VOL 10 NO1 Q1 2021

CINEMONTAGE

JOURNAL OF THE MOTION PICTURE EDITORS GUILD

CHANGING MINDS

Stevie Waichulis Surveys the Pride and Pitfalls as a Trans Person in Post

Ken Burns | Women of Skywalker | Remote Workflow

6 ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINATIONS INCLUDING BEST PICTURE BEST EDITING ALAN BAUMGARTEN

CRITICS' CHOICE AWARDS WINNER BEST EDITING ALAN BAUMGARTEN

WINNER BEST FILM EDITING — CAPRI HOLLYWOOD AWARDS
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"A MOVIE AS SIMULTANEOUSLY ENTERTAINING AND GALVANIZING AS ANYTHING YOU'LL SEE THIS YEAR."
TIME

"ALAN BAUMGARTEN'S EDITING IS THE FILM'S MOST VITAL ARTISTIC MERIT."
VARIETY

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"The editor is the final author of the film."

— David Lean

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BY PETER TONGETTE

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The Value of Recovery

HOW THE GUILD STAFF WORKS TO ENFORCE CONTRACT PROVISIONS

Just as the work that our members do is behind the scenes, so are many of the functions of our union staff. Much of their work is little understood and always looks different from the outside.

One very important component of our staff is the contract enforcement department. Many members come in direct contact with these folks for work-related issues, but even then, much of what they do can remain a mystery.

While it would be impossible to demystify all of it here, there are areas where we can shed some light.

We have employees dedicated to researching projects; putting new contracts and single production deals into our database; securing crew lists; outreach to inform crew members of contract provision highlights; outreach to inform management of the most commonly misunderstood or most violated contract provisions; and analyzing payroll records on projects that had deposits (or bonds) with payroll companies, in order to ensure members were properly paid and no contract violations occurred before releasing those bonds. This is just a brief overview of the many details involved with all of the components of this work.

WAGES PAID TO MEMBERS

$614,347.78 - WAGES
$9,501.59 - VACATION
$8,834.10 - HOLIDAY
17,022.78 HRS.

P&H HOURS CONTRIBUTIONS

17,022.78 HRS.

PHOTO: MARTIN COHEN

In addition to myself, Eastern Executive Director Paul Moore, and Western Executive Director Scott George, the staff members of the contract enforcement department include our field representatives. We have one in the New York office, Jennifer Madar, and five in the Los Angeles office: Jessica Pratt, Ann Hadsell, Olie Amarillas, Alenis Leon and Eric Kench.

Preserving the rights of the membership under the collective bargaining agreements is one of the most important roles of a union, which is why we have chosen to highlight some of those duties here. These dedicated staff members work tirelessly to assist the membership in all sorts of ways. Often, that means explaining contract provisions to members, but it can also include helping them navigate the challenges associated with addressing potential contract violations or other workplace issues. We now oversee hundreds of different contracts with varying classifications, scale wages and working conditions. This can sometimes be daunting for staff, let alone for the members.

Success cannot be fully measured by showing total wages collected on behalf of members for intentional or unintentional misapplication of the union agreements. Neither can success be fully demonstrated by totaling contribution hours attached to those wages, contributions that should have been made on

LOW BUDGET THEATRICAL AGREEMENT

- Paying below the appropriate scale
- Holidays not paid
- Weekly guarantees not fulfilled
- Inappropriate proration of start weeks
- MPI contributions not properly submitted

VIDEOTAPE SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT

- 6th and 7th day premiums not paid properly
- Distant location violations
- Vacation pay not paid

INDEPENDENT POST PRODUCTION AGREEMENT

- Issues related to inappropriate staffing
- Vacation pay not paid
- Overtime calculations inaccurate

MAJORS POST PRODUCTION AGREEMENT (INCLUDES NY MAJORS)

- Severance pay not issued
- Weekly guarantees not properly fulfilled

behalf of members but simply were not.

However the numbers have an important purpose. They show all of us, as union members, the real meaning of organized labor: Members working together, exercising their right to have employers uphold the wages, terms, and conditions required by collective bargaining agreements. I hope these results will encourage you to contact your field representatives if you have any questions or concerns about your union agreements.

These first two tables show the amount of wages, vacation and holiday pay, and corresponding pension and health contributions collected on behalf of members during 2020.

Sometimes violations occur where we cannot point to a member or group of members who were directly harmed. For example, if the production entity failed to employ a music editor and assigned that work outside the bargaining unit, we seek damages for that violation. If collected, they are usually paid directly to the Guild, or sometimes donated to non-profit organizations that provide vital services to members of the entertainment industry.

DAMAGES TO LOCAL IN 2020*

$237,492.07

Violations can occur under all of our contracts, so knowing what you are entitled to can help minimize these problems.

I hope this encourages more members to seek our counsel regarding contract enforcement issues. And while this particular article highlights the work of one department, I am very proud of and grateful for the dedicated service to our members that the entire staff demonstrates daily. ■

**Of this amount, $56,000 was paid to the pandemic relief fund of the Motion Picture Television Fund and $30,000 was paid to the pandemic relief fund of the Actor's Fund.*

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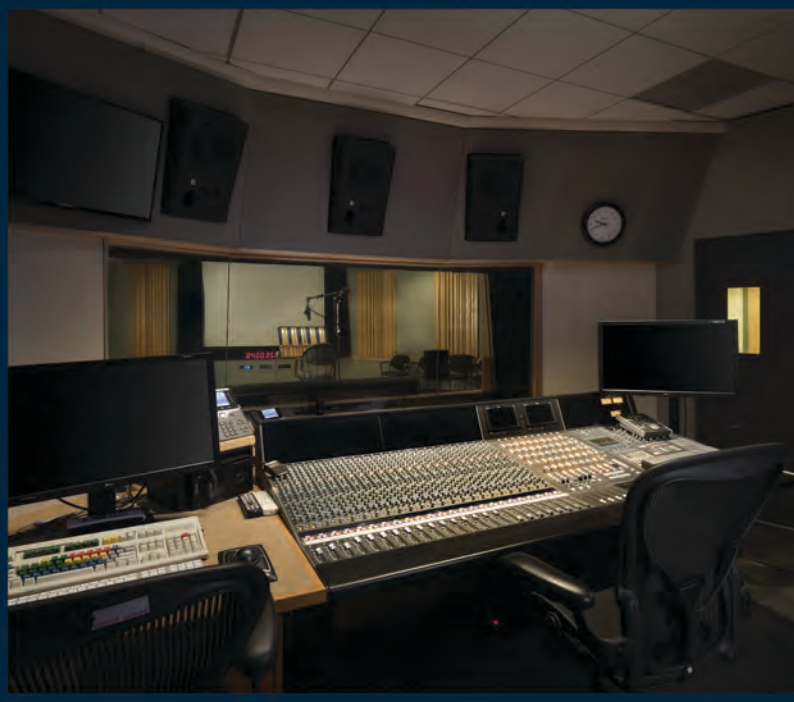

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

In the Q4 issue, CineMontage inadvertently ran a photo of Jay Humbrock's father. Below is the correct photo of Jay. CineMontage regrets the error.

Remote Odds

YES, SHOWS CAN BE ORGANIZED EVEN DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

"There's no place like home," Dorothy avows, willing herself back to the banal comforts of Kansas. Now, as we try to will ourselves out of the shared nightmare of this pandemic, 12 months (at this writing) after Los Angeles issued its initial stay-at-home order, I don't doubt Dorothy's conviction that there's no place like home. The question now is whether there exists, in fact, anyplace other than home. Home occupies all, being now not merely a domicile, but also simultaneously a bunker, a hermitage, and an office.

One year into this catastrophe, I number myself among the fortunate ones: My family and I have avoided falling ill, and I have work. This global ordeal tries my patience and weighs heavily upon my spirit, but I know that I've no personal cause for complaint. It has exacted far more terrible tolls from far too many. Even those of us who remain comparatively unscathed, though, are not unchanged. One of the subtle but significant impacts the pandemic has had upon me is the way in which it has altered my understanding of that place like no other, home.

Like a lot of our members who have had employment during the pandemic, Editors Guild staff members have been working from home. Most of the work we do can be performed remotely, and remote work affords obvious advantages in terms of safety. What's less obvious is how working from home affects work-life balance, how it changes our relationship to our work and to our coworkers, and even how it challenges our idea of home itself.

Yeoman farmers, feudal serfs, or even the traditional artisans who first formed guilds would not have fully shared our definition of "home." But, since the advent of industrial capitalism, the notion of home has largely come to be understood as a space distinct from the worksite at which we labor for wages. Home is where one lives, sure, but "living" isn't just about drawing breath. (In pre-pandemic times, many of us would spend the majority of our waking hours in workplaces; we didn't properly "live" there.) Home is the space in which we belong during those periods of time when our time belongs fully to us — that is, when we're not selling our time and talents to an employer.

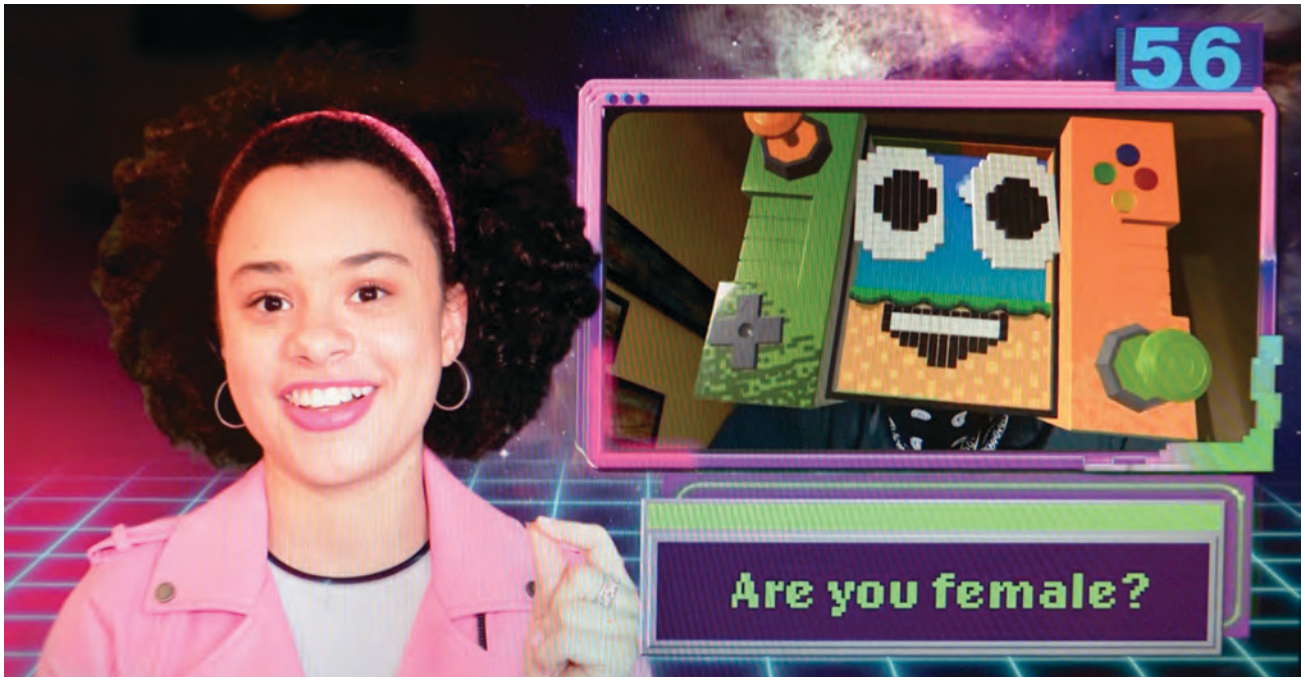
Rob Callahan

If industrialization helped to define "home" as the place we live when we control our own time, a post-industrial pandemic has upended that understanding, perhaps permanently, for those of us with jobs that lend themselves to remote work. That transformation, to be sure, isn't all bad. Obviously, working from home has been instrumental in helping us to remain healthy during a plague. Moreover, it has freed us from the drudgery of daily commutes, and it has given us more opportunity to spend time in proximity to those we most love. I've been relishing the lunches with my wife and kid, and it's great being able to prune tomato plants in my garden at the same time that I'm on a conference call. In many respects, working from home is a luxury.

But the collapse of the physical distinction between home and work can make maintaining the equilibrium of work-life balance trickier. I've spoken to many post-production professionals working from home who speak of increased pressures, implicit or explicit, to work through breaks, to work irregular hours, or to put in unpaid overtime. When we work where we rest, it gets harder to police the boundaries between time that belongs to our employers and time that we retain for ourselves.

More salient to the question of organizing, perhaps, is how remote work affects our relationships with coworkers. Even as our working lives now encroach upon the sanctuary of the home, colleagues are more distant, and connections between coworkers less organic. Our family members are perhaps more like workmates, while our workmates are less like family.

Organizing is all about forging solidarity with coworkers to exercise more power vis-à-vis bosses. With the world of post-production coming increasingly



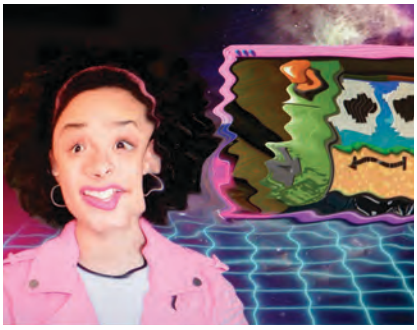
PHOTOS: MARTIN COHEN

Nickelodeon's "Unfiltered."

to look like a cottage industry — consisting of colleagues each sequestered in their individual homes, hither and yon, invisible, or even completely unknown to one another — can organizing new shops even be possible?

I am pleased to report that, yes, organizing can happen and has, in fact, been happening — even while remote work has kept post employees physically separate from each other.

A lot of that organizing has taken place in conjunction with production crews working in more-or-less traditional (albeit socially distanced) settings. Unscripted shows — titles such as "Bake Squad" and "Ellen's Next Great Designer" — have been flipped in recent months, largely on the strength of in-person production crews demanding union protections on those shows. Such campaigns look much like the IATSE's pre-pandemic organizing of individual shows, in which production crew members on set coordinate with post employees working off-set to present their employer with an



ultimatum: sign a union contract or your show doesn't get made.

But we also have a couple of recent examples of organizing wins driven entirely by post-production personnel working remotely. One such was the January strike of the "Unfiltered" crew.

"Unfiltered," a new game show for Nickelodeon, is an instance of the industry innovating new forms of content intended to be pandemic-proof: there is no set, no production crew, and hence no risk of viral exposure. The show's on-screen talent shoot themselves in their own homes using green screens and camera and lighting kits sent to them by a vendor for the production. A crew of assistant editors, graphics artists, and editors (all working from their respective homes) then cobbles together the remotely-filmed footage with a barrage of motion graphics. The effect is a televised approximation of the app-mediated means by which members of an extremely online generation relate to one another. The show is, essentially, all post.

The show may be pandemic-proof, but it wasn't organizing-proof. Guild organizers spoke to members of the show's post crew towards the end of the show's first season last fall. We gathered, virtually, to discuss organizing over the course of multiple Zoom sessions. The clear consensus among the crew was that the show, which was proving itself a success for the network, relied heavily upon their skills and efforts. Notwithstanding their instrumentality in the show's success, the post personnel were work-

ing long hours at wages well below industry standards. And, of course, in the midst of an unprecedented health crisis, they weren't receiving any contributions towards Motion Picture Industry health coverage.

The remaining schedule in that first season didn't bode well for our leverage demanding a union contract, but the crew decided and pledged to one another that they would unionize early in the second season in the event that the show was renewed. It did get renewed, and, in the first week of January, the day before the first episode of the second season was to air, the IATSE notified the company that its crew demanded union recognition. When the company didn't immediately grant recognition, the crew went on strike.

We usually say that a crew "goes out" on strike, or that they "walk off" a job. But those spatial terms don't quite fit when the strikers don't, in fact, go anywhere. And of course there was no picket line, as there was literally no worksite to picket. In the absence of traditional modes of action — workers physically accompanying one another away from the workplace and physically patrolling the workplace's perimeter to discourage would-be scabs — intra-crew communication became all the more crucial. Folks had to keep in contact to be confident that they stood together, even while physically apart, and to know that the show couldn't go on without them. Ultimately, though, it didn't matter if the crew members were on a picket line or on their living room couches. What mattered is that they were acting in concert and their work wasn't getting done.

The network recognized that the crew's action jeopardized the employer's ability to deliver a hit show in time for scheduled air dates. Two days after the strike began, we had an agreement to return everyone to work under a union contract. As a result, the ten editors and assistant editors saw increases to their base pay ranging from 50% to 70%, plus vacation pay, holiday pay, and, of course, MPI health and retirement benefits. It was our Guild's first strike conducted entirely over Zoom — likely among the first of such strikes for any union — and it scored a huge pay-off for the crew.

PHOTOS: MARTIN COHEN

Nickelodeon's "Unfiltered."

