

Sarah Taylor:

This episode was generously sponsored by the Directors Guild of Canada, Alberta District Council. If you reside in the province of Alberta and are interested in editing, contact the DGC Alberta to learn more.

Paul Rogers:

We wanted to stay in the wides as much as we could, and we wanted to not be cutting around when we didn't know what was happening. And a big way of leveling that playing field between us, indie action film and big blockbuster film, was time-remapping and splitting the screen and combining takes; and making a punch that may not have been thrown quite with the force it needed, speed ramping it, and making it feel better. And when someone flies back, slowing them down in midair so that there's more of a weight, and then speeding it up right as they hit the ground so that you feel that impact. These are all just little reasons why Premiere worked out really well.

Sarah Taylor:

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 acknowledgements are the start to a deeper action.

Today, I bring to you an interview with Paul Rogers, the Academy Award-winning editor for Everything Everywhere All At Once. We discuss Paul's journey from Alabama to Hollywood, what it was like working with the Daniels on Everything Everywhere All At Once, and Paul's philosophies in and outside the edit suite. Without further ado, I bring you Paul Rogers.

Speaker 3:

And action.

Sarah Taylor:

This is The Editor's Cut.

Speaker 4:

A CCE podcast.

Speaker 3:

Exploring, exploring, exploring the art-

Speaker 4:

Of picture editing.

Sarah Taylor:

Paul, thank you so much for joining us on The Editor's Cut today. I'm very excited to chat with you all things editing.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah. Thanks for having me. It's always fun.

Sarah Taylor:

Excellent. Yeah, I know. Editors talking with editors is like-

Paul Rogers:

I know.

Sarah Taylor:

I can just do it for days.

Paul Rogers:

I know. It's funny. I was just talking to somebody the other day about this about the American Cinema Editors, which I guess is the American version of y'all, we...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

-when we get together. I'm not a member, but I was invited to do some stuff this year, it's almost more awkward because you're like, "Oh, my God." These people not only speak the same language as me, but like... but they understand the work in a way that's different and they can see the both the good parts and the cracks and the flaws in what I do you know more than most people, who are just like, "Wow, that was... that was cool. That was crazy. I'm very impressed." They're like, "Yeah, well, but that one like.. . one part was a little funky."

Sarah Taylor:

Like, "What were you doing there?" No, well, I don't have anything critical to say about the work you've done on Everything Everywhere All At Once. But before we start talking about that specific film, because I think you've probably talked about it a lot as of recent, I'm sure; but I want to know, how did you get to where you are today? What was the thing that drew you to editing? And a... just a little bit of your backstory. What's your origin story?

Paul Rogers:

I started in high school. I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and I went to Homewood High School. And there was a guy in my high school who I had kinda observed. He had what I guess I would call a bit of a racket, in that he would... we would all get assigned these essays on you know... the Spanish War of whatever, and he would be like, "I'm going to make a video. I'm going to make a movie about it." And then he would go and make a kung fu movie-

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, my gosh.

Paul Rogers:

... and submit it. But it would be so... He put so much time and effort into it that the teacher would be like, "Eh, well, you know... you tried hard, so here's a B...B-plus." And I was like, "That seems cool." So he... we had like a similar social studies project and he umm.. you know.. was making, obviously, a mafia movie about whatever. And uhh.. so I just joined up and we you know... spent all night at my dad's office just running around and having you know pretend fights and shooting pretend guns. And then uhh... I was like, "This is some of the most fun I've ever had." And so we just started making a lot of films together. His name was Peter Hastings. And... and eventually, I got to a point, this is all in high school, where I was like, "I wonder if I could do this for a living." I started looking into film schools and talked to my parents. And to my surprise, they were supportive. And I went... ended up going to College of Santa Fe, which is a small little undergrad school in New Mexico, and uhh... loved it. It was beautiful. Uhh... and they had a start... first year or two of the school, we had to shoot and edit everything on 16.

Sarah Taylor:

Mmm.. Nice.

Paul Rogers:

And so I was on a steam beck you know.. umm... cutting film and.. and...liked it; but it was you know... it's intimidating and it's hard. It's hard work. And then by the time they let us start using Final Cut and Avid, you know I had... It's its... nice because coming to Final Cut or Avid from a year or two of editing on film is like a revelation-

Sarah Taylor:

Mmhmm...

