

The Editor's Cut - Episode 047 - Interview with Nena Erb, ACE

Nena Erb:

I have a really weird method of cutting.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, tell us, tell us!

Sarah Taylor:

Hello, and welcome to The Editor's Cut. I'm your host, Sarah Taylor. We would like to point out the lands on which we have created this podcast, and that many of you may be listening to us from, are part of ancestral territory. It is important for all of us to deeply acknowledge that we are on ancestral territory that has long served as a place where indigenous peoples have lived, met, and interacted. We honor, respect, and recognize these nations that have never relinquished their rights or sovereign authority over the lands and waters on which we stand today. We encourage you to reflect on the history of the land, the rich culture, the many contributions, and the concerns that impact indigenous individuals and communities. Land acknowledgements are the start to a deeper action.

Sarah Taylor:

Today's episode is the online master series that took place on August 25th, 2020 in conversation with Nena Erb ACE. We discussed her television career, which started as a PA in the art department of Mad TV and has progressed to being an Emmy-winning editor on HBO's documentary series, Project Greenlight and Insecure. She's also worked on Crazy Ex-girlfriend and the Apple series, Little America. We'll talk about her work on Insecure, which landed her an Emmy win in 2020 and most recently, and Eddie award nomination. This event was moderated by me.

This podcast contains language and content that some may find disturbing or offensive. Listener discretion is advised.

[show open]

Sarah Taylor:

Welcome Nena Erb ACE. We've got to add the ACE. It's very exciting.

Nena Erb:

I don't know, CCE sounds kind of interesting too.

Sarah Taylor:

Well you'd have to move to Canada, but that's okay. You can have both. Thanks so much for joining us today. We do have lots to cover. We have some clips to show, lots of questions to ask. But first I'm going to give a little bit of a bio on Nena. She is an Emmy winning editor based in Los Angeles. She has edited projects for HBO, Apple, Universal, Killer Films, and many others. In 2016, she received an Emmy award for her work on HBO documentary series, Project Greenlight. In addition, she has received two ACE Eddie

nominations for her work on season three of HBO's comedy drama series *Insecure*, which is what we're going to talk about today. Well, season four.

And the other would be for CW's acclaimed, a series *Crazy Ex-girlfriend*. Nena's received her second Emmy nomination in 2020 for her work on season four of *Insecure*, which I was really excited that I had got to know Nena through back and forth about doing this event. Then I saw that she was nominated for an Emmy and I got really excited, and I was like, I emailed her in the middle of the night, "Congratulations." So congratulations to you.

Nena Erb:

Thank you so much, and thank you for having me.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes. I'm so glad that you could join us today. So to get things going, tell us where you're from and how you ended up in this world of film, television, and specifically editing?

Nena Erb:

Well, I'm originally from Taiwan, Taipei, Taiwan but we pretty much grew up in South L.A. and I've been there ever since. I didn't go to film school. I went to art school and ended up being a PA in the art department on *Mad TV* and did that for a while and bounced around production. Nothing felt the right fit, so I just kept trying different things. It wasn't until I was working as an associate producer that I really understood what editing was about, because the editor I was working with he completely opened my eyes and then showed me how you can shape characters and change the tone, and how much control you have over the story.

Of course after that, I was like, I was hooked. There was no turning back. So I learned the software and he was kind enough to hire me as his assistant, and here I am many, many years later.

Sarah Taylor:

What was one of the first jobs you had that made you be like, "I am an editor now. This is it. I'm a real editor."?

Nena Erb:

Gosh, it's so hard to say because honestly there are days when I'm not sure that I'm an editor on a show for the first time, whether it's a pilot or if I'm in a first season show or even my first season on *Insecure*, which is last season, I wanted to make sure that I did a really good job. When you're new, you want to make sure you fit in. You want to make sure you're getting the tone right, the pacing right, the look right. All of it has to be ... You have to blend in seamlessly with the team and your work has to be seamless.

And so yeah, whatever I'm in those environments, I don't feel I've made it until the first screening, and until I know that the producers are happy. Then it's like, okay, I'm okay. I'm good. I can keep editing.

Sarah Taylor:

I feel that's a really common thing that happens is like, because every project has a whole ... Because everything's different. You have different people to work with, different stories to tell, and then once you get the ball rolling, you're like, "Wait a minute, I got this. It's okay. I know what I'm doing. This is great." First I want to ask, because you started doing more work in unscripted, is that right? And then moved to scripted. How did that process work from being an assistant or an editor in the unscripted world and

then making that jump to be in scripted? Because I feel a lot of people will want to make those transitions, and so how did yours work?

Nena Erb:

Well it took a long time, easily a span of like 10 years. What happened was I had started in non-fiction and there's a show called Curb Your Enthusiasm that came around, they were looking for an assistant. I thought this is the perfect chance for me to get into scripted television. I interviewed. Didn't get the job.

Sarah Taylor:

Darn it.

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

I was like, "I didn't see that one. That was exciting." Anyway ...

Nena Erb:

Didn't get that job at all. But the interesting thing is I befriended the editor. His name is Steve Rasch ACE, and I became friends with the associate producer whose name was Megan Murphy. And we just kept in touch, and at one point in the season they needed some extra help for a short, very short term. I went in there and helped him out, and that kind of took my friendship with them to a different direction. Steve became my mentor, Megan became a really good friend and a champion. After that I think Curb wrapped, she took a job on a reality show, and I happened to be on that show.

I didn't know that she was ... I knew that she worked there, but I didn't know she was keeping an eye on my work.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh wow.

Nena Erb:

She was just secretly watching my cuts and evaluating me, I guess. After that she had a show that also included improv comedy, and she knew that I could handle copious amounts of dailies with different lines and the camera everywhere else, so she brought me on and that was my very first scripted credit.

Sarah Taylor:

What was that show?

Nena Erb:

Lovespring International.

Sarah Taylor:

Then have you worked with her since then? Have you kept that relationship going through the years?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, definitely. She's hired me to do music editing for one of Jeff Berlin's movies. Then later on she hired me to do some editing for one of his movies as well.

Sarah Taylor:

That's awesome.

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

I think that's something to be said about our industry too, is that you make those connections with people and you become their friends or you just you're friendly with people and they want to work with you because they like you right? And they want to keep bringing you back because they want to spend time with you and you do good at your work and all that stuff so, something to be said about making sure we keep our relationships good with people in the world in the industry.

Nena Erb:

Yeah, definitely.

Sarah Taylor:

So, I'm curious as every editor I think has slightly different processes on how they handle dailies, and when they get to look at scripts, or how they look at the notes and all that kind of stuff. Do you get to have a look at the scripts before you start? Do you have any input in scripts, or the scripts before you get to start post? It's probably different in TV because it's a pretty fast turn around and the writer's room is happening now for Insecure, but you're not part of that. So yeah. What is your process with that? Do you get to be part of the table read, like that kind of thing? Then what happens once you get in the edit suite and you start cutting?

Nena Erb:

Typically I'm usually getting the scripts a day or two before the table read. Unless it's something really, really glaring, we don't really chime in about the scripts. There's a whole team of people that get paid to do that, so I'm just happy to read it and show up with a table read, show up at their tone meetings, and then once the dailies come in, what I'll do is I'll watch everything including just the nothingness in between resets, because I've found reaction shots that have bailed me out many times in those moments. I watch it from the first frame to the last frame. As I'm watching it, I'm cutting it in my head too. And of course, if I love a performance, I'll just make a note of that or I'll put a locator on it. After that I start cutting. I have a really weird method of cutting.

