

Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
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Name: Eddie Alfaro
E-mail: alfaro@onebox.com

Hello Josh

I need your help desperately. I am using a mini DV camera, and a TCD-8 Sony DAT to shoot a short. Are there any levels I have to adjust to keep up the speed of sound and video sync.

Thanks
Eddie

Dear Eddie:

Are you using crystal synchronizers, which are little boxes that go on the recorder and the camera? If not, they won't be in synch no matter what you do. Why are you doing this to yourself with the DAT recorder? Your camera records sound, use that, it'll be in synch.

Josh

Name: Stephen Kerr
E-mail: Kerssed@aol.com

Dear Josh:

After reading your Running Time script and your describing of Bruce Campbell to a t or should that be an "L" (Sorry, lame attempt at a joke) at the introduction of Carl, do you go into directing or writing a script with who you want to play a certain character in mind, or was that just a one time

thing?

Dear Stephen:

In that case I did, but generally not. I don't create characters with actors in mind because I may not be able to get them. Besides, an actor isn't a good basis for a character since you probably don't know that actor or anything about them. Real people you know are much better to work with because you know them and you can steal their motivations and attributes. A friend of mine buys generic 100mm cigarettes and breaks off the filters, which I've used as a detail for two different characters now. See?

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Loved the PA essay - I've passed it along to every would-be film major I know, and everyone thinks it's terrific!

I recently read an article inspired by the remake ...oops "revisioning" ... of "Planet of the Apes," in which the author listed any number of vintage science fiction novels that were deserving of making it to the screen. What are some favorites of yours that you think might make decent films?

By the way, Jerry Pournelle's website yesterday mentioned that Poul Anderson is in rapidly failing health, and had an address in case fans wanted to send him a note of thanks for his work over the years - it's at <http://www.jerrypournelle.com/view/currentview.html#Tuesday>

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

Sorry to hear about Poul Anderson. I was just discussing this topic yesterday. After "2001" came out in 1968, myself and others really expected a trend of science fiction movies to begin. A year later one sci-fi film came out, "Marooned," and very few others came out for years. All the while, I kept thinking about all the great sci-fi books I'd read as a kid and a teen, like Asimov's "Foundation" trilogy or his book "The Gods Themselves" or his R. Daneel Olivaw robot-cop stories, or Robert Heinlein's "Stranger in a Strange Land" (among many others) or Arthur C. Clarke's "City in the Stars" (among many others). Oh, man, I don't even remember anymore, but most of the good sci-fi has never been filmed.

Anyway, when the sci-fi movie trend finally occurred, after "Star Wars" 1977 (I attended the very first matinee screening at the Chinese Theater), all it spawned were insipid knuckle-headed comic book movies, and still none of the good sci-fi books have been filmed.

Josh

Name: Fan X
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Are you still working on Centurion?

Dear Fan X:

No. I can't give my stuff away, why bother writing any new scripts?

Josh

Name: Violet
E-mail: Violet128@hotmail.com

Hey Josh,

I hope you don't mind me asking a why-on-earth-would-anyone-possibly-care question.

The credits for Bob Zemeckis' lame movie WHAT LIES BENEATH list two "key grips." One of them is described as KEY GRIP - UNDERWATER UNIT. Do you know why there are two of them? I thought key grips were the big daddy head honchos of ALL the grips on the production and that there could only be one.

My unsatisfying, blind guess is that the underwater sequence in the movie was so complicated that a water specialist(?) with water-specific equipment was needed. Any thoughts?

Thanks.