But organizing wins don't necessarily involve work stoppages. A case in point: only a few weeks after the "Unfiltered" strike, we won union recognition for a nation-wide group of 50 editorial employees working for the animation studio Titmouse, Inc., a prolific producer of adult-oriented animated programming, including such titles as "Big Mouth" for Netflix.

The animation sector of our industry, already experiencing boom times before the pandemic, was quick to embrace remote work. Without physical production crews, physical sets, and on-camera talent, retooling animation for working from home was relatively easy. When stay-at-home orders brought all of live-action production to a complete stand-still, animation only began picking up the pace.

The Titmouse organizing-from-home effort faced challenges that wouldn't have pertained to organizing at a traditional worksite. There was no water cooler at which coworkers could meet and establish connections. There were no after-work happy hours at which they could casually share stories about workplace concerns. Some of the Titmouse employees had been working at the company for years, but many others only began there more recently and had never had the opportunity to meet any of their coworkers in person. Text messages, emails, and meetings via videoconference had to suffice for building a community and consensus capable of effecting change at their employer.

But the Titmouse editorial crew did that work of building solidarity, culminating in an overwhelming majority of

SEE PAGE 53

Anedra Edwards

VISUAL EFFECTS EDITOR

Q Where are you currently employed?

Marvel Studios and ABC Studios.

Q Current projects?

I recently finished the Marvel Studios series "WandaVision" and will start another Marvel Studios production at the end of this year. I will also be a part of an ABC pilot that will start post production later this spring.

Q Describe your job.

As a visual effects editor directly employed by the production, I'm often the link between picture editorial and our producing team for visual effects needs. I facilitate the process of getting assets back and forth between the visual effects studios/vendors and the production. When working with picture editorial, I collaborate with them -- similar to a visual effects artist -- to create temp visual effects when fleshing out ideas for look, timing, etc. I'm also often in the driver seat for spotting when effects are needed and maintaining their continuity. Tracking visual effects shots also falls under my duties; I keep track of which visual effects shots are in the cut, which version is used, and I maintain the current status of shots from our visual effects vendors as they create the final product. I have a number of other responsibilities, but the examples I've given here cover the gist of it.

Q How did you first become interested in this line of work?

My passion for editing sparked in high school when my mother bought me my first video camera, and my teachers would let me do video projects for my assignments. Of course, I was a complete novice at the time and Windows Movie Maker was all the rage, but it was enough to light a fire inside me that fueled my interest in this art. When I got to college, my school of choice, Dickinson College, would allow students only to minor in film, so I pursued the film minor along with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Inter-

national Business. While a student, I was still discovering all the positions in film and TV production, so at the time, I thought I wanted to be a TV producer. However, through internships with large studios such as BET Networks and NBCUniversal and my work as a TV production assistant, I quickly decided that my career path would be in editorial.

I'm originally from Washington, DC, so after college, I started to work at my local news station -- WRC-TV, which is NBC4 in Washington – as an editor and associate producer in the news promotions and advertising department. I also edited freelance on the side. Because of the heavy documentary and news market in DC, an editor acquires a highly diverse skillset. Part of the wide variety of content on our reels includes visual effects, and my background in news, reality tv, and commercials provided me with strong skills in motion graphics and small-scale compositing. After I received my Master of Fine Arts degree in Film & Electronic Media from American University, I moved to Los Angeles where, because of my diverse background, it was a natural progression for me to move into the visual effects world for scripted editorial.

Q Who gave you your first break?

I've had several first breaks. Every phase of my editing journey has required help to make that "first step." I'll list the three that I think were the most important. My first break into professional editing was my position at NBC4 Washington News as the editor in the promotions and advertising department. My first break into scripted editorial was my position as an assistant editor on season 2 of the HBO comedy "Crashing." A mentor of mine, Joi McMillon, ACE, sent my name to several of her colleagues at HBO when they were in search of available assistant editors. I worked with an amazing editor on "Crashing," Tim Roche, whom I worked with again doing visual effects for "WandaVision." My first break into visual effects editorial was the DC Comics superhero show on The CW Network, "Black Lightning." Executive producers Salim Akil and Charles Holland were extremely supportive of me joining the show and allowed me to grow with the series. I started as visual effects assistant editor for seasons 1 and 2 and moved up to visual effects editor by season 3.

Q What was your first union job?

Assistant editor on the reality show "Naked and Afraid" on Discovery Channel.

Q What credits or projects are you proudest of, and why?

I am most proud of my visual effects work with superhero content. Working with "Black Lightning" on The CW was so rewarding because of the impact of the character as an African-American superhero with his family. I saw many of my own friends, relatives, and even myself in the series characters. I am also proud of my work on Marvel's "WandaVision." It's the first MCU content among my credits. There were a lot of challenges to get the show out the door, the biggest of which involved working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Audience reception for the show has been awesome and made the tough times worth it. I also learned a lot on the show in terms of different types of pipelines and workflows.

Q What was your biggest challenge in your job (or on a particular project) and how did you overcome/solve it?

One of my biggest professional challenges has been making the jump from reality tv to scripted in editorial. When I first moved to Los Angeles, I continued to work in reality tv as a night assistant editor for the company World of Wonder Productions. During the day, I hustled to network and to shadow editors and their assistants in scripted. I joined several mentorship programs that help editors and assistants of color further their career goals. On weekends, I also filled in as a post PA for scripted shows. I was pretty much working around the clock and was extremely exhausted at times. However, I knew that if I could tough it out, the payoff would be so sweet, to finally get my first scripted union position. During this tough period, I learned how to strategize in a way that was different from how I had networked on the east coast. I learned how to maneuver to different projects and promote myself to other editors and producers in this landscape. After 11 months of this hectic schedule, I got my first union AE position and then a month later, my first union scripted AE position.

Q What was the most fun you've had at work?

This didn't happen at work, but the most fun I've had with my co-workers was attending 2018 Comic-Con International in San Diego to see the "Black Lightning" panel, which included our executive producers and cast. Editorial was given complimentary passes on behalf of the production. It was a great experience to see the fans up close and observe how intensely they supported the stories being told in the series. It helped give inspiration when we were back in the cutting room, knowing there are a ton of people that appreciate the content coming out the door. It was also my first time at Comic-Con, so I took in the excitement of it all.

Q Jobwise, what do you hope to be doing five years from now?

I hope to have transitioned back to picture editorial and to be cutting an episodic series. I feel that my experience in visual effects is helping to prepare me for that transition because I would like to work on visual-effects-heavy content.

Q What are your outside activities, hobbies, passions?

Outside of work, I enjoy being outdoors. I love running, hiking, and playing basketball when possible. I also like extreme sport activities such as riding ATVs and jet skiing. I adore traveling. Of

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Full Spectrum

GUILD COMMITTEES AIM TO HELP NEURODIVERSE FAMILES

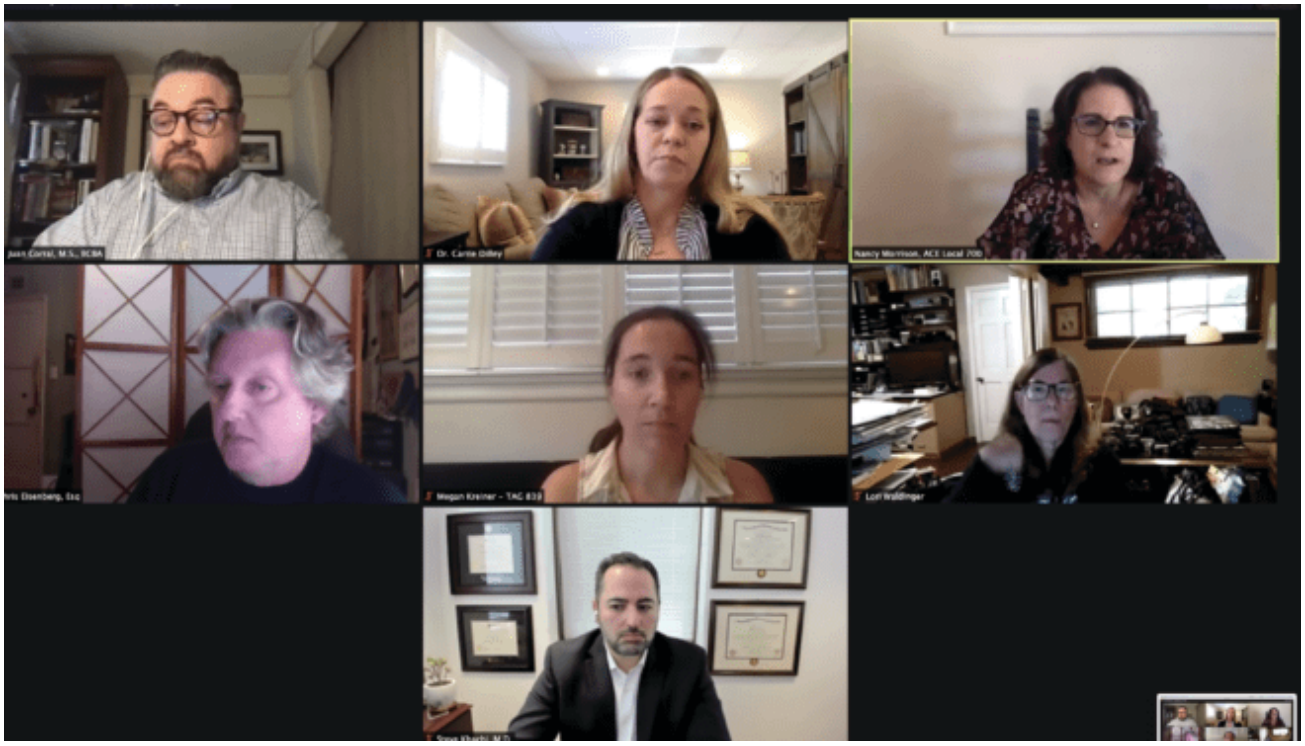

PHOTO: SHARON SMITH HOLLEY

Participants on a IATSE Zoom call in February for neurodiverse families.

By Su Fang Tham

The women's committees of various IATSE guilds have long wanted to organize shared events that would benefit members across the 13 Hollywood guilds.

Last year, production designer Miranda Cristofani, a board member of the Art Directors Guild Local 800, contacted MPEG National Executive Director Cathy Repola and Women's Steering Committee Co-Chair Dorian Harris, ACE to discuss possible ideas. After months of planning, the first such collaboration bore fruit Feb. 21 with the panel "Brain Work: Industry Parents on Raising the Neurodiverse Child."

'We're all part of the same community and face the same issues.'

A panel of clinicians, special education advocates and psychologists shared valuable insights with more than 70 participants who joined the two-hour discussion on how parents can best navigate the various support systems when it comes to raising children with autism spectrum disorder and other neurodiversities.

Production designer Denise Pizzini, – representing the Art Directors Guild women's committee, hopes this will be the first of many such collaborative efforts.

"One of our goals at Local 800 is to unite the IATSE Hollywood Women's Committees," she said. "We're all part of the same community and face the same

issues. I want to thank all the women who worked really hard to organize this amazing event. And a special shout out to the women's committees of the Editors Guild and the Animation Guild."

Before jumping into the nitty-gritty, co-moderator Nancy Morrison, ACE, of MPEG's Women's Steering Committee, brought up a very relevant feature documentary to the topic at hand. In the 2016 coming-of-age story "Life, Animated," a non-verbal autistic boy named Owen – who is a huge fan of Disney animated films – experiences a breakthrough when his dad was able to communicate with him as his favorite Disney characters.

Co-moderator and Animation Guild member Megan Kreiner, whose son was diagnosed at age four – found the film especially poignant due to her profession. "It was a hopeful and delightful experience to see an artform that my colleagues are so passionate about become an instrument that helps a child make sense of their world," she said.

Licensed clinical psychologist Carrie Dilley, PhD., owner of private psychology practice Synergy Psychological, shared a similar story; one of the children she treated once communicated with her via Pixar characters. Dilley emphasized the importance of early intervention. "A neuropsychological evaluation is the most comprehensive evaluation to determine what's going on from a cognitive standpoint," Dilley said. "However, a thorough evaluation can't be done until the child is over six or seven years old."

Once the appropriate diagnosis is obtained, parents often have to trudge through a maze to navigate the school systems, medical professionals and insurance coverage, all of which have their own convoluted lingo and acronyms. For example, in California, as student's IEP (Individualized Education Program) is up for re-evaluation every three years, and if the parents have any concerns, they have the right to request a reassessment via an IEE (Independent Educational Evaluation).

Kreiner also wanted to know whether IEPs are intended to support the gifted side of the child that often comes with an autism spectrum diagnosis. Veteran advocate and educational consultant Lori Waldinger has spent years advocating for students' rights to secure appropriate educational services.

"It is very important that parents advocate for the unique needs of the child, so the IEP should account for the deficits as well as the strengths," she emphasized. Taking a holistic approach when it comes to the IEP, she looks at the broader definition of its direct goal – academic performance – which should rightly include social, recreational and any other aspects of life that could impact the child's overall education.

So what's a family to do when their insurance plan denies coverage for services?

One of the questions from the participants surrounds the rights that neurodiverse children and their parents have when it comes to education. Special Education attorney Chris Eisenberg, Esq., whose 17-year-old son was diagnosed with autism at the age of two reminded the group that all neurodiverse children have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education in the least restrictive environment, or better known as FAPE. In order to be eligible for an IEP, the child has to meet one of 13 specific disabilities and has a proven need for special education services. When it comes to one of the main differences between an IEP and a Section 504 Plan, he clarifies: "The IEP is specifically for special education services, whereas the Section 504 Plan is for accommodations and modifications."

Having 13 years experience working with special needs children, Juan Corral, MS., BCBA focuses on parent empowerment by arming them with information to navigate the IEP process through the school system, amongst other things. So what's a family to do when their insurance plan denies coverage for services? "The first thing is to get in touch with a regional center [part of California's system to provide support for individuals with developmental disabilities]. Their job is to help you seek coverage for services," Corral advised.

However, there are 21 regional centers in the state and they don't all provide the same services. Moreover, you might be eligible for services under one center but not at another. Even with a diagnosis, you may not qualify for assistance at these regional centers. "One of the eligibility tests is for a child to prove that challenges exist in at least three of these six categories: communication, learning, self-care, mobility, self-direction and capacity for independent living (economic self-sufficiency)." Corral said.

Specializing in psychiatric diagnostic evaluations at the Mind Study Center, a Los Angeles-based clinic providing evidence-based integrated care, Dr. Steve Khachi, M.D. is a physician who focuses on psychopharmacology and neurosciences. Once the initial autism spectrum diagnosis has been determined and spectrum-related services have been secured, he advises parents to consider engaging a psychiatrist or developmental behavioral pediatrician. "These specialists will consider other physiological, biological and genetic factors to rule out any medical condition that may not have been explored," Dr. Khachi said.

Despite how frustrating the process almost always is, Waldinger offered parents some hope: that better days are ahead. Going back to the documentary, she reminded the group that just as it

was the parents who finally unlocked the puzzle for Owen, parents continue to be the driving force in pushing for positive change in this area, including changing laws to benefit neurodiverse students. "Having been in this field for 40 years, I've seen the positive trajectory of change in special needs education. Now we have so many more programs and support for these kids. Parents have really taken on a revolution to protect their children. We've come light years from where we were in terms of supporting and including ALL students in society."

With this first event in the rear-view mirror, the Women's Steering Committee aims to continue working with other guilds to offer more events in the coming months that will be open to all guild members across the 13 Hollywood locals. ■

Looking for Resources About Neurodiversity?

- The National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence & Practice (ncaep.fpg.unc.edu)
- Autism Speaks (autismspeaks.org)
- Disability Rights California – Regional Center Services
- Special Education Rights and Responsibilities (SERR) (serr.disabilityrightsca.org)
- The Help Group (thehelpgroup.org)
- Special Education law and advocacy (wrightslaw.com)
- ADHD magazine, community and website (additudemag.com)
- FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) leave for Special Education Meetings
- Interactive education tool on learning differences (understood.org)
- COPAA (Counsel of Parent Attorneys and Advocates) website (copaa.org)
- Lanterman Act (disabilityrightsca.org)
- Autism Society of Los Angeles

Space Age Kid

HOW A CURIOUS ASTRONOMY MAJOR FOUND HIS WAY TO STORY ANALYSIS

By Ray Kolasa

Growing up in Rochester, N.Y., in the 1960s and early '70s, movies were never much a part of my childhood. I remember my aunt taking my sisters and me to the occasional Disney re-release, and there were the usual Christmas flicks shown at the holiday parties thrown by the bank where my mother worked. But my parents weren't big moviegoers. I do recall seeing "Earthquake" (in Sensurround!) in a theater with my father, and I made him take me to see "Logan's Run," which I'm sure he hated since he wasn't the sci-fi fan that I was. I can't ever remember going to a movie theater with my mother.

PHOTO: PHOTOFEST

"Star Wars."

As a Space Age kid, I loved astronauts and aliens, science and science fiction. The comic books I read led me to heroic pulp fiction — everything from "Conan" to "The Shadow," and most especially "Doc Savage: the Man of Bronze!" And then there were the Universal monsters, though at that time I read about them more in magazines like "Famous Monsters of Filmland" or "Starlog" than I actually saw them on the big screen.