Sarah Taylor:

Ooh tell us, tell us.

Nena Erb:

I like to do multiple versions of every scene. Because sometimes there might be two or three performances of a certain line that I like, so I'll have different versions with different performances,

different ways to get into the scene, out of a scene. My first pass is not perfect. I'm just trying to put it all together, put the bones together and then I'll move on. The next morning while my assistant's prepping dailies, I'll come in and I'll watch all those different various scenes. And it always happens that there's one version that's going to jump out, or maybe parts of one version end up another. Once I pick those versions, then I clean it up and polish it and make sure it's perfect.

Usually by then dailies are ready for the next day and it all starts over again.

Sarah Taylor:

That's a really great way of doing it, because then you have those fresh eyes on it in the morning time where you're like, in the heavy of it during the afternoon or whatever the day before, and then you get those fresh eyes and yeah things do pop out right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Have you ever found that with doing that process where you have all these different variations of the same scene that you have been able to audition them for the director if they're like, "Oh, something doesn't feel right." Do you bring those other versions up and say, "Oh, I tried it this way." or is it just go away because you've already picked your favorite?

Nena Erb:

Sometimes. Very rarely, but sometimes I'll have two versions that are just like, I can't pick. Either one works. If that's the case, I'll pick one that might reflect the script more, and just so ... because I know that writers want to see their words on it, so it's kind of important to present that. And then as you know when you're cutting, there's always things where like, "Hmm, that's got a bull's eye on it. I know that people are going to bump on that," or those parts kind of like, "It'd be better if those lines are switched." I have a log of all the scenes, and there'll be a version of that. And if they're in the room and they're like, "I'm not so sure about this area right here." I will say, "You know what? Let me show you this other version I was working on. And that's when I show it to them. Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

What's your typical schedule for, like I say for Insecure?

Nena Erb:

Well, I usually start cutting the next day so I can stay up to camera and make sure that nothing is missing or that there's no issues with the dailies. Then after the last two dailies, we have three days to finish our editors cut, typically like two days for editing, the last day's reserved for music, because music is a huge thing and it takes a long time. After all the songs.

Sarah Taylor:

How is your relationship with your assistant? What stuff do you rely on them for in your process?

Nena Erb:

Oh my gosh. My assistant is amazing. She's my teammate. I bounce things off of her often and especially with music because sometimes you're like, I love all three of these songs, but I know I can't put three right there, so I'll play them for her and she'll usually help me narrow it down. And sometimes I'll realize once we're narrowing it down, like, "Oh wait, this song would actually work great in another scene or another episode." I trust her opinion and I'm always ... We have an open door policy. She cuts whatever she is drawn to. We work on it and yeah and once she cuts something, I'm very open to putting it in the episode and screening it with the producers and directors.

Sometimes I've been able to convince directors to let her jump in and get a little practice in to do notes. Because it's easy for me and her to work because it's very ... we have a relationship, a friendship. I think when you're on the hot seat with a director who's breathing down your neck, it's a whole different experience. It's something that I think it's important for them to go through, and so I've done that to her a few times and she's done amazing all those times. So yeah, I definitely treat my assistant like a number of the team.

Sarah Taylor:

Have you used the same assistant for a long time, or is it depending on the show that you're on?

Nena Erb:

I've been working with Lynarion for about three years going on four, I think. Prior to that I had an assistant for, I think one season, it was ... I walked into a pre established show that had an assistant that they wanted me to use. Then prior to that, I had an assistant for about five years. I try to work with the same people.

Sarah Taylor:

Now when also comes to your process and stuff. Is there anything that you need to have in your edit suite or that is a must have shortcut or something that you do all the time that if you didn't have, you'd be like, "I need that thing,"?

Nena Erb:

I mean there are so many things.

Sarah Taylor:

Well, tell us the things. I have many too.

Nena Erb:

I like to have my tea there. I like to stand, I like to have my bench a certain way so that people aren't behind me. I have it setup, so I'm able to talk to them face to face. It sounds really strange, but it works great. I highly recommend it.

Sarah Taylor:

Do you have a monitor behind you for them to screen ...? How does that set up work? That sounds really good. I'm curious.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. Pretend your desk right now is your [inaudible] right? And I'm the producer. I'm actually sitting this way, but I can talk to you and then he'd be right there. For them it's like a living room area you know?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, yeah.

Nena Erb:

For me, I can ... Once I do something, I can poke my head out and talk to them about stuff. I just think that it's better when they can see your face. But I just think that it's ... when you can see someone's face when you're working on notes and stuff, I feel you can establish a rapport quicker. Trust is built quicker too so ...

Sarah Taylor:

And then can you watch them when they're watching easier that way? Like you could see their reactions and be like, "Oh yeah, I was right. That's not working."?

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I try to watch them, but I don't want to be like ... You know? Because then they'll feel very self-conscious. But I always like sneaking a little peak, and especially in areas where I'm not 100% sure that it's working, so...

Sarah Taylor:

That's a good technique, and you're usually always cutting in AVID. Is that your main software?

Nena Erb:

Yes definitely. Yep. I wanted to teach myself Premiere during COVID, but I kinda never got around to it.

Sarah Taylor:

There's a lot of things that we have to sort through during COVID so I can understand that. Is there a project that's been maybe stood out to you either because it was super challenging and then you had to overcome something to make it be whatever it ended up being, or it was like, "Hey, this works really good. It's smooth sailing."? I don't know if that ever happens, but has there been one thing that's really stood out to you?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, yeah. It was last year, I worked on a series called Little America. It's a series that I don't think would have gotten made even five years ago. It's a series about the immigrant experience. Each episode is completely different one could be comedy, another one could be drama, and so as an editor, it's really nice to have all those different genres to stretch your creative muscle. For that, I mean that I loved just the ability to be able to jump between the two genres, and also I'm an immigrant and I never thought that I would be working on a show that's about the immigrant experience, something that I've actually gone through and I can relate to.

I love that the show runners, they didn't want to paint them as stereotypes that you normally see, you know? So that was great. It was great to be able to humanize them and show them as normal people. It was... I think there's a lot of criticism about the show because we didn't involve politics, but I

think that it was important for them not to do that, because it's not about an agenda for us. It's just about showing immigrants as normal human beings. Someone that might be related to you.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. I really enjoyed the series. I think if you did include the political side of it, then people who might not have watched it and then might have realized, wait a minute, that person is like me, or made it relatable. I, of course, watched year two shows episodes, which I loved. Do you want to talk a little bit about, was it called The Silence? That was the episode title, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

For people who haven't seen it, it's an episode where basically the whole thing takes place at a silent meditation retreat, so really there's no dialogue. But Nena did a brilliant job, and it was funny, and there was ... It was so good. I was laughing then I was crying. It was great. Anybody who hasn't seen it yet, please go watch Little America, The Silent. And then the other one was called The Sun?

Nena Erb:

The Sun yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Which was heartbreaking, but also very good. How did that work for you, to cut almost ... They were 30 minute episodes, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

With really no dialogue. Did you add sound effects? Were you shaping the soundscape and all that stuff? Because man, it was good. There was lots of good moments.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. That's probably the hardest thing I've ever edited so far. I'm sure there's going to be harder things coming up. But up until now, that's probably the hardest one, because there is no dialogue. Certain times the performance can be really subjective when there isn't dialogue surrounding it, propping it up. The first cut came in a little along, it had a lot of different storylines, and watching it felt like you're just watching a documentary. Not really sure who the main characters are, or who you're supposed to be following, because you're following multiple people. We slowly chipped away at it, chipped away at it. Because in the beginning there was a scene with dialogue that set up everything.