Dear Violet:

You are correct, but that's how it is with any special unit, like an aerial unit or an underwater unit, they have all their own people. The chances are very slim that your key grip can actually scuba dive as well.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

I had to laugh when you mentioned David Mamet becoming incomprehensible these days. I liked a few of his early movies but lately I don't get him at all. Can anyone tell me what the hell was going on in *The Spanish Prisoner*? Or *the Winslow Boy*? Or what sort of nonsense he is trying to get across in his book *Three Uses of the Knife*--the most unreadable writing instruction book ever. I guess its just ego or maybe he is rushing it too much. I think he's a talented man but the bigger they come the harder they fall I suppose.

from julie

Dear Julie:

Mamet's book on film direction stinks, too. He was in no position to write a book about it as he knows almost nothing on the subject. He wrote a terrific script for *"The Verdict,"* however (almost 20 years ago), and I like his two essay collections, *"Writing in Restaurants"* and *"Some Freaks."*

Josh

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

Josh,

Ever worked as a P.A. on a feature film other than *"Evil Dead"*?

Have you seen *"Shadow of the Vampire"*? I caught it last night late. After it ended I went out to smoke and by George if I wasn't a little spooked. I think it's all about how creepy Willem Dafoe's performance is. Almost as good at being a vampire as Klaus Kinski was in Herzog's *"Nosferatu"*.

Any movies (other than *"6th sense"*) that have surprisingly creeped you out like this?

Have a good one.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

After "Evil Dead," I think I'd have cut my own throat before working as a PA on another feature. As I recounted in "The 6th Sense" review, the last film before that to scare me was "Aliens."

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Your p.a. bit there is laugh-out-loud funny. Ahhh Ted Nugent, what will he think of next. I'm still hurt because he said to boycott us Canadians because we limited bear-hunting season or something like that.

Aside from Ted how did you find the name stars of the various endeavours? Having been through the same grist-mill, I've been everything from craft service to location manager and back, I found that the actors were always some of the nicest people going. It was always the a.ds ("I'm just dong my job") or the snotty art director or some jackass gaffer who turned out to be the jerk of the set.

Here's a link to an article in Zoetrope magazine b David Mamet about the state of summer movies.
http://www.all-story.com/issues.cgi?action=show_story&story_id=36 . He makes some of the same points you've made here on the site, but uses bigger words.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

Jesus, Mamet has become unreadable. I think he's saying the same thing as me, it's difficult to tell. As a P.A. I never had any problem with the talent, it was always A.D.s or coordinators that were on my back. As a director I never have any problem with the talent, either. Actors are, for the most part, wonderful people. They like to tell stories, laugh at other people's stories, and hang out where you can smoke, just like me.

Josh

Name: G. Isherwood
E-mail: Unloved_Puppy@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Im new to all this screenplay stuff but i am finding it very interesting. I am reading all of your advice, which is very indepth, i have some basic work

and was wondering how i would get it seen by others. As im a student i have little money for online registrations and would appreciate your help.

Dear G.:

Well, if writing is your goal, you haven't managed to get me to understand you. What do you want?

Josh

Name: Nicanor Loreti
E-mail: nikkiseven@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

I'm from argentina and bought your Running time movie at amazon.com. I own a zone 1 DVD player, wich I bought once in the States. You can buy zone 1 DVDs in Argentina anyway.

You asked me that long ago (see page 28)... loved the movie by the way? Did you use black and white because of the budget or just to add some film noir feeling?

Best of lucks with your movies and keep meking'em good!

Dear Nicanor:

I used black & white mainly because it's much easier to go from inside to outside or vice versa without having to change filters. Color stock freaks out when you do that. Also, I like the look.

Josh

Name: P. F.
E-mail: topnet@juno.com

Dear Josh,

I agree with you entirely about what is wrong with movies. However the problem as I see it is with the moviegoers. Maybe I'm a fool for saying this, but I really do think that alot of people in Hollywood know how to make a good film, but nobody needs to bother anymore; people will pay to see anything. There are lots of things that could be better if consumers had any taste: art, books, photography, clothes, TV, music etc.

Anyway, I enjoyed your essays very much. The 99 cent Store was laugh

out loud funny.

I hope nobody calls me a moron but it's Ok I can take it.

