

The Wit and Wisdom of Joss Whedon

"I have control over all the shows. I'm responsible for all the shows. That means that I break the stories. I often come up with the ideas and I certainly break the stories with the writers so that we all know what's going to happen. [. . .] The good thing is that I'm surrounded by people who are much smarter than I am. So gradually I have been able to let certain things take care of themselves, because my crew, my writers, my post-production crew, everybody is so competent, that I don't have to run around quite as much as I used to." (ET Online)

"Ultimately you want to move on from [TV]. You just want to say, 'Okay, now I want to do something where I have the time to create everything that's in the frame. Everything.' And that's sort of where I'm starting to be. I'm getting to the point now where I'm like, 'Okay, I've told a lot of stories. I've churned it out.' I just feel like I want to step back and do something where I can't use the excuse of 'I only had a week.'" (*Watcher's Guide* Interview, Vol. 2)

[*Buffy* is] "a show by losers for losers" (quoted at <http://www.crosswinds.net/~tlbin/cast/joss.html>).

"As far as I am concerned, the first episode of *Buffy* was the beginning of my career. It was the first time I told a story from start to finish the way I wanted." (*Entertainment Weekly*, Jacobs Interview)

"I think everybody who makes movies should be forced to do television. . . . Because you have to finish. You have to get it done, and there are a lot of decisions made just for the sake of making decisions. You do something because it's efficient and because it gets the story told and it connects to the audience." (*The Watcher's Guide*, Vol. 2)

"The two things that matter the most to me: emotional resonance and rocket launchers. *Party of Five*, a brilliant show, and often made me cry uncontrollably, suffered ultimately from a lack of rocket launchers." (DVD Commentary for "Innocence")

"I think my father's best work was probably done at our dinner table. . . . It was great to live around a writer, and my mother also wrote in her spare time, so the sound of typewriters was probably the most comforting sound in the world to me. I loved that. And while I really enjoyed all of the funny things my dad was working on, it was really just being around someone who was that funny. And all of his friends were comedy writers. So the house was constantly filled with these very sweet, erudite, intelligent guys just trying to crack jokes—my father's friends, my mother's friends, teachers, drama people. It just had a great air to it, and what

you wanted to do is to go into that room and make those guys laugh.”
(Longworth)

“I’m a very hard-line, angry atheist. . . . Yet I am fascinated by the concept of devotion.” (Nussbaum, “Must See Metaphysics”)

“It’s about the show, and I feel the same way about it. I get the same way. It’s not like being a rock star. It doesn’t feel like they’re reacting to me. It’s really sweet when people react like that, and I love the praise, but to me, what they’re getting emotional about is the show. And that’s the best feeling in the world. There’s nothing creepy about it. I feel like there’s a religion in narrative, and I feel the same way they do. I feel like we’re both paying homage to something else; they’re not paying homage to me.” (*Onion*)

“Ultimately, stories come from violence, they come from sex. They come from death. They come from the dark places that everybody has to go to. . . . If you raise a kid to think everything is sunshine and flowers, they’re going to get into the real world and die. . . . That’s the reason fairy tales are so creepy, because we need to encapsulate these things, to inoculate ourselves against them, so that when we’re confronted by the genuine horror that is day-to-day life we don’t go insane.” (Longworth)

“I’m sure a lot of writers want to direct because they’re bitter, which is not a reason to direct. I want to speak visually, and writing is just a way of communicating visually. That’s what it’s all about. But nobody would even consider me to direct. So I said, ‘I’ll create a television show, and I’ll use it as a film school, and I’ll teach myself to direct on TV.’” (*Onion*)

“I hate it when people talk about *Buffy* as being campy . . . I hate camp. I don’t enjoy dumb TV. I believe Aaron Spelling has single-handedly lowered SAT scores.” (Nussbaum, “Must See Metaphysics”)

