

# Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive  
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Name: David Condray  
E-mail: david@dustdevil.com

Josh-

Okay, first of all, I have to say that if "Pearl Harbor" was four hours, then they would've had to keep twisting the plot, ie, Josh Hartnett wouldn't be dead after all and Kate Beckinsale would die of pneumonia. Then Ben and Josh could be best friends forever.

Now for the questions. How does Joe LoDuca write the scores of movies? Does he write peices from the context of the script and you edit them to fit the film, or does he write them to a rough nearly-finished version of the film?

Secondly, I just saw "Bless the Child" last night with a few friends last night and couldn't believe how bad they went into CGI-overkill. They used CGI for plates spinning on a table, snow spinning on it's own in a snow globe, and candles lighting themselves. It seems to me like it would've looked a lot better if they just would've put a little work into figuring things out. The snow globe alone could be done just by shaking it, putting it down and then reversing the film in post production. If you had the budget to include computer generated imagery in every shot, would you use it for everything remotely difficult, or would you rather rig something up-like connecting 50 candles to a model rocket detonator?

Lastly, when you write scripts where some characters die, like in "Cycles", do you know before you start writing it who's going to die, or is that just a spur-of-the moment thing?

Thanks for your time, and I can't wait to see "If I Had a Hammer".

David

Dear David:

Jeez, buddy, you lost me a couple of times there. Let's see? Wasn't "Pearl Harbor" four hours long? It felt like it. Regarding Joe LoDuca, as soon as the picture editing is locked he gets the tape and scores to that.

As to digital effects, I say use them when you need them. And finally, when writing any script I am well aware of how it ends and who dies before the actual writing commences. The actual process of writing, to paraphrase John Irving, should be a process of remembering, not inventing.

Josh

Name: Bishop

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

A few easy questions Josh.

Lets go back a few years to two earlier episodes of Xena you directed(Finns, Femmes & Gems/Kindred Spirits).

I have blooper tapes from the fan club and they showed one scene in particular from "FF&G" where Lucy, Renee and Ted first enter Aphrodite's temple(at the beginning of the episode), and Lucy had a difficult and couldn't get it right. I've read where she had a little too much to drink the night before at a party.

Also in another tape, they showed a scene in "KS" where Renee walked up to talk to Ted and he had the contraption on his neck and Ted kept getting tongue tied and couldn't get it right. In both of these, they kept screwing up and screwing up and when they didn't screw up they got the giggles.

It was very funny to watch, but what was your reaction when they were having these problems. Did you get frustrated because of all the time constraints, or did you think it was funny yourself and were you laughing with them.

Also, in all the times you worked with Lucy and Renee, have you every shared any cross words with them?

Now just an opinion here. If you ever get a chance to film another one of your scripts and it has 2 major femal characters; why not ask Lucy and Renee to play the parts. I'd assume you won't be able to get any of the Hollywood big-wigs; and if word got out that Lucy and Renee were working together again it would be big news to a ton of folks even if was a low budget project. Would be good attention for your project; not to mention getting two gal who are good at their craft and work well together. Of course they could turn it down; but it wouldn't hurt to ask them if the situation ever came up.

Bishop

Dear Bishop:

I'm the worst with those sorts of flubs, I just can't stop laughing. Lucy coming in and goofing up her lines in FF&G was so funny I thought I would choke. That was a wonderful sequence of giggles and screw-ups in KS, too. We had one just like it on SP when the two of them are on top of that cliff at the beginning. To watch two pros like Lucy and Ted or Renee and Ted unable to deliver their lines because they can't stop laughing just kills me.

Casting is about trying to get the appropriate actors in the right roles, it's not about giving your friends gigs. If I ever have parts (and financing) for Lucy or Renee, I'll offer them a part.

Josh

Name: Jen

E-mail:

Hey, Josh.

As you seem to have an affinity for screwball comedy, I'd be interested to know what some of your favorite comedies are. (For my money, there's still nothing better than "Bringing Up Baby," but then I'm just a novice movie geek and you and the other professionals will doubtless find a way to rip my post to shreds and use it to shoot virtual spitballs at me for my ignorance. Eh.) Also, if you're feeling extra smart and/or energetic, I'd like to know who you think the best comic actor and actress are. (Off the top of my head, I'd probably go with Peter Sellers/Cary Grant and Madeline Kahn.) Thanks!

