

The Editor's Cut - Episode 031 - "Q&A with Daria Ellerman, CCE" (Master Series)

Sarah Taylor

This episode was generously sponsored by Finale — A picture shop company, the Vancouver post alliance, IATSE 891, Annex Pro, Avid and Integral Artists. Hello and welcome to The Editor's Cut. I'm your host Sarah Taylor. This episode is part of our Master Series and was the Master Class with Daria Ellerman, CCE that took place on March 10th 2020 at Finale in Vancouver. Daria has over 25 years of experience working in television and films. Some of her most recent credits include the new hit series on Netflix "Virgin River" which I've binge-watched-the ABC series "Take Two" for which she won the 2019 Leo Award and the feature film "Meditation Park." This Master Series was moderated by Kirk Hay.

Kirk Hay

I met Daria in 2012 on a kids show when I was assisting and it was there that Daria gave me the opportunity to cut. So I started cutting in 2012 on the kids show. Then we did two seasons of that then another kids show, all multi cam stuff. Then I left to do some other things animation and some MOWs and then we reconnected on season one Virgin River last year and this year I got to cut two episodes once again with the support of Daria. So that was great. It was really really helped me knowing that I could always lean on Daria if there was a an issue of course there was lots of issues as there always are. So yes so we've known each other for a while actually when I sat down to think about this a little bit about Daria two decades of experience editing television series, MOWs, documentaries, feature films. Her credits include the feature film Meditation Park which opened the 2017 Vancouver International Film Festival and Birdwatcher. Several MOWs and hundreds of hours of episodic television. Daria's versatility comes from the variety of projects she has been involved in from comedy to drama across genres and 140 episodes of sitcom that include a live audience. Daria has been nominated for nine Leo awards, a Southampton International Film Festival award, a Gemini Award, and a CCE award as a picture editor, and won Leo Awards for her work on television series Take Two and The Collector and she currently just wrapped the Netflix series Virgin River. Now the special thing about the sitcom things is in front of a live audience is just to interject a little bit into that is the pressure in which you have to turn around a cut for the audience on Friday and they only shoot was it Thursday-Friday? Thursday Friday. So I don't know if you're talking a little bit about that later but that was that was something else. She's a master of art and it gives me great pleasure to introduce Daria.

Daria Ellerman

Thank you. And I can't believe how many people here I know, how many people here assisted me, how many people are now my fellow colleagues, those editors, and I can't believe you guys want to hear me talk but anyways we're going to talk and I just wanted to tell you what I thought I would do. I'm gonna show a clip the first episode of Virgin River Season 1 Episode 1 and I wanted to talk about... I want to of talk about it from the perspective of the three ways that a story gets written, any story any movie or television series it's the script, it's written in production, and it's written in post-production, and I wanted to sort of should show you the clip and then explain the different areas where there was impacts on the script by both production and post-production, and also the way that we would edit this particular scene as the fact that it's the first episode of a new series. And I've I've done I think I counted them up I might have written it down... I've done ten or twelve episode ones of a season one, and I've done two pilots that were... one was a backdoor pilot which was a movie of the week for Sabrina the Teenage Witch the half hour sitcom, which went on to be completely retooled and nothing that we did was used. And then another pilot that was an action kind of tween thing... teen thing that got rejigged and we used part of the pilot but it became a new thing so that's a more conventional pilot style. You know we don't really do pilots so much anymore, particularly I don't still think it's a Netflix or streaming

thing really. We just sort of launch in and so there are some considerations about when you're doing Episode 1 season one and I was sort of aware that this was more knowledgeable audience and I thought that might be a more interesting way look at this clip. So we could play the first clip I think.

[Clip Plays]

[Clip Audio]

Daria Ellerman

How do you like watching that again Kirk?

Kirk Hay

It was the song again and again and again.

Daria Ellerman

So the reason I wanted to... the reason I wanted to talk about the three ways that the script is written is because it took me a while to start thinking about how production is impacted by so many different things and how we would you know gather in the bullpen and complain about the way something was shot. Then once the director came in you might find out like like in the season just recently that there was a truck mount on a car and then there was an accident and then the truck mount was off the car. So we only had one camera on this particular scene when it and it was like Oh this is such an ugly angle. Right. So you just you just you just wonder like who who shot this why were they doing this. And I think it's important for us as editors to kind of realize that that the impact that production has on what is scripted that we just kind of have to deal with it and stop going out in the bullpen and complaining. Well I guess we'll never do that but... and I've also been in meetings where you know there's a script that has it like lots of many small scenes and I've seen a production manager directly address the writer it's like OK so you've got 12/8 of the pages here at twelve different locations. You can have six. You know? And so then the writer has to go back because they don't we can't afford to go to twelve locations so they have to somehow figure out how to either make. Two locations out of one location or you know like it's like the writer was never expecting that they would be have to go back and rewrite something just because the money's you know there isn't enough money allocated for that many locations so the writer starts with this idealized thing. Then even once prep starts they have to start immediately. The thing becomes un-idealized and then as production goes then it becomes further impacted. And then when we're in post we choose to sometimes change the script. So in the case of this show, the first three shots that we saw which were an overhead shot, a drive by, and a drone at dusk, never existed in the production of that episode as scripted. It started at night with the woods with the car driving in. So production shot what was scripted but as we were editing episode one of course episode two... well one and two shot together so episode 3 and 4 are shooting, and there's editing going on and we also were supplied with a bank of drone shots beautiful beauty shots that we were using as transitions. And so you know we're sitting around and realizing that there's not there's not really much of an opening here. And we we wanted a few things; we wanted more time to establish our song because it was the first episode of a new season we're trying to create interest. We wanted you to listen to that song because we were trying to suggest something with the lyrics of the world keeps moving on... whether you know not literally but we wanted... we wanted that to resonate. And we also thought about things like... and this was a collaboration between the showrunner and the executive producer that was in post and myself and our post producer and Kirk and you know how can we do this. And so we decide well you know what, we have all these beautiful drone shots. We should probably start the episode with a drone shot because that's going to be a visual motif. It's gonna give us time. And while we're while we're getting this drone shot you know, Gary can you get us a couple more shots right? And then we were all because

