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

# 

# THE EDDIE AWARDS ISSUE

#### FEATURING

EMILIA PÉREZ **DUNE: PART TWO** THE BRUTALIST **SEPTEMBER 5** SUPER/MAN: THE CHRÍSTOPHER **REEVE STORY** 

PLUS

Golden Eddie Honoree JON M. CHU

Career Achievement Honorees PAUL HIRSCH, ACE MAYSIE HOY, ACE

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# ACADEMY AWARD' NOMINATIONS-BEST FILM EDITING MYRON KERSTEIN ACE





# CREATURES, CLOUDS AND COLLABORATION: How Joseph Kahn's Monster Horror Comedy "ICK" Was created



It is tough to stand out at the Toronto International Film Festival. It is even harder to stand out in the horror film community, which is arguably the most active, talked about, watched and dissected film genre. Joseph Kahn's "Ick" did both.

"Ick" tells the story of the American town of Eastbrook that for 20 years has ignored a creeping vine growth which eventually evolves and attacks. Starring Brandon Routh and Mena Suvari, the film is a mix of over the top horror, comedy, alien invasion and satire. It mixes practical effects with state of the art VFX, and the scares are both gross and funny at the same time.

Grammy award winner Joseph Kahn, who wrote and directed the film, is known for amazing visuals and high paced action, having shot some of the most iconic music videos of the past decade, including a large number of Taylor Swift's videos.

Kahn is also a director that jumps into every part of the production and post process. He even created VFX mockups of shots for both the DP and the editor, who were both on set right by his side. So mix Kahn's frantic style, the need to give viewers the highest quality scares (because you do not want the horror community to feel that your town-folk killing goo is not up to their very high killing goo standards), a tight budget and schedule, a shoot in Houston, Texas with post production in LA, and it was clear the filmmakers had to be as efficient as possible.

"Ick" was shot by Cinematographer David Weldon, with post production split between Editor Chancler Haynes, working from Houston during principal photography and from Los Angeles after, and Assistant Editors Edward Schroer and Sam Cook, who worked from different locations in Los Angeles. Color correction was done by Walter Volpatto of Picture Shop.

Remote collaboration and blurring the lines between production and post was essential to the success of the film. To do this, DaVinci Resolve Studio, Blackmagic Cloud, Blackmagic Cloud Store Mini 8TB and Blackmagic Cloud Pod network storage solutions were instrumental, which were used along with Blackmagic URSA Mini Pro 12K OLPF and Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 6K digital film cameras.



### ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF THE **DAVINCI RESOLVE STUDIO AND BLACKMAGIC CLOUD WORKFLOW** WAS HELPING HAYNES MANAGE THE FILM'S MORE THAN 1,000 VFX SHOTS.

Weldon, who has shot dozens of music videos, TV series and films, knew what Kahn needed. "It was a bit like shooting a music video in terms of a fast paced set, and Joseph having a specific vision for every part of the film. It could have been a typical 'town in trouble and people aren't listening leading to doom' monster film, but we made it unique, using the form factor of Blackmagic cameras to find creative shots, placing the cameras in tight spaces, along with utilizing the dual native ISO of the cameras to move quickly on set.

We were also shooting in anamorphic for the entire film, and the ability to shoot in 8K also gave us flexibility for punch ins and adjustments if we needed them in post. There were many shots that were being built in a 3D environment, taking what we did on greenscreen and giving that to the VFX team in 8K to build with. This allowed for a lot of detail to go back into those shots."

Getting the footage they needed was just one part of the puzzle. This was a film where the editor was onset, and every part of post had to be collaborative. Haynes used Blackmagic Cloud with Kahn, the rest of the editing team in LA and Weldon. "Ick" was Haynes' first time editing an entire feature film in DaVinci Resolve Studio. He worked directly with Kahn in Houston. "Joseph is a filmmaker that is very far thinking. As an editor, you need to figure out how to get to where he wants to go, and being able to collaborate with him using Resolve and Blackmagic Cloud was a huge creative help.

Kahn would often use DaVinci Resolve Studio's Fusion page and its DaVinci Neural Engine Al features to mock up how he envisioned VFX scenes. He then shared these with the editing team using Blackmagic Cloud Pod and Blackmagic Cloud.

"The collaboration workflow just worked. Simple and helpful and we didn't need to have an IT person on set. The Cloud Pod let Joseph be hands on with his edits. He could duplicate sequences and easily send them to me," Haynes explained.

"From an assistant editor's perspective, Resolve and Blackmagic Cloud made it so easy for Chancler to be working, and then bring Sam and myself in immediately to review. There was no break in the creativity," Schroer explained. One of the advantages of the DaVinci Resolve Studio and Blackmagic Cloud workflow was helping Haynes manage the film's more than 1,000 VFX shots. He explained, "I was tracking a lot of VFX shots, and stepping into these sequences was great with the Cloud Store Minis. I was getting VFX shots from five different vendors and just added them right into Dropbox with the Cloud Store Mini workflow."

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#### Cover (From top): Karla Sofia Gascón, Zoe Saldaña, Selena Gomez. Photos by Shanna Besson. ©Page 114 - Why Not Productions - Pathé Films - France 2 Cinéma. ©2024 Netflix, Inc.

### ACADEMY AWARD INCLUDING BEST FILM EDITING NOMINATIONS NOMINATIONS NOMINATIONS NOMINATIONS

ACEEDDIE AWARD NOMINEE BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM



# "A STUNNING CINEMATIC ACHIEVEMENT"

Directed by Edward Berger





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### **MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD**



ello, fellow editors and editing fans around the globe. How is it possible we are already knee-deep into 2025? It's been a bit of an ominous start to the year with the catastrophic fires that have ravaged Southern California. My thoughts go out to all of those who suffered any kind of loss during the firestorms, and I hope you have found the support needed to pick up the pieces and begin to move forward. I have been impressed with the outreach of my fellow peers toward one another, showing care and concern for those living in or near the target areas who suffered any kind of loss. That camaraderie is inspiring and what I wish for within our ACE community.

Let's keep up that spirit of support in these turbulent times because not only have we been contending with Mother Nature this year, but the industry itself is still in recovery mode. Sadly, I know way too many people are still struggling to get back to work. It's hard to know what our new normal will be as the industry takes its sweet time figuring it out. For myself, I try to stay positive because I know that people still love to watch stories unfold on both the big and small screen. After over a century of capturing audiences and mesmerizing them with the spectacle of cinema, the industry will persevere.

At the time this issue went to press, we were in the process of reimagining and rescheduling the ACE Eddie Awards in response to the fires. In this issue, you can read about our special honorees: Golden Eddie recipient Jon M. Chu and Career Achievement Award honorees Paul Hirsch, ACE, and Maysie Hoy, ACE. Congratulations go out to all the 2025 Eddie nominees in every category for all of your dedication and hard work. To have been recognized by your peers is a major achievement and makes you a winner!

This issue also includes coverage of *Emilia Pérez*, *Dune: Part 2*, *September 5*, *The Brutalist* and *Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story* It's always great to take a deep dive into what goes into constructing some of the year's most honored movies.

You will also see pictures from one of our most popular events of the year – the ACE Holiday Party! There were over 600 partygoers in attendance, and once again, the potato and ice cream bars were big hits. We also had a great showing of 61 of the 90 newest members present to collect their ACE plaques. At least the new members were kind enough to listen to me try to talk over the festive noisy crowd! Thank you and congratulations to all of last year's new members.

We hope you took advantage of the ACE Screening Room during the awards season. It is getting better and better each year. Thanks to everyone who helps make this happen for our members. It's a wonderful way to watch shows so we can make informed decisions during voting time.

Enjoy this first issue of 2025. Remember to be kind. Be respectful. And cut, cut, cut!

- ACE PRESIDENT SABRINA PLISCO, ACE

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#### **FX CONGRATULATES OUR** 75TH ANNUAL ACE EDDIE AWARDS NOMINEES





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BEST EDITED SINGLE-CAMERA COMEDY SERIES EP 301 "TOMORROW" JOANNA NAUGLE, ACE



FX WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

BEST EDITED SINGLE-CAMERA COMEDY SERIES EP 603 "SLEEP HYPNOSIS" LIZA CARDINALE, ACE | DANE MCMASTER, ACE



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BEST EDITED DRAMA SERIES EP 110 "A DREAM OF A DREAM" MARIA GONZALES, ACE | AIKA MIYAKE





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BEST EDITED NON-SCRIPTED SERIES EP 305 "TEMPORARY" TIM WILSBACH, ACE | STEVE WELCH, ACE | MICHAEL BROWN MICHAEL OLIVER | TIM ROCHE | MATT WAFAIE JENNY KROCHMAL | MOHAMED EL MANASTERLY



## WHAT'S NEW

#### LIFE LESSONS

The Life Lessons column was created for veteran ACE life members to share their personal musings, views and recollections about their experiences in our business. This quarter's column is written by Michael Ornstein, ACE.

The Gettysburg Address delivered by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 consisted of just 272 words. It is remembered today as one of the most concise and powerful speeches ever delivered and was a pivotal moment in the history of our country. Sometimes though, it only takes one single word to describe a situation. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Early in my career as an ambitious young assistant looking to move up to the editor's seat, like most of us I would cut anything that I could get my hands on, paid or not. I cut student films, documentaries, shorts, trailers, films for theme park rides. I even directed and cut a training film for the phone company promoting use of the telephone book (that tells you how long ago this was). It didn't have much of a plot but it did have a great cast of characters!

Eventually though, through a fluke, I did land my first legit editing job on a network series. I had developed a friendship with the line producer of a low (read "no") budget feature and we both got fired (also a good experience for an upcoming editor, but that's another column). He was friends with a producer on a new series at Universal, *Miami Vice*. You may have heard of it. Well this bond of fire and blood led him to recommend me and I got the job! Why? I'm not sure but I was young, knew my rock n' roll and threw in a little bit of bullshit. Oh, and did I mention ambitious? It was a trial by fire but I was finally ready.

Four seasons later and I was really ready. Ready to leave after those challenging years of late nights, weekends, crazy schedules and once with an air-date just days away, last minute picture changes given on the dub stage while the negative was being cut! Yes, this was on old-school film, celluloid, silver nitrate. It was time to move on.

I had an agent by this time and had set my sights on a career in big-time features. My agent had secured me several interviews and again I found myself on another low-budget indie. But this one was a comedy! Something new and different for me, something to expand my toolbox. I thought, "Hey, I'm a funny guy, I can do this!"

The film was called *Dead Men Don't Die*. Heard of it? I didn't think so. It was written and directed by a gentleman named Malcolm Marmorstein. Mal was a first time director but had written many episodes of the *Dark Shadows* television series and the feature *Pete's Dragon* some years before. The film starred Elliott Gould as a TV anchorman who witnesses a big drug deal going down in the parking garage of his office building (convenient, no? ... well it was low budget). He is murdered by the gang but is quickly found by the building's Haitian cleaning lady who is a Voodoo priestess in her spare time, played by the very funny Mabel King. Through her magic she resurrects him as a zombie. Gould was very funny delivering the newscast as a zombie and his co-anchor, played by Melissa Sue Anderson, didn't even seem to notice! The humor is light and silly but there are some good laughs as this trio tries to crack the drug ring and "get the story."

Though a freshman director Mal did a good job behind the camera and his long experience as a writer served him well. Things went smoothly as we began to work our way through the director's cut but as so often happens in the editing process, when other voices start to chime in is when complications arise. One other thing to know about Mal is that he spoke German. For those who don't know that language, it often uses some very long words. The reason for this seems to be a reluctance to create new ones so they combine words already on hand to express new meanings.

We've all had the experience in the editing room of getting notes from studios, networks, producers, producers' relatives, relative strangers and other assorted passersby. Often their removal from the project gives us good insight, sometimes it can be a change that is just ... different. Not better, just different. And occasionally they fall into the category that Mal called "schlecterverbesservung." The closest translation in English means "improvement that makes things worse." It is so apt, so delightful, so perfect for what we often experience in our careers and it has stayed with me for all these years. For years afterwards I had that word posted on the wall of my editing room. Funny thing though, very few people asked what it meant.