Dear Jen:

Although Hepburn and Grant are both at their peak, I've never much cared for "Bringing Up Baby." Although it is considered a classic and a great comedy, Howard Hawks didn't really like it, either. I'll take Hawks' "Monkey Business" over "Baby." I also love Preston Sturges' "Christmas in July," "The Lady Eve," "The Palm Beach Story," "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" and "Unfaithfully Yours." There's a wonderful, rarely-shown film called "So This is New York," produced by Stanley Kramer and directed by Richard Fleischer that really made me laugh. There's a terrific film called "Remember the Night" with Barbra Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray (written by Preston Sturges) that slaughters me every time I see it. I finally just saw "Million Dollar Legs" with W. C. Fields that was as wacky as any American movie I've ever seen. Fields is the president of the country of Klopstockia where all men are named George and all women are named Angela.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Hidey-ho. I just saw traffic, and for the most part agree with everything you said. To me it really did seem like a tv show, really just a bunch of episodes slapped together. I think the tv series is being released on tape here in North America, I don't see how it could not be better unless it's acted out by the Muppets. On second thought...

The question I wanted to raise was your point about nobody mentioning the legalization of drugs. Do you really think that politicians, all of whom are about the status quo, would want to say something like that out loud? I think the film did touch on this problem in the plane when Michael Douglas' character says the dams are open for suggestions (and ack! there's an ugly metaphor if ever there was one). What he gets is silence in return.

The only suggestion he gets is to filter out more money. Of course no one is going to suggest legalization.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

Yeah, but why are we in a place in our society at this late date where a "hip" filmmaker like Steve Soderbergh won't even mention legalization? I find it stupid and narrow-minded.

Josh

Name: XenaFreak  
E-mail: Our own circle of hell.

Dear Rob Tapert's bitch,

I thought you might like to know about all of the continuity errors that I found in Soul Possession. Clearly Joxer begins that episode with exactly 57 eyebrow hairs above his left eye and later in the same episode he has only 55 and a half eyebrow hairs, so what the hell happened to the other fucking eyebrow hairs? I mean come on how the fuck am I supposed to continue to live in my fantasy world in which Xena and Gaby really exist if you keep screwing up the details? And duh of course Xena would already be comfortable with Gaby's hair color, especially since that it not a wig, no it's really Renee's hair! It's all real it's all fucking real!! I have to go back to my Xena chat room now and waste away my short life discussing the fine details of a TV show, goodbye you traitorous bastard.

Xena Psycho Fan

Dear Xena Psycho Fan:

You're calling me "Rob Tapert's bitch"? Well, thank you so much for writing in and sharing your sharp observations. Now, back to your chat room.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Caught your last "Xena" episode on WGN and enjoyed it (especially the in-jokes), even though I didn't know (or particularly care) how it fit into the whole "Xena" mythos. Nice use of cherries, too.

What's your opinion on the work of James Cameron? I enjoyed "Aliens" and the "Terminator" movies, and even parts of "The Abyss." But "True Lies" was a dud and I have successfully avoided seeing "Titanic."

Charles

Dear Charles:

I'd really hate him if it weren't for "Aliens," which I like a lot. I can entirely live without either "Terminator" movie, the second one being particularly boring, and Ed Harris is good in "The Abyss" but the rest of the picture can happily sink without a trace. I still think that "Titanic" is the worst film of the past ten years.

Josh

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

Josh,

I saw Soul Possession and it had parts in it I liked (mostly Lucy's performance) but I thought it contradicted what I happened at the end of Sacrifice II and the beginning of A Family Affair. Okay, whatever.

I have a question about the ending when "Xena", who is now in Annie's body, says to Mattie (Gabrielle) - "You know I like you better blonde but I can go with this".

Why does she say that? Didn't "Xena" just spend over a year in Harry's body looking at Mattie? Shouldn't she have gotten used to it by now? Shouldn't that have been Mattie's line since Annie's body would have been

"new" to Mattie (Gabrielle)?

And whose idea was it to do the whipped cream and cherries? Lucy's? Yours? Or was that in the script?

Dear Lucyfer:

Look, I shot the script they gave me. The whip cream was in the script, I added the cherries.

Josh

Name: Caroline

E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

In case you weren't adequately frustrated today I pulled this from today's newspaper...

"The film opens with Lara Croft doing desperate battle with a deadly robot, in what turns out to be a homage to the openings of the Pink Panther movies where Clouseau took on Kato."

