

THE MAGAZINE FOR FILM & TELEVISION EDITORS, ASSISTANTS & POST-PRODUCTION PROFESSIONALS

CINEMAEDITOR

THE AWARDS ISSUE

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Barbie
Oppenheimer
Killers of the
Flower Moon
The Holdovers
Animation
Editing

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DAILY BEAST

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A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD



Hello editors from wide and far, welcome to the latest issue of *CinemaEditor*. Lots of news to report from ACE headquarters!

Once again the double header of a live and virtual EditFest was a huge success. The live panels on “Editing Action” and “AI” were incredibly compelling and Bobbie O’Steen’s intimate interview with rockstar editor Dana Glauberman, ACE, was a true treat! Not only that, the breakout rooms with some of ACE’s top editors during the virtual session were detailed, fun and informative. Just a reminder both days of EditFest (live & virtual) are available to watch anytime on our EditFest Global site. So if you missed a day or a panel, it’s there for you to see. Thank you to Team ACE and ZOË Productions for knocking EditFest Global out of the park!


Election results are in! Welcome New York editor extraordinaire Kate Sanford, ACE, to the Board and equally extraordinary new Associate Board Member Susan Vaill, ACE. They’ll be joining the rest of us on the board: Kate Amend, ACE; Dana Glauberman, ACE; Dorian Harris, ACE; Maysie Hoy, ACE; Nancy Richardson, ACE; Tatiana S. Riegel, ACE; Stephen Rivkin, ACE; Terilyn Shropshire, ACE; and life member Richard Chew, ACE. They also will join Associate Board Members Ben Bulatao, ACE; Mark Helfrich, ACE; and John Venzon, ACE. And our officers, Secretary Lillian Benson, ACE; Treasurer Andy Seklir, ACE; Vice President Sabrina Plisco, ACE and myself. All of us at ACE are grateful to these amazing editors who generously give their time and energy to our cherished organization. Thank you Board!

This Fall the long reach of ACE has been felt worldwide, from Amsterdam where ACE friend and *The Hollywood Reporter*’s Carolyn Giardina interviewed Eddie Hamilton, ACE, (*Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning*) live

on the main stage at IBC, to Michelle Tesoro, ACE, (*The Queen’s Gambit*, *Maestro*) representing ACE at this year’s TEMPO meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark. Additionally, I was pubbing it with our ACE members in London, and Bobbie O’Steen interviewed Shelly Westerman, ACE (*Only Murders in the Building*) at NAB NY. More on all that inside.

Hard to believe that this year’s Awards season has arrived, but don’t worry, Team ACE is busy planning for our 74th annual Eddie Awards. Once again we’ll be at UCLA’s Royce Hall. On March 3, we’ll honor educator and award-winning documentary editor Kate Amend, ACE, and the one and only Walter Murch, ACE, with Career Achievement Awards. We’ll also present longtime board member and former ACE Treasurer Steve Lovejoy, ACE, with our Heritage Award.

It’s time for you to crack open this issue! Inside you’ll find interviews with the editors of some of this season’s top live-action movies, among them, Thelma Schoonmaker, ACE, on *Killers of the Flower Moon*; Jennifer Lamé, ACE, *Oppenheimer*; Nick Houy, ACE, *Barbie* – and yours truly, for my latest collaboration with Alexander Payne, *The Holdovers*. We’ll also examine animation with editors including Stephen Schaffer, ACE, from *Elemental*; Randy Trager, ACE, from *Nimona*; Michelle Mendenhall, *Ruby Gillman*, *Teenage Kraken*; and Eric Osmond, ACE, *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. So pull up a seat and enjoy.

Finally, as of this writing, the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes have been resolved. This was an extremely painful experience for the industry as a whole and editors were not excluded. Hopefully we’ll get back to some sort of “normal” pronto. In the meantime watch out for each other. And remember ... be proud, be bold and be brilliant. Not everyone can do what we do. 

– KEVIN TENT, ACE

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Matt Allen is the recipient of the Eric Zumbrunnen Fellowship (2020-2021). In late 2022, he finished editing the feature film entitled *American Murderer* starring Tom Pelphrey, Ryan Phillippe, Idina Menzel and Jacki Weaver. His feature film assistant editor credits include *A Man Called Otto*, *Christopher Robin* from Disney, *Bloodshot* and *Sweet Girl*. As an associate member of ACE, he always enjoys working with and being mentored by other ACE members! He hopes to work with another ACE member on a film very soon!

Leo Adam Biga is a veteran cultural journalist and author based in Omaha. His articles appear in *American Theatre*, *Flatwater Free Press*, *Omaha Magazine*, *The Reader* and numerous other publications. He is the author of the 2016 book *Alexander Payne: His Journey in Film*. His other books include *Crossing Bridges: A Priest's Uplifting Life Among the Downtrodden* (2015) and *Forever Grateful: The Gift of New Life from Organ Donation* (June 2023).

Scott Essman has been writing about cinema craftsmanship since 1995 and during that time has also produced and moderated many special live events which celebrate classic films.

Harry B. Miller III, ACE, is a feature, television and documentary editor. His recent credits include *Turn: Washington's Spies* and *The Predator*.

Bobbie O'Steen is a film historian and author of *Cut to the Chase*, based on interviews with her late husband, editor Sam O'Steen; *The Invisible Cut*, which deconstructs the editing process; and *Making the Cut at Pixar: The Art of Editing Animation*, with Bill Kinder, an authoritative media-rich book about the editor's pioneering role in animation. Bobbie hosts an ongoing event series, "Inside the Cutting Room," honoring master editors and has taught at AFI and NYU. More info at bobbieosteen.com

Adrian Pennington is a journalist, editor and marketing copywriter whose articles have appeared in the *Financial Times*, *British Cinematographer*, *Screen International*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Premiere*, *Broadcast*, *RTS Television* and *The Guardian*. He is co-author of *Exploring 3D: The New Grammar of Stereoscopic Filmmaking* (Focal Press, 2012) and his favorite film of all time is *Gilda*.

Jack Tucker, ACE, Emmy-nominated editor and first-ever recipient of the ACE Robert Wise Award, was at the helm of *CinemaEditor* magazine at the close of the 20th century. He produced documentary feature *American Empire* with his partner, director Patrea Patrick.

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ACE EDDIE AWARDS 2024



2024 EDDIE AWARDS SCHEDULE

Fri, Dec 15	Submissions for Nominations End (5pm PT)
Tues, Jan 9	Nominations Ballots Sent
Mon, Jan 22	Nominations Ballots Due (5pm PT)
Thurs, Jan 25	Nominations Announced
Feb 2 - 20	Blue Ribbon Screenings
Fri, Feb 2	Final Ballots Sent
Fri, Feb 9	Deadline for Advertising
Tues Feb 20	Final Ballots Due (5pm PT)
Sun, Mar 3	2024 ACE Eddie Awards

For more information visit www.AmericanCinemaEditors.org

WELCOME

American Cinema Editors would like
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LIFE LESSONS

Life Lessons is a new column during which our veteran life members share their sometimes irreverent, personal musings, views and recollections about their experiences in our business.

No Fingerprints

BY PAUL HIRSCH, ACE

While I was finishing *Falling Down*, I was taking a walk around the Warner Bros. lot, and I bumped into Joel Schumacher and his assistant.

"We were just over at your cutting room looking for you," Joel exclaimed. "I said, let's play a little trick on Paul. What can we do? I know!" And he followed with one of his trademark obscene lines that he often deployed to watch my reaction. I obliged, duly uncomfortable.

He was in a gleeful mood.

"Listen, I'm starting another picture," he said, "and I want you to cut it."

"Great," I replied. "What is it?"

"Warner Bros. have entrusted me with the studio's most valuable asset," he said. "They want me to direct the next *Batman*."

My heart sank. I didn't like the idea of doing a sequel to a picture someone else had cut. It seemed to me like taking a bath in someone else's bath water.

"Great. Is there a script?" I fumbled. I sensed that Joel picked up on my hesitation. "Not yet."

"Let me read the script," I said.

"It sounds great," I finished lamely.

Later on that evening, I thought, "What am I doing? Joel only tolerates hearing 'yes.' It's a high-profile movie. I should just do it. He is bound to make a better picture than the first two." It's always easier to say yes to an offer than to turn it down and have to go looking for work.

So I called him the next day, but he had just left on a location scout on his next project, *The Client*, based on the book by John Grisham. Thinking I shouldn't let this go for long, I faxed him a letter (this was 1994) saying, "I don't know what I was thinking yesterday. Of course I'll do it."

Joel called. "I thought you were going to turn me down."

"No, no, I love working with you," I lied. And that was that. I had the job. Or so I thought.

A couple of months went by, and I got a message to call Joel on the set of *The Client*. This was very unusual, since the director has so many demands on his time during principal photography. When I got him on the phone, he said to me, "Are you having any problems with the studio?"

"Not that I know of," I replied. "Why?"

"Well, I had a conversation with the people in production, and we were going over who I wanted as my creative team

on *Batman*, and when I told them I wanted you, they said, 'We would prefer you to use someone other than Paul.' I asked them why. They said, 'We don't want to go into it. It's simply that just as you wouldn't want us to impose someone on you, we would prefer you didn't impose anyone on us.'"

I was stunned. "What does that mean, Joel? I don't have the job anymore?" I asked.

"My hands are tied for the moment, but I'll see what I can do."

This struck me as bullshit. If a director wants someone for his editor, he usually gets his way. I called Bruce Berman, the head of production at the studio. I couldn't get him on the phone, and he didn't return my call.

I called my agent, Marty Bauer, and explained the situation to him. He called back a little while later.

"I spoke to Bruce, and here's what happened, but you can't tell anyone what he told me. It seems that Joel had just seen *The Fugitive*, (which had just opened) and was so knocked out by the editing that he decided he simply had to have that editor on *Batman*. He just made up the story about the studio, so he wouldn't have to take the blame."

According to the studio, Joel had lied, and they had agreed to cover his lie. But this didn't make sense to me. *The Fugitive* was notorious around the lot. It had been cut under the most difficult conditions. They had only a few weeks to do it in, and had hired six editors, all of whom shared a head credit on the film. I couldn't imagine Joel saying, "I want those six people to cut my movie."

It didn't compute. It sounded to me like either they were lying, or Joel was.

I called my old friend Dede Allen [ACE], who had taken an executive job at the studio. I asked Dede if she knew what was going on. She said she would see what she could find out. She called me the next day. "Were you slow in accepting Joel's offer to you?" she asked.


"Well, I didn't say yes the first instant, but I wrote him the next day, saying I would do it."

"Hmm. Yes, it seems Joel remembered that."

"And that's why I'm not getting the job?"

"No. Not just that. What happened is this: the young Turks in production think that Dennis Virkler (ACE, the lead editor on *The Fugitive*) is a genius. They attribute the picture's success entirely to Dennis. They have given him a long-term contract here and want to pay him out of *Batman*'s budget to cover the deal they had made with him. They called Joel and asked him to use Dennis. Since you were a little slow to accept in the first place, Joel figured, 'Screw Paul,' and agreed to hire Dennis."

This version had the ring of truth. This was finally believable: They were both lying. Joel could have stood his ground and insisted on using me, but decided to play ball with the studio, and lied to me to cover his ass. The studio then blamed Joel for bouncing me.

These weren't your garden-variety white lies; they were big, nasty Hollywood stab-you-in-the-back type lies. You find a knife stuck between your shoulder blades, and nobody's fingerprints are on the knife. 

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CONNECT COMMITTEE LUNCHEONS



Luncheon with Richard Chew, ACE



Celebrating Chew's birthday



Luncheon with Frank Urioste, ACE

The ACE Connect Committee recently launched a luncheon series, the first with Oscar-winning editor Richard Chew, ACE, who dined with Sarah Reeves, ACE; Marshall Harvey, ACE; Luyen Vu, ACE; Sujit Agrawal, ACE; and Joel Pashby, ACE. The June 28 luncheon was held at Marino's Hollywood restaurant, where the likes of Frank Sinatra and Henry Mancini enjoyed meals.

Chew discussed his journey from student to Oscar-winning film editor, and his work including *The Conversation*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Star Wars*. Chew invited each attendee to share their own unique journey into the film business.

Reeves asked Chew what advice he had for emerging editors, and the editor responded that he would tell them to learn to live within their means. This practical advice reflects the realities of the film industry, which often involves fluctuating opportunities and financial stability. In an email after the event, Chew added, "We should keep in mind pursuing an ideal at the same time, whether social, political or spiritual, an ideal of what kind of world we want to create, or preserve or expand. Having an ideal would help us decide on what projects to work on."

The luncheon corresponded with Chew's 83rd birthday, so Sal and Mario of Marino's brought out a delicious cake with a candle on it. It was a nice surprise.

This was followed by a September 13 Connect Committee luncheon at Marino's with special guest Frank Urioste, ACE, who dined with David Helfand, ACE, Philip Malamuth, ACE, Julio Perez, ACE, Ishai Setton, ACE, and Jeff Granzow, ACE, as well as Urioste's grandson Nick Betance.

