

Screenwriters. On Screenwriting.

The BAFTA and BFI Screenwriters' Lecture Series in association with The JJ Charitable Trust

Brian Helgeland

26 October 2012 at BFI Southbank

Brian Helgeland: I'm not a writer; I'm a filmmaker. If I wanted to be a writer I'd be a novelist. If I wanted to write dialogue, I'd be a playwright. But I want to make films so I'm a filmmaker; I'm no different than a costume designer, or a DOP, a director. I make movies for a living.

I've loved movies since I can remember. They made me realise there was a great big world out there. There wasn't one where I lived, but every time I saw a movie my life seemed to get a little bit bigger. But I never imagined anyone made them. I was vaguely aware that Alfred Hitchcock was running around somewhere, but that was it.

Unfortunately I stopped loving movies as soon as I started working on them, and never got it back. The magic is gone, and there's no replacing it. But I fell in love with making them, so that was great. I traded one love for another.

It's taken me around the world, figuratively and literally. I've met my best friends through making movies, [and] my most mortal enemies. And they release me from my childhood purgatory, and I owe everything to them.

I was born – these are all the things you just have to know about me – I was born in East Providence, Rhode Island which like London, the designation 'East' makes all the difference. I was raised in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which is the new version of your Bedford. I read it was once the home of Eddie the Eagle and Joe Bugner, so the colonial apple didn't fall far from the tree.

My people, as we say in the United States, emigrated through Ellis Island from Norway. My grandfather was a Norwegian merchant marine man and he came to the United States to be a yacht captain. And then the Depression happened in 1929 and he became a fisherman instead, so when you judge me you have to consider all of my origins.

These are the jobs I've had since I was born, there's eight of them; I collected and sold scrap

newspaper, I washed dishes at a 95 patient nursing home (which was probably the best job I ever had) I was a janitor at a 95 patient nursing home (which was the worst job I ever had). Sometimes, in the middle of the night, as I'm falling asleep I can hear the intercom calling for a wet mop to toilet six. I wouldn't recommend that. I was a clerk at a drugstore, in a semi-bad neighbourhood, and we had a druggist who was always talking about suicide. He was very funny, his name was Herbie, but he always talked about suicide and how he would kill himself. Should he put his head in the oven? And we'd laugh.

One night we got held up, a junkie came in and put a gun right to Herbie's head and said 'give me all the hard stuff.' There was a beat, and Herbie said 'would you like that in liquid or capsule?' Which I still think is the greatest line I've ever heard in my life. And he left, very agitated with a bag full of something and Herbie was laughing, saying 'I gave him laxative.'

I said 'he's going to come back and kill us!' and he said 'that's up to him, there's nothing we can do about that.' So I left that job, and I got a job working at an all-night gas station across the street from the drugstore – which was nerve-racking also. So that was five. Six, I was a commercial fisherman for a year and a half. Seven and eight I've been a screenwriter and a film director. And that's it.

That's the only eight things I know how to do, and only four of them am I still willing to do. I know what you're asking, so I'll save someone the trouble of asking how did I make the jump from drugstore clerk to gas station attendant. I can't reveal all my secrets tonight, so I'm going to have to take that one with me. But anyway, somewhere along the way I got an English degree at a state school in Massachusetts – it's a second language for us in the United States as many of you know.

I could not find any employment that I was qualified for, or inclined to do, and since my grandfather had been a fisherman and my

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father when I was young had been a fisherman, I decided to go fishing. I've written four screenplays about fisherman, none of which have been produced, so I don't know what that means – write what you know, and watch no one make it, I guess.

But the second winter was coming, and I knew I didn't want to go fishing for the winter because it was not dangerous so much but it was cold and miserable. I was going to go with my friend to Florida, just to hang around. I had saved some money, and I was in a bookstore. I read a lot as a kid, and I passed a book that said A Guide to Film School, and I had no idea such a thing existed.

I picked up this book and I realised you could go to school for film. It was in Los Angeles, which had to be warm, and I applied and the only school that would take me in the middle of a semester took me. I had never written before, and I had never thought of writing, but I had a class that I had to write a screenplay for. It was one of those crazy assignments, where you had to write half a screenplay.

So halfway through the semester I had written half a screenplay, and I went to the teacher and said 'what shall I do with half my screenplay?' He said 'well if you have time, finish it.' So I finished it, and then when I was done I went to him again and said 'what should I do with it?' He said 'I don't know.' There was a contest on the bulletin board, and I took off this thing and sent it off, ten dollars.

Went home to go fishing again for the summer, and forgot all about it. Around August my Dad tracked me down and told me someone had called and I had won a writing contest. Not that I had won it, but I was one of four finalists, and they had searched for me when I was one of 50 finalists, they had searched for me when I was one of 12 finalists. But I had left my apartment in LA and hadn't left a forwarding address. So finally they tracked me down.

So I had been spared all this worry about was I going to win or not. I showed up back in LA and won second place. It was at the Director's Guild and they had a little reception, and I was just standing around minding my own business and an agent came up to me and asked if I had an agent and gave me his card. I didn't know what an agent was, and the next thing I knew I had an agent.

It was an agency called the J. Michael Bloom Agency, we had Timothy Dalton and Sigourney Weaver and they soon both left so we had nobody. They wouldn't make photocopies, so you had to make your own photocopies. When I wrote a script I'd make ten photocopies and I'd carry them all in, and I wrote script after script after script and he couldn't sell any of them.

And after six scripts he called me one day. He never called me; I thought to myself he must have sold one of the scripts. He said 'we have only so many shelves here, and your scripts are taking up so much space you've got to come and get them.' So having no interest in working in film, having no interest in getting an agent, having no interest in anything except trying to make a Super 8 film at some point, which I'd given up, I found myself literally walking down Sunset Boulevard with 50 screenplays in my arms which I dumped in the back of my truck and drove home while pages would flutter and finally fly off.

Another one would fly off on the 405 freeway. I thought I've tried that, I can't do that; I'll go home and go fishing again. A month went by, I was waiting until the end of the semester, I wasn't going to go back to film school, and my agent called me again. He said 'this is never going to work, but I have a friend who's an agent who has a client who has an idea for a movie, and he doesn't know how to write it. Would you come meet this guy, and maybe you guys can work on it together.'