The above quote is from the three star review for Tomb Raider, in the Chicago Sun Times, by Roger Ebert. That's three stars out of four. (Four being a masterpiece.)

If Angelina "space cadet" Jolie even comes within a billion light years of Peter Sellers' talent I'll eat my hat. And this is a film based on a video game.

I think this may be one of the signs of the apocalypse.

Dear Caroline:

So what's the frustrating part of this? That Angelina Jolie isn't as talented as Peter Sellers or that Roger Ebert is a big fat idiot with his taste up his ass? The only thing that made Ebert bearable was Siskel. With Siskel gone, Ebert is just one more paid-off, Hollywood PR guy masquerading as a critic. Regarding "The Tomb Raider," I'm sure it's every bit as interesting as the software it's based on. I can't wait for the feature film version of "MSWord."

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

I beg to differ - I'm a bigger geek and smart-ass than either of you. I got curious, and thanks to a quick Google-search, discovered that your buddy Kearston had indeed communicated with you \*a year and a half ago!\* Back when "Return of the Dragoon" and "Kindred Spirits" came out. You eloquently observed ""Even if you're willing to sleep with me, I still don't have a job for you." (You've got it archived on Page 9.)

Guess you should have slept with her - nothing like a (semi-literate) woman scorned.

Thanks for continuing to make me laugh,

August

Dear August:

Thanks for the detective work. I had a feeling I'd encountered her before.

Josh

Name: Pestering Fan  
E-mail: 666\_6666@getalife.com

Mr. Becker,

Hi how are you? You are probably hoping for some intelligent and thought-provoking questions but you will have to make due with my two ridiculous questions instead. First, what's it like being a director? Just kidding. My real question is, what was the origin of Ted's line about Japanese bean paste cakes in Lunatics? I mean that's not a snack food that just pops into one's mind when coming up with dialogue. I own a copy and have seen it several times and have always thought that was a weird and funny line, especially with Hank's hand shaking. And my second question is , why have I never seen a photo of Ivan Raimi? Is he a vampire, camera shy, is he in witness protection? I have no idea why I care about what Ivan looks like but having been a fan of all things Raimi for a while I was just curious.

Rock on baby.

--Pestering Fan

Dear Pestering Fan:

I believe the line in the script was "Japanese rice cakes" and good old Ted turned that into "Japanese bean paste cakes." Ted's good at that kind of thing. As for Mr. Ivan Raimi, I have few pictures of him lurking around. I just pulled out my 7th grade yearbook and there he was, so he must not be a vampire. Actually, he's worse than a vampire, he's an emergency room doctor.

Josh



*Ivan Raimi on the set of "Acting & Reacting," May 1978.*

Name: David Pollison  
E-mail: Daverat@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I think Pearl Harbor should have been 4 hours instead of 3 hours. Then Ben Affleck could have been responsible for winning the battle of Midway and dropped both Atomic bombs on Japan. And just think, in the sequell, his son, who is not really his, could invent helicopter fighting in Viet Nam. And if they get Sage Stallone to play him the second could be about how he becomes Rambo and in the third hour he could be Clint Eastwood's character in Firefox or Malcom Mcdowell's character in Blue Thunder. What do you think?

Dear David:

I knew you were really the mastermind behind all these movies. I think maybe you run Hollywood.

Josh



Name: julie  
E-mail: juliejhnsn7@aol.com

Dear Bearded Wonder,

Bruce's book is fantastic. I love the photo of the gang on "swamp patrol."  
Ah Bruce, what would the world do without him?

Best, JJ.

Dear Julie:

I haven't read the finished version of Bruce's book yet because he has failed to send me my copy. He says he will, soon. Anyway, the joke of that photo is that we're all on our knees to make the swamp water look deeper.

Josh

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

Actually Kearston, it's "you're a geek" not "your a geek."

Noelle.

Dear Noelle:

Look what happens? I try to be a smart-ass and I'm wrong.

Josh

Name: kearston  
E-mail: jade18\_101@yao.com

Dear Josh:

I think your a real geek, how's that spelling for you!

Dear Kearston:

OK, I admit it. I'm a geek. But think of our encounter this way, I may have

inspired you to write the first error-free sentence of your life. You should celebrate.