“Don’t give people what they want, give them what they need. What they want is for Sam and Diane to get together. Don’t give it to them. Trust me. . . . People want the easy path, a happy resolution, but in the end, they’re more interested in . . . No one’s going to go see the story of Othello going to get a peaceful divorce. People want the tragedy. They need things to go wrong, they need the tension. In my characters there’s a core of trust and love that I’m very committed to. These guys would die for each other, and it’s very beautiful. But at the same time, you can’t keep that safety. Things have to go wrong, bad things have to happen.” (*Onion*)

“It’s better to be a spy in the house of love, you know? . . . If I made ‘Buffy the Lesbian Separatist,’ a series of lectures on PBS on why there should be feminism, no one would be coming to the party, and it would be boring. The idea of changing culture is important to me, and it can only be done in a popular medium.” (Nussbaum, “Must See Metaphysics”)

"I designed the show to create that strong reaction. I designed *Buffy* to be an icon, to be an emotional experience, to be loved in a way that other shows can't be loved. Because it's about adolescence, which is the most important thing people go through in their development, becoming an adult. And it mythologizes it in such a way, such a romantic way—it basically says, 'Everybody who made it through adolescence is a hero.' And I think that's very personal, that people get something from that that's very real. And I don't think I could be more pompous. But I mean every word of it. I wanted her to be a cultural phenomenon. I wanted there to be dolls, Barbie with kung-fu grip. I wanted people to embrace it in a way that exists beyond, 'Oh, that was a wonderful show about lawyers, let's have dinner.' I wanted people to internalize it, and make up fantasies where they were in the story, to take it home with them, for it to exist beyond the TV show. And we've done exactly that. (*Onion*)

"I think it's always important for academics to study popular culture, even if the thing they are studying is idiotic. If it's successful or made a dent in culture, then it is worthy of study to find out why.

'Buffy,' on the other hand is, I hope, not idiotic. We think very carefully about what we're trying to say emotionally, politically, and even philosophically while we're writing it. The process of breaking a story involves the writers and myself, so a lot of different influences, prejudices, and ideas get rolled up into it. So it really is, apart from being a big pop culture phenom, something that is deeply layered textually episode by episode. I do believe that there is plenty to study and there are plenty of things going on in it, as there are in me that I am completely unaware of. People used to laugh that academics would study Disney movies. There's nothing more important for academics to study, because they shape the minds of our children possibly more than any single thing. So, like that, I think 'Buffy' should be analyzed, broken down, and possibly banned." ("10 Questions for Joss Whedon")

"Because when a joke works, I know it. I can hear the audience laugh, and I still watch the show with a bunch of people. I still watch it with people who haven't worked on it, so I can see when they laugh, and when they get scared, and when they think it's ridiculous, and when they cry, and all that good stuff. And that's the fun. So it's very hard for me *not* to make a joke, because I know that a laugh is a surefire reaction, whereas if you're playing something more dramatic, I don't know if they liked it till it's over because they'll just sit there, and that's very nerve racking." (Longworth)

"That to me is the essence of what I'm interested in. It's something you see in the Hong Kong films that [Quentin] Tarantino has followed. You don't *know* what kind of scene you're in. Something can be very funny and then suddenly very terrifying—very exciting, and suddenly very ridiculous. I think that's what life is like, that's what interests me. But ultimately, while humor is definitely the voice that I'm the most comfortable with, drama is the structure that will always attract me." (Longworth)

"I always wrote things. Stories, poems, songs, plays, comic books. Whatever came to mind. And I always sort of vaguely associated writing with my life, in that I thought I could make movies. I always assumed making them meant writing them, but I never really thought about that. I thought about directing, and when we

studied film we really didn't study writing at all. I was doing various things, but I wasn't doing any heavy writing and I never studied at all. I never thought of myself as definitely becoming a writer. I tried to write several novels as a kid, and I'd usually get to page twelve." (Longworth)

