



## Joss Whedon: The Biography

*Amy Pascale , Nathan Fillion (Foreword)*

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From the cult favorite *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which netted four million viewers per episode, to the summer blockbuster *The Avengers*, which amassed a box office of \$1.5 billion, Joss Whedon has made a name for himself in Hollywood for his penchant for telling meaningful, personal tales about love, death, and redemption even against the most dramatic and larger-than-life backdrops.

This biography follows his development from a creative child and teenager who spent years away from his family at an elite English public school, through his early successes—which often turned into frustrating heartbreak in both television (*Roseanne*) and film (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*)—to his breakout turn as the creator, writer, and director of the *Buffy* television series.

Extensive, original interviews with Whedon's family, friends, collaborators, and stars—and with the man himself—offer candid, behind-the-scenes accounts of the making of groundbreaking series such as *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, and *Dollhouse*, as well as new stories about his work with Pixar writers and animators during the creation of *Toy Story*. Most importantly, however, these conversations present an intimate and revealing portrait of a man whose creativity and storytelling ability have manifested themselves in comics, online media, television, and film.

## Joss Whedon: The Biography Details

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# From Reader Review Joss Whedon: The Biography for online ebook

## Annie says

Somewhere between 3.5 and 4 Stars

Since this is the first biography I have ever read, I feel like I have to be cautious with reviewing this, since I can't compare it to other books of this genre.

I think this book was, for someone who didn't know all of Joss Whedon's work, really, really great. It gave a good and wide overview of all of his projects, but to those projects of him I knew, like *Firefly*, *The Avengers* or *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, I didn't get to know more than I already knew. So, I think for a hardcore fan of Joss Whedon, this biography could be a bit problematic, since I don't believe they would get much more information than they might already have.

In addition, I wished there would have been more about Joss Whedon as a person himself. He is such an extraordinary person with a unique mind that I missed reading more about his thoughts and emotions and everything, but I guess that's just a general problem with biographies.

Overall, as a "casual" fan of Joss Whedon, this book was great to get to know him and his work better, but I wouldn't recommend it to a hardcore fan who wants to learn new things about him.

But still, read it, because, well, it's Joss Whedon.

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## Allen Adams says

<http://www.themaineedge.com/buzz/acro...>

Few people have had the sort of impact on the pop culture landscape that Joss Whedon has brought to bear over the past two decades. From “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” to “The Avengers,” Whedon is one of the most formidable – and most beloved - figures in entertainment.

His story unfolds in a new biography, the aptly named “Joss Whedon: A Biography”. Writer Amy Pascale has engaged in exhaustive research, engaging in in-depth conversations with people from all aspects of Whedon’s life, up to and including the man himself.

Pascale unpacks Whedon’s life from its beginnings. A creative and somewhat callow youth, Whedon was greatly influenced by his mother (a feminist educator) and father (a television writer) alike. His childhood was spent surrounded by artists and intellectuals. He also spent a few years attending an honest-to-goodness English boarding school before attending Wesleyan University in Connecticut. It was at Wesleyan that he encountered Jeanine Basinger, a film studies professor who would serve as a muse and mentor for Whedon for many years to come.

From there it was off to Hollywood, where he worked as a writer for a number of sitcoms – “Roseanne” chief among them. Then came his screenplay for the film “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” along with various others and assorted script doctoring gigs.

But it was the chance to revisit Buffy that served as the Big Bang moment that would lead to the inception of the “Whedonverse.” From there, Whedon rocketed to prominence. “Buffy” begat “Angel.” In turn, those

shows led to “Firefly” and “Dollhouse.” Before you know it, Whedon is helming “The Avengers.” All the while, a rabid and fiercely loyal fan base was building all over the world thanks to the advent of the internet – a fan base that continues to grow to this day.

Perhaps it’s unfair, but the biggest criticism of this book has nothing to do with the author (who has clearly done her homework) or the subject (Whedon’s impact on popular culture more than warrants biographical exploration). In truth, the largest issue with “Joss Whedon” is simply the lack of real conflict. The man has by all accounts lived an exceptionally happy life. By no means is this a bad thing, but the absence of struggle reduces the book’s impact somewhat.