#### CAMERIMAGE

William Goldenberg, ACE, received the Camerimage Award for an Editor on Nov. 23 during the closing ceremony of the 32nd EnergaCamerimage festival in Toruń, Poland. Goldenberg won an Oscar for Ben Affleck's *Argo* and earned additional nominations for *The Insider*, *Seabiscuit*, *Zero Dark Thirty* and *The Imitation Game*. He recently made his feature directorial debut with the movie Unstoppable. **NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS** 

#### CONNECT COMMITTEE LUNCHEON



Luncheon photo (L-R): Folmer Wiesinger, ACE; Isaiah Camp, ACE; Michael Kelly, ACE; David Milhous, ACE; Charles Little II, ACE; Philip Malamuth, ACE. Photo by Mario Marino.

CE members gathered at Marino's in Hollywood on Nov. 14 for a Connect Committee luncheon with special guest Michael Kelly, ACE. Joining him were Charles Little II, ACE; Isaiah Camp, ACE; Folmer Wiesinger, ACE; Philip Malamuth, ACE; and David Milhous, ACE.

Kelly shared that he first discovered his passion for film when an English teacher, aiming to help him improve his grades, suggested that he write a paper about filmmaking. At the time, Kelly worked as a theater usher and had a deep love for movies. His success with the paper led to a followup assignment: creating a short film. Michael embraced the challenge, successfully shooting and editing a short project that not only earned him class credit but also sparked his interest in pursuing a career in film.

His professional journey started in the mailroom at ABC in Chicago. From there, he transitioned to editing commercials before moving to Los Angeles to work on live action and animated projects. Among the many milestones in his career, Kelly is particularly proud of his contribution to the iconic asteroid sequence in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back.* While technically working as librarians on the film, he and Conrad Buff [ACE] are believed to have become the first two people to receive the credit of visual effects editor. They seized the opportunity to enhance several shots provided by Industrial Light & Magic. Kelly described how he helped manipulate 10 to 15 shots and famously added an explosion effect to an asteroid. Though George Lucas initially remarked, "Asteroids don't explode," he ultimately approved the effect – and the rest is history.

During the lunch, the group touched on the evolving role of AI in filmmaking. Kelly likened its impact to the transitions from vinyl records to CDs and from film to digital editing, emphasizing that progress is nothing to fear. His stories and insights made for a fascinating and inspiring afternoon.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Lorenzo Sgroi at Pacific Post and Mario and Sal at Marino's Ristorante for sponsoring this memorable Connect Committee luncheon.

- DAVID MILHOUS, ACE

#### **HPA AWARDS**

he Hollywood Professional Association (HPA) handed out its annual HPA Awards on Nov. 7 at the Television Academy's Wolf Theatre. Kevin Tent, ACE, won an award for The Holdovers (editing in a theatrical feature); Rob Paglia collected a trophy for the "Better Late" episode of Hacks (episodic or non-theatrical feature, 30 minutes and under); and Max Allman and Nicholas Nazmi were honored for the "Daddy's Dyin', Who's Got the Will?" episode of Red Faire (documentary). In a rare tie, awards in the category for episodic or non-theatrical feature (over 30 minutes) were presented to James D. Wilcox, ACE, for the "Part Six: Far, Far Away" episode of Ahsoka and Katie Weiland, ACE, for the "The Red Dragon and the Gold" episode of House of the Dragon. During the ceremony, FotoKem received the Charles S. Swartz Award for industry contributions. Engineering Excellence honors went to Adobe for Enhance Speech in Premiere Pro, Disguise and Cuebric for their AI-driven 2.5D workflow, and Evercast for Evercast for Apple Vision Pro.



Clockwise: HPA Stage. Photo by Ryan Miller/Capture Imaging; Kevin Tent, ACE. Photo by Loreen Sarkis/Capture Imaging; Rob Paglia; Tom Cross, ACE with Katie Weiland, ACE; James D. Wilcox, ACE with Tom Cross, ACE; Max Allman and Nicholas Nazmi. Photos by Molly O'Keeffe/Capture Imaging.

### WHAT'S NEW

**NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS** 

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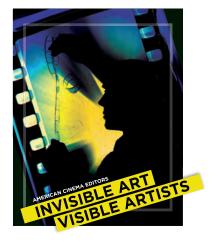
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#### ACE HOLIDAY PARTY

CE attracted a capacity crowd for its annual Holiday Party, which was held Dec. 7 in Herscher Hall at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles.

During the festive event, newly-elected ACE President Sabrina Plisco, ACE, presented plaques to new members and associates, and additionally led the annual raffle, with proceeds benefiting the ACE Educational Center.

A trio of past ACE presidents were in attendance, including Kevin Tent, ACE; Alan Heim, ACE; and Stephen Rivkin, ACE. In all, the event was attended by an estimated 600 ACE members and additional guests.

During the evening, a toy drive was held, with donations going to Spark of Love to support children and teens in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Ventura and Riverside counties.

Thank you to event and raffle sponsors. ACE appreciates your generosity. Sponsors and donors include: Adobe, Avid, Blackmagic Design, Waldorf Astoria, Pantages Theater, Bradford Portraits, American Contemporary Ballet, A Noise Within Theatre, Magic Castle, Pasadena Symphony and POPS, Geffen Playhouse, The Smoke House Restaurant, Water Grill, Simms Restaurant, Ca' Del Sole, Daniel Cahill Massage Therapy, Reiki Session with Mandy, Coach Rob Silver, Smart Post, The Orchid Wrangler, Sequence Wines, Frequency Wine Company, Ojai Winery, Lindquist Family Wines, Tensley Wines, The Broad, Skirball Cultural Center and Malibu Wine Hikes.

Additionally, ACE celebrated the holidays in New York during a Dec. 11 party at the facilities of sponsor Sound Lounge. ACE collected donations for the Entertainment Community Fund during the party. Thank you to Sound Lounge for its generous sponsorship. (*L.A.photos on page 13. N.Y. photos on page 14.*)



#### ACE HOLIDAY PARTY, LOS ANGELES





#### ACE HOLIDAY PARTY, NEW YORK



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### TECH CORNER Editing The Brutalist

BY DÁVID JANCSÓ, with HARRY B. MILLER III, ACE

met Dávid Jancsó in Hungary, 2019, as we were hired to edit the Universal series Treadstone. Although the series was 'meh,' the post crew was one of the best groups I've had the pleasure of working with.

David and I bonded in particular over a second unit director whom we couldn't convince to shoot action scenes from more than one perspective.

The production and post were set up in Budapest, in a rather decrepit multi-story building. The building A/C had to be replaced to stand the 100 degree summer heat, and the internet wasn't good enough to run Evercast. The post equipment (Avid NLEs, Nexis storage) was provided by David's company, Post Office Films. The production shot all over Europe and North Africa. With wildly uneven acting, it was visually exciting, and narratively a mess.

The group has kept a text chain going during and since that summer of 2019. When I saw that David had edited The Brutalist, along with Ilka Janka Nagy who was also on the Treadstone crew, I asked if he'd tell me about making the movie and its technical challenges.

The Brutalist follows the fictional Hungarian architect Lázló Tóth, played by Adrien Brody, arriving from Europe to rebuild his life in post-WWII America.

*Here is Dávid Jancsó's story, edited (of course) for length.* – HARRY B. MILLER III, ACE

I was born into a family deeply rooted in the world of filmmaking – my mother, Zsuzsa Csákány, was the editor of the Best Foreign Language Oscar-winning film *Mephisto*. My father, Miklós Jancsó, was a renowned director. Despite their accomplishments, they tried to steer me away from the industry. So, I earned degrees

in political science and law before realizing I couldn't ignore my passion for filmmaking

I became involved in *The Brutalist* early on, thanks to my collaboration with Brady Corbet on his debut feature *The Childhood of a Leader*, and my work with Mona Fastvold on *The World to Come*. My relationship with Brady and Mona allowed me to understand Brady's visionary approach to filmmaking. When *The Brutalist* came along, I was immediately hooked.

I am extremely loyal and dedicated to the directors I work with and to the films we create together. For me, each project is a commitment to realizing the director's vision and giving everything I have to ensure the final product is as exceptional as possible.

The film is a sprawling narrative, and tackling it was no small feat. My co-editor, Ilka Janka Nagy, and I handled everything ourselves during post-production, which lasted nearly two years. From editing to sound design, music, visual effects, DI and delivery, we shared every task.



Our work on *The Brutalist* spanned the Western hemisphere. We began editing in Budapest during the shoot there, continued in New York, moved to London and ultimately returned to Budapest for the DI.

Our brilliant composer, Daniel Blumberg, traveled the world to record the score. Even the sound work reflected the global nature of the production, with our sound team, led by Steve Single and Andy Neil, working from Australia and London.

Ilka and I were actively involved during the production phase as well, frequently visiting the set and assisting with preparations. This hands-on involvement, from pre-production through to the final stages of delivery, made *The Brutalist* an exceptionally fulfilling and extremely challenging experience – one that required not just technical expertise, but also a deep collaborative effort between Ilka and me to bring Brady's vision to fruition.

Each image format used in *The Brutalist* was carefully selected to serve the narrative and evoke different time periods and emotional tones. The majority of the film was shot on 35mm (2-perf, 3-perf, 4-perf and 8-perf VistaVision), alongside some 16mm. VistaVision was a significant, though not exclusive, component. (The original VistaVision format was 35mm, shot horizontally over 8 perfs per frame, for a higher resolution large screen image.)

Archival material was meticulously selected, mostly, by Ilka. One notable shot, a train crash captured on an Arri Alexa, because of technical limitations was processed with grain and a film-look overlay to blend into the film's aesthetic.

Parts of the epilogue were shot on Betacam to achieve an authentic 1980s look. All this material was scanned directly to 4K (and 6K for VistaVision) using a DFT Scanity scanner, resulting in an accumulated 700TB of data.

The film was developed and scanned at the Budapest NFI FilmLab, with the digital dailies processed through Post Office Films, a post-production company I co-founded over a decade ago with some fantastic colleagues. Our finishing colorist Máté Ternyik was brought into the process early to apply a so-called 'best light' grade to the dailies, ensuring a high-quality visual reference during editing.

We edited the film in 4K (using DNxHR LB) in Media Composer. While the various formats were initially ingested at their native resolutions and aspect ratios, the final film was standardized to a 1.66:1 aspect ratio through a combination of aspect ratio adjustments and matte applications.

However, the film's release was not limited to digital formats. it was also recorded back to 65mm and 35mm film, with tailored masking applied for each specific output format.

AI played a fascinating role in enhancing *The Brutalist*. Beyond the integrated AI tools available in software, such as ScriptSync and PhraseFind in Media Composer, we faced particularly complex challenges when working with the Hungarian language. To address this, we collaborated with the team at Respeecher, who helped refine and perfect our actors' Hungarian pronunciation, with the actors full agreement and signoff. Adrien Brody and Felicity Jones read/acted text from books to establish their vocal models (which they also own), to drive the AI Hungarian delivery. My voice was used at times to prompt AI with the correct accent and inflection.



AI also proved to be a real timesaver in the more logistical aspects of post-production such as the creation of lists, reports and organizational documents.

One of the most innovative uses of AI came during the sequence showcasing László's life work at the end of the film. We crafted this segment by blending Betacam and 16mm footage with AI-generated photorealistic images of buildings and architectural details that our art department designed. This approach allowed us to create a visually rich and evocative background projection montage that captured the scope and beauty of László's architectural legacy. (Note: Nothing that is presented as László's work or any actual plans were AI. Those were handmade by a team of architects hired by the production team.)