Urioste shared that he began his career as a truck driver at MGM, ascending the ranks under such legends as Vincent Minelli, Robert Aldrich, Margaret Booth, ACE, and Ralph Winters, ACE, as well as through his tenure as senior VP of feature development at Warner Bros. where he oversaw editorial.

Throughout their conversation, one clear theme was Frank's immense gratitude toward his collaborators. Among many that he highlighted, he's held a special fondness for Paul Verhoeven, with whom he first worked on *RoboCop*. The cutdown on this film was particularly frustrating for the pair as they felt the core humor and satire lay in the over-the-top nature of the violence. Still, it earned Frank his first of three Academy Award nominations and sowed the seeds for a collaboration with Paul on two more films.

The editor shared additional memories, such as a time when he had to inform Billy Wilder that the lab had lost an entire day of dailies on *The Front Page*. Wilder was able to keep it in perspective: "You should have seen Berlin after the war."

Thank you to Lorenzo Sgroi at Pacific Post and Marino's Ristorante for sponsoring these Connect Committee luncheons. **CE** – JEFF GRANZOW, ACE, and JOEL PASHBY, ACE



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2023 ACE LUAU AND BOARD INSTALLATION

ACE held its annual Luau and Board Installation on Sept. 22 at Ca' Del Sole in Toluca Lake. During the celebratory event, hosted by Pivotal Post, new and returning board members were introduced. Returning board officers are President Kevin Tent, Vice President Sabrina Plisco, Secretary Lillian Benson and Treasurer Andrew Seklir. Board members are Kate Amend, Richard Chew, Dana E. Glauberman, Dorian Harris, Maysie Hoy, Nancy Richardson, Tatiana S. Riegel, Stephen Rivkin, Kate Sanford and Terilyn A. Shropshire. Associate Board Members include Ben Bulatao, Mark Helfrich, Susan Vaill and John Venzon.



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ACE IN NEW YORK



Only *Murders in the Building* editor/co-producer Shelly Westerman, ACE, appeared in a featured conversation with author and historian Bobbie O'Steen on Oct. 25 at NAB New York. New York-based editors also gathered Oct. 27 for a mixer at MCM Creative. Hors d'oeuvres and drinks were provided by Sohonet.



ACE IN PORTLAND

ACE held its first Portland, Ore.-based mixer on Oct. 18 at Victoria Bar. The “longest distance driven” award goes to Etienne des Lauriers, ACE, who traveled for five hours from Bellingham, Wash.



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ACE INTERNSHIP LECTURE SERIES

The ACE Internship Committee recently hosted a lecture series for all intern applicants. Special thanks to all the panelists and participants, including moderators Tyler Nelson, ACE, Sabrina Plisco, ACE, Art O'Leary, ACE, and host Troy Takaki, ACE. And, our gratitude and thanks to Internship sponsor Adobe.

ACE IN LONDON



ACE President Kevin Tent, ACE, was recently in London for a screening of his latest film, *The Holdovers* at the BFI London Film Festival. During his visit, ACE members and friends including Walter Murch, ACE, gathered to welcome him and share a drink Oct. 9 at local pub Adam & Eve.

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Noise Reduction in a Very Noisy World

BY HARRY B. MILLER III, ACE



Ambassador DeSadeski:

“What did you say?”

General Turgidson:

“I said, Premier Kissov is a degenerate atheist commie!”

– Dr. Strangelove

Hearing dialogue is about the most important aspect of storytelling. The history of filmmaking includes the development of new and better ways of recording that dialogue. Film production recording started with one microphone on a boom trying to keep the actors on a set within hearing range. The current on-set paradigm is to have one or two boom mics, with operators trying to keep up with the actors while staying out of the picture. Then, because we now use multitrack digital recorders, we hang wireless ‘lavs’ on everyone that speaks. The result is often 12-14 channels of recorded audio for every take. This is how the episodic NBC television show *La Brea* is produced. And that is one of the reasons it’s been a challenge to edit.

La Brea is shot almost entirely in Australia, which must be the noisiest country in the world. With the bugs, the birds, the brush, the rivers, the wind, the locations, the questionable mic placement and a set of actors who don’t seem to think being heard is important, this project has produced some of the most problematic recorded production dialogue I’ve ever encountered.

And no one channel has the most intelligible recording. So, the editors either cut with four or five tracks of production

sound, hoping that a good recording is in there somewhere. Or, for specific lines or words, they have to search through every track to find a better recording.

Then there is the noise. Lots of noise. Many of the *La Brea* scenes are exteriors, often walking through forests or heavy brush. And the bugs: Australia has some kind of cicada that makes incredibly loud alien clicking noises. Did I mention loud? Oh, my.

Early on, the editing team discovered at least one audio plugin that helped reduce a lot of the noise without damaging the voice frequencies too much. Avid offered a code in Avid Link to a free version of iZotope’s RX-6 audio plugins. In the recent season of *La Brea*, we were able to get production to spring for the latest from iZotope, RX-10 Elements. Editors began using the RX-10 De-noise plugin on nearly every clip of dialogue. Which is a lot of work, applying it and tuning it to that specific audio, on hundreds of clips in an episode.

But is that the best solution out there? I signed up for several demo licenses to compare.

CrumplePop is the newest kid on the block. It was recently acquired by my favorite visual plugin company, BorisFX. And soon after they adapted it as an AudioSuite plugin for Avid Media Composer.

Its interface is very simple. Drop the plugin onto an audio clip and open the AudioSuite effect editor. Then adjust the level of Denoise.



You can also adjust the output level. The lower dials are wide band EQ filters. It shows a waveform as it plays the clip, and you can see how much noise is removed.

With light wind and nature, it does a pretty good job of bringing out the dialogue. Where it fails is filtering out strong hums, such as with refrigeration or lights. One scene in *La Brea* was shot inside an empty skating rink. The equipment/refrigeration hum was terrible. CrumplePop didn’t make a dent in it.

Besides AudioDenoise, it has EchoRemover, Levelmatic, PopRemover, RustleRemover, TrafficRemover and Wind-

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Remover. I'm unclear if AudioDenoise includes all these, or if you need to try each one to see what removes the most noise. It costs \$23 a month (\$276/year) or \$600 for a one-time perpetual license. There is also a standalone application.

The effect we used extensively this past season of *La Brea* is iZotope's **RX-10 Elements**, and mostly the Voice De-Noise plugin. Place it on a clip and hit the "Learn" button, which configures the reduction. It has additional controls, being able to change the Threshold, the Reduction amount, the input and output levels. RX also has De-click, De-clip, De-hum and De-reverb. And it has one plugin that combines them all into the Repair Assistant.

Repair Assistant allows you to dial in how much of the different noise categories (De-ess, De-click, etc.) you want to eliminate.



RX-10 Elements Voice De-Noise Plugin

The full RX-10 Advanced is \$1,200 ... ouch. RX Elements, which was the most we needed, is a one-time \$99.

The next set of filters I tried is from the good people at Todd-AO, and is called **Absentia DX**. (What's behind the name? Absent-ia the noise?)

Absentia has just the one plugin with several built in components (Doppler, Hum, Tick, etc.). It is the least intuitive to operate. Individual components can be activated. But the amount of any section has only limited controls. Broadband Reducer has only three levels. And I can't tell by the label which is stronger. The bottom three controls are either on or off. And the biggest drawback is the Preview button isn't active, so you have to keep opening, adjusting, rendering and closing the plugin until you find the best combination for your track. Very labor intensive.

Absentia is much more suited to an audio editing NLE, such as Pro Tools. Presumably you can adjust the controls as you play the sound.

Absentia also has a standalone app, which you can drop complete sound takes in to have them processed before editing.

It has other features, including Phase Synchronizer, Transcribe and Alts Finder. It is a subscription at \$150 for the first year, then \$50 per year.



Absentia DX Broadband Reducer Plugin

Last on my list of plugins is **Clarity Pro** by Waves. It has stereo and mono, regular and pro versions.

Clarity Pro has the highest level of control. The center control adjusts the overall noise reduction. You can also adjust the Process Amount, Reflection, Ambience Gate and the output level. In addition, each range of frequencies can be individually raised or lowered. It has the most control of all the plugins here, but it is more expensive than RX Elements, on sale at \$250. Its simpler little brother, Clarity VX, is only \$36.



RX-10 Elements Voice De-Noise Plugin

So, which one is best? I put together a sequence of several problematic sound scenes.

Pictured on the next page is the most difficult sound scene from *La Brea*, the one shot in an empty hockey arena. Noise was coming from the refrigeration units for the ice floor, the huge arena lights and the HVAC. RX and Clarity did the best jobs overall clearing dialogue from the noise in this sequence – note the waveforms when there is dialogue versus without. They also did the best in the other sequences I tried. CrumplePop did well on the other, quieter scenes, but couldn't get rid of the overpowering hum here.

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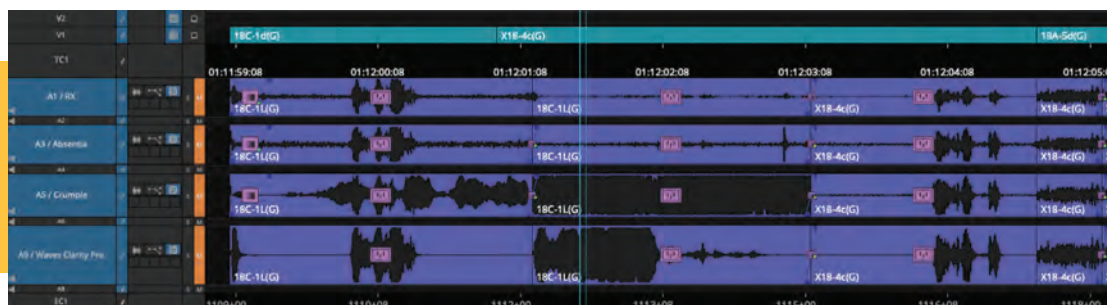


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Difficult
Sound Scene
from *La Brea*

Conclusion: RX is the about the best deal for price and quality. Clarity Pro has the most granular controls, and probably would be my preference if I could justify the price (i.e. let a producer pay for it). Of course, on a show with multiple editors and assistants, everyone has to have the same plugins otherwise you can't easily share processed video or sound.

New Technology Committee Update: Our MPEG group has about 20 members from several branches of Local 700. We've been meeting regularly and writing reports for the board of directors, with an eye on next year's contract negotiations. A lot of what will be considered in those negotiations will be what the directors, writers and actors have agreed to in their negotiations.

The biggest conclusion I've come away with from our research is that the job of picture editor isn't especially threatened by artificial intelligence technologies. Much of what is labeled as "AI" isn't really artificial intelligence. Analyzing

a clip of dialogue and creating a text document is much more machine learning, where lots of computers analyze what is said and compare it to other words in its learning model, and spits out what it "heard." As picture editors, we are working with directors and producers who can be anything but predictable, which makes a machine editing system useless.

AI is a much bigger threat to actors, if their image and voice can be copied and inserted into scenes that they weren't in. Or productions they weren't paid for. One demo from the technology company Flawless shows an actor's face and dialogue from one scene mapped onto the same actor in another scene to create an entirely new shot.

What new technologies will do is what they've always done: make certain tasks simpler and easier. And require fewer people. But work will open up in other areas. Which means we always have to learn new technologies to keep relevant in the workplace. **CE**

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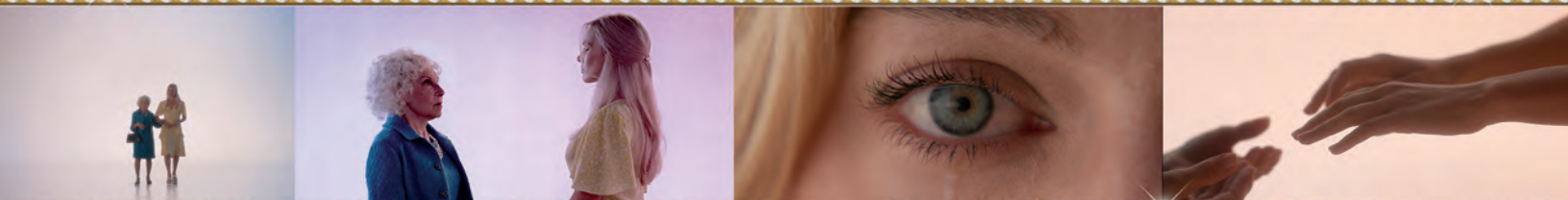
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Barbie

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Killers of the Flower Moon

Thelma Schoonmaker, ACE, crafts the quiet and the passion for Martin Scorsese's historical drama

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

Martin Scorsese reteamed with Thelma Schoonmaker, ACE, for their 22nd feature, continuing one of filmmaking's most enduring and creative relationships that began in 1963.

Based on the 2017 nonfiction book by David Grann and written for the screen by Scorsese and Eric Roth, *Killers of the Flower Moon* is set in 1920s Oklahoma and details the mysterious murders of members of the Osage Nation, the Native American tribe that became wealthy after the discovery of oil on their land at the end of the 19th century.