Josh

I'm afraid not, Josh. She used the second-person plural (and singular, in modern usage) possessive pronoun where the appropriate word would have been its homonym, the contraction of "you" and "are." However, I'm unsure whether that constitutes a spelling error or a grammatical error.

Shirley  
(obviously, a bigger geek than Josh)

Name: S.C.  
E-mail: [scornett@yahoo.com](mailto:scornett@yahoo.com)

Dear Mr. Becker,

I was just wondering if you liked "Requiem for a Dream" (if you saw it).

I thought "Pi" (by the same director) was a great film, and I noticed it in your list of films you liked. I liked "Requiem", as well; but have a feeling that you might find it to be too choppy and drawn out. Other than that kind of dark, forboding feel that they have, they seem worlds apart.

My only real complaint with "Requiem" was the excessive use of that modern, chaotic editing style. The film still managed to get to me, though; and afterwards, I was stuck in this intense, melancholy state for hours.

Just Wondering,

S.C.

Dear S.C.:

I haven't seen it yet.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

What a delightful romp "Soul Possession" was. As many others have already said, thanks for the nice glimpse of Ares and Joxer one last time - each got the chance for some wacky comedy, and for some more serious

scenes. Ted's bits with Lucy were especially touching, and allowed him to show that "sweet" side that I recall from "Lunatics." Since I gather the final two episodes are going to be one of those grim, sins-from-the-past plotlines, this was a very fitting way to say goodbye to two favorite characters without some apocalypse breaking out.

I especially liked the quick shot of the flowers shrivelling as Ares sped by, and of course the little in-jokes (like "the guy who played him was a goofball," "Bruce Campbell was too expensive," and of course the eye-poke! Joe Besser is shuddering somewhere, I'm sure!) Nice close-ups on the "random reporter," too.

And I've appreciated your comments on how some of the lines and business were developed in rehearsal. Any others that may have been improvised, ad-libbed, or revised as you went? (And did I miss Ted's Sinatra imitation, or was that edited out?)

Thanks again for a really enjoyable episode!

August

Dear August:

Ted's Sinatra tribute was cut. I turned in my cut about 90 seconds long, and the two things that were cut were Ted doing Sinatra and another fart joke. Ted and I got together during prep and rewrote a lot of the dialog for Joxer. We added the whole drunk thing.

Josh

Name: dick carpenter  
E-mail: Dcarpenter1371@aol.com

Dear Mr. Becker:

I fully agree with your praise and admiration for and of William Wyler. My own favorite scene, (of many, many scenes) is in "Best Years", where Homer (Harold Russell) shows Wilma (Cathy O'Donnell) how helpless he is without his "hooks". It took Wyler's skill and fine taste to direct a new actress in her first movie and an amateur (one training film for the Army)in this most extraordinary love scene!

Thanks for your excellent tribute! Wyler was an American patriot in war and peace, as well!

Sincerely,  
Dick Carpenter

Dear Dick:

Welcome fellow Wyler fan. Yes, that scene where Homer has Wilma put him to bed (I just got goose bumbs thinking about it) and remove his arms is human, wonderful, powerful filmmaking. Then again, I think every scene in that film is exceptional.

Josh

Name: Cameron K. Smith  
E-mail: gunbunny\_one@hotmail.com

Josh,

Love the sight/insight into film making. I've kicked around the acting in biz in Canada for the past twelve years & have spent the last ten months in film school to start working on the other side of the camera to one day get my own projects going. I wanted to say I appreciate your "point blank" film reviews, advice & anicdotes from the industry. My question is this, why are there not more folks like you out there teaching film instead of the "kid gloves" instructors I've seen. This is an industry where shit hits the fan regularly & none of these kids are going to be prepared for what happens when they actually do get working. Would appreciate your feed back.

Thanks,

"On Set Armourer" = "Gunbunny Ventures"

Cameron K. Smith

Dear Cameron:

Why aren't there more people like me? I've been wondering that my whole life. I may not have much else going for me, but in a world of non-stop crap you can consider me Radio Free Bullshit. As Bob Dylan said, "When you ain't got nothin', you ain't got nothin' to lose."

Josh

Name: aaron  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

That Keaston letter has to be joke, one of your friends yanking your chain. If not, I'm scared, very very scared.

Dear Aaron:

It doesn't seem like a joke. I hope it is.