The greatest technical challenge was harmonizing the diverse formats and media types into a cohesive viewing experience. With the many image formats used, the analog-to-digital and back-to-analog workflow presented a multitude of complexities. Not many people today are adept at handling film, let alone navigating the intricacies of combining it with digital and analog formats. Ensuring that every frame, whether shot on film or created digitally, retained its integrity while seamlessly fitting into the larger narrative was a painstaking process.

We were adamant about preserving the unique traits of each format to enhance the film's emotional and temporal layers. By keeping the specific characteristics of each medium intact, we added a tangible sense of time passing.

The film offered an opportunity to explore a variety of editorial styles. We drew inspiration from a multitude of films and filmmakers – Eisenstein, Kuleshov, Kubrick, Hitchcock, De Sica, Fellini and Antonioni among them. As a small-budget film (\$10 million), we also had to get creative to counteract certain missing elements or limitations. That included filling narrative gaps with carefully curated archival footage or enhancing scenes through innovative editing techniques, such as jump cuts and overlays.

One of the biggest challenges was keeping the audience engaged for the film's 3.5-hour runtime. Sustaining their attention required a deliberate use of multiple film languages and storytelling techniques, each tailored to the narrative's specific needs. While it was often demanding, this interplay between creative intent and technical execution was also one of the most rewarding aspects of the project.



### JON M. CHU ACE GOLDEN EDDIE HONOREE BY WALTER FERNANDEZ

Jon M. Chu was everywhere in 2024. The musical phenomenon that is *Wicked* gripped the pop culture psyche in a way reminiscent of *Barbie* in 2023. This time it was pink and green that colored our socials and reveries. The ramp-up to the release date was almost as demanding for Chu as the production itself what with four international movie premieres, a book tour, a press tour and a baby on the way.

In midsummer of 2024, Chu released a memoir about his upbringing and evolution as a filmmaker called *Viewfinder: A Memoir of Seeing and Being Seen*, cowritten with Jeremy McCarter. The book doubles as a guide for nascent filmmakers, and as a cradle to present exploration of his origin story. It also serves as a rumination on the future of cinema and his place in it. Feeling tentative in the present is a daunting concern for Chu because he grew up in the future. He explains, "When I say that I grew up in the future, I'm mainly saying that I grew up in Silicon Valley. I spent the '80s and '90s riding a wave of technological change. Getting to see the world as it was going to exist in a few years' time. But when I say that I grew up in the future, I also mean it in another more personal way. It was the future that my parents had imagined for themselves many years before."<sup>1</sup>

Chu was born in Palo Alto, Calif., and grew up in neighboring Los Altos to two loving parents who immigrated to the U.S. from East Asia: his mother from Taiwan and his father from China. His parents own and run the popular Chinese restaurant, Chef Chu's, that they opened in 1970. As the youngest of five children, Chu's family already had a system in place where they would Westernize their kids as much as possible while preserving their own Sinitic culture.

It was during this busy childhood that he developed his love for theater, dance, music and film. "I went to shows every weekend in San Francisco, whether it was musical season, opera season or ballet season," recalls Chu. This combined with seminal experiences like watching *E.T.*, Disney's animation renaissance and Michael Jackson's music video canon, inspired him to pursue his artistic endeavors early. He continues, "All of those together spoke to me of the power of the moving picture. Film could communicate and express things that even dialogue was not sufficient enough for. Music and movement became part of the natural language of how I see and tell a story."

When Chu first got into filmmaking, he says his parents didn't see it as a serious career path. It took an incident while he was editing on his computer instead of working on his studies that altered their perception of this distraction.

One night, Chu was editing a video when his mom came into his room. She unplugged his computer, erasing all his work, and told him he should be studying instead. "I was just devastated," he recalls. "And I went to her ... that night and said: 'This is what I love. You always said that this is America, the greatest place in the world. You could do whatever you want if you love it.' And the next day, she came to school, and she had a pile of filmmaking books and said: 'If you're going to do this, you have to study it like a craft.' And from then on, they were right there next to me."<sup>2</sup>

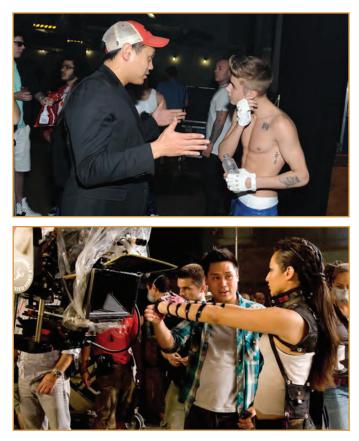
Chu went on to attend the USC School of Cinematic Arts where he honed his craft and imported some of that Silicon Valley sensibility. "When you grow up in the future ... you tend to become an optimist," he says. "The people who fail to see the promise of every new update or beta release that comes along. 'Just wait,' you say. 'Just wait.""<sup>3</sup>

One early champion of Chu's work was none other than Steven Spielberg. Chu directed a short film while at USC called *When the Kids Are Away*. The uproarious mini-musical billed as

Jon M. Chu headshot by Sophy Holland for Universal Pictures. 1, 3. Prologue. Viewfinder: A Memoir of Seeing and Being Seen. By Jon M. Chu and Jeremy McCarter. 2. Interview. "With 'Wicked,' director Jon M. Chu writes his own story." November 12, 2024 https://www.npr.org/2024/11/12/1212541645/jon-m-chu-wicked-film-adaptation. "a celebration of mothers" caught the legendary director's eye for its sheer inventiveness. It combined choreography, camera movements, multiple locations and an original song. It even screened at the 2003 Tribeca Film Festival. It was more than enough to get him signed with the William Morris Agency.

Initially, his career seemed to go from 0 to 60 in a matter of months. For the next few years, however, he was attached to various high-profile projects that never came to fruition. Chu's disillusionment with the fickleness of the industry didn't dim his outlook, though. "I figured out fast that my Silicon Valley origins gave me an advantage and I pressed it for all it was worth. The tools I used, the projects I chose, all of it was shaped by my desire to use technology as an aid to storytelling. A belief derived from my hero, Steve Jobs, that technology could be the best friend that creativity ever had." Much like the tech, Hollywood would have to catch up to Chu.

In 2007, Chu got his chance to direct his first full-length Hollywood feature. *Step Up 2: The Streets* was the follow-up to the first installment that catapulted Channing Tatum to stardom. Its mixture of dance, story and music was an ideal fit for Chu. He was able to capture the raw sensuality of b-boy dance culture so well he was brought back for the third installment, *Step Up 3D*. Around this time, he developed a scripted web series for Hulu called *The Legion of Extraordinary Dancers* (The LXD) that included many of the dancers that Chu met on the set of *Step Up 2*. It's also where he began one of his great collaborations with cinematographer Alice Brooks, ASC. A creative partnership that thrives to this day. After a stint in the doldrums, Chu was off to the races.





Partnering with a teenager may not seem like a lucrative move for a rising Hollywood player, but when that kid is Justin Bieber, you go with it. Chu directed two concert documentaries (*Never Say Never* and *Believe*) and a music video (*Beauty and a Beat*) for Bieber. These higher profile gigs led to him directing more movies like *G.I. Joe: Retaliation, Jem and the Holograms* and *Now You See Me 2*. While Chu was prolific and consistently working for nearly a decade, he was only ramping up to his most personal project yet.

Based on Kevin Kwan's wildly successful book, *Crazy Rich Asians* was a critical and commercial smash that put Jon M. Chu in the spotlight as an auteur in the making. "It's called *Crazy Rich Asians*, but it's really not about crazy rich Asians. It's about Rachel Chu [Constance Wu] finding her identity and her selfworth through this journey back into her culture, which for me as a filmmaker exploring my cultural identity is the scariest thing." He continues, "The American culture is: Pursue your own happiness, follow your dreams. The Chinese side is: Sacrifice everything for your family; it's all about the group. Those conflicting ideas were always a battle in my head."

The film boosted the careers of Wu, Awkwafina, Ronny Chieng, Ken Jeong, Nico Santos, Harry Shum Jr., and Jimmy O. Yang. It also introduced us to Henry Golding and reintroduced Western audiences to the impeccable Michelle Yeoh. The movie also marked Chu's first pairing with editor Myron Kerstein, ACE.

Chu reveals, "I'd heard [Myron's] name around because he'd worked with some people that I knew, but what compelled me to him was *Garden State*. I was at the age where that movie really spoke to me and a new generation of young



artists. The soundtrack, the images, it just felt really authentic. More authentic of a voice than I had seen in a movie in a long time. I loved his use of the music in the storytelling. It's a character itself. I loved that he had a lyrical way of cutting a movie that didn't feel musical. The way he would cut was reflective of the way music feels. The music was not something you simply put on top of it. Music could marry with visual grammar that was less music video than actually a part of a real, true narrative. I love that about him."

Chu continues, "When we sat down and talked for the first time while I was looking for an editor for *Crazy Rich Asians*, we had a mind meld. The things that he loves about story are the little moments. It wasn't even the music moments. It was the quiet moments. The way we saw the emotions of the performances, and the things in between the takes. He was a great miner of those moments. I was excited to be working with him." *Crazy Rich Asians* garnered Kerstein his first Eddie Award nomination.

Their subsequent pairing was the movie version of the Broadway musical *In the Heights*. Oddly, this was Chu's first out-and-out musical foray, since the musical short that got him in the door nearly 20 years ago. The kid inside him who often went into San Francisco to watch musical theater must have been beaming. Along with Brooks as director of photography, they formed a powerhouse trio that reveled in the big and small of storytelling. Chu shares, "I knew combining [Myron's] talents with that material made for a winning match. We have great teamwork. We trust each other. If I disagreed with him, I could express that and he wouldn't fold. He would hear it and we could argue about something and make adjustments accordingly. We would come out with something that was bigger than either

me or him. It was such a beautiful experience to create with him." The collaboration was so fruitful that Lin-Manuel Miranda hired Kerstein and Brooks for his feature film directorial debut *tick, tick* ... *BOOM*! However, Chu quickly brought them back for their next collaboration.

With *Wicked*, Chu mounted his most ambitious project to date. The beloved Broadway musical has rabid fans with high expectations, but Chu is never one to back down from a challenge worthy of his time. Chu asserts, "The most important lesson I've learned, the one that informs all of the others, is that feeling brave isn't a minor consideration, it's the main consideration."<sup>4</sup> So rich is the lore of *The Wizard of Oz* and both source materials (the *Wicked* novel and musical production), that the film was split into two parts. *Wicked* has already grossed over \$600 million dollars worldwide and it has moviegoers chomping at the bit for part two, *Wicked: For Good*. It also earned Kerstein his third Eddie Award nomination.

"Maybe the smartest thing I ever did was finding Myron and never letting him go," says Chu. "He made my life 800% better because I did not have to worry about the intention coming through in the movie. Yes, we probably would cut differently, but the intention was the same and he found things that I could have never found. We just want the best scene. We want the best sequence. We want the best movie."

When it's all said and done and *Wicked: For Good* releases in November of this year, Chu would have spent nearly half a decade on this project. He had three children during the lead up to *Wicked*'s release. He even missed the Los Angeles premiere to be with his wife, Kristin Hodge, as she birthed their fifth child. Chu now has the same number of kids his parents had when he was born.

True to his prolific nature, he has many irons in the fire. A Britney Spears biopic based on her memoir is in the very early stages with Chu at the helm. He wants to make "an exploration of how we treat and how we expect our pop stars to be. Is that fair? And what freedom means. Those questions are always interesting to me." In addition, he's super excited about an animated musical movie of *Dr. Seuss'Oh, the Places You'll Go!* with songs written by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. Not to mention half a dozen other projects in the works.

While his trajectory shows no sign of abating, Chu does acknowledge that the industry he loves so much has been dealt





some heavy blows as of late. In the time that he married and became a father, his childhood home and his adopted home have been at odds with one another. He reflects, "In the years since 2018, something has changed. Actually, almost everything has changed. The relationship between my old home, Silicon Valley, and my new home, Hollywood, has gone from mutual benefit to something more like a demolition derby. Bay Area companies like Netflix, which is based a few miles from Chef Chu's, have disrupted moviegoing traditions that stretch back decades. Much as they've done with music, media and other industries. For somebody like me, who fell in love with movies because of big-screen communal spectacles, the kind that Steven Spielberg makes, this has been painful to watch. And it has put me in a deeply unfamiliar situation. I'm not used to regretting the changes that technology has brought or feeling nostalgic for the way things used to be. When you grow up in the future, you never expect to be one of the horse-and-buggy people."

