

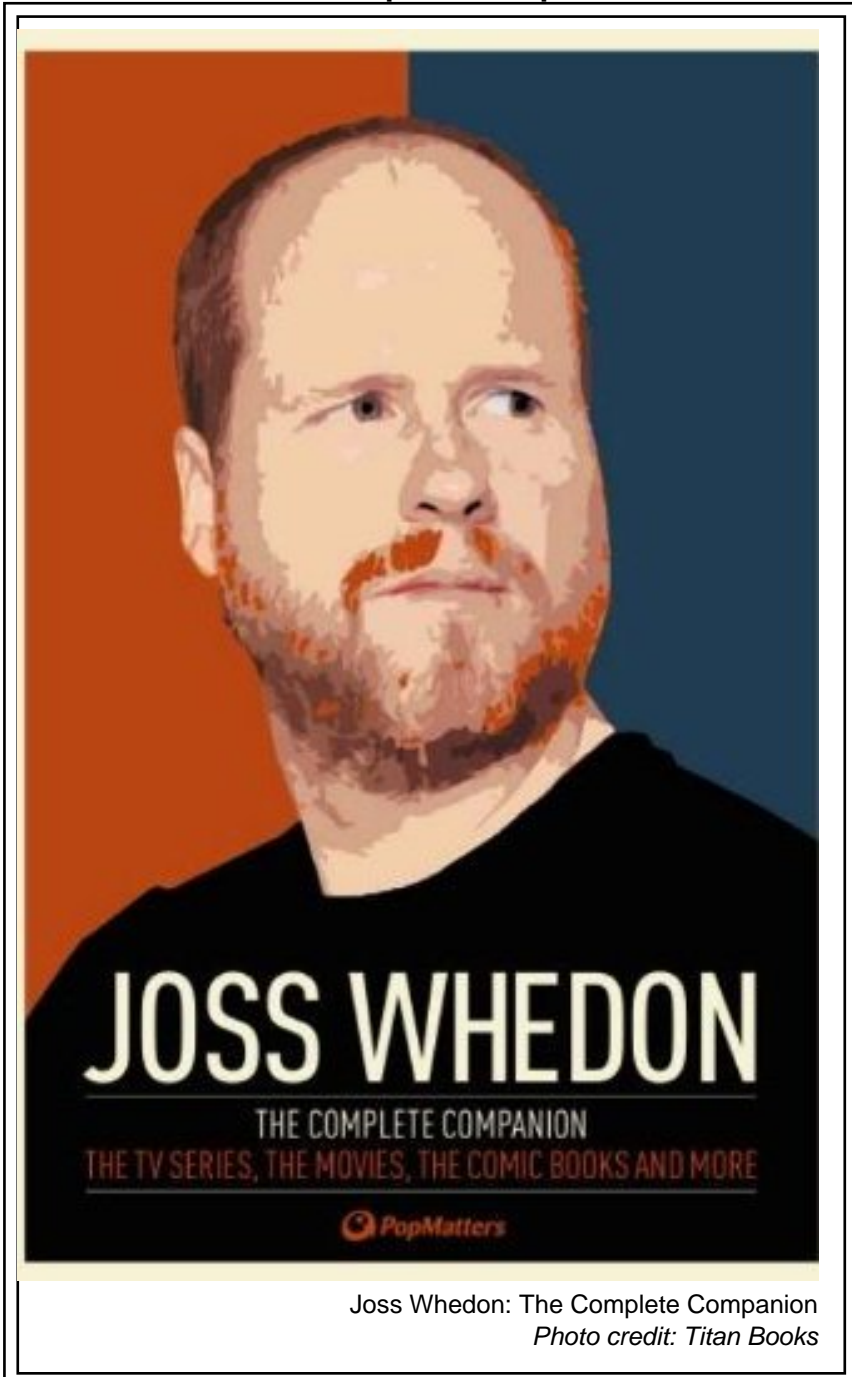
## Book Review: 'Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion,' 'Cabin in the Woods: Official Visual Companion'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 23, 2012 - 4:49pm

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CHICAGO – Yes, this critic adores Joss Whedon. What a surprise, right? With the upcoming release of his highly-anticipated take on “The Avengers” and the recent critical love for “The Cabin in the Woods” (which he co-wrote with Drew Goddard), there seems to be a recent reappréciation of the man who gave the world “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” “Angel,” “Firefly,” “Dollhouse,” and much more. I realize that I may be the fish in the barrel, but if you swim in similar waters I can’t imagine you being disappointed in the recently-released “Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion” and “Cabin in the Woods: The Official Visual Companion.” These are two of the most thoroughly entertaining, informative, and intellectually engaging film/TV books that will be released all year.