of the what the drone could shoot where the location we were at. The only shot we could get from the drone was from behind the car and it comes up and it's a beautiful shot. But that's not the shot we all have in our minds when we wanted to we wanted this great this epic drone shot just one shot. You know Gary might be able to get us some other shots but so production impacted us in the limitations of the drone. We at post impacted the writer's script by deciding we wanted more of an opening. We wanted to try and draw the audience in and we had to remove something coming up later. So we wanted to emphasize the smallness of a of a car in a wild world. And we wanted to establish the world of our show so that when the drone comes up that is the world of our show Squamish is in for Northern California. And also we wanted to maybe suggest that this has been a long journey so if we shot that at dusk then we would dip to black and then we would come up into the episode per script which was that this car drives through the forest. And so... so something else that we think of when we're when we're editing is our shot selection so the kind of shots we were trying to select for the beginning were with that idea of this is a lonely road or in the forest first it's dusk, now it's night. So that the first time we come to the shot of someone in the car there is no question that this is our main character. We're not being coy about it at all. We're not like shooting from behind or from the side or we're like the first thing that we decide to do after trying to establish this opening is to just show you this person. This is the person that you need to be interested in. This is the person whose story we're telling right now, whose point of view this scene is from. And in terms of shot selection as well the director had done a nice little tilt down. So we saw the phone and and it wasn't and it wasn't really inserting and we really liked that and then we did a little VFX where we replaced it so that we could do the no service thing. And that was just mainly just that the director she was so awesome. She just like kind of just did this thing and then we're like oh but we could like make a sound and put something on the screen and then we recorded some ADR of her going "oh great." And again you know just trying to emphasize that she is a fish out of water because you might get from her appearance and from her fancy car that perhaps she's not a person who regularly travels these roads or lives in this area. Anyways that took a long time to get there. It took a lot of cuts and it took a lot of thought and a lot of discussions and a lot of meetings and then and then to have... you know our director or second unit director go out and survey and come back with the news about well this is the only shot I can get you. But at the end of the day we felt that we had accomplished that anyways. So then the next section is is the the stalking semi which we were trying to to show that she was rattled and I guess it would be unfamiliar for her to maybe deal with a semi on a dirt road like that. And and then she skids which takes us into the flashback. So in the script the semi honks and goes by her. And then a bear suddenly rears up in front of her. And roars and that she slams on the brakes and hits her head on the dash. So like I like to call this like "look ma no bear!" So... Kirk like tried... we tried we like ordered up... we shot a bear.

Kirk Hay

There was a bear.

Daria Ellerman

There was a bear. We shot a bear but we shot the bear in December. What are bears doing in December? This bear was so sleepy and all the bear could do is turn its head and open its mouth and like we put the growl in, like we tried speeding it up, we ordered up a green screen bear, we tried we didn't have a plate. We had the bear... what was wrong with the bear shot?

Kirk Hay

The only shot they did was a POV over her shoulder. A POV or like over the shoulder through the window. And then they had to have a wire an electric wire run around the bear because it was a huge grizzly.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. It was like a fence.

Kirk Hay

And then the trainer was there like with its biscuits going like... and the bear was literally going like "my mouth so dry," like it opened its mouth. It was like that. So the roar was like [blah.] So that was a problem. And then the way they shot it was because they didn't want to run over the bear. The car just goes like this.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. That's right the car just slowed down.

Kirk Hay

We had we had to try and speed up the car get rid of the fence, get rid of the trainer, anger up the bear. And there was no plate no clean plate no anything.

Daria Ellerman

And a strange light too a strange light because they did do a B-camera on the actual just bear. And he was kind of like in this little halo of light. Yeah. And so then we like had come up with this version the best we thought we could do. And then the big kahuna show runner who happened to be on set a lot in season one not so much in season two. She came in the room she sat down we played her the sequence and she said "get rid of the bear." We agonized over this!

Kirk Hay

And we got rid of the shot we got green screen animals to give us a bear. They were like "hey Kirk you know after effects" I'm like No no... "you do now." I mean they're comping the whole thing up. So we did our due diligence. I mean we covered that every... I was I thought they were gonna like come and glue hair on me and be like "All right Kirk out to the road you go." But we tried it all.

Daria Ellerman

But that that was just mind blowing actually because it was so obvious but you know you well it's not my practice any ways to cut out anything before it before the showrunner's seen it. I mean even when directors make lifts I'm kind of like oh okay because generally on television series, not on features, you know that the showrunner is gonna want to see everything that was in the script unless like there's like a phone call in a discussion and an agreement like okay I I really do want to see it that way. So I don't think... there was never... the option of removing the bear was never an option we thought... even the Post Producer then.

Kirk Hay

Then the question was What do we do when the bear's gone?

Daria Ellerman

Right. So so I said I'll make the skid happen out of the semi which you know when you have like a nice shaky when you have nice shaky shots like that nice little skid sound a little music sting it would just it you know it wasn't that hard. And in retrospect it feels cleaner than to have had first a semi menace her and then a bear. Like I mean that might have been a bit much but I think that that what the writer was trying to do was really show the danger of the wilderness area that they were in and the

unexpectedness of a bear she would probably never expect this, this woman from L.A.. So it felt like it was really super important to have the bear.

Kirk Hay

A lot of money was spent on that bear too.