And I did, the film was *976-EVIL* which is still probably the greatest moment of my professional

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life. We sold it for \$12,000. The cheques would come in and bounce, the first one bounced, the second one bounced. I got half of it, so I got \$6,000, and finally on the third one I was at the agency, the cheque got delivered, my agent gave it to me, I ran across the street to the bank and deposited it. And it held.

So that was the start of my writing career. I'm as proud of that movie as anything I ever worked on, and there was no looking back after that. I never had to get another job, I never had to worry about paying the rent again, I was a professional writer and it's gone that way ever since.

Since then I've written 60-odd screenplays, 18 of which have been made into films, and three television shows. So I must know something. And I didn't know what I knew, so when I agreed to do this I sat down and tried to analyse what I think I can pass on. I think the first thing is pick something worth writing about, which seems fairly obvious.

You want to make it compelling, and you want to make it commercial. And the thing about a commercial movie is all it has to do is make more money than it cost to make. So if your movie cost \$10 to make and it makes \$20 it's commercial.

You want to bear that in mind, if you decide to write a movie about a man who talks to the tomatoes in his garden, don't set it on Mars. You'll be OK. But if you write that and you make that compelling and that character compelling, it's a commercial movie. So you have to look what's commercial.

I once had a meeting with Dino De Laurentiis, and I got a call, my agent – now a new agent, thank God – called me up and said 'Dino De Laurentiis called me and wants to meet you.' I didn't know Dino De Laurentiis, I'd never met him, I was out of his orbit, there was no reason why he should know who I was. So I immediately said 'yeah, I don't know why but I'll meet with him.'

I went to his office, I got sent in and he was behind this enormous desk that if you put a mast in it you could sail it to Italy. It turned out it was Mussolini's desk. He had a big crowd around the desk, and his secretary went over and said that I was there for the meeting, and he started going 'everybody out, everybody out, Brian's here, Brian's here.'

I had never met him, he didn't know who I was, [but] everyone left. He was in a T-shirt, suit pants and a wife beat T-shirt, as we say. And he said 'do you want a cappuccino?' and I said 'yeah, I'll have a cappuccino,' and he just went 'CAPPUCINO!' into nothing, into the air. He said 'come, sit, sit, sit.'

He didn't want to sit at the desk; he had a little table, like a café almost in his office. And as we sit down this little old Italian lady comes in with two cups and they're jiggling. She brings them in, and I said 'what did you want to see me about?' He said 'have your cappuccino, enjoy your cappuccino, how are you? How's your family?' I'm like everyone's fine.

Finally he finished, and he set his cup aside and he said 'I need your help.' I said 'with what?' And he said 'I'm asking you for help, I called you, you're my friend, I bring you here, I say I need your help and you say what? why? what?' I said 'OK, I'll help you, I'll help you,' and he goes '*prego, prego.*'

I said 'what do you want me to do; I don't have to go kill someone in the afternoon....?' He said 'I'm going to do my biggest project, I'm going to do the Beeble,' and I said 'the what?' He said 'I'm going to do the Beeble,' I'm so embarrassed, but I said 'the what?' and he goes 'the BEEBLE!' I said 'Dino, I don't know what The Beeble is.' He said 'Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, the Beeble,' and I'm like 'oh, OK, OK, OK.'

He wanted me to do Judith, which was a good book. He was going to do every book in the Bible as a film, however many books there are. I said

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'why are you doing this?' and he said 'because it's got money, power, sex, love, friendship, everything. The Bible has everything, it has everything, it's compelling.' OK, I got it. So let's write something compelling – but I got Judith.

A couple of things, I say screenwriter, having said I'm not a writer and I'm not, but they call us screenwriters, so I'll stick with that term. The next thing I could pass on is that screenwriters have to fight. And you have to fight with everybody. If someone looks at you the wrong way you have to fight. You can't be happy to be in meetings, you can't feel grateful; you can't have any of that stuff. Never apologise for being a writer, you have to fight, you have to absolutely be known as difficult.

Executives should dread when they see that you're coming in. And they should dread that you're coming in because you should make them feel stupid. Anything they say that's dumb you should point it out to them, rather than let them slide and be polite you should point out what's wrong with their ideas. You have to do that; they should be embarrassed to open their mouth. And you get away with this by being good at what you do. So be good, and embarrass them, and never give an inch to them.

Structure, I know I'm jumping around but there's only about five things, you have 120 pages, that's it, so it has to be structured. It has to drive forward. If you write a scene that is lateral cut it out or make it do something, or make it drive you to the next moment because there's no time to mess around. Novelists can write 900 pages if they want, they can write 300 pages if they want. You can write 100 or you can write 140, but there's not a lot of difference there. Be creative before you write your script, when you're writing your outline, you can take flights of fancy, when you break the back of the story, when you stare at the wall all day long you can be creative. But when you start writing that script you're an architect and there's nothing creative about it – that's a slight exaggeration but it's true.

I think you have to be ready to be lonely, and if you're not then don't do it. Really lonely. You have to think you're an idiot all day long, know that any number of people could do a better job at what you're doing than you are, but just do the best job that you can do. There's something glorious about throwing time at something.

I always think a movie is a giant funnel, as big as this building, with a little tiny pinhole at the bottom and everyone, whether it's the production or whether it's the screenplay, you fill this enormous funnel with all the stuff and one drop comes out and that's the movie or the script when it's the script. The more you dump into that funnel to get that drop, the better it's going to be. It doesn't mean it's going to be any good, but that's a whole other thing.

I read somewhere that it took four billion man hours to build the pyramids, and I figured for me it's about two thousand to write a script. Not to turn it all into maths, but if you spend two thousand hours doing something there is a satisfaction in that. It's an accomplishment. It's two thousand hours not doing something else.

The next thing is writer's block, in my list. Writer's block is where you separate the grownups from the children, because there is no such thing as writer's block, it's the price you pay for the good day you had on Thursday. You do more work sitting staring at the wall than you ever do feeling it, writing stuff out with fingers flying across the keyboard.

If you're unwilling to go through the pain of that then you will not get the reward on the other side. Writer's block is not an obstacle to writing, it is writing. The muse is long gone, she's laughing at you; she's not coming back. That's the price you pay for the little spark she gave you at the start.

I very much believe that writing a screenplay is mental ditch digging; it's the Panama Canal from the back of your head to the front of your head. That's it.

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Dialogue, movie dialogue has never been how people really talk. It's not supposed to be how people really talk it's how we wish people talked. It's what you wish you said to somebody when they insulted you, it's what you wish you had said in a romantic situation. But when people say it doesn't sound the way people really talk, of course it doesn't; it's movie dialogue. People talk like I'm talking now in real life.