P.F.

Dear P.F.:

I think the mass audience is a lot smarter than they're given credit for, and can easily understand anything that's thrown at them. Hollywood, however, keeps perpetuating a lie that movies get more popular every year. Movies sell less tickets every year, they just cost more. I have no doubt that if they executives running the studios had the slightest idea what they were talking about and asked for better scripts, they'd get them. Of course, first they'd have to learn to read.

Josh

Name: Gord
E-mail: zajac@sheridanc.on.ca

Dear Josh:

"That 'moron' you're referring to was my girlfriend about 20 years ago."

<pop!>

That'd be the sound my foot's making is I yank it out of my mouth. My apologies. Normally I prefer to engage brain before mouth. This was not one of those times.

Kicking himself for his knee-jerk reaction (and for not thinking of that car analogy),

Gord

Dear Gord:

I disagree with her as much as you do. But this is the land of the free, she's allowed to be wrong.

Josh

Name: Biff
E-mail:

Hi, Josh.

I noticed on your movie list that "Boogie Nights" is not on there. Did you see it and not like it or have you just not seen it? If you have, what are your thoughts on P.T. Anderson's writing?

Thanx,
Biff

Dear Biff:

I don't think he has the first clue how to write. All of his scripts are horrible, structureless messes, particularly "Magnolia," which was one of the most grueling films I've ever attempted to sit through (and failed). I really despised "Boogie Nights," and I think Mark Wahlberg is awful. Anything else?

Josh

Name: Gareth
E-mail: GAZZFC@Aol.com

Dear Josh:

Ok thanks :) You never answered how you found all of these ****isms. I tried looking up regional dialect and yorkshire slang etc but i never got anything good. Did you go to Texas to find you Texasisms? If yes any other ideas because, not being a pro and only being 17 i can't travel a lot.

Also, when you are writing a script do you base the characters on people you know? I do and just wondered if it was a good/bad approach?

Does a film have to have some hidden meaning or can it just tell an interesting story?

How well do i need to know your characters bearing in mind i am basing them on people i know.

Sorry if i'm asking stupid stuff but i haven't studied it or anything i just decided i enjoyed it so i started writing.

Ta

Gareth

Dear Gareth:

You have clearly not read my [six script structure essays](#). When you have, write back. As for Texasisms, I got a bunch from Larry McMurtry's books, as well as from the film "The Last Picture Show." Horton Foote's plays and

scripts are loaded with them, too, like "Tender Mercies."

Good luck,

Josh

Name: Timothy Simons
E-mail: blackfish@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

How do you feel about short film nowadays? Would you approach the writing in the same way as a long film, except cut the acts shorter? I saw a short called "Bobby Loves Mangoes" on SciFi Channels "Exposure" which I thought was quite good and seems to follow the same structure as a full feature and brings it all in at about 18 minutes.

Dear Timothy:

I would, definitely, but with a short film, just like a short story, you have more freedom since you're not trying to keep my attention for all that long. Still, you have to keep it, and that's where structure is very helpful.

Josh

Name: Gord
E-mail: zajac@sheridanc.on.ca

Hi Josh,

To this moron who asks if people really care about all that "technical shit" about the three act structure and whatnot, I only have two words him: "Sixth Sense."

People respond to all that "technical shit" on a gut instinct level. The film just "feels right" when you walk out of it afterwards. It's kind of like asking if people care about all the "technical shit" about how marijuana affects the human body. Well, no, they don't, but they do care about how they feel when they smoke it.

(Admittedly a weak example, but I'm in a rush...)

Gord

Dear Gord:

I entirely agree with you, but it was a weak example. How about a car? You may not be interested in the technicalities of how your engine works, but all that "technical shit" makes it run whether you understand it or not. That "moron" you're referring to was my girlfriend about 20 years ago.