Then in the middle there was a little more dialogue, and then there's all the dialogue in the back. Through experimentation we got rid of all the dialogue in post, and we had to get rid of many, many different characters stories so that Sylviane's can rise and you end up realizing, "Oh, I'm supposed to be following her. This is her journey as a seeker. She's here, she's looking for love, she's looking to belong. That story finally bubbled up to the top after 50 some odd versions.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Nena Erb:

Yeah, it was ... We did a lot of different versions. I think I did like 10 one night. It was ridiculous.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow. Well you wouldn't tell by watching it. It looks great. I liked that there was no setup. Right? I feel like you guys ... Yeah, you did a great job of ... Everybody kind of has ... Maybe not everybody, but there's a vision of what a silent meditation looks and there's like ... You're like, "Oh, okay. They're not talking. Okay. Yup. That's how it goes. Yep. This makes sense."

Nena Erb:

Yeah. Lynarion, my assistant, she did a phenomenal job with the sound design. She really did. It was so good that when we got to the stage, I think we had to go back to what she had a lot of times.

Sarah Taylor:

Nice.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. That was an interesting mixed day.

Sarah Taylor:

You're like, "Actually it was better before, sorry."

Nena Erb:

Yeah. They were great with it though. Cool, very, very understanding of it. They were able to still add their own little touches, but yeah, she knocked that out of the park. The sound design was so great.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. It was really good. Did you want to talk about The Sun and how that came together, that episode?

Nena Erb:

That one came together more traditionally I think. But of course, anything compared to The Silence and all those versions that we did seem easier. I wouldn't say it was easy, but ... But yeah, that one was ... It was interesting for me because I didn't want to demonize Syrians. It's about a Syrian man who seeks asylum because his father discovered he was gay and is trying to kill him. It's a heartbreaking story. At the same time it was very important to the director and to myself and producers to make sure that we didn't shamed him into that, "Oh, you should be more accepting," kind of a role. We tried to explain why these mercy killings or whatever they're called are done in that culture. That was, I think, probably the most eyeopening experience for me to be able to really scrutinize all the different performances to make sure like, "Okay, this is emotional, but not too sappies." Because you don't want to like ... anything too syrupy.

When the guy's explaining why the father is hunting him. And also we couldn't be too angry either. Then now you're demonizing the father and the whole culture, religious reasoning behind it. For the tone it was really tough to find the right balance, but I think we did okay.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. I think that's such an important thing to talk about and that you have those discussions because it's so easy and in a lot of media, it's so easy for that to be ... Well, you're just, you're the bad guy period. But he's a whole human and there's reasons why he believes a certain thing, and there's culture, and there's religion, and there's ... We all have good and evil. It's good to have stories that where you see, well that's really crappy, but also I can see where he's coming from right?

Nena Erb:

Right.

Sarah Taylor:

I think we definitely, as editors can help shape those things. And yeah, you're right. The fact that you took that time to really look at all the reactions or all of the takes and say to you know ... To be thinking about that while you're cutting, because that could be lost on ... Other people might not, or if that's not brought up in whatever you might miss it and then we're telling a completely different story.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. Definitely.

Sarah Taylor:

It's a reminder to all the editors out there that we do have a lot of control in the edit suite. We can really shape things to be impactful, I think right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I think you did a fantastic job on that one.

Nena Erb:

Oh thank you.

Sarah Taylor:

So yes, everybody, please go watch Little America. It was a really great series. Highly recommend it. Apple TV. Well, speaking of things to watch, so Insecure. This was season four. Yes. We're watching clips from season four. I'm a huge fan of Insecure, and when I was looking to see who we could bring on for the master series, I discovered that Nena had cut Insecure and I got very excited. I was like, "We must interview Nena." Then I saw all of her other credits and I was like, yes, she's got lots of good stuff. This is great. I'm a fan of, and familiar of your work and a fan of your work. We have a few clips to watch. Do you want to maybe set up the series and we're going to watch self-care Sunday as the first clip, just so in case people haven't seen it or...?

Nena Erb:

Yeah. This is episode six. It's basically the first few scenes of the episode. It comes after the block party episode where Issa and Molly, her best friend, they have the big blow out. Of course neither wants to apologize to the other, because they all feel like they're right. Even though the block party was a huge success in this episode, Issa's feeling a little empty, and she's missing her friend. And so throughout the entire episode, she's constantly checking to see if Molly's called and Molly hasn't. This is her kind of ... We're not going to show this part, but the episode's all about her trying to prove that she's not a selfish bitch. What we're about to see is the aftermath of a fight that happened between her and her best friend.

[clip plays]

Bitch, do you hear yourself? Nobody has more drama than you, Issa. You still the same selfish bitch you always been. You need to figure out your shit and stop using people.

Last night was lit.

When's the next one?

Where were those bomb tacos from?

Thought that shit was going to be whack.

But that shit was tight.

The most fun I had an Inglewood in a minute.

I can't believe Vince Staples was there.

We need more events like this. Even my grandma was out there dancing.

Tonight in the South L.A. niggas gathered for fried chicken, cocoa butter, and violence. But as always, you can count on Shannon on the scene.

Yo, just checking in on you. Don't let that Molly fuckshit ruin how well you did today, you killed it Iss. By the way, did you invite mom, because she keep blowing my-

Hey, morning after update. It looks we are waiting on deposit returns from four vendors. But in the meantime, I did have a few questions about something that you was telling me that-

You okay girl. What was that last night? What happened with y'all. Okay this baby won't stop crying. Why you reaching for my titty, ain't nothing in there. Is that a Wheat Thin? That's a Wheat Thin.

So what am I supposed to do now?

That's a good question. You fucked up.

I didn't fuck up. She fucked up.

And she got you fucked up.

Fucking right.

That's what the fuck I'm saying.

I should probably reach out though.

Reach out? Have you noticed that you're always the one reaching out and apologizing.

The fuck.

Yeah. Let her reach out to you. She's wrong too. Effortless bars.

Okay. Yeah. But what do I do while I wait?

Relax, relate, release. Take care of you.

Self-care Sunday.

I'm sorry, what? Speak up.

I said self-care Sunday. It's when you take care of yourself on a Sunday.

I know what that means. I read too.

Okay.

Sarah Taylor:

I love the mirror talks always. They're my favorite scenes. Tell us about this scene and why you chose it to talk about.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I feel like every season there's always an outlier episode. I had that in season three as well, and I feel this is very similar. There's a lot of use of the graphics from social media, and the whole concept of the half of the screen being taken up by her brother, her assistant and social media stuff, the YouTube clip. It's always taken up by somebody else but never Molly. It's like the two halves and half of one's gone. That was kind of the idea for me anyways. I wasn't in the writers room so I don't know what they had. But for me, cutting, I was always, I had that in mind. The amazing thing was we never discussed what any of the graphics would look, or whether it would be picture and picture or exactly 50/50 split. It went back and forth multiple times.

Knowing that that could be very, very challenging, the notes process and it could change a million times. I just decided, I made a decision, let's just do half and half and Lynarion made all those graphics which are phenomenal.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I think it presented well, and so there wasn't a single note.

Sarah Taylor:

Nice.