Josh

Name: Brad Lang  
E-mail: classicfilm.guide@about.com

Dear Josh:

I wanted to let you know that your Web site is listed in my Tribute to Anthony Quinn appearing this week on the About Classic Movies site, located at <http://classicfilm.about.com> There is no charge or obligation for this listing or any listing on any About site other than paid advertising.

Dear Brad:

Thanks for the listing.

Josh

Name: Tony  
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Just a few questions on "SP".

Why was this episode such a Renee-lite episode? Was it to give her a bit of time off for her pregnancy, or just giving her some time of for the heck of it?

Also, since it was Renee-lite; was Renee there on set when Ted and/or Kevin had their little farewell party? And was there any tears shed with Lucy and Renee as they said goodbye to Ted/Kevin?

Tony

Dear Tony:

The entire flashback story is Gaby-lite because she's supposedly dead. As to the little farewell parties, I don't recall who did what because as a director under a strict deadline any of these little farewell deals is just an intrusion on my schedule, mainly achieving making me more nervous.

Josh

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

Josh,

What festivals did RT play at? Looking back, did it help you in selling it or getting you any additional talk or buzz?

You've also said you can't get any distributors to even look at "Hammer". I though they'd look at anything. That, after all, is their job isn't it? Is there a reason that perhaps they are avoiding it on purpose? Something about the story that's an automatic turn off to the studio folk? The fact that it's low on violence and sex (I think it is anyway). Or perhaps because it takes place in the past? Just wondering if maybe you were thinking something along these lines too?

I 'spect you'll get in somewhere, sometime. Have a good one.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I have no doubt I can get the film into any of the second and third tier festivals in the world, but you don't get anything out of that. No, being in various festivals did nothing for the sale of RT. It played NY, Chicago, Orlando, Phoenix, Helsinki, Sao Paulo, E. Lansing, Champaign-Urbana, lots of little festivals. They're kind of fun, but they don't mean anything.

As to the distributors not watching the film, they're not picking on me. You think that's their job, watching whatever comes in, but that's not how it is. If there isn't a reason for them to watch it--like it was at Sundance or won Telluride or something--they simply won't bother with it. I'm trying to get a film rep to handle it right now. We'll see how that goes . . .

Josh

Name: kearston  
E-mail: jade\_9258@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

you know what im not here to ask a question i regret for even being nice to you, no i regret even talking to you, your a jerk, i dont need your help to become an actress because you knw what when i do and you want me in a movie, im going to be there to lough in you face, remeber that

Dear Kearston:

So then, we've communicated before? I suppose I could go back and check what horrible thing I said, but I don't feel like it. You certainly have a terrific grasp of spelling and the English language, I have no doubt you'll make it big, and then won't I be sorry? Your last little bit there sounds just like Rupert Pupkin talking to Jerry Langford in "King of Comedy." If your talent doesn't get you ahead, you might consider taking someone hostage.

Josh

Name: Georgia  
E-mail: glantonyshyn@home.com

Hi Josh,

Thank you for "Soul Possession" It was funny and did answer questions from before not answered. I loved seeing Ted and Kevin and of course Renee. Lucy was so true to form of this one. It really showed what a talent she is in any form. Thank you Josh for all your work on the show and hope to see more of your talent in the future. It is too bad the show is going to be gone but the best to all in the future .  
Thanks to all .

Dear Georgia:

Thank you. As a little note, which Ted pointed out, this was the first time in all the episodes these two did that Joxer and Ares had dialog together. Strange, huh?

Josh

Name: Jen  
E-mail:

Hey, Josh.

Just wanted to let you know yet another person watched "Soul Possession" and very much enjoyed it. Great one-liners, crackling chemistry between the actors (pity Renee wasn't in the script more--I think she's got excellent comic timing), and some surprisingly touching scenes (the Joxer/Xena pre-wedding thing worked infinitely better than it had any right to). Especially delighted to see Ted Raimi again. You got another wonderful performance out of him in his final ep. Anyway, I'd like to compliment you on directing the very best of the Xena comedies and let you know how much I've enjoyed your work. Not that I'm kissing your "steely, sun-kissed buttocks" or anything... Take care, Josh, and best of luck in your career.

Dear Jen:

Thanks. I guess I'll just have sit here on steely, sunkissed buttocks (Ted and I added that line, BTW). I must say that I somewhat dreaded having to do that scene with the something old, something new . . . because it was so sappy on the page. But I think Lucy and Ted really gave it a supreme effort and pulled it off.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Of course we saw Soul Possession!

