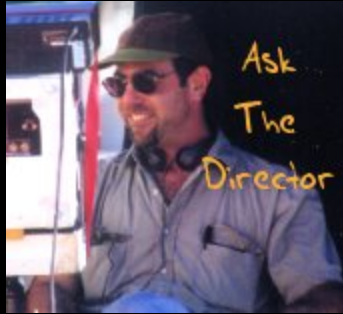


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
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Name: Bryan
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I enjoy making films with my parents little home video camera. I am only 17, and I am thinking of maybe being a filmmaker some day. Do you have any tips or suggestions for me?

Dear Bryan:

Yes, if you're not completely and utterly obsessed by movies, go into something else. It's very difficult field to get into, or to make a living, let alone to succeed at in any way, shape or form.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Just finished reading your latest update on "Hammer." Once you have the finished film in hand, what will your next step be? Will you try to work out a deal with a distributor for distribution to theatres? Is there any kind of "indie film network" that might pick it up? Will you do a "premiere" in LA? Or are you likely to approach videotape or cable outlets?

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

My first stop will be the good folks over at Anchor Bay Entertainment and a theatrical distribution company they introduced me to, Castle Hill (they did a terrific job re-releasing all of John Cassavettes' films a few years ago). If they're not interested, I'll go elsewhere.

Josh

Name: Patrick Wheeler
E-mail: wheeler_74@yahoo.com

Hello Josh Becker,

I have enjoyed your directorial chores with Renaissance Pictures, and especially liked "Running Time" Do you have any future projects in which you are working with Bruce Campbell that you are at liberty to divulge?

Thanks,
Patrick Wheeler

Dear Patrick:

Other than trying to get my film, "If I Had a Hammer," released, that's all I've got going right now, with Bruce or without him. I may go and hang with him for Thanksgiving, though.

Josh

Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Josh,

Re: "I didn't do the seminar since only five people signed up. I'll try again at another time."

Cool. Next time, give us warning on the website, I know a few people who certainly come if we'd have known about it in time... you also missed the Austin film festival by about a week (intentionally?), might be a good time/place to coordinate it since so many film buffs & indie filmmakers come from out of town.

Anyway, on to my point. Someone passed me a few scripts last week, and

it's the first time I've gotten a chance to read some in the "draft" state. My response was about the same with both of them, right around page 40. Disappointment.. and somewhat suprised. The structure was terrible! These were supposed to be "professionals" in the industry, and they were making really, really simple mistakes.

The first one took a wrong turn at the end of Act I (in fact it seemed like Act I was pretty much the writer's entire idea, forced into 120 pages.) The second script was worse, because even with better dialogue, it just sort of meander along behind the main characters, following their lives.. only this had the opposite effect of what the writer intended; instead of caring more about the characters, I felt lost and bored. (At about page 60, I recall thinking "shouldn't something interesting have happened by now?")

Have you considered writing an essay on how structure and character growth are interconnected? It seems to me that breaking the structure is the wrong way add depth to your characters. Don't we, as viewers, expect a certain pacing to the "growth curve" of our characters as well? And when this doesn't happen when we expect it to, is the natural response of our audience to feel cheated?

JT

Dear JT:

That's what almost all of my screenwriting essays are about. I just told the story in the essay "[Monsterization](#)" of when the concept of character depth really hit me while I was writing "Cycles." You simply can't have deep characters if your structure is bad. If you haven't spent act one setting up the character's issues that will be confronted in act two, then resolved in act three, your act one is wrong and basically worthless. Screenwriting is about structure, and from the structure comes everything else.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

How often do you watch new movies? If you just saw 3 Kings not that long ago, on video I presume, it seems to me that you might be missing out on a lot of really good films that would be worth a look. There must be SOME good new movies since hundreds are made every single year...Not that 3 Kings was very good. It wasn't.

What about the foreign scene? Herzog is doing his first feature since the 1980's. Are you into his work?

At any rate, I'm just curious.

Regards,

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

I saw "Three Kings" and it sucked. I see all kinds of new movies--I have satellite TV and all the silly channels--and should I ever see a good movie I'll let you know. I liked a couple of Herzog's films, "The Mystery of Kasper Hauser" and "Aguirre, the Wrath of God," which were both 25 years ago. I wish him all the best on his new picture, but I don't hold out a lot of hope.