Nena Erb:

And all the graphics. I had a lot of notes from the VFX team.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

[crosstalk 00:29:47] put that together, but yeah, I was relieved and amazed that Lynarion did such a great job with that, that we just sailed through. There's a phone conversation that we'll probably take a look at

later, but that was also a continuation of ... Originally it was supposed to be a split-screen conversation, and we tried it that way but it ... I don't know. I didn't feel like we still needed to use a 50/50 visual language that we used earlier, because it comes from after she had her chat with her mom. So maybe she's starting to feel whole, so I didn't feel like we needed to split the screen. That was just a crazy, crazy concept that I ran with.

Sarah Taylor:

I hear you. Well, it worked, and I think, yeah, it had lots of good, good ... Well, there was lots of good things of what was on the other screen. The graphics or that YouTube lady. Like [laughs]. Do you want to touch on music for this series and why music is such a big part of the series, and what that process is like in the edit suite?

Nena Erb:

Sure. Yeah. Music is a huge character. Issa's a big fan of music. She's always said that she wants a great show, but she wants the music to be dope. We're always trying to use artists that are unreleased or about to release when the episode drops. It's a whole timing thing that our music supervisor Kier Lehman has to deal with. He's been able to find all these incredible artists that I had never heard before. So yeah. We have like thousands and thousands of songs to choose from.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Nena Erb:

It's got to be West coast, it's got to be the right vibe. It's got to sound great. It's got to have lyrics that fit the scene. There's a lot of different boxes that we need to tick, and so that's why it takes forever. But I feel like we're doing okay with the choices that we're making. Yeah. Issa always has ideas too, because maybe she'll be driving into work and she'll hear a song and she'll say, "Oh, let's try that there."

Sarah Taylor:

One question that popped up in the thing was does she ever come to the edit suite and work with you?

Nena Erb:

Yes.

Sarah Taylor:

What is it like working with her? I think she'd be really fine but ...

Nena Erb:

She's great. She's super smart. She's able to look at herself and be very objective. I know that that can be really hard sometimes for producers who are also acting in the episodes, but she's great. The first time I worked with her, I wasn't sure what to expect. But, within minutes it felt I was hanging out with a friend criticizing what's on TV.

Sarah Taylor:

That's awesome. Do think that growing up ... Because when did you move to L.A.? You were a young child when you moved to L.A.?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Do you think that growing up in L.A. is helped you work on the show because you are from L.A.? Do you feel that's a benefit for you?

Nena Erb:

I think so. I feel it has ... South L.A. in particular that whole neighborhood that the show is based on, or based out of, was where we settled when my family and I immigrated here. So yeah. So that community has always been very, very special to me because it was our first experience in a whole new country. It could have gone south really bad but it didn't, because like ... It was incredible. Our neighbors embraced us and just helped us along. I had friends almost immediately.

Sarah Taylor:

That's great.

Nena Erb:

Yeah, so growing up in that area, it's always been very special so ... I love featuring South L.A. so...

Sarah Taylor:

I feel like that's a really special part of the show, is that you have these really great drone shots and just street shots of the space, and it's like a character in itself I feel like. And ... So yeah, I was curious to know if there's ... what you felt there was that connection. Thinking back to when you were your young self, did you ever think that one day you'd be making a show based in that community? That must be pretty wild to think about.

Nena Erb:

Yeah, definitely. I did not think that would happen and I made it a point not to say anything in my interview because I didn't want that to be ... I didn't want that to sound fake because it's not.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah for sure.

Nena Erb:

For sure, people have like, "Oh yeah, I love that city," and stuff, like using it in the interview. But for me it was a very personal thing so I didn't tell Issa until we were done with season three.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, she must've felt ... That must've been a special connection there-

Nena Erb:

Oh yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

... to talk about that yeah.

Nena Erb:

It's so interesting because South L.A. changes. It's always changing, constantly evolving. From season to season, we have to shoot new exterior's. Things are just different.

Sarah Taylor:

Do you want to show the next clip? I guess it would be the phone call.

Nena Erb:

This comes after an entire episode of her giving an older man a ride. He's this prickly old man who's making her life miserable, but she's just trying to prove that she's not a selfish bitch.

[clip plays]

Hey.

This is Kelli, may I ask who's calling?

Kelli it's Issa. You called me.

I know I called your ass, but you're ignoring me like you're my biological father. Where you been?
Are you okay?

Yeah. I'm okay. I've just been busy.

Okay. Well have you called Molly yet?

Uh-uh (negative).

Why not?

Because she hasn't called me.

So that's it. That's a wrap? Issa, come on. I know you're upset right now, but maybe if y'all sat down and talk face to face, you could work it out.

Are you giving Molly the same energy?

Yes. I've been calling that bitch too. Look when me and Tiff let our shit sit too long, we almost didn't come back from it.

I just don't want to be the one to reach out this time.

Okay. So what? If she doesn't call, y'all just never going to speak again.

Sarah Taylor:

I really liked the pacing in that one, and them walking and stopping and ...

Nena Erb:

Oh yeah, yeah. That was a very deliberate choice. I wanted to make it seem like they were going to potentially meet in the middle. As a symbolism of them coming to accord and she's going to go call Molly. But they never do meet in the middle so ... and she never calls Molly.

Sarah Taylor:

Nothing is solved.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I had a little fun cutting that once I didn't like what it looked like as a split-screen. I tried that other concept of trying to make it seem like they're mirroring each other as they're getting closer and closer together only they really weren't. I'm glad that in the end Issa likes this version better.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Yeah. I think it worked really well. When you're in this show, because the framing is very ... a specific style of framing for a lot of the shots and stuff. Are you at all ever helping with that process? Where like, if it's in the suite you're maybe punching in a little bit or shaping things differently to make sure it fits into that vibe I guess is ... I don't know?

Nena Erb:

No, no. I think that look was established since the pilot, and all of our DPs and our directors have honed in on it, and they're very aware of when to shoot these short-sighted shots and when not to. Because we don't use them a lot. We use them sparingly. There might be one potentially two in an episode, but not ... It's typically just one.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. But it's still like, to me when I see it just ... I'm like, "Oh yeah, that's the style of the show." It's interesting, I've never actually thought to count how many shots are like that, but that there's only one shot like that in an episode or maybe two that it still is something that I'm like, yeah. That's part of the show. That's fun.

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

What is it when you're hiring an assistant? Is there certain types of skills that you expect from your assistants?

Nena Erb:

I have to get along with them. That's the most important one, and hopefully they want to be a teammate. I like assistance that want to cut, because I like having someone to bounce certain things off of. That only comes with someone who wants to be an editor, right?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

Skills, they're always evolving. Right? Because I feel like our digital media is constantly changing, so as long as they can do the normal things prep dailies, and maybe script sync scenes, that's kind of it. Sound design is very important, but I feel like both of the assistants on Insecure this past season are Louis and

Lynarion. However they have spoiled me because they're both so good at everything. Like everything. The effects, temp effects, sound design. Like all of it. It's going to be hard to replace Lynarion, it really will be. But she's on her way to editing so I'm pretty excited for her.

Sarah Taylor:

That's awesome. You'll have to get her to be like, who's the next person like you come my way?

Nena Erb:

Yeah. She'll have to do the first round of interviews.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Have you ever had moments of creative differences with the director and had to stand your ground to get the approval for the cut that you knew was the right creative direction?

Nena Erb:

No.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, that's good.

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

You lucked out.

Nena Erb:

I pick my battles. I try to see it from their point of view, and I know that the director's cut is a director's vision and I try to make sure that I'm able to provide that for him or her. If it's completely off the mark, I know it's going to get changed.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

There's no reason to get into it with them. There's no reason. I just want to make sure that they're comfortable and they are happy with what we're turning in, and putting their names on. So, yeah, I don't get into it.