That all changed in 1977. "Star Wars" was the turning point for me, followed several months later by "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Those two films featured everything I loved: space opera, aliens, monsters, heroic fantasy. A sense of wonder.

In between those two films my family moved from Rochester to San Diego. Now San Diego ain't all that close to Los Angeles when you're only 15 years old, but it's much closer than New York, and it's where I caught my first glimpse of Hollywood moviemaking when my family happened by La Jolla Cove while Richard Rush and his crew were filming "The Stuntman." Thus inspired, I built a Millennium Falcon model, borrowed my dad's Super-8 camera and filmed the miniature spaceship in front of black velvet as I blew it up with firecrackers. At the time, briefly, I wanted to work in Special Effects.

But I didn't think about going to film school when I first entered college. I was interested in real science as much as science fiction and so began college studying Astronomy. After two years of Math and Physics, I realized I wanted to pursue something more creative. San Diego State University offered a degree in Radio, TV & Film, and by then the film bug had bitten me good. In those days, San Diego's Ken Cinema was a regular hangout, where I saw double features with work by such international directors as Truffaut, Kurosawa, and Fellini. I still vividly remember the night, nearly 40 years ago, that I saw Hitchcock's "Psycho" and Polanski's "Repulsion" on the same bill.

While still in school, I got a ton of experience in all facets of television production at KPBS-TV. Then it was time to load up the truck and move to Beverly... or at least North Hollywood. My first Hollywood job was as a P.A. for Dick Clark Productions... but I quit at lunchtime after spending the morning painting offices. I worked for a while as a sound effects editor cutting in gunshots to a popular TV show, then as a P.A. on "The Golden Girls," a show so beloved that some still think my getting lunch for

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To make the new documentary his editors discovered writer who reinvented

TELLING P

BY PETER

Ken Burns has spent the better part of his career contemplating American life in all of its marvelous, multitudinous complexity. The documentarian has burrowed into baseball, honored the Shakers, and stood in awe of the Brooklyn Bridge. He has traced the origins of jazz and profiled one of America's most illustrious political families, the Roosevelts. He has celebrated the national

"Hemingway," Ken Burns and new sides to the American storytelling

APA'S STORY

TONGUETTE

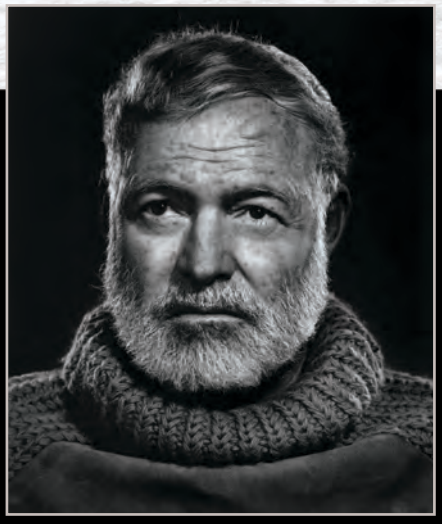

PHOTO: Estate of Yousuf Karsh

park system and helped us come to terms with no fewer than three wars: the Civil War, World War II, and the Vietnam War. Given that Burns has so many subjects spinning in his head, some viewers may wonder what the filmmaker himself reads during his off-time. “Among the many, many books at the foot of my bed, where there’s a kind of impromptu

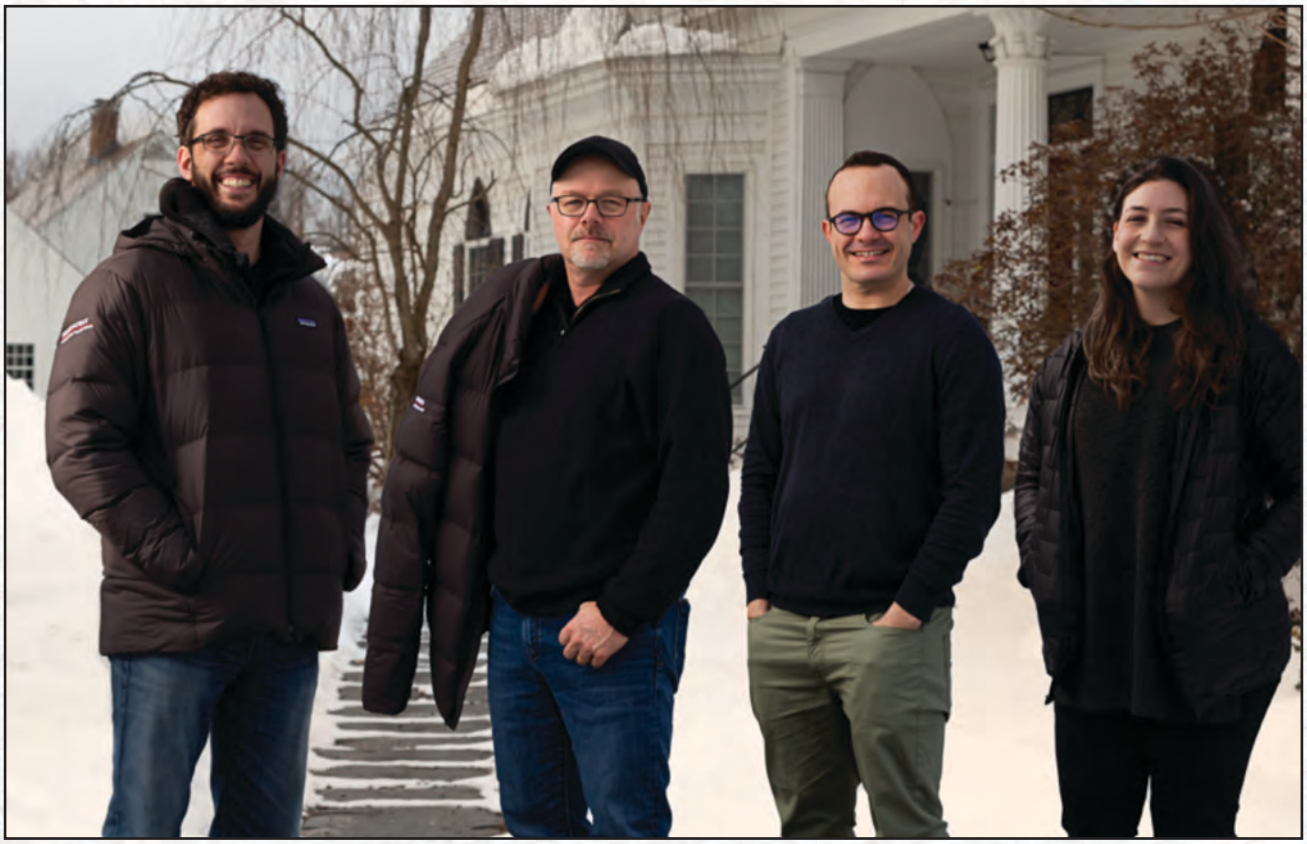

PHOTO : EVAN BARLOW

The "Hemingway" post team: Ryan Gifford (left), Erik Ewers, Brian Lee and Cat Harris.

bookshelf, I have the complete short stories of Ernest Hemingway," Burns said. "It is not a week that goes by that I don't pick up and read before bed at least one. Several of them are — 'masterpiece' is not even the word: 'Hills Like White Elephants,' 'Up in Michigan,' and, of course, I would say 'The Killers.' . . . The best of all probably is 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro.'"

Burns may be a longstanding admirer of Hemingway, but it took him close to a quarter century to turn his attention to a writer who, despite his demons and excesses, remains revered for the pithy honesty of his prose. Co-directed by Burns and Lynn Novick, the three-part documentary "Hemingway" will be shown over three nights on PBS stations from April 5-7. Burns, Novick, and a number of key post-production personnel on the film recently spoke with CineMontage about its long and winding road to television screens — a process that included crucial decision-making during post-production, a phase valued by all who work at Burns' production company in Florentine Films, based in New York and in Walpole, New Hampshire.

"We can collect all the rare and never-before-seen archives . . . and you can have the best interviews in the world, but how you put them together is it," Burns said. "The whole editing process is just a continuation of the central creative process of our collective group."

The seed for the project was planted by Burns' longtime collaborator Novick, who, in the mid-1990s, took a vacation to Key West, where Hemingway — who was born in 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois, but eventually blazed trails to Paris, Spain, and Cuba — had once made his home. Novick was already familiar with Hemingway's work, but when she took a tour of his residence — and had a close look at his writing room, which was staged to resemble how it might have looked during the writer's lifetime — had something of

an epiphany. "It was like a lightning bolt — just standing in this room where he had created some of my favorite works," said Novick, who then pitched the idea of a documentary on Hemingway to Burns and another stalwart collaborator, writer Geoffrey C. Ward.

Years passed. Burns, who is famous for juggling multiple films, had already committed to making other documentaries that would take precedence, and there was talk of outside Hemingway-related projects that the filmmakers wanted to steer clear of. "Other things just became more urgent for whatever reason," Novick said. "It got officially on our list of something we were definitely going to do probably 10 years ago."

While Burns, Novick, and Ward spent years or even decades mulling Hemingway, the picture editor on the show had a far more compressed timeline. Senior picture editor Erik Ewers, ACE — along with fellow picture editors Ryan Gifford, Cat Harris, and Margaret Shepardson-Legere — worked for about 16 months on "Hemingway," earning credit on all three episodes. And he hadn't even revisited the legendary writer in years and years.

"The last time I gave Hemingway any thought was in high school," Ewers said. "I hadn't re-read him."

One of two senior picture editors currently working at Florentine — the other is Tricia Reidy, ACE — Ewers has certainly been busy during his 30-year association with Burns. While still a student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Ewers happened upon a broadcast of Burns' "The Civil War," which was a national sensation during its initial airing in September 1990. "There were a bunch of people watching this very strange film where there were photographs and sound effects and they were panning across these images of soldiers," Ewers recalled. "I found myself actually in tears in a matter of minutes."

PHOTO: AP

Partners: Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.

Ewers later phoned his father, a Civil War buff. "I told him how much I wanted to do something like that, and he said, 'Well, you should talk to your aunt and uncle — they live next door to the director,'" said Ewers, who, after meeting Burns and having made an impression on then-supervising editor Paul Barnes, ACE, earned a spot as an apprentice on Burns' 1992 radio documentary "Empire of the Air."

"I fell in love with the mechanics of editing, back then on Steenbecks," Ewers said. "Organizing trims and cleaning fill and all of that was thrilling to me, believe it or not. And it was a very educational environment. Paul made it pretty clear early on that he wanted to grow me."

Ewers, who has worked in both picture and sound editing, steadily rose through the ranks at Florentine: He became an associate picture editor on "Baseball" (1994) and earned his first full co-picture editing credit on "Lewis & Clark" (1997). And, since the turn of the millennium, he has been among the editors on some of Burns' most ambitious and impactful projects, "The War" (2007), "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" (2009), and "The Roosevelts: An Intimate History" (2014). "He's really grown — he's a terrific editor," Burns said, reflecting on his protégé's evolution. "It's been a long, long journey together, and it's been a family. And Erik is most definitely a part of that family."

Despite Burns' own tendency to hopscotch between projects, editors employed at Florentine — all of whom work at the facility in New Hampshire — work on just one at a time. They are assembled into teams; one team of editors might be starting a project while others are at a later stage on another project. The editor tasked with keeping the moving parts moving along is post-production supervisor Daniel J. White. "I've called it sort of like [being] a harbor pilot," said

White, who assures that schedules are kept to and budgets are maintained. "The ship comes into the harbor, and the captain doesn't always know all of the rocks that they don't want to run into." He oversees not just the editorial team but other finishing work. "I disseminate all the information between the post houses, between the directors, the producers, the editors," he said. "It is just making sure that everything is beautiful and perfect and sounds terrific . . . before Ken sees it, and hears it, for the final time."

Beyond the technical pleasures he found in editing, Ewers discovered that working on projects centered on historical topics spoke to something deep within him. "I was a very sensitive child — troubled in some ways," Ewers said. "My earliest memory of connecting it to history was at age 13. I read a Vietnam narrative. It was fictitious, but it was based on real events. Just a short paperback book. I kept imagining, 'How would I act? What would I do in these life-or-death situations — these terrifying moments?'"

In jumping into each new documentary, Ewers applies the same mixture of empathy combined with intuition. "My secret — and for a long time, it had been a secret from Ken and Paul and Geoff Ward and [writer] Dayton Duncan and Lynn — is I don't read the scripts before I start editing," Ewers said. "I don't look past page one. I react to each page. As I flip the page, I have no idea if this chapter or section is going to end and a new one is going to begin."

Embarking on a project without having undertaken extensive or extraordinary research seems to be commonplace at Florentine, almost an article of faith. "Having some kind of specialized knowledge of a certain subject can actually hinder you in how you want to translate things to the audience," picture editor Gifford said. "In the Avid itself, you kind of, in some ways, become infused with this."

On "Hemingway," Ewers found himself leaning on his gut reaction more than on most projects. Not only had he not read the writer's work in years, but, in the early going, he felt he didn't fully grasp what he was all about. "I, on 'Hemingway,' felt more unstable than any other project in 30 years," he said. "I didn't have a feel for his language. I didn't have a feel for those micro moments that we were pulling out of his books. I didn't have the understanding of the greater context of the books, because it had been so long" since reading them.

'We're talking about a guy's life that has a lot of drama and he's very interesting, but there's nothing like . . . a long battle scene or anything like that.'

For Burns, the key was to embrace, rather than flee from, the contradictions of his subject, whose lifetime of brawling machismo came with dire consequences, including three divorces and his own suicide, by gunshot, in 1961. "His first wife, Hadley, had said that he had so many sides he defied geometry," Burns said. "He did those macho things — big-game hunting in Africa, hunting, fishing, all of that sort of stuff — but underneath it is this incredible other life."

Burns points to "A Farewell to Arms," which uses World War I as a backdrop to the love affair that emerges between an ambulance driver and a nurse. "As Edna [O'Brien] points out, he gets the boy stuff right — the guns — but what people remember is a woman dying in childbirth," said Burns, whose film links Hemingway's writing to his youth, much of which was spent in the company of his father, a doctor. "The father is leaving in the middle of the night to try to deal with difficult pregnancies," Burns said.

Ewers, too, came to realize that two Hemingways would have to coexist in the documentary. "You can't just hate him, and you certainly can't love him," Ewers said. "You see the complicated reasons why he became such an undesirable person with his mother and the suicide in his family, which was also seemingly somewhat genetic."

The theme is stated in the first moments of Episode 1, during which Michael Katakis — among numerous writers interviewed on-camera, including Paul Hendrickson, Edna O'Brien, and Tobias Wolff — comments: "Hemingway was a writer who happened to be American, but his palette was incredibly wide, and delicious, and violent, and brutal, and ugly — all of those things. It's something every culture can basically understand." (The opening of Episode 1 was cut by Gifford.) Ewers said that Burns is a believer in what he calls "Aristotleian Poetics": "Part of his Aristotleian Poetics is to have a prologue that is some moment, event, thought — something — that kind of throws you far ahead into the film to give you just a glimpse of how it might feel or be," Ewers said. "Then the intro follows [and] is kind of our table of contents, getting the viewer to understand what we're going to talk about in the film."

With scrupulously prepared scripts, meticulously chosen selects drawn from the interviews the filmmakers have conducted, and a strictly chronological narrative approach, at first glance it might seem that Burns' films offer little in the way of editorial invention. "We spend very little time in flashback, ever," Burns said. Yet, he added, within those parameters, there is enormous room for editorial adjustments. "The respiration, the rhythm, the inhalation and exhalation of it develops over time," Burns said.

The specific rhythm and even length of any Burns project springs from the creation of what is called by Florentine veterans a "blind assembly": An editor will put together a version of an episode that includes on-camera interviews and narration (at this stage read by Burns rather than the final narrator, Peter Coyote) but no other imagery; a black screen is shown in lieu of yet-to-be-chosen archival stills or footage. "It's just so helpful, and people say, 'Oh, it's a radio play' — it's not that at all," Burns said. "You just hear it, and you begin to internalize a rhythm of a story. And then you are liberating the film by saying, 'OK, now go add pictures.'"

As Burns and his collaborators describe it, the blind assembly is something of an exercise in efficiency. By listening to passages of narration against a black screen, it's easier to recognize where the narration drags; and, where that narration drags, it might be cut before any actual substantive editing is done. "[The blind assembly] allows us to watch it and see how long it is and see where it's redundant," Ewers said. "We see what we can cut down so that we're not editing scenes that are going to get thrown out anyway."

"We're trying to nail down the structure and get close to a running time," Novick added, so that editors' time is not wasted on sequences likely to be scrapped later on.

