

The Editor's Cut - Episode 053 - Terilyn Shropshire, ACE

Terilyn Shropshire:

When you think about it, we all edit everyday in our lives. We're making decisions constantly in our lives, whether how we move, or how we dress. I know for me, when I was in high school and English was one of my favorite classes, and writing. And writing is rewriting, and writing is editing. And so I think in some ways once I really understood how it applied to film, it made me realize that in some ways, I've been preparing for this career.

Sarah Taylor:

This episode was sponsored by Finale Post a Picture Company, Annex Pro Avid, Vancouver Postal Lines, IATSE 891, and Integral Artist. Hello, and welcome to The Editor's Cut. I'm your host, Sarah Taylor. We would like to point out that 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 acknowledgments are the start to a deeper action.

Today's episode is the online Master Series that took place on October 13th 2020, in conversation with Terilyn Shropshire, ACE. She provides an in depth look at her stellar career, and her collaborations which include a 20 year working relationship with director Gina Prince-Bythewood, as well as with notable directors Kasi Lemmons, Catherine Hardwicke, Vondie Curtis-Hall, and Ava DuVernay. From feature films, The Old Guard, Miss Bala, The Secret Life of Bees, Love & Basketball, and Eve's Bayou, to network television. When They See Us, Marvel's Cloak & Dagger, Shots Fired, and Quantico, Terilyn has had a hand in crafting some of the most revered stories on screen. This talk was moderated by filmmaker, V.T. Nayani.

[show open]

V.T. Nayani:

I'm V.T. Nayani, I go by Nayani, and so grateful to be here tonight for this conversation, this necessary conversation with Teri. I'm so glad to everyone for joining us from home, from wherever you are, and choosing to be with us tonight. We're so grateful to have you here in this conversation. I think as Teri said just before we started, which you guys weren't privy to, but obviously it's still important to gather and celebrate each other, and to continue to dream forward and move forward. I think this is part of a larger practice. It's a difficult time for all, we acknowledge that, and honor that. But it is wonderful that we can still find ways to gather. I'm thankful to be gathering with you, and to be in this conversation, and to have people at home join that conversation a little bit later. I'll start with asking you how you doing tonight? I love to do a little check in before we start. I guess for you it's 5:00 PM in LA, right?

Terilyn Shropshire:

It is, yes. And the sun is just setting. So you'll probably see it start to go that way.

V.T. Nayani:

You have a good glow right now, we'll see it's set with you. I wanted to get right into it if that's cool with you. Last night, we had a lovely conversation. And I'm so grateful to be moderating this, or having this conversation with you. Really, it's a conversation. I don't want to look at it as a moderating a panel of one person, but really just two artists, two people who are working in film sharing and talking. I've watched your film, I mentioned it the first time we talked but I've spent my years watching your films growing up. Some of them having a really deep impact on my early childhood girlhood. And still going back to them, but also seeing your more recent work which we will speak to and have a chance to watch.

Something that stuck was me last night... And for those at home, we're going to go more into the storytelling aspect, we can get into the technical, and we will, but as a director, I often see the editor as an integral part of the storytelling unit, you have the writers or the writer, the director or the directors, and then you have your editor and without any one of them, we can't get our job done. And it's actually my favorite part. I'm going to interview you or ask you questions from the perspective of a director who's really interested in your process, but also who you are as a storyteller.

Again, last night we spoke and the conversation still sitting with me because you spoke tenderly about women's empowerment, and agency, and giving characters agency through your work. And I wanted to start there tonight. In this conversation between two of us who are two women working in film in different capacities. What does that mean to you when you approach your work, and you're thinking about women's empowerment and agency and in the editing process specifically?

Terilyn Shropshire:

Yeah. I'm really fortunate that the writer directors that I've worked with are people who are interested in telling, obviously, a wide spectrum of stories and bring to the world a large spectrum of characters. I think that part of their responsibility or choice as artists is to do that and to choose projects where they see themselves reflected back. And in part, so do I. And so it is one of those things where when I'm on those journeys, and I can be part of creating that reflection, and through the director's lens, it's always a privilege, and it's always appreciated. I think that as movie goers, we love to just immerse ourselves in other worlds in other people's worlds and cultures, lives, and in many ways our way of expanding our world is through education, and travel, and meeting other people and experiencing other stories. I feel really fortunate when I can be part of that.

V.T. Nayani:

I want to thank you for sharing. I wanted to ask you a question. I'm not going to get into all the reasons why you got into editing, because we're going to focus on your work. But I did want to start with having this one question for you, which is, for me, I know I'm a director, but I didn't necessarily know I was going to be a director. I loved films and TV growing up which I think all of us who work in this industry love. We have a love for the craft, and the stories that had a lasting impression on us as we were growing up. But there were so many different pathways to get me to this point. And I'm wondering with you, how did editing become an interest? How did it become something that you thought, "Oh, man, I could really go for it, I could really explore that. That's a thing I can do." Do you remember that that moment, or that inception? Or if there were multiple moments that led to you becoming that storyteller in post?

Terilyn Shropshire:

No, it's a really good question because I didn't grow up going... I mean, I would love to meet someone who grows up thinking, "Oh, I want to be an editor when I grow up." I want to be that person.

V.T. Nayani:

I know.