I think the trick to dialogue is that it's about rhythm, you want to say it out loud, you want to say it often; you want to repeat it over and over again. And above all you want to shorten it. So I actually play a game with myself where if I have ten lines of dialogue I say it has to be seven lines. I don't know how I'm going to make it seven lines, but it has to be seven lines.

And then I work at it, and sometimes it can take an hour just to fiddle with it. It's not as good, seven lines, but this reduction of dialogue is what makes great movie dialogue. The best actors want less of it, and so give it to them.

Write what you know. If you're not an astronaut you don't have to be an astronaut to write about it. If you are an astronaut then luckily you can write about astronauts. What you have to do is humanise the characters, so if you're writing about astronauts you just find a way to humanise them so that you can know them that way, and come at it from that angle. But research the hell out of astronauts.

And find something that you... I think everyone has something that they respond to, whether they know it or not. It might not always be obvious. What I think I realised in my own work is I'm interested in identity, and that can be discovering who you are, sticking to who you are, returning to who you are or realising that you can't get away from who you are.

But I think it's in a lot of films, not just films that I work on, but I always find when there's something to do with identity I feel more

comfortable about writing it, whether it's original or an adaptation I have to try to find that, so that I kind of feel like I know. It's general enough that I'm not repeating myself, but the films I do well have that at the core of them.

I think there's no substitute for research, you just research everything you do to death. When you think you have more than done your due diligence you haven't. There's always one little thing left to learn.

I remember I was hired by Warner Bros. to do a Viking script, and I read everything about Vikings and this book and that book, Icelandic sagas which was a chore. I remember I had one book left to read, and I thought I don't need to read it, but once I thought that I knew I had to read it. And it was a thing about battle and how when they go on a raid the triage was anyone who had a stomach wound, they would make onion soup.

And they'd give them all a bowl of onion soup and they'd eat it. And then one Viking would go around smelling everyone's stomach. And if he could smell onions you weren't getting on the boat. So I immediately thought that's a fantastic, funny scene to have in my Viking movie, but if I hadn't read the last book I wouldn't have got it.

If you're entering a world that you don't know about... on *Man on Fire* we went to Mexico we interviewed kidnap victims, kidnappers, corrupt policemen, reporters, got reams of testimony from them and went through it; and just had to immerse ourselves in that world or we would have just been making stuff up. I think the audience doesn't necessarily know the facts of certain things, but they sense when you've done your homework and they sense when things are real. So research, I think, is really important.

The other thing is it's a movie, so I always make a soundtrack when I'm working and I think of songs that pertain to the script I'm writing. I start to make lists, I start to make CDs, I play the music

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when I'm writing. Sometimes when I'm in the car, and it creeps in and seeps in. It's invaluable.

The other thing is do not abdicate the images and the imagery, to anybody. A good screenplay has to have all that in, so over my desk I have an enormous wall of corkboard, and even in the middle of writing I probably spend an hour a day Google imaging and trying to find photos, I don't know why, sometimes they speak to me, but I put them up there. If you just forget about that you're not writing the script that you could write.

I own far more books of photography than I do books of fiction; which kind of brings me to the first clip. Screenwriting has to have a visual element in it, and even in a dialogue scene if you can do it without words it's better. So we can run this and I'll say a few words about it. This is from *Man on Fire*.

Clip from *Man on Fire*

Obviously a dialogue scene. In the movie she's enamoured with him, and he is with her as well. But at some point you have to get out of that scene and have a point to it, and they could keep on talking and talk this through but it just seemed like he drives her, she's trying to sit up front with him. Minor thing, it's not earth-shattering. The car stops so she gets in the back seat, so we're not going to be friends, you're my employee and you're going to drive me around. We're not going to talk anymore.

But if every scene, whether it's a little dialogue scene – obviously a big action scene is something else – if you think of how to tell the story without words you're in good shape. It's visual characterisation. The more you can do that the better. Obviously the actors have to be along for the ride but they usually are, so that's good.

If you are a writer there's a lot made of this adversarial relationship between directors and writers, which I don't believe in personally. I've

had a lot of luck with... four different directors I've worked with more than once, and you need them and they need you. You're kind of lost without each other. And a secure director really wants to hear what you have to say, whether he or she agrees with you or not.

The kind of more push and pull and tug there is between you the better the film will probably be. I worked with a director, Richard Donner; we did this film *Conspiracy Theory* together. When I first sent it to him, it was the first script I had ever written that came out at exactly 120 pages. And I sent it to him and he called me on New Year's Eve and said he wanted to do it.

He said it was the best 119 pages he'd ever read. I walked right into it, I said 'but it's 120,' and he said 'yeah, I'm not so sure about that last page.' Which, if you've seen the film, on page 120 Mel Gibson died and he didn't die in 120 of the rewrite; but, he stopped me one day, and he said 'you're not happy with what I'm doing,' while we were shooting. He forced me to tell him I wasn't happy with what he was doing, so I said 'yeah, I'm not happy.'

And he said 'well you have to direct yourself, if you're not happy because you have a prism that you see life through and that's how you write. And I have a prism that I see life through, so how is my prism and your prism ever going to line up exactly the same?' But really, directors can be your greatest ally.

I was once called by Paul Greengrass, out of the blue, I didn't know Paul. I got a phone call one day that he wanted to talk to me. He was doing *The Bourne Supremacy*, he was in Berlin and got right to the point and said he had picked me off of a list, looked at my credits, they had promised him that he could have a rewrite of the script before he started shooting, and they had put him off and put him off and finally he demanded [it] and said they had promised and now he wanted someone to come in.

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I still to this day don't know how he got my name, but he called me and said 'can you come out to Berlin we start shooting in a week?' It sounded a lark, he sent me the script and I read it on the plane going over. And I got there and he was kind of exhausted, I think from prepping at a studio and having to deal with all the politics which he had a different version of, but not quite the same version of.

We had a beer and he was laughing, he said 'I wanted to re-do the entire script and now there isn't time,' and I said 'when do you start shooting?' and by that point it was five days. I said 'we have time, we can rewrite the entire script,' and he perked right up and he said 'do you think so?' and I said 'yeah.'

I think we stayed up basically four days and rewrote the entire movie from start to finish. And that's what a writer and a director, when they get on, do with each other. He then turned it in, and we were waiting around for a meeting, and the producer showed up. It was around eight o'clock at night, he had just flown in from LA and he had been messengered the script somehow, or emailed it.