Josh

Name: Gareth
E-mail: GAZZFC@aol.com

Hi

I liked this site, i read CYCLES all the way through first time, it was a good read. I've written a few screenplays myself, just for my own amusement but about stuff i care about and am interested in. What i want to know most is how you find out about different ****isms? I tried it but i didn't have much look.

I really want some advice and stuff too so if you don't mind putting up with me for a couple of mails will u e-mail me?

Cheers

Gareth

Dear Gareth:

Go ahead and ask.

Josh

Name: Lanie Dikitanan
E-mail: Bayzm0m@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I went to Florin high school with Kristian Monday and was very good friends with him. I recently moved and lost his information. Do you have an email or phone number or anyway I can contact him? Thank you.

Dear Lanie:

I'm sorry, but I don't have any info on him. I did, but I don't know where it is now. Nor do I know where he is now, either.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Dang, people write you long Emails! My wife has been batting 1000, checking out old movies from the library. We watched "Breaker Morant" last night and "My Cousin Vinnie" tonight. Both court dramas.

This is how Breaker Morant stacked up:

Excellent acting from solid character actors (no stars?)
Excellent script
3-dimensional characters (dozens of them)
Excellent photography with unexpected POV's
Excellent pacing
Excellent editing
Super-excellent running time: 107 minutes
It had a point and theme, and TONS of irony

AND, on top of all that, it even had an interesting story that I kept thinking about the whole day after.

The little woman and I, even though we like a (very) few new releases, are seeing that NOTHING being made today scores in all categories the way Breaker Morant, Paper Moon, etc. did. It's too bad, because the crap coming out now costs what, 10 times (or more) the budget of the great films of the 60's-70's.

Lucky for me, there's still 700-something films on your fav list I haven't seen, many of which are stocked on beautiful, analog VHS at my local public library.

Am I supposed to ask a question? Forget it. Thanks for all your work with your website, your Fav List, and "Ask the Director."

PS I've never watched an episode of "Xena" AND I'm not feeling suicidal. Coincidence?

Dear Tim:

Check out Stanley Kubrick's great early film "Paths of Glory," which holds a lot similarities to "Breaker Morant." Both are terrific, but "Paths of Glory" is even better.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

That's strange. Isn't the Ice Storm about wife swapping parents, electrocuted kids, sexually confused teens, and the overall despair of things in that era. This was your childhood? Or am I thinking of the wrong film?

Dear Noelle:

No, I'm a little earlier than that. My personality was formed in the mid- to late-sixties and early seventies--"The Ice Storm" is mid- to late-seventies. I was already a disdainful teen that detested the new age of disco, and phony modernism. As disco took over the airwaves I stubbornly continued to listen to The Doors, Jimi Hendrix, and Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Josh

Name: Lisa Robinson
E-mail: lrobinson@levinegroupinc.com

Dear Josh,

I liked your reviews, but I wonder, do you think people really care about all that technical shit you complain about, ie, the chronology of the story, etc., etc., etc.....Don't they end up with an overall feeling? Can't it be like a poem, rather than a story?

Also, did you see Ice Storm? It was our childhood. I'm sentimental, I guess.

Dear Lisa:

The overall feeling I get from nearly all films of recent days is severe boredom. Since this is a somewhat technically oriented website, I'm aiming many of my comments at what I believe are people that are at least slightly knowledagable about movies. I think modern movies almost all have the same problem -- shitty scripts -- and I know what's wrong with them; so why shouldn't I specifically state the problems? Regarding "The Ice Storm," I rather liked it, and yes, it did remind me of our youth in Michigan. I do find Tobey Maguire, however, to be a bit of a bore.

Thanks for visiting.

Josh

Name: Cynthia E. Jones

E-mail: cynthiaejones@hotmail.com

Dear Josh,

You know, one of these days a high school teacher is going to throw "O Brother" on and let his class watch it while they're learning "The Odyssey." You can count on it.