"I mean, I knew I wanted to do something that wasn't a real job, because I just can't do it. I'm pathetic that way. I knew I wanted to be an artist. I loved drawing, I loved singing, I loved acting, I love every kind of art that there is. So I had never really narrowed it down, and it wasn't like I was slaving away. I did write a couple of screenplays when I was a kid, but I always thought that was just part of the process. I didn't think of myself as a writer. And then I got out of college, and I swore that I wasn't going to write for TV because I had actually not been raised on American TV much. I was more into the sort of highbrow British stuff that my mother watched. I was a PBS kid." (Longworth)

"I've heard people say nice things about how we should get an award, and I work so very hard on this show that, of course, in my heart, I believe it, but I never expected that we would. I do think it's a little strange, a bit of a hybrid, and it is tough. You know, I think the Academy has proved itself kind of stodgy in the last couple of years. Not to say that we should be getting it. I watched the first *Sopranos* and was like, 'Give it to *these* guys. Oh my God!' I watch *The West Wing* and say, 'Give it to these guys!' There's great shows out there. I'm not like, 'Oh those stodgy voters, they don't get how great we are, blah, blah, blah,' because the fact that I'm *ever* having a conversation about the Emmys in regards to a show called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* means that something's gone horribly right (*both laugh*), so the critical understanding of this show has been so gratifying. The fact that the critics got it and appreciated it from day one, and the rabid, almost insane fan base is great. Anything else is just gravy. The thing, though, about the show that I think holds it back is the wacky tide. You know, people don't like the wacky tide. It's not serious drama if you have a wacky title. But it's the fact that it is so schizophrenic and has so many elements. One of the things that TV is about is comfort, is knowing exactly where you are. I know they're going to invite Jessica Fletcher over, one of them is going to get killed, she very politely is going to solve it. I know what's going to happen when I tune in to a particular show. With *Buffy* we'll do French farce one week and *Medea* the next week. We try very hard structurally not to fall into a pattern either, so there's not a shoot-out in a warehouse every episode, because there *are* elements of comfort, obviously, *Buffy* will appear in the film at some point, but, at the same time, I'm very much committed to keeping the audience off their feet. It's sort of antithetical to what TV is devised to do. Not that there aren't surprising and delightful shows out there, but not to have that particular comfort level would throw people to a certain extent. It's like when we decide what show to send to the Academy voters, it's always a big question. Do we send the drama, the comedy, the horror show?" (Longworth)

"I have always felt an enormous obligation, I mean, since I was a kid. Since I was writing stories alone in my room that nobody else was going to read, I worried about how much I needed to mix what my political beliefs were with the story I wanted to tell. How much I needed to protect good role models, how much I needed to make a statement, and how much I needed just to dig to some dark place and write whatever the hell I wanted. That's a huge part of it. I've thought about this a lot, particularly when I've been confronted by it, by events like this. To an extent, I think we have a grave responsibility. I think it would be belittling

our audience to say that if we poke a stick in somebody's eye on the show they're all going to go do it, because they're a little more intelligent than that. But you absolutely have to think about what it will mean. At the same time, I feel strongly, and I've only come to realize this in the last few months, that we have a responsibility to be irresponsible. As storytellers, I've always been very offended by the whole, 'lets rewrite all the fairytales' where the three little pigs settle their differences with the wolf by talking about their feelings." (Longworth)

"Well, it does, and it doesn't because, ultimately, stories come from violence, they come from sex. They come from death. They come from the dark places that everybody has to go to, kind of wants to, or doesn't, but needs to deal with. If you raise a kid to think everything is sunshine and flowers, they're going to get into the real world and die. And ultimately, to access these base emotions, to go to these strange places, to deal with sexuality, to deal with horror and death, is what people need and it's the reason that we tell these stories. That's the reason fairy tales are so creepy, because we need to encapsulate these things, to inoculate ourselves against them, so that when we're confronted by the genuine horror that is day-to-day life we don't go insane." (Longworth)