Of course, eventually those segments of black screen do get filled in. During the preparation of any Burns project, a research team will start assembling archival stills one to two years before any editing is done. The images are imported into FileMaker to be accessed by the filmmakers. "When I started 'Hemingway' I think there [were] probably around 500 images in the FileMaker database," said Ewers, but by the end of the process, some 17,000 were logged into the database, each with source, licensing, and quality information. To arrive at final selections, the directors and producers sit down with the editors. "We'd look at the pictures that are potentially possible, or footage, or we might say we don't have anything," Novick said. About 1,000 images are seen in the final film.

'Films are only made in the editing room — period.'

"Hemingway" came with one big, inherent challenge: While many Burns projects revolve around inherently dramatic subjects, such as war, social change, or even baseball, this one profiles a writer, and much screen time is spent on his craft. "There isn't some huge, momentous event that we're centering around," said assistant editor Brian Lee. "We're talking about a guy's life that has a lot of drama and he's very interesting, but there's nothing like . . . a long battle scene or anything like that."

To add visual interest at the get-go, Lee devised graphics that gave movement to the writer's handwriting: At the start of Episode 1, Hemingway's words on a page are seemingly being crossed-out and replaced by new ones. The animated scribblings have a kinetic poetry to them. "Famous lines or scenes or moments in stories are suddenly being edited before your eyes," Burns said. "That was crucial to us in telling the story."

Working alongside Ewers were picture editors Gifford, a seventeen-year veteran of Florentine productions who co-edited Episodes 1 and 2 with Ewers; and Harris, a relative newcomer who began as a research intern on "Vietnam," left Florentine to gain postproduction experience, and returned to co-edit Episode 3 with Ewers. (Shepardson-Legere also co-edited Episodes 2 and 3.) Each editor stressed the importance of maintaining a uniform style between them. "There are different editing styles and then there's the Florentine overarching thread," said Harris, adding that one constant is a preference for letting episodes play at their natural lengths rather than rushing audiences from incident to incident. "There is a lot of breathing room for people to accept what you're seeing and hearing, in between narration, as well as while you're hearing that narration or different voices," she said.

Not that there is anything shambling or shaggy about the documentary. In the end, the filmmakers say that the form of "Hemingway" reflected something of Hemingway himself. "Hemingway is the master of compression and sort of stripping away what's not necessary," Novick said. "We want the film to embody that, but not to be Hemingway-esque either — to sort of be within our style but to be the vessel of that."

Last March, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the editors went from working as a team in New Hampshire to completing their work remotely. "Over

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CHANGING

MINDS

STEVIE WAICHULIS SURVEYS THE PRIDE AND PITFALLS AS A TRANS PERSON IN POST

By Stevie Waichulis

During my late 20s, I was just coming out of my shell, discovering who I was.

It always upset me that people felt that I needed to change in their eyes, that I was never good enough in my own skin or attire. My true identity was constantly challenged through the early years of my career. Many coworkers told me that I would go much further in my career if I just played the "straight game" regarding my appearance.

I always worked very hard and doubled the hours that most Editors would not consider doing for low-budget, independent projects. Being single and in my late 20s, I did not have a family waiting at home. I went above and beyond for producers and directors who, I realize now, did not appreciate my diligence, nor did they respect me for who I am. When people start out in this industry, they oftentimes try to overachieve to prove their worth.

This interaction with producers and directors continued for many years. I have pretty thick skin and I try not to allow people's personal opinions of my appearance affect me. However, when it affects my position or future opportunities, then that's a problem. I had one producer tell me that I should wear "business attire" and not feminine attire. They meant, male business attire. I said, "Well, if that's what I was going for, I would do that. But that's not who I am, nor is it my style." This has been the story of my life: People constantly offering their opinion of who I should be in their eyes.

PHOTO BY MARK EDWARDS

Stevie Waichulis with her 1991 Mercedes Benz 560SEC, which she has been restoring since 2017.

I grew up in a small town in rural Pennsylvania, which had its pros and cons. I lived in a safe and slower-paced environment. However, there was a lack of diversity compared with larger metro areas. Having the opportunity to work on farms and experience a rural upbringing gave me a unique outlook.

My teenage years consisted of dirt bikes, beer, guns, fishing, camping, and 3-day music festivals, as well as the occasional fist fight that resulted in loose teeth and blood in my mouth. I've always been an automotive enthusiast and was fortunate enough to own motorcycles growing up. I still have an old 1981 Kawasaki KZ750-E2 from my college years which I've been restoring on and off through the years. Go to my (Stevie Waichulis) YouTube channel to view a few clips of this motorcycle. I get joy out of tinkering with mechanical things and getting my hands dirty in the process.

My initial college major was Computer Science but I changed over to Fine Art and Graphic Design. I then ventured into Radio & Television Production, followed by earning a BS in Film and Animation at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY.

In August of 2004, I rented a U-Haul and loaded my old Buick and belongings and relocated to LA. The trek across the country and hopes of a bright future were exhilarating.

At the time, I was primarily dating men and was beginning to become more gender-fluid with my wardrobe. Rochester, NY, was my first experience in a larger, more diverse city. Moving to LA was like another planet all together compared to the East Coast.

When I arrived in LA, I lived with a friend from RIT in a small studio apartment in Highland Park. It was a sketchy neighborhood, with gunshots heard every other night. I grew up with guns in Pennsylvania and never had a problem with them. However, when people shoot them off in populated cities, it's a bit uncomfortable thinking that a stray bullet can come through the apartment windows at any time. Helicopters with spotlights flew around our neighborhood most nights which made it next to impossible to sleep. One of our neighbors owned a pickup truck with several bullet holes covered up with electrical tape. We had a few gang members in our apartment building. Needless to say, rent was affordable in Highland Park during that time.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Waichulis on Instagram (and opposite).

I thought it would be too difficult to achieve success in the entertainment industry if I transitioned.

Meanwhile, I worked various retail computer jobs as well as low-budget independent films. I started obtaining more and more Assistant Editor and Editor gigs and in 2008 I got to cut my first documentary film.

Through the years, people constantly told me to dress more professionally, which meant more like a straight male. My style of dress was gender-fluid, and I was not willing to change to make other people more comfortable around me. I personally started and stopped my own transition several times over the years because I thought it would be too difficult to achieve success in the entertainment industry if I transitioned.

People's fears and misunderstandings of gender identity kept me from

being my true self in this industry. It was always hurtful when people would talk to me about my choice of attire and that I needed to change to be taken more seriously in the entertainment industry. I never asked for people's opinions. Each new film or show I worked on typically had a few people that just didn't respect or trust me because I was trans and/or non-binary.

Through the years, workflow problems and situations came up in post-production from time to time. If there was tension amongst editors or producers over technical issues regarding a scene or shot, the crosshairs would typically land on me when I was assisting, placing blinded blame for random technical issues with footage or sound, which in the majority of instances had nothing to do with me directly.

Many productions are grossly mismanaged from top to bottom. Editors and assistant editors know that problems on set get passed on to post production. It is part of the job.

A few years, ago I was editing on a show when a new post-production supervisor came on board. I was midway through the producer notes phase of my episodes. Word got back to me that the post-production supervisor was uncomfortable with me and would talk behind my back. Their homophobic and transphobic chatter would take place after I left at the end of the work day.

We can't always pick who we end up working with in post production. I typically take most gigs that come my way because living in Los Angeles is far from affordable and I need every job I can get.

Over the last several years we are finally seeing more transgender representation in the content being produced. Every time a transgender actor or actress is cast, it helps spread awareness and acceptance around the world. The same goes for post-production as well.

I hope my story and experiences can help others stand up and become stronger and have the courage to be themselves without fear or anxiety. We should not feel that we have to look down or away when people look at us. I have done this over the years as I would hear people commenting under their breath. I did not want to socially engage any more than I needed to outside of what was expected of me on the job. I did not want to make any waves that would jeopardize any future opportunities.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

The transgender community deserves the same respect that anyone else in this industry receives. As long as we believe in ourselves and we stay true to ourselves, success will follow.

Other people's fear and misunderstanding will begin to fade away as we all do our part in being VISIBLE. Transgender union members should not be treated any differently than any other union member.

It's important that we allow people to see us for who we are. We are not going away, that's for sure. We have stories to tell. Let our creativity flow!

I look forward to all the amazing stories yet to be told by our community through film and television and to working with more LGBTQ+ content makers in 2021. ■

Stevie Waichulis is a Film Editor. In 2020, she and her film partner Jason Rutherford distributed their film "SHHHH" (www.darksidereleasing.com), which was an official selection at Beyond Fest. In 2021, they are releasing a definitive documentary on Grindhouse cinema called "Masters of the Grind."

PHOTO: SKYWALKER

TOGETHER: Margie O'Malley (left), Ronni Brown, Kim Patrick and Bonnie Wild at the 2018 primetime Emmys, nominated for "Star Wars Rebels."

Sounds Like Family

WOMEN AT LEGENDARY SKYWALKER SOUND HAVE FOUND A HOME — AND CAREER BOOST

By Michael Goldman

At Skywalker Sound, women are making connections – and that makes all the difference.

Danielle Dupre, a re-recording mixer and eight-year veteran at the famed Northern California facility, says she got her foot in the door thanks to the grace of another woman industry professional she had long admired.

"I emailed Leslie Ann Jones, now director of music recording and scoring at Skywalker [as well as a recording engineer and mixer], with no previous introduction," Dupre recalled. "She got back to me right away and invited me to [Skywalker Ranch] to have lunch and meet some people. That's how I met the guy who later ended up hiring me for an entry-level position that no longer exists—recordist. Leslie was so nice and made it obvious she wanted to help another woman in this industry."

Bonnie Wild has also been at Skywalker for eight years, winning two Emmys as a re-recording mixer and sound effects editor. After having worked in the audio industry in her native U.K., Wild's contacts got her a tour at Fox Studios during a vacation, and on that visit, she felt

inspired by seeing industry veteran Anna Behlmer using a digital film console while working as re-recording mixer on "Kung Fu Panda."

"I looked at Anna doing her pre-dub pass on that film and I thought, this is what I want to do," Wild said. "I got trained on a DFC in England where I worked, and then moved to America specifically to try to get to Skywalker Sound. I was eventually offered a job in digital editorial services, an engineering role, and started there."

Those are just two examples of prominent women audio professionals who were inspired or guided by those who came before them over the years.

Today, the company believes that building diverse crews makes both good sense and is creatively beneficial, according to VP and general manager, Josh Lowden. "Ideally, we want all the people involved in telling stories to be speaking from their own experience and bringing different perspectives," Lowden explained. "But more diversity also enables our teams to solve problems in unique ways. By growing diversity in our teams, we ensure that they come with different perspectives and solutions."

Thus, Skywalker Sound is a facility where some of the audio industry's longest-tenured and most highly decorated women are headquartered—where Jones (five Grammys and eight nominations); re-recording mixer Lora Hirschberg (a 29-year Skywalker veteran and the first woman to share an Oscar for achievement in sound mixing for "Inception" in 2011, one of two Oscar nominations in her career); and others have achieved major industry distinction; where internship and apprenticeship programs are actively seeking women and other groups to enhance diversity; and where the audio work on "Mulan" (2020) was handled by what that film's sound designer, Krysten Mate, called "the most female-heavy post-production show I have ever been on. I went from sometimes being the only woman on a stage earlier in my career to working with a sea of women."

PHOTO: SKYWALKER

AWARD WORTHY: Dave Acord (left) with Baihui Yang, Ronni Brown and Kim Patrick in 2007.

In other words, over the years, Skywalker Sound has become a place where, as Wild put it, "a roomful of guys is not perceived as a normal thing anymore."

How this came about is due to a convergence of factors that the 10 women surveyed by CineMontage point to—including an active camaraderie shown by an informal "sisterhood" at the facility, as Wild refers to Skywalker's close-knit team of women professionals.

'Priceless Guidance'

Kim Patrick, now a supervising sound editor, sound designer, and re-recording mixer started at Skywalker in 2012 in the company's internship program under sound designer Randy Thom and re-recording mixer Leff Lefferts, and was then asked to apprentice for supervising sound editor Gwen Whittle right out of her internship. Just ahead of her in Skywalker's internship program was current supervising sound editor Baihui Yang, who also interned for Thom before he guided her into an apprenticeship and the world of assistant sound editing. In both cases, the two women took advantage of formal entry programs, but once they got inside Skywalker, they found themselves receiving priceless guidance from experts.

"Toward the end of my internship, Randy offered me an apprenticeship position on a sci-fi movie," Yang said. "Through that, I was able to join the

union. And from there, I worked as an apprentice, then assistant editor on a few movies, learning editorial skills. This was a very intense yet exciting program. Since my desk was only six feet away from Randy's, I was immersed with his sound design work all day long."

In the area of apprenticeships, Lowden says Skywalker has diligently tried to build a fertile training ground for young talent as a way to increase diversity, in addition to the company's ongoing efforts to improve balance and representation in other ways.

"[Smaller crew sizes] have made it harder for new people to get into the industry and get the experience they need," he said. "To help offset this, we're bringing in new apprentices that are not attached to specific project budgets, so that we can offer them a continuity of experience and training without having to stop-and-start on projects. Along with that, we are pairing up some of our more experienced editors with veteran supervisors to act as mentors."

For veteran Skywalker women, however, mentoring younger women is more than a formal program—it's a passion. Whittle, now a supervising sound editor and a two-time Oscar nominee, is among a group of trailblazing women on the company staff who, in addition to their professional duties, are actively looking to open doors for younger female professionals. She's been at Skywalker 32 years—"as long as the building has been operational," she says proudly—and worked on the second film ever to mix at the facility, "Willow" (1988), as an assistant sound effects editor.

She well remembers often being "the only woman in the mix room," but since that era, she says, the art of mentoring has been among her favorite pursuits.

"The Ranch has always been good at incubating talent," Whittle said. "But anyone who has ever worked with me as an assistant knows that if they have any interest in dialogue and ADR editing, and many certainly do, I will be happy to teach them everything that I do."

PHOTO: SKYWALKER

Coya Elliott of Skywalker Sound.

Patrick seconds the notion, declaring, "the mentorships I have received over the course of my education and career thus far are something I consider to be absolutely essential for my own success and progression. Now, I'm hoping to do the same, especially for women still in school or just starting their careers."

'A roomful of guys is not perceived as a normal thing anymore.'

She points to resources many Skywalker women support, like the Women's Audio Mission (WAM), a San Francisco-based non-profit that Patrick calls "a leader in training women for audio-related careers and connecting women audio professionals from around the world. This model of training and connecting women in the field really resonates with me and seems like one of the best ways to maintain a large and active sound community."

Melanie Mociun, currently an audio technician at Skywalker who has been at the facility since 1986, emphasizes this point — the desire of established women of Skywalker Sound to help a new generation of women audio professionals extends beyond facility work. She praises her colleagues for actively participating in and encouraging external outreach programs. For example, Hirschberg and Dupre donate time to Reel Stories, a non-profit youth media organization to guide young women in making content and pursuing media careers, and Jones has taught recording at the Institute of

Musical Arts in Massachusetts and at that program's summer camp designed for girls and young women.

Dupre adds "it was no coincidence" that she reached out to Jones when she first circled Skywalker Sound, saying, "I felt my chances of being seen and taken seriously were increased by approaching another woman." When she eventually got hired, Dupre emphasizes that Hirschberg, though they did not personally know one another at the time, quickly "sought me out within my first few weeks. She came into the machine room at lunch, introduced herself, and immediately [invited her to lunch]. I came in with a lot of 'imposter syndrome,' wondering if I fit into the roles that interested me. But just getting to know Lora, and knowing that people like her exist in the building gave me a lot of confidence trying to jumpstart my career."

The Incredible Shrinking Crews

During the film era, early in her own career, Mociun emphasizes that audio crews were much larger than today. She also points out that Skywalker Sound has had three woman general managers over the years and has always had women represented in its workforce. However, she says, for some reason, jobs like re-recording mixer and sound effects were typically male-dominated. Whittle agrees, saying "back in the film days, I'd say it was pretty even on [Skywalker film crews], male and female. But even then, there were not many female mixers. Lora Hirschberg broke through in that area for us [as a Skywalker employee]."

And Krysten Mate remembers that while "there were quite a few women working in sound post-production in Northern California" generally when her career launched in the 1990s, "most of them were doing dialogue and ADR or were Foley walkers. Very few were in sound design, sound effects, supervising, or mixing."

Then, as the digital era took hold across the industry, crews started to shrink. And with that fundamental shift, Dupre suggests that for a time, "although men and women both had technical computer skills and should have been hired equally [for new computer-oriented jobs], stigmas unfairly kept women from being seen as qualified.

"With people on the margins, when there are natural shifts in the industry, they are often the first ones to lose opportunities, and I think that happened to women in this industry for a time after we went all-digital," Dupre said. "I think there was a stigma, even on the part of some women, that when it came to technical stuff, it was somehow out of our grasp. That is completely not true, of course, but when we went all digital, that stigma and the fact that there were less jobs hurt chances for a lot of people."

Still, Skywalker Sound has always been more progressive than many facilities, the women suggest, and over time, headway was made in that area. Indeed, Mociun helped research an October 2016 article for the IATSE Connection newsletter put out by IATSE's Women's Committee, and during that work, she and author Barbara McBane concluded that by 2016, "Skywalker Sound probably employed a larger percentage of women at all levels of sound post-production than any other major facility."