And as for the whole 'rear projection' universe, like when Ted is running from a giant spider in "Lunatics," I kind of like it, because all of a sudden I feel like I'm watching a Ray Harryhausen picture. I'm still trying to figure out how you split the street in two to reveal lava underneath--above and beyond for any low budget indie film I've seen (without resorting to the cheap and plentiful CGI).

have a great day,

cindy

Dear Cindy:

When we made "Lunatics" in 1989 there weren't any digital effects. In 1989 CDs were sort of a new thing, and music was now digital, but not effects. The process shots in "Lunatics" are all rear-screen, just like the good old days. I don't think anyone had used this method of projecting animation on a rear-screen since "Mighty Joe Young" in 1949.

Josh

Name: mike

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Very nice. A little off beat, but that's the way I like 'em. Keep on writing.

Dear Mike:

Okay.

Josh

Name: Vanishingpoint

E-mail: No thank you

Josh, Josh, Josh...

Did these traitorous fingers write "If your in the right mood"? Surely you realised I meant either "...you're..." or "...you are..." You could at least have corrected my error. Now I feel only worthlessness and shame. Call me a pederast if you want although that would only add to my pain. I'd have to tell myself you really only meant pedant. But enough sophisticated word play.

I can't go for Warriors. I'll almost leave it there just adding I don't like it and don't see it as impressionistic. It might be existential but if I want a bit of that there's MM (Yeah!!) or Vanishing Point. How odd, a film named after me, it must be good. I've only seen The Warriors on TV so perhaps a lot of violence was taken out. That can ruin films but I don't feel like discussing censorship right now.

I haven't seen The Driver for years. I remember the Mercedes in the underground car park bit and I think there was a double cross ending in a train station. The Driver should get caught with something in a locker but because of the double cross it's not there and he walks. I'd like to see it again, it's a safe bet I'll enjoy it. I'm easily pleased by cars in films. I've even watched a few Burt Reynold's in my time! I'm not saying they're any good though. Hope those who have not seen The Driver didn't notice I gave the ending away a bit there. Sorry.

I think "Hard Times" was on the TV a few months back and it came recommended but after I watched the trailers for it I lost interest. I've never really liked Bronson - (Have you seen him recently in any of those "Family of Cops" TV movies? I'm not joking here, he acted like he is actually senile. He looked lost, confused and delivered his lines like he was reading off a cue card which, I suppose, he could have been. I don't like him but I felt embarrassed for him. And yes I know he was much better earlier but even then I didn't like him.) - or Coburn - (Same again, he's done some good stuff but I've seen too much "In Like Flint" which didn't make me laugh.) - but if it comes round again I'll try to remember to give it a go.

I'd better stick a question in here. This is something that's worried me for a long time. It's a genuine question about Sam Raimi's work (and I know you're not Sam Raimi) and it's very trivial and I can already guess the answer - money. But the thing is really bugging me and I'd just love there to be a deep, meaningful truth to uncover here.

I'm probably showing my age here when I talk of a special effect we used to call 'two films'. In Evil Dead 2 there's a bit of 'two films' work when Ash is propelled into the sky. It's too obvious Ash and are sky are separate bits of film (two films!) and the end result is pretty poor. Fair enough, this was a low budget film made twenty years ago. Fast forward to Darkman. Scene near the end set at a fairground. Darkman gets angry, 'two films' sky in the background. Again the result is pretty poor. Didn't Darkman have the budget to get a decent result? Watching American Gothic's title credits. More poor 'two films' work. More recently with Xena and Hercules, they have fairly reasonable CGI monsters (not state of the art but reasonable) but it seems to me the simple 'two films' stuff is always weak and certainly weaker than average. Maybe it's only me. Maybe I'm obsessing on it but whenever Sam Raimi is involved (even if it's only as a producer) the 'two films' work seems worse than other cheap films and TV manage. I've watched some dire old "made for TV" rubbish with no acting, no script and no idea but production values that appear out of this world. So Josh, I

guess you must watch a bit of Raimi's stuff. A specific problem with the 'two films' stuff or is it just they were all low budget shows? Or don't you see a problem?