Scorsese's adaptation focuses on a particularly complex marriage between Ernest Burkhart (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Mollie Burkhart (Lily Gladstone), a member of Osage who owns oil rich land. The reign of terror in which Ernest plays a part is exposed by federal agents – in one of the FBI's first cases – who identify William Hale (played by Robert De Niro) as ringleader.

The Apple Original Films movie was shot on Osage Nation land in Oklahoma, site of the actual events depicted in the film, with Schoonmaker editing remotely in New York during the pandemic.

CinemaEditor: Did you start by reading the source material?

Thelma Schoonmaker, ACE: Yes, I read the book – that was necessary, and then the script. I don't have to look at the script much more after that because I want to see how Marty develops things. Sometimes he doesn't put all the beautiful ideas he has into the script.

Of course, the script was changed at one point when DiCaprio decided he wanted to play Ernest instead of Tom White (the FBI agent for which Jesse Plemons was then cast). They were rewriting a bit during filming and that was fine with me. I don't have to be guided by script. I'd rather be guided by the dailies and my conversations with Scorsese when we look at the dailies together. That is the way I work.

CE: Ernest facilitates murder, yet we empathize with him. Perhaps because he is so conflicted about his actions. How did you develop that character?

TS: Ernest is a very complex character, similar in some way to the central character in *Peeping Tom* [Michael Powell's 1960 classic about a serial killer], albeit the Peeping Tom was doing much worse things than Ernest – Or maybe not?

The love story is what we really wanted to focus on in *Killers* because it was true. They really did love each other. From my point of view, Ernest was trying to keep Mollie quiet. She is too active politically, too ferocious about Native American rights. No one really knows what was in those shots he was medicating her with in addition to insulin. I think he was fooling himself into thinking he was keeping her quiet, not intending to kill her, because he loved her. It's the very last statement he makes in the courtroom.

In real life Mollie was asked by the FBI why she remains with Ernest and she replied, 'I love him.' Even when Ernest admits everything he has done wrong, she still feels that way. When he is granted a release from court by Hale's lawyer (played by Brendan Fraser) he goes straight to Mollie. ... So what's interesting in the film are these two separate strands and it's why, to an extent, you feel sympathy with him. Marty and the actors really worked on building that love story.

CE: The scene where Ernest first crosses the threshold of Mollie's house would, in other films, be truncated. Can you tell me about the importance of that scene to the story?

TS: Marty says when he filmed the scene he fell in love with the characters. You get a very strong picture of Mollie immediately. Within her first couple of lines, you understand that she is a very strong person, very dignified and knows what she wants. Ernest is a little taken aback by this and fumbles his way through the first part of the conversation but because



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he's attracted to her he begins to come on to her. He talks about how much he likes the way she looks and is very honest about his own laziness and love of money. Things begin to shift. She is attracted to him too and in a later scene when her sisters tease that Ernest is only interested in money she replies, 'Of course he wants money,' when what really she's saying is, 'He wants a home.'

Mollie is the soul the of the movie. There's no question about it. The way she presents herself is quite unique.

CE: Was there a risk of presenting the story as one of a white savior, the FBI, riding in to save the day?

TS: That is one of the reasons Marty agreed with Leo to change his part. They didn't want to make a story about the 'good white folk' coming in to save the day. Tom White, the agent of the fledgling FBI, is the only good 'white' guy in the film.

I love the way Jesse works the part. Instead of being the aggressive pistol carrying agent he does things with humor and quiet persistence and in the end he basically cracks Ernest by seeming to understand what he is going through. I've always admired his work including in *The Irishman* [playing Hoffa's stepson] and was delighted he was cast for *Killers*. It's an understated performance which I think is brilliant.

CE: You've had the best seat in the house to view Robert De Niro's performances over many films. Does anything he does continue to surprise you?

TS: This is his finest performance I think – ever. That final performance on the stand at the end of *Killers* where we're



just holding on him because his Take 1 was so powerful – it's stunning. I was thrilled to see him take this on and carry through with it so beautifully.

CE: Martin Scorsese features in a cameo at the end. I wondered why he had chosen to give himself that speech, which conveys the shame of a nation?

TS: They considered other actors but at a certain point Marty thought it was right for him to do it. ... It was filmed in the auditorium of a catholic preparatory school, the very same one where Marty trained to be a priest [Scorsese briefly attended a New York seminary in the early 1960s].

CE: The dailies screening is so important to you and Scorsese – how was this affected by working remotely?

TS: We were able to screen dailies once or twice a week in New York and talk it through constantly.

I love being with him for dailies because he is seeing what he has done for the first time and it's having a big impact on him. There are very few people who can speak about film as well as Marty. He is so articulate about what he likes and doesn't like and he wants to hear what I feel about it as well. I take very careful notes during dailies screenings and work from that to do the first assembly. It's very important to be with him for the dailies.

CE: Presumably you were able to work in person together during editorial?

TS: Yes he was heavily involved. He is a great editor. He cut *Mean Streets* himself [Sidney Levin is credited] and he taught me everything I know about editing.

CE: Do you still cut on Lightworks?

TS: I still do. Scott Brock my co-editor is very versed in that. He taught me how to use it on *Casino* and there's something about it I still love.

CE: How did you work with Robbie Robertson's score?

TS: Marty has worked with Robbie and has been a friend of his for 50 years. He definitely wanted an indigenous person for the music [Robertson's mother was Cayuga and Mohawk] so Robbie was a natural. He recorded pieces with Native American communities for the film. The Osage performed the final piece





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that booms up from the drum and you see still Osage walking around still alive and still vibrant.

CE: Your editorial approach seems very respectful of letting the power of the truth be told.



TS: You're not quite sure what's going on at first with Hale. We see him manipulating his nephew to get him to marry into the Osage and have him sign the piece of paper that gives him rights to the land. Marty deliberately wanted to seep in the evil of Hale and also to give space to how the Osage are portrayed in the film so that you gradually become aware of what is going on. You are able to study the characters in a different way than with flashy camera movement.

You know, Marty is more interested in quiet and silence now. The scene where Ernest and Mollie first have dinner together is very indicative of this. We really start to get to know them. A beautiful moment at the end of the scene is something Marty learned from a member of our Osage crew. They commented about the thunderstorm in this scene and that their Grandma would make them stop and be still and quiet during a storm. Marty took that and made it into Mollie's great moment where you see how much it means to her to be Osage while Ernest doesn't understand. Then the pair of them in a two shot, we hold on it. That shot is very typical of the kind of thing Marty is doing these days to really immerse you in the character. **CE**

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BARBIE

Nick Houy, ACE, makes every joke count in the Greta Gerwig hit

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON



“You have to give every joke a fighting chance – especially if someone on the team believes in it wholeheartedly,” says Nick Houy, ACE, editor of Warner Bros.’ *Barbie*, which at press time was the year’s highest-grossing movie, topping \$1.4 billion worldwide. Houy attributes its success to director/co-writer Greta Gerwig and co-writer Noah Baumbach.

“We started with most amazing script that had nothing to do with Barbie,” Houy says. “Greta and Noah wanted to make something bizarre and original and push the boundaries of what we thought we’d be able to make. The script had such really crazy humor that I thought Warner Bros. or Mattel would never let us do that with their IP. It was like a Marx Brothers or a Mel Brooks movie, breaking the fourth wall.”

He adds, “For any studio or company the lesson from *Barbie* is that people love original thinking and the more you water it down the less interested they are going to be.”

There can’t be many people who haven’t seen *Barbie* – which stars Margot Robbie (who also produces) as the eponymous toy and Ryan Gosling as her companion Ken – or are unaware of its impact. This is the first live-action outing, after several animated features, for Mattel’s iconic toy line, but Houy notes, “This is not a Barbie movie. Everyone was trying to make it much more than a straight advertisement.”

Jokes aside there’s a relatively complex narrative driving the story during which Barbie transforms from being totally carefree into introspective and confused before “taking control of her own destiny Barbie.”

The story begins in Barbie Land, where Houy says he wanted to “show Barbie having a really fun time and then at some point the movie starts to break and we begin to tease out what the movie is really about.”

This is the point when Barbie wonders aloud, “Do you guys ever think about dying?” causing all the characters to be temporarily confused and silent.

“I deliberately slow the pace down there,” Houy says. “A following scene with Ken trying to kiss Barbie goodnight has this very slow-gears-turning piece of score as the moon sets and the sun is rising. The audience begins to realize there is something more going on here.”

Houy explains that he views himself as the first audience member and that his role is to be truthful to that in feeding back to the director. On this film that included working the jokes and testing the strength of areas where the pace deliberately slackens, for instance, when Barbie meets an elderly lady (fabled costume designer Ann Roth) on a bench in Santa Monica and later when she meets Barbie’s inventor (Ruth Handler, played by Rhea Perlman) in the middle of a frantic chase sequence through the Mattel headquarters.

“Those are the moments that are what the movie is about,” Houy says, adding that one beach-set scene is probably his favorite in the film. “Barbie has never really seen an old person and she finally sees what it means to be human. It plants a seed for her – and for all of us – that you have to face your mortality and you have to go at it with a sense of humor.”

He continues, “I cut that assembly while we were shooting. We tried a million ways of taking all sorts of scenes in a different direction but we never reworked this one. We knew it was the pitch perfect version of it and it set us up for when Barbie meets Ruth Handler. She is the





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Richard Roeper, **CHICAGO SUN-TIMES**



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A FILM BY TODD HAYNES

MAY DECEMBER

creator – or God if you want to see it that way. For me, that scene then sets up the emotional payoff at the end of the film.”

The ending has Barbie’s ‘Creator’ telling her what it means to be human but the script had only hinted at what was needed visually. It was up to the editorial team to come up with ideas.

“It was as basic as ‘something kinda Terrence Malicky,’” says Houy. “They never really shot anything for it. I began by pulling clips from Terrence Malick films or footage that felt in that vein but nothing was landing right. Then we had the idea of using our home videos and Super 8 film which suddenly felt more organic and real but it still wasn’t quite clicking.”

It was producer Christine Crais who suggested they should depict women only (rather than fathers, brothers, sons) and the female perspective on becoming human. Houy’s team selected footage of their mothers, grandmothers, daughters and sisters and let these real life experiences be what the Creator communicates to Barbie to accept life, even though it ultimately means death.

“That was meaningful for all of us. I see my daughter as part of that [sequence] and people are responding to it in a deep way.”

This is Houy’s third collaboration with Gerwig following *Lady Bird*, for which he was ACE Eddie nominated, and *Little Women*. His credits also include episodes of Showtime series *Billions*.

“*Little Women* was a bigger budget, bigger canvas than *Lady Bird* and *Barbie* was 20 levels above that,” Houy says. “The scope of the set design and costumes combined with great actors and everyone on the crew working [at] the top of their game was extraordinary.”

Yet his relationship with Gerwig hasn’t changed, he says. “We always talk about movies just like we’re ordering lunch. It’s just how we all talk in the office. This film has hundreds of references from *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Red Shoes* to *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Grease*. It’s a lot of things all mixed together but totally unique.”

He explains that the references were used not just for homage but to help them pull off shifts of tone. “*Barbie* is a huge comedy movie and yet so many of my friends tell me they cried at the end. How many movies can be the biggest comedy ever and also make you so emotional? We were constantly studying films and trusting our own gut, being open minded and going where the movie took us to try to balance that tone.”

The beach scene near the beginning of the movie where the dialogue is basically lots of “Hi Barbie” went through more than 50 iterations.

“At script stage we talked about this being an homage to *Singin’ in the Rain* and like a studio lot dream sequence. It was beautifully redone in that style but we knew that in any other movie this would constitute a detour from the central story. If you look at it on paper you are taking the audience away from the main character for quite a long time so you have to make it so good that you can’t cut it. We fought to make it the best it could be and saved it.”

His team includes first assistant editor Nick Ramirez – “one of my closest allies who has worked on everything with Greta and [me]” – and a crack team of assistant editors in London and New York.



“We seemed to have had a lot of Nicks on this film – we had five Nicks in a room at one point – so the running joke was to welcome each other with ‘Hi Nick! Hi Nick!’”

With 1500 visual effects shots to process this was also the biggest VFX team Houy had worked with. “On previous films it would be removing a boom mic from the shot but this was an amazing experience. There’s nothing more fun than trying to decide where to put a merman on a motorbike in the middle of Barbie Land. It just feels like you’re playing every day at work.”

Houy also cut together a six-minute featurette of bloopers and additional material that didn’t quite make the final cut, which was shown post credits in later IMAX screenings.