Terilyn Shropshire:

I really didn't think about that while I was growing up. I was a movie watcher. Spent a lot of time in dark theaters watching films. I also had a dad who seemed to always have a camera in his hand, or have a Super 8mm in his hand, but as far as realizing the editing aspect of it, it wasn't something that I focused on. I don't think that I really, really understood what it was about until I was in college. And I was literally editing my first film that I shot, which was part of the requirement, that you had to both... I was a double major, I majored both in journalism and film. So we have something in common.

And even in the journalism classes, and when you switch over to broadcast journalism, you had to do everything. You had to write, you had to shoot and get on the studio and do all of that. And I think it was really when I started to have to bring the material back into my personal space and figure it out, did I really appreciate and truly understand what that meant. And yet, I have been watching it all my life, but I've been watching the result of effortless storytelling in a sense. And I think that when you think about it, we all edit everyday in our lives. We're making decisions constantly in our lives. Whether how we move or how we dress, or how we do. And I think even when we were... I know for me when I was in high school and English was one of my favorite classes. And writing and writing is rewriting, and writing is editing.

And so I think in some ways, once I really understood how it applied to film, it made me realize that in some ways, I've been preparing for this career, because I love to write, and I also was a person that when I was in school, my friends would bring me their papers and say, "Read this, and tell me what you think." And I would read it and I would give them suggestions, "Maybe if you move this sentence here." And I never thought about it as how it would relate to the career that I'm doing now. But I really started feeling an appreciation for it when I actually had to become the problem solver, and try to figure out how to fix the things that I had not maybe done right when I was out shooting.

And then when you're in school, you also are working with other people. So then you start to edit their material. And I just found that was the most organic and instinctive to me. And I could spend hours doing it, and still want to get up the next morning and do it again. And I didn't necessarily feel that about directing.

V.T. Nayani:

I've tried my hand at editing and I definitely don't... I feel that way about directing, but I think editing is... I started from the roots. I'm always talking about the editors I work with, because it's so fun to work with the editor, I think you get... everyone says it, but when you're in the edit, when you're in that room with someone you know what it feels like. You get a chance to retell the story, to reimagine it really, because you have it on the page, and it's one thing, and whether you wrote it or not is one thing as a director. And then you shoot it and there's all these questions and feelings that come up, and you don't really know where it's going to go, you're tired. You've got long days. You know there's footage but you don't know what's going to happen with it.

And then you get to the edit room, and there's so much trust that you put in the editor that you collaborate with. We'll speak to some of the relationships that you've had with the directors you work with. But I almost want to shout it from the rooftop every time that people don't ever see the editor. It's not somebody you necessarily see all the time. But without them we have nothing. We actually don't have... and it's like with any other role, and we can say that about an ACU for the focus, we can say that about costume, but everybody's integral, but the editor is a storyteller.

And when you mentioned being... I think there's something at some point, obviously, we don't have to do it tonight, but to say about people who end up in film who really love writing or English. They love their creative storytelling classes in high school, or growing up, they loved reading or writing. And I think you're speaking to... you doing those rewrites for friends, which I was also that person, speaks directly to the fact that you are a storyteller in this process. So, thank you for sharing that. "When They See Us" directed by Ava DuVernay, all of us know on Netflix, and we know the story and we've read the news, and we've heard the stories for years, and then the weight of rewatching it on set is one thing.

There was so much content, and they filmed for quite a bit of time, a couple of months and it's a huge cast. I can't imagine actually how much footage there was, especially for episode one. And I think a lot of people that I've spoken to have shared that they struggled getting past episode one, because it's the inciting moment, is when everything happens. The journey that these men have been on. My question for you is, being on set and seeing how it was being filmed, and then you getting all that footage, what was your first reaction? I mean one, what brought you onto this project, I can imagine from what you've already shared why you decided to come on board, that as well. But what was your first reaction when you received this footage? How much footage did you receive? And how did you not only start to process and move through it all as an editor, but also as a person to sit with that content?

Terilyn Shropshire:

As you know, it all starts with the script. I remember when Ava called me to ask me to be a part of this. And then she sent me all four scripts, and I read them back to back. And I just remember being... by the time I got to the last one, I was just completely devastated. And it's always a privilege when you can take a journey where you're also learning about things. I knew the story, obviously, but to the depth that the writers have really gotten into it, it was quite extraordinary. And so when the dailies started coming in and the way that Ava was shooting, she was shooting multiple scenes for different parts at the same time.

I was responsible for part one, Spencer Averick, did part two and four, and Michelle Tesoro did three. We came on a gradual even though Spencer was starting to receive his dailies for two, he wasn't quite official, he was actually working from home. And so I was looking at all the dailies and then getting back to production and Ava just tried to send a message every day to let her know what I was seeing. I feel that the first time you watch dailies is the most important, it should be the purest and hopefully, you can allow yourself to take it in for the first time as the audience would take it in for the first time.

I really don't like to take a lot of notes the first time I watch dailies, I like to just... If I have the time to do so, I like to just be able to experience it because I will never have that experience again. And all editors know that. And so I just remember first of all, being incredibly impressed by the young men who were playing the characters and because I had the five men as boys, I have the actors that were playing the younger version. And every day I just became more and more just stricken by how beautifully they were portraying these characters. And yet I had to focus on the characters because that's ultimately the stories I have to tell. So, it was never an easy day on dailies. The dailies were pretty tough, and you had to be able to take those in and then, again, I go back and then make notes about the things that were particularly effective to me.