He walked into the room and he said 'Brian, you don't have to stay here for this meeting. In fact your plane to LA leaves tomorrow at five in the morning.' I looked over at Paul, who was kind of gleefully smiling, and he kind of looked at me and said 'it's OK, see ya.' And they basically had it out for three hours, about this script we had done. Afterwards I met up with him, and the big thing in the script was he had inherited a story where the Soviet Union still existed, basically.

He kept saying to the producers that the Soviet Union fell, you can't really have this in the movie, and they were like 'we don't want to change it.' He said 'well, they want to go back to what we had.' I said 'I figured that,' and he said 'but, no Soviet Union.' So he had kind of got what he wanted, and I think as he shot he worked back in more of what he wanted without them quite realising it.

But I was in love with him, and that's what you can do as a director and a writer together. You can turn the studio on its head three days before shooting starts. The great thing to me about movies is how subjective they are. We have these tornadoes in the US, where they go into a trailer park and they take one trailer out and disappear with it and everyone else is left behind.

No one's favourite movie is anyone else's favourite movie, and that's the beauty of them. There's always a list of what the ten greatest films of all time are, but for me if I'm watching TV and *The Warriors* is on, the Walter Hill film, I'll drop everything I'm doing and watch the Warriors run around New York and get chased by all the gangs with their faces painted.

Whereas if it's *Citizen Kane* or *The Bicycle Thief* I might not sit down and tune in; for no reason, these are my top ten favourite films: *From Russia With Love*, *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, *The French Connection*, *Klute* where Jane Fonda talks the entire movie, Donald Sutherland says nothing, and at the end of the movie you know everything about him and nothing about her. Which is how it's designed, it's fantastic. *The Bad News Bears*, *The Great Escape*, *The Road Warrior*, *The Guns of Navarone* and *Manhattan*.

Which leaves behind one; Lucas Jackson is alive to me, he is the only man whose approval I have ever craved, I measure my life against his and continually come up short. And he's a movie character; Lucas Jackson is the title character in *Cool Hand Luke* which I have watched a dozen times, but watched clips of on television hundreds of times. I don't know how many times.

It is, in my opinion, the highest achievement in the history of western civilisation. And I'm not joking. I just want to show you two clips from that, the first is a dialogue clip that happens early on in the movie right after he's gone to prison.

Clip from *Cool Hand Luke*

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All right, so you know where Paul Newman's headed. He's going to the box. But obviously a screenwriter sat down and typed that out, that's not an ad lib. It's the institutionalism of where they're at, it's all those things, Newman steals the scene at the end by mouthing one word, but that's the screenwriter through and through, working that scene.

So this is the second scene. If you haven't seen the movie he's just found out his mom has died, just before this scene.

Clip from *Cool Hand Luke*

So that is film-makers at work. The screenwriter set that up, certainly wrote that, as he goes to the box, but you've got the cinematographer working his butt off. The director, the costume designer with that white gown he has on, and the music with the editor. The screenwriter got everyone there, but that's film-making, that's everybody with the screenwriter included; and with Paul Newman humanising that kind of de-humanising experience.

You understand, without any dialogue, that he's gone in one guy and he's come out another guy, that's the big shift in the movie, everything has changed, he's not passing time and having fun anymore after that; but is just on a road to getting himself killed. That's why I say that a screenwriter is a film-maker.

Having said all that I wanted to direct, and Dick Donner who I mentioned had said I was unhappy produced a TV show that shot in London at the time, it was called *Tales from the Crypt*. So he said 'if you want to direct you should direct, so why don't you go to London and direct.' Which I was thrilled to do, I'd always wanted to work in London, I had been here for a couple of days once. We were prepping, I had a three day prep, and I had a day off and I went to Tower Records at Piccadilly Circus – it's not there anymore.

For years wherever I went I would look for the *Cool Hand Luke* soundtrack, I didn't know if it existed even, or not. But if I was in a record store I'd got try to find it, and never found it. I went to the import section and there it was. I think CDs hadn't been around for that long, but it was a CD. I was staying at the Athenaeum Hotel and they had just proudly installed CD players in the rooms. So it was a long time ago.

I bought the soundtrack, and I went back to the hotel, and I was at the front desk and I was changing some dollars for pounds and I heard Americans behind me. I turned around, because they were American, and they were talking about having come back from a trip to Kenya. And I looked and the guy talking was Frank Pierson, who wrote the screenplay for *Cool Hand Luke*. I thought 'this is the strangest thing that's ever happened to me.'

In my entire life I've never introduced myself to anyone, I've never walked up to anyone to say I admired their work, or anything. But I was in London, it was Frank Pierson, so I walked over to him. He was talking to about five people, and I waited a respectful distance from him, and he wouldn't look over, and he wouldn't look over, and finally it got to be embarrassing even for the people who were with him.

They were like 'Frank?' you know. I was horrified at myself and so finally I just started to try to back away, and the second I moved away he turned and went 'Yessss?' I said 'I don't mean to interrupt you, but are you Frank Pierson?' And he said 'let me guess, you became a screenwriter because of me.' So now I'm like 'son of a bitch!' you know.

I said 'no, no I didn't.' He didn't realise I was a screenwriter. I said 'no, it's just *Cool Hand Luke* is my favourite movie,' and he went 'oh good for you, *Cool Hand Luke* your favourite movie. What else can I do for you, there anything else?' And the people with him, you could tell it was 'not again Frank, not again.'

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It just hit me, I said 'no, but I have something that I think belongs to you,' and he said 'what's that?' And I pulled out the *Cool Hand Luke* soundtrack and I gave it to him, and he was kind of flabbergasted. He said 'where did you get this?' and I said 'I just bought it. I'm sorry to interrupt you.'

It was a cosmic experience, and I started to walk away and he said 'hey wait, what's your name?' and I told him my name and he said 'you want to have a drink at the bar?' And I said 'yeah sure, sure. Don't hit me, you know'; and then spent the next three hours with him hearing all these stories and all these things.

About a year and a half went by, and there was a panel discussion that the Writer's Guild was putting on in LA. They had different panels, and I got asked to be on one of these panels, and I said yeah. And I was looking on the schedule and I saw Frank was on the panel after mine, and I was all excited [that] I'm going to maybe see him.