Josh

Name: colleen
E-mail: cmaginnis_920@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Hello, I am a high school student struggling to complete a research paper. Included in my paper i have to have an interview. My paper is on directors and in West Virginia there seems to be a sortage or directors. I wonder why? Anyway, i was wondering if you could help me out. I would absoulty adore it if you could respond and let me give you my questions.

Thank you sincerely
Colleen

Dear Colleen:

If you think you have a good question, go ahead and ask it. As far as your school paper goes, I could care less.

Josh

Name: Andy
E-mail:

<< If you're doing a remake or a sequel, instead of beginning with the idea of being "creative," you're beginning with the idea of "money" and you are a whore. >>

Dear Josh:

Has it ever occurred to you that some filmmakers do sequels to add to a story? Isn't there something creative to be said at that? Was Raimi a whore for doing "Evil Dead 2" and "Army of Darkness?" Can't you accept the fact that a filmmaker would *want* to do a sequel? A story (with or without a

message) sometimes benefits from being expanded upon.

Dear Andy:

Hey! I love "The Godfather Part 2," so it's certainly possible, just not probable. 99.9% of the sequels and remakes suck because they were made with crappy intentions. My favorite director, William Wyler, made a great remake with the 1959 version of "Ben-Hur." Quite frankly, I think Wyler took the job just to prove that a great film can be made out of anything, including a remake. My favorite Tarzan movie is the second one, "Tarzan and His Mate," not the first one. But, for the most part, remakes and sequels are, in my humble opinion, the worst kind of shit and not worthy of a big defense or a real discussion.

Josh

Name: Nicole Marks
E-mail: nmarks@sendit.sendit.nodak.edu

Dear Josh,

I am looking into the career of being a director and i was wondering if you could answer a few questions for me? First one, what do your salaries range from, second what are some disadvantages and advantages? and what type of education do you need? If you could answer these for me i would be very grateful thank you

yours truly
Nicole Marks
P.s I love your website a lot

Dear Nicole:

Salaries range from \$00.00 per year to multi-millions of dollars per picture, and everything in between. Learning how to spell or form a sentence might possibly be helpful, too.

Josh

Name: Andy
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Regarding your rant on remakes... Looking through your list of favorite movies, I see that a lot have been based on novels. I don't see you

bitching about them. When a director or writer translates either to the screen, they are still working with someone else's material...so what's the difference? I've seen a lot of good remakes where the filmmakers have taken the same idea (in many occasions remaking their own material) and have taken new approaches to it...exactly as if you were adapting a novel. But why are films based on novels not crap? A lot of the best ones are translated verbatim from the source material...but are you gonna denounce them because you read the book already?

Dear Andy:

What on Earth have novels got to do with remakes? Novels are a different medium. Movies can happily be made from short stories, articles, novels, plays, and the interpretation of taking a story from one medium to another is where the originality comes in. But when you base your movie on another movie, you've got no originality to start with. I think it's even worse than that. As William Goldman said of sequels in his book, "Which Lie Did I Tell?" "... Sequels are whore's movies. And always will be." So are remakes. If you're doing a remake or a sequel, instead of beginning with the idea of being "creative," you're beginning with the idea of "money" and you are a whore. Plain and simple.

Josh

Name: Courtney King
E-mail: AgentScully45@aol.com

Dear Josh:

If I am able to obtain a New Zealand work permit, who would I need to get in contact with to work on Xena, either as an actor or crew member?
Thank you for your time.

Dear Courtney:

"Xena" has been cancelled and the the remaining shows have taken a big budget cut. What job do you think you're going to get? However, if you have actually gotten your work permit and are there, call Pacific Renaissance Pictures and see what they say.

Josh

Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Josh,

I got an email from someone saying you did a seminar here in Austin about a week back... Why didn't you warn us? Will you be doing any others in the area? I would have certainly tried to come.

JT

Dear JT:

I didn't do the seminar since only five people signed up. I'll try again at another time.