Regardless of this, Chu knows he's in a prime position to help his industry. "I have grand privilege of having the microphone right now," he confides. "So, whatever I put out there has to be important to me. Important to what I want in the world and how I see it. Whether that's a reflection of where I am or a look back at what I was, or where I want to be and where I'm going."

There is still a hunger for stories even though the manner of their consumption has changed. He shares, "I think that true love, fairy tales, the positive messages of positive stories – I don't think those ever die. Sometimes we like to hide them in sarcasm or irony, but they are still there, and they still move us."

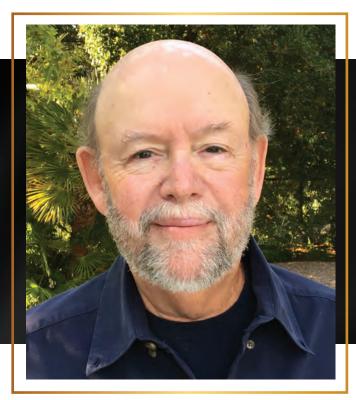
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# Paul A Hirsch, Ace

ACE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT HONOREE BY BOBBIE O'STEEN

s an editor, Paul Hirsch considers himself to be like the Queen of England. "She had no actual power, but she did have influence." And because Hirsch always felt free to say what he thought, his contributions have had considerable impact on so many beloved and meaningful films, such as Carrie, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Footloose, Ray – and a little film called Star Wars. Hirsch speaks of film editing, along with music and dance, as the core of his sensibility, and his childhood provided fertile ground for inspiration. His mother was a Martha Graham dancer and he was a percussionist at the High School of Music & Art and, after earning an undergraduate degree in art history at Columbia, he enrolled in their School of Architecture. However, on a trip to Paris, he spent days watching classic Hollywood films, including Citizen Kane, at the Cinémathèque Française, which had a resounding effect, causing him to change course and seek out a career in film back in New York. He started as a gofer delivering film, then assisted a negative cutter and ended up editing trailers, one for Brian De Palma, who offered Hirsch his first feature, *Hi, Mom!* He was only 23. Hirsch says De Palma was extremely important to his development as a young editor, especially since he was never mentored by other editors. He learned the principles of editing on his own: "It was kind of a thrilling experience, sort of half invention, half discovery." Hirsch was also inspired by De Palma's brilliant camera moves, and "set pieces that were like clockwork. When we'd sit and watch dailies, he would say: 'This is meant to be so-and-so's POV,' and I understood it." Hirsch put his all into this film, operating as his own assistant, music editor, sound effects editor and trailer editor. But the movie opened disastrously and he was back to editing trailers for three years, experiencing the first of many inevitable ups and downs in the life of a freelance editor.

Then he was back on track with De Palma for *Sisters*, the second of 11 films they would ultimately do together. This film is a thriller which paid homage to Hitchcock, and Hirsch decided to use Bernard Herrmann's brilliant score from *Psycho* – particularly the shrieking violin sounds from the famous shower scene – for a stabbing scene in *Sisters*. His temp score breathed new life into the film and led to De Palma hiring Herrmann, whom Hirsch described as both a mad genius and highly sensitive artist, and whose insights and talent had a major influence on Hirsch. He was so excited about the score of *Sisters* he played it for Jane, the woman he was then dating, while also telling her the film's grisly tale of murder and conjoined twins. As a result, she was a bit reluctant to continue dating him. That moment was overcome: They have been happily married for 50 years.

Hirsch would then work on the iconic Carrie, again using Herrmann's music in the famous jump scare at the end, when Sue (Amy Irving), the girl who had tormented Carrie (Sissy Spacek), kneels down to lay a bouquet of flowers at her gravesite. Carrie's arm comes shooting out of the ground and Hirsch cuts to the main title theme of Sisters, which begins with an anvil strike. "By making the cut in a rhythmically inappropriate place relative to the ongoing slow piece and turning up the volume, the scare was tremendous." Hirsch is particularly proud of that film and says that, if offered the chance to change anything, he wouldn't touch a frame of it. De Palma screened Carrie for his friend, George Lucas, and his then wife, Marcia Lucas. "They loved it and about two weeks later I got a phone call from Marcia: 'How would you like to come out and help us on Star Wars when you are done?"" Hirsch said, "I don't think I fully appreciated it at the time, but in retrospect, I owe her an enormous debt of gratitude."



"My greatest adventure – one that would profoundly alter the course of my life – was just beginning." Lucas gave Hirsch a tour of his newly-founded visual effects company, ILM, and Hirsch "was awed by the high-techness and cutting edge-ness of it." He said to Lucas: "I feel it's only fair to tell you that I've never worked on anything this big." "Oh, don't worry about that ..." Lucas said, "No one ever has."

Lucas had been unhappy with the first editor during production in England, and now Hirsch was jumping onto a fast-moving train, working alongside Marcia and Richard Chew, ACE, in Northern California. Hirsch had always done the first cut by himself, but he was soon invigorated by the collaborative spirit among these young filmmakers.

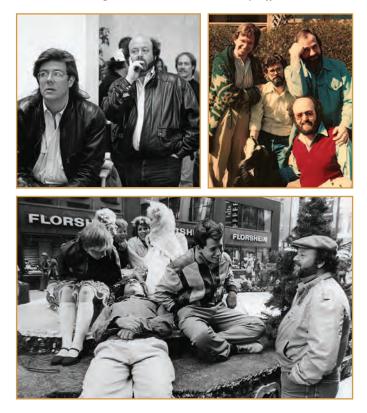
Lucas was under tremendous pressure, because they were over budget and 20th Century Fox was urging him to eliminate the final battle sequence to save money. Imagine the film without the destruction of the Death Star! As a result, Lucas wanted to prioritize the battle scene so that ILM could do those special effects before the budgetary axe fell. Marcia initially engaged in this Herculean task alone and soon Hirsch was recruited as part of a tag team at the Kem. "At first, I would 'drive' - that is, sit at the controls and make the changes while George and Marcia sat on the couch calling out suggestions. Then, after a couple of hours, we would switch and Marcia would drive while George and I would sit back on the couch calling out suggestions." They went back and forth like this for two or three days, until finally they were done. Hirsch made many helpful suggestions overall, one involving the beginning of the film. After the opening battle in space, they originally cut to Luke looking up at flashes of laser gun fire from that battle through binoculars; he then arrives at a teen hangout on the planet of Tatooine, where there is a long

expository scene of his talking about joining the Rebellion. Hirsch suggested they eliminate that entire sequence. Lucas agreed and now the introduction to Tatooine is when R2-D2 and C-3PO land and we experience the desert planet as a mysterious, ominous and lonely place – and then meet Luke at the robot auction, which introduces him organically into the story.

Lucas left a deep impression on Hirsch: "He was in many ways the most remarkable man I have known. He combined an artist's free imagination with hard-headed business sense." Marcia left a strong impression, as well. Not only was she a warm supportive colleague, but she and George lent Paul and Jane the use of their house and master bedroom when Jane was having their first baby, Gina. Hirsch called it "an act of generosity and self-sacrifice unmatched in my experience." That baby became a successful film editor, his son Eric an award-winning rerecording mixer, which brings Hirsch great pride and joy. He also experienced the ultimate highs of his career: the test screening and thunderous response to *Star Wars* in San Francisco – and winning an Academy Award.

Hirsch was soon introduced to another talented director, Herbert Ross, on *Footloose*, the first of four films they did together. Ross had been a choreographer and "was visual in a different way from George and Brian." Hirsch made an important contribution to the opening title sequence. Asked to recut it, "I started with the lowest-key shot of a man's foot tapping, building with the music to a pair of feet running frantically in place, and generating a terrific energy that launched us into the final card." That sequence was celebrated and set the tone for this wonderful film where dance represented freedom.

Hirsch soon ended up with another impressive talent: writer/ director John Hughes. On Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Hirsch had an

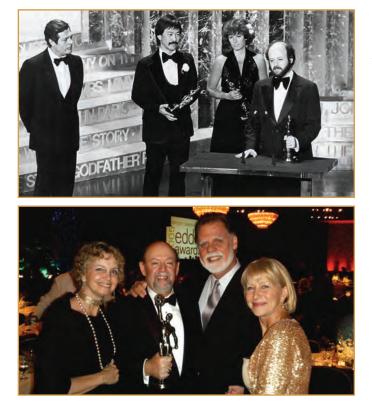


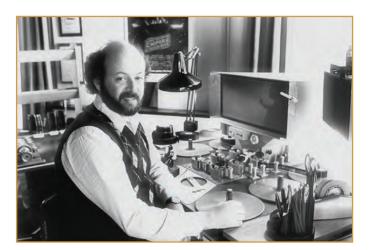
'aha' moment in the shower, something many editors can identify with. "It occurred to me that the parade, being the most dramatic event, should come last," and he manipulated the footage so the traffic jam scene would come earlier and make it seem as if it was caused by the parade. Hirsch says that film was one of his favorites – and became part of the zeitgeist.

Their next film together *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* was infamous for its massive amount of dailies, the first cut being 3 hours and 45 minutes long, and Hirsch had a limited amount of time to edit it down to 90 minutes. He also made a crucial contribution to the penultimate scene. Originally, Neal (Steve Martin) had already said goodbye to Del (John Candy) at a train station when he learns of his homelessness by seeing him at another train station; but Hirsch found – in one of the endless takes from that film – a moment where Neal looks puzzled; Hirsch intercut flashbacks so that Neal figures out Del's dire situation on his own, which makes him more empathetic, while preserving Del's dignity. Hirsch expressed compassion for Hughes, who he said "died so young and had abandoned Hollywood, hating studio interference, hating the whole process."

Hirsch subsequently speaks of his own Hollywood trauma on *The Adventures of Pluto Nash*. It was the first and only time he was fired – and yet, as is often the case, the editing was not the problem. The film wasn't funny, cost a fortune, and became the biggest bomb of all time at that point. However, those experiences still shake an editor's confidence: "The whole fiasco affected my way of thinking, I started to worry about taking the wrong script."

The tides eventually turned dramatically for Hirsch on Taylor Hackford's film *Ray.* "I loved the footage and Ray's music."





Hackford used the emotion of Ray Charles' songs to help dramatize and illustrate the story and designed the songs to work in innovative ways, linking scenes and montages to span time and location. Although Hirsch had edited on film for the first 25 years of his career, he had easily made the adjustment to digital editing. And now he was working on a version of the Avid that had a new package of VFX, and he started experimenting, combining images based on the intensity of the exposure, made some really slow pushes, was able to accurately control irises, "and I discovered 'dip to color," which gave me a way to introduce the flashbacks. I was having a great time playing in a virtual sandbox."

*Ray* is a beautifully edited film and represents the full expression of Hirsch's sensibilities. "*Ray* remains a special memory of Taylor and [mine], [Oscar] nominated for our work together. We formed a bond that lasts to this day." Hirsch also won an Eddie Award, "which meant a lot to me, since it is conferred by my peers."

Several years ago, Hirsch decided to write A Long Time Ago in a Cutting Room Far, Far Away ... a highly entertaining book about his work on over 50 films, focusing on those he believed his readers would care about the most, along with the personalities involved and behind-the-scenes stories - while also going into fascinating detail about his creative choices and problem solving in the cutting room. Throughout the book, Hirsch is also refreshingly honest about his feelings: the triumphs and disappointments, the bonds forged and strained. All the vagaries in the life of an editor. He also realized, when he was reviewing the book, that he wasn't very strategic and that a lot of his relationships with directors ended in some kind of unhappiness on their part, but he also felt that in being so opinionated and by challenging them, they would feel more confident in what they were presenting. His significant contributions definitely attest to the benefits of that approach.

