

Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive Page 41

Name: May Fly
E-mail:

Hey Josh.

I was just wondering if you've ever seen the Hong Kong film, "A Chinese Ghost Story" and/or viewed the finale of Xena, "A Friend In Need 1&2"

If you see Rob again, you may want to let him know that the cat is out of the bag on where he got the story for Xena's finale. In fact, the entire Xena internet community now knows he practically stole "ACGS" and just inserted X/G into that story and thus we have the Xena finale.

Now this is my opinion and many others as well. Many call Rob a visionary and a great creator. Sorry, but if he is such a visionary, why could he not have come up with an original story for the Xena finale(the biggest show of the entire series). Instead he stole someone else's vision and just inserted his characters.

And it wasn't just the story he stole, he took and copied many scenes and shots almost directly; enough that a case of plagiarism could be made here.

Now it wouldn't be that big a deal if he gave credit to where the actual story came from, but instead he gave none. Instead this finale was touted as 'Rob's vision'; 'Rob's baby'. Well sorry, but I think it's pretty damn low to copy someone else's work and then claim it as your own.

Now I know your a friend of Rob's so you will take his side on anything, but I don't think you can sit there a honestly tell me it's okay for a writer to literally steal another's work and claim it as your own original vision without giving any credit at all to the original source.

It makes Rob look bad for 2 reasons. One, he's not creative enough to come up with his own story. Two, how could he morally claim something as his own when it clearly isn't.

If you see Rob, ask him about it or let him know that the cat is out of the bag, and everyone knows who the true creator of 'his vision' really is(and it's not Rob).

Hell, I'm tempted to get in contact to the creator of "ACGS" and let them know about the Xena

finale(since they may know nothing about it) and let them know their story was pretty much copied by Tapert. They may not give a rat's a\$\$, but then again, they could view it and be pretty pissed their work was stolen and used without any credit.

May Fly

Dear May Fly:

Oh my God! The cat's out of the bag. Now people will know that there are unoriginal ideas on television, and the apocalypse will follow soon. And you're the cause! If you hadn't let the cat out of the bag we could have all continued along in blissful ignorance believing that shows like Xena contained new and original ideas, but no, you had to ruin everything. Damn you!

Josh

Name: Blake Ryan
E-mail: ezracobb@hotmail.com

Hi Josh,

I'm currently constructing a website dedicated to the world of cult film, and would like to include a section interviewing cult film personalities not so much about their own work, but what their favorite cult films are, what cult film icon (alive or dead) they'd love to work with, what cult film they would have loved to have been a part of, favorite cult genres, and thoughts on the current state of film. It is a non-profit site aimed at broadening the appeal of my favorite films, which include Paul Schrader movies, Bruce Lee ripoffs, Italian Mad Max ripoffs, etc. If you're interested in being interviewed, please e-mail me. I was also wondering if you know of any other filmmakers personal websites where I can contact them.

Thanks for your time,
Blake Ryan
Australia

Dear Blake:

I'm game. Send the questions. The term "cult" confuses me, but as far as low-budget goes, I like guys like Edgar G. Ulmer, Joseph Lewis, and young Anthony Mann. I don't know that that's what your after, though.

Josh

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

Josh,

Having read your structure essays, My wife and I have been borrowing old movies from our local public library (on your beloved VHS format) to see if they are really better than the current crap.

Wow, you're right! We saw Spartacus (10,000 non-computer-generated extras?), Lawrence of Arabia (good, but long), On The Waterfront (GREAT ending!), and Paper Moon (a perfect movie in every way). Now we just consult your recommended movie list & no more stinkers! Afterward, we argue about where all the standard 3-act beats were.

Thanks for setting us straight. A lot of Houston filmmakers (well, mostly safety training films...) are now big fans of your essays.

Tim Gibson
Houston

Dear Hoot:

Once you know about the three-act structure, it's very obvious, I think. The connection between all the good movies is that they all have it. The connection between all of the bad movies is that they don't have it.

Good luck with the humidity in Houston.

Josh

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

Josh,

I'm glad Bruce is doing the intro and his writing arm has not snapped off from book signings.

Have you ever read Joe Queenan's Confessions of a Cineplex Heckler? Interesting but bizarre movie criticism.