I started in a very broad sense, and then you narrow things down. And then the script itself, at least part one, there's a tremendous responsibility because in one, you have to set the stakes, you have to set the conflict. As an audience, they have to get to know who these young men were, as well as their parents, and what everybody was going through so that you're invested in them enough to want to continue on the story. And so the script itself for part one was a bit more on the linear side than what the ultimate version of the cut ended up being. It was shot in such a way, and conceived in such a way

where you went into each voice story. At the beginning, you get a sense of them going back and forth and getting to know them before they go into the park.

But once you're in the interrogations, there was a lot of going into each young man's room, and hearing the detectives question them, and then you go back to the detectives room, and you hear them talk. And as we started to build it, it became very apparent that even though these boys were going through some incredibly horrific experiences in their individual rooms, collectively, they were sharing the same thing. They were basically being pitted against each other. They were trying to get one to, to implicate the other. And they were in those rooms for a very, very long time. And it became very apparent in working with the material and working with Ava, that we needed to give everybody a sense of how even though these young men did not really know each other, ultimately Yusef, and Korey knew each other, but it was one of those things where they were all experiencing the same hell, so to speak.

How to build that, and how to make you feel as an audience that the viewer is trapped in that sense, as they were, and also to be able to really show what the detectives were doing in order to build their case. And that's very much the scene that you watch, this happens towards the end of part one, after the boys have been interrogated for hours, and most of them without their parents, and now they finally let their parents in. And you're seeing the weight and the gravity of what's happening.

V.T. Nayani:

Thank you for sharing. Yeah, I know you had mentioned that it was very linear. And in the edit it becomes what it does. And I just wanted to understand a bit more of that process. And I guess my other question was, how long did you guys work on that particular episode? And you got your dailies they came in, you're determining how you're going to tell the story. What did that process look like as it got to the end, because I'm interested also how it is working with the different... you've worked with incredible directors, what is like working with Ava to really lock that and decide, "Okay, this is what we're going to do." What did that process look like near the end, having it come together?

And half of that, the men were on set a lot of the time you saw Korey, and Yusef, many of them stopped by, did they get to see a cut before it ended? And it's going to go into my next question as well with the next clip, but it is their story, were they involved at any point, or was it just you and Ava, for the most part?

Terilyn Shropshire:

Those are good questions. While Ava was shooting, I was cutting simultaneously. And again, communicating with her. I don't remember really sending a lot of things forward. I think I sent her a few scenes forward, but because she was... the schedule is pretty, non-stop. But there was also the benefit of having the other editors around, because we could work off each other. As far as the part one process, part one was the first and I think part one was probably one of the last ones to finish. And I think part of it was, it was again, the weight of what it had to do for the rest of the other parts. Because one is introduction to the young characters, and you do see them, you do see them in two.

But again, you have to be able to understand what's going on in one. We spent a lot of time in one, and we spent a lot of time editing and re-editing and also getting a lot of feedback from the other editors in terms of... because the other thing too, is it was really important for me to be able to communicate to them because we were handing off the character batons to them, and so it was important for them to see what we were doing in one, and then ultimately we ended up finding ourselves swapping footage. Footage that maybe was intended for one, but it seemed as if it was going to work better and two, or a flashback, or something.

There were there were images that I had fallen in love with, with just... you know when you... you know stock footage of New York and that time of the movie where suddenly I have this great image and Ava would be like, "Oh, no, let's leave that for two." And you're like, "Okay." There was a lot of that. But Ava is just... she is so clear with her vision, and very, very specific. So what's great about Ava is just that... and she had to move around a lot. And so in some ways you had her for a certain amount of time, but that time that you were with her, she was so laser focused. So you could have been working on something for hours, and then Ava would come in and go, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. And you're like, "Oh, of course. Yes. Okay, we could do that."

That part of it was great. And figuring it out. I love the problem solving part of what I do. And with something like this, it wasn't as if we were running into a problem. But we were running into that realization of as you go into each room, and you keep hearing the same young man... or a different young man say the same thing. "I didn't do it. Who are you talking about? I don't know who that is." And so in a sense, there was a rhythm to each scene that allowed you to say, "Okay, look, if we keep going through each room, and they keep saying the same thing, at a certain point, the audience is going to be ahead of us." They know that these boys are going to... they're going to deny what's going on, and the police are going to press them about that. So, why not create an environment where we're moving where one person starting a sentence, and the other person's answering it.

Or where we disorient you in a way that you don't know where we're going to take you next. And you also needed to understand and be clear that these guys did not know each other. They lived in the same neighborhood. And like I said, two of them, and they might've passed each other on the street, but you really need to understand that they were being categorized a certain way. And this wilding, and this mentality that they all went out together. It took time to find the right rhythms and whose room were you going to go into next? And how to how do you build that story where you understand that even from the standpoint of someone like Raymond, who was completely just... he was with his grandmother, and they took her out.

And he was in that room alone with those guys. And ultimately they were forcing them to implicate the other. To answer your question, I think one took the longest, which made complete sense that it would, and I think that with... as far as how Ava decided to show it, at a certain point towards the end of our process, she did screen it for the actors, the young actors to see it. And then she made a decision to screen it for the actual men. I think she flew them in actually, to watch it because she knew it was going to be really important for them to be able to see it a certain way, and see it privately, frankly. She was very, very respectful because as hard as it was, for us to make it and be a part of it. We were trying to honor what they lived and what they went through. And it was always very sensitive and strong about the story, and protecting their right to experience it.