They had a green room, and I went in the back when I was done with my panel and there was Frank sitting, going through some cards. And I walked over to him and it was the same kind of thing, he just wouldn't look up. Then finally, because we're friends, I said 'Frank?' and he looked up at me and said 'yes?' I said 'you probably don't remember me, but I'm Brian Helgeland....' and he said 'I know who you are – what do you want?' I said 'nothing, good luck.' And I walked away from him.

About a couple of years more went by, and I was at the Writer's Guild Awards, I had won a Writer's Guild Award, and I was waiting for my car, the valet, to leave and I saw someone coming out of the corner of my eye and here comes Frank Pierson in a tuxedo. I was just like 'oh no!'

I kind of turned a little bit away, waiting for my car, and all of a sudden I hear 'Brian? Brian?' and he was like 'come here!' and he hugged me. And then, not to get into it, but the next time

I saw him he wouldn't have anything to do with me, and they gave him a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Boston Film Festival.

And I got called and they said 'we understand you're one of his protégés.' I said 'I know him, I wouldn't go that far.' They said 'Frank has asked if you'll give him his Lifetime Achievement Award,' and I said 'sure I will.' I told this exact story, and he kind of passed me scowling, and accepted it.

He died a couple of months ago, and I saw him about six months ago in a restaurant and he looked so mad that I didn't go over and talk to him. But if I had, and I knew he was going to die – which of course I didn't – I would have told him that yes, I did become a screenwriter because of him; even though I'm not a screenwriter. So thank you very much, and rent Frank Pierson movies.

Mark Kermode: That was a fantastic lecture, thank you so much for that. I'm just going to ask Brian a few questions and then we'll throw it open to the audience to get questions from you. Just a couple of things, in relation to what you've been saying. The first thing that struck me was that you said, and I wasn't sure whether you said it sardonically, you said that you were in love with the movies and then the minute you started seeing them being made the magic went, and you said you fell out of love with them but you fell in love with making them. Have you genuinely fallen out of love with watching movies?

BH: That's true, I can't sit through them, it's hard to watch them. I wonder about why they mixed the sound the way they did, didn't they have a better take of that? Stuff like that. I can appreciate a good movie but I don't like to watch them really, anymore.

MK: So you genuinely can't get lost in them in the way that you used to, because you talked about it so vividly about that being your escape route as a child? Does that not feel like something which has left you bereft?

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BH: No, honestly, because I did fall in love with making them, whether that's being alone typing them or making them, I fell in love with the process of making them. Not to digress, but the one time I had that experience again was, I love *Deliverance*, and I had only seen it on television though I had seen it many times. At the Nuart [Theatre] in LA they were having a CinemaScope festival and they were showing *Deliverance*. I had never seen it projected, and I thought I'd go see it projected.

This was the last time I had that same visceral [feeling] seeing a movie again, even though I'd been making a movie for many years. When the canoes pull over and Ned Beatty gets it, I'm sitting there thinking to myself 'this is where those guys try to get Ned Beatty to squeal like a pig, and make him run around in his underwater.'. I'd only seen it on television, and on television they cut the rape out, and I was sitting in the Nuart and I started to realise what was going to happen to Ned Beatty and I thought 'my God, I've seen this movie ten times and I had no idea that this was actually what happens in this scene. That's kind of the last time....

MK: Of all the scenes not to see in *Deliverance*... it must be a very different movie. The other thing is, you talked about 2,000 man hours going into the writing of each screenplay, and then you said you thought you'd written 60 of which 18 had been produced, so you're talking about a one in three, one in four hit rate. Of all the unproduced [screenplays] for example *The Ticking Man*, famously an unmade screenplay, how do you feel about the screenplays that haven't been made, having put 2,000 hours into it?

BH: I don't know how it is for other people, but I've found if they don't get made fairly quickly they don't get made. I've never had an old script suddenly get picked up and made. So for me, once a certain amount of time goes by, I try and forget about it and move on. You can't be like Miss Havisham with her wedding cake,

wandering around the house with it. You've got to find a new cake.

MK: I think you'll find you can be like that; it's just maybe not such a good idea.

BH: Yeah. But there's always the next one and the next one and the next one.

MK: But what happened, for example, in the case of that [*The Ticking Man*] because that was a big news story. The money people were talking about was a million dollars, was involved.

BH: Yeah, at the time I was writing horror films, and I had a very good friend of mine named Manny Coto who was also writing horror films. We couldn't get a meeting on anything else, no one would talk to us about anything else, and we loved genre movies but we said the only way out of this is we've got to write something that someone wants to make. So we wrote this big action movie, and sold it, it had a bidding war and it was high profile and Bruce Willis was attached right away.

It was Larry Gordon, a producer, had started his own finance company and this was going to be the first film they did. And all bad stories in Hollywood lead back to Joel Silver, the producer. What happened was, Joel who had also wormed his way on as a producer on *The Ticking Man*, even though he wasn't involved originally, then bought *The Last Boy Scout*, talked Willis into doing that instead and put *The Ticking Man* off for six months. Largo, Larry Gordon's company, made a movie that was a disaster, lost a huge amount of money, they were under financed and they went under. And he owns the script to this day.

MK: Is there no part of you that thinks it was destined not to be?

BH: I think it's destined not to be, yeah.

MK: But would it have made a great movie?

BH: I think so.

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MK: So of all those unproduced things, which is the one that you're most bothered about having not been made?

BH: A couple. I wrote a script which was the story of two brothers set in the world of fishing; called *Finest Kind* and that one I actually kind of drag out and rewrite once in a while, and try to give it mouth to mouth. It sat up once, but then fell back over. And I have a western I wrote, called *The High Lonesome*, about a deaf gunfighter. A soldier who gets deafened at the Battle of Gettysburg, drifts out west and becomes kind of a hired killer – this gun for hire, and he's deaf. And the whole movie is from his point of view. There's one other, called *Sidney Grimes*, which is a crooked cop movie.

MK: And we may yet see them, in that case?

BH: That one, because it's got a studio behind it, at least.

MK: One of the things where you take your place in history is that you're one of the few people to have won a Razzie and an Oscar at the same time. I know it's a well rehearsed story, but it's worth repeating, tell us how that happened.

BH: Actually Joel Silver I can't blame for that one. And I should just say I got hired on *The Postman* by Ron Howard to write it for Tom Hanks. He was in post on a movie called *The Paper* at the time, we were working on the script and there was a script on the coffee table called *Apollo 13* and I would thumb through it during the day while he was off checking the mix and stuff. And he came in one day and said 'what do you think of that script?' I said 'well, it's interesting,' and he said 'yeah, but you know how it ends, you can never make that movie,' and we'd be back to work on *The Postman*.