"When I say we have a responsibility to be irresponsible, I'm not just talking about, 'Oh, I'm trying to help kids deal with the world.' I'm talking about the process of telling a story. These stories come from this place, and I think that stories are sacred. I think that creating narrative is a basic human function. It's why we remember some things and not everything. It's why everybody's version of the same event is different. Everybody creates narrative all the time. I think it's a really important function. And it has to come from this base place to be pure, to be art, to be anything other than a polemic. So I'm not just talking about 'Well, I've got to help kids deal with their problems by showing them scary stuff.' I mean, I've got to fulfill that human need for scary stuff, and sexy stuff, and racy stuff, and wrong stuff, and disturbing stuff. Because I think that's what storytelling is. Now, am I saying that sex is bad? Unfortunately, because it's a horror show everything that happens is bad. *(Both laugh.)* Everything that can go bad, will. Buffy's gonna drink beer, and it's going to turn her into a caveman. Now, I've been to college, and that's what happens. *(Both laugh.)* But we sort of undercut that specifically at the end of the show when Xander said, 'And what have we learned about beer?' And Buffy says, 'Foamy.' I don't want to make a reactionary statement. I don't want to say, 'Never have sex.' I don't want to say, 'Quick, go have it now.' I want to say, 'Some people have it. Everybody thinks about it. Here's how we deal with it.' The thing with Angel wasn't, 'Don't sleep with your boyfriend.' Giles very clearly comes out and says, 'I think you were rash, but I know you loved him and he loved you, and I'm not going to upbraid you for that.' That wasn't about that. It was about what happens when you sleep with a guy and he stops calling you. What happens if you give him what he wants, and he starts treating you like shit. It was about the emotion of it. And that's a very real, emotional thing that everybody goes through. You consummate a relationship, and it disappears out from under you, and it happens to both sexes." (Longworth)

"I've struggled with my ability to write women. My whole life I've wanted to make sure that I didn't idealize them, that I just didn't sort of scratch the surface. And sometimes I don't get it right. When I don't understand, I go to Marty Noxon, one of our female writers, and ask, 'What did you go through?' But I have always been interested in feminism, partially because I was raised by a very strong woman,

and partially because being small and 'fragile, and not taken seriously by anybody, I could identify with the way I perceived women were being treated once I got out of my house, where they 'were treated like equals, lender and feminism has just always been a big area of study for me. It's what I concentrated on in film. And I think the other side of that is I'm a fell One of the reasons why I was always able to do well in my feminine studies is that I never came from a knee-jerk, lesbian separatist, sort of perspective. I understand the motivation of the man with the murderous gaze, of the animal, of the terrible objectifying male, 'cause *(laugh)* I'm him. So it was very easy for me to sort of get into the mind set of, shall we say, the enemy." (Longworth)

"You know, I am incredibly undisciplined. I'm very lazy. I'm a big procrastinator. I happen to love doing this, which makes it easier. And, sometimes I can stay up all night if I have to, because I have no choice. Any discipline that I have comes from my desire to make the shows as good as I possibly can before I let them go. I reach a level of exhaustion, and this year I only reached it sooner, because I had two shows going. But ultimately, how disciplined I am doesn't matter because I have this huge amount of work to do, and I get scripts in late, and it's not great in that sense. But I don't really have the opportunity to be as lazy as I really am because the show just doesn't allow it. I've often said that everyone who does movies should be forced to work in television for two reasons. One, the story actually matters, and two, you have to get it done. I think movies get sort of mired in this place of, 'Well, we can do anything we want. We don't know what the fuck we're doing.' *(Both laugh.)* In TV you have to tell the story, and you have to bring them back next week. And it has great discipline in terms of structure, in terms of meaning, in terms of what matters, and it's got to be done by tomorrow." (Longworth)

"It is the most fun I'm ever going to have. I love to write. I love it. I mean, there's nothin in the world I like better, and that includes sex, probably because I'm so very bad at it. It's the greatest peace When I'm *in* a scene, and it's just me and the character, that's it, that's where I want to live my life. I've heard about guys who find it strenuous and painful and horrible, and I scratch my noggin. I don't get it. I definitely get tired of rewriting, something that I'm not creating from whole cloth is tough. So every now and then I have to drum up the enthusiasm to write this exposition (scene. It's a real drag. But, ultimately, the moment I break into a scene, the moment I figure out what it is, I'm there, I'm loving it." (Longworth)