'I think there was a stigma, even on the part of some women, that when it came to technical stuff, it was somehow out of our grasp.'

Furthermore, in more recent years, a path into the facility through technical or engineering work has become increasingly feasible for women. One reason is that for creative positions, Skywalker typically selects from within, promoting liberally and following the apprenticeship and mentorship training models previously discussed. Most creative talent there are fulltime independent contractors, so, they suggest, basically getting into the facility to begin with can be the hardest part. But once there, excelling, showing initiative, and taking advantage of the rich mentoring culture to learn skills has proven to be a productive path for reaching creative positions.

For instance, though Wild had creative experience in her native UK, she is glad she initially landed on the technical side of the company before moving into mixing and editing.

"What is great about working on the technical side is the amount of stuff you get to learn," she said. "You learn everything about the equipment, which is great for when you become a mixer, because you really have to know that console. You are also in the room watching [others] mix, how they interact with clients, deal with politics on stage, and see mistakes get made and how they get resolved. So I'm a firm believer in taking the engineering path."

Another key industry paradigm shift that has created new opportunities involves the rise of streaming content direct to consumer homes—a shift that, at this point, has evolved into an area "that is just exploding," in Hirschberg's words. Now more than ever, there is a rabid demand for content of all types and genres, and therefore, as Wild puts it, "there are a lot more jobs kicking around, at this point."

"[Streaming] is expanding the workforce once again, which is good for women," Whittle emphasized.

The women also credit the Guild for helping to even the playing field, particularly where historic obstacles like comparable wages, childcare, and healthcare are concerned. "It's expensive to live in California," said Whittle. "We want to give young women enough work and training to keep them inspired as they learn the industry, but they need a living wage to do that. The union has been important in that regard."

For young women entering the industry, getting into the union is both a great motivational factor and a practical layer of protection that makes learning the industry a feasible endeavor. All of which is probably why women have historically been quite active in Guild service at Skywalker. For instance, re-recording mixer Elizabeth Marston is the latest of several women to serve there as shop steward. During negotiations a couple years ago, Marston was key in helping to create a new rate and rank for the position she held at the time at Skywalker, assistant re-recording mixer. Today, she said, "I find great value in my role as shop steward."

"Basically, we need to make sure these young women are successful economically, that they can afford to come in and learn how to do this," added Hirschberg. "That's one key benefit of a labor union—giving workers the financial stability to build their careers and take care of their families."

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

All of this is not to say that Skywalker, or anyone else, has achieved true gender parity. That's why the Skywalker women have suggestions for how the industry at large could push this transition into the next phase and beyond. Among those suggestions is the notion of working to eliminate "unconscious bias," as Mate puts it.

"Skywalker makes a conscious effort to pull more women into roles that will break the glass ceiling of the supervisory and top creative positions," Mate says. "But [around the industry], I don't know that 'boy's club' is the right term anymore. I find it is now a far subtler and possibly unconscious bias, but it can nevertheless have detrimental effects on women's careers. In a freelance, creative business like this one, you are often at the whim of whether someone 'feels' you are a good fit or not. If that person is a male who has not worked with a lot of women, it is likely he will pretty much always pick another male. My solution is to put a lot more qualified women in front of them—widen the field of candidates."

Dupre, meanwhile, argues that good intentions are not sufficient—"companies need to have plans of action."

"We have to move from thinking we have checked off the 'diversity box' to thinking about how diversity will make the content more valuable and be the best way forward for the company," Dupre said. "Companies should put diversity at the forefront of hiring practices, and you need to make sure that those people can learn, be mentored, and be given the tools to succeed."

Hirschberg urges the industry to do a better job actively reaching out to inspire young women.

"It's incredibly important for young women to see us and be able to imagine themselves in these jobs," she said. "Women must not self-select out of applying for positions or careers because they don't think they would 'belong.' Employers must work harder to [encourage women to apply and assure them] that they will be seen, included, and considered. That means changing how we search for candidates and how we have them apply for jobs."

If companies want a better understanding of how to achieve such goals, Marston suggests the obvious: ask women.

"If you want to make positive changes that benefit women, you should ask women what those should be," she said. "There are changes that can better suit women in this industry, like better maternity leave policies that increase job retention and placing more women in administration and decision-making positions to make policy changes possible. The women representation gap is one thing that has to improve."

Leslie Ann Jones points out that women need to have confidence in the fact that they have every right to any industry opportunities their talent and hard work can bring them, and they should be eager to bring their own unique perspectives to the table.

"I learned long ago that gender is important," said Jones. "As much as we'd all like to be treated the same (and we should), as women, we have our own perspectives on things. It's important to bring that to the table. Our gender is important, as is the diversity we bring." And besides, she adds, from a creative and business point of view, "better choices are made when there are more voices and perspectives in the room."

In a sense, that is the ultimate argument when discussing why it matters if crews and projects are gender-balanced or not.

"There are only two things a person brings to a work team," said Yang. "Their professional skills and their personal experiences. The skills are the foundation, but the personal experiences are what can elevate movies, a form of storytelling, to a different level. Our product will be received by global audiences in today's age, so a creative team that better reflects the components of our audiences will naturally make for a better received product." ■

Michael Goldman, a frequent CineMontage contributor, is a freelance writer specializing in film. He is the author of books about John Wayne and Clint Eastwood.

Agents of Change

WME HELPS POST-PRODUCTION CLIENTS ADAPT TO A WORLD WRACKED BY PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC SHIFTS

By Peter Tonguette

You might call them the Editor Whisperers.

The WME agency prides itself on representing countless high-profile movers and shakers in the entertainment industry, but a dedicated group of agents focus on serving a less visible but no less significant clientele: below-the-line talent, including post-production professionals. These agents not only help editors find work, and find career satisfaction, at a time when the film and television business is contending with the twin disruptions of the shift to streaming and the coronavirus pandemic, but they function as sounding boards, career planners, and unofficial therapists of a sort.

"The agency is committed to representing artists on a very broad spectrum," said WME agent Jasan Pagni, adding that the famous actors, directors, authors, and musicians that the agency represents are no more, or less, significant than the likes of the editors, cinematographers, and other craftspeople whose artistry actually brings movies and series to vivid life. "The production artists are just as important as any of them."

Picture editor Robert Komatsu, ACE, can attest to the agency's aggressiveness on his behalf: The editor has been represented by Pagni for about a decade, during which time he has accumulated a substantial haul of credits, including the feature films "Jobs" (2013) and "A Dog's Journey" (2019). "From that point on, I would say everything I've gotten has basically been because of Jasan," said Komatsu, who recently received a Primetime Editing nomination for his work on the acclaimed series "Mrs. America," starring Cate Blanchett as anti-feminist activist Phyllis Schlafly.

PHOTO: WME

WE WORK: Mira Yong and Wayne Fitterman of WME.

"Jasan is good in that he knows what my goals are," Komatsu said. "He takes that into account for what he submits me for or what he tries to stretch to see what he can get for me—something that will challenge me."

For agents to successfully advocate on

behalf of their post-production clients, they must have an understanding of the art of editing—not just its particular role in the filmmaking process, but its relationships to other disciplines. "There's a real truth to the fact that, when a project goes into the editing suite, it turns into a whole different animal," said WME agent Mira Yong. "In film, the director and the editor work so closely together for that director's cut, and you have to understand those personalities will have to work in that room. The way of working will need to match up."

Agents also must grasp particular personalities of the editors they call clients: their strengths, their interests, their goals, and even their hobbies. Yong said that she aims to find at least one completely unique attribute in each editor's skillset. "That really helps with pushing them, say, from the independent to studio world, or into television where they haven't done television before," Yong said.

Consequently, when agents pitch editors to directors, they have more to work with than simply a laundry list of credits. "When we talk about our clients, we're not talking about: 'Oh, they just edited this, they edited this, they edited this,'" Yong said. "We talk about personality. We talk about what they actually are motivated by."

Armed with such knowledge, the agency can dip into its vast pool of clients to potentially pair directors with below-the-line talent. "There was one recent example of a film where I was in touch with the director at an early stage," Pagni said. "I was able to put actually four clients on the project: cinematographer, production designer, costume designer, and editor. Of course, that's a very best case scenario."

Indeed, the WME agents say that editors should seek stable, long-term collaborations—something as important in building a career as good scripts and healthy budgets. "I think director relationships are the most important part of a career," Pagni said. "If you get hooked up with two to three extremely talented directors who are doing the type of projects that speak to you, that can lead to a very strong career."

So vital is the formation of editor-director relationships that WME never hesitates in matching client editors with non-client directors, said Wayne Fitterman, the head of the agency's production department. "As great as it is for us to have great access to directors that the agency represents, that by no means stops us or precludes us in any way from having relationships with directors that the agency doesn't represent," Fitterman continued. "Some of us have very deep relationships with those directors from other agencies because of clients that have worked with them over the years."

'Editors, like directors and writers and others, are storytellers.'

Indeed, Komatsu describes himself as a beneficiary of WME's commitment to networking. For example, after working on AMC's series "Halt and Catch Fire," Komatsu was recommended by another editor for another show, "Matador." "One could say, 'Well, you didn't get that through your agent,' but I would not have met that editor on 'Halt' unless it was for WME getting me onto 'Halt,'" Komatsu said. "It's like this tangled web that stems from WME, making these contacts for me or getting me an initial show that then leads me to another show."

The development of such leads is especially important in an industry that can feel more unstable by the day, beginning with the decline of studio-produced dramatic features. "You could always rely on DVD sales to a certain extent, even if the box office was not stellar. That's when the mid-range dramas were being made," Pagni said. "The business all really started to change 10 years ago, when DVD sales went significantly down." These days, much of that content has migrated to television or streaming platforms. "The need was fulfilled by at first HBO and Showtime, leading into Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, et cetera," Pagni said.

Komatsu has been a witness to, and participant in, the transformation. Early in his career, he worked in the cutting room of director Ron Howard, but he eventually began adding more and more television and streaming projects to his portfolio. After wrapping up the second season of Showtime's series "I'm Dying Up Here," though, Komatsu told Pagni that he wanted to make sure he still had a presence in the feature world. "He said, 'Absolutely,' and that's one of the reasons I got 'A Dog's Journey' for Amblin," said Komatsu, who was tempted to try for another feature to keep the momentum going. Then fate intervened. "Part of me was like, 'Maybe I should just go for another feature,' and then 'Mrs. America' came along—I was like, 'I can't turn this down. This is just too good.'"

Fitterman said: "Editors, like directors and writers and others, are storytellers, and I think that taking a story and making it six hours or eight hours, instead of two hours, allows a much deeper dive."

Not that the jump to television or streaming is always an easy one. Editors accustomed to flying solo on features will find themselves working in tandem with other editors. "Some people love that collaboration and love that experience," Pagni said. "Then there are some, honestly, who don't and would like a movie that's sort of their own thing. It's our job to listen to them and to know who would thrive in that environment more than others."

Even editors who migrate from broadcast television to streaming will

encounter unfamiliar workflows. Whereas hour-long episodes of network series consist of about 44 minutes of content per show, episodes of hour-long commercial-free cable or streaming series have no such limitation and can run longer. The entire season of a streaming series often premieres at the same time, too. "The fact that you drop all of the episodes at once I think has really changed how we all consume material, but also in terms of editing itself," Yong said. "You're not thinking about repeating any information. You're assuming and thinking about people watching more episodes than one at once, and sometimes all at once." Episodes are kept open for a longer period of time than on the networks, and editors watch and comment on each other's cuts. "All of that is a different dialogue than what we had seen prior in terms of television," Yong said.

Yet, amid all of the uncertainty, the WME agents suggest that editors have an abundance of opportunities in front of them—even on highly sought-after superhero films. Yong noted that Marvel Studios, for example, often works with directors who have emerged from the independent film scene, which can create opportunities for editors. "On these larger films, they tend to pair someone who has that experience already, and then maybe another person that comes from a different point of view," Yong said. "It's sort of threading the needle there and seeing about how to get into that opening that exists."

The chance to nurture a career is surely the most satisfying aspect of the editor-agent partnership. Picture editor Jeff Groth worked with several agencies before switching to Pagni last year just ahead of the release of Todd Phillip's "Joker" (2019), for which he would receive an Oscar nomination.

"I was looking to kind of make a change," said Groth, who met Pagni following the recommendation of several mutual friends. "It was just kind of a casual meeting, and I said, 'You know what, I think we could do well together.'" For an editor in Groth's position, it's less about getting gigs than discovering the next great challenge. "The kinds of questions that he asks now are like, 'What do you want to do?'" Groth said. "The idea that you have a chance at this stuff because you've got now some things behind you is an exciting place to be."

PHOTO: WME

Robert Komatsu.

The WME agents see reasons to hope that editors will stay busy as the industry climbs out of pandemic-prompted shutdowns, too. "Once movie theaters do open up in a safe way, I think people are going to be really wanting to get back out there," said Pagni, adding that streaming services—including recent entrants HBO Max and Peacock—are likely to be long-term players. "Do I think they're all going to survive? Probably not, but it's going to take a long time for any of them to sort of give up because they're all part of larger conglomerates," Pagni said.

Fitterman put it bluntly: "The business is always going to need product, and we represent people who create product." ■


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A message from the Membership Outreach Committee.

Heroes of the Lockdown

HERE ARE THE ESSENTIAL TOOLS MEMBERS RELY ON FOR REMOTE WORK

By Jennifer Walden

Remote workflow solutions have dominated tech discussions for the past year.

At first, the question was: what works? But as COVID lockdowns have persisted, the question changed to: what works best? When CineMontage reached out to industry pros to talk about the essential tech of 2020, it was not surprising that the majority offered up tried-and-true, long-term solutions that make working remotely not just manageable but sustainable.

Here, editor Myra Lopez and sound designer/mixer Konrad Piñon talk about the benefits of Evercast from picture and sound perspectives, Avid editor George Brown III discusses Teradici's remote desktop technology, ADR mixer Tami Treadwell praises ADR... At A DIstance, the remote ADR system from WB Sound, finishing editor/colorist Christopher Doyle highlights his favorite aspects of Autodesk's Flame 2020, and re-recording mixer/composer Michael Phillips Keeley touts the benefits of updating to the Dolby Atmos Renderer v3.5.

Evercast Editorial.

Evercast for Picture Editors

Lopez, based in Los Angeles, is currently working on an original animated mini-series for Netflix Animation Studios. Her responsibilities include editing animatics and overseeing the editorial team through completion of the project.

One essential tech solution for Lopez is Evercast (www.evercast.us), a real-time, web-based remote collaboration platform that combines video conferencing, HD live-streaming, and full-spectrum audio all in one. Evercast connects to industry standard NLEs (Non-Linear Editing systems) and DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations), like Adobe Premiere and Avid Pro Tools, respectively, making it possible for the creative team to instantly review edits and mixes.

Myra Lopez.

"Evercast enables me to stream my various timelines to my director and make edit changes in real-time. With Evercast, I have been able to continue to work through this pandemic and review material when needed, almost like being in my edit bay," Lopez told CineMontage.

When the pandemic hit, Lopez and the production team were wrapping up the final animatic and beginning post-production on the show. Despite the switch to working from home, they were still able to remain on schedule. Lopez said, "Evercast allowed us to meet virtually through the post-production process to address any further editorial needs."

One of her favorite features is Evercast's video conferencing, which acts like a virtual conference room. Up to 20 team members can virtually attend a live Evercast session to discuss notes

and changes in real time. “I love that I’m still able to have that interaction with my director and production team that normally would take place in an edit bay,” Lopez said.

Evercast for Sound Editing/Mixing

On the sound side, sound designer/re-recording mixer Konrad Piñon, CAS, at Margarita Mix Hollywood, a Fotokem Company, found Evercast to be the most reliable choice for mix review sessions with creatives and clients. Through the pandemic, Piñon has been working from home, editing and mixing a multitude of animated series including “Rick and Morty,” “Big Mouth,” “Star Trek: Lower Decks,” “Bless the Harts,” Adult Swim’s “Lazor Wulf” and “Tigtone,” Hulu’s “Solar Opposites,” and more.

“When the COVID lockdown began, 90% of our projects kept going. Even though everybody was being forced to work remotely, deadlines didn’t change. We had our delivery dates and we needed to hit them,” said Piñon.

After trying several remote collaboration options, Piñon chose Evercast. One main reason was Evercast’s scalability.

“You can scale your video and audio settings to where they’re going to work. I host the sessions, and once I got the bandwidth I needed, I was able to scale everything up: scale the audio all the way up, crank up the video, and add more people. It made a huge difference, for me and our clients. We weren’t worrying about technical flaws, like sync issues or glitchy video. Our clients could focus on the creative part of it and that’s really what we wanted to do.”

Having the ability to host up to 20 participants reliably, with high-res audio and video playback, was important for Piñon. While working on the CBS All-Access animated series “Star Trek: Lower Decks,” at times Piñon needed upwards of eight people to join the session. “We’d have creatives, the composer, music editor, production team, and editorial. There were so many signature elements within the program that we really had to nail them down in real-time, in context, and decide if we liked it or not. I couldn’t have done it any other way,” he said.