Sarah Taylor:

I think that's the biggest difference between a film and television, is that the producers always have the final round. So, if something doesn't make pass the producers, it doesn't matter if you fought with the director about it, the producer is going to change it or vice versa, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Do you have any techniques or things that you've learnt over the years on how to deal with different personality types in the edit suite? Because every director coming in, every producer coming in, they're all different. They all have their own quirks and stuff. So, how do you navigate it for yourself in the edit suite, and how do you communicate with all the different people?

Nena Erb:

Well, if it's a director I haven't worked with before, I usually try to introduce myself either at the table read or at the tone meeting, make sure they have my contact information. I always ... I offer this to every director. I always tell them ...I go, "Hey, if you have a scene that you're a little nervous about, that you're not sure about, let me know. Shoot me an email, shoot me a text, whatever it is, and I'll make sure that I cut that first the next day, so you can take a look at it and see if your concerns were valid, or if it was just something that you just weren't sure, but now that you see it, it's fine. I find that that really calms them down a lot, and it starts us off on a good foot. So, that's typically what I do, and I always let them know like my job is to make sure their vision is realized, especially in TV. I think that means a lot to them because they don't usually get that.

With producers, it just comes from being in the room with them and trying to read their vibe, and understanding what their internal pacing is and what they respond to in terms of jokes or performances, and really observing them, I think. For a lot of editors, myself included, it can be a little frustrating after you've explored all the different avenues of what the scene could be from the dailies, and then they want to like dig into it and start from scratch because they haven't seen all the things, but it occurred to me that they want to do that, not because they don't trust me, but because they haven't gone through all the different avenues that I have. I think of myself as a little tour guide at that point, and we always typically come back to the version that I had or some form of that, because I think once you get to know all the material, I mean, everyone kind of agrees on what's working and what's not, or at least I hope so, because you should be a good fit with your show runners.

Sarah Taylor:

For sure, that helps. But that's a good point of ... I feel like maybe early on in careers or yeah, the more experience you have, the more you realize like, okay, no, I'm here as part of the team. Yeah, you do trust me, that I'm providing you with the cut that I think is right, but it's okay for you to look at other scenes, or other takes. It doesn't mean that I sucked at my whatever, right? I feel like it takes some time to realize that we can all ... or we're creating something together, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

And maybe, luckily ... being fortunate to work with directors and producers that you can collaborate with, I think that's a huge thing to get that confidence up for young editors or new editors, that they can work together to make the thing.

Nena Erb:

Definitely.

Sarah Taylor:

What are your current thoughts or ideas on what you think the future of post is, now that we're living in a different world right now? What are your feelings on where things might go in L.A. and for you in the future?

Nena Erb:

Everything is uncertain. I imagine we'll be working from home a lot more with the potential going into an edit bay, if there's a tough scene that the director or the producer wants to work with you on in person. There's been shows that have a protocol in place where if that is to happen, they'll have an edit bay set up. If you're going to go in, you're both going to get tested. It has to happen like a week from the time that you have to in or something. Then of course, you're sitting far apart with the mask, but honestly, I'm happy to work from home, if it means that my family and I stay safe.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, yeah. But it's pretty amazing how much you can do from home and how ... even just Zoom, like right now. I have Zoom calls with my directors and stuff, and I was doing that before COVID, just because we were in different places. So, it is handy how our technology works. But do you feel like you'll miss that face to face, or to have those conversations in person, or in the same room?

Nena Erb:

Absolutely. Yeah. I think the rapport will be there, if you're working with someone you've worked with before, but I think if you're doing a new show with a new team, it might take a little longer for you to establish trust and get on the same page, I guess, with the other person. So, that's going to be really interesting. I am curious to see how that's going to go.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. As we all are. And every location is different, right? Every place that ... yeah. I know more films are coming up to Canada to shoot because we have less numbers, but then it's like, yeah, it's just a wild. The new world. What are your thoughts about making the post-world more equitable, in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and all these other things coming to light. What are your thoughts on how we can make the post-world more equitable and how we can have a different looking people behind the computer shaping these stories, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah. This is so interesting. I was just actually talking to Netflix about this.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, good.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I had just a general meeting with them and someone asked me like what I thought of including apprentice editors again, and I thought that was a great idea because apprentice editors, it used to be a thing that they would have on films. Someone that comes in that's the entry level assistant, the

apprentice, and they would learn from the two ... the first and second assistants and be involved in the environment without a lot of risk. I feel like they should bring that back.

Sarah Taylor:

Totally. Yeah.

Nena Erb:

That would help a lot of people build credits and have a resume, so that they can be up for jobs and be considered, because I feel like you can have diversity programs all you want, but if they're coming out without credits, I don't know that they're going to get a chance. You know? I mean, everybody's always going to say, "Oh, well, here's two candidates. This person has a lot more credits and you've got none." I think if there are apprentices and they can have like a list of credits on projects, I think it'll be a lot more helpful. It's similar to the DGA training program.

I don't know if you guys saw that up in Canada, DGA, they pick I think two or three ... I don't remember how many people they pick, but they basically put them on a feature film for a month, put them on another one for a month, put another one for a month, and then they do TV shows. By the time they're done, they have a tremendous resume and they know how all the different genres work and they can run the set on anything. So, I think if we can do that, I think that'll make a big difference.

Sarah Taylor:

That'll be huge. I think that's something that's just missing for a long time now, that we have come to the digital world where we don't need to be in this expensive cutting film. We've lost that, where we're passing our knowledge down as much, right? Especially in our smaller industries, like within Canada. I hardly ever have an assistant, let alone am I able to help somebody as much as maybe somewhere like in L.A. where you can have assistants. Then if we can do this apprentice thing, so many doors I think would open for people, and I think it's so important.

And it's just to share our craft so that people can learn, and they're not flailing. People are flailing trying to figure it out on their own. They could learn from somebody who has great experience. So yeah, I think that would be fantastic. I know the DGC has trainee programs, but I don't know ... I don't think I've ever seen it for editing. I don't think it's in the editing realm, but that would be fantastic. Do you have a story of your own authorship that you may want to tell one day?

Nena Erb:

No. I don't ...

Sarah Taylor:

You like to help others tell stories. That's fair.

Nena Erb:

Yes. I mean, honestly, I don't think my life is that interesting. So, I'd rather tell other people's stories. Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

That's awesome. Keith asks ... his question's about the speed of editing. Do you or any of your assistants ever take time to pick up visibility? Is it something you allow your assistants some time to acquire, or do you expect it to be right away ... how fast they edit?

Nena Erb:

I don't really expect my assistants to edit fast. I know that takes time. It took time for me. I think a large part of it comes with practice, but also the ability to really understand the material that you're working with. If you know where all the bodies are buried, so to say, I think you can solve problems quicker, and I think that's the perception of speed. When someone's giving your note and you're like, oh, right, okay. I can do this, this, this, and this. It's because you're accessing what you know, the tools that you have to work with. Because I feel like once you're ... a quick type of ... I mean, it's all the same, right? I think really, the speed comes from how quickly you're able to solve a problem rather than the actual physical act of executing it.

Sarah Taylor:

What advice would you have for a new learning film student who wants to become an editor?

Nena Erb:

Oh, wow, there's so many. Let's see. Gosh. Well, American ACE. They have an internship program that is hugely valuable and it introduces you to all kinds of different genres, puts you in rooms. I mean, now everything's virtual, but back when you can send someone to an edit bay, they would have you in a feature film room for a week. They would have you in an episodic TV room for a week. They would have you in a documentary reality room for a week, so you understand the workflow, and then they do a week in your mix house, your sound houses, your online facilities, so that you can understand, okay, all these things that you're doing when you're assisting, that's where it goes and you understand why it has to be a certain way. So, I think it's just such a great program that recent graduates should definitely apply. I don't know if you guys have something similar.