Whedon has been wildly successful in his personal life; what early struggles he had sprang from not having his voice heard in various television writers’ rooms and directors taking his screenplays in different directions – problems many truly struggling writers would love to have. Yes, he had TV shows get cancelled before their time – “Firefly” springs immediately to mind - but even those cancellations inspired the sort of fan fervor that the medium had never really seen. He was hit hard by the Writer’s Guild strike – only to use that down time to create a beloved internet property in “Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog.” And when his genre-flipping film “Cabin in the Woods” got delayed, his consolation prize turned out to be the chance to write and direct the third-highest grossing film in box office history.

All this plus a happy, healthy marriage and loving family, a loyal and ever-expanding cadre of acting and writing acolytes and perhaps the most fervent fan base of any TV/film writer in the 21st century. No doubt, Joss Whedon has had some problems – and we see glimpses during his formative years – but even then, he had loving and supportive parents and teachers alongside him at almost every turn.

But you can’t fault someone for having a great life. And there’s no doubt that Whedon is in many ways a fascinating subject. While Pascale definitely mines some wonderful stuff from Whedon himself, the book shines brightest when she speaks to those who have worked closest with Whedon. Without fail, everyone who has spent time in Whedon’s orbit offers heartfelt praise for the man. Of particular note are his fellow writers – particularly those who worked with him on “Buffy.” And mention must be made of actor Nathan Fillion, who worked with Whedon on “Firefly” and his adaptation of “Much Ado About Nothing.” Fillion’s affection and respect for Whedon is so in-depth and far-reaching that some of his thoughts actually wound up becoming the book’s foreword.

Hardcore Whedon fans might not find anything new here, but the Whedonverse dilettantes are likely to find some fascinating revelations in “Joss Whedon: A Biography.” Its main reward is the behind-the-scenes glimpse it offers; a look at someone who has so clearly found a mainline connection to the zeitgeist.

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## Trike says

I thought this biography was just okay. I don't do hero-worship of any kind, because no one -- and I literally mean no one -- is ever *that good*. That said, I do like quite a lot of what Whedon has done. I enjoy the way he crafts stories, I agree with his general outlook on life, I've liked most of the TV shows he's created and both films he's directed.

But even as a casual fan, I already knew most of the stuff in this book. There are no real revelations here, aside from his close ties to a former teacher. On that level, the book is a disappointment.

It's well-written, I'll give it that, but at the end of the book in her acknowledgements, author Pascale mentions she thought they wanted her to write a magazine article about Whedon and that is exactly what this strikes me as: a 500-page magazine article.

This is not a warts-and-all book. It's breezy and mostly surface stuff. While it is interesting to see how certain movies came together or fell apart, the interest is mild rather than intense. Disagreements are quickly swept away as if they were no matter.

It was also far less humorous than I would have expected. The humor is there in the interviews, but it's not expressed well. If you weren't already familiar with these people, you'd have no idea when they were being ironic or arch or merely jesting. That's a job for the author, to help underscore the nuance, to call out for the unfamiliar reader when an interviewee was being facetious.

If you need all this information in one place, this is the book for you. But something Whedon said about a fellow student in college applies to this book, "This guy's a puddle."

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## **Charity says**

Any Whedon fanatic may tell you they know everything there is to know about the man and the world he created. This book might just teach them something new. While large portions were details that most fans will be familiar with, there was enough new information that it made the read worthwhile. The book does seem to become more of a history of Mutant Enemy near the middle, as the focus drifts towards the work and less towards Whedon himself. In the end, I am just grateful it wasn't an autobiography as that would mean Whedon would have to murder someone to stay true to his craft.

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## **Tammy Subia says**

I received an ARC of this title from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Do I need a synopsis for this? It's a biography on Joss Whedon, creator of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and so many other amazing pieces of entertainment. I've been trying to figure out how to write this review, because I'm afraid it's going to come out as more of a review of Joss Whedon's life than it is a review of the author's book. I guess I've never reviewed a biography before.