--Noelle

Dear Noelle:

No, I haven't read it. I was brought up reading critics like: Pauline Kael, Dwight Macdonald, Penelope Gilliatt, James Agee, and Andrew Sarris, so I'm spoiled. As for Bruce, he says he looks like Bob Dole after a signing, with his withered arm clutching a pen.

Josh

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

Josh,

There was an interesting article in the LA Times recently by Patrick Goldstein. He's got a few odd ideas (like that American Beauty is a 'daring' film, as if). But overall he makes a good point about the decline of film and film criticism in the last 20 years. Seems like his ideas are similar to your own.

Here's a link to the story if you don't have the paper:

<http://latimes.com/entertainment/printedition/calendar/la-000058394jul170.story?coll=la-headlines-calendar>

Dear Jim:

A friend of mine already sent me that article. I pulled a quote for my preface, about when the NY critics go to screenings they look like prisoners of war being marched into a refugee camp. We are not alone!

Josh

Name: Vick Boston
E-mail: Vick716@aol.com

Dear Josh:

Will you please tell me the final episode of Xena's death (by being beheaded), and what happened to Gabrielle, and Joxer. And more importantly Xena's baby daughter after Xena's death. What are the circumstances, and what happened afterward too. Please let me know.

Vicki Boston.
I'm going to miss them very much. And their adventures too.

Dear Vicki:

Gaby and Joxer get married and move to the bottom of the sea, where they have a squid baby. Get with the program.

Josh

Name: John Griffin
E-mail: j7griffi@wmich.edu

Dear Josh,

I just wanted to tell you that I rented Lunatics: A Love Story a few weeks ago and loved it! Is there any chance it will be released on DVD anytime soon? I'd love to get my own copy.
Thanks.

John

Dear John:

I'd love to get my own copy. No, there are no plans that I know of, not that anyone would check with me, or even think of keeping me informed. I'm glad you liked it.

Josh

Name: Rick Langis
E-mail: rlangis@worldpath.net

Dear Josh:

Hello my name is Richard Langis. I am looking for help, I have a story about an abused child and where that abuse had taken this child in life. I am looking to hopefully turn it into a screen play or movie of some sort. I am sure you may get crazy questions like this but this is for real and is very dramatic. If you cannot help me could you please direct me to someone who can??

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Richard Langis

Dear Rick:

But what's your question?

Josh

Name: dawn
E-mail: planetsaredisks2000@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Just wanted to say, enjoy your work, and love the things you have done with this web page. I think its great you take the time to respond to fans no matter if its good or bad. I like the fact you very honest and open with all people that write to you. And you kinda cute too.

Dear Dawn:

Thanks. It's odd, but I get cuter by the day, too. I can't explain it.

Josh

Name: Eric Rosenthal
E-mail: eric3020@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Becker,

I like your essays, and when your book comes out I will buy it in a minute. However the title "Film: The Lost Art"; it sounds like something from some snobby academic. I'd prefer "Why most movies suck" if you can get away with the s-word.

Here's my question: When you're developing an idea, if it starts becoming something you're not too crazy about, do you put it aside for later, or force yourself to fix and finish it? (I assume even experienced writers come up with bad ideas, but I guess they can detect them earlier than the rest of us)

Have you seen the little known movie "A Shock to the System"? It stars Micheal Caine as a burned out executive who climbs the corporate ladder by offing the competition. Anyway, I liked it.

Eric

Dear Eric:

I did see it, but it's gone in one ear and out the other. Regarding ideas, if you outline first, then write a treatment, meaning like a short story, if it isn't working you'll know it long before you've ever started the script. If you can't tell the story and make it function in 8 to 12 pages, you'll never make it work at 100 to 120 pages.

Josh

Name: Brian
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Nancy doesn't get a black eye because she is clearly a replicant.

Dear Brian:

Oh, man! I wasn't going to reveal that until they released the director's cut. Thanks!

Josh

Name: F. R.
E-mail: swanlandprods@yahoo.com

Howdy, Josh!

I was very glad to read that you're submitting your book proposal to a publisher. I really enjoy your writing and your insights, and the books of essays and instruction on film that are now available, with the exception of William Goldman's books (which I enjoy), are either painfully formulaic (::cough, cough, Syd Field::) or just collections of people reminiscing about how they got into the business, which is interesting to a point but not *useful*, especially to people who have already gotten past the entry level in "the business." Your essays on structure really serve a very pragmatic purpose: to get film/tv people thinking about what makes a film work, e.g., structure.