Daria Ellerman

A lot of money was spent on that bear but it was yeah it was yeah man it was hilarious. And the interesting thing was that I mean the showrunner also happened to have written the first episode and she was not at all precious about the bear. She was like "get rid of the bear!" right. So yeah first episode first season flashback. So we have a flashback because it's a conventional way that we are going to reveal backstory about characters right. It's kind of a trope... it's very accepted and also putting it right in the opening is saying to the audience this is how we're gonna do this, right? That's why that flashback is there and it's also to make you wonder who this woman is, to put her in a hospital setting so maybe you think that she works in a hospital and then to create this kind of eye contact between her and the doctors so that you maybe think oh is this person important. And that flashback was a lot longer and it got truncated just to make it a lot cleaner. And I think that's better better than exchanging a lot of dialogue that wasn't really gonna build on what is there. And we thankfully cut to it because I think it was scripted with the flash of light and somehow a flash of light was gonna come through that... I don't know what was going to... anyways once we got rid of the bear we had to rethink that and I personally always prefer a cut to a flashback. We did pre lap some of the audio going in because there was just some concern about making it really clear to people that we were transitioning into a flashback. And I think did we have a little sound there?

Kirk Hay

Flashback whooshes were had, lots of them were sampled and gone through and I just think they didn't like that idea. No it was really like a double hat on that thing....

Daria Ellerman

Yeah a hat on a hat. Yeah yeah that's our showrunner's favorite saying "hat on a hat" and I'm glad and I'm glad because I think we even auditioned a white flash which is like please say no please say no. And then we come out of the flashback and we we are meeting a new character and as the as the episode went on we were continually meeting new characters because it's the first episode but in that scene we were we were trying to be wide whenever we could just to emphasize the remoteness and you know remind us that we're in the woods and see her you know assuming that her cell phone is gonna work even though we had the insert where she said she had no service right. She should have known her cell phone was....

Kirk Hay

You always check it still.

Daria Ellerman

You do right. And then we cut to the main title card which was not scripted and that's a thing that I've noticed you know recently and I've been on shows where I've like you know when I've had an opportunity to speak to the showrunner and they're not scripting them where the main title card goes like "Hey guys want a script that?" you know and some people are like "yes!" because they they realize that that might affect how the director might direct if they knew that we were cutting to a main title card and like there's so many shows now that that you know just slammed the graphic on top of footage

for a scene. But this the these scripts never had the main title card scripted or where we were gonna place it. So it got placed in several areas. This was I think the earliest it got placed. We had it placed later I think. And then even later. And then we came back to here but it's just I noticed that's always an interesting... it's a thing because in this case it helped us. There was a time cut you know the scene that came after that they're in the truck and they're driving. It also helped us emphasize that she had a decision to make right there. Like is she going to get in the car with this guy. I mean she's really have any choice. Like what is she going to do. Sit in her car and wait for the bear to get her? Oh right. She doesn't know there's a bear.

Kirk Hay

There was a ripple effect of that too cause didn't doesn't Doc say there's bears out here she goes "there's bears out here?" Yeah but the title thing also goes back to the Netflix all knowing all seeing they know that if a title last longer than I think it's 10 seconds then you have to follow certain format because people will skip past it. So if you have a title they want you to have it this long or that long nothing in between. Because I know that people are gonna... so that played a part in....

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. How long?

Kirk Hay

Seven and a half seconds.

Daria Ellerman

Right. So we're doing it under the ten seconds so that we don't get the skip.

Kirk Hay

Yeah yeah yeah.

Daria Ellerman

And there was talk of a main title as well. And for some reason I'm under the impression that Netflix would rather not do a main title and I'm not 100 percent certain why that is. But I think some productions insist and they they do a main title. Like I did another show where they went out to a place in London England and did a beautiful main title and Netflix was OK with it but but also then I think that's where that skip thing comes in. So when you... oh no but you can't skip it unless it's at the beginning. Like when you're watching them when you're bingeing. Right. Right. Anyways there's we're having, it's funny because that's the thing when you work on Netflix show there's a lot of these discussions about the Netflix rules and things of where you. Yeah.

Kirk Hay

And they change ever so slightly every season.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. If it's not scripted I I like to see if they will but I don't think we're ever gonna script them on Virgin River. We're just going to plunk them in and then continue to move them from cut to cut. Right.

Kirk Hay

And then when the director comes in you can say "it would be great if you shot a specific shot for the main title" and they always go "that's a great idea!".

Daria Ellerman

That's true!

Kirk Hay

And then that next block you're "like where is it?"

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. And then in season one we had that same card on every episode and in season two we have a different shot for every episode which is kind of nice actually. Yeah. Does anybody have anything specific about that clip that we were talking about or anything that I said that was confusing or Kirk said was confusing?

Audience Question

The opening music did you have that well beforehand or did you get that later?

Daria Ellerman

That's a great question actually because um...no. So before we had the extended opening we did want something in there and we tried... we tried a number of things and we tried to go a number of ways because Netflix... and this is not a Netflix symposium here but... it was Netflix kind of digs the idea of of a cover or something recognizable that's affordable or they're all about having you know a source cue at the beginning and at the end of an episode that costs a little bit more than you know that kind of library stuff that you might put in other scenes. And we really didn't have enough time. The way that it was shot before we before we were like into the bear which is now into the crash and so I think the most recent thing I think I probably had temp score in there when we decided to get rid of the bear. And then when we decided to get rid of the bear is when we had the conversation about extending the beginning and then we started auditioning a lot of songs and we had an executive producer in post that season and... who was really into finding music and she knew this song and she came in one Monday morning is like "this is the song that we should use." And so we started using this song, everybody in production really liked it. And so then we did start in a little bit of black and try and make our shot lengths so that we could establish the lyrics that we wanted to. And we did even edit I think for like we edited a verse so that we could get lyrics that we wanted before we crashed into score for the semi thing. But a lot of times we do have a song. It might be scripted or it might have been sent to us and we find something that we like, or sometimes our showrunner will be like I really love this song, and we will work with it from the beginning, but and this goes to episode one of the season one is, that first of all you're going to redo the temp score 10 times anyways and any songs that you're gonna use, like you're going to you're gonna burn through 100 source cues before you land on the three or four ones that you're gonna feature in the episode. It's just everybody knows what they don't like. They just don't know how to tell you what they want, and they might not even know what it is until they hear it anyways. And in this one it was... we all kind of liked the vibe of it, but the world keeps moving on was really very important and it's important to the story because you know this character is is coming out of a lot of it, she's leaving L.A. for a new start in the small town and leaving behind a lot of personal bullshit right. And we we really thought that song would really help us establish that and we were hoping that it would draw you in and keep you interested because as a viewer of streaming services, it's not lost on me how quickly I'll give up on something. Nope, next! You know. And so when you're editing something for a streaming service you're like Oh my God how can we not have people do that how can we keep people interested? So I think that we hoped that the song would do that. We hoped that having a little bit of

action and a flashback to make you think... then a grumpy old man, and then a main title might be enough for you to go “OK I'll see what's... see what's happening next.”.