### “Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion”



500 pages of essays on most TV writers might seem a bit extreme. It’s not in the case of Joss Whedon. The fact is that his programs, mostly “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” have been analyzed down to each individual line of dialogue. How Whedon has revolutionized the role of strong women on TV, how his shows address religious themes, how they handle homosexuality, and much more are highlighted in a series of essays in this stellar book. Like most essay collections, it can be a bit hit and miss but the former far outweighs the latter and some of these will make even fans of Whedon’s appreciate him a little more completely.

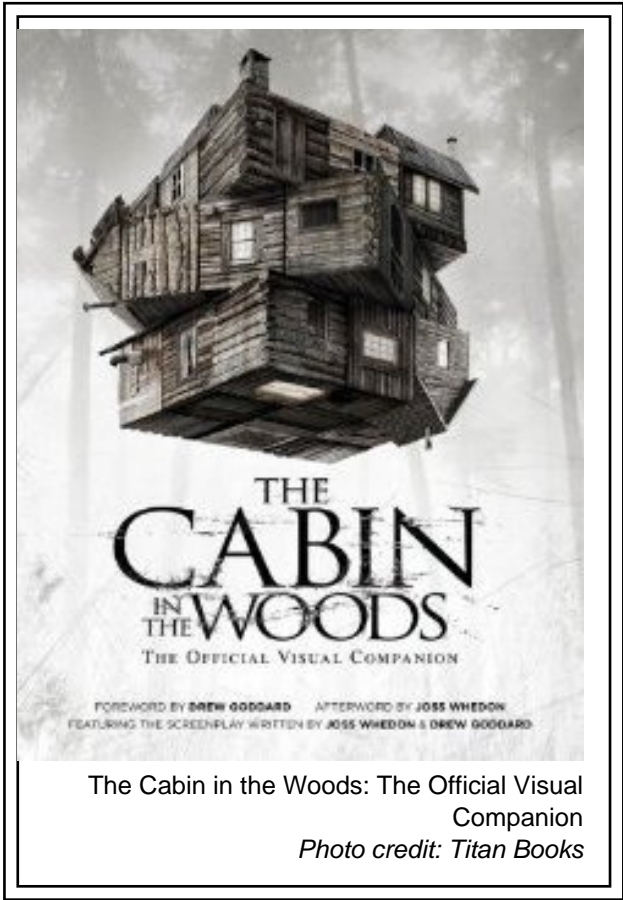
Right from the very beginning of the daunting tome, I adored “Why Cast a Spotlight on Joss Whedon?” by Robert Moore, a spectacular piece that breaks down why a cult of critical acclaim has grown around the man. It might seem simple to break it down into “He Likes What We

Like,” “He Thinks We’re Smart,” and “He Respects Women,” but Moore brilliantly extrapolates on these ideas to show not only how important they are to Whedon’s work but how influential they were on the entire TV landscape. A solid case can be made that “Buffy” is the most influential show of the last twenty years. A stronger one after you read this book.

“Buffy the Vampire Slayer” gets a large chunk of page space but it’s not alone. You’ll also find essays on “Angel” (example, “The Strength and Conviction to Lose So Relentlessly: Heroism in Angel”), “Firefly” & “Serenity” (example, “The Death of Utopia: Firefly and the Return to Human Realism in TV Sci-Fi”), “Comics” (example, “Tom Brokaw’s Coat: Joss Whedon, Astonishing X-Men and the Accessibility of History”), “Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog” (example, “The Night Billy Buddy Died: Dr. Horrible’s Tragicomic Inversion of Spider-Man”), “Dollhouse” (example, “Fantasy Is Their Business, But It Is Not Their Purpose: The Metaphor of Dollhouse”), and the Films (even as current as “Six Reasons Why Joss Whedon Is the Perfect Director for The Avengers”).

I’ve been lucky enough to read a large number of entertainment business-related books over the years. “Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion” is easily one of the most memorable and interesting. Then again, it was kind of made for me.

“The Cabin in the Woods: The Official Visual Companion”



I’ve also seen a number of visual companions in my day. Most are a joke. They are a few official stills, some previously-published interviews, fact sheet material, a synopsis, and the shooting script. They’re usually about as exciting as a novelization. I am SO happy to report that this is not the case here. This is one of the best companion books I’ve ever seen. It has interviews, an uncut script, and some AMAZING concept art, including drawings for many of the creatures barely glimpsed in the final act. You’ll want to look through this just to see all the wonderful things you miss (there’s a still of the “betting white board” that allows you to see all of the potential nightmares in a way you wouldn’t until DVD). If you love the movie (as I do), you’ll love this one too. Buy ‘em both.

*“Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion” and “The Cabin in the Woods: The Official Visual Companion” are both available in stores and online now from Titan Books.*



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