Sarah Taylor:

We have a mentorship program, yeah, and for the CCE that we just started this year ... 2019, so last year, but going through this year, and we had a pilot project in Toronto. So, eventually we're going to try to do it across Canada, but so, yeah, right now in Toronto it's happening. Of course, it started pre COVID. So, we had all these things set up where people were getting to go into edit suite. So, they're doing it virtually and stuff now, too, but it's very similar. But more, they've been paired with an editor or an assistant that they're ... So, then they get to be mentored with that editor or assistant that they're paired with. Yeah, we're definitely trying to get that going more as a program, similar to what ACE is offering, because I think that's huge.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. And also, I think the interesting thing is, with everybody being home because of COVID, you can reach out to people whose work you admire because chances are they're hanging out. They might be open to just having a Zoom coffee with you.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

I think so much of this business is about relationships. I would just make it a point to reach out to someone new once a week or once a day, if you're really ambitious, and yeah. Get to know a lot of people, establish and foster the friendships, and eventually they'll become your network and they're going to be able to help you move up, move around. So, all that, in addition to trying to cut as much as you can for practice, those are all things that I would suggest.

Sarah Taylor:

Awesome. Can you speak more about the interview process? How do you prepare and what's the best piece of advice you would give to put your best foot forward in an interview?

Nena Erb:

Well, I typically try to get the script, if it's a new project or a pilot, and I'll read it a couple of times. I always try to think, okay, for this scene ... if I have questions, I write them down. If there's something that I really connect with, I write it down. If I can think of music that would go great with the scene, I write that down. You want to come in with questions about the characters, the story. You want to bring something to it as well. So, maybe that's a music thing, maybe it's something else that you're envisioning, or maybe you read the scene and you suddenly have a concept of how they can shoot it. That might be worth bringing up, just to spitball. But yeah, it's really just doing your prep, and when it's possible ... because sometimes I'll get a script and I'm meeting them in the ... the meeting's next morning, so I don't have time to watch other programs or other movies that the producers have done before, because it helps to know some of their work, too.

Sarah Taylor:

Keith says he's been teaching himself for the past six months and he's been waiting to pick up freelance jobs to build his portfolio, and he wants to become assistant editor. So, he's wondering how he should approach that. Is it more important to meet and make friends, which is kind of what you just said, with post-production people, or have a demo reel? Do you also have any good advice on how he can reach that goal of becoming an editor?

Nena Erb:

Well, I don't think you need a reel, if you want to be an assistant editor. I think it's more important to meet people and connect with editors that you get along with, that will potentially need an assistant. That would be probably the quickest way to get a job as an assistant, but if you want to edit, then a reel is important because it helps to be able to show people what you're capable of. And in terms of being an editor, I think for most people, they work their way up from being an assistant, so then it's just finding an editor that will mentor you. And I would just try to do my job as best as possible, as fast as possible, so that I can cut something every day, you know? And I think sometimes, if your time allows and if your editor is cool with it, I would just try to cut something every day and then see at the end of the week, okay, how many minutes is that? Is it three minutes? Is it five minutes? And then if it's five, the next week you aim to do seven-

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, yeah.

Nena Erb:

... and the next week 10, you know? So, that's how you build up your speed and how quickly you solve problems, right? Yeah, I think making sure that you can keep up is going to be really, really important on your first editing job, because you don't want to not be able to deliver on that deadline.

Sarah Taylor:

For sure. Yeah. And if you are in Canada ... Keith, I don't know if you're in Canada ... we, pre-COVID, had lots of gatherings with editors. We'd have pub nights and stuff like that, but we are ... as you know like events like this ... yes, so he's in Canada. Yeah. So, events like this, you can connect and learn from editors. Then also, we have Edit Con every year in Canada, where it's like a full day of chatting with editors. Again, this year it's probably ... it's going to be online, but those moments, getting out and going to networking events where you're just connecting with editors and talking edit ... because we all get excited and we all want to talk about it ... is huge. So, yes, keep up with the CCE and hopefully when we have in-person events again, you can make some of those in-person connections. Another question from Sabrina. She says, as an editor, do you feel having a reel or series of reels put together as important? Or do you only provide examples of your work upon request from specific productions?

Nena Erb:

It's funny. When I first got an agent, she said to do a reel. I never got around to it, but I said, "Hey, I don't have time to cut a reel, but here's what I can do. I can do a website, and I'll just put certain scenes up," and she's like, "That's fine." So, that's been that, and honestly, I don't know how many people have looked at it, if at all, but I imagine that if I was starting out, I imagine people would want to see something. So, I think that would be a helpful thing to do.

Sarah Taylor:

I feel like it's more, now, examples of a piece of work or, yeah like a scene or something is really important because you ... well, I can't say anybody can put together a montage of the cool music track and a bunch of clips, but to get your story sense or your pacing sense or whatever, the actual pieces of work is important. Do you have any tips for people who want to make the move to Hollywood or to L.A., and try to get into that world? Because yes, I feel like it would be daunting, but what are your ideas on that?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, I think it's definitely possible. Absolutely. I would save money, a lot of money. because you want to make sure that you have a nice cushion, because there are times when you're not working and it might be a month or two, and you don't want to ... It's really stressful if you don't have that financial cushion. So, I would plan and save as much as you can. I would ... and as you're saving, reach out to editors and assistants, depending on wherever you are level-wise in terms of your career. Reach out to people whose work, I guess, you admire or assistants who you know that have done really difficult V effects, movies. Whatever skill that you want and whatever job that you want, reach out to those people and try to make a connection.

Again, when you're meeting people, I would try to find out what they like as a person, rather than just all talk about working. And definitely don't ask for a job. Get to know them first, because it becomes very awkward when you meet someone for the first time and then they hit you up for a job, and it's like you want to help them, but you just met them. So, it's a little difficult to know what their skill sets are, to know what their personality is like, and who they're going to fit with. So, it just puts the other person at a very awkward position. So, I would definitely reach out, try to foster a genuine friendship,

and maybe by the time you save up your money, you'll know many, many people, and you move here and they can help you out.

Sarah Taylor:

That's awesome. Are there any groups or things ... like, there's ACE, but is there anything else in L.A. specific that editors connect on or events that they go to, or anything like that?

Nena Erb:

I think Blue Collar Post Collective.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. I think they're pretty big and they're great with welcoming people that are coming into L.A. or California. I believe it's based in L.A., but I'm not 100% sure. They're phenomenal. They've been very helpful. They sponsor people to go to EditFest every year. Yeah, I think that's a great organization to connect with.

Sarah Taylor:

So, Derek is asking, are there any techniques to use to build pacing in your edits?

Nena Erb:

No. I rely on my gut. It's always ... it's an internal thing. I can't really explain it, but yeah, it's all just up here. And I think it'll come to you with practice ... come to anybody with practice, I think. You'll know what the pacing for a certain scene is, if you want it to be comedic versus dramatic. I think after ... it just comes with practice. You'll learn to trust your gut.

Sarah Taylor:

What are your thoughts on temp music and cutting with music when you're assembling? What is your ideas on ...

Nena Erb:

I don't work with temp music when I'm assembling. I don't do music until after I'm done, because I want to make sure that the scene can stand on its own without dressing it up with music. So, yeah, I don't do that.