Josh

Name: Michael James
E-mail: vetb882@aol.com

Dear Sir,

I am impressed with your resume and someday hope to be a writer/director as you are. I read your story structure article and couldn't agree with you more. As a contestant in the Greenlight Project, I have had to read soem seriously bad efforts. Two were good ideas that the writers didnt know what the hell to do with. My question is, now that I feel I have a legitimate shot at winning this thing (based on what Ive had to read) I signed up as director if I should actually win. My problem, I couldn't tell you an Arriflex from a Bowflex. I am considering the Dov SS Siemens 2 day class just to familiarize myself with the equipment that will be used. Would you recommend this class? I am a student of Robert McKee's Story Structure classes -- I missed a car payment but I dont regret it. I KNOW how to write as I hope my script Melanie's Angel will attest.

Any info will be helpful,
thanks and have a great day,

Michael James

Dear Michael:

Sort of counting your chickens, aren't you? Anyway, I don't know a thing about Dov SS Siemens. Check out my Recommended reading list, but particularly "The Director" by Richard L. Bare. Project Greenlight, is, in my humble opinion, a stupid idea. C.B. DeMille did a thing just like Project Greenlight in 1922 and it was a miserable failure. The idea that you'll get better scripts from amateurs than professionals is truly knuckleheaded.

Josh

Name: soph
E-mail: C_soph@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Was the song "If I Had a Hammer" played in your movie "If I Had a Hammer?" Thank you.

Dear Soph:

Yes, the song is played several times in the film, including over the front titles. Other songs in the film are: "Goodnight Irene," "This Land is Your Land," "Rock Island Line," "In My Time of Dyin'," "Bourgeois Blues," "Darling Corey" and "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Josh

Name: Gil
E-mail: excelrightnow@hotmail.com

Hi Josh,

I wanted to know if you were born and raised in Isreal, and if you were where were did you live?

Dear Gil:

Not only was I not born and raised in Israel, I've never even been there. BTW, it's I-S-R-A-E-L.

Josh

Name: Aaron
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I think you were quite right when you answered by David Lean question. (For me "Doctor Zhivago" is such a bore, i find it very hard to watch.)

Also on the subject of "Ryan's Daughter", i kept thinking to myself it has good cinematograpy but then realized your number one rule of film-- THE STORY. Everything else doesn't mean a damn thing.

On the subject of your films: the only one I have seen is "Lunatics: A Love

Story". (but this is because I live in a small town and can't find them. We have no good independant films, foreign films, etc. It is pretty crappy). Anyway, I really enjoyed "Lunatics" and the plots of "Thou Shalt Not Kill... Except" and "Running Time" are very intriguing, and i am going to order them on DVD from the US next week.

I guess I should ask a question: What is your opinion of Fellini ?(again I have only seen very few of his films because of this damn town!) I watched his "Toby Dammit" in "Spirits Of The Dead" last night and kind of enjoyed it. But most of his films never go anywhere. It would be nice to hear your favorites of his films so I'll know what ones to order. (But not before I get "Thou Shalt Not Kill" or "Running Time"- which i'm sure will be great).

Thanks again!

Dear Aaron:

I'm not much of a Federico Fellini fan. I've seen "8 1/2" quite a few times, and parts of it are wonderful, but the whole film I find troublesome. I love the look and milieu of "La Dolce Vita," but it ultimately bores me. "La Strada" is a creepy, interesting film (and fairly short) , but the dubbing of Quinn's voice tortures me. I like the neo-realist films of Vittorio DeSica and Roberto Rossellini ("The Bicycle Thief," "Open City") much better (BTW, Fellini co-wrote "Open City").

Josh

Name: Thom
E-mail: Rampage04

Dear Josh:

I wanted to ask, when you get an idea in your head for a movie, do you start writing the screenplay right away or write a story first? Why do you have a bunch of short stories, how come you haven't written screenplays for them? Is there really a difference between a story and a screenplay? It just so happens a screenplay has its own form? Thanks

Dear Thom:

Most often when I get an idea for a movie I noodle it around in my head for the rest of my life and never actually write it. If it sticks and begins to solidify, I write it down in my journal. If I keep coming back to it, then I'll write an outline. If the outline makes sense I'll then write a treatment, or short story version, if you will. If I can make that make sense and the idea still interests me, then I'll write the script. I'll never write a script I haven't worked out all of the structure for first. If you don't know your structure you can't write a decent script--no way. As I was just discussing with my webmaster, Shirley, short stories are a different, looser form than the

screenplay, and don't necessarily have to have three acts or a resolution, meaning, without a lot of adaptation, most stories won't automatically make good scripts. If I write something as a short story it's because it seems like a short story to me.