V.T. Nayani:

Thank you for sharing. I'm going to go to the next film, "Talk To Me" the MLK clip, I'm thinking about both pieces, both pieces of storytelling, and they are about real people and real lives lived based on real men's lives and what they've been doing, their story and their journey, but also within the larger social political context within bigger movements. One of the questions I had was how does that factor into your process of preparing and editing, but I think you spoke to that earlier. And so, I would love to discuss what we had a conversation about briefly, which is the pacing. We're going on this journey of emotion, feelings, and there's so many beats in there. Was that something that was on the page, and even if it was or it wasn't, how did you build that? What goes into crafting something that takes us through so much as an editor?

Terilyn Shropshire:

Thank you. Well, the thing about that clip is, it speaks to tone. And when you're working on a particular film, where you're going between moments of lightness and brevity and also dealing with serious topics within the story of somebody's life. This was a movie about a real person, Petey Greene, who was a radio personality at WOL at the time, and this was based on his life. And he was a character. And he was known as such. Dewey Hughes is also a real... was a real life character, this movie is about the relationship between these two men who actually came from the same background. And ultimately, their lives went in different directions, and yet their lives came back together. And they became very dear friends.

The reason why I like this clip, in a sense is it speaks to, as editors, how we have to sometimes navigate between something that is purely slapstick, or comedy, and then be able to make that shift. And how do you do that? How can you do it in such a way that hopefully it feels organic, and feels natural to what really happens in life, because in one minute we can be laughing, and something tragic can happen. And life shifts on a dime, it shifts quickly. And so within that scene, it's not even so much, really, again, the cutting part of it, because really, the first shot is one shot. We take you all the way in until the fight starts to happen. But it's really about being able to bring something so crazy happening into a place where these people are suddenly hearing one of the most devastating pieces of news that black people heard in their history.

And so I felt like I was helped a great deal by the music and Terence Blanchard's score, and Tainted Love, which is the original artist, and Gloria Jones. Yeah, actually made a note on that. And being able to go from something like that to then have Terence be able to help bring us in to what's really going on, because I think even when... I remember when people first started to see this scene, when you start to see the station manager come in played by Martin Sheen, people are still laughing in the theater. It was one of those things where even in seeing him come in, they were still in the head space of, "What is happening with this fight?"

And just to even feel that shift happened in the audience was palpable, really. And then ultimately, to then go into something that's a lot more watching these people have to work, to continue to do their jobs amidst this horrific information. The clip is shorter because it goes into a whole... even more of the riots and more of ultimately... it then shifts into a whole musical section. So yeah, I think that it's one of those things where when you're first starting out and trying to figure out your way in terms of storytelling, part of that muscle you try to hone in on is how to be able to make those shifts in storytelling. And how, as an editor, can you hopefully facilitate that, the way that you juxtapose the images and emotions and that type of thing.

V.T. Nayani:

We also have two questions that are about "The Old Guard", usually with fight scenes, or I feel like I especially in the pandemic where I had the opportunity to pull everything back and rewatch things multiple times. I always feel like I'm anxious and I'm caught up, and I'm missing things. Involved action happening so fast, the tendency to cut it that way. I've seen in a lot of work, and what I felt about this was I felt I was a part of everything, I saw every part of that fight. I didn't feel like it was rushed. I didn't feel like I missed anything. It's almost like I was a pilot, I was there and playing with them. And so yeah, what was the process of editing that? Was that intentional that way? How did you approach this particular fight scene?

Terilyn Shropshire:

It was extremely intentional from the standpoint of how Gina, how she and the DP Tami Reiker envisioned the fight. Her conversations with the fight coordinators and stunt coordinators, and obviously the choreography ultimately, and the training that both actors did Kiki Layne, and Charlize Theron, did to be able to have the scene work the way it did. Gina has always... her mantra was always that she wanted everything to feel real, to feel authentic. And she wanted to feel these two warriors taking each other on without a lot of bells and whistles. And they purposely even within the plane, they built the plane in such a way that they there were no walls that you could move out. They were in the fuselage working on the fight.

And so from my standpoint, it was just really important that I honored that. Fortunately, you had two very committed actors who really trained hard, and worked the choreography, and really made my ability to let them do their thing much easier. It was structured in such a way that each part of the fight... there were different stages of the fight. And so in a sense, as they were actually shooting it, and Gina directing the fight scenes, they were done in such a way that, "Okay, we're going to go from here to here." And then ultimately work on that part until they got that particular part of the fight done. It was very much like a dance and choreography.

And then moved on to a different part of the fight. And so it was created in such a way that at least the actors, if you can imagine, it's a lot for them to take on, if you were to try to do the whole thing. It was definitely divided into sections. And then it was really about them continuing to do a particular move. And until they felt like they had the right look of the punch being thrown or being received, or any number of those movements. And so within a take, I would actually have a lot of resets. Ultimately was about going through and really looking at what was working, and just picking the best of the work that they did. But it was a fun scene to work on. And it was great because there were things that ultimately, you get a pre-stunt piece, that's done by two of the stunt people that shows you what the choreography of the fight is going to be.