I've rambled on again. As before edit or dump this letter but I am genuinely bugged by Raimi's duff 'two films' work. It haunts me and distracts me from thinking about real issues: so HE'S Keyser Soze! Now how do I spell Soze... ?

Vanishingpoint

Dear Vanishingpoint:

My, my but you can go on. I think your "two film" reference is to process screen work, which is now either blue screen or green screen. In the old days it was rear-screen. Let's put it this way, in Sam's films, as well as in his productions, there is a lot of process screen work due to the kinds of stories they are, i.e. horror, fantasy. If you do a lot of process work, some of it comes out fine, and other stuff doesn't work as well. It's hard to do good process work quickly, as in TV; it also doesn't cut well with everything, like in "Darkman," when you go from Liam Neeson against an actual sky, then cut in on him against a superimposed sky, you can easily tell the difference.

Josh

Name: David
E-mail: david@dustdevil.com

Hey Josh,

First of all, I read on your site that you did some high school drama. Even though you've obviously chosen writing and directing over acting in your movies, have you ever considered giving yourself the lead role, or been offered the lead in other peoples movies?

Secondly, I read an interview you did a long time ago about Ted Raimi, and you said something about a pilot he did for MTV. Is Ted still trying to get a show made? (that one or otherwise)

And in the same interview, you said you were planning on making a movie with Ted if everything worked out. What did you have plans for, and is it still in the works, or is that idea long gone?

By the way, I saw Lawrence of Arabia on DVD the other day. Does that mean you've gone out and bought a DVD player?

Thanks, David

Dear David:

Yes, I've had a DVD player for six or eight months now. Films certainly do look and sound better on DVD. Regarding me taking parts in things, I'm not a good actor so it doesn't interest me much. Also, my eyesight is just poor enough so that, without my glasses, I can't see my marks and always miss them. I'd much rather tell actors what to do than do it myself. As for Ted, he's traveling the world doing conventions. I pitched him an idea a few weeks ago, which he seemed to like, but I haven't heard back from him. And, as to Ted's MTV pilot, he shot it and they decided not to follow up, and that's that. He can't take it elsewhere because they paid for it.

Josh

Name: Patrick
E-mail: same as before

Dear Josh:

Thank you for the reply. Yes it can print it out as is but that's a lot of dang ink. I guess I'll have to live with it. Yes it is handy I used it just yesterday when I got Bullitt, Becket, and Cimarron, and I haven't seen them before.

Good luck with all your future ventures,
Pat

Dear Pat:

Well, there's a triple-bill for you. I don't think "Bullitt" holds up all that well, but it was hugely influential when it came out, and I'm still a big Steve McQueen fan. My fulfillment at seeing a Mustang and a Charger in a chase scene was monumental. Also, if you in fact got the 1931 version of "Cimarron," as opposed to the 1960 remake, it's a great example of early sound filmmaking, but necessarily a great movie. "Becket," meanwhile, was my favorite film when I was a kid. Lovely photography by the great Geoffrey Unsworth, who also photographed "2001" and "Cabaret."

Josh

Name: May Fly
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Just want to reiterate.

It's not the copying that I have a problem with.

Xena has done many parodies. However "FIN" was a little too much of a direct copy to be classified as a parody or an homage. Many scenes were directly copied.

But the main problem we have is no mention being made of where the story came from. If there was a simple notation in the credits that "FIN" was based on the film "ACGS" or something like that it would have been fine.

But no, Tapert touted this as 'HIS VISION'. Give me a break. It's not the lack of creativity or originality that bothers me with Tapert(finale for his show and he can't even come up with an 'original' story), but what gets me is the lack of morality to claim this vision as his own when it clearly is not.