“There’s a moment where Ken goes back to Barbie Land with the camper vehicle which is one of my favorites,” he remembers. “The way Ken does it is he’s grilling a burger and a bear starts sniffing around. The bear rears up on its hind legs and they have a choreographed fight. It’s a locked off shot in front of this beautiful background. Ken flips the bear over, does some martial arts moves. I always thought it was very funny but it was a little too long to work into the Ken traveling back sequence. It’s still too long to show the whole thing in the end credits even now but it’s one of those moments that I think shows the fun we were having on this movie.” **CE**

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The Holdovers

Alexander Payne and Kevin Tent, ACE, reteam on the '70s-set drama

BY LEO ADAM BIGA

An enduring director-editor collaboration, Alexander Payne and Kevin Tent, ACE, share a 28-year partnership that began with 1996's *Citizen Ruth* and now includes *The Holdovers*.

The Focus Features film (written by David Hemingson, who is new to Payne's orbit) follows a crusty, unbending teacher (played by Payne's *Sideways* star Paul Giamatti), acerbic student (newcomer Dominic Sessa) and grieving school cook (Da'Vine Joy Randolph), who are forced to spend the holidays together at a New England boarding school in 1970. The dramedy further cements one of modern cinema's longest-lived creative unions. "I've observed very few directors of my generation have such a sustained relationship with an editor," says Payne. "I think a lot of directors change editors for one reason or another, either through not getting along or unavailability or I don't know what."

Payne and Tent don't take what they have for granted. "It takes some time for a director to trust an editor and a little bit vice versa," says Tent. "I don't know when that happened in our process but it happened at some point. Probably somewhere midway through cutting *Citizen Ruth* when we said, oh, it's working. And we're making the film better. "I think that's a good lesson for young filmmakers and editors – to find somebody at their level so they can grow together," he adds.

In Tent, Payne has a wingman helping him realize his auteurist explorations of broken people. "A creative collaboration is successful in the quality of the questions you ask each other. In those questions is where the film lies," says Payne.

The humanism of Payne's closely-observed, intimate work mirrors '70s films. *The Holdovers* intentionally aspires to that gentle, organic spirit and flow. Says Payne, "I can't tell you that it's more gentle or seamless than say *Nebraska* or *The Descendants* ... but all of it somehow gets folded into the rhythms of the screenplay and the performances on set, and then by extension the rhythm of our editing approach. It's from the feeling that had we been making films then, this one might have come from us,

not from our imitation of others. To some degree, we've already been making '70s films."

"AP's films are very unique because you're laughing one moment and then crying or wincing the next," Tent adds. "He gets amazing performances from his actors. We're really performance-driven. We'll let continuity go by, other things go by, but we believe if audiences are engaged with characters they won't notice those things."

Filming with cinematographer Eigil Bryld took place in Boston, and editing occurred between Omaha and Los Angeles. "We didn't have a permanent cutting room like we usually do," Tent says. "We were bouncing back and forth."

Since *About Schmidt*, Payne's eschewed watching dailies and assemblies during production. "One reason I don't watch dailies too much anymore is that I want to approach the editing process as much as possible as an editor, not a director," Payne says, "and also, like an editor, I want to get to know the footage."

Tent begins cutting during production "but it's generally pretty loose," he says. "I incorporate all the lines as written and try to include a piece of all the coverage. I send scenes to AP for weekend viewing. Sometimes he watches, sometimes he doesn't. Once he finishes shooting and comes to the cutting room we start watching dailies and working on our first cut. It's usually much better than an editor's assembly but not quite yet a full director's cut. We watch my first pass at scenes and incorporate things we like. This has worked well for us. By the time we start actually cutting we both know the footage really well. It takes a little more time to deliver a director's cut, but it's rare we haven't gotten more time when we've asked for it."

Payne describes the first week in the cutting room as "one of the happiest weeks in my life." He adds that they have a song that he calls "The Promised Land." Set to the music of "America" from *West Side Story*, it's a paean to the editing room, where everything finally comes together in shaping the material harvested on set.

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FRED TOPEL, UPI



**BEST EDITED
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(COMEDY, THEATRICAL)

Edited By

Joel Negron ACE

COCAINE

BEAR

WRITTEN
BY JIMMY WARDEN

DIRECTED
BY ELIZABETH BANKS

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"Editing is one of my two favorite parts of filmmaking," Payne says. "The other being location scouting."

In the cutting room, they find the pacing. "I'm always pushing him to keep things moving faster," Tent admits, "and he's always pushing back to let things breathe. We usually get to a good compromise."

"Sometimes we cut things down to the bone then put it back," Tent continues. "It's better to get it tight and then loosen it up than to keep it loose. That's my theory. I'm always consciously thinking about not losing the audience and having things too slow so they disengage. They have far less patience than we do."

Payne adds that as they explore the right length, the scenes also need time to "register emotionally. Sometimes you've got to hang out to let time work its magic. If things don't register, then it feels it. We keep things moving so that when you do pause or come out of a shot it acquires more meaning."

These practitioners of minimalism believe less is more. "We try not to cut very much," Tent says. "We like to keep things simple. We try to be elegant in our transitions and in our overall pace. A lot of that is the flow and rhythm of the screenplay. And, of course, AP's directing. We try to keep all that in mind as we're cutting to make things as smooth and seamless as possible. Guide the audience along gently so they're relaxed and able to feel more."

Says Payne, "We definitely are of that school where we want the filmmaking to be invisible, so that you're paying attention to the story and characters exclusively. Kevin used to say, 'We want to cast a spell over the audience and not do anything that takes them out of the movie.'"

On their approach to tone, Tent says, "AP's super disciplined about performances on set and then both of us together in the cutting room make sure things don't get too sappy or weepy or cloying. We're both really sensitive to that and resist that when cutting."

Dissolves, largely absent from new American films to Payne's dismay, are something he and Tent love using and have on full display, along with wipes, in *The Holdovers*.

The extended opening title sequence plays like an impressionistic montage introducing us to tradition-rich characters, sites and rituals of the film's fictional Barton Academy.

Says Tent, "The titles actually became something that tied together a number of scenes in the beginning with music and location changes. It's really interesting the way that



happened because the traditional way of doing it would have had a title sequence over the boys choir singing, and then onto the movie. But we jumped all over and I think it sets you up in a compelling way."

"I couldn't have predicted week one how that title sequence would have played out," Payne says. "We sort of discovered it in the cutting room. I've never seen anything exactly like that in a movie before. The first 10 minutes of the film basically are a meditation of the world we're about to enter."

They repeatedly refined emotional closing scenes between Mr. Hunham (Giamatti), who has made a personal sacrifice for Angus (Sessa), the student with whom he has formed a bond.

"Those scenes were never in trouble per se," Payne says, "but every time we'd go through the film we'd add four frames here, take two out there to calibrate not just the takes but the spacing – the time and the reaction. Those are very sensitive, crucial scenes we wanted to make sure we maximized."

Payne cuts in the camera when called for and economically covers whatever else he needs. "It depends on the scene," he says. "Some scenes I'll do in one long take. I cover enough to get what I think we need to edit, which could include a lot of options – but not too many. I think we always have a plan and a discipline to the coverage. Kevin and I might say that by the time we've edited the film together the way it's cut was inevitable. That somehow the gods intended for those pieces of film be joined together at those frames."

The tinkering almost never stops. Even though the final edit was complete last fall, Payne says, "I continued to work on it. I went to the film lab several times tweaking its conversion to film."

"AP is exactly who he's always been, but his storytelling skills are just becoming more refined and subtle," says Tent. "He's just become more sophisticated and he was already sophisticated." **CE**





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Oppenheimer

Jennifer Lame, ACE, splits and fuses the timeline for Christopher Nolan's propulsive biopic.

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

Cillian Murphy stars as the man who became known as the 'father of the atomic bomb' in Christopher Nolan's unconventional and commercially dynamite biopic. Perversely, the writer-director chooses not to directly show the moment of the Trinity Test's nuclear explosion – a moment when even the physicists weren't sure it wouldn't boil the atmosphere – and to position the event as an apex to the second act rather than its climax.

Further, Nolan splits the dialogue-heavy 180-minute movie into two principal timelines and splits those again with criss-crossing flashbacks. "Chris and I had lunch one day and he mentioned he was making a film that had a lot of people in rooms talking," Jennifer Lame, ACE, explains. "I slapped my hands on the table and said, 'I want to do that!'"

At the time Lame was committed to *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* but both Disney and Universal found a way for her to finish for Ryan Coogler then jump to join Nolan.

"I love dialogue-driven films," she says with relish. "That's where I started out my career and it just fits my personality. I can watch hours and hours of footage of actors performing dialogue and then dissect each take, analyze it and cut different versions."

Nolan based his script on the 2006 Pulitzer Prize winning biography *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin. Although an avid reader Lame chose not to read the source material, preferring to come to the story fresh.

"I was relieved I hadn't read it because it meant I came with no expectations or prior knowledge – just like most people who saw the movie. I knew of Oppenheimer, of course, but not much about his background – such as his communist affiliation, or about what happened after the atomic explosions. I relied on the script as a document of his life since Chris had done such extensive research."

Lame was Noah Baumbach's go-to editor on pictures including *Frances Ha*, *While We're Young*, *Mistress America*, *The Meyerowitz Stories* and *Marriage Story*, before gaining

further recognition with her work on Kenneth Lonergan's Oscar winner *Manchester by the Sea* and Ari Aster's horror *Hereditary*. *Tenet*, her first film with Nolan, was her first big budget studio picture and also her first crack at action.

"*Tenet* was incredibly difficult for me. Looking at a car chase for my brain is challenging and when you are challenged things can feel daunting and not as fun sometimes. Action editors can cut a car chase in their sleep but I get the same thrill cutting dialogue. When I got the dailies for *Oppenheimer* it was pure joy. Almost every scene is people talking in a room. I loved it."

Lame particularly enjoyed working on all the scenes in the small, unadorned room 2022 – where the tribunal deciding Oppenheimer's security clearance post-war is made behind closed doors. "There are only so many ways you can shoot it and you've got to pay attention to the geography," she explains.

"Every scene had such personality and it all had this narrative build to it that was thrilling to work on," she says. "In room 2022 there is so much going on whether it's Oppenheimer in the hot seat or on the couch and not talking. Even though it was the same room over and over again, each scene could be cut in so many different ways. The challenge was how do you make people feel like they're not being rushed through something but also not make this a four-hour movie?"

Lame loves puzzle solving in the edit and figuring out the psychology of characters. "We met after I'd read *Oppenheimer* and he asked if I saw any problems. Typically, when I read scripts I have quite a few notes and ideas but I couldn't think of anything. His script was very dialed in. Because it works so well on the page it was intimidating to start the assembly but I had such an incredible experience reading the script. I was ripping through it."

Ticking time bomb

The two different timelines in *Oppenheimer* are established in the opening scenes. 'Fission' is shot in color and shows the world from Oppenheimer's point of view. 'Fusion' plays out in

The Righteous Gemstones **Mythic Quest** **Chevalier** **The Mandalorian** **Only Murders in the Building** **Poker Face** **Creed III** **Dancing with the Stars** **The Crown** **Gran Turismo Sport** **Oppenheimer** **The Boys** **Birth/Rebirth** **Wednesday** **9-1-1** **Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story** **Barbie** **American Idol** **Call Me Kat** **American Ninja Warrior** **Masters of Sex** **The Amazing Race** **S.W.A.T.** **The Orville** **Fire Island** **Cobra Kai** **Air** **American Horror Story** **Ted Lasso** **Next Goal Wins** **Daisy Jones & The Six** **The Last of Us** **100 Foot Wave** **The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel** **Jury Duty** **Deadliest Catch** **History of the World, Part II** **Stranger Things** **BEEF** **The Masked Singer** **Past Lives** **The Holdovers** **Joy Ride** **The Great British Baking Show** **Yellowjackets** **Reservation Dogs** **How I Met Your Father** **Night Court** **Abbott Elementary** **Star Trek: The Next Generation** **Queer Eye** **So Help Me Todd** **Weird: The Al Yankovic Story** **To Watch or Not to Watch** **Barry** **RuPaul's Drag Race** **Victim/Suspect** **American Horror Story** **Saltburn** **What We Do in the Shadows** **Survivor** **Trolls Band Together** **Vanderpump Rules** **Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One** **The White Lotus** **A Black Lady Sketch Show** **Big Brother** **The Contender** **Succession** **Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny** **The Burial** **Hijack** **One Piece** **Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie** **The Afterpart** **The Upshaws** **Moonage Daydream** **The Fall of the House of U.S.** **Nimona** **House of the Dragon** **Welcome to Wrexham** **Schmigadoon!**



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black and white and tells Oppenheimer's story from more of an objective perspective and largely that of Lewis Strauss, the businessman and naval officer played by Robert Downey Jr. The trick for Lame was to balance those viewpoints while giving sufficient momentum to the two timelines.

"Chris' aim is to respect the intelligence of the audience by not holding their hand, and giving them just enough information to enjoy and understand the story. If people watch *Oppenheimer* for the first time and they don't know the exact timing of scenes in room 2022 but it still works for them on an emotional level — then that's ok."

She says she learned a lot from working with Ken Lonergan on *Manchester by the Sea* about what worked best dealing with two different timelines and flashes forward and backward in time.

In *Oppenheimer*, there are flashbacks in both timelines that don't play out sequentially, and even skip back-and-forth over the timelines.