Josh

Name: Dusty
E-mail:

Hey Josh.

Just wondering since you've done some work on Xena. You obviously know Renee O'Connor so I was wondering if you were invited to her wedding, or maybe even lucky enough to attend.

Also I read somewhere that even though there are many nude scenes in Xena, that as a rule Lucy and Renee never do any actual nudity on set. Since you've directed several episodes, is this true, and if so how did you go about shooting nude scenes in your episodes?

Dusty

Dear Dusty:

No, I was not invited to Renee's wedding, nor would I have expected to be, as I'm sure most of the "Xena" directors weren't. I've enjoyed working with her every time, but we're not really friends. As to nude scenes, most of the scenes where they are supposed to be nude, they're not, they're wearing flesh-colored wet suits. At the beginning of "If The Shoe Fits . . ." where Renee is showering, it's a body double in the wide shots and Renee in the close shots. Of course, any time it's wide enough so you can't make out their faces, it's not them, it's doubles.

Josh

Name: Matthew Allard
E-mail: gallard@pivot.net

Dear Josh:

Hi, I read somewhere that you directed Hercules and the Maze of the Minotaur. I like this movie a lot and I was hoping that you might be able to tell me where I could buy it. Thanks!

Dear Matthew:

I'm pretty sure it's never been for sale in the U.S. I have an Australian version that I saw in the stores in New Zealand, but I've never seen it here. I guess you'll just have to tape it the next time it pops up on TV.

Josh

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

Josh,

Looking at the main page I guess it would be fair to say that you're not voting for Bush. But is Gore all that much better? OK, yea, no question he's better. But I've still got some major problems with his views on certain issues. The whole attack on Hollywood bothers me, and while Gore may back off a bit IF he wins, Lieberman strikes me as the kind of guy that will actually get MORE involved in the attack. There's some others things, like Gore's tendency to exaggerate or just plain make shit up. And some of Bush's points about Gore not being particularly effective in bringing together the Reps and Dems is somewhat true. Honestly, I've almost considered voting for a third party, like Harry Browne or Nader. But I've decided to vote for Gore and I'm encouraging my friends on campus to do the same. Bush winning the presidency scares the shit outta me, and I do happen to agree with Gore on alot of issues, including the environment; plus, I suppose a vote for Nader or Browne is a vote for Bush anyway. So I'm gonna go Gore, and just pray that the public wakes up before November 6th. What do you think? Is Gore a good candidate? And what the fuck are we gonna do if Bush wins? (which unfortunately seems very much possible)

Dear Jim:

I voted against Bush, which meant voting for Gore. I vote almost straight Libertarian otherwise. I am considerably less comfortable with a Republican in the white house, since I think they are just itching to get us into wars because they're ostensibly good for the economy. I think that Clinton-Gore have done a fine job over the past 7 years and if Gore could just keep that up, and I think he can, that would be great. Whereas, Bush, Jr. just seems like a snivelling little wimp me, without an ounce of backbone or real character. I actually don't mind that Bush spent from 18 to 40 doing little else but getting drunk and snorting cocaine, but now he's a reformed drunk and coke-head and they're the worst.

Josh

Name: Aaron Graham
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I want to thank you very much for responding to my letter so quickly. I found your help very valuable and now started to read my dialogue out loud. (This is very helpful).

By the way, I just watched David Lean's Ryan's Daughter, I thought it was a pretty good film and I liked Christopher Jone's performance. I was wondering what your opinion of this would be? Do you feel that like Kubrick, Wilder and Hitchcock that Lean lost his touch later in his career with this film and A Passage To India? or do you think that these two films were worthy to his whole filmography?

Anyway, thanks again. I really appreciated your help.

