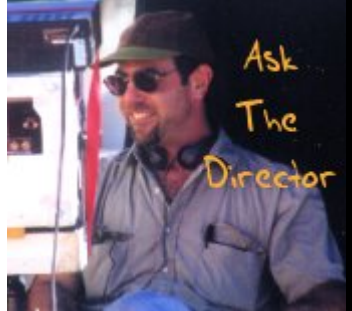


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 6

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if your experience while working on Evil Dead 2 was a good one or not? Also, how many episodes did you direct for "Stories of the Highway Patrol?" Thanks.

Dear Drew:

You are undoubtedly my most loyal and rational questioner--And I always understand your questions. Bravo! As to my experience on ED2, it was the hottest I've ever been in my life. The 1300 A.D. scenes were shot in a gravel pit in North Carolina and it was probably 110 degrees. But I was dressed in a full suit of armor, underneath which we wore a black, long-sleeved, thermal union suit. By lunch I was in complete and utter misery. There was a tiny, dirty spit-pond at the center of the gravel pit and I spent hours scooping out paper cups full of water and pouring them on the back of my neck. I was in a shot that was cut. Myself and Scott Spiegel were splattered with blood and guts when the winged deadite was shot from the sky. Anyway, at the end of the first of two days of shooting this sequence, Rob Tapert, also in armor, said to me, "Tomorrow will be a lot better." I asked, "And why would that be?" Rob grinned, "Because you know what you're in for." And he was right, too.

Josh

Name: greg
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Hey, I know you guys made Thou.. a while back, I just watched Running Time DVD with my cousin and I was real glad to see that you've reached a real strong maturity level in your filmmaking skills, how to use the camera's positioning as a metaphor relating to the characters thoughts or simply their physical

condition, (in the tunnel with Bruce was intense). I think the style of shooting you chose helped you concentrate on all of these aspects. Man, I'll tell you, them DVD's are just one of the most inspiring things out there. And for all you guys to be putting stuff out on 'em and offering your commentary is great. Listening to you guys is like getting together with good buddies and bull-shitting about stuff; seeming that so many people are into films, when people get together it's inevitable that the conversation will end up talking about them. Sometimes I have to stop myself and change the subject because I, like select few, get really deep into every aspect of the process. So it's great to sit down and listen to you guys BS about the meaty stuff.

I'm wondering what you think the digital revolution will do to independent film. Considering the popularity of computers, the rising popularity of indie-films, and the capability and the inexpensiveness (compared to the cost of film) of editing your digital video right at home on your PC, where do you see independent films heading.

later,
Greg.

Dear Greg:

At least for the time being, I think digital is a great way to make films cheaply and figure out how the process works. My buddies and I used Super-8 for the purpose. However, one must not forget that film is a visual medium and the final product looking good is important. At the present time neither digital nor video offers the resolution of film. Given the relative costs, I would still shoot 16mm film over digital and video, and 35mm if possible.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

How did you get the shot where Raimi's character is impaled on the motorcycle and his face lands right on top of the camera lens? That's a really neat shot. Thanks.

Dear Drew:

I had a piece of glass over the lens and the camera shoved right up Sam's nose while he was lying on a box. We were in the front yard of my parents' house.

Josh

Name: Keith
E-mail: keithf@cdc.net

Dear Josh:

Hi, I just got the Running Time DVD and just wanted to let you know that I really enjoyed it. I've watched it three times actually twice for the feature and a third time to listen to the commentary. Is there any chance that your other films will be released on DVD anytime soon? Just as a suggestion, it would be cool to have a little feature on there about how you make these movies, including financing, logistics, that type of thing. That's one of the best things about your web site...it'd be nice to have it in video format. Also any short films that you might've done would be cool to see as well. Just talking out of my rear here. Have a nice day!

Dear Keith:

TSNKE ought to be coming out on DVD very soon. Bruce and I did the commentary for that, too.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

I read somewhere that Bruce took scale for your film Running Time. I was curious around what figure is scale and does that mean he gets the same as someone in the movie with one line. Thanks

Dear Bill:

SAG scale is about \$500 a day and yes, he'd have made the same as someone with only one line, at least for that day. Bruce invested in the film, so he actually ended up with less than scale.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
E-mail: McDanzz@aol.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

I just bought the RUNNING TIME DVD and felt it necessary to congratulate you on such an entertaining film. I never watch movies twice in the same day, yet yours was so fresh I just had to. I particularly enjoyed the romantic side of the story, which I genuinely cared about despite the fact that the female character had a relatively short screen time. I can't wait to watch more of your work. I read somewhere that Bruce Campbell might do a western with you. True???

Thanks muchly,
Danny Cork.

Dear Danny:

Thanks. Yes, Bruce and I have a western story we'd like to shoot. Perhaps we will, too, one day soon.

Josh

Name: Tamandra
E-mail: TAMandraM@aol.com

Hi Josh!

I've lurked at your site quite frequently this past year, and I've highly enjoyed reading what you have to say. Very entertaining, and I often learn a lot. So wanted to wish you happy holidays, and say thanks for sharing wits with everyone.

As for my question, do you know if there is a story behind the nickname for Rob Tapert being "Rip" during filming of Evil Dead? I recently bought the DVD, despite not having a player yet, to hear the audio track, which was highly amusing. Does everyone involved with Ren Pics have such an immense sense of humor? I'm also wondering if you could tell me what Rob's birthday is, out of curiosity.

Thanks so much, and look forward to more great work in the new year!

Best wishes,
Tamandra

Dear Tamandra:

You'll have to pick up the DVDs for "Running Time" and TSNKE and check out the audio tracks Bruce and I did. Perhaps our nutty sense of humor is what has kept us all working together for so long. As to Rob Tapert being Rip, this was his stage name he used on the first film we all did together, "The Happy Valley Kid." Soon thereafter Rob decided to actually remain in the film business and began using his real name. I actually don't remember anyone's birthdays, including Rob's.

Josh

Name: greg
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I read a question from a fan; basically asking you for an "IN". The answer you gave was a slap in the face. It was also a question I had asked in the past as well. Although, I'm not sure if you received it, yet the slap in the face to your other "fan" was more than enough to reach me. It knocked off my goatee I was wearing at the time and also caused me to spill my coffee all over my pants and shoes. It didn't burn me terribly, because it was an iced-mochachino, but left me embarrassed and down 3 bucks. But when it's all over, having known the outcome before I even asked the question, I say an honest THANKS.

However you know though, I really didn't know what to make of Thou shalt-. To be afraid of drama while making a comedy is ignorant. Unless you are making a parody or slapstick, which I don't believe it was either, drama is something to parody and criticize comically. When you have inexperienced

actors it is the inexperience you should exploit when adding character to the actors. The fact that the actors in Thou- couldn't act was the only thing that the characters brought to the screen. This of course only slightly made the characters comical in a seemingly unintentional way. I believe a good director can make a star out of anyone, but have to know the limit of your actors abilities.

