



EMMYS
PRIMECUTS
2024

Television
Academy



Michael Ruscio, ACE – Editor 3 Body Problem

How did you get your start in the business?

In film, I began as an apprentice on 'Return of the Living Dead', learning the ins and outs of coding machines and rewinds. In television, I was lucky to be part of the ABC series 'Nothing Sacred', executive produced by David Manson. I edited the episode Disney banned, 'HIV Priest'. It never aired, though it's infamous and has gone to many festivals.

What made you decide to become an editor?

So many other career paths in the beginning. At one point I was in line to be a salesperson for shirt fabric in New York. Then I realized that really wasn't me. And I regrouped and dove into my love of film, working with the Maysles Brothers as a PA for a time, assisting Michael Tannen and Ian Hoblyn who managed Paul Simon. Ultimately, I moved to LA and did whatever I could to immerse myself into filmmaking

What is it about editing that attracted you?

I saw that editing embraced everything about my sensibilities. Music, rhythm, acting. It became apparent to me that films were made in the editing room.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

The best, from Dennis Virkler, who mentored me: emotion carries a cut better than any match. The worst: Someone once told me I was too literal, which seemed untrue and really pissed me off, so I always try to be more figurative.

What challenged you the most on this show?

The realization that there was a relentless drive for logic, emotion and excellence. And I needed to rise to the task, and wanted to! It kept me on my toes.

What shows are you watching right now?

Mostly live comedy and things that make me laugh.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Immerse yourself into any job or internship you can get. If you feel you're interested in production and there's an open job in post-production, take it. And vice versa. Learn what you can. And seek out people who see your value and will help you and keep you in mind. Don't be afraid to be a nudge. Keep reaching out to anyone who might help you on your way.



Martin Biehn – Lead Editor

Escaping Twin Flames

What is it about editing that attracted you?

Montages always captured me as a kid. I read lots of comic books and besides film/tv, I think comics are the only medium that really has picture editing in it. It's the only place you can actually see montages where the pictures and the narrative may be pointing in different directions but complimenting each other and adding up to something larger. I think that complexity always intrigued me. And then when I started watching films and really got into the meat of the American new wave I really started to put it together. Coppola and Scorsese and Spike Lee films grabbed me with their dynamic montages even when I was a kid and I think really opened my eyes to the artistry that was possible just by associating and contrasting images and words.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

Less advice than a way of thinking about things... I was taught early on by one of my mentors Marc Dichter, brother to the master sound mixer Lee Dichter that cinema is a mix of arts: writing, photography, acting, audio recording, production design. These arts exist independent of each other and cinema but what makes television "television" or cinema "cinema" is the editing. The ability to juxtapose images, manipulate time, associate ideas etc, this is our whole thing. That idea felt very powerful to me and it helped me to better understand, interpret and learn from everything I've seen since. I don't remember the bad advice honestly.

What challenged you the most on this show? The tendency when you're building something is to make it clean and compelling, taking out a lot of the small things that might contradict the larger story points. But this is a messy story and in many cases people either had conflicting opinions on an experience, were conflicted themselves about an experience they had or understandably didn't want to share details about their traumatic experiences at all. Our director Cecilia Peck had developed a wonderful relationship with several of the subjects and so through her, we were able to operate from a place of trust, even doing additional interviews to further flesh out the story and give more truth the subjects perspectives. Furthermore, by integrating GLAAD and our experts Dr. Janja Lalich and Dr. Cassius Adaire into both our process and ultimately the show itself, we were able to lean on the science of coercive control and cult mentalities while staying in our lane and not editorializing in ways that might be used to harm the trans community. We were extremely cognizant that our film could be used to harm people that are already very much in our societal cross-hairs and so we did a tremendous amount of due-diligence, had a lot of arguments over language and story-telling and did a lot of extra work to try and make sure we were mindful of how the film might be seen out of context. Again, these people aren't characters to be manipulated, they aren't there to tell the film-maker's story, they're there to tell their own stories and it's our job to facilitate that while being as fair as possible to everyone involved.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Get started however you can. Say "Yes" as much as you can (within reason.) The road into this industry can take many, many forms and most are unexpected and unpredictable. Find a mentor if you can who can guide you, but if you can't? Just start making stuff. Understand that you (and everyone else) has to be bad before they can be good. Make weird, bad things. Experiment and find your voice and what makes you tick creatively and use that as your guide. In art all experience is valuable and you never know where things might take you.



Inbal B. Lessner, ACE – Editor **Escaping Twin Flames**

How did you get your start in the business?

Was in a filmmaking program in high school where I discovered editing, then produced and edited training films for the Israeli Army, then NYU film school where I interned for Sam Pollard and for Barbara Kopple, then moved to LA and started working as an editor. Eventually combined editing and producing.

What made you decide to become an editor?

It's a pretty good story. In short, my "eureka moment" was in high school - saw a documentary that looked like it was shot with 5 cameras, but it was single cam. It blew my mind. Realized I loved it *and* could be good at it.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

Best advice - plant your seeds where you want to see them grow.