Speaking of structure... I went to see "The Anniversary Party" this past weekend. I really enjoy Jennifer Jason Leigh and Alan Cumming as actors, so I was curious to see what they'd come up with as writer/directors. It started out amusingly enough as a satire of Hollywood egos on parade.

****SPOILER ALERT**** I mean, hey, it's nothing new for a movie to say, "Wow, film industry types are amusingly self-involved and neurotic," but the jokes were funny and the actors were playing characters that were similar to their usual "types" -- Kevin Kline as an acclaimed but egotistical and hammy actor (but still a nice person), Phoebe Cates as an actress who retired to become a full-time mom, etc. -- so that added to the enjoyment. It was seemingly well-structured, too: First act, introduce the central couple and their friends, point to potential conflicts. Second act, the couple and the party guests mingle and the conflicts arise.

But then, it all went to hell. At the end of a LONG sequence in which all the guests presented their gifts to the couple, the last guest (Gwyneth Paltrow as a shallow, really young, politically correct starlet) gives them enough Ecstasy for everyone at the party. And suddenly...the second act started all over! Once again, the party guests were interacting and conflicts were arising, the only difference being that now everyone was wasted. And it wasn't like this was a short little scene to cap the act -- this was LOOONG, and made the film feel like it was approaching Kevin Costner-length. Some very emotional dramatic developments also arose, but I had lost interest by then because I had been primed for the film to move on to the third act (and resolution/conclusion!) before this whole detour began.

I tell you, Josh, I just sat there in the theatre thinking about how pissed off you would have been, because *I* was totally pissed off, too. I wanted to spank the filmmakers (just metaphorically speaking, not in reality!) and make them sit in front of their computers and read every one of your structure essays until they were memorized.

Sigh. When will they ever learn?

be well,
F. R.

Dear F. R. :

I've been rewriting for the past several days based on the edit of my good friend, who also happens to be an editor. It's good to hear someone say something nice about my stuff because right now I'm having trouble looking at it. It's also good to know that I'm what comes to mind when you see a shitty movie. The same thing seems to be happening to Bruce Campbell, who calls me on his cell phone as he's leaving the theater in Oregon so he and his wife can bitch to me about how much they didn't like the film. Elizabeth, the editor, has sent me a few articles recently backing up my assertion that movies are in a sad state (she doesn't see many films and thinks maybe I'm overstating the issue). In one article, it said that when the New York critics go to screenings they look "like prisoners being marched into a gulag." Another article was about how all of the films aimed at younger audiences (as though that weren't all the films) are all dropping dead, including "A. I." Interesting, eh? Perhaps a change is in the air.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

I agree with you that P.K. Dick's work has been greatly tampered with. I'm pretty content in the knowledge that the "Valis" trilogy will never make it to screen. But isn't it funny that some people don't think a sci-fi tale is fully told until it's in celluloid form?

On another note, regarding myths...have you seen "Requiem for a Dream?" I apologize if you've mentioned it before, but I feel that it's definitely a modern-day myth. True, painful, and lesson-giving. Of course, that's helped by the participation of Hubert Selby, Jr., who wrote the original material as well as the screenplay (with Aronofsky). Plus Ellen Burstyn kicks ass. And, of course, I'd much rather be disturbed by a film than bored.

Have a great day!

cindy

Dear Cindy:

I haven't seen it yet, but I will. I liked "Pi," (which I must say did remind me of "Lunatics"). I watched John Huston's last film, "The Dead," for perhaps the 4th time and it's really exceptional. A beautiful rendition of Joyce's story.

Josh

Name: Scott Wilde
E-mail:

hey josh,

you gave me some advice when I was just an aspiring filmmaker, and now I may have let you down somewhat. because now my friends and I are making commercials for television and radio. we still have the ultimate goal of making a movie, its just that commercials are easy to make and we make lots of money doing them. It's almost like an addiction. We have saved buckets of money but still we have no drive to make our movie, we haven't even started yet on what we want to do. please give us another nugget of wisdom and some inspiration.

-Scott

ps. please do not give out my new email to the public, too many people want it.

