



For many fan/scholars and scholar/fans worldwide, the proclamation of a popular t-shirt that “Joss Whedon is My Master Now” was already an oath of allegiance before the Whedon Spring of 2012. After establishing himself as a premier cult creator, the man who gave us not only great television (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, *Dollhouse*) but web series (*Dr. Horrible’s Sing-along Blog*) and comic books (*Fray*, *Buffy Season Eight*, *Astonishing X-Men*) and the most studied figure in popular culture (over thirty critical and scholarly books,

Joss Whedon, A Creative Portrait



From *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to Marvel's *The Avengers*

David Lavery

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hundreds of essays, a dozen academic conferences), Whedon finally became, with the spring 2012 release of the horror flick *The Cabin in the Woods* and box office sensation *The Avengers*, the filmmaker he long dreamed of being.

Drawing on a wide variety of sources and making use of psychologist Howard Gruber's insights into the nature of the creative process, *Joss, A Creative Portrait* offers the first intellectual biography of Whedon, tracking his career arc from activated fan boy to film studies

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major, third generation television writer, successful script doctor, innovative TV auteur, beloved cult icon, sought-after collaborator, and now major filmmaker. Film and television scholar David Lavery, co-founder of the Whedon Studies Association and co-editor of its journal *Slayage*, tracks Whedon's multi-faceted magic from its source—the early influences of parents and teachers, comics, books, movies, collaborators—to its artistic incarnations.

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In which two Wesleyan alumni square off, caveman vs. astronaut, for the future of the imagination.

Introduction—From the Mind of Joss

Whedon. An overview of the book's approach, like Whedon's work a hybrid, a fusion of Howard Gruber's case study method for understanding the nature of the creative process with a grounded-in-television neo-auteurism.



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Part I. Apprentice

1—Television Son. In which the offspring of two generations of television writers, John Whedon and Tom Whedon, enters this dimension.

2—Fan Boy. In which the young Joss Whedon grows up under a variety of high and popular cultural influences.

3—Film Studies Major. In which a creator-in-the-making goes to college and falls under the influence of the movies and professors like Jeanine Basinger and Richard Slotkin.



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4—Television Writer. In which the college grad goes West in hope of realizing his dream of becoming a filmmaker and discovers television.

5—*Buffy Goes to the Movies.* In which his first film script (and greatest creation) is ruined by others and disillusionment sets in.

6—Script Doctor/Screenwriter. In which Whedon tries his hand (with some success) at saving the work of others and writing for the movies.



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Part II. Creator

7—*Buffy Does Television.* In which the F. Scott Fitzgerald "no second acts" maxim is proven false and a botched movie becomes a TV masterpiece.

8—*Creator of Angel and Firefly.* In which the Whedonverses expand and the pains of cancellation are known.

9—*Creator of Serenity.* In which a cancelled, cult television series becomes a movie.

10—*Visiting the Dollhouse.* In which yet another promising Whedon television series proves both controversial and cancellable.



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11—Not Making Wonder Woman. In which Whedon fails at his potentially greatest challenge.

12—Networks of Enterprise. Collaborating.

In which Whedon plays well with others, directing other people's shows and writing a movie (*The Cabin in the Woods*) directed by another. **Comic Book Author.** In which a childhood dream comes true as the comic book geek authors such comics as *Fray*, *Astonishing X-Men*, and *Buffy Season Eight*. **Working Outside the System.** In which Whedon, in pursuit of a new business model, goes independent to create the web series *Dr.*



Horrible's Sing-Along Blog, film a homemade Shakespeare adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and establish a micro-studio.

13—*The Avengers*. In which Whedon finally has the opportunity to make a blockbuster, smashes box office records, and realizes a childhood dream.

14—*Joss Whedon, Auteur*. In which Whedon's writing and directing come into clear focus in an examination of his major stylistic and thematic signatures.

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Epilogue

"You think you know, what you are, what's to come. You haven't even begun." In which speculations are offered about the future of Joss Whedon.

Appendix A: [A Joss Whedon Filmography](#)

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Appendix C: [A Joss Whedon Timeline](#)

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