But it takes on a completely different life when you have two actors taking on that, because they bring their performances and their personalities, and the characters, and what the characters are going through. And being able to capture that. And that's part of it too, is that the whole idea of being able to have a fight scene is it's got to have a purpose. There's a reason why we're moving through it. And when you say yeah, it's not just about these two women punching each other out, they both have a goal, they're both trying to achieve something in this fight, and not just take you down the other.

This is the beginning of this master-student relationship. Nile is a warrior, she's a Marine. She's going to have a certain education, a fighting styles based on how she was trained. Andy's lived for millennia. She's learned every possible fighting style, she could have taken Nile down at any point. But that wasn't really the point of a fight, was it? For her, she's about to bring somebody into her family and to her team. And she's got to see what this person's made of. That was a fun part, was being able to let them both have... where you get a little bit more of a window into each person's personality within the scope of the fight.

V.T. Nayani:

Thank you. One of the questions that they had was how did you land that job? I know you have a relationship with Gina, so maybe that's... how did you get that job, how did you sign up for that job? And what was the best, and the most negative and positive, or the best and most challenging, maybe, takeaways from working on "The Old Guard"?

Terilyn Shropshire:

I landed the job because I've know I've worked with this director for 20 years. And as artists we have done, I think this is our sixth project together. As artists, we've grown together. I've been fortunate enough to have earned her trust. And so when she was going to take on this project, she asked me if I would be her editor. And of course, it was something that I ultimately, of course wanted to be a part of. As artists, we always love to keep moving and navigating ourselves through different stories. As people, we love living different stories and experiencing different stories and it's no different when you're an editor. I was very fortunate that Gina asked me to be a part of it. I would say that as far as, I guess, what was it the best part of it, the journey itself and the people that I got to work with-

V.T. Nayani:

And the most challenging.

Terilyn Shropshire:

Most challenging. The most challenging was... and this is not unique to "The Old Guard", but there was a lot of footage. And so there was a lot of footage to get through. And for me, I watch everything. So it was a lot of time spent in a room with a lot of footage. But I think the other thing that I would have to say, and I'm sure there are a lot of people that can relate to this right now, was having to finish a film of this caliber at the level that Gina and I work, and everybody else works in a pandemic. And that I found to be the biggest gauntlet that was... we have other gauntlets, but the one that really said, "Okay, how are we going to navigate through this and be able to continue to work and make collaborative art?" Which is what filmmaking is, "In a place where we have... a space where we have to isolate from one another."

And I had the most amazing crew. And my crew just rose to the occasion, every single time. Even though we were apart, we were a connected unit, obviously, Zoom, and Evercast, and Source-Connect, and TeamViewer all of these things that kept us moving forward. And I think the thing that was also... the thing that was hard, just at the point when I feel like sometimes as an editor, you're still working, but you're starting to enjoy the fruits of your labor. You've gone through the production, and all that's... the drama that happens with that. And then you finally you're close to locking. And now it's time to work with the sound people which I love. I love working with sound, and music, and scoring and all those things where you get to move into other people's rooms, instead of them coming into your room.

You get to go park to the scoring session, all of that went... we had to find a way to do all of those things in a different way. And we did it, and I'm really proud that we got through, but that part was hard. I love scoring, I love being part of hearing the score actually being recorded. And we did, we were on Source-Connect. They were literally scoring in Iceland, and I was getting up at... I find myself like falling asleep and waking up at three or four o'clock in the morning just to listen to the score being done. But that part was challenging. And then not being able to see... I got to see it in Gina, and I got to see it on the big screen, which was amazing just before, as we were doing our final checks. But when you saw it finally at theater, it was extraordinary. And I keep hoping that we'll do "The Old Guard" drive-in because I really would love more people to have seen it on the big screen.

V.T. Nayani:

Yeah, I was watching it on my laptop, but I just don't feel like it's the same as being on the big screen so I hope we all get to see that sooner than later. People that watched "Eve's Bayou" before this, then you all know that there's a long history of her being in stories that explores supernatural and the mystical forces, I guess, so to say. On your approaching... we talk about things that are about real people. And then you have a film like this that explores family secrets, the rituals, and spirituality and other kinds of practices. I'm always interested in that kind of stuff within my own culture. And so as an editor, as an

artist, as a storyteller, coming on board, documenting and putting together something that reflects things that are so sacred for real communities. What's your approach in that to edit something that does mean something and does have a history, and indigeneity, and a sacredness to so many communities? How was that?

Terilyn Shropshire:

It's interesting, isn't it? Because "Eve's Bayou" was set in a world where it's its own ecosystem in a sense within the film. It's this Southern Gothic world where there's a lot of tradition, and one of the things I loved about the script, again, all starts with the script. And Kasi's approach to it was the idea that if you think about it, "Eve's Bayou" was made, and I'm going to age myself and I look at Young Journey and I'm watching Lovecraft now I continue to be blown away by this young lady. I was blown away the first time I worked with her, and she carries... not carries the film, but it is her... this movie is about... it's her story, it's her point of view. It's like we journey through journey.

And so what was amazing about this was... part of this too, was just based on Kasi's life, and how she grew up and the people that she grew up around. And be able to reflect that back in film is something that we're not always able to do. And certainly was much more difficult to do it back then. And that's what it was so refreshing about "Eve's Bayou". Was that you were able to take these traditions that our culture have grown up with, and many other cultures have grown up in different ways, but share the same type of traditions and having parents who live at home, with grandparents who live at home with us. And kids who were basically disciplined a certain way, and beautiful women who... and black men who were professional doctors.