Konrad Piñon.

One of Piñon’s favorite aspects of Evercast is their 24/7 tech support, which has helped to guide him through the process of sending his Pro Tools output (audio and video) through their EBS streaming player. They also helped Piñon tweak the settings within the EBS software (like video bitrate, codecs, audio bitrates, and so on) to deliver maximum quality audio and video to the clients.

Piñon notes that a high-res output starts with a high-res input, so he requests a ProRes video file from the picture editors for reference, preferring to downgrade the video on his end (if needed) using the EBS. He said, “This way I’m pretty confident that the clients and creatives are looking at the highest quality that we can provide. We do a test before our mix review, set the output to the highest resolutions the connection

PHOTO: WARNER BROS.

ADR at a Distance.

will allow, confirm that it sounds good for everyone, and then go."

Teradici for Remote Editing

Emmy-winning television editor George Brown III who specializes in the fast-paced world of day-of-air editing, chose Teradici (www.teradici.com) as his essential tool over the past year. During the pandemic, Brown has been cutting shows for "Access Hollywood." Instead of editing on the Avids at Universal Studios in Hollywood, Brown edits from his home using an NBCUniversal-issued laptop equipped with Teradici — a virtual workspace architecture that compresses, encrypts, and transmits pixels from a remote source to a local endpoint. As Brown put it, "Using Teradici is so simple. You launch the software, log in, pick the room you want to drive, and it connects you to a machine that is located in Universal Studios. It's like I'm right there. Teradici is what NBCUniversal uses as their exclusive way to patch in."

According to Brown, NBCUniversal has been a leader in remote editing workflows due to their experience of covering the Olympics. "For the past ten years, they had an entire edit farm in Stamford, Connecticut, that was ready to do any Olympics coverage that they had, remotely. There may have been a few editors on location at the Olympic event sites, but most of that editing is being done remotely via the cloud," Brown said. "They were ready to deal with the COVID crisis because of the lessons they learned through how to do the Olympics remotely."

Teradici was one of the quickest ways to implement remote editing. Brown explained, "There's no data that's being transferred. That's the beauty of it. Our footage lands and is drawn from local servers on the studio lot that we access via the internet and the Teradachi software is our go-between. It creates a virtual connection. So you're not transferring files."

Since it's a remote virtual workstation that securely accesses stored footage (whether it's on a local server at Universal Studios or cloud storage), Teradici can be optimized for a variety of bandwidth situations using algorithms to dynamically tune the remote display up or down, based on the quality of the connection. Ideally, there's no difference between editing on a local computer and editing at an endpoint (like Brown's laptop) that's receiving a streamed pixel representation from a centralized virtual computer.

In reality, there are times that the experience isn't so flawless. "In the middle of the day, or especially near deadlines, with so many people hammering on it at the same time, it does get a little dicey. Your timeline starts to look like water droplets and when you press play, it just staggers and it skips and pops. Sometimes, I literally have to pretend I'm in a spaceship and turn off all non-essential equipment, even video! And I have to edit by sound only. That's a super rare event, but we've all had to realize that sometimes our internet just doesn't work. We all deal with it. When you're working day-of-air, there are just some things you have to let go," Brown said.

ADR…At A Distance

MPSE Award-winning ADR mixer Tami Treadwell, at WB Sound in Burbank, names their ADR…At A Distance (www.wbsound.com/adr-at-a-distance/) as her essential tech of the past year.

Treadwell went from a full studio schedule to a pandemic-imposed hiatus, unsure of when she'd be able to return to work. Concurrently, WB Sound was developing a remote ADR solution they call ADR…At A Distance. "While some truly amazing remote technology has allowed ADR work to continue and post-production to move forward, one of the most important elements of a successful ADR session — the in-person human interaction between a mixer, the performer, ADR supervisor, director, producer, etc. — has sadly been sidelined for the time being," Treadwell noted.

With that said, Treadwell feels that ADR…At A Distance is an invaluable solution that utilizes all of the functionality and flexibility of the studio's custom ADR System. And unlike some remote recording solutions, it gives full control to the mixer. Treadwell said, "I manage the feeds to and from the remote rigs in the same way I would if the actor were

simply behind the glass, allowing me to focus on the sound and the performers."

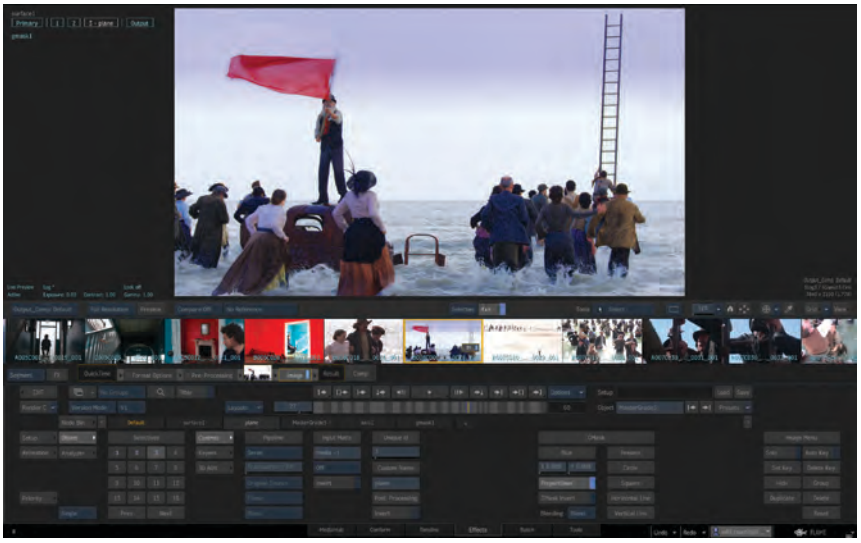
As with in-studio recording, using a simple tab Delimited file of the cues, the mixer moves through the list and the ADR system displays the dialogue, cue, and take numbers superimposed over the picture, as well as sets the in-points for the beeps and streamer. The picture and production guides are streamed to the performer and editor, so no content is loaded onto the remote rig. This allows for last-minute changes and additions, plus provides the ability to establish a long-term remote setup that doesn't need to be updated or managed. And along with the Pro Tools master recordings at WB, there are backups created locally on the remote system.

All of the WB ADR workflow features are available to the ADR...At A Distance rigs — everything from updates to the on-screen dialogue, automatic line sampling for parrot recording, a dedicated fill sampler for playbacks, one button wild-take syncing and futzing, and fully customizable matrix for the actor and editor feeds. One major benefit for the actors is the ability to easily add multiple streamers within a cue to assist with difficult timing. The sound and post teams monitoring remotely can hear and see all of this as well, and they can communicate directly with the performers and the mixer.

"Virtually every aspect of the ADR automation can be customized for any given situation or preference, and with the ability to control multiple remote rigs simultaneously, even in a pandemic we are able to continue recording ADR with both loop groups and solo performers," said Treadwell.

Autodesk's Flame 2020 for finishing/coloring

Christopher Doyle, a Flame finishing editor for Universal Pictures Theatrical Marketing Group, chose Autodesk's Flame 2020 (www.autodesk.com/flame) as his top tool. Doyle's day-to-day involves editing and polishing domestic television and digital market spots for Universal Pictures' films like "The Voyage of Dr. Doolittle," "The Invisible Man," "Black Christmas," "Yesterday," "Us," and so on.



Autodesk's Flame.

Because Doyle works on spots destined for television markets, he has to make sure the images meet specific standards set by the networks, filmmakers, studios, and the MPAA before being broadcast. This typically means removing or obscuring offensive elements like blood and partial nudity/skin, but occasionally it includes removing brand images or product placements too. "Spots are sometimes created and aired very quickly, so it's important to be able to move fast and do certain types of tracking/roto work in addition to mastering and delivery. Autodesk Flame is a great box to use," he said.

Autodesk's Flame 2020 offers several innovative tools that help Doyle concentrate on the job at hand. For instance, Flame's AI machine learning and the advancement of the tracking system, especially the planar tracker, are particularly useful when working on blood-soaked scenes — with bloody wounds on bodies, pools of blood, or blood splatters that need to be removed or desaturated. Doyle said, "When I saw early demos of Flame's AI machine learning at NAB years back, I could see how people's eyes would just widen with amazement at the possibilities. The balance is learning when and how to use it effectively, not just using it to 'use it' and hope you get your result done with one click. Even today, there is no magic button that does it all. The 'Hollywood magic button' just doesn't exist."

Working with the Image toolset, Doyle uses selectives to isolate what he wants to modify and then processes that with color grading shaders, or with gmasks for image grading, correction and relighting. "I often use different shaders for beauty (Crok/A2 Beauty), and a certain mix of others for doing processes such as wire removals, blood de-saturation and image removal/blurring," he said. "Working with different shaders is cool for some light beauty fixes, but can quickly make images look flat and plasticky. At first you may be impressed that you painted out a zit, but people forget that in the moving image you have the grain, shadows, and

lighting details that constantly change. To sell the effect, you may have to put some more work in, and sometimes it's a little bit of the new school technique with a bit of old school know-how that gets the job done best."

For difficult shots, using both Batch FX and the Image toolset has significantly opened up Doyle's options for how to approach it. For instance, Doyle needed to remove a person from a scene that had shadows intersecting with cast-off street lights. "I used Batch FX to handle the primary end of the paint, and I used Image to do the grading and relighting. I was happy with the result," he said. "While I probably could have done both paint and grading in Batch, I felt completely at ease using them separately, especially in making fast color tweaks in Image versus jumping into Batch."

"I know other people do things differently, and that's one of the great things about learning from others. I have to credit the community of Flame user groups online for they are all about sharing information on how to help one another problem-solve and get better at doing their work. And here at Universal, from the top-down they've assembled a Theatrical Marketing Team of women and men that are the bedrock of the workflow. Even with all the gear and tech available, without having the operational and technical support and being able to learn from, lean on, and collaborate with such talented individuals here, I would only be able to do so much," he said.

Dolby Atmos Renderer v3.5

For the past 20 years, Michael Phillips Keeley, CAS, MPSE — owner of Sound Striker Post in Los Angeles, CA — has primarily been a re-recording mixer and composer on TV series and films. His work includes popular shows like "Ancient Aliens," "The Curse of Oak Island," and "Running Wild with Bear Grylls," and documentary features like "Sinatra in Palm Springs" and "NASA & SpaceX: Journey to the Future."

Just over five years ago, Keeley converted his garage into a 9.1.4 Dolby Atmos mix stage and recently he's upgraded to the latest version of the Dolby Atmos Production Suite Renderer. "It has completely changed my workflow as I mix everything natively in Dolby Atmos using one CPU now, even if it is just a single stereo mix deliverable," he said. "I feel that I get better mixes when mixing immersively utilizing great plug-ins such as Nugen Audio's Halo and then use the Renderer v3.5 to create my final Atmos, 5.1, or stereo mix. I've also been using this same workflow to create binaural mixes."

Keeley used this workflow while crafting the mix on Discovery's "NASA & SpaceX: Journey to the Future," and he also uses it to remix music from stereo to Atmos on tracks from various artists like Run The Jewels, and Dragon Force, and for a trailer music project featuring Danny Carey from Tool.

Some new features in the Dolby Atmos Renderer v3.5 include improved binaural rendering with increased spatialization to deliver a more realistic experience. There have been changes to the UI for added clarity and ease-of-use, like adding Standard groups to the Object View to display the groups to which objects have been assigned for configuring inputs and re-renders, such as Dialog, Music, Effects, and Narration. It also includes new keyboard shortcuts for the File Menu, System Menu, Renderer Main Window, and Monitoring and Transport Controls.

Keeley said, "A few favorite features for me are the improved binaural algorithm and the ability to do a quick export to mp4. This is a huge help for when I need to quickly do A/B mixes on different consumer systems. I also really like the new loudness metering and GUI improvements."

As a composer, Keeley likes the updated Dolby Atmos Music Panner which enables tempo synchronized positioning of audio objects in a Dolby Atmos mix.

Dolby Atmos Panner.

"I love using the Music Panner, especially on arpeggiated synths or anything that has a repetitive pulse to it. On a recent trailer track that I just finished, I have one sound that circles your head in one direction and another one that is going half-speed in the other direction. It's so great to easily have these repetitive panning moves that are automatically synced to the tempo of the track. Then when monitoring the binaural mix through the Renderer, you still get a good sense of it in your headphones as you continue to feel the motion of it, as it sits within its own space in the mix," he said. ■

Jennifer Walden is a freelance writer specializing in technology issues.

Here's Looking at You

HE MADE 'CASABLANCA.' OFF THE SET, MICHAEL CURTIZ SOMETIMES LEFT BEHIND A MESS AND BRUISED EGOS.

PHOTO: LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION

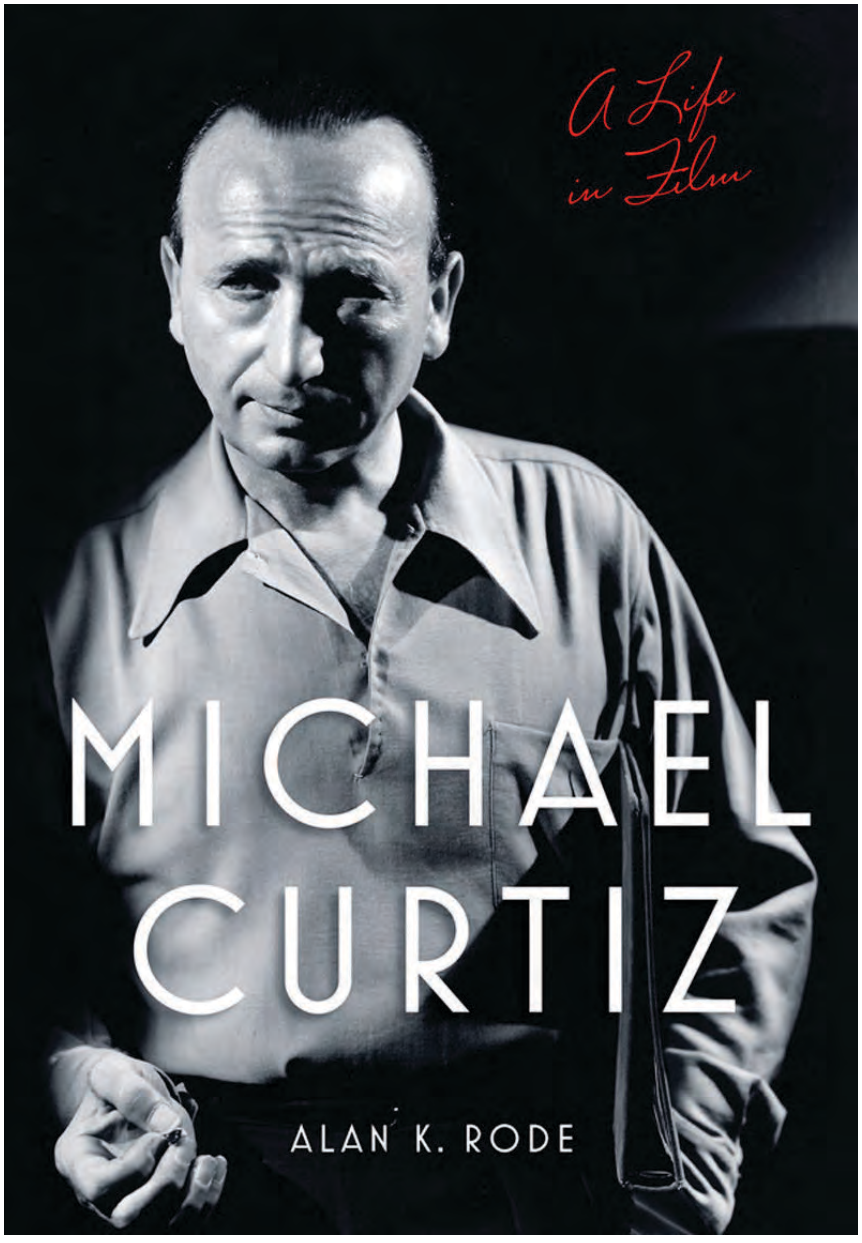
Curtiz visiting Las Vegas in 1956 with his sometime star (and reportedly mistress), Anitra Stevens (right).

By Betsy McClane

Alan K. Rode's book "Michael Curtiz" is a meticulously researched, clear-eyed, and comprehensive look at the director's career. It contains nearly 100 pages of notes, bibliography and indices, and is part of the extensive "Screen Classics" series published by The University Press of Kentucky. This academic pedigree brings gravitas, but it does not get in the way of a good writer delivering an account of Curtiz' extensive but often underappreciated career. Rode's style is highly readable and easily captures the quirks and humor as well as the drama and antagonism of many behind-the-scenes moments. It is an enlightening assessment of a life spent entirely thinking about and making movies.