Well, first let me just say that this book was pretty long, and yet I still would have happily kept reading forever. The author did an excellent job of keeping a narrative going throughout the book. She devoted separate chapters to separate projects of Joss's, while also keeping things chronological even though he hopped from one project to the next and back again. I almost felt like I was reading a fictional story, with character development, foreshadowing, conflict, tension, and resolutions. I also think the author did a great job of piecing together many different people's thoughts while working on various projects in order to give the reader a complete idea of what it was like to be there with Joss at that time.

So basically I'm saying that this biography was excellent. Excellent excellent excellent. I was fascinated the entire time...

And that, of course, is why I feel like I should be reviewing Joss the person rather than this actual book. I don't want to take away anything from the wonderful job the author has done, but I obviously wouldn't have been so invested in reading a biography if I wasn't so obsessed with its subject. Joss Whedon has been probably my biggest hero for a really long time, in the sense that I admire his work--both as a consumer of it for entertainment, and as a creator myself.

While he writes scripts and I write novels, I feel like the fundamentals of storytelling are the same. And I found so much inspiration in hearing exactly how Joss creates his stories. One tidbit I especially enjoyed was how he talks about writing episodes of *Buffy*. While the show is told in a very monster-of-the-week format, especially in earlier seasons, Joss was adamant about keeping the conflict of each episode grounded in the emotional conflicts of the characters. He always asked himself and his other writers, "But what's the *Buffy* of it?" I think I need to write this on the top of my dry-erase board when I'm making notes for a novel, perhaps substituting "*Buffy*" with my own MC's name. Or then again, perhaps not!

I know I'm not the first person to say this about him, but another thing I really admire about Joss is the way he cultivates his own family of creative and talented people, keeping them close around him. If you watch his shows, it's obvious that he uses a lot of the same actors for many different projects, but he also uses the same writers, etc. I can understand why he does this, and I also feel most comfortable when I'm around other creative people. While I can't cast my friends in TV shows, I appreciate how Joss does this. It is also interesting how he has created his own family, while he often talks about that idea as being a big theme in his shows. And the fact that his "family" gathers at his house to give Shakespeare readings just makes my heart swell a little bit.

I also feel like I share so many personal beliefs with Joss, about humanity, feminism, religion...and it was great getting to read his thoughts on the subjects and about how his beliefs have shaped his work. I already knew that he was an atheist, but I found myself majorly connecting with him during moments of this book, especially whenever he takes issue with the idea that you need to have religion in order to have a sense of morality.

There are countless other reasons I could give for why I pretty much worship Joss Whedon, but I think maybe I'll save that for a separate post. I'm just going to end this with a few Joss quotes I found in this book that really kind of hit me in the gut.

"Very often you'll be in a group and you'll discover that every single person in it feels like they're the one on the perimeter."

"...we, all of us, are alone in our own minds, and I was very much aware of that from the very beginning of my life. Loneliness and aloneness--which are different things--are very much...[among the] main things I focus on in my work."

"It made me realize...that every 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."

"I believe the only reality is how we treat each other. The morality comes from the absence of any grander scheme, not from the presence of any grander scheme."

"The enemy of humanism is not faith. The enemy of humanism is hate, is fear, is ignorance, is the darker part of man that is in every humanist, every person in the world. That is what we have to fight. Faith is something we have to embrace. Faith in God means believing absolutely in something with no proof whatsoever. Faith

in humanity means believing absolutely in something with a huge amount of proof to the contrary. We are the true believers."

And finally, a quote from Amy Pascale that I wholeheartedly agree with:

"When I say that Joss Whedon changed my life, I'm not being hyperbolic. If anything, it seems inadequate to say that he changed it only once."

(Check out this review and others on my blog at <http://tammywritesya.blogspot.com>.)

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## **Bunny says**

### **Numfar! Do the dance of a job well done!**

When I was approved for the ARC of this book from Netgalley, it would be a drastic understatement to say I was excited. I have been a worshipper at the feet of the Whedon for a very long time now, and I was ready to throw the book I was reading aside and dive headfirst into this. I expected to finish it in hours, not days.