This is the way that I grew up. And these are the type of people that when I read the script, and ultimately started to work with this movie with Kasi, we were just reflecting a part of our lives that we were familiar with. But yet it was considered different to people who maybe had not seen this type of family. And so the mysticism part was, what was really great about this story was is that there were these traditions, but if you can imagine it through the eyes of a young girl who, for her, it's all both exciting and scary, and she doesn't clearly quite understand what's going on. And then ultimately, she realizes that she has this something special that's been passed on to her from her family.

And so it was always fun to respect the magical part of the story, and to make it feel... because it was real to these people, it was a real thing. And to be able to do that in a non-campy way and yet to find both humor in it, but also within Eve's mind, it was something very serious, she feels that she killed her father with Voodoo. Like, "How do I kill my father with Voodoo?" But yet to actually have that loss, I don't know what kind of therapy she went through for the rest of your life. But yeah.

V.T. Nayani:

We do have a question from someone who says "Love & Basketball" is one of their favorite film. I find that, and I mentioned this, we always focus on the love story, which is at the height of this film, and watching those journeys unfold together and apart. And it's one of my favorite films growing up. And it's so nostalgic, it takes you back to particular moments, particular time in your life. But I often find, and I think this also comes from Sanaa, talking about her experience, prepping for and being in this film, we forget about the process of her getting ready for it and becoming Monica, and the journey of becoming Monica. And her story on its own, and her journey in its own.

I picked this clip, because it focuses on her, and is not necessarily we woven together with the story of him and them together. And he talks about giving back agency in your work, and I see it here with this scene... even if it's one woman in the film, it's about her journey. It's about her story from her

perspective. What was it like working on this scene? And how did you cut that together? It's such a emotional moment, there are these beats there for her, and it leads to so much. What was that like, and how did you carve space to tell the story of the individual characters, but also focus on the lightest story of Love & Basketball?

Terilyn Shropshire:

I know, it all starts with Monica, doesn't it? And I think that we all have a little bit of Monica in us. It's not the athletic part. But it's the part of someone who's struggling to find her place, to prove herself, to not be limited in a world that wants to put you in a certain box, or tell you what you can't do. And I think that's why we all relate to Monica, and I think that's why we root for her because at any given point you can be identified if you're strong, or if you're overly athletic, or you move a certain way... you're basically pigeon-holed, or people decide who you are, when sometimes you're still trying to figure out who you are.

I think that that's why people really connect, aside from the fact that it's a love story. And because you're in a situation where, again, this is centered around a young person, and it's important that... and Sanaa, again trained so hard for this, and she wasn't a ball player, and she encompasses Monica. And so I think that to Gina's credit, it was also about trying to allow us as an audience to not necessarily have each basketball game... yeah, each basketball game had to have a purpose. It wasn't just about showing that Monica could play, but also showing that Monica was vulnerable, and that she didn't always make the right decisions. And so what I loved about creating this game and building this game, and Gina deciding to create it as a POV was what could I do to try to balance the time that you're with Monica in her head, basically going through what she was going through?

Initially, I didn't have the voice, that was something that was recorded while that ultimately it was... So it was trying to figure out building the actual POV part of the game, and when I was going to take you in and out of that. At what point do you choose to step out of Monica in a way that he or she would react. She would react to a buzzer, she'd react to a whistle. You go out in those moments, and yet, even her stepping onto the court, it's like... I was a swimmer in high school, and I remember when you would come out to get ready to go off the blocks, and you're walking to the blocks. And yet, you're somewhat aware of who's in the stands, if your parents are in the stands.

And so I think that we all can connect to those feelings of what is it like. The boy that she has a crush on is in the stands. All of that, that part of it was... it was kind of it's always like putting yourself in the position of where do I want to be as an audience? I think that the best thing sometimes you can do as a technician, as an editor, is to remember go back to your roots, go back to what made you want to be part of film. What it felt like to experience things, and try to approach your work that way. It's hard sometimes because you have to step in, and you have to be technical, and you have to figure it out. But you have to sometimes get out of your own head space and become a viewer again, and re-experience. That's why I say forget what you know and try to allow yourself to have some degree of perspective as an audience to what you're working on whenever you can.

V.T. Nayani:

Thank you. There's two audience questions. Speaking of audience, there's two audience questions, and I want to make sure we get to them. Again, Jennifer, I'm just going to read it word for word, "Love & Basketball is one of my favorite films, what was the process of editing that final one-on-one screen between Monica and Quincy? There's so many quick little moments that were captured so perfectly. How did you bring it all together?"

Terilyn Shropshire:

That's so funny that Jennifer asks that, because that's usually the clip I show, actually.

V.T. Nayani:

Yeah.

Terilyn Shropshire:

But I felt like I should maybe show something different to this evening. Look, that game was... it was, gosh. There was so much riding on it. I remember reading it, and I remember literally holding the script like, "Oh, my God, what's going to happen..." And so you want to honor that. You want to honor the first time you experience it. That was a scene that was scheduled to be shot over two nights. And I think it fell somewhere. I don't know, it was somewhere... I don't think it was toward the end of the shoot. But I do remember... I don't tend to always go to set. I have feelings about that, and there are some films where I've been on set more than others. And it's usually because there's some choreography or something going on, or playback, or something where I feel like it's helpful for me to be there. But usually, I like to keep a certain degree of filter, between what's happening on set and what's coming in to me as an editor.