Take it easy,
Greg

Dear Greg:

You do realize that I made that movie nearly sixteen years ago, but thanks anyway for the advice. Regarding asking me for a job or an "in," and why I finally got pissed off after 500 times -- I simply think it's stupid and rude. As though I were going to hire someone I don't know off the internet instead of one of the many people running around in L.A. that live right near me that I know. Get real.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

How come Bruce Campbell didn't star as Stryker in Thou . . . since he played him in the super-8 short?
Thanks Alot.

Dear Drew:

Bruce had already joined SAG and it was a non-SAG shoot. But he was supervising sound editor.

Josh

Name: Eneida Molina
E-mail: emolina@caribe.net

Dear Josh:

I enjoyed your essay and laugh a lot! I don't know who you are but you are a genius and I really appreciate the time you took to write down your well documented point of view. I am grateful for the insights you gave me. I will never forget that.

Eneida Molina
Puerto Rico

Dear Eneida:

Aw heck.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

What kind of camera did you use on THOU . . . and was it expensive to rent it out? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

I mainly used a Arriflex-BL, although I did a fair amount of pick-up shots with a Cannon Scoopic. The Scoopic belonged to Renaissance Pictures, so I got that for free. The BL belonged to some advertising company in Detroit that never used it anymore and rented it to me very cheap, although I don't remember for how much anymore.

Josh

Name: Lu Zhilu
E-mail: Luzl@dns.hubu.edu.cn

Dear director:

I have written a science fiction novel which is an analogy of the Chinese society. The novel entitled The Remote Dream can be the base of a film to shock the world, especilly the Chinese people. Are you interested in shaping it into a film?

Yours ever
Lu Zhilu

Dear Lu:

No.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if you still make short films in your spare time? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

No, I don't. I haven't made a short since I began making features. I make TV for a living and features in my spare time.

Josh

Name: JackFan
E-mail: jackfan@xenafan.com

Hello Josh!

I see you are directing two episodes of Jack of All Trades. Is there anything you can tell us about the series? Are the episodes you directed the first two that will be shown?

Angela Dotchin is absolutely gorgeous! What's she like?

best wishes,
JackFan

Dear Jackfan:

It's the first out-and-out comedy Renaissance Pictures has made. It takes place in 1803 and Bruce and Angie play early secret agents. Angie Dotchin is astounding--she's beautiful from absolutely every angle and a terrific actor, too. She completely holds her own with Bruce, which ain't so easy. I directed the first two episodes, although my second one might be shown third. They turned out really well, me thinks.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Is "If I Had A Hammer" complete? Do you have a distributor? If so, is it coming out soon?

Dear David:

No, no and no.

Josh

Name: Matthew Priewe
E-mail: priewe@highland.cc.il.us

Dear Josh:

How would I attempt to get myself into the film industry with no present connections. Right now I live in northern Illinois and I have no real experience to date. Is it possible to get an apprenticeship and how would I go about doing so? I would love to have a response. Thank you for your input.

Dear Matthew:

I'm so sick of this fucking question I could scream. We all came from outside of Detroit with no connections, now you must do the same. I rather feel that if someone has to ask me how to get into the film business that they never will. Millions of people want to get into the film business and a few thousand succeed, but they don't do it by asking favors of others. They do it out of sheer will, ambition and determination, which you either have or you don't.

Josh

Name: Evan Louison
E-mail: Evan.Louison@stonybrookschool.org

Dear Mr. Becker,

I was wondering if you ever prefer to line up your own shots and angles for a scene, act as your own DP on occasion, or even handle the camera yourself. I know there are quite a few directors who act as their own DP's and cameramen (i.e. Tony Kaye) and some who simply enjoy handling the camera themselves (Robert Rodriguez). I have read many quotes by directors such as the late Stanley Kubrick that actually shooting a scene from behind the camera helps bring the director closer to the scene itself and deeper involved with the filmmaking process itself. What are your thoughts? Do you have any personal favorite cinematographers besides Kurt Rauf or any of the others whom you've worked with?

Dear Evan:

I choose all the angles and line up all of my shots, but I no longer need to look through the camera since I have a video monitor that shows me exactly what the camera sees. I was both D.P. and camera operator on my first film, TSNKE, and I did not find it to be an advantage to directing. It is far more important for the director to be paying very close attention to what the actors are doing, not framing or listening to the film running through the gate. Just as a little note, what's going on in front of the camera is far more important than anything to do with the camera. How you film a scene is important, too, but not nearly as important as how the scene is playing. I think that far too much attention is now being paid to the technical and mechanical side of filmmaking, and far too little attention is being paid to whether or not the scene is worth shooting to start with.

I just worked with a terrific D.P. (or D.O.P. as they say here in New Zealand), Kevin Rielly, D.P. on "Jack of All Trades." I like Donny Duncan who shoots "Xena." I also very much like an older D.P. down here named Allen Guilford, whom I've worked with several times. From a viewing standpoint, I am a big fan of: Gregg Toland, Robert Surtees, John Alton, Joseph Walker, Nicholas Museraca, Gabriel Figueroa,

Vilmos Zsigmond, Laszlo Kovacks, Owen Roizman, Jack Green, and many others as well.

Josh

Name: Evan Louison
E-mail: Evan.Louison@stonybrookscool.org

Dear Mr. Becker,

I have had a serious question in my mind upon viewing your film RUNNING TIME, which I consider to be excellent in that it is both experimental and artistic in the same instance. I wonder (and please do not think this is an insult), did you ever attend film school or study cinematography? If so, I would like to know where. I am seriously considering a career in filmmaking, and think constantly about the issues of whether or not attending school to study film is an advantage to the filmmaker, or whether or not it is necessary at all. I beg you for your personal opinions and experiences, since I know that several writers and directors (i.e. Sam Raimi) never attended school for film and still managed to express their desired works through the medium of film.

Dear Evan:

I attended six colleges, two of which were film schools, and never graduated. I went to one semester at Columbia College in L.A. (not to be confused with Columbia University in N.Y.) and learned how to properly coil a cable. I then attended one semester at Sherwood Oaks Experimental College (this was in 1977), where I met: Robert DeNiro, Robert Aldrich, Francois Truffaut, Martin Scorsese, Robert Wise, Mel Brooks, and Gene Wilder, among others, but really learned nothing about filmmaking. Whatever I do know about it I got from watching many movies, making a lot of short films and reading books.