I am sooooo delighted! I just don't know where to begin with talking about it with you, that all (only saw it Sunday night)!

So much do I have to say, that I may as well just give you a link to my list of observations, if you're curious:

<http://www.studiosusa.com/mb/NonCGI/Forum2/HTML/048661.html>

But the one thing I've GOT to know is, were you aware that there is an apparent error in props with regard to the old chakrum and new one.

While Xena and Joxer are walking to Dahok's pit, Xena has the new one on her hip (she \*should\* have the old one at that point in the timeline).

Then she goes off to take a whiz and talk to Ares. She then has the NEW chakrum on her hip!

You or Rob didn't catch that in editing? Or was it too late to do anything about it?

And I also gotta say this, THANK YOU FOR KEEPING SO MUCH JOXER/TED IN YOUR CUT. When he delivers the line, "...then I believe she's alive too. I'm sorry I've been such a downer." My heart melted! Ted is a great actor, no bones about it.

"goat cheese milkshakes"...made me smile that I heard that from you first -  
- thanks for playing along.

Dear Diana:

The error was caught in dailies, but there was no time to reshoot. The art director should have been on top of this, but that's how it goes in show biz.



Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Do you have any screenplays that you have adapted from other forms?

Dear D.:

No, I've never done an adaptation, since I've never had the rights to any books.

Josh

Name: aaron  
E-mail: arnbarnes\_85@netzero.com

Dear Josh:

I have a question that is fairly morbid, but it's something that I've wondered about over the years. When there is an accident on the set that causes an actor's death should the film continue to be made? For instance, as I'm sure you know, in Twilight Zone three actors died when helicopter blades flew off, resulting in one actor's decapitation and two dead kids, yet the movie production went on. And in the Crow, Lee died from a loaded "prop," and they used stand ins and old footage to fill in the blanks. At what point do studio's cross the line in moving forward with these films? Is there any kind of moral gauge that you would follow should something like that happen with one of your movies?

Dear Aaron:

Look at it this way, you spend \$50 million opening a factory and someone accidentally gets killed on the production line. Do you shut down the factory? Once you've got that much money behind something, you can't stop -- no one would let you, including the insurance companies. Morality hasn't got a damn thing to do with it.

Josh

Name: fan x

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

thanks for soul possession. iknew it'd be entertaining but i didn't expect so many laugh out loud moments. kevin's "call me" and ted imitating gaby were my favorite scenes. i really didn't think i'd miss xena all that much til i saw this episode and remembered how damn funny everyone on it could be. huzzah for ted, lucy, kevin, renee, and of course the director!

Dear Fan X:

Thanks. It doesn't seem like very many people watched it, which is why it's been canceled, I guess. Kevin ad libbed the "Call me" line on a rehearsal, then didn't do it on the first take. I asked him to say it, and he replied, "But they didn't have telephones back then." I said, "Calling can just be yelling, right?" He nodded, "Oh, yeah, right."

Josh

Name: Connor

E-mail: connoride98@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Who is the antagonist in MEAN STREETS? Is it the DeNiro character, or the Local Hood?

BTW, I think the only reason "Running Time" wasn't accepted to Sundance and the likes is because you used black and white film. Otherwise, it no doubt would have been accepted and praised.

In your new film, If I Had a Hammer, who or what is the antagonist? What's the conflict?

Thanks for your time,  
Connor

Dear Connor:

Wait a minute! That can't be true about the black & white. What about "Pi" and "Stranger Than Paradise"? I don't want to get into the antagonist, protagonist nonsense. I don't bother with it. In "Mean Streets" Johnny-Boy is bringing himself down, not the local hood. The real drama is with Keitel and how far will he go to look out for his buddy? That's within himself. In "Hammer" the conflict is also interior for both the boy and the girl.

Josh

Name: Connor  
E-mail: connoride98@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

I read your articles on structure the other day and I totally agree with what you had to say. Do you think that a common misconception in understanding three act structure is that most people are under the impression that three acts must follow chronology of events?

For instance, RUN LOLA RUN has three acts that take place at the exact same time...parallel to each other. And, RESERVOIR DOGS uses flashbacks to escalate it's conflict, creating an Act Two that takes place weeks before Act One.