Paul Rogers:

...and it's incredible and you realize just how amazing they are. Whereas I... you know.. I grew up with computers. I was making... This stuff we were working on in high school, I was using Windows Movie Maker or whatever-

Sarah Taylor:

Wow..

Paul Rogers:

...so it just kinda seemed natural. Of course, this is how it works. So you know... learning on film really gave me an appreciation for what non-linear editing is, you know... for what it... what it can do for you, and .. and how amazing it is. And I found myself in school, in college, directing and writing and shooting and acting and just every time I would do one of those, I would kinda just be waiting to get to the edit so I could play, so I could really have the fun that I wanted to have. And it took me a while to realize that I could do that for other people. So I remember the first guy, his name is Zeeshan McCaughney. He asked me to cut his film that he had shot. And I was like, "You can do that? You can do other people's stuff?" And so I did it. It was amazing and it was really fun. He was really happy. And I just started doing that in

school and cutting stuff for other people and realized that it was... that was where I was happiest. And so got really lucky; got out of college and got a job at public television, cutting documentaries in Alabama, and did that for you know... even years and kinda thought I was settling in you know.. I... I like... I was 24, got married, got a dog, got a house, like.. you know... had a good job with a retirement plan, and was like, "All right. Now we'll just do this forever and then I'll get old and die." And I was at work doing what you do at a job sometimes, which is kinda like screwing around on the internet and watching other stuff and not working. And I watched a film called Until The Quiet Comes by a director named Kahlil Joseph. Just watched it again and again and then was just floored by it. And I went home and told my wife, Becky, "I think I have to quit my job and I have to find these people and I have to move to LA and... and-

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Paul Rogers:

... uproot our lives." And she was like, "Uhh.. Okay. No, thank you." Uhhh.. But she you know... was like, "Look, you go out there and and... give it a shot and I'm gonna stay here and keep my job and keep our house, and I... you know... keep the the.. bank account, checking account with a little bit of money in it." Because I went out there at age 29 and became an unpaid intern and was just working for free.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Paul Rogers:

So you know.. I foun... found Khalil's editor, Luke Lynch, who cut that with him, and took him out for drinks and you know... got some advice. And when I came out here, I never asked for a job and I never asked for work or never asked for anything except for advice. And so he just gave me advice and he invited me to uhmm.. Absolutely Productions, which is where Tim and Eric, you know... the comedy duo, it's their company. And he was cutting The Eric Andre Show, season one... Season two, maybe. And he just gave me the code for the door of the production company.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Paul Rogers:

So I just started showing up every morning, just dialing in the code. And I would you know sweep the floors or organize the cereal boxes or whatever, just make myself useful. And one day, one of the producers there was like, "You're an intern, right?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure." He was like, "Did you fill your paperwork out?" I was like, "Nope." He was like, "Okay, here's your internship paperwork." So that's how I became an intern.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, my goodness.

Paul Rogers:

I just slid in.

Sarah Taylor:

You got the code and you organized that cereal.

Paul Rogers:

I just showed up. I think in general, I had had interns at my old job. I knew what a good intern was; just someone who doesn't walk around asking people for things to do. They just do stuff that needs to be done. And it doesn't matter if it's like, you know... "Do you want me to organize this footage?" or this was back when tapes were still a thing, too. I'll organize your tapes, I'll label your hard drives. I will go to the grocery store and I'll go pick up lunch you know... and then I got lucky enough to intern on season two, assist on season three, and then I was cutting on season four of The Eric Andre Show. And in between there, I was you know... meeting people. I met Dan and Daniel, roller skating in Glendale and cut the music video with them.

Sarah Taylor:

Were you good at roller skating and then that was like, "Oh, this guy's cool"?

Paul Rogers:

Yeah. I can do it.

Sarah Taylor:

I can do it.

Paul Rogers:

I stayed upright-

Sarah Taylor:

Perfect.

Paul Rogers:

... for the most part. But yeah, so that... it wasn't super linear, like I interned and then I assisted and then I edited and then that was it. That was my big break. Because I was doing stuff on the side and so was Luke. And and... Luke and I ended up becoming partners with Kahlil and with Graham Zeller in a company that was called Parallax. and yeah, I met Dan and Daniel roller skating. We hung out. It was great. I was like, "These are good people." I volunteered at a kids' camp that they had going on where they teach kids how to make music videos.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, that's cool.