What challenged you the most on this show?

The trans aspect of the story, and the compressed schedule.

Can you speak about the formation of edit team?

As the showrunner who hired the editors, I was looking for editors who are excellent at their craft, but are also great communicators, excellent team players, and can share our passion for exposing the story in a sensitive and ethical way. Everyone operated under this mandate - it was a 3 hour film and we were going to all work together to make it the best we can in 4-5 months of edit. Martin actually replaced another editor who started and wasn't a good fit. I think both the editor and the team felt it right away and I had to pivot quickly because we were on a tight schedule. Kevin knew Martin from another job and recommended him, and luckily Martin just became available, so I thought it would be an advantage that they knew each other and had that trust. Martin had good references from other people I trust, so I pulled the trigger quickly, and so glad I did!

What shows are you watching right now?

My guilty pleasure while we were making the show was Love is Blind.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Seek mentors. Try to shadow AEs and editors. You learn the most from being in the room, observing the process, the actual cutting, the edit room politics and dynamics and all the conversations. This is becoming more and more rare and I try to offer this opportunity to people starting out.



Maria Gonzales – Editor Shōgun

What made you decide to become an editor?

My love for film and TV dates back as far as I can remember. I first became interested in editing at the age of fifteen when I was visiting LA, and a family friend took me on a tour of the WB Lot. We spent a couple of hours with an editor friend of his. Everything was cut on film back then, so I remember being in awe of the film library, the overflowing bins, and watching footage on a flatbed... That was the day I first thought of editing as a possible career direction and everything I did from there on focused on getting into a cutting room.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

Best—It's hard to pinpoint the one piece of advice that made the most significant impact on my career. As I've worked my way up the editorial ranks, I learned so much from those who mentored me: all the more experienced assistants and editors. Along the way, I picked up tips and tricks by symbiosis. One of the things I love about working as an editor is that you get to work with different people all the time, and there's always an opportunity to learn from new colleagues. I can't remember any of the good advice; You can rest assured I have suppressed the bad ones.

What challenged you the most on this show?

The show was very challenging. Getting the right pacing took a while to establish; it also took a lot of finessing to ensure some of the humor shined through the fairly dense dialogue scenes and often violent and emotional sequences. However, working in Japanese added a layer of complexity, making it much more difficult for me. I relied on my instincts while putting together scenes, and I had to run my episodes by Aika to ensure the dialogue flowed naturally. It was humbling having to ask for assistance with minor line cuts and dialogue changes. I am so grateful for the support I had from the assistants who worked tirelessly to subtitle everything and then supported me through the various iterations of the cuts.

What shows are you watching right now?

I just started watching *My Brilliant Friend*, which is about to air its fourth Season. I read the books years ago and am a huge fan of them, but I never set aside the time to check out the show, so I'm doing that now. I'm also looking forward to *Slow Horses* starting its fourth season.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

This has been a tough year for our industry, but I would encourage people starting out not to give up. The landscape has vastly changed since I started; many of the traditional entry points are disappearing, but new ones have emerged. Shooting is more accessible, editing software is more accessible, and the way people (especially younger generations) consume entertainment has forever shifted. So, I would encourage young people to edit on any projects that come their way. This is how you meet people you'll want to continue collaborating with and how you'll forge your path to being an editor. Another piece of advice would be always to approach projects with an open mind. This profession can be very gratifying not only because of your contributions to crafting a film or a series but also because you're open to learning from those around you.



Aika Miyake – Editor Shōgun

What was your journey to become an editor?

When my father passed away when I was 17, I inherited his Nikon camera and began photographing my high school years. I loved capturing moments that resonated with me. Even before that, I was a mixtape girl, so when I discovered editing in college, it felt like a natural extension of my passions. I quickly fell in love with the art of storytelling through visuals and audio. Given my need to become independent quickly to support my mother, pursuing editing as a profession felt like the right move. It was quite a journey to find the type of editing I love in Japan. I started as an online editor for TV and later transitioned to offline editing, but often found that editors were expected to be mere button pushers. I had a strong desire to be a storyteller, so it was challenging, but I persevered. Finally, at age 30, I found my niche, working mostly with foreign crews in Japan. I'm so glad I didn't give up.

What is it about editing that attracted you?

Editing resonated with me on a deep level. I knew it was a craft that would continue to reveal new layers, even after years of practice—and I was right. Every project brings something different, and I'm thrilled to keep learning and evolving as an editor. This passion has led me to explore a wide range of genres, from documentaries and commercials to music videos, TV talk shows, and live performances, all before delving into scripted work.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

The best advice is to keep editing. While you can learn a lot by assisting someone, the most valuable lessons come from working on the puzzle yourself and getting hands-on experience. The worst one is hearing someone say that it's impossible to become a scripted editor with my background in commercials. I know it's hard but I'm determined to make my way.

What challenged you the most on this show?