And so this was a scene where I remember seeing the early rushes of the stuff that was coming in. And I could definitely feel that the game between Quincy and Monica. Originally, it was supposed to be a much longer game. And then I think in the course of them choreographing that, they realized that it was going to need to be a short... plus they were shooting this at night, and anybody who has shot at night knows that you only have a certain amount of hours. Anyway, it came in, and I felt like both of them by this point they both have the physicality of the game. And clearly, it had nothing to do with the game. It was really about what was at stake at the game.

And I did feel as I was starting to put it together that I was wanting a little bit more of what the game meant physically from an emotional standpoint, if that makes any sense. Yes, Monica would miss a shot here, and Quincy would get a shot here. But I really wanted to feel what they were both going through in the game. And I think that we had about 85% of it, but there was a 15% that I was missing. I remember talking to Gina about it and saying that... because they were going to have to go back and finish the game. It was one of those things where I did ask her, I showed her an early cut of it. That's the other thing. It's like, when you suddenly have to cut something very quickly for a director, and you may... and it may not have been a scene that I really wanted to cut right away, but I felt like I had to because, again, there was an instinct where there was certain things I wanted to see.

I wanted to get more of the fight, get into the game of... And so what was great was is that we looked at it together, and we found certain areas that we felt like she could go in and pick up some things. And so when you watch it, it's like some of this stuff is like just when they're grabbing each other, or he's pushing her hand away, or a couple... I think we have like just a couple more close ups of them in terms of relating to one another that really had nothing to do with the actual game itself. But the internal fight that they were both going through.

And so then we put it together, and then the challenge becomes how do you take a scene like this, and underscore it? Do you use score? Do you use source? What do you use as far as... what is going to be the musical language of a scene like this, because so much of it's at stake. And I remember, because a lot of times when I'm editing, I will start to... Gina usually has a playlist when she's writing, she usually passes on the playlist to me, and I start listening to what she is listening to. And then I'm always

listening to a lot of different types of music. And it happened around the time that we were cutting the scene, Meshell Ndegeocello's album Bitter came out.

And I remember listening to it on my way in to work one day, and the song came up, Fool of Me. And I was like, wow, this is our movie in a sense. This is what's going on right now. And so when I got to the cutting room, I talked to Gina about it, and we put it in. We had a cut of the scene, and I literally dropped it in. And it was amazing. It just fell. Those happy accidents are rare. Often you have to maneuver the music to... but it just, it was so emotional. We got so excited. I think we were running around that editing room. It's like we found the voice, the vocal voice of what we wanted the scene to be. And so that was really exciting.

And yeah, it's the scene that where you do have the cutting style of yes, the game. But then there are times when you want to slow it down, and you want to feel what these characters are feeling. And I think that that's the balance of trying to have a certain momentum. But don't lose the emotion in the momentum. There's a reason why this game is going on. And if they were just playing basketball, and you were focused on the action of the game, the scene would have never worked.

V.T. Nayani:

Yeah, I saw the story of how the track was taped because that track is... I think when anyone thinks about that movie, they think about that particular song, I think anytime they hear that song, it takes them back to that movie, if you watch that film. Good to know the story behind you listening to the album and suggesting it. It's going to be my little bit of fact history that I can share with like, "Did you know that actually, this is where the song came from?" We have two more questions, and one of them, I'm going to... there's one from your cousin. Your cousin Patricia. Patricia asks, "The Old Guard was so very different..." I'm going to read her whole message. "The Old Guard was so very different it seems from your other movies and work. Did it feel this way to you? Are there any common threads in the movies, do you have edited you feel?" And then it says, "This silly question is from your cousin, I am so very proud of you."

Terilyn Shropshire:

Thank you. Oh, my goodness. Look, "The Old Guard", what I loved about doing "The Old Guard" was it was a perfect example of being an editor and wanting to be considered that you're capable if you're really working on your craft, and you're working on your skill, as an editor. You have lots of tools in your toolbox, just as a director does. There's a lot of muscles that you want to try to just stretch when you're an artist. And I think that sometimes when you're working in commercial art, people want to tend to limit you or pigeon-hole you into, again, saying what you can't... not that they're not saying that you can't do it, but they tend to want to go with what is tried and true, or the person that's tried and true in a particular area.

And they may be tried and true because they've been given the opportunity. Ultimately, us being able to be our best selves is when people don't try to limit us and try don't try to tell us what we can't do, or don't allow us to showcase our work. What was great about "The Old Guard" is that everything that I've done before has prepared me for The Old Guard, it's a different type of storytelling, but it's still storytelling, there was no reason for me to think I couldn't do "The Old Guard". Whereas at the same time, I still had to go into meetings with the studio and educate them as to why wouldn't I be able to do "The Old Guard". But I had to be able to do that in a way to assure them that I was the right person, even though this was a choice of Gina's, but there was still the necessity for them to meet me, which happens on most films where, of course, the people that are giving you the money to make the film, are going to want to know who have you chosen to take this journey with?

But what I would say about in terms of things that are similar, what I love about all of these films is that they're either telling you... they're bringing you into a world that maybe you've been aware of, maybe you haven't certainly when you look at something like "When They See Us", and you look at "Talk to Me", these were based on true stories of people you... I mean there are a fair amount of people that knew about Central Park Five, but there are people that didn't really know the story. With movies like "Love & Basketball", and "The Old Guard", and other films that I've done with directors, especially the female directors, and not to say that male directors don't empower women, of course they do.