Paul Rogers:

And they saw you know... some of my editing that I did on the kids' music videos and were like you know..., "Hey, we have this silly music video called Turn Down For What, if you want to... We've never

worked with an editor, so maybe you could give it a shot." And so I did and it worked out well and we just kept working together. We did Interesting Ball, a short film, and a couple other things. And so you know... I just kinda like... tried to follow my interests and and... surround myself with good people who were also doing good work and try to stay away from the bad people who were doing good work or... you know... I definitely you know... I prefer good people who do bad work, to bad people who do good work.

Sarah Taylor:

I would have to agree with that.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

How did you determine, like decipher that when you first got to L.A.? Like who was right? Who was good for you?

Paul Rogers:

It was really just gut feeling. Like I met with Luke at a bar the first night or maybe the second night I flew into L.A., because I flew out really just to take Luke out for drinks. I flew out here, I took him out for drinks, I flew home. And then I... I was like, "It seems like he's a nice guy. I can make this work." About six months later, I got my stuff in order and I drove out-

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Paul Rogers:

... in my CRV. and uhmm.. but yeah, it was really just Luke was a good guy. He was nice and he was straightforward and honest and it didn't feel like he was bullshitting me and he wasn't trying to get free work out of me. He would pay me when he could and you know... but a lot of that stuff, like I said, was... you know.. A music video, you get paid like 200 bucks.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

It was nothing. And most of it, that was back in the day when legally you could be an unpaid intern. So I worked for free for a long time and my wife was just paying my bills.

Sarah Taylor:

Thanks, Becky.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, totally. And then even when she moved out, she got to keep her job and go remote, which back then was not really a thing. So yeah and then Dan and Daniel were just... I mean... You can see it when you see them in interviews. They're just really solid, great, wonderful people. So it wasn't any kinda... I didn't have any kind of checklist. It was just like... if I vibed, if I got a good feeling, then great. If I got a weird feeling, then no, thank you.

Sarah Taylor:

I think that's a hard thing for people you know... younger in their career to listen to that intuition and that gut. I know a lot of that plays into all you do in the edit suite as well, but you need to have that trust with the people you're working with.

Paul Rogers:

I think so. And I think it's also like if you find yourself trying to convince yourself to do something, to take a project, or trying to convince yourself to work with somebody, well, you know... coming up with reasons, probably not a good idea. Something in your gut is telling you not to and then your brain's trying to convince your gut to do it you know.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I've had many experiences like that and I'm always like-

Paul Rogers:

Me, too.

Sarah Taylor:

... "Remember that time when this happened before?"

Paul Rogers:

yeah I still do it. I'm still like, "Well, it's a good opportunity and I don't know, it could be nice."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, but then it's always a challenge.

Paul Rogers:

I never... I have never proven my gut wrong. Every single time I've done that, I've been like, "I fu... I knew it. I knew this was going to end." But I just I... convinced myself it was going to be fine and it's never worked out.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. So how long was it from the time that you you know... took out Luke for drinks to then having... now you have a company, you've worked together, you're doing Oscar winning films? How long have you yeah I guess how long have you been in L.A.?

Paul Rogers:

I've been in L.A... Well, 2013, July, 2013, so it's coming up on 10 years. But like I said, I had you know... seven years of editing experience professionally in Alabama. Although, I think it paid off. It didn't pay off in terms of real... Nobody cared what I did in Alabama. Its In L.A., it's very much, "What have you done with people that I know?"

Sarah Taylor:

Yes.

Paul Rogers:

And what have you done that I've seen? And I hadn't done any of that. It was all stuff that's just airing you know... locally. So... I had the work ethic, I think, and the ability to work with people. And I was beginning to develop a kind of... I don't know if you would say a style, but just a sensibility, I guess.

Sarah Taylor:

Mmhmm...

Paul Rogers:

And so I think that helped me kinda accelerate here a little bit faster than if I'd come out here when I was 23 you know.... Yeah. And it was 10 years and then all of a sudden, to be honest.