And then a month later I got a call from him saying 'I'm doing *Apollo 13*.' It was a movie I couldn't get fired from, usually a writer can

manage to get fired from a movie, but I couldn't get fired from that movie. I have a lot of stories about it, but I won the Razzie for screenplay for that year at the same time I won the Academy Award for *LA Confidential*, and I won the Razzie on Saturday and I won the Oscar on Sunday. And I got the Oscar on the Sunday, but I didn't get any Razzie, so I called the Razzie office and I said 'where's my Razzie?'

They only had one that they would trot out when they announced the names, so they said 'we only have one,' and I said 'well you've either got to give me that one or make another one, but I want my Razzie.' Two weeks later they had made a Razzie, it's a Super 8 reel, spray painted gold, with a foam raspberry on top with sequins poked into it, spray painted gold also. I had to re-spray paint it about year ago because it was flaking. But you know, if you really want to make a great film you have to take the risk that you're going to make a really bad film.

If you make a safe film it's never going to be too bad or too good. That's why I like the Razzie, because that movie could have been great. It's not, but it could have been.

MK: You think it's actually quite close, what was the key?

BH: The key thing was, you'd have to see it, which I don't recommend. The Kevin Costner character, and Costner rhymes with Joel Silver in some languages, the Kevin Costner character in my script was a con man. And it was post-Apocalyptic in these little towns, and he had found a dead body with a postman's uniform on it, and he wore it. He said that the government has been reformed, 'we're delivering the mail again, can you give me something to eat, can I sleep with one of the girls here?'

It was a scam to get fed and entertain people, and it became a movement, and the only person who didn't believe in it was him. So he basically said 'it's pretty unsympathetic, I don't believe in this.' I said 'yeah, but you do at the

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end, you take the reins,' and he said 'no, I think I should be sincere.' And that's where the whole movie.... it's like, if Burt Lancaster in *The Rainmaker* really thought he could make it rain it wouldn't be quite as good. So that's where it went wrong.

MK: And you were telling a lovely story before we came on about working with Clint Eastwood, and Clint Eastwood assessing a piece of work by how much it weighed.

BH: Right. I wrote a script for him called *Blood Work*, and I brought it to his office when I was all done, it was the shortest script I ever wrote, it was 95 pages. I went into his office and gave it to him, and he took it and he just went like that with it [makes weighing motion]. And he went 'how many pages is this?' I said '95,' and he said 'it's already the best script I ever read in my life.' So there was that one.

And the other one was he sent me the book for *Mystic River*, and I read it. I was prepping the movie I was going to direct, I didn't have time, but it's him so I read it. I had two little boys at the time, and I just didn't want to make a movie about that. It was based kind of on my own neighbourhood back home, and I just said no, I don't want to do it. But I passed to his agent so I didn't have to tell him directly. And his agent said 'is that your final answer?' like it's a quiz show. I said 'that's my final answer,' and he said 'OK, I'll tell him,' Click.

And it was a Sunday, and an hour later the phone rang and it's Eastwood, and he says 'where do you live?' I told him where he lived, and it's far away from where he lives, like an hour, and he said 'I feel like taking a drive, I'm gonna come out and see you.' Like, unheard of. I said 'no, wherever you are, I'll come see you and I'll come and talk about the book.' He said 'no, no, no, I'll be there this afternoon some time.' So I wait and I wait and I wait, and then finally the doorbell rings.

And this is almost how long the entire meeting lasted. I open the door and he said 'hi,' and he walked and looked around the house. And he said 'you got a yard?' And I said 'yeah I got a yard,' and I walked him to the back door, and opened the sliding glass door. And he looked out and said 'yeah, that's OK,' I said, 'do you want anything to drink?' and he said 'no,' and we had some cookies, so I said 'do you want a cookie?' He said 'what kind are they?' and I said they were oatmeal. He went over and looked at them and he went 'yeah, I'll have one.'

I got a plate, and he goes 'I don't need a plate.' He picked the cookie up and he went over to the sink and he just started eating the cookie over the sink. I'd been around him on the other movie so I knew that you many times no one talks for ten minutes. So I just sat down at the kitchen table, kind of wondering why this was happening.

And he's knocking the crumbs into the sink, looking out the window, and finally he's done and he goes like this [wipes hands against each other], but he didn't look at me, he just looked in my direction and he went 'so, are you gonna do the book?' And I said 'yes sir, I'm gonna do the book.' And he went 'oh great, when do you think you'll have it done?' and I said 'four months,' and he went 'great, great,' and he walked out the door and the next time I saw him I was handing him the script.

MK: Just a few more things before I throw it open, because I know that people have their own questions. It was very interesting to me that when you cited your favourite movies one of the ones you cited was *The French Connection*. The interesting thing with *The French Connection* is it's a fairly famous case of a movie that won several Oscars, but it's very disputed as to who actually wrote what is said on screen.

There is a screenplay, and there is what is said on screen. The director has famously said 'yeah, we threw the whole screenplay out.' I know that you're a film-maker rather than a screenwriter,

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but how do you take to that kind of story, because obviously you talked about writers and directors not being at loggerheads, but that seemed to me to be a classic case in which there is disputed ownership of the words.

BH: Right. It's like the big speech in *Jaws* that Robert Shaw makes, Robert Shaw says that he wrote it the night before. John Milius says that he wrote it, [Carl] Gottlieb who wrote the screenplay says that he wrote it. It's not in the book. No one knows who wrote it, but it's a great speech so someone wrote it.

Sometimes directors... one reason that some directors go through a lot of writers is because it's how they claim ownership of it. They supervise this guy and that guy, and this guy and that guy and this guy so therefore they can claim the script that way. It's usually an ungenerous thing to do.

The reason that I probably picked that movie from a writing standpoint is the car chase. I don't think the screenwriter sat down and could come up with words that translated into the excitement of that car chase. But the car chase in that movie, technically it's good, but it's not the greatest car chase ever seen. Anyone can mount a camera outside a car, and watch the hubcap fly off.