Dear Aaron:

I feel like David Lean had lost his touch a film earlier, with "Doctor Zhivago." Although I think both Robert Mitchum and John Mills are terrific, I believe that "Ryan's Daughter" is nearly a disaster and dramatically lays a big egg. So does "A Passage to India." However, from "Lawrence of Arabia" back is all well worth seeing, particularly "Great Expectations," "Oliver Twist," "Brief Encounter" and "Hobson's Choice."

Josh

Name: John
E-mail: jforde40@hotmail.com

Howdy,

I found a copy of GoreZone from 1991 that had a great interview w/ you. If you'd like I'll send you a copy. Whatever happened to the termite sci-fi flick?

Time for my 2nd Annual Halloween inspired question: name 5 flicks that you would recommend for Halloween night. The jack-o-lantern will be carved w/ a candle burning inside throwing luminous shadows on the walls, now what should be in my VCR?

Thanks Partner

Howdy, John:

I have a copy of that GoreZone somewhere. What ever happened to "Insectoids?" They are terrorizing Shelfville and Drawertown, where most of my scripts and stories live. So as not to repeat myself, let's go to some lesser known scary films.

1. "Dead of Night" (1945)
2. "Bedlam" (1946)

3. "Five Million Years to Earth" (1968)
4. "Repulsion" (1965)
5. "The Tenant" (1976)

Josh

Name: Aaron Graham
E-mail: agraham83@hotmail.com

Dear Josh,

I discovered your site very much by accident, but am now very glad to have discovered it. I absorbed all of your articles in one day, and found them to be quite helpful. It seems to me that you live and breathe film, and to me that is very encouraging. I also look up to that.

Anyway, I am an aspiring writer/director (who isn't these days) but I feel like this is something I have to do with my life. I live in a very small town in Canada and figure on going to film school next year in the US, basically just to help develop my craft and also to meet similar people. I have also have made a couple "little" films in my home town with the encouragement of family and friends. (mostly they just humored me, they don't really care about film that much).

Anyway, my question is concerning dialogue. For me it is very hard to write. I was just wondering if you could tell me a little bit about the way you come up with dialogue for your screenplays?

Any ideas or methods you like to use would be much appreciated and once again, terrific site and I have learned a great deal from it. (I definitely share your opinions of where film is today... utter crap).

Thanks again.

Dear Aaron:

If your dialog is good you ought to be able to cross out the names of characters and still know who's speaking. To achieve this you must know who your characters are, they can't just be names on paper. If you know what they really want in life, then that's probably what they're talking about. If you know what the character's big problem is, then you'll also know what they're not saying. If you know your theme then you will know what every conversations ought to be about. It's really an issue of then personalizing the theme to the character. I also think it's important to read the dialog out loud just to see if a human being can actually say the lines. Also, a line of dialog should generally not exceed five or six sentences or two to three paragraphs, tops. Really, the shorter and more succinct the better.

Josh

Name: melissa
E-mail: causetense@aol.com

Dear Josh:

What are the most important things to know and remember if i wanna become a director?

Dear Melissa:

Story, story and story.

Josh

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

Josh,

When you watch your own movies do they feel like "real movies"? Just curious. Made a feature and it still looks and feels, to me, like one of my video shorts I made in High School.

Are you serious when you say the last great movie you saw was Unforgiven? If that's right, how in the world, as a filmmaker and movie lover, do you stay sane?

Dear Blake:

As James Stewart said, "Movies are pieces of time," and if you were there during the shooting, each shot represents its own little hunk of time and effort that it took to shoot it. Therefore, at least for me, my movies never really flow together as a single flowing piece because each hunk is its own deal. Regarding how I stay sane because contemporary movies suck so bad, I watch mainly old movies. I recently saw a cool film called "The man Who Never Was," a 1956 British production based on a true story about how the Allies fooled the Germans into thinking they were invading Greece instead of Sicily. I also just watched "Three Kings," which I found entirely unbelievable, totally uninvolved, and pretentious as well.

Josh

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

Hey Josh,

Got a copy of Running Time on VHS, and really loved it. With respect to your most recent letters, I got the theme, and it made very clear some of the things you say on story structure. I rarely go to films anymore, myself, there's just no interest. Just saw the Sixth Sense, and I agree that one did work...however, by reading your letters I knew a little too much lol. Also, in latest visit to LACMA, viewing the Dutch masters, I really am drawn to that use of black myself, and it made me think about you :) I'm working on a portrait of Ted as Joxer at the moment...have you had any interest, or has anyone done a portrait of you??