In his book's final chapter, Hirsch returns to his first love, music, when reflecting back on his career. He says that being the editor of a movie is like being in a band, describing himself not as the lead vocalist or solo guitarist, but more like the bass player or the drummer. And yet "we can make a huge difference. I've played in some terrific bands in my life, and it has been a blast. For that, I am truly grateful."

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# Maysie Hoy, ace

ACE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT HONOREE BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

aysie Hoy, ACE, is an actor and editor who became an integral part of Robert Altman's troupe in the 1970s beginning with *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and continuing as an assistant editor on *Nashville* and *3 Women*, and co-editor on *The Player*. Hoy also edited *The Joy Luck Club* and *Smoke* for Wayne Wang and, since 2007, 16 films for Tyler Perry among 48 solo editing credits. "If I, a woman from Vancouver's Chinatown, can do what I'm doing now, then anybody can do it," she says in typically defiant fashion.

As far back as age 4, a career in show business was all Hoy wanted. "Which is crazy because being Chinese with very traditional parents that was the furthest thing from everybody's mind. Except mine."

Despite, or perhaps because of, their conservative upbringing Maysie and her brother, William (esteemed ACE editor in his own right), hungered for bright lights.

"Mom used to take us on Sundays after church to the Chinese Opera," Hoy recalls, "which is a completely different experience from a Western Opera. Families take their kids and people are eating, they're talking. The sound is what gets you. I remember the singing and the pageantry on the stage and then the chaos that happens in the audience."

Their mom, perhaps harboring a desire to be an actress herself, also took them to Chinese movies featuring Kung Fu masters like Wong Fei-hung.

Hoy's uncle, a Charlie Chaplin fan, babysat them with cinema trips. "We'd watch a double bill like *Picnic* and *Bus Stop* (1956, both directed by Joshua Logan, the latter with Marilyn Monroe). I'm probably 12, my sister Lila 10, my brother Bill 8, and we're sitting there watching adult movies! I think that's where it all started."

At high school the feeling hardened. "What I really wanted to do was go against what everybody else thought I should be doing."

She was repeatedly told she'd never make it, including by a school counselor who agreed to switch her major from dietician to theater arts – and then by the head of the theater course.

"Years later, I became really good friends with his ex-wife and she said she remembered him coming home one day and saying, 'I can't believe that there's this Chinese woman that wants to be an actress ... and she's not even that pretty!""

"Well, after I heard that I started laughing because being knocked back just motivated me even more."

It would be a long time before Vancouver turned into today's hotbed of media and entertainment but in 1970 Robert Altman was in town casting for his revisionist Western *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* starring Warren Beatty and Julie Christie. Hoy landed a part. "The only women's parts in that movie were prostitutes ... but that's how I met Bob Altman." Afterwards, she played a receptionist in a CBC show but that was it. "No one was casting Asian women."

A year previously Hoy had spent time in San Francisco learning improvisational techniques. On return to Vancouver she set up her own improvisation company, The Good Will Store, with a grant from the Canadian government.

"They wanted people to create jobs and so I thought I'd create jobs for actors. My idea was for the company to be for people that didn't quite fit into the norm of what an actor should look like."

Hoy performed theater games almost daily including with kids in inner city schools who needed an outlet for their energy. She was given use of a rehearsal space at a club owned by Tommy Chong's father in Chinatown, introducing Tommy to improv and inadvertently birthing comic duo Cheech & Chong. "He'll be the first one to tell you that's what happened."

But her ambition wasn't being fulfilled. "I vowed to go to London, study and be an actress or go to California to be a director. Maybe I could shadow Bob? I wrote him a letter. He didn't answer. Weeks later I decided to call him at random. Reintroducing myself I said, 'I'd really like to come down and see what you do as a director.' He replied, 'Well, do you know how to play poker?'"

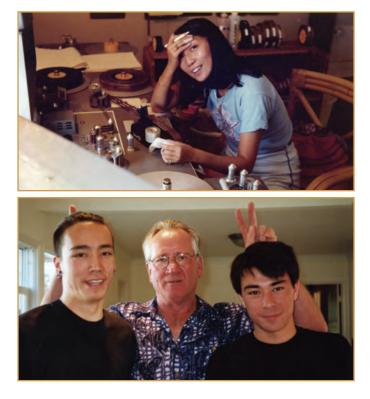
Hoy didn't but thought she'd learn. "He said, 'Be here on January 13.' That was within a week. I packed a bag and never looked back. The minute I landed in L.A. I felt that this is where I belong."

On the set of *California Split* (1974) in Los Angeles with Elliott Gould and George Segal, Hoy wasn't content to play a bit part. "I made a plan. I'm in a situation where I could learn a lot from all these people. So I decided to create my own Robert Altman School of filmmaking.

"I met all the different department heads and they wondered who this Asian woman was when I told them I had worked with Bob on *McCabe* and with that I became friends with them all."

They included sound mixer Jim Webb who was in the process of designing the eight track mixing board which was built in a van heading for *Nashville*; and costumer Hugh McFarland, who was also outfitting Fred Astaire and Robert Wagner for *The Towering Inferno*. "I'd spend a day or two with them and ask all sorts of questions. They were very helpful. They didn't say, 'Beat it, kid.' The biggest thing was just to observe the dynamics between each department."

She spent time with camera and electrical, where Hoy met future husband and gaffer J. Michael Marlett ("I didn't know this at the time, obviously!").





Second AD Alan Rudolph asked Hoy if she could fill in for the script supervisor who was ill with morning sickness. When Scott "Scottie" Bushnell found Hoy could sew, she made her wardrobe assistant on *Nashville*.

Altman asked Hoy to research the 1880s for *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (1976) and she became PA to three-time Academy Award winning costumer Anthony Powell.

She even shared an apartment with Altman's producer, Bushnell, for two years. "She really helped me in my career especially when it came to editing."

Hoy made her entrée into the editor's den when Dennis Hill and Peter Appleton were cutting *Buffalo Bill* from hundreds of thousands of feet of film. "It was clear to me they needed help organizing the footage. They agreed but I'd have to go ask Bob."

She marched over to Altman's office to convince him of the need for an apprentice. "He looked down at me and said, 'This isn't a film school, you know.' I agreed, but they need me. Bob said, 'If it's okay with the guys, it's okay with me.' I ran out of that place so fast before he changed his mind."

In Palm Springs for Altman's *3 Women* starring Shelley Duvall, Hoy had triple duties as assistant editor, assistant sound editor and actor.

After which she had a decision to make. "If I wanted to be an editor I had to concentrate on pursuing that rather than assisting in every department." She took time off to regroup – but the hiatus lasted eight years when she and Michael decided to have a family.

She got back in the saddle assisting Hill on sports comedy *Major League* (1989) after which she was hired by Danford Greene, editor of  $M^*A^*S^*H$  and *Blazing Saddles*, where she assisted on *There Goes My Baby* (1994). "Danny kept his promise and moved me up and made me co-editor.



"When I was finishing *There Goes My Baby*, Scottie called to tell me that Bob needed someone to edit the arrival of the stars to the museum scene in *The Player*.

"I realized I no longer wanted to go to casting calls for stereotypical characters who have one line in a movie when I was 30 let alone 70. If I became an editor, they couldn't judge me by the way I looked. They would judge me on my body of work."

Her acting experience helped her transition. "Actors need to find the character's motivation and figure out their backstory. So as an editor, I try to put myself in the shoes of the character by listening to the performance and watching the behavior.

"I knew about timing because of my improv. When you're on the stage and you're just sort of winging it, you know when you're dying and when you nail it. It's an innate feeling. So, as an editor when a director asks, 'Why did you pick that take?' I'll reply, 'Because it felt right.""

Altman famously pioneered the use of multi-track dialogue. On *McCabe*, Hoy recalls Warner Bros. producers wondering what the heck was going on. "Nobody was supposed to talk on top of lines, but Bob just ignored them so when we were in production on *California Split* Jim had three Nagras recording simultaneously. On *Nashville* there was no need for Group ADR because we had all of these rich original conversations that you could never replicate authentically on a stage.

"This changed my approach to editing because when I talk to directors I tell them that I'm not afraid of overlapping dialogue. If it makes the actors feel more comfortable to do that, then go ahead and if there's an important line we'll figure out a way of surfacing it."

She says, "I've been so fortunate growing up in this business, seeing amazing dailies and working with a director who knew

exactly where to put the camera. When I'm working now, it's ingrained in my bones that I know when it's a good shot."

In 1993, she edited *The Joy Luck Club*, a complex drama told with multiple storylines and flashbacks about the experience of Chinese and Chinese American characters. Culture clashes are played for comic and emotional effect, including a scene in which a caucasian American is introduced to his future in-laws at dinner.

"When I was cutting the scene I was relating it to my own personal background," Hoy says. "The first time Michael came to dinner my mom did all the stereotyped stuff like making certain dishes and Americanized Chinese food. I had a lot to draw on."

A challenge in this film was managing the transitions between time periods without using conventional fades or dissolves. Hoy suggested a way of using sound effects to subliminally bring the audience into the next scene which they did throughout the whole movie.

"Growing up having Chinese as my first language, I know that different tones might sound the same to the Western ear but mean different things. That's what I use when cutting dialogue."

Hoy went on to work with director Wayne Wang on Brooklyn set dramas *Smoke* (1995) and *Blue in the Face*, shot back-to-back, each written by Paul Auster and starring Harvey Keitel.

Other credits include *Mrs. Munck* (1995) directed by Diane Ladd; Oliver Stone-produced black comedy thriller of director Matthew Bright's *Freeway* (1996) starring Reese Witherspoon; *Love Jones* directed by Ted Whitcher (1997); fantasy drama *What Dreams May Come* (1998) directed by Vincent Ward and starring Robin Williams; comedy drama *Crazy in Alabama* (1999), the directorial debut of Antonio Banderas; and Dolly Parton's *Coat of Many Colors* (2015), for which she was nominated for an ACE Eddie.



From top: Cooking for New Year's Day; 5K walk for Camp del Corazon; With grandchildren Peridot Rose and Jaxton Michael Marlett; With Alan Heim, ACE, and Hank Corwin, ACE; With Dolly Parton, Christmas of Many Colors: Circle of Love, 2016; With Joi McMillon, ACE (longtime assistant) and Jian McMillon. Photos courtesy of Hoy.

In the latter part of Hoy's career she has enjoyed a prolific partnership with actor, filmmaker and playwright Tyler Perry. Beginning with *Daddy's Little Girls* (2007) their run includes four Madea movies; *Meet the Browns* (2008); *For Colored Girls* (2010), starring Janet Jackson; and *Good Deeds* (2012) with Perry and Thandiwe Newton. In 2023, Hoy was nominated for an ACE Eddie Award for Best Edited Feature Film (Non-Theatrical) for *A Jazzman's Blues*. They have just completed period drama The *Six Triple Eight* starring Kerry Washington.

"I think it also helped that he never asked me anything about my background. You know, when I used to go up for comedies, the [execs] would point out a lack of comedy in my resume, which is crazy because they didn't understand my background is in improv."

Hoy has also turned mentor, notably to Joi McMillon, ACE (who recently edited *Mufasa: The Lion King*) on several Perry shows. "Mentoring is just not about how you cut film, it's also how you present yourself and how you look at the world. It is not an arrogance. It's just a belief in yourself. In fact, I'm thinking of doing a class in improv for editors because you have to think on your feet when a director or producer throws you something. They hired you for an opinion and you might as well give it without being defensive."

As co-chair of the Diversity Committee for the Motion Picture Editors Guild, Hoy is helping to foster change in the industry from a time in 1980s when she, her brother Bill and Richard Chew, ACE, were Hollywood's only Chinese American editors.