Josh

Name: Jim Eagan
E-mail: starion106@aol.com

Hey Josh,

Got a technical question here. When you're shooting for a show like Xena or Jack do you generally shoot for the edit? or is there very little wasteage due to the short shooting time? I'm basically wondering if the time constraints on these shows force you to do less coverage than say you'd do on a feature film. I get the impression that your shooting of Xena is well blocked out/boarded ahead of time and there's not really a whole lot of footage to play around with in the editing stage. Which I suppose is good in some ways since you're not even involved in the post much, correct? Other guys take care of that, and presumably they can't do much to 'hurt' the final product because you've essentially chosen the correct shots already. By the way, sorry to hear about Sundance. But you know that thing is a joke now anyway. They've got their idea of what a 'good' movie is and anything outside that 'self-important arty drama'-type doesn't have a chance.

Dear Jim:

I, as well as most other TV directors, shoot as much coverage of a scene as time allows. Occasionally you shoot a scene in a single shot that cannot be edited, but not too often or the producers will freak out. Everyone wants the ability to shorten, lengthen, or simply rearrange, as the case may be. At this stage of my life, given the low budgets and very short schedules of my movies, I don't shoot them much differently than TV, although I will sit on a shot longer if it pleases me. I get three days to recut all of my TV episodes from the editor's assembly. I just did this yesterday on my two "Jack" eps, one of which came in nearly 7 minutes too long, which is a lot in a 22-minute show. Anyway, had I not gotten coverage of most everything then it would not have been possible to whittle that time out of there.

Josh

Name: Rickie Clark
E-mail: rickie.clark@virgin.net

Dear Josh:

Hi, I work for a record lable called Silva Screen Records here in the UK, we deal with soundtracks, and I wanted to ask Joseph Loduca a few questions. So I was wondering if you had his e-mail address as you work with him a lot. It would realy help me out if you could get this for me.

Thanks,
Rick.

Dear Rick:

Joe is not online, as far as I know. Send your message here and I'll forward it to him.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

Well, looking at the movies I saw on the list...this is just a limited amount...but most of them seemed to be big little movies...they all had large casts, large companies backing them. It seems like in the past couple of years this "little" festival has just become another forum for big studios to show off their films.

Dear Bill:

This is not sour grapes, but Sundance has long been a tool of the large "Independent" film companies, like Miramax, Fine Line and Fox Searchlight, which are all subsidiaries of large corporations.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Are there any other festivals that you have entered the film in, such as Slamdance, or North by Northwest? Good luck, and thanks.

Dear Drew:

Not yet. Slamdance is specifically for first-time directors. Most festivals are pretty meaningless, really. I will try Telluride and Toronto when I get back from New Zealand.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

I read some of the movies that made it in sundance..but only a couple..any chance yours made it and you just haven't put the news up yet?

Dear Bill:

I just checked the complete list of the 2000 Sundance Film Festival's selections and "If I Had a Hammer" didn't get in. That's three times I haven't gotten in, so I will now stop trying.

Josh

Name: kate
E-mail: misskate66@yahoo.com

Hi Josh,

I am a television and video production major from channel 10 and 36 out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I have a research paper to do on directing, and I was wondering if you could answer a few questions for me.

Thank you,
kate

Dear Kate:

Let me take these questions one at a time.

1. *What would be some personal qualifications to have to be a director?*

Having the ambition to do it, the ability to handle a cast and crew and knowing how film cuts together.

2. *What are some advantages and disadvantages?*

The advantage is that it's a great job; the disadvantage is that it's difficult to get work, and after each job you never know if you'll ever have another job.

3. *How is the job outlook?*

It always sucks and there's tons of competition.

4. *Where did you start, did you start at the bottom?*

5. *What kind of education did you receive?*

6. *For a future television graduate do you have any advice.*

See as much as you can and read as much as you can. Develop a sense of taste.

Josh

Name: August

E-mail: joxerfan@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hope shooting is going well. How does it feel working with Bruce Campbell again? Do you find any major differences working in the half-hour format rather than the full-hour? And you said that the shows shared the same crew - how does that work exactly? Do they film one, then the other, alternating? Are they filmed in the same area? (I gather Xena and HTLJ shared many of the same sets.)

Dear August:

It's always great working with Bruce because I get to laugh a lot. Also, he so totally understands the process of shooting that he makes it all very easy. Since these half-hour shows are shot in two episode blocks over the course of eight shooting days, it feels just like shooting an hour episode. The crew worked on 14 episodes of "Cleo," then switched to "Jack," then will switch back to "Cleo" when the 22 "Jack" eps are done. Everything here in Auckland is shot within 25 kilometers of downtown, however, "Cleo" was entirely on interior sets and "Jack" is shot on both interior sets and exterior locations.

Josh

Name: Steph

E-mail: littleminx@wildmail.com

Hola Josh,

Are you involved with 'Cleopatra 2525' in any way, and if so, what are your impressions of it (production-, plot-, cast-wise etc?)

Thank you!
Steph

Dear Steph:

No, I'm not involved with "Cleo" other than it's the exact same crew shooting "Jack of All Trades." Everybody seems to be very happy with "Cleo" and, quite frankly, I think Renaissance Pictures has another hit show with "Back To Back."

Josh

Name: Paul Losada
E-mail: mcgonz0@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

What's your opinion on actor/writer/director Vincent Gallo? Have you seen his "Buffalo 66"? If so, what did you think?

One more question for you: Would you ever consider experimenting with any form of animation in your films? Later on.

Dear Paul:

I haven't seen "Buffalo 66." I used to love animation as a kid, but as I've gotten older it has come to interest me less and less. I want to look at fellow humans, not drawings or clay or digital re-creations of humans or animals.

Josh

Name: Russ and Phil
E-mail: russg@ghill98.freemove.co.uk

To Josh

Phil and I were amazed to hear from you as we didn't think it was possible we would ever talk to a real cool director at this point in our lives. Everyone at University is fascinated that we have written to you and recieved a reply. Thanks! You have boosted our confidence on RISING BLOOD and we hope to begin shooting with digital equipment next month. We have been fans of you since I managed to get a copy of THOU SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT in a shop in America, and along with my American vcr we were finally able to see the film. We have just learned a bit about lighting in our university course, but they only teach you the bullshit that they want you to know, and we are working on our own and need to know the short cuts and low budget ways of doing things. If you could give us any info on lighting and how you lit THOU SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT it would help us no end. Thanks a lot Josh.

Dear Russ & Phil:

I lit the film very simply because I didn't have very many lights. I also shot high speed film (400 ASA), so I didn't need many lights. It also gave the film an interesting look and allowed me to not haul a generator out into the woods. People will tell you not to shoot high speed film if you intend to blow the film up to 35mm, but I did and it looks fine. The key to good looking lighting is simplicity. The scene in the bunker with Sgt. Stryker and Lt. Miller was lit entirely with one 200 watt bulb.

Josh

Name: Jake Frank
E-mail: Frames@theoffice.net

Dear Josh:

Nice article on Jews in film. However according to a biography of Charlie Chaplin, he was not Jewish, but his half brother Sydney was. Which is it? Also I have read that Danny Thomas was Lebanese and not Jewish. ?