That's okay though. He's the one who has to live with it, knowing the majority of the Xena fan know the truth.

May Fly

Dear May Fly:

Oh, get off it! TV is basically a giant shithole, particularly syndicated TV. That you care enough to keep writing these letters just shows your misplaced concerns. "Xena" has been canceled. It wasn't canceled because it was so popular; it was canceled because nobody was watching anymore. Get it? Nobody cares. Go bug the folks making "Dark Angel."

Josh

Name: Vanishingpoint
E-mail: No thank you

Josh,

I can't seem to draw you out on the subject of Mad Max (probably my favourite film) and Blade Runner, which I still feel is an intelligent film - flawed but well worthy of discussion, is obviously off limits so...

So let me try a new angle. You've spent a fair bit of time in the Antipodes - ever get round to seeing that near legendary, classic bit of modern Kiwi cinema "Once were warriors" [1994]? Set amongst the urban Maori underclass the film is aware of white racism but never really mentions it. Instead it concentrates on the domestic violence of Jake "The Musc" Heke against his proud (too proud but so loving) wife Beth. Beth is played by the quality actress Rena Owen and how come she's done nothing since? The hulking tattooed Jake is played by Temuera Morrison who does a great job. How sad he then went on to "Barb Wire" and "Speed 2". Serves him right for going after US fame? Temuera's unrestrained violence was a real shock for those of us who had only seen him previously in the dire NZ soap "Shortland Street" where he had played a quiet, cultured, gently spoken doctor. Suppose I shouldn't be watching the daytime soaps.

Anyway it's a cheap film - low production values, and has an over the top tear jerking storyline that's a bit predictable, but top acting, an unusual view of New Zealand culture and it certainly makes an impact on the viewer.

I did check your list of favourite films - no sign of it - but you had Warriors. Warriors? Not that piece of garbage about some gangbangers running all night only pausing for a regular punch up with other young lads? I'd rather watch Commando. Same sort of comic book violence and feats of physical prowess (ability to absorb any amount of pain and so on) but Big Arnie in Commando provides plenty more laughs. If your in the right mood.

Vanishingpoint

Dear Vanishingpoint:

Hey! I like "Mad Max"! I really like "The Road Warrior." Lighten up. I was impressed with "Once Were Warriors" more than actually enjoying it. I've met Tem Morrison and he's a little guy, which was a tad shocking. I complimented him highly on his performance in "Once Were Warriors." He was going out with Angie Dotchen from "Jack of All Trades." The uncle character in the film was played by Cliff Curtis, an excellent actor, who played the first centaur in "Hercules" (and I directed most of his scenes). Cliff also plays the lead Arab part in "Three Kings."

Regarding Walter Hill's "The Warriors," I think it's a terrific picture, and a beautiful example of film impressionism with an interesting existentialist streak. It's the third part of a trilogy, in my opinion, coming after Hill's "Hard Times" and "The Driver." I really think these three films stand alone for what they're trying to do, and pulling off. If you haven't seen the other two films, check them out.

Josh

Name: Patrick
E-mail: banfielp@wsu.edu

To Josh Becker:

Would it be possible to get your fav films list in a text only format? I refer to this list pretty often when I decide whether or not to watch a movie so it would be helpful to have it printed out. 99% of the time if its not on your list I can't bring myself to watch it, it's a good way to filter out the garbage.

I saw Oh Brother Where Art Thou on video recently and it's lame. Since when is reading Homer all that difficult? OK well the Iliad is no walk in the park, but the Odyssey is high school level reading. Hell you can find translations of it that kids can read. So since this is the first Coen bro film i've seen since Fargo I guess I can now add the Coens to my shit list. My shit list will soon be available in text only format for those interested.

Dear Patrick:

It pleases me that my fav list is of use to you. Won't it print out as it is? I think it's nice having pictures. You'd think the Coens could at least read the Cliff's Notes.