And then in the "You're approved!" e-mail, I saw *We do ask that you hold your review until the book's publication month.*

I couldn't read it right away. Having to wait to post a review, I would lose any thoughts and feelings I'd once had. If I wrote the review then and there, and waited to post it, reading it back over I'd probably want to adjust it, and remove the spontaneity.

### **Why god, why?!?!?**

Needless to say, July 31st I dived back in. And killed my phone two times a day being absorbed into the story of Joss Whedon.

I'll be the first to admit, I am super biased to the subject matter. I like to joke that I was a fan of Joss Whedon before I even knew I was a fan. I was a big fan of the first Toy Story, so finding out he'd been involved in that process, bam. Early Joss fan.

Then I found out his father wrote for the Golden Girls. HUGE fan of the Golden Girls growing up. I've always been a Whedon fan! Grandfather wrote for what?! Jesus, that's my entire Nick at Nite childhood!

Cut to a few years ago, reading a book about Sesame Street, and Captain Kangaroo. Guess whose name appears one more time.

And I was one of those 10 people who adored the movie version of Buffy.

Then in this book, I actually find out which episodes of Roseanne were written by Joss himself, one of which being one of my favorites, the episode where Darlene has to write a poem and read it for class.

Yeah. I'm a three generation Whedon fan. I apparently was destined to fall in love with a spunky blonde with a pointy stick, and follow her creator through hell and cancellation.

I did go into the book hesitant, though. The trouble with biographies is the same trouble Joss had when making *Serenity*. The biggest draw will be the people who are already invested. Those of us who have followed Joss, who railed against the WB, railed against Fox, took part in the campaigns. We are the readers.

But what about everyone else? What about the people who see this book while passing their eyes over a shelf full of biographies, and say, "Who's this guy? Oh, *The Avengers*? Yeah, that movie kicked ass. Okay, I'll read it." Will this biography hold the interest of someone who's never heard the term Browncoat?

I think it will.

This book is jam packed with information, without being heavy. You get bits from every aspect of his life without feeling like you're stuck in one part. The origin story (as it were) is clean, and succinct. Grandparents, parents, siblings, born. School, comics, England. Bam bam bam. And plenty of good Jossy soundbites in between.

And really, I read this for the Jossy soundbites. I've read at least half of the big quotes in this book, but some of them I haven't read in 10 years, and getting a refresher was like talking to an old friend. Reminding myself why I follow this man to every new project. I even learned things I hadn't known, and that was fantastic.

I can never have enough lip service to *Buffy*, it is my original fandom, my original love. I think the portions dedicated to that time on the show are well fleshed out. Maybe I'm projecting, but I think you can really tell the author's preferences, likes and dislikes, regarding the show. Much attention is given to the first three seasons, then she just...stops describing. Barely anything about seasons 4 and 5, other than talking about The Gift.

And again, maybe projecting a tad, but I think she and I have the exact same opinions about season 6. I was very interested to see that she mentioned the extreme fan....dislike....for Marti Noxon. Not that I'm guilty of that or anything. ::cough::

Ms. Pascale was a Bronzer, and the cast and crew did frequent that board a lot. But as someone who found her own family via an online Buffy forum, just a tiny mention of the other Buffy forums online would've been nice? I know we never got a visit from Joss (well, that he made himself known, anyway), but still. AOL Buffy boards. Hi. ::waves::

We did find who we believed to be Tim Minear once. I don't know if anyone had the balls to say hi to him, though.

Speaking of. I was interested to see if she would mention any of the tensions regarding the Buffy and Angel set. I've heard rumors, two of which were definitely substantiated. And those were the ones talked about, though it feels like they were greatly sandpapered over. The Jeff Pruitt battle, for one, and what was done to Charisma Carpenter.

I'm glad they're included, and I wasn't expecting (or wanting) Joss to be dragged through the dirt. But still.



Kind of felt like the edges were sanded a bit heavily.

Last thing: I know someone mentioned in the acknowledgements. I promptly ran to her Facebook page to crow about it. Because I am a nerd who reads the acknowledgements.