"I'm a little embarrassed to admit that when I first saw *Dunkirk* it was so immersive I didn't totally pick up on the different timelines. I rewatched it and everything clicked. So, what is important for Chris is making sure that someone who doesn't exactly know the timing of everything has a great emotional experience and enjoys the movie as much someone who picks up on every timeline."

The film's centerpiece and a crucial narrative pivot is the Trinity Test in the New Mexico desert, a moment when Lame holds onto a shot of the blinding flash of light glowing on Oppenheimer's goggled face and the soundtrack falls ominously silent.

"This is what makes this movie special and not just another biopic," she says. "When the bomb goes off we still have another third of the movie to run. It is this experimental form that I found so amazing when I read the script. The whole narrative drive of the story has been to this point. It's a great release for the audience, and for Oppenheimer, but then we have the fallout."

In the next scene, when the trucks are driving away from Los Alamos, Oppenheimer asks the U.S. Army major played by Matt Damon, 'Do you want me to come to Washington?' and he is met with the cold response, 'Why?' "It's devastating, a great punch to the gut," says Lame.



“
I slapped
my hands
on the table
and said,
'I want to
do that!'"



Having reached this crushing low for the central character Lame then had to work to build up the narrative tension again in the final third. "It was very important to Chris that the audience be completely guided here. We spent a lot of time talking about how we build back up to the ending similarly to the way we built towards the bomb."

In the last third of the film we learn more about Strauss, an ambiguous character who on the one hand has supported Oppenheimer's career and posed as his friend, and on the other betrays him for his own Machiavellian ends.

"Strauss is my favorite character. I have a lot of sympathy with him. Other people find him to be a bad guy but with Robert Downey Jr.'s great performance, he is empathetic and so vulnerable. When we first meet him he is trying to impress Oppenheimer and feels slighted by what he and Einstein were discussing by the pond. Later he is humiliated by Oppenheimer at a public hearing. He is so relatable in a way that Oppenheimer isn't."

"There are echoes of Willy Loman (the protagonist of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*). He is vindictive. What he did to Oppenheimer certainly wasn't chivalrous; it was almost immature and that humanizes him in my eyes. This is the way that power and politics work. These guys backstab each other. Oppenheimer is hurt but he is also a realist."

She adds, "I love the ending when we're cross cutting between Strauss and Oppenheimer, and getting to see what Einstein and Oppenheimer say by the pond is a great payoff."

Of Nolan's working regime she says, "Everything feels very meticulous but in a relaxed way. We never miss a deadline. He never does, which can be stressful but also freeing."

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BEST FILM EDITING

HILDA RASULA, ACE



MRC T-STREET

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WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN AND DIRECTED BY
CORD JEFFERSON

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We screen the assembly, even very early on in the process, every Friday without fail. There's a handful of us in the room including producer Emma Thomas but it's a nice feeling because we can put up ideas that we know aren't perfect but each rough version helps us get nearer to where the picture needs to be in terms of rhythm.

In the edit room

With John Lee, Nolan's longtime associate editor, promoted to solo editing duties on *Black Adam*, Lame was tasked with finding someone new to join the team. "I need someone technically capable but also with the right personality, someone who can roll with the punches and not get too stressed out."

She found the ideal new first assistant in additional editor Mike Fay, a fellow New Yorker with a shared history in working with Loneragan (*You Can Count on Me*). Since Lame was finishing *Wakanda Forever* during the first part of *Oppenheimer* photography "he was my eyes and ears during the shoot."

Also on board was first assistant Tom Foligno (*Casino*); "He loves working with film so much. He was thrilled when he got the opportunity and had such a great attitude." Other members of the team included post-production supervisor Tina Anderson and Nolan collaborators including assistant editor Scott Wesley Ross and VFX editor Andrew Blustain.

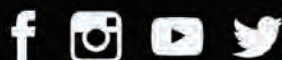
Lame remembers, "Everyone loved getting to watch the black and white displayed in IMAX. It was so cool and put everyone in such high spirits." 

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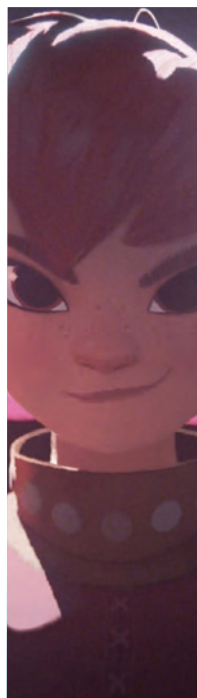
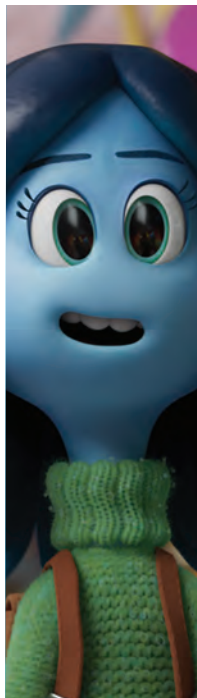
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ANIMATION EDITING

The editors of four 2023 animated movies – *Elemental*; *Nimona*; *Ruby Gillman, Tennage Kraken*; and *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* – offer insights on the creative process

BY SCOTT ESSMAN

Elemental

Elemental continues the Pixar tradition of creating all-original pieces of entertainment which also provoke viewers of all



ages to consider the story's further implications. In point, the key relationship in the film concerns Ember, a female character made up entirely of fire, and Wade, a male character fully built of water. Editor Stephen Schaffer, ACE, who also worked on *Wall-E* and *Incredibles 2*, notes that the core story drives every aspect of a Pixar film. "They allow us the time and the space to explore in

the story world," Schaffer says of the legendary Pixar 'brain trust' of creative leaders, including *Elemental* director Peter Sohn. "Of course, as you're producing it, things change and you have to adjust."

Working on *Elemental* a total of four and a half years, Schaffer started cutting two sequences of storyboards for *Elemental* in the fall of 2018. From that early outset, Schaffer approached *Elemental* as a love story, which guided him all the way through the production. "The biggest challenge was we had such a large volume of film," Schaffer reveals, noting that the final film, at 101



minutes, was drastically condensed from the breadth of computer-generated animation originally produced for the project. "There's so much more footage that we had put together – and different versions of the film. It was a constant battle of, 'Can we get this part right and still make an entertaining sequence?'"

Throughout the process, Schaffer would rearrange sequences, constantly whittling specific scenes down before showing his edits to Sohn. "It's okay to fail at that point," Schaffer confesses,

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“because we can redraw a sequence if we have to. It’s that ability to put things together quickly and see what sticks – we did a lot of that on this film. When we’re in full production and you’ve got moving pictures, which is a whole different thing than working on the storyboard, then, you can really see what scenes are doing.”

Critically, Schaffer and Sohn tested their various edits of *Elemental* in audience previews. “Like on *Wall-E*, there was a whole sequence that was fully animated that we had to lose and rework,” Schaffer states. “On this one, a sequence which was cut out of the film wasn’t quite fully animated, but it was through layout. Sometimes we have to sacrifice some really great work to make that story better; it’s a story that everyone can relate to on some level – it’s about connection.”

Nimona

With a visual style that emulates the concept that computer technology was used to make a hand-drawn film, *Nimona*’s filmmakers led by co-directors Nick Bruno and Troy Quane, aimed to stay true to ND Stevenson’s two-dimensional graphic novel as much as possible. Edited by Randy Trager, ACE, *Nimona* has been classified as a hybrid science-fiction and fantasy project, focusing on the narrative’s hero, Nimona, a teen-aged shapeshifting girl, voiced by Chloë Grace Moretz.



Unquestionably, *Nimona*’s creative team delivered the story in a very hyper-stylized manner, suiting both the dramatic elements and story content, driven by Moretz’s diversified performance. “She gave us so much to work with for any given moment,” says Trager. “She could be devilish or endearing or childish or sarcastic – she gave us all different shades of those. We always really wanted to keep her engaging and have what would come across as an honest portrayal of a person who is not necessarily one thing, whether it’s physically, or even just her personality. We wanted to feel a consistency across these different extremes. The directors were always pushing her, in a good way, to experiment, try things. We came back from these recording sessions with hours and hours of different angles we could go on: 10 to 20 or 30 takes of some performances.”

Created by Annapurna Animation and distributed by Netflix, *Nimona* took Trager two and a half years to edit, mostly from his home in New York, connecting remotely to post house Digital Arts in New York, where the media was stored. One of the film’s main vendors, DNEG, would provide Trager with additional frames of media, as requested. “This action is either a little too fast or too slow,” Trager might have communicated to



DNEG, emphasizing that the most amendments were actuated for *Nimona*’s first act. “Sometimes, they animate to dialogue we have, and then they add some action. Every week, the movie’s different, whether it’s on a micro level, or we cut a scene out of the movie, or combine two scenes, or move a character from one scene to another scene that they were never in before.”

Trager spoke to the movie’s strength being its timeliness. “For people who don’t get representation on screen, this is an opportunity for having some insight in regards to [underrepresented] people and give them a sense of their point of view,” he states. “It’s a story about people trying to understand each other, and, maybe not initially thinking that’s possible, but then it is.”

Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken

At DreamWorks Animation, *Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken* was edited by Michelle Mendenhall and co-directed by Kirk DeMicco and Faryn Pearl. This was a new creative team who had 14 months to complete the project, which involves the female title character who uncontrollably turns into a sea monster when she hits the water.



“It was all rewritten, and the whole thing was re-storyboarded, but we kept the same characters,” Mendenhall says of the new direction undertaken for the project.

“The tone was definitely changed quite a bit – the animation hadn’t started yet. We had three sequences in layout when the director switched, and the art department had established all the looks of all the characters.”

Regarding the central story, Mendenhall related to the Ruby Gillman character and her relationship with her mother. “I have a 16-year-old daughter, so she was 14 when we started,”

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Mendenhall relates. “She’s that really awkward teen that’s also really studious and really into math. There were so many different ways I could relate to that relationship.”

Of note, Mendenhall has worked at DreamWorks on and off since 1998, on films including *Shrek 2* and *Flushed Away*, and was invited to edit *Ruby Gillman* by producer Kelly Cooney.

In one of the film’s memorable subplots, a character who Ruby trusts, Chelsea, turns out to have ulterior motives. “Since we knew that was a pivotal point in the movie,” Mendenhall states, giving her another relationship to nurture in post-production, “we tried different versions where we were trying to see if that could build more tension than we realized. That was definitely an area that we spent a lot of time on, to try to really have it feel like it was impactful.”



Ruby Gillman features vocal performances by Toni Collette as Ruby’s mother, Jane Fonda as her grandmother, and Annie Murphy as Chelsea; Ruby herself is voiced by Lana Condor. “The good thing about Jane Fonda and Toni Collette is every single take is really good – which makes it harder, right?” Mendenhall unveils. “Because then you have to say which one is really the best one! At the same time, you define which one is playing the best against the other one, and they give you such a range that [even a single minor choice] could change the scene so much.”

The Super Mario Bros. Movie

Working at Illumination Entertainment for the past 10 years as the lead marketing editor, Eric Osmond moved into picture editor for 2023’s *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. Most prominently known for the *Despicable Me/Minions* films, Illumination scored another hit when *Super Mario Bros.* earned \$1.36 billion globally.

For *Super Mario Bros.*, the animation was produced in France, with considerable communication between Los Angeles and Paris taking place via Zoom and screening rooms that synced with one another.

“You’re constantly trying to present the best picture that reflects the script and the notes with the material that you have,



and keep it evolving,” Osmond explains. “You can’t ever get too attached – you might have a really solid storyboard cut, and it’s going to change when you get the actors. You first record with the scratch actors, and then it plays completely differently with the real actor. The boards are going to be adjusted; the timing’s going to be adjusted. When you’re happy with that cut, then, it gets approved to go to layout.”

At Illumination, after the locked story reel and layout, the directors of photography for *Super Mario Bros.*, Lorenzo Veracini and James C.J. Williams, assumed creative control of all visuals and planned camera angles. At that juncture, Osmond, who had four additional editors assisting him, remarked that shaping performances became vital, such as that of Princess Peach, voiced by Anya Taylor-Joy.

“In the case of Anya, we wanted her to be a tough princess and hero; we didn’t want her to be the damsel in distress,” Osmond says. “You’re looking for takes that embody that, and she certainly gives it to you. It’s a matter of choosing the ones that fit what you’re after. Typically, there’s a lot of open-mic recording and some ad-libs. I take it all and string it all out – I might have an hour and a half of it, and I start to move it up a level, so I can visually see [the dialogue in the edit]. And when I start cutting the scene from that hour and a half, I can now focus on [moments] that struck me as particularly special.”