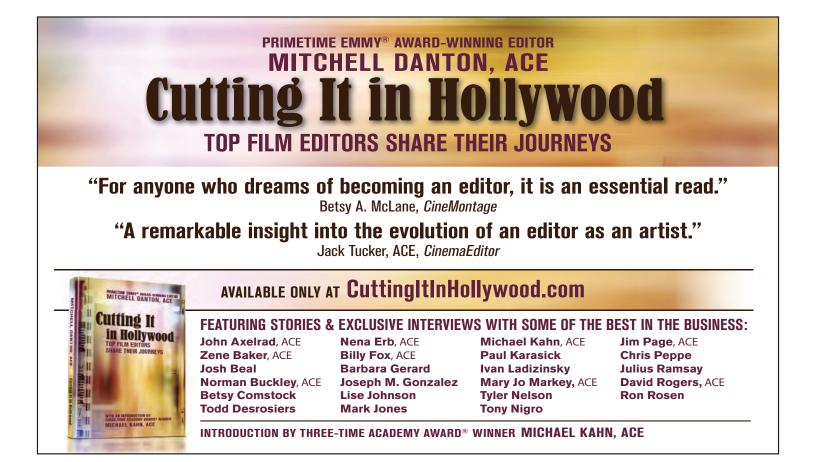
"Now I see Asian editors doing really good work everywhere I go. For people of different ethnicity and diverse backgrounds there is more awareness."



Progress is slower when it comes to female editors, she laments. "I know that women don't make as much as men, even working on the same show.

"I've been in situations where I've told male directors and editors, 'If you said this to me now, as you said it back then, I could sue your ass. I'm talking about sexual innuendo and comments which even then were racist but only recently can be called out without feeling you were stepping out of turn. I've stood up for my crew at different times and called out producers for their actions."

More broadly, she feels that the art remains an afterthought to too many people. "Even when you talk to Academy members, they really don't know how to judge editing. They might give the editing award to the Best Picture but the Best Picture may not be the best edited picture."



# Emilia Pérez

Juliette Welfling retains the heart and soul in audacious genre bending musical drama

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

fearsome cartel boss enlists a struggling lawyer to help fake his death and undergo gender reassignment surgery so that she can finally live as her true self in French filmmaker Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Pérez*. Bold premise aside, the drama is audacious on several levels, not least in playing amid original songs by Clément Ducol and Camille and dance choreographed by Damien Jalet. It features four potent female performances including Karla Sofía Gascón in the title role; Zoe Saldaña as the lawyer, Rita; Selena Gomez as ex-wife, Jessi; and Adriana Paz as romantic interest Epifanía.

The director's previous work includes *Rust and Bone*, *Dheepan, The Sisters Brothers, The Prophet, The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and *Paris, 13th District,* all edited by Juliette Welfling (who has accumulated five César Awards for best editing). The French artist also cut *The Hunger Games, Ocean's Eight* and *Free State of Jones* for director Gary Ross and was Oscar nominated for *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*.

Starting Netflix's *Emilia Pérez*, Welfling says the director didn't provide any specific description of the film's genre. "The script evolved from being conventional in the beginning to something very different by the end," she says. "It went through all kinds of genres that sort of mix and match throughout the film. It's drama, it's a soap opera, it's film noir, a love story, a musical comedy. It's a whole mix of so many different things in ways that are unexpected, maybe weird or strange. I have the impression that it doesn't really look like any other film that one may have seen before because there's such a mix.

"We switched from one genre to another; everything is intentionally fluid. Everything felt possible and there wasn't any sort of frame around what we could do."

The first scene soon erupts into a song and dance led by Rita as she passionately argues the case for the prospection of a wife beater. The composition and choreography drives the narrative. It's set in a busy nighttime street market and sets the template for the musical numbers that follow. "It's a complicated scene which Zoe makes seem very easy," Welfling says. "She is singing, dancing and acting and her performance is remarkable. I selected the things that foreground her performance. More than that we wanted to be true to her character's spirit. I didn't want to impose too many cuts. If I watch a movie musical I'm often struck by how much the song and dance is cut too much and then I start thinking it's not that actor dancing for real, that's not authentic; it's a fake.

"So the longer we stay on a shot then the easier it is for the audience to believe in the performer. That was sort of a guiding principle for us."

There were, however, constraints. The scene was largely shot single camera with choreography and camera timed so precisely as to offer few options in the edit.

For all musical numbers the chief challenge was to transition in and out of them in a way that would make the songs feel integral to story.

"Most of the time what we wanted was for the viewer not to perceive a transition. For example, in the scene where the surgeon (played by Mark Ivanir) breaks into a song, mid-shot. When he starts singing, there's no music at all. He's singing a capella without orchestration."

She continues, "Normally, when a song arrives in a musical it arrives abruptly. Since the lyrics of the songs are dialogue in our movie we wanted them to arrive unexpectedly obtrusively."

A later set piece where Rita accosts male guests at a fundraising event was challenging in this regard since the beginning of the scene had featured some shots that were designed to be spectacular.

"Zoe looks incredible but if we used those shots at the beginning the audience would know right away that she was going to break out into a song and we didn't want that. We wanted for the viewer to be surprised."

Crafting the character of Manitas/Emilia Pérez was another editorial tightrope. The aim is that the audience gradually warms

to her as they empathize with her plight even as they are horrified by what he might do to Rita on their first encounter, alone and with a hood over her ahead, trapped on the drug lord's bus.

"In practical terms, that Zoe had a hood over her head for part of this sequence meant we could change the dialogue any way we wanted, which we did to some extent. As far as Manitas is concerned, you see the rings on his hands and the gleam of his teeth. I didn't want the viewer to see him right away. I delayed that moment as much as possible, just as Rita only glimpses him and we hear her deep breathing and how scared she is. By just showing little pieces and wider shots we make out his face and discover him."

Overall, Welfling says she tries to edit based on how the character feels in each situation. "I edit with my heart. I try to put myself in the character's shoes and therefore to try to have the viewer feel what each character feels. That is my only knowledge of what editing is. I don't have any rules for building a scene, nor am I interested in rules."

What then are we to make of Rita's decision to acquiesce in Manitas' request to secretly transition to a new identity?

"When we meet Rita she's sort of a slave to her boss, a male attorney. She's the one who does all the work, and he's the one who takes all the glory. She's considered to be less than nothing. So when the opportunity presents itself to make a lot of money she tells herself, she has nothing to lose. When she finds herself alone with Manitas she realizes that these are not good people, but there's something about her story that rings true. If Rita believes in universal social justice then her proposition shouldn't be denied just because of who she is."

A dinner party in London during which Rita is unexpectedly reunited with Emilia is a key scene that marks the beginning of the second part of the film. It's a crucial turning point in the characters' lives. "To emphasize that we're entering a new chapter, we chose to open the sequence with the song, 'Swing Supreme,' by Robbie Williams, which is very different from the musical style of the rest of the film.

"At the moment of revelation, the lights go out and we're suddenly immersed into the intimacy of Emilia and Rita, allowing us to escape from realism. As Rita sings, she goes from surprise to terror to compassion, while Emilia sings her story in a heartbreaking way. The editing of the first part of the scene



I edit with my heart. I try to put myself in the character's shoes and therefore to try to have the viewer feel what each character feels."



is focused on efficiency, but for the sung part, emotion alone guided the cut. We stay in close-up, shot-reverse-shot of the two women, with minimal cutting in the editing. They are like the only two people in the world; that's what we want the audience to feel. It's a very emotional moment. After this scene, everything will be different."

The film is France's selection for best international feature Oscar yet it's almost entirety told in Spanish language and set in Mexico City. Welfling says she understands a little Spanish but that this wasn't an issue. In fact, it helped. All dailies were subtitled in French and if she had a problem she'd translate it on her iPhone.

"Jacques says he likes to make movies in a language that he doesn't speak natively because to him, when it's in French, he finds he is searching for the subtext. But when it's in a language he doesn't understand he's listening to the music of the language. Spanish is such a beautiful, lyrical language that I let myself go and tried to cut this movie rhythmically. To me, the fact that it's in a language, where I don't immediately connect with the meaning, meant I thought more about the musicality of it."

The final third of the film switches the story's focus from Rita to the title character. Emilia's story gathers pace around her children, her work, her conflict with ex-wife Jessi (Gomez) and her love affair with Epifanía (Paz).

"Whereas Rita goes through fewer experiences in that part of the film it was very important for us not to lose her. We tried to move some scenes around so that Rita wouldn't disappear from the story, even while she has to take a step back to foreground Emilia's story."

# Dune: Part Two

Joe Walker, ACE, contrasts the intimate with the colossal in shaping Denis Villeneuve's sequel

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

irector Denis Villeneuve always had the second half of Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* in mind when making 2021's *Dune*. It proved a crucial creative decision since Herbert's science fiction is so dense and plotting so complex, attempting to distill the ideas into a coherent narrative must have felt like attempting to ride one of the gargantuan sandworms that inhabit the desert planet, Arrakis.

His achievement with key collaborators including cinematographer Greig Fraser, ASC, ACS; production designer Patrice Vermette; composer Hans Zimmer and editor Joe Walker, ACE, was rewarded with six Oscars from 10 nominations including for those mentioned and laid the groundwork for the sequel released last March.

"Because *Part One* did the groundwork of setting up these worlds and explaining the rules we didn't need to do that again," Walker says. "Everybody is familiar with the setup and it rewards the audience if we are a little epigrammatic especially at the beginning. *Part One* had freed us up to embrace the action adventure in *Part Two* but none of that would matter if we haven't nailed the human drama at its heart."

The film's opening scene lasting roughly 10 minutes picks up where *Part One* had left us with Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet), Chani (Zendaya) and Paul's mother, Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), hiding in the desert, hunted by the Harkonnen. The sequence is emblematic of the filmmaker's approach to the whole movie in service of Herbert's vision which is to constantly contrast the loudest moment with the quietest and the largest object with the smallest.

"We cut from a tiny shrimp-like fetus in the womb of a woman [Lady Jessica carrying Paul's sister] to the planet Arrakis in the middle of a hostile desert where nobody can last for longer than a day. We go from the most vulnerable to the most threatening," says Walker. "That's where we start the story. It plays into something very familiar in science-fiction films which is the idea of human drama on an epic scale." Another element to the film's big contrasts stems from the Bene Gesserit (the female-led political and religious force), who believe in the crucible of hardship – the idea that individuals who are shaped by struggle are the ones who thrive. "It's a bit like the philosophy of the Spartans or the Bedouin or, as here, the Fremen. That of a harsh environment forging a resilience and creating great warriors," says Walker. "I was putting things together as rhythmically as I could and to include the landscape because I felt that's a really, really big part of this story."

He continues, "The scene also represents an attempt by Denis and I to maximize the atmosphere and create a vibe and a tension for the story without forcing it. With music, for example, we're really minimal in that scene. The aim is to build a lot of tension before there's a frenzy of action."

Even in the assembly of Paul's triumphant worm ride, which has become the film's iconic scene, there is a sense of what Walker calls "a stretched rubber band" that snaps back in emotional release at the moment we see Paul survive.

"Especially with a longer film you're looking for ways of engaging your audience and perhaps surprising them and upending the drama. That's part of the rhythm I'm looking for. A good example is when Chani shoots the ornithopter down. It explodes, we cut and she's running and all you can hear are her breaths and footsteps. Then it crashes in a ball of flames. You can always make big bold hard cuts in an action sequence and build exciting contrasts but you can also do it in a dialogue scene. We actually spent more time finessing the intimate human story to make the dialogue scenes just as engaging."

For example, a somber, light hearted and quiet scene on a dune at dusk shows Stilgar (Javier Bardem) instructing Paul on how to survive in the desert. "Javier leans forward and makes a sudden noise to jump scare Paul. In editing terms, I am technically crossing the line on a hard cut and of course that does jolt your brain. I've been in an audience and seen that this gets a reaction. It's deliberately jarring." Also in this scene Stilgar warns Paul to beware of the Jinn [desert spirits] and Bardem makes a strange wind-like sound that imitates them. In the edit, Walker slowed that sound down and it becomes a tonal note for the score in the next scene in which we see Paul alone in the landscape. It's a small detail, but representative of how precise the story world is which is itself based on hours of discussion and planning.