"Well, what I wanted was to create a fantasy that was, emotionally, completely realistic. That's what really interests me about anything. I love genre, I love horror, I love, you know, action, I love musicals, I love any kind of genre, and 'Buffy' sort of embraces them all. But, ultimately, the thing that interests me the most is people and what they're going through, and that's why I loved 'Roseanne,' that's why I wanted to work on it, because it was the only sitcom I felt was genuinely funny and also very real and very kind of dark. And that's what I wanted to bring to this." *(Fresh Air Interview)*

"Well, I'm very, very much aware of it as being like a novel. You know, the only equivalent to what you can do with a soap opera (unintelligible) to me is, you know, what Dickens was doing, and he happens to be my favorite novelist, the idea that you can get invested in a character for so long and see it go through so many permutations. It's fascinating to me, the shows that I've always loved the

best, 'Hill Street Blues,' 'Wiseguy,' 'Twin Peaks,' have always been shows that did have accumulative knowledge. One of the reasons why 'The X-Files' started to leave me cold was that after five years, I just started yelling at Scully, 'You're an idiot. It's a monster,' and I couldn't take it anymore. I need people to grow, I need them to change, I need them to learn and explore, you know, and die and do all of the things that people do in real life. (*Fresh Air* Interview)

And so we're very, very strict about making sure that things track, that they're presented in the right way. Because, ultimately—and this is one of the things that I did find out after we had aired, the soap opera, the characters, the interaction between them is really what people respond to more than anything else. And although we came out of it as a sort of monster of the week format, it was clear that the interaction was the thing that people were latching onto. So we were happy to sort of go with that and really play it up and really see where these characters were going to go. So now it is very much a continuing show, and we're always aware of that." (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"The important thing is always to match whatever your characters are going through to whatever you're going through as a creator to what the audience is going through. When people worried about, 'How are you ever going to give Buffy a boyfriend after Angel, how are they ever going to get over each other?' Well, that's exactly what Buffy was worried about, that's exactly what Angel was worried about. You know, it's taking the challenges, it's taking the fears that you have and letting everybody go through them, because, ultimately, everybody always does." (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"What we don't have, which is what some science fiction shows have, is we can't just do a thing because it seems cool. Everything that we pitch, everything that we put out there, whether or not it works, is based on the idea of: The audience has been through this. A normal girl goes through this. A normal guy deals with this. You know, it's issues of sexuality, popularity, jobs. Whatever it is, it's got to be based in realism. We can't just say, you know, 'The warship's come and, you know, they transmogrify, the—blah, blah, blah.' We can't do that. We can go to some pretty strange places, but at the start, we always have to be about, 'How does the audience relate to having done this themselves?' (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"That's why when we aired 'Innocence,' when Buffy slept with Angel and his curse went into effect and he became evil again, I went on the Internet and a girl typed in, 'This is unbelievable. This exact thing happened to me,' and that's when I knew that we were doing the show right." (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"Then the question just became how much do we play in metaphor and how much do we play as, you know, her actually expanding her sexuality? And you're walking a very fine line there. The network obviously has issues. They don't want any kissing. That's one thing that they've stipulated. And they're a little nervous about it. Ultimately, they haven't interfered at all with what we've tried to do, but, you know, they've raised a caution about it. And, you know, at the same time, you have people—the moment Tara appeared on the scene, saying, 'Well, they're obviously gay. Why aren't they gay enough? They're not gay enough. You need to make them more gay.' You know, people want you to make a statement. They want you to turn it into an issue right away. So you sort of have forces