Josh

Name: daniel
E-mail: alfredgnewman@aol.com

Dear Josh:

What the name of the movie that the award for best foriegn language film in 1975?

Dear Daniel:

Akira Kurosawa'a wonderful film *Dersu Uzala*.

Josh

Name: Justin
E-mail: jsalibri@radford.edu

Hey Josh,

The other day, I was browsing your favorite film list and came across "Slacker", which doesn't seem to fit with the rest of the movies you've listed. What's up with that?

Also, I noticed that you've added to your list some of the recent films that you reviewed and funtioned at telling a good story, but how about those 3515 movies that you've seen in total. That's a wickedly precise value, how do you keep track of it all?

Are you saying, from lack of answer to an earlier e-mail, that there is not one semi-consistantly good storyteller making films in present day?

Justin

Dear Justin:

I had never seen anyone try that structure before Slacker, of one person to the next to the next for the whole film, and he nearly pulls it off, too. It's a

shame it goes into that Super-8 footage for the last ten minutes, but hey . . .
. A lot of works and it's funny.

Regarding how many films I've seen, I keep a list. I'm up to 3,553 as of this moment. And no, there is not one semi-consistent storyteller working in film right now. If you think I'm wrong, please name them?

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Gee, I hope that fly girl doesn't find out about what Joel and Ethan Coen did to Homer's "The Odyssey." She'll be pissed.

cindy

Dear Cindy:

You must be referring to the fact that the Coens were proud of the fact that they had made a movie out of it without reading it, right?

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Sheesh. Of all the movies to defend she picks A Chinese Ghost Story as an original work of art? This is a film that builds itself entirely on homages to old films and chinese mythology/folk tales and stock characters that the director parodies. This is pretty common knowledge.

From Amazon.com editorial: "The final battle in hell is said to have inspired scenes in Sam Raimi's Army of Darkness. And the film has its share of homage: A group of crusty zombies are reminiscent of the skeletons in special-effects guru Ray Harryhausen's 7th Voyage of Sinbad--and they are eliminated by Tsei-Shen in comedic slapstick fashion, not unlike the style of Charlie Chaplin. Cheung and Wang are a likeable romantic pair, and Ma Wu creates a hilarious character who breaks out into song and a martial arts dance when drunk."

I love Asian cinema but its the very definition of derivative. But if you're ignorant of Chinese storytelling and old films you wouldn't know that.

Thanks,

Julie

Dear Julie:

There's actually been more from Ms. May Fly, but I haven't posted it because she bores me. Why not pick on a show that's at least still on the air.

Josh

Name: Not a Xena Psycho
E-mail: bradym23@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

That's what the chinese get for being commies -- they get ripped off. screw em.

Dear Not a Xena Psycho:

There it is, G.I.

Josh

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

Hey, Ms. Fly, as the great director John Huston once said, "It's all right to copy from others. It's copying from yourself that is shamfull." Or something to that effect. Besides, what's so new about a movie-tv show not giving credit to other works that inspired it? Did Quentin Tarantino give credit to the films he copied scene for scene in his first 2 films? How about Sam Raimi with "Evil Dead", or Peter Bogdanovich on "Last Picture Show"? Did they feel compelled to go out and tell the world that they'd copied shots and ideas from directors like George Romero and William Friedkin on ED, and John Ford and Orson Welles on TLPS? Give me a damn break. Shoo fly, shoo.

Josh, I've noticed that all of your posted screenplays are at least a number of years old. Yet, all the scrips you've made yourself we're fairly new ideas at the time. Do you think you'd have a hard time adapting an older idea as opposed to a new one that still has your mind on fire?

Have a good one.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

TSNKE had been sitting around for a few years when I finally shot it. My only problem in shooting anything is financing. You hand me any script you want, and if I have the money to shoot it, I'll shoot it. As far as going out and raising money, however, I generally need the motivation of a fresh new idea to fire me up.

Josh

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