I did a film in, what was that, 2016, called The Death of Dick Long. It was my first feature. It was really fun. It was with Daniel Scheiner. That wasn't like the big break. Then all of a sudden, I was doing features and just meeting with all kinds of directors. It was a great experience and it was you know... one of the most fun edits I've ever done. But its not you know.... it was really like Everything Everywhere that all of a sudden it just hit so hard and and worldwide. I think all of us who worked on it were just kinda blown away. And our lives changed overnight, professionally, at least.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow. Well, I'd like to talk about Everything Everywhere All At Once. You know... you mentioned that you met the Daniels rollerskating, which I think is awesome. Led you to music videos, short films. What was that initial conversation when they said, "Hey, we have this film"? How did that go?

Paul Rogers:

They had made a film called Swiss Army Man with an editor named Matt Hannam.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, yeah. He's Canadian.

Paul Rogers:

He's Canadian, right?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

He's become a great friend. He's got just an incredible like CV. He's got so many great films and worked with so many great filmmakers. So they told me that they were working on Everything Everywhere and they invited me to Dan Kwan's back kinda his back office, which basically is his converted garage. And they just said they wanted to walk through the script, that they had been doing this with people. They had been talking through the script with people because it helps them in the writing process to talk it out and then to ask questions afterwards.

And so I sat back there with John Wong, the producer, and they just acted it out. They weren't jumping around and wearing outfits or anything, but they were like they would just talk it through. "Okay, this happens, this happens. And then he comes up and the dad says this." And then they would say it. And it took two hours or something. It was a long time just sitting and listening. But it was really, really fun and really beautiful. And and I.. you know.. I cried four times. I remember being like, "That was amazing." I've never cried, someone just telling me a story.

And back then, it was a story of a father-daughter, and it was Jackie Chan, was the idea. And Evelyn was more of a... not a side character, but she wasn't the main character. And then they did that and I was like, "This is amazing. I cannot wait to see it. I hope you make it. I hope you get all the money you need. And I hope you cast... I hope you get Jackie Chan," because that was who they were going out for. And then a while later they said they let me know that they had changed the script up. They had switched it to be about a mother-daughter, and Evelyn was now the main character and they had Michelle Yeoh in mind.

And I was so excited because I love... Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon was a pretty important film for me growing up because, this is sad, but it's one of the first foreign films that I'd seen, really, in theaters. My dad would always rent foreign films and bring them home and we'd watch them, but that was my first theatrical experience with that. And it really opened me up and got me excited and I really started exploring just just foreign films, in general. And anything outside of the mainstream started to be exciting for me and it even got me into indie filmmaking. And I loved Michelle in that and so I was really excited.

And then they asked me if I wanted to cut it, and I was like... immediately terrified. Because I had sat through that thing and I was like, "This is going to be an insane film and it's going to be really hard to cut and shoot and act."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

Like All of it was a challenge. Everything they were laying out seemed impossible. So I said, "Yeah." And then I immediately called Matt Hannam and I was like, "Can you... can I take you out for drinks or dinner? And I just I think I need your help. I need to know that I could do this. I need your moral support."

And he was super gracious and you know.. we went out. It was like the week before lockdown too. We were like, "Should we be out? And he just walked me through his process and the experience of working with them and... and just his experience working on so many films with so many directors. And a lot of it was just kinda like talking about personality and keeping the energy up and keeping everyone happy and excited. And that stuff's the stuff that I really... like.. I know that through the process of editing, the iterative just work through it process, we'll figure it out editorially.

I just wanted to also make sure that it was a positive experience and that we all could stay friends; because I was good friends with Dan and Daniel, and this was a big movie, and I knew it was going to be stressful and knew it was going to be hard, and I didn't want to jeopardize or what we had going personally. So that was a really, really big help. And then yeah they sent me the script. I read the new script. I was scared all over again. And then we just got to it. I just kinda had to not think about it as a filmmaker at first and think about it as just I was excited to help my friends make this crazy thing you know.

Sarah Taylor:

From that.. the rewrite of the script that you read after you signed on as editor, how much has that has that changed to what we see in the final film?