The car chase in that movie is great because of the character, to me. It's because you know Popeye Doyle. If he hits the woman with the baby carriage he's not stopping. That's why it's a great car chase, because you're steered at him as a driver. And he's chasing a train that's up there, there's no one else on the road with him. It's his character, in the way it's developed, in the way he develops it that makes that a great car chase because he's going to do anything to get this guy and he doesn't care who gets hurt. The first thing he does is leaves someone who was shot, instead of him, he just leaves them on the side of the road and gets in his car and goes; because he doesn't care, and that's why it's a great car chase.

MK: A last thing before we throw this to the audience, you've written and directed, it seems to me that when you talk about writing you talk about it almost as I would expect a director to. It's not dialogue, you talk about the visuals. Clearly you have stepped up to the mark as a director. When you are writing do you feel that you are effectively directing the movie on the page.

BH: Yeah, I try to, and I think it's your job to. If I have a scene in a room I'll make a blueprint of the room, and figure out where everything is so I have some sense in my own head of what the physicality of it is, and that kind of thing. That bleeds through into the screen direction. But where it's important. If someone asks a question and the person goes to the window to answer it it's because they can't look the person in the eye when they answer the question, or that kind of thing. If that physical characterisation is important I try to put it in there. It might all get thrown out, or they might shoot in a different location than what you wrote in the script.

MK: The standard accepted thing is directors don't want the screenwriters to have told them [this], they want to be able to do that themselves. Does that not put you at loggerheads when you work with them?

BH: No, because I don't say where the camera should be, I just say physically where the actor should be. If it makes sense. If it's important, otherwise I leave it out. But just try to write it as much like a movie, so that when you read it... I get complimented a lot, people say they can see the movie when they're done reading it. But it's not because I called camera shots, it's because I don't ignore the physicality of where they are or what they're doing.

Question: I'm curious to know when you're adapting things like *Mystic River* and *LA Confidential*, which are different voices from different writers, and you are a writer yourself; and then you've got two different directorial styles like Clint Eastwood is known for shooting

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something very quickly. I don't know how quickly.... how do you integrate your own vision, because you say you're a film-maker, but where do you leave the film-maker behind and when does the screenwriter take over?

BH: In the case of a book I think you have to admire the book. If you don't have respect for the book – and obviously there are great books and there are some books that aren't so good. But if you don't admire the book then you shouldn't get involved with it. It's just not good. What I've found with most novelists, if you stick to the theme, if you keep the theme of their book, they don't care what you do otherwise. They understand that it's a different thing.

I think in the case of *LA Confidential* it spoke to me in that the three characters all had identity issues, basically. Russell Crowe's character, everyone thought he was a thug and he wanted to be a detective, so he was something that no one thought he was. It appealed to me on that level and I responded on that level, so I knew I could slip in and help tell that story.

As opposed to another worthy book that, if I didn't relate to it personally, I wouldn't know exactly how to... I'd just be mucking about and not knowing what I was doing. You have to go to war with it on some level, because you have to turn this thing into a movie. *LA Confidential* had two serial killers in the novel, one was in the past, unsolved murders in the past. And a serial killer who was also active in the present. Neither of those storylines are in the movie, because we just had to clean house and get to the point of what we could do in two and half hours.

But I have to relate to it on some level. In *Mystic River* the Sean Penn character was a criminal who had tried to go straight. But that instinct to be a criminal was always in him, and his daughter getting killed, he had used her as the excuse – to my mind – as to why he had to stop his life of crime, which was what he was really drawn to and good at. So her death allows him to step back into who he really was as a person –

again, identity – and use that to try to solve her murder. When I identified that I knew I could do it, because I felt comfortable with that as a kind of thematic.

Question: I'm Laura from Film Club. I was wondering, you make crime and thriller movies, why did you suddenly decide to make *A Knight's Tale*, because it's my favourite film. I was just wondering, because it's so different. Why did you make it?

BH: I like that film a lot. It came out of.... I was doing *Payback*, the first movie I directed, and I had this whole other story but I had all these problems on *Payback*. Problems with the star and the studio and lots of things. And when I was done with it I wanted to do something that took me back more to loving films in the first place. Years earlier I had researched, before I did *Payback*.... sometimes you have an idea for three days and try to sort it out, and after three days you think 'why would I ever think that could be a movie?'

I wanted to do a jousting movie for three days, and then I put all the notes away and thought that was the dumbest idea I ever had. When I was looking for something to do after *Payback* I dragged all my old notes out I got to that one, and there was one line in there from the research I had done, which said you had to be noble to compete. I thought to myself, well that's it. That's identity, but I also thought it's a peasant who wants to be a knight, and it was a screenwriter who wants to be a director which is kind of the same thing. So literally, that's what that movie's about. It's Heath wanting to be a film director.

MK: It's interesting, a number of people do cite that as one of their favourites. Why do you think it has lasted so long, because it is a peculiarity. It's a lovely film, but...

BH: Yeah, it's the thing that doesn't make sense when you look at my other films. But I'll tell you, [it was a] joy making that movie. It's in the movie. And I think a lot of times when you're making a

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movie, how you make it becomes what the movie is. If you have a sincerity, and everyone's working for the same good reasons, it shows up in the movie, it bleeds into the movie. And that movie had a joy to it all the way through that's on the screen, and I think people recognise it.

Question: Hi Brian, thanks for coming out to see us today. Just a question, you were talking about your films and your characters having a lot to do with identity, specifically with things like *LA Confidential* and *Mystic River*, how do you go about the process of exposition with those changes in identity. And in just in general, with such strong character pieces, how do you approach exposition. Any tips for us on that?

BH: Yeah, in *Man on Fire* you don't really know who Denzel is in that movie. He was an ex-soldier of fortune, and you got the sense that he'd done bad things. The studio kept wanting a speech where he meets up with Christopher Walken who's his old running mate, and they wanted a scene where they said 'remember that time in Lebanon?' and 'remember this? remember that?' That scene appears in every bad action movie, to let the audience know what we've done and all these things.

I just said I wasn't going to do a scene like that, because it's just stupid. But I had to do something, to get across the history between these guys, and that they had a life that they regretted. We had a scene at a barbecue at Christopher Walken's house, and they're watching the kids play and it's a happy light moment. What the idea was, Denzel looks at him and says 'do you think God will forgive us for what we've done?'

And it said in the script Walken laughs, and when he's done laughing he goes 'no, I don't think so.' That's it, that's the entire situation. Once you get into details it falls apart, because you don't believe it, it's being written for the audience to understand all the bad things they've done. And they know what they've done, they wouldn't discuss it with each other. I don't know if this is

answering the question, but lots of times it's just what you don't say, and how they react to each other. But in that case you know more from that than you knew from if they listed the 900 places they had been together, and all the dirty deeds they had done.