Dear Jake:

As far as I know, and, let's face it, I could be wrong, both of those men were Jewish. Sadly, I don't have my books with me here, but Danny Thomas was definitely Jewish. Look it up.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Hello, How did shooting go today? Do you get nervous the night before you start a new project? How much does a director earn per episode? Do you get extra each time the episode airs? And, how long will you be in New Zealand this time around?

Best,
josh

Dear Josh (man of a million questions):

They pick me up to begin shooting today in 15 minutes -- it's 6:00 A.M. I used to get nervous the night before shooting, but not anymore; now I just go and do it. I earn a zillion dollars an episode, but I only get residuals after the second time it shows and thereafter. I will be here until Dec. 19.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Hello, When will you find out if your new film, "If I Had a Hammer" gets accepted into the Sundance Film Festival lineup? BTW, I wish you much luck and success.

Best,
josh

Dear Josh:

They announce the line-up in December. Since I didn't get in with "Lunatics" or "Running Time," perhaps the third time is a charm.

Josh

Name: Viv
E-mail: vivdoug@oceanfree.net

Dear Josh:

where on windows '98 can i find a web composer

Dear Viv:

Go into config.system and type in "Delete everything" and I think you'll find what you're looking for.

Josh

Name: Heavenleahope
E-mail: Heavenleahope@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Ok heres my comment.....WHAT ABOUT ME!!!! I understand that the actors might want to go on with their lives...but what about me? I have been watching Hercules since it first came out and I am really upset that I won't be getting my lolause fix for much longer...I know you can't help this but really how does anyone think Jack of all trades and especially cleo2525 is ever going to make it...taking the place of Hercules....I mean really? What are we fans supposed to do without our lolause fix...If Kevin wants to give up and quit so what do a show with Michael Hurst and Karl UrBan....grab the writers and make them come up with something...H**I I could come up with something better than this....I know it isn't in your control so who do I talk to?????? Thanks for your time feel free to email me, Heavenleahope@yahoo.com

Dear Heavenleahope:

I hear that Michael Hurst is now directing a movie, so life moves on. Besides, now he can return to doing Shakespeare and the Greek classics here in Auckland, where he is something of an institution. The rumor is that next up is "Hamlet."

Josh

Name: Joan
E-mail: JLNCollies@aol.com

Dear Josh:

The only stars that state the actor's name and the character they became famous playing are: Clayton Moore The Lone Ranger, Freeman Gosden Amos and Charles Correll Andy (since there are no quotation marks one might easily construe that Amos and Andy were their last names).

You missed Lassie.

Dear Joan:

It only says "Lassie," it doesn't say who played the part.

Josh

Name: Tim
E-mail: tim.hayes2@sympatico.ca

Hi Josh,

I was just wondering what ever happened with a film that you were planning on directing for Renaissance right after Lunatics: A Love Story. I believe it was called Humans In Chains.

Dear Tim:

How do you know that? Actually, the script didn't turn out all that well is what happened, although I still like some of the ideas.

Josh

Name: Joyce Picker
E-mail: joycepick@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Hi! I was in a workshop in Michigan a few years ago in which we did scenes from a screenplay you wrote called Biological Clock. I really thought it was funny and was wondering if you still plan on making it someday. By the way, I worked on the scene in which Beth came back from New Zealand to seduce her old boyfriend. It went great, thanks for asking. I moved to California a year ago and haven't yet had the fortune to work on a screenplay like that here.

Joyce Picker

Dear Joyce:

Thank you. I'm rather proud of that script, but I never could get anyone in Hollywood to care about it. Perhaps I'll make it independently someday.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Hi Josh,

I have a few questions for you: How's the weather in New Zealand? What are you working on right now? What do you usually do in your spare time there? Who do you hang out with? Please tell Renee that her fans LOVE her!! Do you have any funny stories to tell about her?

Best,
josh

Dear Josh:

Well, it's spring here and raining quite a bit, although when it's not raining it's beautiful. I'm about to start shooting (tomorrow) Bruce Campbell's new show, "Jack of All Trades," which looks like it should be amusing. Most of my spare time is spent working, figuring out how I will shoot these shows, although I do hang out a bit, like last night with Bruce. I also have a good buddy down here named Edith, who worked on Herc and Xena for many years. So far, I've only seen Renee for a brief moment at lunch. I'll be seeing her a lot more when I move onto the Xena ep I'm doing in a few weeks. Meanwhile, I saw the new Xena musical ep and Renee looked very sexy in a white fringed go-go bikini.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Josh,

Hi! I know that you began your training as a director by making your own super 8 flicks when you were still a teenager, but how would someone who wants to be a special effects artist get started? How did the special effects teams on "Hercules" and "Xena" learn their craft?

Thanks,
josh

Dear Josh:

Initially, there was KNB (Kurtzman, Nicotero, Burger), who are in L.A., and WETA, who are in Wellington, who did all of the physical and mechanical effects, and Flat Earth, who do the digital effects (which are supervised in New Zealand by George Port). The connection between these people, that I can see, is that they are all clever people. How or why any of them got into special effects I have no idea, but they all seem to love effects and they all seem to know what they're talking about. I'd say see everything you can and read everything you can get your hands on about it, and experiment.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
E-mail: McDanzz@aol.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

Just read some of your short stories and found them very entertaining (particularly 'Commando Mission'). I was wondering how you felt about Father McPhillips' beliefs in 'The Gospel According to Judas'. His ideas about stories in the Bible being metaphorical rather than true are exactly how I feel. What's your take on Christianity?

Thanks for the great read,
Danny Cork

Dear Danny:

I rather like Will and Ariel Durant's explanation of where the old testament bible came from: in about 600 B.C., after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to Israel they brought many of customs, stories and Gods of the Babylonians back with them. They set up Babylonian idols in the synagogues, which deeply upset the Rabbis, who went to the king and suggested that there ought to be a codified set of rules for behavior. The king agreed and the Rabbis went off and wrote down all the rules, particularly the ten most important rules which they said were direct commandments from Jehovah. They also wrote down a lot of the local mythology (like the story of Noah, which is exactly the same as the Babylonian story from "Gilgamesh" of Utnapishtum, the oldest man in the world who had lived through the great flood), they put it all together, sealed it in a jar and proclaimed, "We've found a book sent straight from God!" And thus we have the old testament bible.

Josh

Name: nat goldsmith
E-mail: NGoldsmith@webtv.net

Dear Josh:

I believe in your article you made two errors concerning Elia Kazan and Larry Parks. I understand they are both Jewish.

Dear Nat:

You understand incorrectly. Elia Kazan is Greek Orthodox. I don't have my books with me here (in New Zealand) but Larry Parks was Gentile.