Dear Scott:

In "Annie Hall," Paul Simon is showing Woody Allen around his Beverly Hills house, takes him into his private screening room and says that he no longer has to wait in lines or stand outside. Woody replies, "Yeah, then you grow old and die." The way the film business works, most aspiring filmmakers will drop out somewhere along the climb and do something else, like post-production, lab work, or making

commercials. You're caught in a standard trap, and you can either get out of it, or grow old and die.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Hey there. It's Noelle again. Been awhile and it looks like all kinds of new stuff is going on here. First congrats on getting that draft out to the publishers. Will there be any new material or is it stuff that you already wrote. I hope Ted does the intro. Heck I hope Ted does his own book.

And speaking of Ted the Lunatics screenplay is up and I read through it pretty quick--maybe the fastest read so far of the screenplays. I don't think its really very different from the movie. A couple of scenes were shorter and the scene when Hank melts would have been so cool. And if I'm recalling correctly there is a scene in the hallway when Nancy looks back at the door as if she has her doubts about leaving which would have made it clearer that Nancy really liked Hank.

One thing though, why doesn't Nancy get a black eye when Hank clobbers her right in the face? Just kiddin'

Noelle

Dear Noelle:

Bruce Campbell wrote the forward for my book -- he's the bestselling author in the bunch. The last I heard his book was on the 6th printing and had sold over 50,000 copies. Regarding Nancy's black eye, I wanted her to have one, but we screwed up the continuity on the first day of shooting, then there was no correcting it.

Josh

Name: Lord Pompous
E-mail: pompousass@doofy.com

Dear Josh:

I am trying to find my mentally handicapped sister in Great Britain. She lived at London Doclands 12, Tally House Manchester Rd. E14, but after skipping her meds this last weekend, she escaped and is loose in London. She knows her way around a computer, so if she contacts you, please let us know. Like most English people, she has great difficulty in spelling and proper grammar. So, hopefully, if you hear from her, you will know her by her use of badly spelled words like; banguli, diseaster and cheapin and the use of the word Oly.

Thank you for your time.

Lord Pompous Ass.

Dear Lord Pompus Ass:

Never heard of her.

Josh

Name: afia begum
E-mail: hotmailafiabegum@

Dear Josh:

I really think your film is a diseaster cheapin other words but I want to ask you a question why are you ugly and why did you pick such a horrible name I have told all my friends and lam going to tell everyone i live in london doclands 12 tally house manchester road E14 oly vist me please because I hate you iam a girl am a banguli.

Dear Afia:

Well, when I was a small child I only dreamed of being ugly, so that's what I've worked at my whole life. I have no doubt you must be gorgeous since your use of the English language is so beautiful. Regarding my name, I once said to my Mother, "Mom, I'm glad you named me Josh." She asked why, and I said, "Because that's what everyone calls me,"

Josh

Name: Brenda
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Is Ted Raimi as nice a guy as he seems?

Dear Brenda:

Yes, he is. And he's one of the funniest people I've ever met, too. He's also very bright and well-read.

Josh

Name: Brian
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Sorry if you thought my Blade runner rant was directed at you personally. I was just adding my two bits to the points you made.

Did you ever see A Simple Plan. I thought it was a pretty solid film. One of the few that was better than the source material it came from. I read the book first and thought it was pretty unbelievable but I thought it was handled well in the movie.

From,
Brian.

Dear Brian:

Look, Sam's my buddy and I don't want to pick on his film.

Josh

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

Hey Josh Becker,

Did you run some screenwriting seminars, or are you going to any more? You should post big events like that somewhere on your site.

I think you said that most of the independant films are just bad as the hollywood drivel, but I've seen a few good films, most recently "Pi", from other filmmakers who seem to get the idea of good storytelling. Since you're in the thick of it, do you think that there are any current writer/directors, besides you, that know how to consistently tell a good story?

Oh, and last week your name was in the newspaper, twice, in article about Bruce Campbell's book. How long til yours hits the stands?

Justin

Dear Justin:

I've never run a screenwriting seminar, although I did think about it for a brief moment. I liked, "Pi," too. It's an interesting story and it's well-shot.

Josh

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

Josh,

I just got back from your neck of the woods. I spent a week in L.A. where I was at a film festival seeing my debut feature projected at the Sunset 5 on Sunset Blvd. (know it?) God, how I hated every minute of it. I don't see what a fest (unless it's a big one) can do for a director who's not famous. I'll bet there weren't 30 people in the theatre, and not a single person was from any of the distributors I invited. Nothing I wasn't already expecting, but you always hope.