MK: And that presumably fits with what you were saying earlier, about ten pages down to seven, always distilling, always getting everything down to the essence.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

Question: You talked about rewriting the screenplay for *The Bourne Supremacy*. How do you feel about rewriting other screenwriters, in that case Tony Gilroy, and how do you feel about being rewritten yourself?

BH: I haven't done a lot of rewriting. If I didn't think something needed work I wouldn't work on it. Put it that way. If I read a script and I thought 'this is pretty great,' I would say no, first of all.

MK: Has that happened, have you been offered things and thought that and said no?

BH: Yeah, a couple of things. But generally they recognise that it's pretty good, so it doesn't happen very often. But it's one of those things where what I would say first of all is that's not who I rewrote, Tony. Someone else had been in there before him. It's one of those movies that it's the studio's movie at a certain point, it's a franchise movie, and they're trying to get it to what they want it to be and everyone understands that including the guys that are on first. But it's hard to describe, it's just part of trying to get the movie made. You went in there and made it better or made it work when it wasn't working. You did your job.

MK: You're very sanguine about it.

BH: Yeah, it's not personal. First of all they're not stupid. Everyone talks about how dumb studio executives are, they're pretty smart. Not about

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story, not about what's a good film, but what they do they're very smart about. That's a different world and you're naive when you're running around thinking they don't understand the purity of the story.

That's the ninth thing they're worried about, or care about. But it's a kind of guerrilla war you have to wage, but they really expect you to wage, and somewhere in the middle you end up with a film.

Question: Thank you for an honest and humorous insight into the world of film-making. Can I ask you why you were attracted to the remake of *The Taking of Pelham 123*?

BH: Sure. Again, it starts out as a practical thing. Sony own the MGM library, and they had a lease on it, and it was basically going back to MGM/United Artists. The head of the studio brought me in and asked me to look at the list of the 2,000 and some odd movies, because they could keep – I think – 15 movie titles. So she asked me if I would, as a favour, go through the list and tell her what I thought the best ten or 20 titles were. Which I did, and *Pelham* was on the list.

I gave her the list, and she said 'thank you very much,' and that was it. They had made *A Knight's Tale*, so I was happy to do a favour for them. Then a couple of weeks went by, and I got a call one day saying they were thinking about doing *Pelham*, would I like to do *Pelham*? I said, 'it's such a classic, I'm not really interested.'

But I had worked previously on an idea for a hostage movie that I hadn't done. I thought I could take that and put it in that situation. In fact I said I'd do it if Tony Scott did it. So I pitched it to Tony, Tony said he'd do it, I got hired to write it and then Tony left to go do another movie so I dropped out of it. Someone else did a draft of it. So now they were making this movie that I'm not involved with, but it took so long Tony finished his

other movie, came back on, called me and said 'what do you mean you're not doing it?'

I said 'you left!' But now he was back on so then I came back on and we started over again, because what they had done in the meantime was kind of a straight, scene-by-scene remake. It's a tricky thing, it's like no one wants to make an original script. I work at studios and they're terrified of original scripts, because there's no history. Comic books they know how many issues the comic sold, and a book worked as a book and a musical worked as a musical.....

MK: But *Howard the Duck* worked as a comic, but nobody saw the film.

BH: Yeah, it blows up in their face all the time. But an original screenplay, they make them but very infrequently, and the reason why is they have no confidence to do it because it's never been proven to work before. So the beauty in our heads was that we could piggyback onto the title and make the hostage movie we wanted to make. On the one hand it's different from the original, and on the other hand people are saying that's not what *Pelham* should be. I started rambling, I don't know if I answered the question or not.

Question: Thank you so much for your talk tonight, that was wonderful. You spoke before about imagery, how important it is to show what it is you want the actors to say. When you write that down where do you draw the line in terms of how much direction you want to give the actors, for them to actually portray what you want them to say for their internal dialogue?

BH: You mean as far as attitude and things like that?

Questioner: If it makes the story move forward, yeah. In terms of how important that is.

BH: Yeah, I don't put many parenthetical 'happy', 'sad,' I try to leave those out because almost every actor I ever met, it infuriates them.

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They want to do the opposite. I just try to hope that it shows up as important without underlining or putting it in italics. If the scene has a rhythm and a point, and it follows along with what came before it, most actors understand it, you know.

And if they don't then you've got to kind of walk them through it. But I try to not make it pointed. I think the more pointed you make it you weaken it in a way.

MK: We have time for one more question and it being the last question I'm going to allow you to choose whose.

BH: All right.

Question: Thank you very much. I just wanted to ask you about *LA Confidential*, because I've always been fascinated with the genre that it may or may not be. For me it's very unique in terms of genre, and I just wondered if you had a take on that, or whether you thought about genre when you were working on it.

BH: Yeah, I always thought it was a great book and had great characters that were alive. To me it was literature when I read it. I think [James] Ellroy transcends his genre, which is his triumph really. We used to have, when we were prepping it, on Friday nights Curtis [Hanson] would screen a film in the genre, like *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, or *The Maltese Falcon*, or one of those movies. I would never go to them.

He would say to me 'why don't you ever go to these?' and I'd say 'because I don't see this as that kind of movie.' I just thought it was a great story, and the characters were great. I think it falls into that genre, if you want to kind of categorise it, but that never came into my head, trying to follow any genre rules about what noir genre characters do and how they end up.

Having said that I think noir is pretty realistic in a lot of ways, they don't have happy endings and they don't have a lot of things that most Hollywood movies have.

Questioner: I actually thought it created a whole new genre in one sense, that film, about a bigger concept but I'm not quite sure myself what it is.

BH: I was just telling the story earlier today, I think it's *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca*, and they both have the same DP [Arthur Edeson] and they both have Humphrey Bogart and Peter Lorre, and one is a full on film noir – *The Maltese Falcon* – and the other has nothing to do with film noir. And they're made a year apart from each other, almost the entire same crew, but I don't know why. I don't know why one is and why one isn't.

MK: Ending on *Casablanca* is always good in my book. I want to thank BAFTA and the BFI for organising this. Thank you so much everybody for coming along, and for your questions which have been great and thoughtful. And a huge thank you to Brian for what I think was an outstanding lecture, and for your honesty and entertainment value with those answers. We wish you all the best, thank you so much.

BH: Thank you.