I cannot say enough how pleased I was by this book. Pleased enough to get a little emotional at times, remembering how much being a fan of his has given me over the years. I will be buying this book, and it will have a good spot on my bookshelf.

Again, though. I am very biased.

(Note: Review also posted to my Tumblr account)

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## Jennifer says

During the course of her new biography on Joss Whedon, the creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and director of *The Avengers*, author Amy Pascale mentions several times one of the iconic t-shirts of the Whedon fandom, a riff on a line of Darth Vader's that reads simply: **Joss Whedon is my master now**. I own the t-shirt, but Pascale has clearly bought into the lifestyle. Her *Joss Whedon: A Biography* may as well have been subtitled *Pascale's Panegyric*, and seems more like a PR exercise automatically greenlit once *The Avengers* gross clicked over the billion dollar mark than an actual attempt to chronicle the eponymous subject's life.

Pascale, a director at MTV and cofounder of the semi-defunct pop-culture site PopGurls, presents a functional enough recitation of the facts of Whedon's life from his upbringing by his famously feminist mother to his work launching Marvel's 2013 television tie-in *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, but as a biography her book reads more like an annotated IMDB listing interpolated with quotations lifted from podcasts, Comic-Con panels, and *Entertainment Weekly* interviews. Only a trace amount of personal detail appears, so any fan of her subject's work will know most, if not all, of the trivia on parade here, and any nonfan will hardly be wooed by her workmanlike prose or her inability to treat Whedon as a complex person rather than just as a poster child for Geek Success.

The best part of Pascale's book is the chance it affords to relive your own experiences with Whedon's work: the campy delight of the first season of *Buffy*, the heartbreak over the cancellation of *Firefly*, the absolute fangirl SQUEE moment of realization that you didn't need to worry about *The Avengers* sucking because Joss Whedon – JOSS WHEDON – would have his hands on the reigns. Unfortunately, that trip down memory lane also serves to highlight the book's utter unwillingness or inability to synthesize the work and the man and draw any thematic conclusions. The writer isn't always his text, but the text is always the writer, and Pascale avoids making any but the most obvious connections, a grave error in a book about a man whose work frequently emphasizes that our stories are what make us who we are.

In the end, the real problem with *Joss Whedon: The Biography* is that it's not *Joss Whedon: The Autobiography*, and that it's the student taking us on the tour rather than the master. Whedon only turns fifty this year and his professional plate is fuller than ever, which means he's unlikely to get reflective and present us with the memoir both he and his audience deserve for another couple of decades at least. When he does – if he does – I and the other acolytes will be waiting.

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## Squeasel says

This is not a review. It is, I suppose, a comment that I apparently feel compelled to make. It is entirely unhelpful to those considering reading this book, to whom I'd say read the damn thing already because Joss Whedon is the best thing ever. He's like Sara Crewe (A Little Princess) in that he gives us the stories we need to reframe our narratives in the dark times, and he's like Santa Claus except without the kinda creepy stalker parts. It's just nice to know he exists (Joss Whedon that is, not Santa Claus) and reading this book will, if nothing else, remind you that he ACTUALLY DOES exist. (Although now that I've said that, a sudden, horrid little doubt crept in - which I am going to vehemently ignore because I can live in a world without Santa and the sky bully being real but not, I think, without Joss Whedon.)

You can probably see by now that this isn't really a book review, so I'll just get to the useless comment I felt compelled to make. Anyone who isn't insane about BTVS should refrain from reading the rest of this and just go buy the book or rewatch Dr. Horrible or something. Continuing to read this will only irritate you and make me look really loony.

I heart Joss Whedon. (That's not the comment. Here's the comment. ) I personally feel that season 6 of Buffy is the best season of network tv I've ever watched (and rewatched, and rewatched) and still my favorite even adding in HBO etc.

(I am, in saying this, choosing to pretend that a few minutes of season 6 episode 19 (Seeing Red) is some sort of horrible shared hallucination that didn't actually happen because I felt personally betrayed by what I believe was the writers breaking character for like the first time ever, in the worst of ways, to set up for season 7.)