In order to audition various takes of a character’s line with the directors, Osmond also creates ‘stacked takes’ of a group of takes which he felt worked for the scene. “The timings don’t have to be perfect,” he says of the stacked takes. “When we agree on which one to go with, I finesse the cut a little bit to fit that in a little more. That’s how we approach it.” **CE**



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The post-production community celebrates editing and examines how the art form will continue to evolve



BY MATT ALLEN

Hundreds of editors, seasoned assistant editors and aspiring filmmakers gathered Aug. 26 at the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank to learn from the best craftspeople in their industry. ACE President Kevin Tent, ACE, kicked off EditFest L.A. 2023 by reminding the audience of the origins of this event that bring together a diverse audience of post-production professionals from not only Southern California, but around the world. “EditFest was created as a way to support ACE and our editorial community during the last writers strike of 2008. And here we are again,” Tent commented.

The event, hosted by master of ceremonies and voice actor Jon Luke Thomas, was headlined by keynote speaker Dana E. Glauberman, ACE. Glauberman, who has been nominated for the Eddie Award multiple times for her work on *Up in the Air*, *Juno*, *Thank You for Smoking* and *The Mandalorian*, shared her editorial wisdom and career path through a Q&A moderated by author Bobbie O’Steen.

“I loved photography and I think there was a moment where I was interested in becoming a cinematographer,” Glauberman explained. “But I remember talking to a neighbor who discouraged me. I remember him specifically saying to me that it’s a really tough business as a woman to get into. So I kept that in the back of my mind, but I got the photography thing from my dad.

“I also loved doing jigsaw puzzles as a kid. I would lay them out in the dining room and get lost in it. Still to this day if I see a jigsaw puzzle sitting on somebody’s table, I’ll sit down and start finding pieces.”

This love for solving puzzles led Glauberman to find her niche in filmmaking. “I went to UC Santa Barbara for undergrad.

I took one film production class and the only thing I liked doing was editing because I was working with my hands. It was Super 8mm. I had a tiny splicer in a room by myself, not in front of a crowd of people. The process took me back to my childhood solving jigsaw puzzles. There is only one way to put a puzzle together, but there are hundreds of ways to cut a movie or TV show together.”

EditFest also featured an all-star panel of editors: Zene Baker, ACE; Dody Dorn, ACE; Michael McCusker, ACE; Evan Schiff, ACE; and Terilyn A. Shropshire, ACE. They shared their approach to action editing on big blockbuster movies. The discussion was moderated by Avid’s Senior Director of Artist Relations Matt Feury who asked the question: “Do you approach editing action differently than cutting a dialogue scene?”

McCusker (*Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*) asserted, “I think the process actually sort of dictates it. Particularly the



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modern process with all of the previs and whatnot. When I did *Ford v Ferrari*, I effectively cut that final race twice. I cut it entirely in previs and then cut it when the footage came in. I can't imagine that they made *Raiders of the Lost Ark* without previs. It's such a big part of what we do and it's why it's so important for an editor to be involved early because we can see if it's going to work and we can actually keep track. We are the hive mind of the movie when they start shooting. But when you're doing so much in the beginning, you have to start that hive mind earlier."

John Wick: Chapter 4 editor Schiff reminded the audience of an important truth about story over spectacle. "Within an action film, a lot of the groundwork that makes the action scene so engaging comes from the dialogue scenes that preceded. All of that setup matters. Action is story."

All the editors agreed that cutting great drama takes longer than cutting action. And good action can play off story points and propel the narrative forward. This was especially evident in the clip of the Oyo Battle from *The Woman King* that editor Shropshire showed the audience.

"If you see the film from the beginning, you witness a lot of character growth and development through what they're physically doing throughout the fight scene. A scene can be both dialogue driven, emotional and action based," Shropshire explained.

"What I love about this scene is that it's a battle where each of these warriors is really discovering who they really are. I liked that there was a lot of character storytelling. And the audience sees things at the beginning of the movie that they're not capable of doing or had some degree of disdain.

For instance, the character of Nawi is given a rope as her first weapon. And she questions, why are you giving me a rope? But, by the time you get to this scene, you begin to see how she has learned to use the rope effectively. I love the scene because it was a fun scene to cut. It was an honor. These women trained so hard for six months to get themselves into physical shape to be able to do what they did."

While the majority of the day was spent diving deep into the craft of editing, the last panel of the day, moderated by Carolyn Giardina of *The Hollywood Reporter*, acknowledged the technological elephant in the room – artificial intelligence. Restriction around the use of AI was one of the major sticking points for the 2023 work stoppage with both the writers and actors. Currently both groups collectively view AI as an existential threat to their crafts, but how does AI impact editors?

Zack Arnold, ACE, is passionate about understanding what makes us human and sets us apart from machines. "My belief is that over the next three to five years, five percent or fewer of specialized careers are going to survive AI. So what we're seeing is the transition from specialization in our economy back to generalization. We were a generalized society for most of human civilization. Then all of a sudden the industrial revolution comes along and for the sake of efficiency, we all became widgets on the assembly line of somebody else's dreams."

AI has created a brand new tool for filmmakers. However, not everyone sees this new tool as a positive. Many with specialized skill sets wonder if they will have a job. The CEO of Runway, Cristóbal Valenzuela, talked about how his company is already changing things dramatically in the world of visual effects and post-production. "Runway is a tool that augments



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workflows. For rotoscoping for example, we have a tool called Green Screen that can segment and do rotoscoping in just a few seconds. So a lot of editors can use that alongside traditional NLEs. We have tools for painting that allow you to remove wires and objects within shots. And we have tools that allow

you to generate videos.” However, any VFX or rotoscoping artist reading this article might wonder, will I still have a job?

Even though the panelists marveled about how far AI has progressed, there was still hope in human filmmakers remaining at the center of the creative process. Arnold commented, “As an editor, the reason I’m not worrying about being replaced anytime soon is one thing. It is ‘the note underneath the note.’ Just imagine you have a cut and there’s an edit button and an executive says do these 10 notes. What a tremendous disaster that would be! It is our job to interpret the note and say, ‘All of this is really stupid!’ However, you have a point, but the reason you think this doesn’t work isn’t this, it’s actually this. Our ability to interpret ‘the note underneath the note’ is the reason that I’m not worried.”

Arnold proposed that our ability to empathize is one of the greatest assets creatives have in the era of AI. “I think one of the most important skills that is so downplayed as editors and creatives in general, is our ability to manage conflict and understand how to get the result and the vision that somebody wants. So if you want to go out and make yourself future proof, get a degree in clinical psychology. You’ll be an editor for decades to come. AI is never going to figure that out.”

The day began with a welcome from Platinum Sponsor Blackmagic Design. That included a short presentation on how Big Picture Ranch has used DaVinci Resolve to edit, mix, color and deliver work.

The following month, EditFest continued with online discussions, including a featured conversation with Hank Corwin, ACE. American Cinema Editors would also like to thank Gold sponsors Avid, the Motion Picture Editors Guild, Runway, Indee, Universal, Netflix and Disney for their support of EditFest 2023. [CE](#)



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IBC 2023

Eddie Hamilton, ACE,
Takes Center Stage
at ACE-Hosted Session

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON



Eddie Hamilton, ACE, was the star attraction at the IBC Show, held last September in Amsterdam, where he talked about the tricks and challenges of cutting fast-paced action during the American Cinema Editors-hosted presentation on IBC's main stage.

The British editor who is currently working on the next film in the *Mission: Impossible* franchise showed clips from his work including a climactic scene from *Top Gun: Maverick*, for which he won an ACE Eddie and earned an Oscar nomination.

He told a thrilled audience that achieving the story and excitement in such action scenes can take months in the cutting room, during the one-on-one conversation with *The Hollywood Reporter's* Carolyn Giardina.

"Our job is to be emotional, visual storytellers," Hamilton said. "As the editor I have to constantly put myself in the audience's point of view, and make sure that every emotional impulse that they're feeling from beginning to end is communicated as clearly as possible."

Hamilton explained that he will edit until it's the right result for the audience. "If it's not working for the audience, we'll cut it out or figure out another way to tell the story more simply and economically. Ultimately, the audience is right."

AI dominates IBC chat

There was one theme that dominated IBC – artificial intelligence. Renard T. Jenkins, president of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, reported that the industry was only just starting on its journey through a decade of massive change. Discussion has turned to practical assessment of the ways this multi-faceted technology can be best introduced and managed. There was little talk at IBC of using Generative AI to create entire movies or series – or of taking editors' jobs. Generally, AI was framed by the tech developers as an editor- and industry-friendly tool to improve efficiency, and in doing so, allow the editor more time to be creative.

Adobe enhances with AI

Adobe showed updates including an AI-powered speech enhancement tool for Premiere Pro. Enhance Speech is designed to allow Premiere Pro users to clean up speech affected by issues such as a poorly placed mic, excessive background noise, low-quality archive footage and more. It uses AI to remove background noise and improve sound quality, with a slider so that users can decide how much of the background noise they want to keep.

In addition, Audio Category Tagging uses AI to determine which clips contain dialogue, which contain music and which are sound effects or ambient noise. When each audio clip is selected, the most relevant tools are automatically displayed.

Its text-based editing tool now includes filler word detection to automatically identify "ums" and "uhs" in dialogue. Users can remove those filler words, pauses or any other unwanted dialogue in one step using bulk delete.

Adobe reported that Premiere Pro also has a number of performance optimizations, new color preferences, improved tone mapping, a new Viewer Gamma option, new consolidated settings in the Lumetri Color panel as well as improved LUT management and relinking. There are also new project templates, custom export locations, a new metadata and timecode burn-in effect and batch selection of markers.

In After Effects, an AI model has been added to the roto brush tool, designed to help separate difficult objects such as overlapping limbs, hair and transparencies from their background.

All of this is in the background of Adobe Firefly, a suite of AI models for GenAI, such as text to image, which are in essence cleared of rights for users to exploit.

Adobe is also a founder of the Content Authenticity Initiative, a cross-industry group uniting in a standards approach to how AI is deployed. "The idea is to surface what is going on with an image, where it was trained, how it was altered to combat

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disinformation and increase transparency,” Kylee Peña, product marketing manager for Adobe explained during an IBC panel. She added that the company was also introducing ‘Do Not Train’ credentials for artists to tag their content.

In related news, file transfer product LucidLink has integrated its Filespaces software with Premiere Pro. This now allows editors to “preemptively cache” the media they need, directly in Premiere Pro. They can either pin just the clips needed within their sequence or if more precision is needed, cache the clip ranges found within their edit.

Deeper Pro Tools and Media Composer interoperability

Avid – which recently closed a deal to be acquired by an affiliate of private equity firm STG for \$1.4 billion – introduced Ada, the company’s branding for its developing AI technology, and tighter integration of Pro Tools with Media Composer.

To the latter, Pro Tools Track Markers are designed to improve the workflow between Avid’s video and audio software, “so teams can have tighter collaboration notes.” Track Markers added to a Media Composer sequence with detailed, color-coded comments will now appear at Pro Tools track positions.

As part of an ongoing partnership with Dolby, Avid previewed Pro Tools with integrated Dolby Atmos Renderer, which is designed to “eliminate complex configurations while mixing immersive sound.” According to the company, users will be able to configure a mix for Dolby Atmos on Pro Tools systems, and with the Dolby Atmos Renderer integration, “Pro Tools sessions will retain all mix data, ensuring users and facilities have compatibility across projects and collaboration.”

In sound, Avid also demonstrated new development efforts to utilize Celemony ARA 2 technology to integrate dialogue editing tool RX Spectral Editor directly into Pro Tools. Avid suggests this could enable users to have a more fluid workflow to repair and clean-up audio, without the need to hop in-and-out of applications.

iPhone to Resolve workflow

Blackmagic Design brought its Resolve post-production software to IBC, and additionally announced several new cameras, among them the Blackmagic Cinema Camera 6K, a digital film camera costing \$2,595 with a full frame 6K sensor and 13 stops of dynamic range. For cloud and mobile work, the camera records both Blackmagic RAW and H.264 proxies at the same time.

The company also announced Blackmagic Camera, an app which adds digital film camera controls to an iPhone. It’s based on the same operating system as Blackmagic’s digital film cameras.

This means users can adjust settings such as frame rate, shutter angle, white balance and ISO; or, record directly to Blackmagic Cloud in 10-bit Apple ProRes files up to 4K. Recording to Blackmagic Cloud Storage and automatically



syncing with DaVinci Resolve lets editors collaborate on Resolve projects, according to Blackmagic. These features are available from the Apple App Store, for free.

“[It] adds professional camera features like frame rate and timecode to the iPhone so customers have similar controls as our professional cameras,” said CEO Grant Petty. “Plus, the Blackmagic Cloud workflow [means] customers can get their footage to the newsroom or post-production studio in minutes. I think it will be really exciting to find out how Blackmagic Camera will change traditional news and post-production workflows.” **CE**

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AHSOKA



Carol Littleton, ACE

Listener, Negotiator, Artist

On the occasion of her Academy Honorary Award, which will be presented during January's Governors Awards, Carol Littleton, ACE, reviews her career from meeting Hal Ashby to editing *E.T.* and working with Jonathan Demme

BY BOBBIE O'STEEN

When Carol Littleton, ACE, got the call that she was to receive an Academy Honorary Award from the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences she said, with characteristic modesty, "They must have made a mistake."