Josh

Name: Keith Hawkins
E-mail: keith15@inreach.com

Howdy, Mr. Becker:

How's it feel to make a "crime drama only for unpicky genre fans" kinda film (reel.com description of "Running Time")? Fuck the corporations; I'm buying it anyway; along with DVD TSNKE (when it finally comes out)? Is there a new ETA on DVD TSNKE? You think my being in the Marines is some kind of joke?

Keith

Dear Keith:

I guess it's better to make a "crime drama for unpicky genre fans" than get a sharp stick in the eye. See the previous letter and answer for TSNKE DVD details.

Josh

Name: Sean
E-mail: scornett

Dear Josh:

I gather from reading your website that you've probably already seen/been disappointed by more films this year than you'd care too, but are you at all interested in "Being John Malkovich"?

I don't necessarily agree that story/plot structure is the foundation that will make or break a film (I really enjoyed "American Beauty"), but I certainly do acknowledge its importance in film and need in so many (films). I think "Being John Malkovich" had enough "structural integrity" that you would be comfortable with it from that perspective. Also, I think it's probably the best film I've seen in years. It is a little bit long, but very entertaining, and about the most original movie that I can remember seeing since I was potty trained. Let me know.

Also, what's the word on DVD TSNKE? Do you know yet if they're gonna include "Stryker's War" in its entirety?

Thanks for your time, sir.

-Sean C.
-West Coast TSNKE Fans

Dear Sean:

"Being John Malkovich" hadn't opened yet when I left the U.S. for New Zealand and it won't open down here for months. Hopefully, it will still be playing when I return. No word as yet on the TSNKE DVD or if it will have "Stryker's War" on it. I'm still waiting to hear myself.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I saw your short "Tora, Tora, Tora", and I thought it was cool. Was that film fun to make, especially when you guys were throwing pies at each other? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

That's "Torro, Torro, Torro!" which the story of an out-of-control lawn mower. Sure, it was a lot of fun to make. There are some reverse motion shots in it that worked pretty well, if I do say so myself.

Josh

Name: Phil and Russ
E-mail: russg@ghill98.freemove.co.uk

Hello there Josh,

Russ and I have our own movie company named AURORA PICTURES but we're not professional (yet). Do you have any tips for us as we are making our first feature called RISING BLOOD and we're not sure what to do with it once we're finished? We would love to hear from you as you are up there with the best in our opinion. Thanks.

Dear Phil & Russ:

Good work on getting the film made, first off. Obviously, you ought to get it into as many festivals as possible, and it wouldn't be a bad idea winning a few. Otherwise, you probably need to find a sales agent, which is something that has never gone well for me and I have no good suggestions as to which sales agent to get. I have never made a good distribution deal, so I'm not the best person to speak to on this subject. I do, however, wish you all the luck in the world.

Josh

Name: Rob
E-mail: niofswords@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Do you like Bond films?

Dear Rob:

When I was a little kid I liked "Goldfinger," "Thunderball," "You Only Live Twice" and even "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," then lost all interest. I do rather like the book "Casino Royale" and would be interested in seeing a true adaption of it. I couldn't stand Roger Moore as Bond, nor anyone else since him.

Josh

Name: bob
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

Just a short comment, but I think there's a weeeee bit of difference between Raimi's "style" and Becker's style. Their films, respectively, have been completely different.

BOB

Dear Bob:

Thanks for noticing. I've always felt that, style-wise, had Sam and I not grown up one block from each other, we may as well have come from different countries. He sees the whole thing completely different than me, and, obviously, his view has been a bit more popular.

Josh

Name: Chelsea
E-mail: bigreenkangaroo@juno.com

Dear Josh:

I am a student who is about to start directing a show for cable tv. It's my senior project. What type of advise do you have that will help me work on this project to make it the best it can be. I am working with lots of inexperienced people and I have a lot of experience myself.

Thank you for any help,
Chelsea

Dear Chelsea:

Make sure the script is as good as it can be and you've got the best actors you can get your hands on. When you are on the set shooting, be calm and don't panic even if that's what you really feel like inside. Both shit and good vibes run downhill, so if you're calm and having a good time, everyone else will, too, and it will show in the final product. Good luck.

Josh

Name: Arthur
E-mail: anesome@bellsouth.net

Dear Josh:

I was just curious about something... Why do you get off on insulting every film and everyone in the movie industry (not to mention burning every single bridge you come to), especially when it's perfectly obvious that you're just riding Sam Raimi's coat-tails and ripping off his directing style?

-Arthur

P.S. Please explain the cinematic importance of "Xena: Warrior Princess".

Dear Arthur:

I have a new policy for answering stupid assholes like you--FUCK OFF!!

Josh

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

Hey Josh

Just curious what your favorite and least favorite films out of your own body of work are. Is there any film that you absolutely love or despise?

Dear Dave:

Jeez, I've only made four films and the fourth one isn't even done yet. I like parts of all of them and I dislike parts of all them. Of the three (barely) released films of mine, "Running Time" is the closest to my original conception.

Josh

Name: Eric Rousey
E-mail: elrous0@pop.uky.edu

Dear Josh:

Hey Josh, great site! I had a question that you might be able to answer about Evil Dead I. Why was that location in Tennessee chosen? I mean it was a pretty long drive from Michigan and there must have been locations in northern Michigan that were just as good. Was this location scouted out by a friend or relative in Knoxville or something? Or did Sam and Rob just decide to set it in Tennessee and so wanted to shoot it there for authenticity, maybe? Thanks.

Dear Eric:

Originally the film was to be shot in northern Michigan in the summer. However, as it took the Ren Pix boys longer to raise the money than anticipated, we didn't get to shooting until November, 1979 (20 years ago this week). It was decided that it would be way too cold in Michigan at that time for all of the exterior shooting, so a southern location was chosen. As fate would have it, it was one of the coldest winters in Tennessee's history.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Have you seen From Dusk till Dawn 2: Texas Blood Money, that Scott Spiegel directed? If so, what did you think? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

Not only have I not seen it, I haven't seen the first one.

Josh

Name: A.C.
E-mail: Silvr107@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Sorry to hear about Stevie! I know how it feels, and nothing I can say is gonna make you feel any better, but know that I feel for you! :0)

Dear A.C.:

Thank you. Everyone has been very nice about this and I appreciate it.

Josh

Name: Kerry
E-mail: kezz26@yahoo.com

Hi Josh,

I love the website.

I just wanted to ask you a question regarding your views on awards given to TV shows such as the Emmys. I am a Xena fan (Yep, another one :-)) and I have always wondered why the show is constantly ignored. The show may not be as mainstream as some of the shows that are constantly nominated, and I realise that some people may not think that the lead actresses are good enough to be considered but surely Joe Loducca or the wardrobe department deserve something for their efforts?

What do you think about this, and from your experience of working with actors do you feel that Renee and Lucy deserve more credibility from their 'peers'.