"In this scene too we show Paul mansplaining to Chani how to sandwalk based on what he thinks he knows from his own research. It's a beautifully played moment and speaks volumes about the status he holds in Chani's heart at that point, which is that she's no pushover and he's going to have to be humble and work his way up."

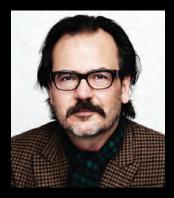
Paul's relationship with Chani blossoms into love on the dunes but by the end of *Part Two* their romance has soured. In the film, just as in the book, Paul thinks he must fulfill his destiny, which is to save the world by uniting his House with that of Princess Irulan (Florence Pugh), daughter of the Emperor. In Herbert's text we are led to believe that Chani accepts this fate but in the film she is surprised and heartbroken.

"Denis articulated to me many times that he tried to be true to Frank Herbert rather than the book," Walker explains. "Messiah [Herbert's second novel in the *Dune* canon, and the basis for the third film in Villeneuve's trilogy] was written to be a warning about messianic figures, not a celebration of them. To that end there were two choices made in the script. One was to make Chani a moral compass, much more so than she is in the book. She's a non-believer and skeptical of the manipulation of the Bene Gesserit. The second thing is that as the film unfolds, more and more of the story stems from her point of view.

"Towards the end, there's a moment in the desert where Paul and Chani are facing each other and he decides that he has to go south knowing the heavy consequences that will mean. They depart in different directions and at that point you sense the trust between them is broken. The point of view shifts. There are scenes showing her scrutiny of him and the moment he decides to go with Irulan is one of them."

Walker and Villeneuve worked to find a "hyper-clarity" to drive the story. It was a balance between focusing on details, such as the Fremen harvesting fluid from the dead, and maintaining a story trajectory that encompasses a universe and the ultimate devastation of billions of lives.

"A lot of the work in the edit was to try and pull together the thread of a story which takes us from a vulnerable young man



Especially with a longer film you're looking for ways of engaging your audience and perhaps surprising them and upending the drama. That's part of the rhythm I'm looking for."



in the desert left for dead with a mother who has her own kind of derangement all the way to the point where he's a potential messianic leader. That is a long rise and in the edit we were always trying to finesse that path."

One totem that Walker kept on the wall of his edit bay at home was of the Looney Tunes character – and Warner Bros. stablemate – Road Runner. Although there is more humor and wit in *Part Two*, particularly from Javier's performance, the reference was less about leaning into crazy comedy and more an attempt to "slightly embrace the grotesque," Walker says.

"I also feel that those Chuck Jones films were great at expressing human frailty in some way, even though it's a coyote and a roadrunner. It matched the idea that Paul isn't a superhero. He hasn't got a cape and he can't leap over buildings. He is always very vulnerable and human. When we start the story, we're starting with a boy who's trained but never ready for what's in front of him. The Road Runner aspect of it plays into that sense that it could be us. When he climbs on the worm, it's not entirely certain that he isn't going to get thrown off."

There's also an ambivalence to the adaptation about the existence of magic and religious miracles. Walker says, "In Denis' script, Stilgar is not an arch-manipulator like the Bene Gesserit. He actually has faith. And that plays all the way through the film up to the point where Paul seems to have been killed by Feyd-Rautha (Austin Butler). There's an incredible shot of Javier where his face drops and all those hopes and ambitions and generations of conditioning in his faith just fall apart in less than two seconds. I remember the feeling of discovering that little moment in the dailies.

"I like the idea that maybe the rational explanations of things is also in itself a form of magic. It's such a big point to make from a very small thing but it's also how we tried to keep a unified approach to a cut."

# Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story

Editor Otto Burnham hopes viewers have "laughed, cried and been inspired"

BY MATT ALLEN

ditor Otto Burnham discusses the editing of documentary Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story, which follows Reeve's life from before he won the part of Superman in Richard Donner's classic to his paralizing accident and inspiring advocacy work. Burnham's recent work includes Apollo 13: Survival and Atomic People.

**CinemaEditor:** How did your career start in editing documentaries? Is editing something you always wanted to do? Otto Burnham: I always knew I wanted to work in film having spent so much of my youth watching them, but I arrived at editing reasonably late – in my mid 20s. I didn't go to film school but studied psychology doing my dissertation on memory. I climbed the greasy ladder of post-production in L.A. and London – making a mean fried-egg sandwich as a runner, working horrendous night shifts as an edit assistant/tape op and actually was an online editor and junior colorist for a time. I used equipment to edit that I wouldn't have had access to otherwise, so for me working in those environments was critical. Music videos, short films, commercials that never saw the light of day – anything I could get my hands on.

### *CE:* What made you want to pursue a career in editing? Any early formative experiences?

**OB:** Watching movies endlessly and becoming obsessed with the presentation of them – specifically the punctuation and atmosphere which editing creates. The combination of music and swirling photography at the end of *Irreversible*, the door being slammed shut in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, knocking a vampire off a motorbike in *Blade 2* – specifically the choice of shots used – 'moments' I guess. Areas where the editor gets to express themselves. It might be a lingering shot, it might be a fast sequence, it might be some dread-soaked moment in the rain during *Se7en* – they are all structured in a way to convey emotion. I learned quite quickly that I reveled in the presentation of these

moments given the opportunity in the editing suite. Exploding story, it's a thrill. I love watching these moments again and again and again. Also my personality suits the discipline, being a bit of a shut-in.

### CE: What initially attracted you to telling the story of Christopher Reeve in Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story?

**OB:** Superman! I was in the playground of primary school in 1995 when the news broke about his accident. I can still remember the shock. I loved him as Superman, [Superman IV:] The Quest for Peace was actually my intro to him (as a kid I loved the bowling scene) and I loved comic books. My uncle had a decent collection in our basement – Nemesis the Warlock, Judge Dredd, Daredevil. I got a real kick from watching superhero films growing up – contrary to popular opinion Batman Forever is a gem! Anyway, the nerd in me was interested in the project and then there was the opportunity to collaborate with Ian Bonhote and Peter Ettedgui again.

#### *CE:* What was your collaboration like with directors Bonhote and Ettedgui? How did all three of you work together to make this movie come to life?

**OB:** Working with any director is about your relationship, trust, understanding and collaboration – especially when working with two! We have a beautiful working relationship, having worked together on *McQueen* and *Rising Phoenix*. *Rising Phoenix* in particular had a mad structure and I threw the kitchen sink at that film – crazy, beautiful visuals – we fought tooth and nail for so much of the editorial and built a lot of the trust we now share. They understand me – what I need to express myself (space), when to lean on me – and I understand them! They are my brothers, my parents and my children who all equally share a giddy excitement for cinematic filmmaking. We work democratically in the edit; having three voices actually solves problems pretty quickly – i.e. two vs. one. If someone feels

strongly, great, it's noted and nothing is ever forgotten. But that trust we all share in each other's ability and desire to tell the best, most emotional story possible means you can move on from debates pretty quickly.

### CE: What were the biggest challenges in crafting this movie editorially – especially with so much archival footage?

**OB:** The archive was the least of our worries to be honest. Yes there was a mountain of it, but it was so rich that getting through it was just a question of time. The biggest editorial challenge was realizing a structure that required dual narratives running concurrently and dovetailing between the two in ways which maintained an emotional flow and weren't predictable. Ian and Peter conceived the idea of starting with Chris' accident and setting two timelines running, but how does this work in reality? I had to think about moving thematically between the narratives, sometimes chronologically across great passages of time. It actually helped provide me opportunities to juxtapose Chris' life before and after the accident as well as exploring parallels in his life, despite the chasm of his physical condition. Also I wanted this film to be fun, combining archive in playful ways to keep you on your toes – Superman is a comic book, I knew the film would move people but it needed to feel contemporary and entertain.

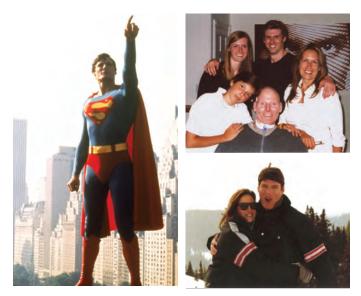
### *CE:* Is there a particular part of the documentary that you are especially proud of?

**OB:** I like the parallel of Chris training to get out of the wheelchair, segueing into him training for [the original] *Superman*: two pivotal moments in his life which required huge psychological strength. Also the gliding sequence because I had to fight for that! I wanted to sit in the imagery, move away from the narrative and kind of enjoy the feeling. You have just fallen in love with Chris through Gae's eyes and now you are in Chris' shoes [Gae Exton was Reeves' former girlfriend and mother of his children, Matthew and Alexandra.] It also provided a beautiful thematic transition back to Chris trying to convince [Richard] Donner he would make Superman 'really fly.' I love so much of it. We worked hard to make the end work, I don't want to give anything away but having two big emotional punches like that was a daunting prospect when I started.



"

My work is an extension of me. I cut with music I like. Video games inspire me, the internet inspires me, cinema inspires me – what makes you an individual is what will separate you from everyone else."



### CE: What would you want audiences to take away after seeing the film?

**OB:** I want you to have laughed, cried and been inspired. I also want to help challenge the structural presentation of documentaries. I think as the discipline continues to flourish there are stranger and braver approaches that we can take to telling true stories. Keep things moving.

### *CE:* What advice would you give aspiring editors who want to pursue a career as documentary editor?

**OB:** Cut – all the time. I'm cutting silly videos on my phone when not in the suite. Always playing, I love it. It's how I express myself. It's how I get things off my chest, it's how I learn, it's how I can live vicariously, it's how I can entertain. My work is an extension of me. I cut with music I like. Video games inspire me, the internet inspires me, cinema inspires me – what makes you an individual is what will separate you from everyone else. I've been an 'other' my whole life, mixed race in places I've not always felt comfortable, into alternative culture, not knowing quite who I am supposed to be. I like to think maybe being different is finally paying off. I would also say remember your first version of something won't be right! Learn to not take criticism personally - get used to changing things! Show conviction in your ideas, but learn which battles to pick. Your job is to not only help realize a vision but to inspire and surprise – including the people you are working with. So experiment, have fun – there are no rules.

### **CE:** Anything else you want to share with our readers about the making of this film?

**OB:** *Super/Man* was independently made, no one saw a frame until Sundance in 2024. I think the assumption has been it was studio sponsored and just another biopic, but actually it's the opposite. We pushed everything we could as hard as we could and had no idea how the world would respond. There are so many docs being made right now, you need to bring something different. I think the attitude with which we made the film has been justly rewarded and I'm so proud of it and everyone's contribution. Also keep an eye out for what we are cooking next.

# **September 5**

Hansjörg Weißbrich recreates the tension of the broadcast newsroom covering the '72 Munich massacre

BY ADRIAN PENNINGTON

n September 5, 1972, news began to emerge that Israeli athletes had been taken hostage at the Summer Olympic Games in Munich. Over the next 22 hours, events unfolded that shocked the world, and in the U.S., it was televised by an ABC Sports team more familiar with calling play-by-play sports.

September 5 dramatizes the crisis from the point of view of the ABC Sports broadcast crew scrambling to cover the story from inside a cramped control room in close proximity to the Olympic village where the hostages were held. Their live coverage was watched by 900 million viewers globally. "Our goal was to keep the audience on the edge of their seats and to create that real-time atmosphere even though they may know the outcome," explains editor Hansjörg Weißbrich (*She Said*).

Director Tim Fehlbaum and co-writer Moritz Binder had planned to tell the story from multiple perspectives until that proved too expensive to realize. But during prep they met with Geoffrey Mason – a member of the ABC Sports crew that covered the tragic events – and they decided to make the former sports producer a main source for the film.