Only two other editors, also women – Margaret Booth, ACE, and Anne V. Coates, ACE – had received this honor. Littleton's matter-of-fact ironic response: "Well, women have not had too much recognition; there are certain things that have remained constant."

She adds, "I hope this honorary Oscar becomes an incentive for below-the-line Governors to honor their members' work. It's very important that the people who make movies – and I'm talking about cinematographers, editors, art directors, costume designers, hair and makeup artists – that these disciplines be represented in meaningful ways, that they be awarded places on important committees."

Littleton herself was on the Board of Governors for 12 years, is currently on the Film Editors Branch Executive Committee, and was also on the committee for the Academy's In Memoriam tribute: "I was passionate about getting editors included, acknowledged for a lifetime of filmmaking." In addition, she was on American Cinema Editors' Board of Directors for many years. Littleton knows editors are "by nature listeners and negotiators; we don't particularly want to stir things up." But stir things up she did, in her inimitable way.

Littleton began her journey in L.A. as an editor with an entry-level position at Richard Einfeld's post-production company, where she met editor/director Hal Ashby "whose editing discipline left a deep impression on me." Ashby was one of many who tried to get her into the Editors Guild. MPEG was, as Littleton calls it, "Ossified and raft with nepotism."

There was an enormous, qualified workforce in Hollywood, but the union's closed shop blocked most from joining. It crippled

so many young, qualified editors." She decided to start her own post-production company, while never giving up on her dream. She finally did get into the Editors Guild when one of her commercial clients signed a union contract; but as a new member, she was thwarted by its seniority rules.

Then, opportunity arrived: She was offered her first union job by filmmaking team Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck on *French Postcards*. Littleton told a mixer at Todd-AO about her good fortune; his response was, "Don't do it. You're a successful commercial editor; you've got a growing company. If you edit features, you'll be taking jobs from men, men who have wives and children." Littleton says, "It was a turning point for me. That comment exposed what I was facing as a young woman and aspiring film editor."

Littleton soon became active in the union and eventually president of MPEG. During her tenure from 1988 to 1991, the union drafted an entirely new constitution and by-laws, which dramatically opened up its membership; later, as vice-president, she helped set in motion the eventual merging of the Los Angeles, New York and Chicago locals under a national umbrella. Her impact was seismic and she was ultimately called the 'Silent Revolutionary.' "I don't feel we were necessarily silent," she says. "We had to find practical ways to resolve systemic problems."

Littleton's self-determination was rooted in her upbringing. When she was a child her father told her, "Nobody helps you. You've got to decide what you want to do in life; figure it out for yourself and just do it." Littleton also developed a devotion to nature from growing up in rural Oklahoma. When AMPAS interviewed her for their archives, she added two items to her impressive career timeline: "Walked the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain" and "Walked two legs of the Chemin de Saint Jacques in France."

Those restorative, medieval walks reveal her passion for a life lived meaningfully as well as her deep appreciation

“



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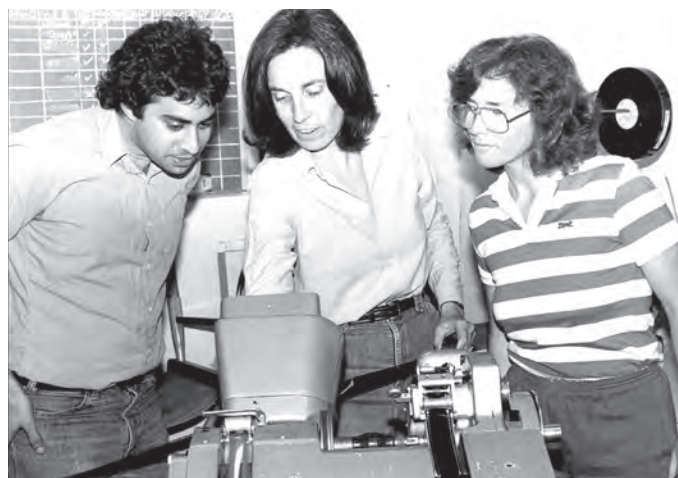
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for the arts which is inseparable from her work. Her love of literature originated with her mother, an accomplished pianist and organist. During her adolescence and later as a university student, Littleton excelled at the oboe. As a result, she spent her junior year in Paris and later another year in Paris with a Fulbright Scholarship where she serendipitously met the great love of her life, John Bailey, ASC, who sadly passed away Nov. 10. They both shared a passion for film and Bailey went on to achieve great success as a cinematographer, with their careers intertwining on many films – all while enjoying a marriage that continued to thrive after 52 years.

Although Littleton was discouraged in her early years, even by fellow editors (“The work is too competitive for women” was one classic line) she would soon enjoy a partnership of another sort with director/writer Lawrence Kasdan – and finally experience an upside to being female.

When she interviewed with Kasdan for his directorial debut on *Body Heat*, he said he wanted to hire a woman because, as Littleton explains, “Larry felt that a woman editor would naturally interpret the sexual scenes erotically, knowing that innuendo is more powerful than anything explicit.”

Kasdan was also impressed that she picked up on his screenplay’s extraordinary sense of humor and stylish, film noir dialogue. Littleton’s experience as a musician heightens her ability to listen closely. “While editing, you have to be sensitive to the rhythm of language as much as the rhythm of song.”



In the next four decades, Littleton and Kasdan would share a fulfilling collaboration on eight other films including *The Big Chill*, *Silverado* and *The Accidental Tourist*. Littleton talks about him in a way that many apply to her. “He has integrity and humanity as a person and a filmmaker; those two qualities are inseparable.”


After *Body Heat*, Littleton’s next editorial adventure was beloved classic *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* for director Steven Spielberg, which earned her Oscar, BAFTA and Eddie nominations. Littleton, typically, focused on the intimacy of the story. “It was our task to make E.T. believable as a real character. Let’s face it, it was a puppet, a piece of rubber, with a bunch of pneumatic tubes attached. My primary task was selecting the moments that made the connections between E.T. and Elliott ring true.”

Littleton forged a special bond with writer/director Robert Benton on *Places in the Heart*, which took place in a small Texas town during the Depression. “It’s closest to a biographical statement about where I’m from. On the surface, you may have thought they were simple country people, but I know those people who strive to be honorable, compassionate and to have a meaningful life.” She was brave enough to trust the power of the tableau shots, reflecting a time and place where, as she says, “time slows and your pulse lowers.”

She describes director Jonathan Demme, for whom she would edit several films, such as 2004’s *The Manchurian Candidate*, which she co-edited with Craig McKay, ACE, as full of life. “I loved working with him because he is an optimist to the very marrow of his bones.” When she ventured into television, she won an Emmy for the acclaimed *Tuesdays with Morrie* starring Jack Lemmon and an Eddie for *All the Way* with Bryan Cranston. Whatever the nature of the project, she has always been attracted to authentic characters and stories with directors who have the courage of their convictions.

My connection to Littleton began when music editor Suzana Peric insisted we meet, explaining that Littleton reminded her of my late husband Sam O’Steen. “They both give grace to their profession. It’s their security in who they are that allows them to give space and confidence to all around them. And in all the craziness, the essential ingredient is a wicked sense of humor.”

But my story is not unique. Her warmth, kindness and generosity of spirit have made her an indelible mentor, friend and fierce advocate for so many. And, by example, she makes you a better person than you ever thought possible.

In 2010, I saw Littleton most deservedly receive the Fellowship and Service Award from MPEG. In her acceptance speech she recounted a scenario familiar to many in the room: She and her crew were working late at night and the production offered them a meal – pizza – acting as if it were a magnanimous gesture. “But cold pizza is not a meal,” she declared, “It’s an insult!” Laughter filled the room. Such a Littleton moment. In that evening’s program, Kasdan wrote, “I wildly underestimated the influence Littleton would have on me ... She has been my teacher, moral touchstone, slave driver, confidante and friend ... she is the perfect companion. I will never know any better.” 

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST FILM EDITING - GREG LEVITAN, ACE



"AN AUDIOVISUAL TREAT"
MANUEL BETANCOURT, THE A.V. CLUB



**"MUTANT MAYHEM SHOOTS THE VIEWER OUT OF A CANNON AND
RELENTLESSLY PROPELS THEM THROUGH A WORLD OF CREATIVITY"**
JAY LEDBETTER, AWARDS WATCH



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA
TURTLES
MUTANT
MAYHEM

John Bailey, ASC



“
John will
forever
live in
my heart.”

Former Academy President John Bailey, ASC passed away Friday, November 10, in Los Angeles. He was 81.

“It is with deep sadness I share with you that my best friend and husband, John Bailey, passed away peacefully in his sleep early this morning. During John’s illness, we reminisced how we met 60 years ago and were married for 51 of those years. We shared a wonderful life of adventure in film and made many long-lasting friendships along the way. John will forever live in my heart,” said his wife, Carol Littleton, ACE.

“All of us at the Academy are deeply saddened to learn of John’s passing,” said Academy CEO Bill Kramer and Academy President Janet Yang. “John was a passionately engaged member of the Academy and the film community. He served as our President and as an Academy governor for many years and played a leadership role on the Cinematographers Branch. His impact and contributions to the film community will forever be remembered. Our thoughts and support are with Carol at this time.”

Bailey’s career spanned nearly five decades. He worked on films such as *Ordinary People*, *The Big Chill*, *Silverado*, *The Accidental Tourist*, *Groundhog Day*, *In the Line of Fire*, *As Good as It Gets*, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* and *Must Love Dogs*.

He was a member of the Cinematographers Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences since 1981, serving 15 years as an Academy governor and two terms as Academy President from 2017-2019, making him the first cinematographer to hold the position of president.

During his tenure as governor, he was vice president and chair of the Preservation and History Committee. He also served on the Academy Museum Board of Trustees and on several Academy committees, including the Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting, Film Scholar and Grants, International Outreach, the Science and Technology Council, Membership Screenings and In Memoriam committees, as well as the former Foreign Language Film Award Executive Committee. He also served as the Academy’s representative on the Library of Congress’ National Film Preservation Board.

Bailey was a member of the American Society of Cinematographers, serving as secretary and vice president on its board of governors. He served on the juries of the Venice Film Festival, Aspen Shortsfest and Poland’s EnergaCAMERIMAGE Film Festival. In November 2014, he received the Ojai Film Festival Lifetime Achievement Award, and was honored by the American Society of Cinematographers with its Lifetime Achievement Award in February 2015. In 2019, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the EnergaCAMERIMAGE Film Festival.

A cinematographer since 1978, Bailey began his career as an assistant cameraman on the 1971 film *Two Lane Blacktop*.

He is survived by his wife Carol Littleton, an Oscar-nominated film editor and former Academy governor. A memorial service will be held at a future date. The family requests in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Academy Foundation in memory of John Bailey. [CE](#)



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM – DRAMA
EDDIE HAMILTON, ACE

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

DEAD RECKONING
PART ONE

SKYDANCE

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John Duffy, ACE
1953 – 2023

John Duffy, ACE – known for his work on series including *Tour of Duty*, *Monk* and *Ray Donovan*, as well as miniseries *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey* – passed away on July 24 with his family by his side at his home in West Los Angeles.

He was born on May 21, 1953, to Marlene and John Duffy, who was in the U.S. Air Force, and so the family moved several times. He graduated from Long Beach High School where he met his future wife, Lesley. It was at the University of Southern Mississippi where he developed his love of film. He was inspired by a wonderful teacher, Col. Laurence Albers. With a Master's Degree in Cinema, Albers made films in the Air Force and passed on his skills to his students. Duffy received undergraduate and graduate degrees from the university. During that time he won the 1977 ACE Student Editing Award.


He met Richard Halsey, ACE (*Rocky*) at the Eddies that year, where the editor encouraged Duffy with his career. He and Lesley moved to West Hollywood, and Duffy began working for Lon Bender at Gomillion Sound and later at Soundelux. He became a sound editor on such shows as *The White Shadow* and *Jumpin' Jack Flash*. (During this time he also played guitar in a band.)

Duffy moved into picture editing in 1981 and cut such shows as *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, *Traffic* and *Snoops*. He also did features including *Turbulence* and *Point Break*. Lesley assisted him for 10 years.

He was nominated for five ACE Eddie Awards, two Emmys and a CableACE Award. For his sound work he was nominated for four MPSE Golden Reel Awards and one Emmy. Duffy loved editing, and in 2008 was inducted into the University of Southern Mississippi School of Mass Communication and Journalism Hall of Fame.

When digital editing came along, he was quick to master the Avid. That system was essential for his work on *Cosmos* on which he worked with Brannon Braga, Ann Druyan and Seth MacFarlane. He retired in September of 2022.

Editing has lost an important member of our profession with the passing of John Duffy. He will be missed.

He is survived by his wife, Lesley; sons Jay and Michael; brothers Mark, Steve and Brian; and a sister, Linda. 