Some people find their lives in making films, or more decidedly, making films is life. Those working in any aspect of the entertainment business, perhaps especially editors, may find that their work is

their life, but for the public, this kind of total devotion is often linked to directors. Among those who might be thought to live only to make films, Martin Scorsese is an obvious first, along with Francois Truffaut, before them Charlie Chaplin, Sergei Eisenstein, and currently Quentin Tarantino. The work of other successful and well-known directors is often placed within the context of a life lived alongside their passion for filmmaking. Michael Curtiz is not a name that quickly springs to mind when listing Hollywood directors who were completely consumed by filmmaking, but Rode's book makes clear that Curtiz, best-remembered as the director of "Casablanca," was among the most fanatically obsessed. Curtiz seemingly lived almost solely to make movies, with only brief timeouts to act the Lothario and play polo on his 25-acre "Canoga Ranch."



Curtiz directed a staggering 44 features between 1930 and 1939.

After a short acting career, Curtiz made films for the next 50 years. He directed his first film, "Today and Tomorrow," in 1912 in his homeland, Hungary, where his stage name was Mihaly Kertesz, and one of his good friends was Alexander Korda (Sándor László Kellner). He worked continuously in Europe and Hollywood until 1962 when illness forced him off the set of "The Comancheros" (John Wayne finished directing).

Curtiz became the top director in Hungary during the late 1910s and early 1920s, a time when Budapest was home to 37 film production companies. Curtiz worked in formats that ranged from silent black-and-white shorts to Cinemascope and Technicolor epics, and everything in between, from World War I documentaries to an array of Hollywood genres: musicals, westerns, swashbucklers, films noir, thrillers, dramas, and perhaps least successfully, comedies. During his many years under contract at Warner Brothers, Curtiz directed a staggering 44 features between 1930 and 1939. In this heyday of the studio system, Curtiz was highly prized by the parsimonious brothers Warner for working very fast (read: very cheap) and very competently with the scripts assigned to him. In a single year, 1945, he went from the middling comedy/drama of "Roughly Speaking," starring Rosalind Russell, to directing the sublime noir atmosphere (with Joan Crawford's Oscar-winning

performance) in "Mildred Pierce." The next year, he turned out the financially successful but now justifiably forgotten musical biography "Night and Day" starring Cary Grant as Cole Porter.

The book is primarily focused on the making of Curtiz's films — the people, processes, and problems involved. It contains a superfluity of incidents, remembered and misremembered by those who knew or worked with Curtiz. As an accurate account of the Hollywood studio system at its height, it ranks with the must-read "Memo from David O. Selznick." Rode seems to have ferreted out every anecdote and detail associated with Curtiz and is unafraid to call out what may be exaggerations or misrepresentations. The book is organized in a chronology that also places Curtiz' work and Warner Brothers within political and economic contexts beyond cinema. Curtiz was known for his devotion and loyalty to America, yet it took years for him to become a citizen. One of Curtiz' most admirable efforts was to get his extended family out of Hungary during the 1930s and then later help others there escape Communist rule. During the Blacklist years, Curtiz seems to have avoided either personal problems or pressures to "name names." Rode speculates that "Perhaps it simply didn't occur to anyone to question the reliability of the man who directed 'Yankee Doodle Dandy,' 'Casablanca,' and 'This is the Army,'" even though Curtiz had directed the pro-Russia film "Mission to Moscow" in 1941 as part of Roosevelt's pressure on Hollywood to support American entry into World War II.

For Errol Flynn and Olivia De Havilland, stardom arrived when Curtiz directed them in "Captain Blood" (1935). The success of that picture led to a long but rather ugly working relationship between Flynn and Curtiz. According to Rode, and apparently well known to everyone at the time, Flynn hated Curtiz, and de Havilland said about appearing in "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1936), "Curtiz was a Hungarian Otto Preminger, and that's that. He was a tyrant, he was abusive, he was cruel." The films Curtiz and Flynn made together created and crystalized the star's image as a hero of swashbucklers and westerns. Since both were under contract to Warner Brothers, like everyone else at the studio they were obligated to work on assigned projects, which were supervised by producers such as Darryl Zanuck, Hal Wallis, and most importantly Jack Warner. Producers and studio heads exercised extraordinary levels of control during this era. Among the many memos collected by Rode is one from Wallis to Curtiz regarding "The Charge of the Light Brigade." "From now on, I want you to shoot the script and the story, and I want you to stop shooting through foreground pieces. I want the camera in the clear, and I want you to forget about all this crap about composition because if the story is no good you can take the composition and shove it." The studio factory system, especially at Warners, usually dictated that once shooting wrapped, the director's job was over and the project moved on to post, while he immediately started another picture. "Michael Curtiz" makes virtually no mention of editing or other post work, except to mention composers and scores. When looking at films from this era it is often unclear if and when directors were involved in editing. The Oscar nominated editor of "Casablanca," Owen Marks, spent his entire career, 1928 to 1960, under contract at Warner Brothers. He edited dozens of films, including several Curtiz titles, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to know if he and Curtiz ever consulted one another.

'I liked him, we got along fine, but he worked people to death. He worked us for 23 hours. We all had hysterics and collapsed.'

Rode is unambiguous about Curtiz' relentless womanizing and the fact that his liaisons, sometimes carried out behind the soundstage scenery, were common knowledge in Hollywood. There were also illegitimate children, in Europe as well as America. Curtiz' longtime wife Bess Meredyth was an actress and screenwriter who had roughly 125 writing credits, mostly during the silent and early sound years. As one of three women among the 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, she also had a notable presence in Hollywood. Meredyth is thought to have contributed substantially to Curtiz' films, writing and rewriting as he was shooting, although this cannot be documented. Neither does the author or Rode shy away from stories of Curtiz' indifference and occasional cruelty to those he considered to be in the way of his work. He was known to abuse both animals and extras. The book contains many accounts of Curtiz' ruthlessness on set, and some of his kindnesses. Actress Glenda Farrell is quoted saying: "Michael Curtiz was very exacting. I liked him, we got along fine, but he worked people to death. We all collapsed one night on 'Wax Museum' (1933). He worked us for 23 hours. We all had hysterics and collapsed." According to "Michael Curtiz," the director was often ridiculed for his thick Hungarian accent and malapropisms, although some believe he embellished those for effect. Instructions might include, "Hire

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

HAVE A CIGAR: Edward G. Robinson with Curtiz, during filming of "Kid Galahad" (1937).

dot boy. He'll break dair hearts."

The film for which Curtiz is best known is, of course, "Casablanca," but his contribution to it is historically minimized, despite the fact that it is one of the world's most honored and beloved movies. He won the Best Director Oscar for it, after not winning for four earlier nominations ("Captain Blood" [1935], "Four Daughters," "Angels with Dirty Faces" [both 1938] and "Yankee Doodle Dandy" [1942]). The story of making "Casablanca," with its many twists, turns, and cooks in the kitchen is well told by Rode, and should be read by anyone who wants to know why and how this cinematic icon came to be. Film history's lack of acknowledgement of Curtiz work, even for "Casablanca," might well be traced to critic Andrew Sarris' "The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968." With this 1968 book, Sarris brought the auteur theory from France's New Wave Cahiers du Cinema group to America and ranked Curtiz far from the Pantheon, placing him in the "Lightly Likeable" category. Sarris wrote, "The director's one enduring masterpiece is, of course, 'Casablanca,' the happiest of happy accidents, and the most decisive exception to the auteur theory." In a way that acknowledges it as Curtiz' best work, Rode replies, "To the contrary, 'Casablanca' and Michael Curtiz' career Warner at Brothers contradict the shopworn theorem of giving sole credit to a director. 'Casablanca' is better described as cinematic magic that occurred on purpose." ■

"Michael Curtiz"
By Alan K. Rode
689 pages
University Press of Kentucky
2021 (updated edition)

ALAN ROBERT MURRAY
JULY 30, 1954 — FEBRUARY 24, 2021

"It is hard to put my sadness into words," Clint Eastwood said after the passing of supervising sound editor Alan Robert Murray, MPSE.

Murray, who died Feb. 24 at age 66, received a record 10 Oscar nominations and won twice for his work on two Eastwood films, "Letters from Iwo Jima" and "American Sniper."

"I worked with him for 40+ years," Eastwood told CineMontage. "Much of our success throughout the years was due to his magic, and the creativity of him and his team.

"On 'Letters from Iwo Jima,' Alan went out and recorded actual P-51 Mustangs and Corsairs to make it authentic. His father had been a Marine on Iwo Jima. He worked tirelessly to create the sounds in the caves and tunnels while the island was being pounded by artillery. He made it all real and he did that on every picture, recording original sound whenever he could to make it authentic. He was uncompromising. I had incredible trust in him and was lucky to be able to work with him."

All told, Murray made 32 films with Eastwood, including "Space Cowboys" (2000), "Flags of Our Fathers" (2006) and "Sully" (2016).

Murray did acclaimed work with other top directors as well, including Todd Phillips on "Joker" (2019), Bradley Cooper on "A Star is Born" (2018), and Noam Murro on "300: Rise of an Empire" (2014). On the latter film, Murray's son, the sound editor Kevin R.W. Murray, felt his father did some of his best work, bringing to sonic life the horses, swords, shields, arrows, and massive naval battles in an ancient epic.

"There was really no dividing line between my father's life and his work," remembers another son, Blu Murray, an editor who also worked with his father on Eastwood's movies. "Every animal we ever had was recorded. All of our dogs will be forever barking in his films. He took no shortcuts at any step of the process, and his Nagra recorder was with him always. Every rainstorm, cricket chirp, background, wind, or cool sound he came across, he recorded. It wasn't work to him, it was just what he did. He had an unflinching sense of himself, of what he loved, and of how he chose to work. He poured his soul into everything he did."

PHOTOS: MURRAY FAMILY

Bradley Cooper remembered laughing every time a Murray bird sound showed up in a scene. "The scene in 'A Star is Born' between Jackson and Noodles was an Alan Murray bird monologue," he said. "What Alan was able to do with the crowd noises in response to how specific I wanted them to be—rhythmically and musically—responding to what was happening on stage, stands out for me. He was tireless, finding new crowds to play with. I would mention something and two seconds later he was back with four options to try. So many laughs we all had. There is no one better to be in the trenches with."

— Rob Feld

ROBERT CLIFFORD "BOB" JONES
MARCH 10, 1936 — FEBRUARY 24, 2021

PHOTO: JONES FAMILY

Early in Hal Ashby's 1973 drama "The Last Detail," a trio of sailors share a meal.

Petty Officers Buddusky (Jack Nicholson) and Mulhall (Otis Young) are in the midst of the first leg of a trip during which they aim to combine business and pleasure. Officially, the two have drawn orders to accompany a young sailor, Seaman Larry Meadows (Randy Quaid), to a naval prison in Maine, where the glum-faced young man is to serve an eight-year term for pilfering $40 from a polio contribution box. Unofficially, the three of them intend to take a good, long while to make their way to Maine, planning to raise a lot of hell along the way.

In one of screenwriter Robert Towne's signature scenes, Buddusky, Mulhall, and Meadows are seated in a diner. Cinematographer Michael Chapman's camera followed a waiter walking from the kitchen with their orders — Meadows has requested a cheeseburger with sufficiently melted cheese — and settled on a wide shot of the three in their booth as the plates are set down. But it was picture editor Robert C. Jones, ACE, who added the touches and transitions that brought the scene to sparkling life.

Jones held on the wide shot even after Buddusky, nosily lifting up the bun on Meadows's burger, finds that his charge's cheese is unmelted. Buddusky summons the waiter: "Melt the cheese on this for the chief, would you?" After Buddusky sends the burger back, Jones cut for the first time in the scene to a medium shot of Meadows looking on hungrily at his chums as they chow down and ooh and aah over their food. Then comes a time jump: Just as Buddusky barks, "Hey, where these malts at?", Jones wittily dissolved to a head-on two-shot of Buddusky and Mulhall simultaneously taking one last gulp of their malts. The scene ends with a cut to a reverse angle on a now-satiated Meadows: "It's good," he says, holding up his burger.

Such simple strokes of editorial invention were the hallmark of the films of Jones, who died on Feb. 1 at the age of 84. His survivors include his wife, Sylvia Hirsch Jones, and two daughters, picture editor Leslie Jones, ACE, and Hayley Sussman.

A Los Angeles native, Jones was born into a post-production family: His father, Harmon Jones, was an accomplished editor, receiving an Oscar nomination for cutting Elia Kazan's "Gentleman's Agreement" (1947), before becoming a director. His son was himself nominated for three editing Oscars — for "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" (1963), along with Gene Fowler, Jr., ACE, and Frederic Knudtson, ACE, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (1967), and Ashby's "Bound for Glory" (1976), co-edited with Pembroke J. Herring — and took home a screenwriting Oscar, along with Waldo Salt and Nancy Dowd, for Ashby's "Coming Home" (1978).

As an editor, Jones enjoyed multi-film collaborations with several important directors, including Stanley Kramer, Warren Beatty, and Arthur Hiller, but his most fruitful, and eclectic was with Ashby, for whom he edited "The Last Detail," "Shampoo" (1975), "Bound for Glory," and was among a consortium of editors on "Lookin' to Get Out" (1981). Having been tapped by Ashby to contribute to work on the screenplay to "Coming Home," Jones also produced the shooting script used for the director's 1979 masterpiece "Being There."

First and foremost, though, Jones was a gifted editor — praised for his speed and invention by his colleagues.

"He was probably the fastest editor I ever worked with," picture editor Don Zimmerman, ACE, told CineMontage this week. Zimmerman served as an assistant editor under Jones on "Shampoo" and "Bound for Glory," but was bumped up to picture editor on the Jones-scripted "Coming Home" and "Being There." "He was just really brilliant and a great storyteller," Zimmerman said. "He really had an incredible mind. . . . He instilled in me a whole sense of how to do things."

Jones's association with Ashby began on "The Last Detail." Film scholar Nick Dawson, the author of the acclaimed biography "Being Hal Ashby: Life of a Hollywood Rebel," said that Ashby was dissatisfied with the initial work done by

JONES (CONTINUED)

the original editor on the film. Jones was brought in on short notice, ultimately molding the film into the masterpiece it became.

"Jones was starting from scratch," Dawson told CineMontage this week. "It was a situation where time was of the essence. The work that he did was so quick and so good."

Ashby, who had won acclaim (and an Oscar) as a picture editor himself, kicked off his directorial career with "The Landlord" (1970) and "Harold and Maude" (1971). Those classic films, edited by William A. Sawyer and Edward Warschilka, featured a flashier, more ostentatious style of editing in keeping with the spirit of the New Hollywood movement, something Jones moved away from. "You see in the films that Jones cut for him a greater simplicity in the editing that allowed the strength of the material to stand out," Dawson said.

Jones' sedate, contemplative editorial rhythms also added an extra dimension of melancholy to the sex farce "Shampoo," starring Warren Beatty as George Roundy, equally sought-after as a hairdresser and Don Juan figure in the lives of a bevy of Los Angeles women in 1968, including Goldie Hawn, Julie Christie, and Lee Grant. "He and Warren hit it off, and he worked with Warren on almost everything," said Zimmerman, who, with Jones, co-edited Beatty's "Heaven Can Wait" (1978). Jones then edited the Beatty-produced "Love Affair" (1994) and, with Billy Weber, ACE, co-edited the Beatty-directed "Bulworth" (1998).

Confident in Jones' ability to bring out the best in the footage he shot, Ashby gave himself permission to step away from day-to-day involvement in postproduction. "In simple terms, [Jones] freed him to be a director first and to be able to not feel a sense of obligation to be in the cutting room too much," Dawson said. "It allowed him to sort of live his life a little bit: He'd finish production and hand off the film to Bob Jones. . . He knew that the movie was in good hands."

Yet Ashby had bigger plans for Jones, who was tasked by the director to get the screenplay for "Coming Home" ready to shoot. "There were a decent number of credited and uncredited writers on that film, including Ashby himself," Dawson said. "Jones was somebody that he trusted. It's a testament to his incredible abilities, and that rare combination of skills, that the film is so good." After winning an Oscar for "Coming Home," Jones wrote the script used during the filming of "Being There" (though Jerzy Kosinski, upon whose novel the film was based, received the sole on-screen credit). "The version of 'Being There' that was shot was Jones's script," Dawson said.

Ashby and Jones would eventually go their separate ways, but his demand as a top picture editor never abated. Jones also worked on Tony Scott's "Days of Thunder" (1990) and Harold Becker's "City Hall" (1996). In his capacity as a screenwriter, he penned episodes of Shelley Duvall's acclaimed series "Faerie Tale Theatre." In 2014, Jones received a Career Achievement Award from the American Cinema Editors.

"Bobby is the kind of guy who could do just about anything," Zimmerman said.

And Ashby's films lost a little of their magic in the absence of Jones, the man who was, for so long, his go-to editor. "I feel like he maybe thought it was a bit too easy — that it was kind of a bit of a cheat — to have Bob Jones as your editor," Dawson said. ***— Peter Tonguette***

My father, Robert C. Jones, passed away at home on February 1, 2021 after a long battle with Lewy Body Dementia. He was 84.