Kirk Hay

Yeah there's a lot of information crammed into that opening. With the introduction of the main character, a flashback, the crash. It's quite busy as far as that goes.

Audience Question

How long can you go before the opening title?

Daria Ellerman

It was like 2:30-3:00 or something.

Kirk Hay

Some of the shows were like “How about here?” “How about there?” But never passed like five minutes. There were some that were late. I think it's like 3:30 or something around there.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah it almost is like... it seems that we do like to do a teaser type thing but it's not scripted that way and sometimes it's like I said... Why don't you... it's easier to just script it as a teaser but you know.

Audience Question

Was the flashback scripted?

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. It was longer and we cut we cut it down and I think that this episode didn't end up being super long the way you know like a lot of first episodes on streaming services are beyond what we're used to seeing the 43 minutes of broadcast hour. I think this one was forty eight minutes or so seven minutes yeah. So it wasn't it wasn't super long and our goal was to keep people interested. So cutting down scenes.

Kirk Hay

I feel bad for the bear. He probably got all his friends around like “all right I'm in the show. Wait a minute. Where'd I go?”.

Daria Ellerman

Shooting a bear in December!

Audience Question

Once you decided to cut the bear, did they pick anything up for the car crash?

Daria Ellerman

There was talk of doing an insert on the wheel and stuff and actually I was I was really not encouraging that because they also thought while at the same time we can get the wheel in the ditch because it could be as the doc character says well your car's in a ditch and basically you see two cars parked there whatever your car's not drivable. That's all that really matters. And I thought well where it first well where am I going to... how am I going to make this wheel insert work for the skid without it without it kind of just looking stuck in like I preferred it to flow out of out of the the pass-by of the semi. The idea

that she just skidded over to the shoulder so sound can help us there. We had a nice shaky POVs we were inside the car and then we... you know it's I think faster is better. So while yes they were thinking about that and then it just got... it was at the bottom of the list and then it just dropped off, thank goodness.

Audience Question

Is it something dark this show, or just... because I was startled a little bit by the song?

Sarah Taylor

Yeah. No it's not. It's not necessarily but as as I've watched this clip a few times recently I'm like yeah man. First of all like it's night. It was it was just night and it's dark and then the whole opening takes place at night until like I don't know 10 minutes in or something.

Kirk Hay

It's funny though it does get there's a bit comedy... as soon as you come back from that main title, there's a bit of a comedic beat and then even more of a comedic beat and then an even more so it does start like that. And then yeah it's streaming on Netflix right now.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah I just didn't really want to play so much so that we could just sort of talk a really a little bit about. But yeah you're right. Like it does.

Kirk Hay

That's capturing the audience again too.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah yeah.

Kirk Hay

Getting them interested. See. What's going on here. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

Daria Ellerman

And then when we do lighten up. Like I'm always a fan of any moments that you can... where you can lighten up is is always fun.

Audience Question

I'm also curious when you locked that music, did you find you're shifting some edits or is it perfect?

Daria Ellerman

No I because I felt it was perfect [laughs]. Plus I edited the song roughly and the music editor or maybe Kirk edited the song.

Kirk Hay

Well I had a crack at it.

Daria Ellerman

We all you, know but anyways we had a rough edit of the song when we locked. If anything, yeah I actually did adjust the black at the beginning of the show because when I first laid that song it and we

didn't have the the three shots at the opening I had like 15 seconds of black so I could play my song so I only start now and a few seconds black.

Audience Question

So going back to the how tough it can be doing the first episode of the new series, how many versions of that opening do you think you did?

Daria Ellerman

Good question.

Kirk Hay

That project was about a terabyte....

Daria Ellerman

The iterations of the Bear were like 15 or 20....

Kirk Hay

There was original bear, there was new bear. And then there was a truck crash and then there was in the truck crash we were trying to figure out how to do that. There were sound... there was stuff was just sound design like working on trying to get that wheel from the gravel to the dirt and her and Mel who is the main character there... her stuff.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah it is my experience with every opening of this episode one season one just even though like we were so let's say we did a 20 versions before we were happy. We touched that scene every time we looked at the bloody show in some way. And then when the episode was not long but longer than we wanted it to be, we went in to this like the flashback and into the subsequent scenes in the beginning and we did line lifts. So that came later in the process. Like everything sort of stayed. It's that crazy thing where you think OK everything's good right. OK well let's just look at it one more time and it's like oh....

Kirk Hay

And you can't say no.

Daria Ellerman

You can't say no of course not. I love making changes. Yeah. And certainly like I said the music that's the main thing about an episode one season one thing is that like I said we were all temp score then we were all sound design then we had a song and then we didn't have a song and then we blah...blah...and then we you know and and the music that's in there. I think the composer did a redo. So what so then the composer sent music and then we gave notes on the music that he sent so he redid it before it even went to Netflix. Which is just you know luckily we had a composer who was so into providing us with score. Like wanted Netflix to hear it with his score which you don't always have because the most frustrating thing is to continually replace temp that is never gonna be it's never gonna be what what's going to air. So and then it was great because then we had notes and he adjusted his score and then they probably had notes but I think it was a lot... it was by the time it went to Netflix it was pretty much what it is right there, I think.

