

# PREFACE

The first time I interviewed Joss Whedon (during the filming of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* season two finale), I asked him if he considered himself an auteur. He blinked and laughed, looking flattered, and told me no. But I think it's pretty clear to many of us that he is. In this fascinating book, David Lavery explores Joss's artistic development, juxtaposing his findings with the work of Harold Gruber, whose field is the nature of creativity. What were the forces and influences that informed Joss as an innovator capable of such a body of quirky, beloved work, versus those that produced a skilled, more "commercial" director such as Michael Bay? David begins at the beginning – Joss's boyhood – and tracks the elusive "X" factor with a keen scholar's eye. The result, this book, is a must-have for anyone who is interested either in the matter of Whedon or the artistic life, or both.

I met David Lavery and Rhonda Wilcox, the father and mother of Buffy Studies, at the first Slayage Conference in Nashville, in 2004. As one of the few attending non-academicians, I was moved to tears by the rigour and brilliance of hundreds of Buffy scholars presenting papers and holding erudite discussions of the show I loved above all others. David and Rhonda have become my friends, and through them, I have met many of the authors of the vast scholarly canon about Joss and his work. Because of our association, I have joined the ranks of academia and now teach at two universities. I look forward to presenting this book to my students. It's an irreverent and dead-on case study of a brilliant auteur who has changed the shape of the pop-culture landscape, And if that weren't enough, it's a great, fun read.

Astronauts, definitely.

Nancy Holder, author of *Buffy: The Making of a Slayer*, co-author of *The Watcher's Guides*, and Bram Stoker Award-winning novelist