Shit fire, I even thought I saw you while I was there! Basically because I was so close to Santa Monica, but also because this dude was a dead ringer for you from a distance. I walked closer and realized it wasn't you...Unless you were at the Radisson on Wilshire this last week?

I did wind up seeing "AI" at Mann's chinese theatre. It isn't very good, but I'm still glad I saw it, and I definately like that theatre. BTW, do you know if Orson Welles has a star on the walk of fame? I searched for a while, but then the homeless guys started talking to me, or the air next to me, and I rushed back to the hotel, looking over my shoulder left and right.

By the way, beer tastes like shit in L.A. Don't know why, but it does. And I'll be damned if the sun ever stops burning out there!

Love this Missouri air!

Have a good one.

Blake Eckard

Dear Blake:

Nope, that wasn't me at the Radisson. Sorry about your screening, although I've had many just like it. I sort of like that theater, but not where it's located. The same company, Laemmle (relatives of Carl Laemmle, who started Universal), has a theater in Santa Monica I like much better, which is where I showed "Running Time." But that's exactly my assessment of film festivals, too. What's the point? And I don't think Orson Welles has a star on the Blvd. Francis Coppola doesn't have one, either. Luckily, Mickey Rooney has five.

Josh

Name: Hannah

E-mail:

Dear Josh,

Why do birds suddenly appear every time you are near?

From, Hannah

Dear Hannah:

Because I'm close to you?

Josh

Name: Brian
E-mail: compfrp7@netzero.com

Dear Josh:

Doesn't Harrison Ford say he feels the character in Blade Runner is not a replicant? If this aspect of the film is so crucial then why is it so friggin ambiguous? Shouldn't the actor be aware of this during the making of the film, "Hey by the way Mr. Ford your character is not human." In a last ditch effort to make the film coherent they add in some voice over narration. Although I liked the film, there was some lazy thinking in the screenplay. This whole discussion reminds me of a really long essay I read that tried to make sense out of Lynch's craptacular Lost Highway. (i saw this pile of dog shit in the theaters and i've never seen a more numbed audience in my life) In spite of its thorough research and sincere effort it just doesn't hold water because what it came down to was justifications and huge gap fillers that should be in the film itself not in an essay about the film.

Hey cool website by the way Josh.

Dear Brian:

That's what I said, but no . . . This Deckard-is-a-replicant explanation is a bullshit latter-day fix for a illogical story.

Josh

Name: Vanishingpoint
E-mail: No thank you

Josh,

Read your cvomments on Blade Runner and found it hard to believe your Blade Runner fan webmaster hasn't explained a couple of points to you. I'm not the world's biggest Blade Runner fan myself but even I know that:

1) It is made clear in the film replicants can be made to differing specifications. They can indeed be made extra strong (compared to humans) but it isn't inherent in the basic design.

2) What is implied in the 'normal' version of the film and then made explicit in the 'director's cut' is that

***spoiler alert ***

Mr Ford's character is actually a replicant although he only finds out himself at the end of the film. This is made very clear in the director's cut and has been confirmed by the director. I'll write to you with some of the scenes that "prove" this if you want. I suspect you don't want me to though...

One of my favourite films is the first Mad Max. For all it's faults I love that film (and not just because it has a guy wearing mirrored shades while driving "the last of the V8s." I'll tell you why I like it only if you promise not to be nasty to me (and one of my favourite films.)

Vanishingpoint

Dear Vanishingpoint:

If Deckard is indeed a replicant, then I think it makes the whole film duller still. So, are you trying to insinuate that the Brion James replicant hasn't got the strength to kill Deckard? How about Rutger Hauer? Or isn't he strong enough either? And if Deckard is a replicant and Darryl Hannah is just a "pleasure model," why doesn't he tear her head off? Come on! This is a dumb science fiction move that besmirches Phillip Dick's good name, as did "Total Recall," too. BTW, I liked both "Mad Max" and "Road Warrior" as well.

Josh

Name: s. coughlin
E-mail: petrock_50@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

Woohoo! I've been waiting for the Lunatics screenplay. I'll be sending off a message to Teddites in my newsgroup. XXOO Shannon

Dear S.:

Well, I hope you like it. It was a bitch to write.

Josh

Name: Conrad Felber
E-mail: cpfelber@vianet.on.ca

Dear Josh:

I've actually got TWO comments (OK, one's a comment and the other's a question), so please bear with me.