buffeting you and you're trying to come up with what is both emotionally sort of correct as a progression and also sort of mythically significant in terms of your greater arc. You're trying to wield all these things and, week to week, sort of make this thing progress." (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"Generally speaking, I come into a season with the arc for the season, the main fill-in, you know, the main sort of journeys for each of the characters, where are they going to go and some benchmarks—certain episodes. Somewhere around episode 10, this has to happen. Somewhere around episode 15, this has to happen. We have to keep it flexible, because you come up with better ideas or an actor falls out or something happens, you know. The process of creating TV is entirely fluid. You always have to be ready to be thrown a curve, and in our case, every time we have, I think it's helped us out a great deal. I really think what we're doing with Willow and Tara is interesting. And Amber Benson's a wonderful actress. That might not have happened if we hadn't lost Seth." (*Fresh Air* Interview)

"I'm doing a limited series for Dark Horse called *Fray*, about a Slayer that takes place 500 years in the future. I need some flying cars, damn it! It's set in the *Buffy* universe, except that nobody from *Buffy* would appear in it. The comic book exists in its own way, and I can't mess with that history. I was going to do something about Faith, but then I was like, 'I'm bringing Faith back,' and it would interfere with that. By setting it in the future, I don't have to create a whole new world; I can sort of play off of this mythology but not through jeopardizing the characters from the show. We're just talking to an artist. I've written the first one and a half issues. The tone is a gritty, action-adventure, sci-fi fun thing. It's not quite as based in the day-to-day experiences of a girl's life the way that *Buffy* is. It's a much more broader-scoped adventure. It's really fun. Writing the first issue was different from anything I've ever done." (Gross interview)

"[T]he show I anticipate is always so staggeringly brilliant that it makes the Earth rotate in the other direction, but [*Angel*] has done what *Buffy* has done in that it has lived up to my hopes to be a decent show, and then it has shown me things that I hadn't expected. A work of art takes on a life beyond its creator, and when that happens, it's the most gratifying thing in the world. It's like raising a child who becomes a grownup and is suddenly talking to you. *Angel* has started to do that; *Angel* is talking to me now. It could have been just a nice solid formula show, and I think it's going to be something more than that." (Gross interview)

"It's easier to write an episode than direct it. Well, not easier, but scheduling-wise, I usually direct an episode when there is something I desperately want to say—where there's a moment that I want to capture, an idea I want to try out. To create something, that means actually writing it. I may actually direct a couple of episodes that I don't write next year, just because of my time being as it is. By and large, the only time I've done it is when I've co-written with David Greenwalt. The bottom line is that I like to create. To me, the writing is the most important thing, and if I'm going to take the time to direct something and it really pulls a lot out of my schedule, usually I want it to be something of my own. At the same time, it would certainly be interesting to direct somebody else's script." (Gross interview)

"But nowadays I'm really cranky about comics. . . . Because most of them are just really, really poorly written soft-core. And I miss good old storytelling. And you know what else I miss? Super powers. Why is it now that everybody's like 'I can reverse the polarity of your ions!' Like in one big flash everybody's Doctor Strange. I like the guys that can stick to walls and change into sand and stuff. I don't understand anything anymore. And all the girls are wearing nothing, and they all look like they have implants. Well, I sound like a very old man, and a cranky one, but it's true." (Dark Horse interview)

"Redemption has become one of the most important themes in my work and it really did start with *Angel*. I would say probably with the episode 'Amends,' but even with the character itself and the concept of the spin-off was about redemption. It was about addiction and how you get through that and come out the other side, how you redeem yourself from a terrible life. I do actually work with a number of reformed addicts, if that's what you call them. I call them drunks. But my point is a good number of people that are most close to me creatively have lived that life, and it informs their work. I never have, and so I'm not sure why it is that redemption is so fascinating to me. I think the mistakes I've made in my own life have plagued me, but they're pretty boring mistakes: I committed a series of grisly murders in the eighties and I think I once owned a Wilson-Phillips album. Apart from that I'm pretty much an average guy, yet I have an enormous burden of guilt. I'm not sure why. I'm a WASP, so it's not Jewish or Catholic guilt; it's just there. Ultimately, the concept of somebody who needed to be redeemed is more interesting to me. I think it does make a character more textured than one who doesn't." (10 Questions)