Kirk Hay

I like getting tracks back from the composer for first track and you look at it in the end this is version 13, you're like "version 13?" This is the first time we've heard this! So you know they're on their end, doing the same thing. We did that this year to the composer tweaked some score or some source music that we had.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah. We also like to use a lot of source in this show. But then sometimes we like to transition our score to our source. So it's so hard if you don't have something that's in the right key or with the right vibe and so then we would just ask our composer to give us something and it really really helped. Really helps. And you know it's that old thing like "everybody's a filmmaker. Don't worry about it if it's rough." But no... people can not respond to the show if it isn't completely scored and sound effected and V effected and sometimes even color timed. I mean we do some stuff in Avid but I mean sometimes we'd even have to get something a shot sent out if we thought it was too dark we'd have to to get it color corrected and cut it back in just to avoid having your broadcaster and your executives tune out of the show. You want them to see everything and hear everything. I have another clip that I just wanted to contrast with that. It's a little comedy, kids show comedy, and mainly because man, cutting comedy's the best. It's so fun. When we worked on the multi cam sitcom we were laughing every day. Oh and sometimes we were like really really belly laughing. So we worked together and I was the editor for five seasons... Well three Mr. Young and three Some Assembly Required... six seasons of multi camera which was four cameras simultaneously. The idea of multi cam which is the basis of all sitcoms from our childhood, and which was credited with Desi Arnaz developing it for the Lucy show. I'm not sure if that's really how it started. I think people were doing more than one camera but... is that when they shoot the sitcoms in Los Angeles, the idea is is that you set up the cameras so that you don't have to do very many takes. So you're trying to get a pass of four cameras that are all cuttable. And if everything's working you don't even... you do a safety take but you don't really need more than two takes. And they were shot in front of a live audience. What that meant was they did one day of pre shooting of sequences that might be difficult to do in front of an audience because it would require a cut to make the comedy work, or there'd be a gag that would that would have to be cut around in Hollywood they would they would pre shoot for two or three days and then shoot in front of the audience. On these kids shows we would shoot like more than half the show on one day and then the next day we would shoot a half a day for a little bit more and then we would have an audience come in and we would shoot like probably a third of the show in front of the audience so we would pre shoot two thirds and we would shoot a third of the show in front of the audience and it was such a cool experience because I started to get called down to set which is a place that we just don't really get called to. And the thing is our offices were upstairs in this building and they were shooting downstairs and the thing about a sitcom or a multi cam experience is that you don't go outside. Everything's in a studio right and they start calling me down to set and asking me like if the cameras were gonna cut and I'll never forget like the first time I got called down to set and I looked over at this monitor that's a quad split monitor and my eyes just flicked around and I said to the director who had worked with before, "I don't think this is going to work." I think we better if I had that and all of a sudden they're they're signaling OK they're on the radio to the cameraman to change the shot. It was just like "Holy crap I hope this works" you know? But like I don't even know where that came from. And so then there I was going up and down the stairs like on a regular basis which was super fun and then I would attend the live shows and do the same thing, like watch the cameras. And there was just this energy of... there's people in the audience and then there's these kids who are into the fact that there's people in the audience. And we had adults as well... and and everybody's game kind of comes up a bit when there's an audience, and then they're all the writers are down there and they're checking off whether or not the jokes work and they're huddling and rewriting the jokes and I'm just watching them shoot. And in my mind I know what... I know what I have to do on

Monday when I have to come in and have the show ready. But like Kirk was saying... it was definitely grueling, and one of the hardest jobs I ever did but it was so fun because with the help of my assistants of which I had Warren, Dione, Kirk, Jon who would help me with the assembling because we would have to assemble all of the footage that was shot on the Thursday. We would have that material like within... I would have it within half an hour of it being... each scene being shot.

Kirk Hay

This show was also technically new to Vancouver. I don't think anyone had ever done it where they recorded directly into the Avids. And when they yelled cut and the DIT downstairs pressed stop that MXF file was available. So as soon as they yelled cut it would be available but of course you waited till the scene was done and then you can organize it bring it upstairs. So there was a whole workflow issue that Daria was working through on the fly while she was learning multicam, while she had to cut Thursday's footage, Friday morning's footage, so, she'd cut til noon and then that was it. But you'd get footage til noon. And then the audience loaded in at 3:00 and they started at 4:00. So you had two thirds of a show to put together. Lots of slapstick comedy which meant resets to cut, remove, put stunt in, put the gag in, green screen... we had a VFX team that would do viz effects on the fly as well. Daria would pass it off to me I'd get it ready I'd send it down the hall they'd give it back, sound effected and all that stuff. So Daria is doing all that stuff. And then at the end of that, running downstairs and staying there till 10:00, 9:00 at night.

Daria Ellerman

It was fun. It was fun. So what we would do is we would play for the audience the scenes that we had assembled and then we would stop and they would perform a scene and that would be recorded for me to cut on Monday. Then we would play a bit more of the episode so the idea was that the audience saw the whole episode with these little breaks where a scene was performed live in front of them. It was something else but it was great because I had to rely on my assistants to help me assemble. And then there was too many episodes for me to do because they start they would also do episodes without an audience some weeks. And so those then became the assistants' episodes and then people got moved up to Editor and then we are hiring more assistants. So it was a really great experience for all of us and for me because it was just so different. You know like I was kind of like at a point in my career where I'd been just doing a lot a lot of episodic and it was like it would be nice to do something different and love to laugh. You know that was that was the main thing. So that was a really unique experience that I don't know will ever happen again except the rumor at the Netflix mixer... is that Netflix is getting in the multi cam game. So who knows maybe they will do something here.

Kirk Hay

You get to learn to map your keyboard. Camera one two three.