Thank you for your time Josh,

Take Care,
Kerry

Dear Kerry:

Emmys, Oscars, Grammys, and all the other silly awards are just forms of self-promotion by these industries. They try to kid us that this is somehow impartial, but of course it's not. Whatever is most popular will win the awards (like "ER" getting Best Show every year, although, frankly, I agree).

As to Lucy and Renee's "credibility," they both star in a show that's made it five seasons, which is a fair amount of credibility in the TV world. Ultimately, however, I don't think it matters what other people think of you as long as you think well of yourself.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

What was it like directing Sam Raimi as Manson in *Though Shall Not Kill* . . .? Thanks!

Dear Drew:

Sam was already living in L.A. and flew back to Michigan for a week to play the part, so I had to shoot out his entire part in the one week. My biggest challenge was to not burst out laughing and ruin the takes, which I did several times. After Sam left we doubled him with: his brother, Ted; the first A.D., Danny Merritt; and me. On the first day of shooting with Sam I told him, "That wig was expensive so don't fuck it up, OK?" We then shot his close-up getting mad at the camper and saying, "Oh, little one, you have much to learn," then Sam promptly reached up to either side of his head, grabbed big handfuls of wig hair and tore them out. We glued them back in, but the wig looked like shit from there on.

Josh

Name: Katie
E-mail: greenkat3@aol.com

Dear Josh:

I heard that Britney Spears is going to be on Jack of all Trades!!! Is that true?????????

Dear Katie:

Not that I've heard. I would seriously doubt it, too, given the low budget we're working with.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

What was the exact budget on Evil Dead? I've read in many places that it was \$350,000, or \$150,000, or even \$50,000. Which one is correct? Also, I saw Thou Shall Not Kill, and I thought the camera work you did was impressive. Thanks!

Dear Drew:

When we went down to Tennessee to shoot the film the fellows had \$90,000 and the film was originally budgeted at \$150,000. We ended up shooting for the better part of 1980 and between the continuing production costs, post production, the 35mm blow-up, as well as interest on the money they borrowed, I believe the final budget was over \$350,000, possibly over \$400,000. I feel like it's now par for the course for independent filmmakers to blatantly lie about their budgets, setting the numbers far lower than they really are.

Josh

Name: DREW

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I recently saw a bootleg of Cleveland Smith, Bounty Hunter and I thought it was terrific. How did you pull that off with such a low budget? Also, what did you think of Raimi's The Sappy Sap? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

I'm in "The Sappy Sap," you know. That's me ostensibly feeling out a woman's breasts, but when she steps away it reveals that I am actually messing around with a parking meter. As for "Cleveland Smith Bounty Hunter," like anything else low-budget, we shot quickly -- in that case it was four days. Scott Spiegel, Bart Pierce and I then spent the next six months doing all of the special effects one by one. And shooting in black and white made all of the effects blend much more easily than had we shot in color. We did rear-screen projection with a live-action foreground as well as a miniature foreground. We did stop-motion animation in front of a rear-screen slide. Bart and I actually did the double-printing ourselves by using his Bolex as an optical printer. It was a fun movie to make and, all in, including the rights to the music, it cost \$4000.

Josh

Name: Tony

E-mail:

Hey JB.

First just let me say that I totally envy you for being able to work with Renee O'Connor. I've had a crush on that woman for a long time now and I know I'm not alone there. Just tell us, are you in that league too; I mean come on, you're a guy and she is gorgeous. Just kidding, you don't have to answer that.

Seriously, I know you will be working on Xena soon and was wondering if you've heard and could give us any tidbits about your episodes may be about.

Also, since you know Bruce Cambell, has always had such a quick wit about him. I've seen Bruce at a few appearances and he was one of the most entertaining men I have ever seen. No matter what anyone said to him he always had an immediate comeback that got a laugh. Has he always been like that?

Thanks.

Tony

Dear Tony:

I like Renee, but I don't have a crush on her. Besides, she is engaged, so what good would it do me? I would love to come up with a good part for her in a film, though.

Not only do I not know what any upcoming Xena eps are about, I don't know what the one I'll be directing is about. I don't know if it's even written yet.

And yes, Bruce has always been funny, even when he was a kid. Actually, though, Sam was the funniest one of the bunch for quite some time when we were young. Then, when he decided to make "ED," he got very serious and has never gotten any less serious. He used to make me laugh like I was going to die. Both Bruce and Ted Raimi can still do this to me without much effort.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
E-mail: McDanzz@aol.com

Dear Mr Becker,

I read somewhere that Sam Raimi was just nineteen when he shot 'The Evil Dead', and the rest of you were all very young as well. Did you find this daunting at the time, or were you all pretty confident in yourselves? I find the fact that you all did this at such a young age very inspiring. Looking back twenty years, do you view this as a major achievement? Thanks for answering,

Danny Cork
PS :Very sorry to hear about your cat.

Dear Danny:

Actually, Sam was 20 when we made "ED" and Bruce and I were both 21. The process of making a feature film seemed daunting at the time, particularly the way Sam was coming at it, but not our ages. We had already made about 50 short films before that. When the film came out a few years later a French film magazine termed Sam "Un genie du 22," then with each year that passed someone would say to him, "Look it's Sam Raimi, un genie du 24, I mean, un genie du 25, uh 26 . . ." etc.

Josh

Name: Texangrown
E-mail:

Josh,

Renee O'Connor is very beautiful and talented. I love her portrayal of Gabby. Since you have worked with her in the past and will in the future. What do you attribute her popularity to? She seems to be a very special person, whose beauty shines from within. I just wanted to know your take on Renee as a person, and why do you feel she is highly regarded? I think Renee is very sexy and talented. There are so many others who agree!! What do you think?

Thanks

Dear Texangrown:

I absolutely agree. Renee has a great personality combined with a terrific work ethic, and she's cute as all get out, too. How do people get that way? Ask God, not me.

Josh

Name: Texangrown
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

There are some people on the internet who make hated filled comments about Rob Tapert. I feel these are unjustified because they don't know the man. I just wanted to ask you your opinion on why some fans of Xena continually spew hatred towards Rob. Since you know him, could you decribe him?

Thanks

Dear Texangrown:

Yeah, but those intense Xena fans are crazy. Rob is a powerful guy that makes decisions that affect millions of viewers worldwide. Whatever you may think of it, he takes his shows where he thinks they ought to go and he's already created 350 hours of TV entertainment, which is one hell of a lot. Rob is alternately a pussycat then the hardest-headed person I know. I disagree with him all the time, but I respect that he gets stuff done, unlike most everyone that's bitching about him, who can do no more than bitch.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Are you going to direct some episodes of "Jack of all Trades"? And what episode are you flying to New Zealand to film right now?

Best,
josh

Dear josh:

I'm going to direct the first two episodes of "Jack of All Trades," then I'm going to do two weird Xena episodes.