I apparently felt compelled to say this because of how the author of this bio sort of implies that pretty much everyone (fans) disliked the directions season 6 went and had a big issue with Marti Noxon and Joss Whedon regarding the darkness. I freaking LOVED the darkness and that they actually went there. That it went so far beyond "reset" tv, that it wasn't just wrapping up the soul crushing and erasing nothingness that the meaninglessness of life sometimes leaves you with in a nice little bow and a kiss for your booboo after maybe "a very special" 3 episode arc and then going right back to jolly happiness. I could go on forever about this.

I don't know. Maybe it's just me.

But the thing about Joss Whedon and stuff like season 6 of BTVS is that it's one of the few (non-book) things out there that you can find and think "it's NOT just me."

The author did say that due to fan messageboards chastising the writers for "the darkness," they apparently pulled it back a bit as the season was progressing. If true, interesting in that I really wish I could see what it was they were originally going to do. Would I have somehow loved it EVEN MORE?

So yeah, I've outed myself as a rabid BTVS season 6 fan who felt compelled to Yawp in dissent to this bio author's clear dislike of season 6 without her actually, you know, coming out and saying it's her opinion. She did this a few times in the book at various points, but always disguised it a bit with the "fans tended to feel/agree that... blahblahblah" which I found a bit judgy and disappointing I suppose, and for me this is

where I lost willing suspension of disbelief. ok I know it's a biography and so WSoD doesn't so much apply, but I suppose that's where I got a bit tetchy and prickly. No one treats BTVS season 6 like a red-headed stepchild on MY WATCH!

And yes, I see you there, backing away smiling nervously, you people who didn't know this about me, because mainly I keep quietly to myself. Don't worry, I'm not going to suddenly start rabidly babbling about anything other than this. I don't even know why this - season 6 can & does speak for itself, more eloquently than I can.

I've lost steam - just had to clean up more cat vomit -shutting up now.

(I do wonder what these reviews by obviously deranged rabid fans of JW -I include myself- must seem like to a biography-browser who sort of recognizes Whedon's name but that's about it. Less likely to read because of it, or more likely?)

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## **Ian Wood says**

This is the complete review as it appears at my blog dedicated to reading, writing (no 'rithmatic!), movies, & TV. Blog reviews often contain links which are not reproduced here, nor will updates or modifications to the blog review be replicated here. Graphic and children's novels reviewed on the blog will generally have some images from the book's interior, which are not reproduced here.

Note that I don't really do stars. To me a novel is either worth reading or it isn't. I can't rate a novel three-fifths worth reading! The only reason I've relented and started putting stars up there is to credit the good ones, which were being unfairly uncredited. So, all you'll ever see from me is a five-star or a one-star (since no stars isn't a rating, unfortunately).

I rated this novel **WORTHY!**

I am not one of the Joss Whedon groupies. I respect his abilities, but while I loved the Buffy movie, I detested the TV series. I liked Dollhouse and Firefly, and I loved the Avengers movie, so you could say I'm a fan, but definitely not a fanboi. That's how you know that when I recommend this biography, I'm not gushing mindlessly, but considering it rather more dispassionately than many reviewers might.

The biography (which contains no photographs - not in the advance review copy anyway) covers Whedon's life from youth to present (at least present as defined by when the book was written), and it's written by someone who is definitely a fangirl, so yes there's some gushing, but it's kept in check, and it never overrides the facts, of which there are many from a diversity of sources.

These sources include writers and producers who worked with Whedon on his TV shows, such as David Grunewald and Tim Mi near, actors from those shows, such as Anthony Head and Sarah Geller, and actors from The Avengers, along with a host of others. The list occupies a whole paragraph in the acknowledgments, and features Whedon's wife, Kai Cole, and of course, Whedon himself.

The biography makes very good reading, and fills in a lot of details surrounding his rise to success, and the struggle he had to get there. I'm not someone who really cares that much about the details of his personal life

(although this book has plenty of those). As a writer myself, I'm much more interested in his writing career. For me the mechanics of how he goes about this is what was the most engrossing to me: where he came up with his ideas, how he got them into a format that could be filmed, how he made it happen on the small and the large screen.