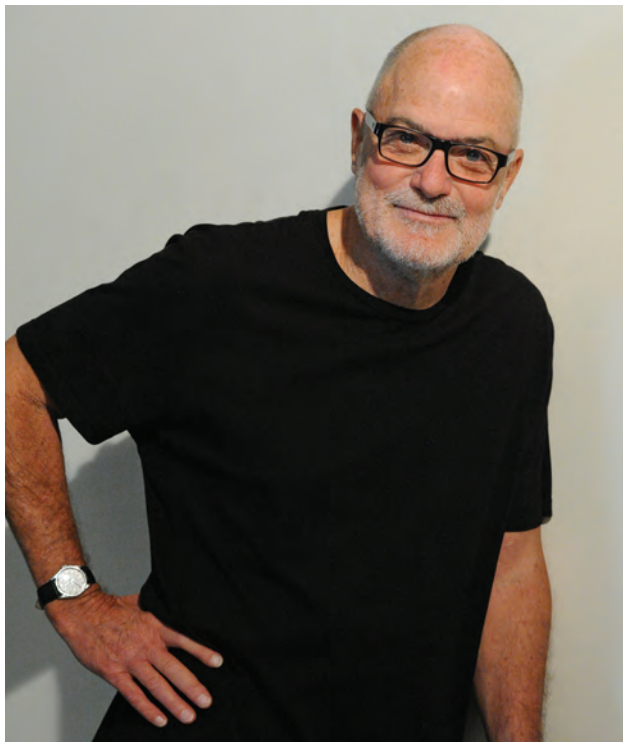
– JACK TUCKER, ACE



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM – DRAMA
JOEL NEGRON, ACE
WILLIAM GOLDENBERG, ACE

TRANSFORMERS

RISE OF THE BEASTS



Doug Ibold, ACE
1940 – 2023

Doug Ibold, ACE, an Emmy- and Eddie-Award nominated editor who served on the ACE board for nearly two decades, died on Nov. 8 after a battle with cancer. He will be greatly missed by his fellow editors. Doug loved filmmaking and during his career he additionally worked on productions as a director and cinematographer.

Doug is famous for editing both the pilot of *Law & Order* and *Law & Order SVU*. He stayed with the latter show for six years and was with the former for nine years. He sometimes felt guilty that he didn't have to go out and find work like most editors because he had a steady job.

After college, Doug was drafted into the army during the Vietnam War where a friend suggested he get into

television when he was released from duty. That was easier said than done. He had no experience so no-one wanted to hire him. He finally got a job at an educational television station where he learned the basics of film production. It was a great education to him as he worked as cameraman, sound recordist and director. This led to a job as a live television director at a CBS affiliate in Florida.

Bored with the routine and inspired by the film *Easy Rider*, Doug quit and went on a cross-country trip ending up in Ohio where he had filmmaker friends. Together they formed a company called Butterfly Films. George Harrison recommended them to John Lennon who hired them to help complete a film to accompany his album, *Imagine*. He and his companions ended up shooting a lot of footage around New York in the guerrilla style of John and Yoko.

After that they got a job shooting for the Rolling Stones. He learned the power of editing when he messed up a documentary he was filming but was able to fix it in the editing room with a few pickup shots and a narrator. "It was then that I realized the power of editing and how much fun it was," Doug explained.

Ibold moved to L.A. where he was a complete unknown. Fortunately, he was friends with Don Bellisario who hired him on *Quincy, M.E.* When Bellisario created *Magnum, P.I.* he brought Ibold with him. This led to *Miami Vice*. It was there that he met Dick Wolf for whom he edited four pilots. One of them was *Law & Order SVU*. When it went to series, Doug signed on for six and a half years.

In 2006 Doug retired from Wolf and hung up his scissors. He was nominated for Eddie Awards three times and once for an Emmy. He also made feature films like *Off Limits*, *The Break* and *The Capture of Bigfoot*.

After retiring he was hired by the USC School of Cinematic Arts to pass on what he had learned in the industry. His students were fortunate to have such experienced a teacher who once said, "Experiment all you want and if it works go with it. It's incredibly satisfying when I see the light bulb go on in a student's mind and they really get it."

We have lost a comrade and a lover of our craft. He will be greatly missed. **CE** – JACK TUCKER, ACE



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM – COMEDY

DAN LEBENTAL, ACE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

HONOR AMONG THIEVES



Arthur “Artie” R. Schmidt 1937 - 2023

Artie Schmidt, ACE – a two-time Oscar winner for Robert Zemeckis’ *Forrest Gump* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* – died peacefully on Aug. 5 at his home in Santa Barbara. He was 86. Born in Hollywood, Artie followed in the footsteps of his father, Arthur P. Schmidt (*Some Like It Hot*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Sabrina*), who died while Artie was living in Spain, teaching ESL. He returned to Los Angeles for the funeral, and a few months later, at a loss for a job, his father’s assistants offered him an apprenticeship. And so began the early years of learning the trade. At the time, it took almost as much time to become an editor as it did a doctor: first an apprenticeship, then at least eight years as an assistant editor.

Throughout his remarkable 30+ year career, Artie’s work touched the hearts of countless moviegoers worldwide. He had a long collaboration with Zemeckis over nine films including *Forrest Gump*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, the *Back to the Future* trilogy, *Cast Away* and *Contact*. Artie also worked with director Mike Nichols editing *The Birdcage* and *Primary Colors*.

Other notable films he edited included *Coal Miner’s Daughter*, for which he was nominated for an Oscar; *Last of the Mohicans*, *Addams Family Values*, *Death Becomes Her* and *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (for which he was one of three co-editors

who won on Eddie). His editing of the TV movie *The Jericho Mile* earned him an Emmy. He served on the Board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and in 2009 was presented ACE’s Career Achievement Award.

Artie never forgot his early struggles in the film industry and those who mentored him in his early years, editors like Dede Allen, ACE, and Jim Clark. Artie continued that tradition by mentoring and encouraging many young aspiring filmmakers, wherever he met them – in the editing room, at film schools or film festivals.

Talking to them about editing, his most frequent mantra was “keep it simple.” Others were: “Don’t manipulate, the footage tells you how to cut; listen to the film rather than imposing your own ideas or ‘style’; a bad cut can be as offensive as a missed beat in a symphony; editing is the final rewrite; cuts should remain invisible to the eye – but I want you to feel their impact.”

A strong believer in the benefits of a good education, Artie supported his school, Notre Dame High School, Sherman Oaks, and his alma mater, Santa Clara University, and talked to their film and theater student groups. He would also encourage them to have a well rounded life: “Read, go to the theater, museums, look at art, travel.” He always seemed to be reading six books at once: The combined height of the various piles of books on his bedside table once clocked in at 32 inches.

Aside from his stellar filmography, his family, friends, collaborators and fans will remember him for his kindness, warmth and genuine goodness. He always said what he thought, and was incapable of telling a lie: After a rather disastrous preview, we couldn’t answer the phone for days, because he knew his mother would be calling to see how it went, but everyone involved had been sworn to secrecy. His dry wit would get laughs in a tense editing room or over a shared meal with colleagues and family.

Artie and his wife, Susan, shared a love of travel, especially to Italy, and loved the arts and the opera. He and his wife supported Santa Barbara’s Music Academy of the West, as well as the Los Angeles Opera.

For almost 25 years, he loved hosting his large family at his home for Thanksgiving. He was a great cook.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Susan; his brothers, Fr. Ron Schmidt and Gregory Schmidt; four nieces and four nephews (editors and filmmakers among them) and many cousins and family members.

Writes his family: As we bid farewell to Artie, we find solace in the indelible mark he left on the world of cinema and the countless fond memories his friends and colleagues have shared with us. He is dearly missed by his family, friends and all those whose lives he touched.

Rest in peace, dear Artie. We love you. 

“THE BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR.”

Leonard Maltin



“**The Holdovers**’ retro production title, popping sound, dissolved editing, and grainy cinematography make it look and feel like it was made during the ’70s.”

The Cinema Dispatch

The Holdovers

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IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

BEST PICTURE

BEST FILM EDITING

KEVIN TENT ACE



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WRITTEN BY **DAVID HEMINGSON**

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DIRECTED BY **ALEXANDER PAYNE**

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{CUTS WE LOVE}

BODY HEAT

1981 / Directed by Lawrence Kasdan / Edited by Carol Littleton, ACE

BY BOBBIE O'STEEN (with portions reprinted from
2009's *The Invisible Cut* with permission by author O'Steen)



Body Heat, written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan, pays homage to film noir movies of the '40s. Says editor Carol Littleton, ACE, "We wanted to speak to our generation with a neo-noir film." In its '80s incarnation, the femme fatale Matty (Kathleen Turner) is even more aggressive and calculating in the way she uses her sexuality to manipulate the hapless Ned (William Hurt) into murdering her husband.

The set up for the pivotal scene where Ned succumbs to Matty's seduction occurs during a steamy midsummer night. He meets her at a bar and she tells him about the wind chimes in her house, how they make her cool. He asks to see them, and she reluctantly agrees, but warns him he will be disappointed. When Ned arrives at her house, Matty shows him the chimes, tells him he must leave and openly kisses him, then suddenly says she's too "weak" to resist him and heads inside, closing the door behind him. He walks to his car and the camera booms down on him, as he struggles to decide what to do. "The crane shot is a tribute to noir style," says Littleton. (frames 1, 2)



Frame 1



Frame 2



Frame 3



Frame 4

She cuts to three shots of the chimes, each one a closer angle, as their sound crescendos, echoing the sounds of longing in Ned's head. Littleton describes it as "a siren luring him back." (frames 3, 4, 5) The following tight close-up of Ned, again shooting down, underlines his powerlessness and fever, with Littleton purposely holding on the shot for a long time before cutting out on his move off screen: "It's liberating, seductive," she explains. (frame 6) Ned tries the door. Matty has locked it. He looks at her, framed in the bejeweled door, like the prize he cannot have. (frame 7)



Frame 5



Frame 6



Frame 7



Frame 8



Frame 9

Originally the intention was to continue to shoot across Ned outside the house toward Matty, pacing back and forth until he picks up a chair, smashes through the door and grabs her. "It was planned to be one seamless Steadicam shot. When we got the film back from the lab, it was completely streaked with a few usable sections. The Steadicam's gyro malfunctioned," Littleton explains. "I suggested to Larry that I go through the footage and cut together the sections of each take that were un-streaked. We couldn't reshoot the scene, because the house was scheduled for the wrecking ball in a few days. But with limited time on the set, we shot coverage of Matty through the panes, in different image sizes. Then we took the windows and door back to L.A. to shoot the reverse angles on the soundstage using them as foreground pieces and I knitted the angles together to show Ned's break-in efficiently."



Frame 10



Frame 11



Frame 12



Frame 13

Littleton intercut what was now three points of view: Matty shot through the panes, medium and close, Ned looking at her past those “foreground pieces” (curtains and blinds) and the Steadicam shots. (frames 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15) Littleton effectively turned a problem into an asset, increasing suspense and engagement. After Ned smashes the glass door (frame 16) comes a defining editing moment, which clearly reveals Littleton’s female sensibility. “I chose one of the biggest reaction shots of Matty when she gasps.” (frame 17)



Once the tension is unleashed, Matty takes the initiative, kissing him, running her hands down his back. (frames 19, 20) Then she turns around, as if to say “look at me.” (frame 21) This is followed by angles of “her long legs, long torso. There’s something very dangerous ... a stylish noir shot up at the ceiling, so beautiful,” says Littleton. (frames 22, 23)



“The [following] reflection of the action in the windows showing both of them on the floor is the most voyeuristic of all the angles,” explains Littleton. (frame 24) There was more graphic footage available for the subsequent shot of them inside the house but “there was a definitive decision not to show too much.” (frame 25) One shot in particular was not Littleton’s choice: “I did not like the close-up of the panties placed in the foreground,” she says, “but Larry loved it. He said it’s a guy thing.” (frame 26) The next two close shots of Matty and Ned are highly evocative, since the audience can only imagine what he sees and she is experiencing (frames 27, 28) The high shot of Matty that follows (frame 29) “was a little posey,” says Littleton, but also necessary as a transition to the headboard after which the camera pans down to the lovers in bed. (frame 30)



“Before we previewed the film, we thought if the audience can buy the ‘breaking in’ scene, we’ll be okay, but if there’s a laugh when he forces his way in by crashing through the glass door, grabbing her, throwing her to the ground, and seducing her ... we will have a definite problem,” Littleton remembers. “We did not anticipate that the next scene would be the problem. The audience laughed when Matty said something to the effect of: ‘I didn’t want this to happen.’ She did want it to happen, of course, she wanted to be seduced, so we had to omit the dialogue. She reaches for him under the sheets, groping him, and we cut to daylight and Ned walking across the street with a self-satisfied look. We never read Ned’s attitude as being particularly funny, but it was a huge laugh.” (frame 31)



She adds, “I think the audience was unbelievably uncomfortable with the last moment of the scene when Matty gropes Ned ... and then, with the cut to daylight, the tension was broken, and the audience was relieved.” [CE](#)



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