The key challenge was managing the duration—both in terms of the footage length and the extended post-production timeline. I dedicated 19 months to this show, with most of the editing done remotely from my home, often alone with just my two cats for company. I navigated a spectrum of emotions—excitement, anxiety, and the inevitable highs and lows—largely on my own. Maintaining mental resilience was essential throughout this long journey.

What shows are you watching right now?

I'm currently watching *House of the Dragon*. I loved *Game of Thrones* and the first season of *House of the Dragon*, and I'm thoroughly enjoying season 2 as well.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Keep editing and explore different types of projects to find what truly resonates with you. Editing isn't just one thing, so I encourage young people starting out to be curious and open to exploration. Beyond editing, live your life to the fullest—experience the fun, the sad, and the challenging moments. These emotions will guide you when editing scenes that require emotional depth in the future.



Patrick Tuck – Editor Reservation Dogs

How did you get your start in the business?

I started as a PA at a post house called Rock Paper Scissors. I worked my way up to assistant editor, worked on a ton of commercials, a few documentaries, and some scripted stuff. I was very fortunate to work on a music video with Lil Dicky, who enjoyed working with me so much he asked me to come edit on his newly greenlit show *Dave*. I was still assisting at the time, so this was one of those miracle, life-changing stories.

What is it about editing that attracted you? I've always loved finicking with computers, and editing started to feel like the perfect blend of art, technology, and fun. Also, my parents are movie buffs, so I was exposed to a lot of different movies at a young age, which was major fuel for my dream to become an Editor.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

Best – Don't try to convince someone you're something, just *be* that something. Worst – In regards to work, you should always ask permission before you go above and beyond, because it might be a waste of time.

What challenged you the most on this show?

Cutting the finale of any show comes with a certain amount of pressure, but *Reservation Dogs* is such a beloved and special show for the indigenous communities of the world, so Varun and I (as well as everyone that worked on this episode) felt a responsibility to knock it out of the park. A lot of care and attention was given to every frame to make sure our characters, and the audience, feel present throughout the episode. At the same time, we were saying goodbye to characters we've truly grown to love, which sparked so many emotional reactions and conversations within our team that perfectly mirrored what happens to those characters in the episode. It was challenging, but ultimately the most rewarding work I've ever done, both for the show and for my own well-being.

What shows are you watching right now?

I just finished *Ripley*, which I thought was incredible. I'm watching *Planet Earth III* because Planet Earth is always the best thing ever. And I'm watching *Escaping Twin Flames!*

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Forget what you know and be open to learning. Editing has "rules" that are meant to be (and constantly are) broken in order to elicit feeling from the audience on a subtextual layer. Understanding the history of editing helps you understand the language in which you are communicating, but that doesn't mean you can't make up new words or slang to express yourself. Lastly, the best part of being an Editor is learning from the people you are working with – true collaboration is multi-directional.



Varun Viswanath, ACE – Editor Reservation Dogs

How did you get your start in the business?

My first TV job was as a night shift Assistant Editor on a docu-follow series produced by ThinkfactoryMedia. I got it through a recommendation from a fellow AFI Alum. I worked on two-night shift shows, while editing at a YouTube channel during the day, till I got bumped up to the day shift, and eventually made the jump to a scripted comedy series.

What made you decide to become an editor?

I really love thinking about the multiple webs of possibilities in the story I'm working on, and I have tons of patience both for precision and for creative conversations. I tried many different departments as a young indie filmmaker, but editing is where I felt it all really came together both for me and for the film. It also helped a little that I went to college to be an electronics engineer, and I could embrace the technological aspect of early digital filmmaking quicker. Editing is where all these aspects of my personality best tied together, and I loved it.

What's the best advice you ever received? The worst?

Best: "You have to see the film for what it is, not what you want it to be" - from Phil Linson, ACE, who was the Vice Dean and Head of the Editing program at AFI when I was a student there. It really made me rethink my "jack of all trades" indie filmmaker hangover, and focus in on how to become a better editor. Worst: "Take this job, it'll look good on paper" - the couple of times I've taken this advice, I've had bad experiences. When I've taken jobs for the story and the collaborators, I've inevitably had a better time.

What challenged you the most on this show?

We had an episode 303 "Deer Lady" that was emotionally very hard for everyone involved. It involved scenes where Indigenous children were taken from their families by missionary schools, and abused by the school staff to strip them of their identities. It was very hard material to work on, and the kids all looked like my own brown-skinned little boy sleeping in the next room. The team supported each other really well through the episode though, and we all knew we had an important story to tell, and the audience we were trying to serve were the survivors of Native boarding schools and their families. It also helped to have a collaborator in Patrick to lean on and share the weight - and I was able to hand the episode over to him halfway through to bring fresh perspective, and he made it better!

What shows are you watching right now?

I'm just finishing Presumed Innocent, and I'm on my second watch of Scavengers Reign - it is such a spectacular show.

What advice would you give someone starting out?

Beyond the tactical advice of put yourself out there, get to know people who you would want to work with, learn specific skills or tools - I would say go live an emotionally rich life so you have more to put back into your work. The wider your life experiences are, the more nuance and empathy you can bring to your work, and the more value you provide to your collaborators.