#1) I thought you might like to know how much I enjoyed your "Verisimilitude" essay. I came across it quite by accident (as is usually the case with the ol' internet). I had used the word "verisimilitude" in a newsgroup message, and for the sake of those who may have not been immediately aware of its meaning, I wanted to point them to a couple of Web sites in which it was defined. When I did a WebFerret search, your essay popped up as one of the results! Anyway, to make an already long comment a bit shorter, I thought it was pretty darn good, and quite amusing too, as was your "Kids These Days" rant. I hope to find the time to read some of your other online efforts very soon... your "Ode to William Wyler" sounds particularly fascinating.

#2) I couldn't help but notice that "Blade Runner" is significantly absent from your "Favorite Films" list... is this because (a) you haven't seen it yet (difficult though that may be to believe), or (b) you genuinely didn't much care for it? I'm just curious, that's all.

Thanks very much for your time, and keep those cool essays comin'!

Dear Conrad:

Thank you for the nice letter. Yes, I have seen "Blade Runner," but no, I didn't like it. Gerry Kissell, the co-webmaster here, is also webmaster of Bladezone.com, the big "Blade Runner" website, and just asked me why I didn't like "BR" for that site, so I'll repeat myself. Replicants were designed and built to have massive strength on distant planets and can lift like ten-ton rocks on Titan. The entire film Deckard keeps fighting replicants -- first Brion James, then Darryl Hannah, then Rutger Hauer -- all of whom should be able to kill him in one second. I honestly thought Darryl Hannah had twisted his head off the first time I saw it. It's complete nonsense, with good photography, terrific effects and a moody score.

Josh

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

Hi Josh and JT,

Well since we're all discussing October Sky (which was renamed from Rocket Boys, why I don't know) It reminded me of How Green Was My Valley, with the whole coal mines vs an academic career thing. I did like October Sky too, but I love How Green Was My Valley, the former is touching and has some good acting but I don't think it comes close to McDowall and OHara(I think it was OHara as Angharad).

Dear Julie:

Yes, it's a very young, lovely, and incredible Maureen O'Hara. I'm just trying to be a somewhat positive guy when I say that "October Sky" is a good film. It is in recent memory, not compared to "How Green was My Valley," which was shot in the San Fernando Valley here in L.A., by the way.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

"The confusion of society at this point is well-displayed in our contemporary movies.

Josh "

This statement reminds me of something Joseph Campbell said once in an interview -- that much of the confusion in our cities stems from the fact that we don't have a well-defined series of cultural myths to pass down to each successive generation. Ever read his stuff? You'd probably find it very interesting.

JT

Dear JT:

I've read a number of Mr. Campbell's books and like them a lot (I believe I have one on my suggested reading list, too, "Myths To Live By"). Anyway, our movies are our myths now, and that's what I'm complaining about -- we're now handing down useless myths. When you watch "Casablanca," you are given a good example of how to deal with real life problems, and how to live your life as an honorable, respectable human being. What lessons are we getting now? That three cute chicks can kick ass? That rubber chickens want to escape the coop? That gladiators get to fight the emperor in the coliseum? Bullshit. Useless.

Josh

Name: Tuomas Laasanen
E-mail: tuomas@cinemasf.net

Dear Josh:

Hi. I noticed that you were talking about liking the movie "October Sky". I saw the film myself a few weeks ago and though it was a bit better than your average Hollywood-fluff the last thirty minutes or so got so sentimental that I thought I watching a Steven Spielberg movie. Didn't you have any trouble with the overkill drama at the end?

I also have a real question that came to my mind while i was looking at some old moviemagazines. You wrote to someone that "Running Time" was shown at Helsinki sometime few years ago. The article I read wasn't that clear so if you could set this one straight: did you attend some kind of an filmmaker-panel or discussion after showing "RT" (and possibly "Lunatics")?

Dear Tuomas:

Both "Running Time" and "Lunatics" showed at the Helsinki Film Festival in 1998 and I did a Q&A after both of them. And I absolutely agree with you that "October Sky" is a just a bit better than the usual crap, but it's still better. I think it has a better sense of reality than a Spielberg film. The problem is, like a Spielberg film, it's all so pat. Everything works out exactly as you'd expect it would. I did like the relationship between the kid and his Dad.