Tam

Dear Tamandra:

I had three portraits painted of me by Don Bachardy, whose new show I just saw at the Academy. He also has a new book out, called "Stars In My Eyes," which are his beautiful portraits of famous people that all actually sat for him, like Bette Davis, Myrna Loy, Jack Nicholson, William Wyler, and John Huston. I sat for him, too, but I didn't make the show or the book. Each portrait took three hours and I'm still amazed I was able to sit still that long.

Josh

Name: Gord
E-mail: gord@gordzajac.com

Josh,

I believe you mention in your DVD commentary for Running Time that the theme of the movie is trust.

In regard to your comments about a writer giving the theme to a film in the first two minutes, how do you establish that in the first few minutes of Running Time?

My favourite scene in RT has to be the entire tunnel/Carl beats the crap out of Donny sequence. It was nice to see a more fleshed out character arc for Donny than what I had previously read in the script. I'm still impressed you were able to go back and shoot that scene two weeks later.

Thanks for a fun film,

Gord

Dear Gord:

Trust is what Carl and the Warden are discussing, trust is what Carl and the prison guard discuss, trust is immediately the issue between Carl and Patrick--the theme is stated pretty clearly I think.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

The essays I've read on your Web site have made me watch movies much more critically lately. And the other day I had the misfortune of seeing the type of Hollywood crap you're always warning us about: "The Contender." This is not so much a movie as a political tract on film. But regardless of one's political views, it's a lousy movie: It's got a main character who you never care about and, even worse, who never DOES anything. And the script has no three-act structure and piles one unbelievable event on top of another. When "The End" flashed on the screen, I heard several people utter in unison what I had been thinking throughout the film: "No way."

There, now I feel better. What's this got to do with you? Well, until I read all your essays, I would have probably have just been disappointed in the movie. Instead, I'm pissed off at the waste of money, talent (most of the cast was good, especially Gary Oldman), my time and my money. Thanks for the education.

Charles Corder

Dear Charles:

I've been experiencing the exact same feelings toward most Hollywood movies for about 20 years. I know within 2 minutes if the writers have a clue about structure because a well-written script states its theme right away--if the theme is not stated right away, the chances are about 99% that there isn't one. I have a tendency to bail out on most movies within the first 35 minutes because that's when act one is supposed to end, and if it doesn't, there's absolutely no reason to watch the rest of the film because it's going nowhere.

Josh

Name: Tony Mitchell
E-mail: ttmitchell@jbwere.com.au

Hi Josh,

How much money did you get for selling "Cycles"?

Dear Tony:

I received the Writer's Guild high-budget minimum, which, at that time was about \$48,000. I spent it all making "Running Time."

Josh

Name: Jim
E-mail: Starion106@aol.com

Josh,

Now that Xena is going off the air, what are the chances that Sam/Rob will develop a somewhat intelligent tv series? I mean, Xena was decent entertainment I suppose, but after a few episodes it bored the shit outta me. Jack seems to have died, and Cleo has been awful from the get-go. Any chance that Sam and Rob will develop a smart, fun hour-long drama series? Maybe like a cable network show? I know you're not much of a tv viewer, but I think with the right talent in front of, and behind the camera you guys could do something that adult viewers could enjoy. Get the three of you guys together, write the pilot, have Sam produce and you direct. See where it goes. Seems like syndication is pretty much dead, why not hook up again with those guys and try something new? Make something worth watching? Maybe not even a series show, just like individual movie-of-the-week type deals under a shared premise.

Jim

Dear Jim:

If that's what Rob Tapert or Sam Raimi wanted to do I'm sure they'd let me know. I am an idea machine and I sit here day in and day out dreaming up ideas for movies, TV movies, mini-series, you name it. I'm researching two ideas right now that I think would make great TV movies: the 1876 presidential election, and the life of Adolf Hitler. I pitched Rob the life of Julius Caesar, as told at three different points in his life simultaneously, so you'd have a 12-14 year old actor, a 20-25 year old actor (like Karl Urban, who played him on "Xena"), and a 40-45 year old actor. Anyway, it didn't seem to go anywhere. I have a sit-com idea for Bruce. I've got a TV movie script about young Teddy Roosevelt, with a great part for Bruce. I have tons of stuff no one is interested in. As Rob Tapert himself taught me, if someone wants to get in touch with you, they'll find you.