Daria Ellerman

Exactly. Yep yep. And I mean it's the form itself is the writers who write on it love it. The producers who produce it love it. It's a thing like sure you know it's kids and fart jokes and I mean I've got an eight year old boy inside me somewhere because I find all that stuff hilarious. And so the love of the forum also kind of infects you like you're just like... you know it's hugely collaborative that way. You know everybody is interested in everybody's else's opinion on how to make it better. So I hope it comes and I hope that you get the opportunity to work on something like that. We're not going to show you anything from that because I... I didn't even think about that but I did think it would be nice to contrast Virgin River with some comedy because we don't get to do as much comedy here as I think any of us would like. Right. And I've done some single cam comedy as well and this clip I'll show you in a bit is a

single cam kids show right? And we do that here. And the main difference between the single cam comedy and the multi cam form is there's no laugh track. So yes we did have a laugh track and we edited the laugh track. You guys edited the laugh track. And that was one thing where a lot of people who were quite cynical about it were like "Oh yeah. But it's got a laugh track" but we didn't have a lot of music, like the laughter was kind of our music. We had like stings a little stings in and out of scenes but it's quite different that way. But I think that in terms of any comedy whether you have a laugh track or not you have to hold for laughs. You have to... in your head when you're editing, I mean you have to be fast pace in your setups but you've got to let the the punchline land and you've got to give it a beat. And so when you're editing with a laugh track it's very easy to do because you're putting a laugh under it. So people can't jump it like I find sometimes in single camera comedy, sometimes the other actors don't let the... like there's a way to gracefully let a laugh land as a performer, as well so that it doesn't feel like it's staging.

Kirk Hay

Remember they would laugh on stage... that the video village crew would laugh. So the actors knew OK.

Daria Ellerman

Oh yeah. That's the thing about multi cameras that anybody who is on the stage floor watching whether it's a rehearsal or actual live shooting. You have to laugh. And so you develop your multi cam laugh where... because if you don't laugh, no but the actors are like "whoa oh what's wrong with it." And sometimes you're laughing at the same joke over and over and you do have to keep laughing.

Kirk Hay

Those poor live audiences would be like take 7 they'd be like what's happening here?

Daria Ellerman

Oh yeah yeah yeah and we'd be down at the village going hahaha! You have to right? A little bit about comedy it's all about timing: acting plus pacing. A lot of people say comedy lives in the wide shot, not necessarily. In sitcom, yeah. You know we did, we did have a lot of gags that were wide because they were visually were that. Single cam, not always but there's just something about the looser angles in comedy with the body language and especially if you're including lots of people in the gag you know it's not... you tend not to use so many close ups. You tend to have fewer reactions and that's not a hard and fast rule but the thing about comedy is it's important to get the setup out so that the punchline lands and if you're cutting away during a setup, there's a possibility that people aren't going to hear the setup. And of course sometimes part of the setup will include people's reactions, if something is gross you might do it. But you would pace it in such a way that you're very clear with your setup because if you're not clear with you setup, you don't have a punch line. So that's why there tends to be definitely fewer reactions. And we used to... the way that they described it in multi cam is that we give the laugh to the person who has the punch line. So the person who has the punch line, we stayed on them and gave them the laugh. In single camera comedy, we might cut away to other characters as a way of creating that space for the people at home who are hopefully laughing. Not if they were watching police academy the one hour series which I worked on... and the other thing that is super cool and I wish we had this scene, Kirk, I wish we had this episode... is genre. So a lot of comedy and particularly kids comedy I've worked on adult comedy too but particularly kids comedy, they like to like turn genre on its side. So we had this amazing episode of Some Assembly Required that was Whiplash. It was fantastic. From the music to like the kind of music that we used and the way that we quick cut it. And it was just, it was hilarious, and it was hilarious because it was recognizably supposed to be the movie Whiplash. You know they quote some of the lines that you know they shot some low angles. They really went to town

on it and it's really... I find that happens a lot in kids comedy and it's interesting because they kind of take a serious adult genre and they kid-ify it and that kind of makes it funny. So this little clip which is the second clip, we'll look at that and then just chat little bit about it.

[Clip Plays]

[Clip Audio]

Daria Ellerman

That's a cute episode because the girls end up busting the boys club. So they were like trying to work with the gangster genre. You know the panning camera and the quick cuts and the framing of the of the girls with it with him on the seat like he's kind of trapped, and you know it's paced up for the whole kind of interrogation... sort of the girls are the hard boiled detectives, the boy's kind of like the dumb blonde so they're kind of inverting that. The ladle is like you know and you have to know the series, the ladle is threatening the the boy's hairdo. And it's like when we watched it we just recently watched Uncut Gems and it was like the ladles the equivalent of Adam Sandler like being hung out the window like you know they're trying to... and it's... that's I thought that was an example of how genre really influences comedy when you sort of turn it a little bit sideways. Yeah. And that's really all I have to say about that. I just wanted to kind of have a nice little contrast to the other clip. I'll just say something before we go into Q and A. So it was very kind of Erin to say earlier that she was grateful that I was mentoring her, Kirk and John, both on the sitcom were able to edit and were amazingly helpful to me, and I look around the room at people that have been, you know, working with me or in the same team as me and I just think it's really important that we mentor everybody that we work with. You're not gonna get ahead by keeping things to yourself and not sharing what you know and not sharing information and not collaborating and not being honest with your, you know, colleagues if they want you to look at something and lifting everybody up and supporting everybody, wanting everybody to succeed, being happy for your colleagues who have success even if they beat you out of a job you wanted. Way to go. That's that's my... I just I really realized that I had had some really amazing mentors in my life and I think early on I thought, it's you know it's really important to do that and to, and I can remember coming up as an assistant and talking about the jobs that were out there and do you know about this you know about that. And some people were like [mmm]. And I'd be like "oh OK" like you know if you were gonna beat me out for a job you're gonna beat me out for a job just because... You know me, keeping that information from you doesn't mean that you're not going to find it out somewhere else. I just really I just feel like it's really important to pay it forward and to, and to you know mentor within our communities and to support each other. And thank you all for coming to support me in this event.