But being able to tell a particular story, or show a particular character through a specific lens, the people that I've been fortunate to work with, really are trying to empower and show the strength of their characters, whether they're male or female, and vulnerability. And that especially in terms of working with Gina, where you have women that have agency, and they're trying to find their place in the world. I'm just fortunate that the directors that I've worked with Ava, Gina, Kasi, Bob, if I start mentioning I'm going to miss somebody. They really have a strong voice, and they want to reflect the world that they want to see. And it's not necessarily the world that we always are living, But I feel like they're trying to give us a different perspective and a different lens, and allow us to think and feel and maybe see the world in a different way.

V.T. Nayani:

Patricia said, "Well, you knocked it out of the park."

Terilyn Shropshire:

Thank you.

V.T. Nayani:

One last question for tonight. I know it's getting late on the East Coast... late depending on who you are. I tend to stay up late, I think that's a lot of artists. And this is about "Eve's Bayou", we'll wrap with this. "Is there a part you would have cut that remained in Eve's Bayou because the director wanted it? I read the book a long time ago, but it was my favorite for many years. So is there anything left in that, that you would have cut but it stayed in the film?"

Terilyn Shropshire:

That's funny that they asked me about that "Eve's Bayou" and none of other movies. But no, seriously, with "Eve's Bayou", there was actually something that we didn't want to cut that we had to take out. And so it was actually the opposite happened, because in the original "Eve's Bayou", which you can still find because ultimately there was a director's cut that was released on "Eve's Bayou". But the original "Eve's Bayou" was there was a character named uncle Tommy, who lived in the house with Eve and her brother, her family. And he was actually based on a character and a memory from Kasi's childhood, again where often in cultures in the past, families lived together in the same house.

Uncle Tommy was a character who had... I don't remember whether it was cerebral palsy or whether he had had a stroke. He was someone who was not able to speak, and he was in a wheelchair, and they cared for him. Kasi's memory as a young girl was having to go upstairs. Her parents say go upstairs and say goodnight to Uncle Tommy. And for her, that that character, the idea of young kids having to go up and say goodnight to "something" that they didn't necessarily understand. Was a little bit daunting to them. But yet, within Kasi's writing and making a film, Uncle Tommy was actually a very integral character because he ended up being the mute witness to what had happened that night that

Cisely and her dad there was a fateful evening where something happened and it changed the course of their lives.

And that's part of what the movie about. And yet, in the original, what you discover is, is that you have two versions of what happened. And as we all know, again, memory is a selection of images. That's how we begin the movie. And our memories are different, like you and I could have an argument and our memory of that argument is going to skew towards... But yet, within this particular movie, there was somebody who saw what happened. But he doesn't have the ability to say what happened. And so it was a very layered character. And ultimately, when we... we had finished the film, and I don't want to go too far into it because we don't have a lot of time. But we finished the film, and then we were told that we had to remove that character.

And it was a big deal for Kasi, as you can imagine, as a director, to cross the finish line, and then somebody pulls you back from the finish line and says, "No, you're not done." And it was the studio decision to remove this character. And then it became my responsibility, or our responsibility together to remove this character, and yet deliver a story and a film where you never knew the character was there. Yeah, it wasn't something... I don't remember anything where I said, "Oh, this has got to go." But I do remember someone telling us that some character got to go.

V.T. Nayani:

Yeah, I remember Kasi being in Toronto at a screening of "Eve's Bayou", I guess, was last year sometime, but I don't know what time is anymore. But I remember her sharing that story. And I remember being an audience. Do you remember what that feels like to be in an audience? And we were all like, "What?" And it was a collective... especially not a filmmaking audience, in my mind that sometimes some of the decisions it's hard. It's hard because we're artists and, especially, I think for a story that's so personal, and comes out of your experience in some way. Yeah, I remember the collective gasp, so thank you for sharing that story.

Thank you for tonight, thank you for making time to chat with us. Again, I was so excited to speak with you. And I'm so glad that I know you a little bit. And I hope we can continue the conversation. Just for making your time and being open and willing to share because this is how we learn. And this is how we grow. We're a community, for those who are filmmakers here and those who aren't, and who are just film lovers. Film never gets done. And you said it earlier, film never gets done on our own. And we're all integral to the process. I'm excited to see what you work on next. But it's been a beautiful career to watch. And I know there's so much more to come, so thank you again.

Terilyn Shropshire:

Well, thank you. And I'm looking forward to seeing what you do next as well. And I really want to thank you for taking the time to get my work, and ask such great questions and steer us through this. I want to also thank the Canadian Cinema Editors for this honor of being able to talk with your group, and we're all in this together. So I really do appreciate it.

V.T. Nayani:

Thank you, Teri. Have a good night everyone, take good care, and I'm just wishing health and wellness for everybody.

Sarah Taylor:

Thanks so much for joining us today, and a big thanks goes to Terilyn, and V.T. for taking the time to sit with us. Our special thanks goes to Jane MacRae and Nagham Osman. This episode was edited by Alex Schead. 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.

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 any way they can.

If you've enjoyed this podcast, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts and tell your friends to tune in. 'Til next time I'm your host Sarah Taylor.

[Outtro]

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