Josh

Name: Ted
E-mail:

Dear Josh,

Thanks for sharing all the info and your unique and individual opinions. Although I may not always agree with you, you're always unafraid to give your own two cents worth, even when it may not be the most popular statment--and I can respect that. Besides if we all thought the same movies were good we would never have a truly thought-provoking discussion which would allow us all to understand or at least view different perspectives on movies. Film, is a medium in which different interpretations and opinions are to be expected and encouraged. Having said that, I will now move on to the Questions part of my email.

1) Someone told me that a great way to learn the art of screenplay writing is to read as many screenplays as possible. Do you agree with this statement? If so, which ones do you suggest I read?

2) Do you believe in/use script-writing software? If so, could you give me a suggestion about which ones would be the best for a novice, which ones are least expensive, which ones give you the most for your money and which one you use and why?

3) What/Who are your favorite foreign films/directors?

4) What is your favorite Hitchcock movie and why?

5) Do you like any of the films of Kurosawa and Spike Lee? Whether you dislike or like any of their films, could you please give your opinion on what you thought were their best and worst films, and your reasoning behind it all?

6) Out of curiosity, how many pages long is your Q&A section? I find it very informative and amusing at times, but I constantly have to sift through the Xena freaks and hecklers!

Well, I realize I asked a shit-load of questions, but if you could at least briefly answer all of my questions I would greatly appreciate it. Thanks for your time, and best wishes.

Ted.

Dear Ted:

Well, I'll do my best. As to how long the Q&A section is, I don't even know anymore. I must have answered at least 1000 questions in the past two years plus. All right, let's take these questions one at a time:

1. When people refer to reading as many scripts as possible, it kind of means becoming a script-reader to see what's going at this time in the biz. Nevertheless, reading as many scripts as possible is fine idea. I particularly like Robert Bolt's script for "Lawrence of Arabia," James Clavell and W.R. Burnett's "The Great Escape," although I don't know where you'd get either one. You can get Preston Sturges' scripts in published form and they're all worth studying (but see the movies first). The point here isn't just to read good scripts, it's to read everything to see what's both good and bad.

2. I do not believe in script writing software and do not use it. I began writing scripts on a manual typewriter and the format is simply five tab stops. Other than that, it's all got to come out of your brain and no software will help. Strong coffee is more important.

3. I Like a lot of Luis Bunuel's films, particularly from his 1950s Mexican period, like "Los Olvidados;" I like the post-WW2, Italian neo-realist films, like DeSica's "The Bicycle Thief;" I think Akira Kurosawa hit a terrific run of pictures in the 50's and 60s, like "Ikiru" and "High and Low;" there's a ton (or, more appropriately, a "tonne") of British pictures I love, like all the Ealing comedies of the 50s, such as "The Lavender Hill Mob" and "The Man in the White Suit," all of David Lean's films, many of Carol Reed's, and of course, Alfred Hitchcock. Many of the great "Hollywood" directors were actually of foreign birth, like my favorite director, William Wyler, who was from Austria, as was Billy Wilder, and Michael Curtiz, who was from Hungary.

4. My favorite Hitchcock film is "Notorious," with "Psycho" coming second, both of which have a lot more characterization than most Hitchcock films.

5. What the hell have Kurosawa and Spike Lee got to do with one another? And why on Earth would they ever be mentioned in the same breath? (Name a Japanese director and an African-American director that both shot films on 35mm stock?) As I previously mentioned, I like many of Kurosawa's films, particularly from the 50s and 60s ("Seven Samurai," "Yojimbo," "Sanjuro," "The Hidden Fortress," etc.), whereas I don't like any of Spike Lee's films, which started off shitty and have gotten progressively worse (if you paid me \$20 I wouldn't see "Bamboozled").

Josh

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