Kirk Hay

Yeah, I'll add do that. I mean in that crazy schedule of the multi cam world, you still found time to come and watch my cuts, give me notes. Be honest about it which is probably one of the most important things. Without just saying "oh that was terrible. Anyway good luck." So that's good. But also you know you mentor. I don't know if you know even, but just through work ethic in the way you deal with one of the best things I try to learn from you is navigating the tricky waters of not editing, but politics that happened inside an edit suite. Daria is a master, she'll be like "This is how you cut this," and someone will walk in and be like "I don't care about that." Just the way she talks to people and she interacts with directors and producers, because I mean editing, putting together stuff getting the timing right is one thing and the whole second part it's a totally different part of it is... is time management, finishing the cut. Listening to a song 78 times and still going "yeah. OK" so so you know just being around and listening to that and learning that due diligence is such a huge part of editorial. Watching you cut that first scene of that first season every single way you could cut it. Daria did it. Every aspect... even if you

said well what about this. Nope doesn't work. So when somebody came in and you always had an answer for them. So that was... I always thought that that was very important and instilled in me that oh that's what you got to do. Yeah sit down you got to make sure that all your angles are covered and you have to be able to tell, especially on Virgin River where the show runner is the writer and the creator. You better know exactly what it is and why you did it that way.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah well I think because I had a unique situation in my life where my husband and I decided that he would stay home with our child, meant that I had to work and because I had to work meant that I really needed to never burn a bridge. And that really fueled my work ethic and it... and I kind of never turned down anything. I basically finished a job and then said "Yes please" to the next one. And so I feel like I was thrust into this situation where I really had to work but what it did do was that the stakes were high for me. So I had to conduct myself in a way that I could not be a prima donna. I could not say "oh no we don't have that shot." when we did, even though I didn't want to use it you know I could not risk the possibility that I would get a reputation as somebody that would be difficult to work with and I think that did motivate my work ethic and it just became part of how I, how I attack everything that I do. And also I really do love the job. Like I love doing it and I think if you don't love editing you should not be in a little edit suite for all those hours a day.

Kirk Hay

Producers Cut 27.

Daria Ellerman

Yeah you know.

Kirk Hay

Yeah if you can find yourself a Daria stick to them, because those things pop up that they don't teach you that you know you can't go on YouTube and be like only see... white flashbacks....

Daria Ellerman

Oh well you know what I feel bad about how technology affected the assistants' time so that... people don't really have a lot of time to come and sit in your room. When I started out like you know there was time in my day and I would ask my editors if I could sit in the back and I would just physically watch them handle dailies because that's kind of the first thing that you need to... that's the advice that I gave you was like Do not stop. Like if you are hung up just keep going because otherwise it'll be five o'clock and you've got four more scenes to do and you've still been like wanking over one cut and I learned that from watching other editors kind of just how they managed dailies because you really have to get those dailies done every day in scripted right and, I mean you know unscripted has a different workflow but you really have to get it done. You can't save anything for the next day because there's a whole lot more coming in. And then you also need to see if there's problems. So you do need to deal with it. But yeah. Soldier through!

Audience Question

It seems like I mean you've been working for a very long time. You've got quite a breadth of kind of different genres different styles of shows. Did you ever find yourself at a point being, not necessarily typecast, but having difficulty finding or getting work in different genres you wanted to move to?

Daria Ellerman

I got hired on Samurai Girl the pilot and I was in the parking lot at Lionsgate like an hour before my interview and I watched four boy editors go in and out and then I went in and then I got the job and I couldn't believe it because it was an action-heavy thing and I don't really know how that happened. And I actually asked the producer later who was actually the amazing Frank Spotnitz and I'm like "Why did you guys choose me like I saw these guys" and they're like "You know what you just seem nice." And that was just like "what?" Like that you know if you work so hard to like think... I was worried about that at that point and then I got that show and I thought "oh I get it like really it has a lot to do with how you vibe with the with the show runners, with the people that you're gonna be working with right." I do think that maybe Post Supers do a little typecasting because I do a lot of drama. I've done a lot of drama. I love drama. I look at my PVR and I'm like you know I look at what I watch and I realize like you know I can do that, and I can do that very well. And I think I used to do a lot of sci fi because that's all we had. And now I don't really hear from the sci fi Post Supers and Post Producers and I don't know if that's typecasting because there's also a lot of people have their people you know we've been rolling with Sally on and off for like a while and you do... what happens is that you roll with the same Post Producer or Super and then you get into a schedule where you're not available when other things start up. So the other thing I did was I did get an agent finally. And the reason I did that is because I thought that she might be able to open up some possibilities for me with with post producers or supers that I hadn't worked with more recently or may be but I still find for anybody who's thinking about getting an agent, 90 percent of the work I get the phone call first. And I phone her right. That's just that's just how it goes. Especially once you've accumulated something of a career you know it's like "oh hi." Eight years later like it's like "Oh great. You do remember me" you know. Yes. So you get you do get the repeat business but those show runners tend to do the same kinds of shows. So when I did do that that year I also happened to, the following year decide to do Meditation Park because I really really wanted to do a feature. It was an insulting amount of money. Like it just is a Telefilm micro budget and not all of us can afford to work for you know a very low weekly for several months. But I felt like I was in a position OK I can do this now. So I think in a way I'm able to make that versatility happen a bit more for me because I'm on one side of me I'm saying no to work that doesn't meet what I think is a decent rate because I feel like there's too much of that going on. For the right project, I would be a little bit more flexible about my rate and that that's why I did that movie and it was great. It was great to do a movie. It was great to see it on the big screen at VIFF, you know like that was super cool for sure but it was hard work and not very well paid.