Sarah Taylor:

What editors would you advise people to study their techniques and style? Do you have any favorite editors?

Nena Erb:

I love Anne V. Coates and how throughout the years, her work is always changing and growing, and she experiments and she wasn't afraid to try different things. I'm a big fan of her work, and other editors ... it's really just whatever you gravitate towards. I think it's going to be tough to emulate and to copy

another person's style. I think you have to find your own because I think it has to feel natural to you, right? if you're always trying to do something that someone else did, and if it doesn't feel right to you, I don't think that that would be a good fit.

So, for me, yeah there's lots of editors whose work I admire, but at the end of the day, I don't ever approach a scene and go, oh, Anne Coates would cut it like this. It's really just what I find in the dailies that speaks to me. And there are times when I'm like, I don't like the scene. I know that I can do more, and then I'll think of the crazy stuff that she did, in *Out of Sight*, and now it's like, okay. I'm going to step away, kind of free my mind up, so I can think outside the box. So, there's been times like that, where something she's done has reminded me to take a risk.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally. I think that's really interesting when you start to hear other editors techniques, and I think I watched something with a *Mindhunter* and how they were using lots of picture to picture takes of one actor from another scene, and then ... and that was one of the first times I heard that and I never really thought about that. I was like, oh, my god, that's such a great idea. We can do that. The technology's there, and of course they shot it in a way that it would be also easier to do those things, but yeah, when you start hearing how people break apart things and put things back together, and then you just have that ... It's not even that it's their specific technique. It's how they accomplished something for that specific show, because every show has its own style. So, as an editor, our style is dictated by what the show is or what the film is, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

But to learn how people craft something with what they have and within that style, you can ... yeah, you have those little things in your pocket, which I think is really fun. Do you think it's necessary for somebody to go to film school ... which you did not, but you went to art school ... or is it better to find a mentor?

Nena Erb:

I didn't go to film school, so I can't really speak to that part of it. I think mentors are very important. I've definitely had many throughout my career and I don't know that I would have the same path without them. So, I highly suggest getting a mentor and film school is not bad. I've always wondered if I would have liked film school. If I had the time, I'd probably do it, but is it necessary, I don't know that it is because I know so many people that didn't go to film school and they have phenomenal careers.

Sarah Taylor:

What is the role of an editor in pre-production? We touched on you get the script before the table read, but maybe tell us that. You get the script, you read through it. When you're at the table read, what are you looking for? What are you there to get when you're watching the table read?

Nena Erb:

If it's a comedy, I try to pay attention to which jokes are getting the biggest laugh and which jokes aren't. I think the only show where I've been more involved with pre-production has really been *Crazy Ex-girlfriend*, because of all the musical numbers. They have dance, concept meetings, they have

different ... There was just a lot of different meetings to go into the prep of it, and sometimes they'll want to do something that's really out of the box and they want to make sure that the editor is there to make sure that they can do it and have it be cut together. So, that's really the only show where I was involved from the pre-production standpoint, I guess.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. What was it like working on My Crazy Ex-girlfriend, having to be a musical and having all those major dance numbers? Did you love that? Was it fun or was it challenging? What did you like about that show?

Nena Erb:

I loved it. It was so fun because every episode has at least two, if not ... I think eight is the most we've had in an episode, and it can range so wildly in terms of genre. You can have an episode where you're doing Simon and Garfunkel, and then the next piece is an '80s hip hop song, and then the next piece ... and we're still in the same episode, could be hard rock. So, yeah, it definitely ... I think, as an editor, you have a wide palette to choose from, and I think that's always exciting, and it's fun. It's fun. The lyrics are great. They're hilarious. The visuals are fun to cut and because they're not the same genre, I enjoy doing the research for it because that sometimes will always inspire something else, too. So, I really enjoy that.

Sarah Taylor:

What would you recommend people do when it comes to researching things about what they're going to get into in the edit suite?

Nena Erb:

Well, I think there's a wealth of information on the internet now. I think if it's a first season show, I would definitely research the creator, because chances are, they did a pilot somewhere, provided it's a TV show. Yeah. So, there'll be articles about it, I think, because pilots, when they get picked up, it's always in the trades, and they'll interview them. Or maybe they've given interviews on other projects they've done. See what their creative viewpoint is, if possible, if there's articles about that. And if they've done a show before that, take a look at an episode or two, because I think that'll really inform what they like and that'll help you. As you're starting to cut dailies, you'll have their taste in your mind, so you can try to give them something that you think they're going to like.

Sarah Taylor:

Charmaine says, do you ever find that your first cuts are super cutty? What's your protocol for resolving that and pacing it out?

Nena Erb:

I'm not a person that likes to cut a lot. I cut when it's necessary. I don't find that my first cuts are super cutty. I find that they might be ... they should be more cutty. Yeah. But also, I think it ... so much is dictated by the story that you're telling, right? If it's a moment that was kind of frenetic, yeah, I'm going to do more cuts. But if it's a moment where they're ... there's an episode in season three where Issa is walking down the street with Nathan, and the entire thing is like a very before sunrise episode. For that one, their chemistry was so good. I just let it play. I had some really, really long takes that just ... unless the story dictated a cut, I just let it go. I really let the story dictate how often I cut, when I cut, if I cut.

Sarah Taylor:

Totally. Yeah. Curious about ... so, Andrea is curious about what mouse you use.

Nena Erb:

I have it right here. I'll show.

Sarah Taylor:

Excellent.

Nena Erb:

It's one with a track ball, but I've mounted it so it's vertical. Your elbows will thank you.

Sarah Taylor:

That makes total sense. Yeah. Any other pieces of equipment, gear that you ... You said you like to do standing ... a standing desk,

Nena Erb:

There's a new piece of equipment that I've recently discovered and think it's the best in the world. It's the cube tab.

Sarah Taylor:

And what is that? I don't know what that is.

Nena Erb:

I'm pretty sure Ruben introduced us to that. It's basically a little cube, electrical outlet that basically, you plug it in and it has different prongs. So, you can plug different things into this cube that is now plugged into your outlet. Does that makes sense?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, yeah. That's awesome.

Nena Erb:

You can put all kinds of stuff on it. You used to have one outlet and now you have three.

Sarah Taylor:

Is it USB things that you can put in, or is it other plugs, just like another ...

Nena Erb:

I think it's just more electrical plugs. It's really ever used on set, because they have lots of things to plug into it.

Sarah Taylor:

For sure. Yeah. Well, I know for myself, I get a lot of hard drives, so there's definitely a lot of things to plug in and I only have so much room on my backup generator thingy. Yeah. Did you have a home system set up and have you been working at home during this time?

Nena Erb:

Well, we finished the final episodes of Insecure at the beginning of lockdown.

Sarah Taylor:

Okay.

Nena Erb:

The cuts were mostly done, so it was just a matter of approving mixes and doing VFX shots, but I had a laptop and one extra monitor that was always set up. I wouldn't call it a full system by any stretch of the imagination, but I imagine that my next job, we'll probably set one in there and we'll see. Personally, I don't want to use my own system, even if I had one. I would rather the show rent me one, because I don't want to be responsible for getting it back up if it crashes.

Sarah Taylor:

Yup.

Nena Erb:

I'm not a technical, so ... I turn it on and that's about it. So, yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Do you find that your assistants are super technical? I wonder, there's a special skillset where I find some editors are like, "No, I don't want to do the technology," but then the assistants seemed to be really, really good with the technology.