Josh

Name: josh
E-mail:

Hi Josh:

How important do you think it is for a director to understand Computer Animation and Video Editing? For example: how much knowledge do you think James C. had while he was directing "Titanic"? Do directors have to understand the animation process to be able to direct such technically enhanced scenes?

Thanks.

Dear Josh:

No, I don't believe a director needs to understand computer animation to use it. I think it's better in all cases to understand things than to not understand them, but if you know what you're asking for, like a wide shot of the Titanic sailing past with Leonardo and Kate on the bow, and you give the animators the live action element they need, you're all set. In my latest film I have a special effect of flickering TV light coming out of every window in every building in the city, which will actually be two shots. I shot a background plate for one of the shots with my character walking past buildings. The second shot will be entirely created by the effects house. It's not important if I know how to actually put that flickering light into the windows, although, as I've said, it wouldn't hurt.

Josh

Name: JML
E-mail: Jlipp1@hofstra.edu

Dear Josh:

My question is short and simple. I want to be a filmmaker more than anything in this world. It is all I ever wanted. It is all I can think about. So please tell me, how do I make it!!!!

Dear JML:

I know how you feel, I've always felt the same way. You probably won't like this answer, but as Laurence Olivier once said, "You think you're an artist, prove it." As I similarly answered someone else a few questions back, it's now up to you to know as much as humanly possible about all aspects of filmmaking. There's no guarantee, but it's the only way I know.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Just wondering... What's your opinion of the films of Terry Gilliam and Keven Smith. They are two of my favorite directors although i can understand why Smith has some detractors (he's films are almost all dialogue). Gilliam on the other hand has done the film i consider to be the best of all time, Brazil.

Dear Nolan:

I'm sorry, but I don't like either one. Kevin Smith seems utterly inept to me -- he knows nothing about filmmaking, his stories go nowhere and his characters self-consciously yap a lot without really saying anything. Terry Gilliam seems like the least talented and the least interesting (and certainly the least funny) of all the Python guys. His movies seem like major jerk-off sessions to me and I don't like any of them, including "Brazil," which I thought was a tremendous bore.

Josh

Name: Tony
E-mail: fossi@hotmail.com

Hi Josh,

How did Sam and Rob break into television? I've heard that pitching new show ideas is nearly impossible unless you are highly connected and have a proven track record. Is this true? How did they do it?

Thanks,
Tony

Dear Tony:

Sam and Rob already had a feature film deal with Universal when they made the move into TV. They had already made: "Darkman," "Hard Target," "Army of Darkness" and "Time Cop," so you could say they already had a something of a relationship with Universal.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Of the short films you made as a kid, which one is your favorite? Thanks.

Dear Drew:

I'm rather fond of "The Blind Waiter" and "Cleveland Smith Bounty Hunter."

Josh

Name: Nathan
E-mail: Nathan.Wishart@Lorem.net

Hello Josh:

I seem to remember a character called Enforcer 2 in an early episode of Hercules, the actress was called Cynthia Rothrock (I've been following her work for awhile now, she's a superb Martial Artist). Will she be making an appearance in either Hercules or Xena (as a different character)?

Thanks for Listening
Nathan

Dear Nathan:

She certainly won't be on Hercules anymore, the show was cancelled and they're done filming. I have never worked with her myself.

Josh

Name: IanC
E-mail: ianchernencoff@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Tell us a story about a GOOD film versus a FINISHED (on time within the budget) film, and how you tricked the devil and succeeded in both aspects.

Dear Ian:

I don't know what the hell you're talking about. All my films get finished and some are good and some aren't. I don't know what tricking the devil has to do with anything.

Josh

Name: Jolene C.
E-mail: jhc1985@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

If you were starting out making movies now, what would you do different? Do you think it's easier or harder, how's it changed since you started?

Dear Jolene:

The two main differences that jump to mind are: 1. There isn't a cheap film format anymore like Super-

8 so one can actually learn filmmaking on their own--digital and video are both OK, but editing is a big routine, and 2. They used to make good movies all the darn time in Hollywood and I knew very clearly what I was trying to achieve -- I wanted to make movies as good as the ones I was seeing at the theater every week (like "The Godfather" and "Patton" and "The Last Picture Show," etc.).

It's never been easy to get into the film business and I don't know that it's any harder now than it was 25 years ago, although back then there was the concept that if you were really good at what you did you'd make it. Now being good doesn't have anything to do with anything since no one knows what a good movie is or has ever been involved with one.

Josh

Name: Chris
E-mail: cnaylor@intouch.bc.ca

Dear Josh:

I'd like to know how you approach writing a scene? Do you make a check-list of story points or beats your scene should have, etc?

Chris

Dear Chris:

I'm a big believer in outlines and story treatments, anything that allows you to work all the way through the story. In my opinion you must know the entire story before you begin the actual writing. You must also know definitively where your act breaks are and what your theme and point are, otherwise you're simply making it longer, not expanding, exemplifying and illuminating the story, which translates as your theme and point. Every scene exists to illuminate your theme, help make your point and move you toward the conclusion. If the scene is not accomplishing one of these things it shouldn't be there.

Josh

Name: gabriel haseitel
E-mail: tango2327@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Hi I am very impressed with all the great screen plays you wrote,my question is probably a frequent one to you guys but I have to know. I wrote a rough draft for a screen play called "KEYS BONES" and I want to go through with it,but Ive never done this before and do not have the knowledge or budget to make this film,who can I contact or what should I do?

Dear Gabriel:

My dad once said to me many years ago that you ought to know how to do every job connected to or relating to your job. He's a building contractor, but he knows how to do electrical work, plumbing and

roofing, and that way he feels he can never be ripped-off or taken advantage of. So, my answer to you is learn everything. You'll achieve this by seeing as many movies as possible and reading as much as possible. I would also suggest making some short films first before embarking on a feature.

Josh

Name: DREW

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I know that you openly admit you smoke, but I was wondering if any of your pals (Bruce Campbell, Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, and so on) smoke as well? Just curious. Thanks

Dear Drew:

Well, they did at one time or another, but now the only truly committed smoker is me. Bruce smokes clove cigarettes sometimes.

Josh

Name: Al Harris

E-mail: CaptGnat@aol.com

Dear Josh:

American Beauty. I enjoyed this movie immensely and I also enjoyed reading your review. I agree with you on some level/ However at no point in the movie was I confused and at no point did I feel like something was amiss. I enjoyed every scene (accept for a few really long scenes between Thora Birch and Wes Bentley). The problem you did point out surely comes from a seasoned screenwriter's perspective, but I found the script to be acceptable. American Beauty is the debut for Alan Ball the writer of the script. This is a very impressive effort, I think, from a first time screenwriter. Also this is a different kind of movie, that perhaps follows a new structure. If you expect or want all movies to follow the same structure, you may be disappointed when something new catches you off guard. When I see the movie again, I will pay attention and try to grasp what you mean, but even if the structure is imperfect, I found the acting superb, the direction great, the cinematography amazing, and the dialogue.