"[E]very time somebody opens their mouth they have an opportunity to do one of two things—connect or divide. Some people inherently divide, and some people inherently connect. Connecting is the most important thing, and actually an easy thing to do. I try to make a connection with someone every time I talk to them, even if I'm firing them. Because a connection can be made. People can be treated with respect. That is one of the most important things a show runner can do, is make everybody understand that we're all involved, that we're all on the same level, on some level. I'm shocked that there are so many people that live to divide. Whether it's to divide people from each other, or from themselves—but it is a constant in everything." (*Film Force* interview)

"I did want to make a movie where a poor girl that kills would have to get her own back. Then, I started out with 'Martha the Immortal Waitress.' The idea of somebody that nobody would take account of, who just had more power than was imaginable. Which is such a pathetically obvious metaphor for what I wanted my life to be. Like, 'I'm the guy that nobody paid attention to. What they didn't know was that I'm really important. I can save the world. So, you know, that's pretty cool, too.' In the interview, you have to say, 'He whined.' [Interviewer's note: Joss whined.] So, you know, when I hit on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, it was right around the time when *Revenge of the Bimbos*, or *Attack of the Killer Bimbos* or something—there were a lot of movies coming out that were proto-silly '50s style titles. They were on the video store shelves. I worked at a video store. I would watch them, and I'd be like, 'You know what? This is just another bimbo movie. These women aren't empowered at all. They just made up a funny title.' I was like, 'I would like to make a movie that was one of these crappy, low-budget movies, that like the Romero films, had a feminist agenda, had females in it who were

people, and had all the fun, all the silliness. *Night of the Comet* was a big influence. That actually had a cheerleader in it. With a title that would actually make people take it off the video store shelves, because it has to sound silly and not boring." (*Film Force* interview)

"Directors have to be storytellers and all that stuff, and some are better than others. I'm talking about movie directors, because a TV director has to do that as much as they can, but ultimately are in service to the executive producer. The producer is the one who has to do that. But, you know, as Jeanine put it once, or probably more than once, 'A director doesn't have to create anything, but he is responsible for everything.' Same thing goes for an executive producer on TV. I don't have to write a line of the script—although there's not a script for my shows that I don't have a line in, or a scene, or a pitch, or something. I don't sew the damn costumes, I don't say the words—but I'm responsible for everything in every frame of every show. That's my job, whether or not I'm directing the episode. So that's why you have to have that complete faith, that kind of blind faith in a leader who has the ability to lead. I don't know... I just also think leadership is something that is earned. I respected those above me, and demand the same from those below me. I don't think there's anything wrong with that. That's one thing that helped keep the show together, is I had a clear vision and I was willing to share the credit with my extraordinary staff, crew, and the cast. I mean, obviously, I'm not writing novels—I'm doing collaborative work. But at the same time, I had a couple of people challenge me on my authority, and they found out quickly that they do not brook that." (*Film Force* interview)

"People becoming unhappy if I changed something or if I was controlling or if I had something ... either pull something out from under me, or complaining about me to staff or something. I'm all for giving people their due and all, but I wouldn't let it lie. You just can't. . . . I would take them either aside or up to my office and explain why they mustn't do that. It's very simple. I said to one director... he said, 'One of these days, I'm going to come down and look over your shoulder while you're shooting.' I brought him up to my office the next day and I said, 'Let me explain something to you. It is my job to control the way you shoot, not your job to control mine. My name comes at the end of every show. You do very good work and you're going to come back for us, but I am never going to let you do something that I don't approve of.'" (*Film Force* interview)

"I didn't want to say 'Look, we're better than a TV show.' I wanted to say 'You can do all of this in an episode of television. It just depends on how much you care.' . . . I love TV. I love what you can do with it. . . . It's not better, it's just TV in all its glory. The way I celebrate musicals I celebrate this medium." (DVD Commentary to "Once More with Feeling")