Nena Erb:

I've met many assistants that were phenomenal and they were very tech savvy, which is great, because I'm not, and they can just help troubleshoot much better than I can. I find that very interesting because it's got to be such a different frame of mind to do your work as an assistant, and then have to switch so that you're thinking with the creative part of it for editing.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

That's got to be a tough thing to juggle on a daily basis, if you're trying to cut after your assistant duties, but ...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. I find ... because I often have to do both. So, I find for myself, when I'm sinking and stuff, I'm turning off a certain part of the brain, right? Then when it comes to creativity you're turning it back on, it's almost like folding laundry, so you can just do it. It's like you're doing the motions or whatever, and then when it comes to the ... sometimes it feels harder, like you're working harder, because your brain is working harder to do the actual editing, if that makes sense.

Nena Erb:

Yeah totally.

Sarah Taylor:

So, sometimes it's nice to take that break. If I'm feeling stuck on a cut, I'll be like, go sync to the next whatever I need to sink or whatever I need to prep. I can go do that to take a break from the story issue or whatever it might be. So, if you're able to do that ... maybe I just do that because I have to do that. Derek is asking, do you think ... does age come into play when you're hiring an assistant?

Nena Erb:

For me personally? No. No. I've just got to make sure I get along with the person and that this person is a team player. If my assistant isn't great, we're both going to go down. Yeah, not just him and not just me. We're both going to go down. So, yeah, it has to be someone who's going to have my back and do the work, and someone that I want to have a drink with and hang out with.

Sarah Taylor:

Having a connection is ... yeah. But then you can trust each other, right? You have each other's back, right?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, exactly.

Sarah Taylor:

We have a question from Sabrina. She's going to talk. I'm going to allow you to speak. Go ahead, Sabrina.

Sabrina:

Hello. Thank you so much for doing this. Anyways, my question was about cutting different genres. Do you find ... is there a genre that you really, really want to cut, that you have yet to? Or do you find you can jump around fairly easily, or was it difficult to switch around? Do you find you get pigeonholed very easily if you stick to a certain genre and you're not able to move around as easily?

Nena Erb:

Oh, gosh. A few years ago, I was very deliberate in terms of picking a drama and picking comedy, and then in the last few years, there's this new blend of comedy that has a lot of drama in it, like Insecure and similar to Crazy Ex, and something like a Little America, too. So, I've been trying to do that more, but I'll tell you, I think it's ... even though it has both comedy and drama, I don't know that a true drama, like something like Game of Thrones, would even look my way. And actually, I don't really ... I enjoy the Game of Thrones, but I don't know if I would want to cut that, to be honest. But yeah, so a true drama, I don't think, would come my way, which is unfortunate. So, yeah, I think people do get pigeonholed.

Sarah Taylor:

How long are you in the edit suite, usually?

Nena Erb:

It's usually ... I try to not go past 12, because then I'm just fried, but there are times when you have to do more than 12, depending on the deadline, if you have a shorter amount of time to turn in an episode or a scene over, but yeah, I try not to go past 12. It's usually about 10, 11-ish, somewhere around there. Again, a lot of it's going to depend on how many dailies you get. I've had directors that shoot nine hours of dailies. So, for someone like me that wants to watch everything, my days are going to be long. But then you have other directors that shoot three hours a day, then it's like, oh, it's perfect. I can watch it all. I can cut it, and I can be home for dinner.

Sarah Taylor:

Yay!

Nena Erb:

You know.

Sarah Taylor:

Do you do any color correcting when you edit? If so, do you have any tips for how someone new to that process should go about it?

Nena Erb:

I don't really do a lot of it. I will, if a scene ... if the dailies come back and it's not quite right, if it's too dark, or I'll probably just drop a color effect on it and up the gamma, just so you can see the image better. But yeah, typically I don't do color correcting.

Sarah Taylor:

Are you typically involved in the color timing when it comes to it at the end? Are you in for that, or just for sound?

Nena Erb:

Just for sound, yeah. I've been invited to color sessions on other shows, but on this show, it's very much the TPs domain.

Sarah Taylor:

That was a big ... when I first started talking to editors down in L.A., it was a surprise that you were included in even the sound. That wasn't something that often ... sometimes you're invited. Well, in my experience anyway. It wasn't something that was part of the process. You just handed it off and then you were onto the next thing. It wasn't part of the contract or anything like that. Then I heard editors getting to do that and I was like, well, that makes so much sense. Then now, there's been a few times where I've gotten to and then, yeah, it's been huge. So, I'm glad that that's part of the process down in the States, but I'd be curious to hear what other editors in Canada have experienced, because yeah, I don't think it's as common.

Nena Erb:

Well, I think it's so important because there's a few times where they'll drop dialogue lines. I will often replace dialogue from another take, but put it in the mouth of ... so, the videos from audio, and then in the mix, I'm like, wait a minute. That's not the one I put in there. I think it's important for editors to be able to mix because no one's going to know, other than you. You're the one that knows it the most.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally. When you're in those sessions, are they taking your direction? Are you in control? Like, you and the director are in control of what's happening? Can you say, "No, that's wrong," and like be okay with that?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, we usually screen it and then I jot down time code and notes, and then we go through the list of notes and we go to the time code, and they play it and they're like, "Oh, okay. I see what you mean." Then you know address it. Some people do it after I leave. Some people do it during. It just depends on how much time you have and all of the mixer.

Sarah Taylor:

I think, also, sometimes ... often things get like lost in the translation to the sound system, right? So, you're like, "How did you ... why did you change that?" And it's like, oh, it just didn't connect properly, or whatever, right? It's a simple thing to change, but if you're not there to do it ... Do you have anything on the goal coming up in the future that you know of yet?

Nena Erb:

Yeah, potentially. Potentially. I'm not sure if I should talk about it just yet.

Sarah Taylor:

That's fair. That's fair. That's good to hear that things are coming. That's good.

Nena Erb:

Yeah. Yeah, there's production that's slowly trickling back in. Of course, no one wants to be the first, so there's always a show that's going to be the first early adopter. So, we'll see what happens.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Nena Erb:

And hoping that no one gets sick and we can all go back to work, and yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. It's definitely ... yeah. It's been a long time. So, hopefully it all works out. It's been really great. You've given us a lot of great advice and insight on your workflow and your process, and your mouse, which these are important things. We need to hear these things, and I'm looking forward to keeping my

eyes open for the Emmy's, to find out if you win. I'll be cheering for you, regardless. Do you have any last advice, or any other last tips that you want to share with us before we call it a night?

Nena Erb:

You know, I just think, yeah, just keep meeting people. This is such a great time right now, just to meet whoever you want. I would take advantage because I don't know that we're going to ever have such access to people that would normally be not within reach at all.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally, because they'd be in their edit suite for 12 hours a day, not able to talk to us on Zoom. So, thank you for letting me reach out to you and talk to you about one of my favorite shows, and for taking the time to chat, all things editing. I wish you the best of luck in the future. I hope that everything gets picked up.

Nena Erb:

Thank you so much.

Sarah Taylor:

And I'm so grateful that you took the time to spend with us today. So, thank you again, Nena.

Nena Erb:

Well, thank you so much for having me, and thank you all for coming.

Sarah Taylor:

Good night, everybody.

Nena Erb:

Bye.

Sarah Taylor:

Thank you so much for joining us today and a big thank you. goes to Nena for taking the time to sit with us. A special, thanks goes to Jane MacRae, Jenni McCormick and Ruben Lim. The main title sound design was created by Jane Tattersall, additional ADR recording by Andrea Rusch. Original music provided by Chad Blain and Soundstripe. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bao.

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[Outtro]

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