Bob was best known for his collaborations as a film editor with Stanley Kramer, Arthur Hiller, Hal Ashby and Warren Beatty. He cut such films as "It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World", "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," "Love Story," "The Last Detail," "Shampoo," "Heaven Can Wait" and "Bulworth" to name a few. He was also a screenwriter, winning an Oscar for "Coming Home" and worked uncredited on "Being There." He then became a professor at USC School of Cinematic Arts for 15 years.

Relentlessly creative, he was also a cartoonist, a sculptor, children's book author, star of his own "Grandpa Bob" video series, sports car enthusiast and restorer, a KEM mechanic back in the day, and a master Avid technician. He was happiest at home, when he could lose himself in a project without any imposed structure and expressed a childlike wonder at what he alone could accomplish. He injected humor into everything he approached. Never an in your face, try too hard, ham-it-up, imposing type humor, but rather the type that embodied his soul. He and his inner child lived together in a perpetual comedic state that was always gentle and truly genius.

The man I most remember growing up was the writer part of him. He wrote at home in an old rustic shed that was far up a hill on our canyon property. That space was also a photographic darkroom that the two of us used together, built when I was a teenager, and probably intended to distract me from other more illicit activities. He let me work in there for hours, encouraging me to experiment and make mistakes. He offered that same kind

of creative freedom when we worked together on Hiller's "See No Evil, Hear No Evil." It was just the two of us on my first and last Moviola show. He allowed me to do a temp dub on my own for the editor's cut screening. He gave some suggestions and then went home early for the day. I had a portable mag stripe dubber, used music from a cassette deck, a mag loop with backgrounds on the Moviola and dialogue played off of a KEM. I somehow figured it all out and chose an Oingo Boingo song to play over an action scene. He knew that however much of a mess I made, I would be learning, and he had the confidence to let go. I believe the students as USC found his mentorship similarly meaningful.

Despite the confidence he exuded with his work, he often battled with the feeling that he didn't know what he was doing creatively. In a speech for his 2014 ACE Career Achievement honor, he said that film "is an art form that has no right or wrong. If there is no right or wrong how does one know if he or she is right? Does it matter? Those moments of panic when you feel you don't know what you're doing is a time when creativity is born, and it may be necessary in a passage to the soul of the cut." To compensate for these feelings, he used his gut as the ultimate arbiter of his craft, and he worked rapidly, with a great degree of spontaneity. And that he could not have done without an acute sensitivity to what's authentic, emotional and humorous about human relationships and behavior.

It was with his family that my dad found his greatest joy and satisfaction. My parents were married for 59 years. They provided one another a mutually loving support system which allowed each to grow independently in their respective fields. When Bob was writing at home my mom was able to go back to school and became a psychologist and later a psychoanalyst. The levels of achievement they both attained is a testament to their genuine belief in each other. And my sister Hayley credits his influence as she describes the playful connection she makes with the children she works with as a psychologist.

In lieu of flowers please consider a donation in his memory to The Ron Finley Project, which promotes community and nutrition by building edible gardens in urban food deserts in Los Angeles and worldwide. ***— Leslie Jones, ACE***

THE GUILD'S MEMORIAL ROLL CALL

JOHN ALBANY
LOW MUSIC
(NOVEMBER 1, 1935 – JANUARY 24, 2021)
56 YEARS A MEMBER

THOMAS BONAR
CINETECHNICIAN
(DECEMBER 20, 1943 – DECEMBER 18, 2020)
50 YEARS A MEMBER

LEE WILLIAM BURCH
ON CALL EDITOR
(JANUARY 23, 1940 – OCTOBER 12, 2020)
60 YEARS A MEMBER

DENNIS CUMMINGS
FILM TECHNICIAN
(SEPTEMBER 18, 1927 – JANUARY 20, 2021)
50 YEARS A MEMBER

ALAN DECKER
RE-RECORDING MIXER
(FEBRUARY 15, 1961 – DECEMBER 14, 2020)
20 YEARS A MEMBER

ESTEVAN ENRIQUEZ
UNKNOWN CLASSIFICATION
(APRIL 6, 1943 – JANUARY 13, 2021)
54 YEARS A MEMBER

WILLARD FRIED
FILM TECHNICIAN
(JANUARY 1, 1929 – DECEMBER 28, 2020)
65 YEARS A MEMBER

JAMES JOHNSON
CINETECHNICIAN
(FEBRUARY 4, 1953 – JANUARY 7, 2021)
39 YEARS A MEMBER

BERNARD (BUD) KLOTCHMAN
ON CALL EDITOR
(DECEMBER 31, 1932 – JANUARY 5, 2021)
60 YEARS A MEMBER

KEITH KOZAR
LOGGER
(NOVEMBER 3, 1962 – OCTOBER 20, 2020)
10 YEARS A MEMBER

NEIL D MAHONEY
ON CALL EDITOR
(MARCH 7, 1977 – JANUARY 8, 2021)
9 YEARS A MEMBER

PHILIP MC CORMICK
FILM TECHNICIAN
(NOVEMBER 7, 1936 – NOVEMBER 7, 2020)
52 YEARS A MEMBER

MICHAEL MC LEAN
SERVICE RECORDER
(OCTOBER 28, 1940 – NOVEMBER 2, 2020)
41 YEARS A MEMBER

KARL METZENBERG
STORY ANALYST
(MARCH 05, 1933 – DECEMBER 05, 2020)
41 YEARS A MEMBER

ROBERT OLER
UNKNOWN CLASSIFICATION
(JULY 12, 1939 – DECEMBER 30, 2020)
59 YEARS A MEMBER

JERRY PIROZZI
SOUND EDITOR
(MARCH 28, 1935 – JANUARY 3, 2021)
51 YEARS A MEMBER

DONALD ROUNDS
ASSISTANT EDITOR
(AUGUST 1, 1948 – MARCH 9, 2021)
48 YEARS A MEMBER

CHARLES ZUPSICH
UNKNOWN CLASSIFICATION
(MARCH 6, 1941 – NOVEMBER 29, 2020)
53 YEARS A MEMBER

'Edwards'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

course, the pandemic has altered that type of activity, but I look forward to visiting some of the places I have on my bucket list once it's safe to do so.

Q Favorite movie(s)? Why?

"Love and Basketball" (2000). I know the dialogue word for word all the way through, even if I watch it muted (haha)! I related to the coming of age story so much, and it's ironic that my career path would eventually lead me to call its editor, Terilyn Shropshire, ACE, a friend and mentor. I was 11 years old when I first saw the movie in a theater with my Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball team. The main character, Monica, inspired me and my friends at the time, and we were determined to have experiences like she had.

Q Favorite TV program(s)? Why?

That's a tough question since I have so many faves. I'll list a few that I've really enjoyed recently. HBO's "Lovecraft Country" and "Watchmen" are definitely on the list for their amazing black leading characters. I was engrossed the entire time while watching, and the supernatural elements and effects were spectacular. I also really like the British series "A Discovery of Witches," currently on Sundance TV (formerly the Sundance Channel) in the US. I enjoy its take as a fantasy series and its interpretation of vampires, daemons and witches. It's also quite the love story and has got me interested in reading the source novel for the show, which is the first book in the "All Souls" trilogy. I also enjoy the STARZ series "Outlander," which is another love story involving time travel and magical folklore.

Q Do you have an industry mentor?

Mentors! Very much so! Terilyn Shropshire, ACE, Shannon Baker Davis, ACE, Joi McMillon, ACE, Brett Hedlund, James Wilcox, ACE, Mary DeChambres, ACE, and many more.

Q What advice would you offer to someone interested in pursuing your line of work?

There are a million pathways to your end goal. Your path will be unlike any others because it is yours, with all its uniqueness. Don't compare your journey to someone else's in a way that deters you. Be encouraged that the journey is all a part of the experience. Visual effects is definitely an onion of a world, so have an open mind as you experience all the layers.

Q Was there ever a circumstance when you had to rely on the Guild for help or assistance?

Yes, there have been many times when I turned to one of the Guild field reps, Jessica Pratt, for assistance and guidance when working with the larger studios. She has been an incredible help, and I am so happy that she is a resource for Guild members.

Q Is there anything you'd like to say to your fellow Guild members, some words of encouragement?

As a Guild member who is a black woman, I encourage my fellow members to look at how they can play a part in continuing the initiatives to create a diverse and inclusive editorial environment. Mentorship is key for allowing underrepresented groups a chance to flourish in editorial. So if you have the time, consider mentoring someone from these groups. Our industry is all the better for it. ■

'Space'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

the writing staff was the pinnacle of my Hollywood career.

But that wasn't what I wanted to do.

If I had my way I'd be a screenwriter but, even back in college, I realized that I was better at editing and analyzing other writers' material. So while it took me a few years to find my way in this industry, I eventually found something I was not only good at, but that I really enjoyed doing: story analysis. It didn't come about quite by accident, there was some luck and good fortune involved... and I have to admit that I exaggerated my resume quite a bit to land my first fulltime job at TriStar Pictures.

That was nearly 30 years ago, when I started working as a freelance Story Analyst. I knew there was a union, but it was off-my-radar and, to be honest, I liked most of those I worked with and felt I was treated well. Except for the low pay, lack of benefits and little job security.

A determined story editor eventually brought me over to Universal Pictures and into the union. Since then, I've worked behind the scenes on hundreds of movies (some of which have actually been made), including all nine "Fast & Furious" films. My early love of comic books, science fiction, and pulp heroes has served me well over the years as my job often involves reading comics and sci-fi screenplays, playing the occasional video game and helping to develop Universal's classic movie monsters for a new generation.

Ray Kolasa has spent most of his career as a Story Analyst with Universal Pictures, often working on the kinds of movies that would have delighted him as a kid. He currently has two daughters in college with filmmaking ambitions that he's trying hard not to quash. He can be reached at ray.kolasa@gmail.com. ■

'Papa'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

the course of a week, we had to get every editor, assistant, and apprentice set up at home, with an Avid, with the drive, with all the material," said Novick, who is based in New York. "We went from having two offices for this project to, I don't know, 10."

Sound mixing had to be reimagined. "The mixer went in, but we all listened on our soundbars at home and then went on Zoom," said Novick, adding that some voice-overs — such as Meryl Streep reading the words of Hemingway's third wife, journalist Martha Gellhorn — had to be recorded using imaginative means. The team brainstormed sending a sound engineer to Streep's home to possibly record the actress, but in the end, a solution was worked out. "Her son had a recording setup in his home, for recording music," Novick said. "Ken spoke to her and talked her through the character, . . . but then she just went into her son's studio and recorded."

Hemingway's voice was recorded by Jeff Daniels — like Hemingway, a Midwesterner (he grew up in Michigan). "We were looking for someone potentially from the middle of the country — sort of the American spirit," Novick said. "We've always wanted to work with Jeff Daniels." (When the postproduction team received the Daniels tracks and began cutting them in, Ewers said, it was like Christmas morning.)

Despite the pivot from in-person to virtual editing, White said that the final result is indistinguishable from a Burns project made pre-pandemic. "In the end, we had as beautiful a project as we normally would have," White said. And, by the end of the process, Burns had scrutinized every frame. "The final month of editing, . . . is me going, 'Open up six frames,'" Burns said. "By the last day of editing, I'm usually the only one still talking."

Yet, on this film, Hemingway talks too — not just in the voice of Jeff Daniels, or in the visible excerpts from his stories and novels, but through the images we see of the man. Ewers' mind went back to the documentary's closest antecedent in his own filmography: Burns' 2001 documentary "Mark Twain," which Ewers co-edited with Craig Mellish, ACE. It was while editing that film that Ewers recognized the simple power of lingering on his subject's eyes.

"On 'Twain,' when you look at the old photographs of him, there's this wit and this joy and this spark," Ewers said. "As each one of his daughters passes away — even when he's onstage and he's Mark Twain, not Samuel Clemens — you see the spark die, until his wife dies and his last daughter, and he's all that's left of his own immediate family. There's nothing left in his eyes."

Decades later, Ewers realized that he was seeing the same progression in photographs of the man many called "Papa." "Here's a man who, just like Mark Twain, was just full of life and ambition and drive," Ewers said. "And, as one head trauma after another comes to him, you start to see the light go out, and by the time he's in his fifties, it's just not there."

The stark simplicity of a photograph, the sharp clarity of a cut — it's what filmmaking is all about for Ken Burns and company.

"Films are only made in the editing room — period," Burns said. ■

'Remote'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

the employees signing electronic union cards in a virtual vote for Editors Guild representation. We sent the company correspondence informing them of the crew's choice in late December. A few weeks later, we had reached an amicable agreement for management to recognize the crew's choice to unionize, based upon a neutral third party's verification that a majority of the employees in question had signed cards. At the time of this writing, Titmouse's editorial employees are preparing to negotiate their first union contract at the company.

Collective action is a prerequisite for meaningful change, and there are challenges to achieving such collective action when workers are working in individual isolation. As an organizer, I'd much prefer to meet with workers in person and look them in their eyes. More important, I'd prefer that the leaders on our organizing committees would have direct, unmediated access to their colleagues as they're reaching out to bring coworkers on board with the organizing effort.

But it's also perhaps true that the lives of involuntary sequestration we've lived over the past year have helped us to recognize how crucial it is to remain connected to those with whom we share common interests. These months have often been lonely ones, but that loneliness has, maybe, made us more eager and more innovative in our efforts to forge bonds that make us less isolated, more powerful.

Even from the bunkers of our living rooms -- pressed into service as working rooms -- organizing finds a way. ■

No Good Thing Ever Dies

FINDING HOPE IN 'THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION'

By Amy Kimmelman

My mother always taught me that "when life doesn't work out, you have your dreams." Dream Big is her motto, and I have never failed to meet her expectations. When I learned recently that my father became ill with Covid-19, I let some of my dreams out of the bag for him. I cheered him on during Facetime calls, telling him he could beat this.

I had some experience turning bad luck into something great. After high school graduation, I couldn't afford my dream college. This led to another aspiration: a career. I was only 18 years old when I landed a job at Rogers & Cowan PR, answering reception-desk phones. I dreamt some more, this time for a promotion to assistant, and got the job. That first week of work, I found Paul Newman in my chair staring at my disorganized mound of files, a glint of amusement in his blue eyes. In two years, I was exceeding mom's Dream Big dictum and trying to fit giant legend Sean Connery into my tiny car. At least he was showing some desire to help organize my stuff, plainly desperate for a place to sit. With my secretarial skills clearly lacking, I became a Vice President before I was 25 years old. Sometimes life is better than the fantasy.

I was soon getting married and my sister Dale helped me pick out a wedding dress. Dale passed away unexpectedly a few months later leaving her two daughters motherless. Grieving the loss of my sister, I looked for a job where I could remain close to home and help raise her babies. I left my career behind and began reading scripts at home.

I was feeling like the dream pipeline was rusted when I saw "The Shawshank Redemption." While prison movies always show inmates building muscle lifting weights, I was mesmerized by the amazing "mind muscle" that character Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) exercised while at Shawshank. What I recognized, and connected with immediately, was the presence of mind that Dufresne maintains throughout his life sentence. I, too, was sentenced to an unbearable tragedy, powerless to change the fate I was handed in watching my sister's girls grow up motherless. What one learns to do in such a situation is develop an escape, a place where the mind can go to find hope, while remaining in the present to spark optimism in others. Watching Dufresne teach the inmates to read, get an education, and even fail in redeeming some of his prison brothers, like suicidal inmate Brooks, was ironically mirroring much of what was happening in my life. After one sister died, I lost the other to drugs.

PHOTO: PHOTOFEST
"Shawshank Redemption."

When tragedy doesn't make sense and a person begins to feel like they are living a horribly distorted version of their life, reality begins to feel like a prison. I love the way in which Dufresne becomes incredibly calm, as only someone who has undergone a tragedy of enormous proportions can do when they reach acceptance. Like Dufresne, I have felt that rage melt. I have also kept a secret like Dufresne does, and it's not a jailbreak, but a large pocket of hope, and the mastery to elude my painful memories. As I get older, I am humbled by the intricacies of dreaming, which allow for the potential to escape loss, failures, and pain. While events in my life have often left me feeling powerless, I am with Dufresne in finding kernels of satisfaction in every bad situation.

It's almost irrelevant that Dufresne makes a physical escape from prison, since the movie shows that his mind has liberated him long before he leaves Shawshank. In truth, Dufresne found enough hope to dole it out in handfuls, in tandem with the delivery of library books. The hope is found between every bad chapter of life, and the movie teaches that the trick is in turning the pages.

I find myself opening a new chapter today as I bury my father, who passed from COVID-19. The imagining of his afterlife, seeing him energetic and happy, is not far from the place that Dufresne inhabits in the last scene of the movie. The beach in Zihuatanejo, with an umbrella shading the sun, and no memory of pain, is where hope will find my father. ■

Amy Kimmelman has been fishing for family fare at Disney for 25 years as a Story Analyst. She spends her spare time figuring out life and scheming her next big dream. You can reach her at amykimmelman@outlook.com

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