"That was the moment when Tim decided to tell the story entirely from the perspective of the ABC Sports team and also to limit telling the story from within the control room," Weißbrich says. "Given that limitation, there was a risk of making a chamber piece with people watching events in front of monitors. To prevent that it was clear from the start that the story should be kinetic and lively and suspenseful and have urgency."

The Constantin Film production, distributed by Paramount, stars John Magaro as Mason with Peter Sarsgaard as ABC Sports executive Roone Arledge and Ben Chaplin as operations engineer Marvin Bader.

Cinematographer Markus Förderer, ASC, BVK, shot the film mostly digitally and handheld using two cameras as if they were a documentary team recording the ABC Sports crew in action. That generated up to five hours of footage for each day of the 32-day shoot. "We had an abundance of choices," says Weißbrich. "We just had to find them in the footage. The trick was to transform the page-turning energy of the script into the final film."

The production built sets at Bavaria Studios in Munich that faithfully recreated the claustrophobic space of the ABC facility. They also secured rights to use original broadcast footage and inserted clips of ABC anchor Jim McKay's interviews and presentation into the final cut. The rest of the archive footage shown in *September 5* was recreated out of respect for the families of the hostages.

The documentary shooting style extended to filming in long, unbroken takes with the understanding that Weißbrich would tighten everything up in editorial.

"There wasn't any conventional coverage of close-ups and wides and all the takes were different. My first approach was playful and intuitive. I watched all the footage and took bits and pieces I liked and started to build the structure of the scene. When we had a rough cut Tim would do his selects and I would work those into the cut. I cut multiple alternatives. We would then discuss and narrow it down and dug deeper into the scenes line by line. Of course, we needed to build character arcs and decide where to focus in each scene. We had to get the overall balance and rhythm right and it was important not leave any fat in the edit.

"Equally, we spent a lot of time getting the emotional beats right. It was important not just to keep the energy and pacing up but also to decide when to pause and when to give weight to particular scenes."

One such moment is the moral dilemma faced by the ABC crew about whether or not to show a possible execution live on camera. *September 5* is not just a chronicle of a massacre but of one of the first global real-time televised news events. "They are the first journalists to realize that their broadcast actually could shape the outcome of events on the ground," says Weißbrich. "This is something that makes the film so timely. Even though

with social media today you can go live in seconds the moral dilemma about what to show stays the same."

The script was written to compress the day's events into 90 minutes. Weißbrich's first rough cut wasn't significantly longer than final picture in part because of discussions with the director in prep. "We already knew what we might or might not need. We cut out one scene which was at the very end of the film and was a short discussion between the crew kind of summing the day up. We just felt it to be repetitious," he says.

After the first 10 minutes and as news of the tragic events breaks, the filmmakers introduce score which is nearly constant throughout. Explains Weißbrich, "We slowly build up and use it in almost every scene. We also deliberately take the music away to create occasional moments of silence. One of these is when McKay interviews Israeli weightlifting coach Tuvia Sokolovsky, who had escaped the hostage takers. That's a powerful moment because the news team is confronted with an outsider for the first time. Until then they are experiencing what happens only on TV screens. They have no personal relationship to the people involved, to the victims."

Another moment of silence comes near the end when there's the final realization that none of the hostages have survived. The music fades out and Mason slowly approaches the telephone to receive the fateful message.

"I started using music very early on in the edit because for me finding the right tonality is crucial and it is very often defined by the soundtrack. Our goal with the music was to highlight certain moments and bring in an urgency but we never ever wanted to be manipulative."





Given that limitation, there was a risk of making a chamber piece with people watching events in front of monitors. To prevent that it was clear from the start that the story should be kinetic and lively and suspenseful and have urgency."



Among fascinating details Fehlbaum learned from Mason was that one of the ABC crew was sent undercover into the athlete's village, which was out of bounds to media at that time, to retrieve 16mm footage of the incident and smuggle it back out. In screenings, this storyline elicits a few chuckles, which Weißbrich says is intentional.

"We were very happy to know that the laughs work because we made a deliberate choice to keep some small, lighter moments in the film," he says. "It works as a relief because the tension is so high throughout the film that we wanted to give the audience some moments of respite."

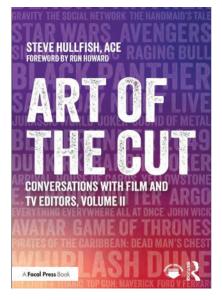
In a strange coincidence, Weißbrich had actually lived in one of the apartments in the athlete village, which was also used as a location in the film.

"In the early '90s I came to Munich as a young assistant editor at a film school there and lived in one of those apartments for a few weeks. I'd completely forgotten about it even while we were editing until it came to my mind when talking about the film. It's now an architectural heritage site and has stayed pretty much the same since the '70s."

The Games in '72 were the first to be broadcast live via satellite, a fact we learn in the film's opening montage which is a fictionalized ABC Sports trailer that Weißbrich put together using archival footage "to set the scene that this Olympic Games was designed to be the serene Olympics. It was meant to tell the world that Germany had changed [it was staged only 27 years since the end of World War II] before ultimately everything was shattered by the attacks. The tone here is deliberately lighter and also ironic. It's delivered in that upbeat style which sports broadcasters like but it's undercut by what the audience knows of what is about to happen."

### PAPER CUTS

**BOOK REVIEW** 



ART OF THE CUT: CONVERSATIONS WITH FILM AND TV EDITORS VOLUME II by Steve Hullfish, ACE Focal Press

**O** ne of the joys and privileges of interviewing editors is the insight they give into their work for which there is no right answer. Learning of an editor's personal response to the material is often so intriguing but by its nature hard to unlock for others to learn from.

Steve Hullfish, ACE, gives it his best shot. Because there is no one way to approach editorial problems, his latest book allows readers to see multiple solutions and ideas from dozens of leading editors and compare them side by side.

This is the second volume of *Art of the Cut* published by Hullfish, and like its 2017 predecessor, this sequel curates quotes from interviews with dozens of the most accomplished editors working today.

He has set himself a gargantuan task. The artistic, subjective side of an editor's work in concert with the director and other departments, is one that is influenced by their own personal experiences in the world. That's why Hullfish has sought to gather techniques and solutions from a wide array of diverse voices. His skill is to organize that information into a series of virtual conversations rather than presenting interviews in entirety about one particular show.

As Hullfish says, "The success of the [first] book came from a simple truth that film editors know about editing a story together: Juxtaposition is more important than simple information. The editing matters. Sequence matters. Context matters."

The book doesn't have to be read nonlinearly but the conversations aren't haphazard. It is designed to be opened at any section that piques interest. Hullfish has thought hard about ordering all the information at his disposal and that's where his own experience as a professional editor comes to the fore.

He decides to break an editor's skills into three broad categories: creative, social and technical. Then he divides the creative element into 'micro' and 'macro' editing. The former is how he defines the cut-to-cut juxtapositional and rhythmic choices. Into macro editing he puts the larger structural, overall storytelling and pacing considerations.

Since technical skills are constantly changing, he wisely leaves discussion of this outside the scope of this book but he does cover this in supplementary content available online.

Since interpersonal or social skills are just as critical for an editor's career and their artistic success, there's a strong focus on this aspect. "If you can't collaborate and communicate well, your creative ambitions and input will be hampered," Hullfish insists.

As Ron Howard says in the book's foreword, "A director may have the final

word in editing decisions but along the way the editor must have the courage to creatively put their opinions on the line."

The topics covered range from organizing and watching dailies to cutting performance, reaction shots and flashbacks. There's a section on assembly and another on 'Landing the Gig' – all of which offer practical advice that should appeal to seasoned and aspiring editors alike. Quite often opinions clash, a topic deliberately selected by Hullfish to showcase that there are many ways to piece together the puzzle.

The interviews, culled from Hullfish's *Art of the Cut* podcast, are with an astonishing number of leading editors, mostly ACE members, as well as directors, VFX editors and sound editors. There's a chapter on how assistant editors work with editors too. The ACE members include Joe Walker, ACE; Úna Ní Dhonghaíle, ACE; Myron Kerstein, ACE; Walter Murch, ACE; Lee Smith ACE; and Sandra Adair, ACE.

There are additional exclusive chapters free to access online which cover further topics ranging from 'Choosing the Project' to VFX. There you can also find the fullcolor high res images in the book, such as snapshots of Avid timelines (useful, since the black-and-white print reproduction does little to aid detailed comprehension).

Every editor has a different way of working and of solving a problem. The end result might be similar or it might not be. It would be intriguing to see how different editors approach working on the same piece of raw material – an approach that Hullfish conceived in a previous book in which colorists shared their process of grading the same set of images. Editing is an art that requires craftsmanship. There is technique that must be mastered, but the creative decisions are entirely artistic.

- ADRIAN PENNINGTON

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Written by Alex Garland, directed by Danny Boyle and made on a suitably B-movie budget of \$8 million, 28 Days Later resuscitated the zombie genre and spawned two sequels.



Editor Chris Gill, ACE, describes the iconic scene set 28 days after the prologue in which we see an animal 'rage virus' contaminate humans. Bike courier Jim (Cillian Murphy) wakes up from a coma to find no-one around. He's oblivious to everything that has happened – as is the audience, though we can guess.



"The film was shot chronologically, which is unusual," recalls Gill. "The first few days of filming were shot all around central London at 4 a.m. when they could block off the streets for a short time. There were still some people in the shot, coming back from parties, and we painted them out in post. They shot on consecutive mornings. We were lucky with continuity since the weather was good and there was no rain."



Multiple digital video cameras were placed high on buildings and in an overturned bus. "They were experimenting with HD cameras like the Canon XL which in today's terms is nothing special but then it was the cutting edge. They shot mountains of material."



Boyle gave Gill a track from Canadian band Godspeed as a musical tone. Gill uses it in the final scene. "The whole world depicted in the scene is completely disunited and I treated it so that in every shot there was some kind of a stutter as if things were developing but the bigger picture hasn't yet been revealed.

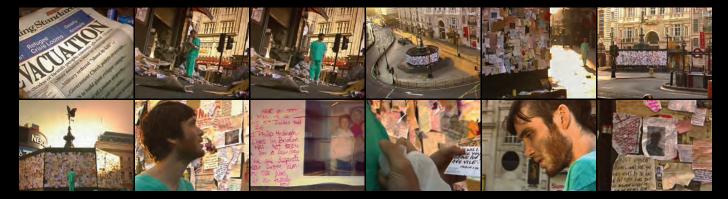
"He wanders through Soho until a moment where he touches a car and its alarm goes off. This gets a reaction from the audience almost every time," Gill says. "We've built up the eerie silence and feeling of isolation to this point. It's so satisfying to hear people jump out of their seats.



"The whole scene came together at the moment Jim reaches the poster wall at Piccadilly Circus. That was the time when everything was in sync, but before that it was deliberately out of sync."



The scene is particularly eerie for anyone familiar with Westminster Bridge and the other landmarks Jim walks around. "I knew the area really well. When cutting it I was feeling what the character was feeling," says Gill, who later collaborated with Boyle on 28 Weeks Later, Millions and Sunshine.



"Danny prefers mid-shots over close-ups because he says when mid-shots are on the big screen, they're almost like close-ups. This scene is shot with a long lens, emphasizing the deserted capital city."



Gill finished locking the picture and was then asked back to re-edit the film's ending. "There was no hope for the future of mankind. But this was barely a year after 9/11 and Fox asked Danny to change the ending. Having shot the film digitally, Danny was given the budget to shoot another ending in 35mm and to arrange for the Royal Air Force to fly past. The original ending was beautifully bleak but depressing so I understand why the studio didn't want to go down that route."







### ACE EDDIE AWARDS NOMINEE BEST EDITED FEATURE FILM



"A vivacious film filled with propulsive energy and profundity that can be felt in Sean Baker's editing"

"What's remarkable about Anora is its ability to straddle various tones without losing its emotional center"

"Writer/Director/Editor Sean Baker is near the height of his powers with this dazzling film"



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