I would have happily read much, much more about that than this book contains, but then it would probably have been really boring to other readers, so be comforted that Pascale strikes a nice balance between the personal and the professional in telling this story. You will learn about his imperfect childhood, his stint in Britain, his school experiences, his choice between acting and writing when he was choosing a college, and how he chose Wesleyan.

From there on out it seems like his story doesn't need telling, but if you think that, then there's still a lot you'll miss. Pascale talks in detail about his work in TV and the struggles he had there in trying to find a balance he could live with between his vision, and the rather short-sighted if not bizarre demands of Fox TV. The details cover Buffy, Angel, Firefly, Dollhouse, and Agents of Shield. His movies are also covered, including the original Buffy movie, Toy Story, The Cabin in the Woods, Much Ado about Nothing, The Avengers, and a mention of the Avengers sequel, the Age of Ultron, the notes for which were begun over a pint and some fish and chips in a Brit pub.

All in all this turned out to be everything I wanted when I picked it up, and I was completely satisfied with it!

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### **Jessica says**

I have been a lifelong Whedon fan, having discovered Buffy the Vampire Slayer when I was eight years old, and I have devoured everything he has ever created since then with passionate ardour. So, a typical Joss fan.

This biography was great. It's well written and interesting, and having such a compelling subject is a great help. Learning about how Joss grew up, how he got to be the incredible visionary he is today, was both inspirational and demoralizing. I loved the behind the scenes peaks at shows that I have loved for a long time. The author is very even-handed as well, not painting Joss as a god but as a man who sometimes makes questionable decisions. Knowing that Joss Whedon can also be super petty at times made me feel more at ease with my own less than perfect moments.

A must read for anyone who loves a good biography, as well as, of course, any Joss Whedon fans out there.

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### **Emily says**

Truly, a must-read for fans. The author laid it out nicely, from his childhood to his early days as a script doctor in Hollywood right up to Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.

This is a great time for a bio to be written as, even though his story isn't over, what has happened so far gave the book a happy ending. The author sees Joss through frustration and aborted projects to triumphs and the recognition he's always deserved.

People who love his shows and movies will be excited about the number of actors the author interviewed for the book-Nathan Fillion was probably quoted the most. And wonderful tidbits from the man himself abound. Interesting and well-written, this was one of the most enjoyable biographies I've read.

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## Aubrey says

How does one go about writing a review on said book (taps fingers on chin). Joss Whedon has, without sounding like an obsessed fan (though I am), been the most influential on my life, with regards to inspiring me to do what it is I want to do creatively. He is my favorite writer. For writers tell their stories in different mediums (though the most recognized writers tend to be of books). Do a search for best writers and it will only pull up links to authors, just one of the many forms writers come in. Trust me, I tried. Joss broke those bounds and really was the first ever writer of film to get such a fan base as a writer, not as a celebrity, but a damn good writer and storyteller. Like mentioned in the book, fans didn't want his autograph, they wanted to pick his brain and bond over his well crafted stories. And everything I read of his character and how he treats others, his motivations, are proof as to why he is so well supported.

This book is like a friend talking to me about a friend. I want to prop it up on my desk or wall indefinitely, as a constant reminder to achieve, to be kind, to stand up for what you believe in, and be only you until the end. Unfortunately, my cat threw up on this brand new book in the midst of my reading it. Desperate to know more, I managed to salvage it because Joss is the kind of guy you continue reading even with vomit residue on the tops of pages.

For me, it started with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. A show, likely seen by some as simply a teen only appealing show. And, as I was a teen at the time, I was mesmerized by the writing, his rather famously unique way with dialogue and understanding of what he wants to tell. He gave me (along with my other favorites: Ellen Ripley and Sarah Connor) a strong female character to admire. Someone who wasn't perfect, who screwed up but never gave up. Recently I watched an interview with Stephanie Meyer. Having not been a fan of her storytelling and wanting to understand her more so I knew why I wasn't, she gave me that answer when she responded to the question of how she feels about the flack she got for creating a meek female character for little girls to admire. She responded saying that we shouldn't admire fictional characters because they're 'just fiction.' That's where I realized our disconnect. For I think we should. We should take from wherever there is good, fictional or not, and draw from it to improve ourselves as people. And if written well, fictional characters are mimicked after reality, it's why we are able to relate.