Harold Pinter used the backwards storytelling method in his romantic drama BETRAYAL which begins with the break up of a relationship, then goes backwards to show us WHY, ending with the "resolution of the conflict" with the couple deeply in love.

Though the chronological end might happen in the middle of the film or the beginning or the actual end, most films still follow a basic three act structure based on the importance of the events to the characters. Structure is not about time, it's about story.

What do you think, Josh?

Dear Connor:

I completely agree with you, the three acts aren't about chronology. You can work in flashbacks or go backward, that's not the issue -- it's how drama flows.

Josh

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

Josh,

What's the best movie memory you have? That is in terms of your own career? Like when someone first showed interest in one of your pictures. Be it a agent, distributor or whatever...

Also, since I've never been to one, do you ever go to film festivals as a watcher? I know there are a number of indi fests in L.A., do you go to em?

By god, if you ain't gonna submit to Chicago, what the hell are ya gonna do with your picture? Keep on a goin'. Damn it, keep on a goin'!!!

Have a good one.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

Oh, I'll keep on going, all right. There are plenty of other festivals beside Chicago. My best memories regarding my movie career haven't got anything to do with anyone else accepting me, or liking my work, or giving me approbation. The actual writing and shooting of my scripts and films has been the joyous part. The shooting of RT and Hammer were terrific highlights in my life. Writing "Cycles" was a wonderful experience. The shooting of all those Xenas, Hercs, and Jacks was great. It's the actual doing I like. I suppose if everyone went nuts over something of mine that would be different, but that hasn't happened and I'm not holding my breath.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

In order to get your film into a festival, it must feature young actors on drugs, a hip musical soundtrack, fast, MTV-style editing, maybe some grainy black and white super 8 footage, and a pseudo-art-house feel. It has to be like Warhol on speed, like Bruce Campbell in a strapless sequined gown. You have to have a message that's questionable, camerawork that's hypnotic, and a distracting plot that doesn't matter.

Your films aren't like this. They make sense. They're American. They star actors who are over 18. They have smooth editing, 40s-inspired lighting, and tripods (although not exclusively). They are well-made. You see? The deck is stacked against you already. Maybe you could invent a new film festival for good non-pretentious movies. The Becker Awards. Then see how many people get rejected.

Keep on keepin' on...

cindy

p.s. I'll be offline for a few weeks. I'm driving to NY without a laptop. The adventure!

Dear Cindy:

"Hammer" is about young people, and two of them smoke a joint at one point in the film. It doesn't have any of those other things, however, but then, I don't want to see those other things. C'est la vie. Have a swell time

in NYC. Give my regards to Broadway, remember me to Herald Square, tell all the gang at 42nd Street that I will soon be there.

Josh

Name: Noelle  
E-mail: apple4pear@aol

Dear Josh,

Sometimes when I hear a screenwriter say they were ripped off I wonder who I really believe since I have no script to make comparisons with. After reading Crime After Crime I felt oddly compelled to see Breaking In to see how close it was. So I rented The House of Mirth and since I had a free rental on my account I tossed in Breaking In. You are absolutely right. They completely stole entire segments out of the script. The scene when they wait for the guy to leave his house and they run into each other is almost precisely the same. When they broke into the roof of the supermarket and used the umbrella my jaw dropped, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Not to mention that the whole premise of the film was lifted from you and Scott. "Breaking In" is "Crime After Crime" except with all the momentum and humor sapped out of it. It must have been incredibly disappointing to experience that. It's hard to imagine why the makers of this film rejected your script and hired someone else to water it down with a limping 60 year old sculptor and a milquetoast sidekick kid in a film that crawls along painfully slow, as opposed to Crime After Crime which is fast paced and funny. I hope this is not too personal a question but are you still friends with Scott? I've read all of your screenplays that you posted and you two seemed to strike a nice chord together, its too bad we didn't get to see much of it on celluloid.

I'm a really big fan of your films and TV work and I hope you take up safe cracking so that you can make a lot more films in the future.

Sincerely, Noelle.

Dear Noelle:

You see that I'm posting all of these scripts on the internet, the idea of people stealing ideas doesn't really bother me. But with "Crime After Crime" Scott and I really felt like we had been ripped-off. Sadly, we didn't have ten cents between us at that point to fight any legal battles, so there you have it. Scott and I, BTW, haven't spoken in several years, although we are on speaking terms. I do think we did some good work together.

Thanks for being a fan.

Josh

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