clever. I like 400 Blows too, but I had to do some research to figure out what the title meant.

Take it easy.

Dear Noelle:

Mickey Rooney is still alive. And I completely agree with you about "The Bicycle Thief," which made me cry, and was made for about \$10 right after the war. It completely goes to show that if you have a good story to tell, having no money won't get in your way.

Josh

Name: Ryan St. Evens  
E-mail: rstevens@bennington.edu

Dear Josh:

super short question:

I was reading some page on your site and you had a great quote about how a good script has to read good, it won't be fine/fixated when it's filmed. Now I can't find this page, and google is no help. Got the url?

Dear Ryan:

Oddly, I don't have all of my writing memorized. I would assume it was in one of the Structure essays.

Josh

Name: A. Hamilton  
E-mail: lilypad@pacifier.com

To Mr. Director Man,

I was very touched by your essays about AIDS: Stevie the Cat and High Cholesterol. Nobody should have to go through what Rick went through and I'm glad you wrote that piece because it reminded me of how insignificant my own problems are. I also liked the other stories called, A Spoon in the Sink, The Crazy Man, Then There Were None. Commando

Mission should be published in an anthology. When can I buy the Josh Becker Collection to put next to my Davis Sedaris, Joe Queenan, and Fran Lebowitz?

Take care. And I'm waiting patiently for If I Had a Hammer. (Reminds me of the old joke: If I had a hammer, there would be no more folk singers)

Dear A.:

Thanks for the nice letter. This website is my collection, sort of a cyber-collection, and cheaper than a paperback, too.

Josh

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