From there it went on to all of his other works where he tapped into some of my favorite things, like horror - as a fresh take with *Cabin in the Woods*, comics with *The Avengers*, and even going with the unexpected with things like *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*. But the coolest part of this book, done so well by Amy Pascale and with a sincerely sweet forward by Nathan Fillion, was understanding how his life has influenced his writing. How he worked, how he thought about things, what role he really played, but how things in his life lead to certain characters, stories, and mediums of which he told in. He takes who he is and fits it in his work with such charm, authenticity and wit. He is a true original.

If you are a fan of his work, then this is a book to pick up. It's hard not to walk away with your jaw dropped and heart full.

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## **Judy says**

I am not generally a biography kind of girl. However, that being said, I am a huge geek at heart and let's face it, Joss Whedon knows exactly how to speak right to us geeky type people; probably because he himself is one. So when I saw this book on Netgalley, I just had to try to get it. I was thrilled when I was accepted.

Since I don't read many (any) biographies, I honestly can't tell how it stacks up to others of its genre. I can say that reading about Joss Whedon's life, from a history of his grandfather and father all the way up to his recent success with the Avenger's movie was done in such a way, that I felt like I really got to understand what drives him. The stories, quotes and interviews with his friends, family and co-workers shared the many sides of the man. It was told in such a way that it was very easy to follow his journey to the top of the geek mountain. I learned so many interesting things, and though some myths were debunked, finding out others just made him more interesting.

As a fan, I thought I knew quite a bit about him. I learned that what I did accurately know, was just the surface. After reading about the struggles and obstacles throughout his career, it gives his successes and victories that much more meaning. Reading this biography has simply made me a bigger fan. I can't imagine telling the story of a world-class storyteller would be easy, but Amy Pascale did it with grace and aplomb. This was a fantastic read, worthy of 4 stars.

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## **Diane Wilkes says**

I think I'm the perfect audience for this book: I am a massive Whedon fan but not much of a fan-girl. In other words, I have watched most of his movies and television shows (some repeatedly), have visited the Whedonverse website on occasion, and have read quite a bit about certain of his productions. Yet I am not someone who scavenges the web for every detail about Joss Whedon and there was much I didn't know and was at least moderately interested in discovering.

One of the criticisms I've seen of Pascale's biography is that she hasn't uncovered new ground, but much of it was new to me. So why did I find the book so ultimately disappointing? It's certainly thoroughly researched and simple to follow; Pascale structures the book in a linear manner, offering a bit on each of Whedon's creative endeavors, of which there are many. Unfortunately, it is heavy on factoids but remarkably weak on insights, a relatively massive tome of diligent, factual research. Taking into consideration its subject—someone who is personal, witty and thought-provoking, and who brings an abundance of unique perspectives to his work—this book is incredibly disappointing.

Still, the information itself is often interesting, though told in a rote manner. (My favorite tidbit: before working in television, one of Whedon's fun creative projects was a musical based on Oliver North that used the music from Oliver.) No doubt, said I to myself, the author is relying solely on research, and doesn't have the access for unique or profound insights. At least, that's what I thought until the end of the book, in which her acknowledgments indicate numerous interviews with not just Whedon and his wife, but many of the principals involved in Whedon's various productions.

A good biography does not just proffer an unconscious recitation of facts, dates and figures; perhaps Pascale's access made her hesitant to offer any observations that might disappoint/anger the House of Whedon. The result is a book that seems like a very well-ordered compilation of brief and superficial articles

on Joss Whedon's life and times, all written or re-written by the same author for consistency. The subject deserves better—a memoir, perhaps?

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### **Tarrant Figlio says**

I really loved the deep inside look at TV and movie production and Whedon's experience. I am not a Whedonverse person so most of the shows and movies I have not seen. There is very little about his personal life, very few pictures. But it is an excellent dive into the How and why of why things ended when they did or never got off the ground. I suspect there are more than a few lessons for aspiring TV and filmmakers.

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