Audience Question

Can you give us a rundown of when you open up a bin for the first time. Do you start a scene from the top of the scene or do you kind of find your way through...

Daria Ellerman

Sure I glance at the script to refresh myself. Like what's the scene about. Sometimes when I'm being very diligent I'll flip to my facing pages and see if the director has any favorite takes. And then if they do sometimes I'll put a little star beside the group. So what I do is I have a bin, I just want the groups. And even before multi cam I worked that way, but since multi cam it's like I don't want... if I don't have to look at single takes, I'm very comfortable watching two, three, four, six cameras at the same time. And also I'm very conscious of my keystrokes so I'm you know I don't really want to use the mouse, the track ball any more than I have to. So I kind of then maybe star the takes it the director wants but I don't want to be too influenced by that because I'm amazed at how many times a director will say "make sure you tell the editor. I love this take." Then they come in they're like oh I should use that take. So it's like you know I've just sort of over the years realized like I should do what I want. So what I'll do is then I'll look at the tiles based on the lined script. So even though my bin is going to be in alphanumeric order. If I

look and I see that there's an L slate that's just lined for a little bit that clearly is an opening shot or whatever. I'm gonna look at that first I'm going to see what it is. I'm going to maybe pick a piece and then I'm going to just work my way across the lined script and I go beat by beat. So I go methodically beat by beat through every tile that pertains to that. And then as I get into the dialogue I will start looking at each group and I'll always be auditioning for the first line but I'll usually listen, I might listen three lines in and take what I like. And then I'll go to the other side do the same thing, take what I like and then start covering up you know what other... maybe if I've left two lines from another take but I find something else I like. I just start roughly building in sections then I go back and I start crafting the opening because by the time I've... you know typically a script is going to like, have a description and then it's going to have some dialogue. So I'll go like a third of the page or so and I'll sort of craft a bit of an opening and I'll start working on the dialogue and at the same time I'm looking at reactions. I'm maybe not putting reactions in yet, I'll build all the dialogue and all the action and I will go to the end of the scene in these sections. So when I go back to revise the section I'm not really fine cutting at that point I'm just saying yeah I like that performance I like that and I'm noting to myself a reaction that I maybe want to layer in. Sometimes I will layer reactions in, and I use... when I'm building I use a video track above the dialogue and I layer in some reactions but I keep the little viewing monitor on V1 but I might layer reactions on V2 to remind myself like I kind of like this reaction, it might work here and I then just continue to build the scene in these chunks all the way to the end. And depending on where I am and in the episode or the movie... and I always work within the cuts... I don't build scenes in isolation and put them in a bin and then string them together later. I always work within one cut and if there's something if I have the A side of the scene I lay it right in and I look at my A-B side and I might go "oh man that's a cool opening shot but I ended that with the...hmm... what am I going to do there might have to go back... Look at how I'm ending the other scene, work on the opening" and then I'll get into the dialogue, and I do a pass where I just splice and listen and fine cut go to the next, listen and fine cut, next cut listen and fine cut. Sometimes I might overlap in there if I've got my reactions then I'll go back again and I'll look at what I've built, and I'll think about reactions I'll look to see if I've laid any reactions on video 2 and then I'll think about whether I'm going to use them or not. And then I go back and I back up into the preceding scene if I have it, and I play through and if I'm happy I move on. And then the next day I will revise that scene. And typically you know there's some scenes where... you just know like "I don't like this at all but I'm moving on" because I have like five other scenes to cut and I might do like quite a big recut the next day or I might not. I might just do... I usually end up tightening a bit more and I might look at it third time and that's it. So how I revise is that as I'm building the bigger piece I skip over the chunks that I've looked at two or three times, because I don't want to saturate myself. It's not till the last day of shooting is in that I really will watch the whole episode down unless we're... sometimes when you're block shooting you might end up having one episode ready earlier than another and if I'm only missing a scene or two I might start revising that episode after I'm finished cutting my dailies for the day, I might start revising that as an episode but... so my process is I cut all the scenes that are new that day. Then I go back and look at what I did yesterday and then I might start adding music at that point to the stuff that I cut the day before and the other thing that I do is I drop locators as a build, for all the sound that I want my assistant to do. And sometimes I'll even drop a locator for music especially if it's something genre that is sort of maybe out of character for our episode so that it won't be... in the case of Virgin River we have a library of composer cues but, on a new show you might have a temp track that you're using for the feel of the show but then all of a sudden we have a suspense scene, it's out of character and I might ask my assistant "see what you can do with this. Give me some underscore here" or whatever and any VFX that needs to be done I'll drop a locator there for my assistant and I feel like it's really important for my assistants to work through my cut because I feel like it's a good way to edit without having to edit and also, you know the assistants begin to absorb like how important sound is and sometimes I see how they are trying to like squeeze a excellent sound into where I haven't left

enough room. Then I'm like oh and then I just like kind of open up my cut to make room for that beautiful explosion shot or whatever because I don't want them to adjust my cut but I I can sort of see how it's been cut off or it's got like some a little fade out on it. I'm like oh "I didn't leave enough room there for that! That nice reverb out!"

Audience Question

Do you still use ScriptSync?

Daria Ellerman

No but I would at the drop of a hat. If they do multi cam here they have to do that.

Kirk Hay

Once you get the taste of that ScriptSync. Thank you Daria very much.

Sarah Taylor

Thanks for joining us today, and a big thank you to Daria and Kirk. Special thanks goes to Trevor Mirosh, Greg Ng, Jane MacRae, and Finale. The main title sound design was created by Jane Tattersall. Additional ADR recording by Andrea Rusch. Original music provided by Chad Blain. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bao. The CCE has been supporting Indspire - an organization that provides funding and scholarships to Indigenous post secondary students. We have a permanent portal on our website at cceditors.ca or you can donate directly at indspire.ca. The CCE is taking steps to build a more equitable ecosystem within our industry and we encourage our members to participate in a way they can.

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Outtro

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