Josh

Name: Gordon
E-mail: gee@nrc.gov

Dear Josh:

I have been shaving with Rise Super Foam (menthol) for over 30 years. However, I'm nearing the end of my supply and I can't find it anywhere. I live in the greater Wash. D.C. area. Do you know where I can get some more?

Dear Gordon:

Yeah, that place on the corner. No, not that one, the other one.

Josh

Name: Warren Weinberg
E-mail: wweinberg@kozyshack.com

Dear Josh:

Do you sell refrigerated foods?

Dear Warren:

Of course. What do you need?

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

Re: that essay by Robert Fogel - does the idea of technology outdistancing information apply to basic storytelling? After all, we've essentially been telling the same themes since time began.

Dear Chopped Nuts:

The themes may not change, but the ability to tell the stories certainly does. "From Here to Eternity" and "Pearl Harbor" may be similar in a number of ways, but they are also highly dissimilar as well -- the former is a brilliant classic, and the latter is an inept piece of junk. The confusion of society at this point is well-displayed in our contemporary movies.

Josh

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

Dear Josh:

I wanted to pass along this great line from Elvis Mitchell's review in The New York Times of the latest

computer game-based movie inflicted on the marketplace.

Mr. Mitchell writes: "Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within" is the first film with human leads played by nonactors, if you don't count "Pearl Harbor."

Mr. Mitchell also describes one of the characters in the movie as looking like "a combination of Ben Affleck and B-movie leading man Bruce Campbell." I give the NY Times reviewer credit for knowing his B-movies.

Charles

Dear Charles:

Elvis Mitchell started his career in Detroit and knows who we are. He may be from Detroit, too, but I don't know that. I still think that Russell Crowe is a digital effect, but that seems to just be me.

Josh

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

Dear Josh,

Thursday is Stuart Devenie's 50th birthday. Any memories of directing him, or good stories? (He's a big fan of your site, so he'll see this sooner or later.)

Thanks,

August

Dear August:

It was a complete pleasure working with him. He's a fine actor of the old school, meaning he's prepared, has actually thought about his scenes and has good ideas to improve them. "The People's Dragoon" began with him making a toast at the head of a long table of dinner guests. Stuart took his napkin and smeared some of every kind of food available on it, then put it in his collar. He may be the governor and quite well-bred, but he's still a slob. I think it's very funny. Best wishes to you, Stuart, should read this, and happy birthday.

Josh

Happy birthday Gov!

Shirley

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

Dear Josh:

Hi. Nope I haven't seen Infinity. But i'll keep an eye out for it.

Incidentally, there is a film coming out called "Julie Johnson." I find this somewhat unsettling because it is my name, well it's a common ame but its mine. Imagine if you found out there was a movie coming out called "Josh Becker."

JJ

Dear Julie:

Well, there is that Ted Danson show "Becker," which I've never seen, but I think he's supposed to be kind of an obnoxious prick. My dad's named is Arnold Becker and that was Corbin Bersen's character's name on "L.A. Law" and my dad had to deal with that for about six years, plus reruns. There was a film for a brief second called "Josh & S.A.M." which seemed like it might be about Sam Raimi and I, but I don't think it was.

Josh

Name: Tony Mitchell
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Hello Josh,

I'm very interested about your comment that the last decent film made was Godfather Part II (please don't quote me). It seems that nothing "special" has been made since that time which strangely coincided with the full-blown "McDonaldisation" of society. A friend of mine gave me the following advice about seeing movies: "go in without any expectations and you won't be disappointed" to which I replied, "then I will always be disappointed because I expect to be entertained". He also saw Perfect Storm because it had "awesome special effects" so I don't take any notice of him. It just seems to me that cinema-goers these days seem to go to a movie not expecting or even demanding anything special, happy to just sit through the same lousy crash, bang, blow-em-up rubbish time after time. And then sit down and eat their identical burgers and fries with their fingers at one of the clone restaurants and go home thinking they have had a good night. Any thoughts?

Tony

Dear Tony:

I'm just reading a fascinating interview with historian/economist Robert Fogel in American Heritage Magazine. He is discussing "The Fourth Great Awakening," which he says began in the early sixties.

His point, basically, is that technology moves faster than human development. Thought has to catch up to technology, which is presently occurring. Technology has moved far past our human thought processes -- information can be delivered immediately, there simply isn't any new information to deliver. Human thought will catch up to the technology, but it will take another 10 to 20 years.

Josh

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