Dear Al:

I thought I addressed this pretty clearly in my review, but I assure you that "American Beauty" does not have some new kind of structure, it has no structure. This does not take away from Mr. Ball's ability to create scenes, characters or dialog, but it ultimately seriously damages the overall film--it gives it no impact and no resonance. The film has almost entirely left my mind and I'm particularly good at remembering movies, even films I only saw once when I was a kid. Were I a seasoned auto mechanic as opposed to a "seasoned screenwriter" (with plenty of herbs and garlic), would you argue with me if I were to tell you your brakes are shot? Would you tell me that you'll just find a new way of stopping that

perhaps I've never heard of? Your "new kind of structure" theory is, from my seasoned and highly flavorful perspective, nonsense.

Josh

Name: IanC
E-mail: ian_chernencoff@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Do you leave fight details to a choreographer? Or does your shot list for swordplay scenes include every thrust and parry?

Dear Ian:

For the most part, the fights scenes are left to Peter Bell, the fight choreographer. Way back at the beginning on "Hercules," I used to work out every move with Peter. For instance, on "Maze of the Minotaur" I decided that I wanted to do a huge, over-the-top bar fight and I had a lot of ideas for it. Peter took all of my ideas and wove them into the big fight -- like Herc taking a guy and throwing him through the ceiling. That fight is seven minutes long, by the way, which is enormous. However, as time has moved along the fight scenes have really become Peter's exclusive domain. He works out all of the moves, then shows you what he has with little toy people he keeps with him all the time. How he's kept his inspiration after all these years and literally hundreds of fight scenes is an amazement to me.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

On Return to Paradise: I guess I'm just tired of seeing the same damn plots over and over again. Just in the past couple years we've had Red Corner, Return To Paradise, and Brokedown Palace...all about Americans in foreign prisons. Watching Return to Paradise gave me about as much pleasure as watching Lethal Weapon 4...except something *kind* of new happened in LW4...not that I liked it either.

Dear Bill:

I agree that it's a drag seeing the same, tired old plots again and again, and I don't suppose ending up in a foreign jail for possessing drugs is anything new, but "Return to Paradise" was far more realistic and believable than any version I've seen previously. I haven't seen "Brokedown Palace," but I thought "Return to Paradise" was far superior to "Red Corner" or "Midnight Express," both of which seemed like bullshit to me. However, what I particularly liked about "Return" was the set-up and the issue it brought up and explored rather well, which is responsibility. As for "Lethal Weapon 4," I don't think there's a comparison here.

Josh

Name: bill
E-mail: none

Dear Josh:

you actually liked Return to Paradise? Are we thinking of the same boring, piece of crap? (the one with the gay lady?)

Dear Bill:

I suspect that we are referring to the same film -- "the gay lady" being Anne Heche -- although I obviously didn't think it was a boring piece of crap. I found it very realistic, believable and scary. The idea of spending three to six years in a Malaysian jail is infinitely scarier to me than all the stupid monster stories in the world put together.

Josh

Name: Jolene
E-mail: jhc1985@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

What age did you make your first amature movie? How did it turn out?

Dear Jolene:

I guess I was about twelve when I began making Super-8 films. The first one didn't turn out very well -- I attempted to record synch sound with a cassette and, of course, it didn't work -- but the second film, "Super Student," caused something of a stir at junior high school. As I recall a very young Sam Raimi made a quick appearance in that film.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if you can explain to me, in laymen terms, exactly how a limited partnership works. I have a book that has a 50 page chapter discussing it, but they use so much complicated language that it's hard to follow. Any info would be appreciated. Thanks.

Dear Drew:

Basically, a limited partnership is mechanism whereby you can take money from people to form a business. They are used in other fields like real estate all the time. It is made up of three documents: the limited partnership agreement, the private placement memorandum, and an investor's questionnaire. The idea behind these documents is that they clearly state what business you're trying to create -- or, in this case a movie -- how much you intend to spend, how the potential profits will be broken up and given out, as well as numerous warnings to the potential investor that this is a high risk deal and they might very well lose their money. In the limited partnerships I've created it's always a 50-50 deal, although you can make it anything you want. There are two kinds of partners in this sort of deal: limited and general. The limited partners, who receive 50% of the potential profits, are the investors and the reason they are called "limited" is that their risk is limited to their investment -- meaning, if they put up a hundred bucks they are only liable for a hundred bucks. Whereas the general partner, which is always me in my deals, receives 50% of the potential profits and is responsible for delivering the film at the stated budget or for paying, somehow somehow, any and all over-runs, thus he is generally liable.

Josh

Name: DREW
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I just wanted to tell you that I read your essay "Smoking Cigarettes" in my speech class for a oral exercise and it went over very well. They liked the point of view you gave, and they thought it was very entertaining. Needless to say, got an A on it. Thanks!

Dear Drew:

Pleased to be of service. I just knew there was a constructive side to my smoking.

Josh

Name: Danny Cork
E-mail: McDanzz@aol.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

Couple of questions for you. What do you consider to be the best film of the 90's? (Considering it was a sucky movie decade this can't be all that tough a question right?

Have you seen 'The Blair Witch Project' yet?

Thanks muchly,
Danny Cork

Dear Danny:

The film that jumps immediately to my mind is "Unforgiven." I also quite liked "Howard's End." Lately, I rather liked both "Pi" and "Return to Paradise."

As for "The Blair Witch Project," my downstairs neighbor lent me the video tape and I watched the first 35-40 minutes and was so incredibly bored I turned it off and have not finished watching it. The idea of a documentary within a documentary is a good idea and also rationalized the use of the horrible-looking video tape, but it didn't make it any easier to watch. Also, not having a script and using very inexperienced actors was, for me, torture. The next film these guys make will prove if they have any talent or not and I suspect that they don't.

Josh

Name: Keith Hawkins
E-mail: keith15@inreach.com

Mr. Becker,

I went to reel.com and saw where the Running Time DVD is now available as a preorder for November 16th. Which leads me to the next obvious question, "Where the Hell is DVD TSNKE?!" We anxiously await its epiphany. Hey, let's face it guys. The man says sit a hole, we sit in a fuckin' hole.

Keith

Dear Keith:

It's coming, I swear. I spoke the friendly folks at Anchor Bay yesterday and they are busily at work on it -- they're trying to work out the rights issue with "Stryker's War," which either some of or all of will be on the DVD.

Josh

Name: Jolene
E-mail: jhc1985@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Maybe this is none of my buisness so I understand if you don't answer. Do you have a Signifigant Other and is there a good story about how you met?

Dear Jolene:

I am single. I do have a cat that I inherited from a friend who died several years ago. That's it.

Josh

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