Paul Rogers:

The rewrite's you know... pretty much there. There's some stuff that got cut, but they had worked on that script for maybe, I think, three years you know.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, wow. Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

And they had a lot of help from other people just reading it and giving notes and smart filmmakers and writers. I think people would be surprised at how dialed in it was and how much the edit reflects that script. We cut a couple of universes. There was one called the Spaghetti Baby Noodle Boy Universe.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, my gosh.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, that one's on the cutting room floor. It's on the deleted scenes, though. But it was Evelyn was a spaghetti noodle in a pot of spaghetti noodles, and then Jenny Slate played her little boy who was a macaroni noodle, who was like, you know..."I'm the only one that's not shaped like the other noodles. I have a hole. No noodles have holes. I don't belong." And anyways, it was a... it's very funny. You should check it out.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I'm going to totally check that out. That's amazing.

Paul Rogers:

It was one of my favorite parts of the script, but it just didn't never worked in the film. And we really tried. It was in there until some of the later, later, later cuts. And every screening people would be like, "Yeah, I don't...I don't.. I didn't really vibe with that part of the film." We were like, "Just wait. We'll just well change the treatment, we'll change the genre, we'll mess with the music, change the voiceover." And then we're just like, "No, nothing's working."

Sarah Taylor:

You really wanted to save the spaghetti.

Paul Rogers:

We really did.

Sarah Taylor:

Wanted it to be saved. I'd like to talk about like the team that worked in post. Did you have assistant editors? I know you were working during COVID, so that changed how it would work and everybody had to change how they worked.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

So..What was the team?

Paul Rogers:

It started off with me and Zekun Mao, who's incredible. And she was from AFI and yeah she had to pivot immediately the first week of... We had one week where we were working in the office off of our network, off our server. And then we all got an alert on our phones. It was like, "Go home and stay home." And so I...I remember just grabbing an iMac off the desk and a hard drive and running home. And we all did that. And you know.. I had never worked remotely. I had taken a music video home and done that, but not like this and not with a team. And the way that me and Dan and Daniel work is they cut with me. you know... They have the premier project and we're trading ideas constantly. And so it was a challenge, to say the least.

And she just figured it out. We got on Resilio Sync, we synced up all our hard drives. We got Evercast going. We tried everything you know... We tried Zoom, we tried Google Meet. Just, "How can we si... how can all sit in a room together and work?" She figured it out. It was amazing. And I didn't really have to worry about it. And also, Adobe was really helpful because this was before productions came out. And for those that don't know, productions is basically It... functions the way Avid has, as far as sharing bins and having multiple editors in a project. It was still in beta. And we just reached out and said, "We're doing this crazy thing. Do you have any help for us?" And they said, "Well, we have this secret thing we're working on and maybe we can get you on the beta and you can try it out." And that was a lifesaver.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, my goodness. No kidding.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, and it worked out great for remote work, and they also just gave us access to their engineers so we could be like, "How does this work?" And they would jump on a Zoom and just walk us through it or you know...

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, wow.

Paul Rogers:

Or occasionally, we...we.. because it was in beta, we found a bug and they would just push an update for us you know... So that was a dream come true. We had a lot of great smart people figuring out how to work remotely. And then Zekun had to leave about halfway through to cut her first feature. And she introduced us to Aashish DeMello who took over and he took us through to the end. And it was like you know.. a dream team. Everyone was great, everyone was on it. I had very little to.. to... worry about. The one thing that I wish I had done more of is just relied on them creatively more, because I think I was so wrapped up in just my own like anxieties about the film. And because of the remote workflow where they weren't in the office, I had dreamed of including them a lot more. of like "Do a pass on the scene and and you know.. come sit with me for a while." And it just didn't work out that way. And I think a lot of it was just kinda me yah me getting caught up in my own anxieties about the film. But the couple of times when I remembered to do it, it was great. you know It was a good cut. Did some assemblies of scenes that were really, really fun. And she was great because she spoke Mandarin and Cantonese. I don't speak Mandarin and Cantonese. Dan Kwan speaks a little bit, but he's not fluent. And so she was subtitling for us and she would even say, like you know... "That's a pretty good take, but they you know they flubbed the line there or they said the word a little funky. It just sounds weird." And so she would help us even with our selects and stuff.

Sarah Taylor:

That's amazing.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

That's a great asset. Yeah. You mentioned your anxieties of doing this massive film that had many themes, many genres, or styles you could say, of different inspiration from different films. How did you handle all that? Were there films that you watched to be like, "Oh, this is a good reference for this universe," or like yeah... how did you tackle all the worlds?

Paul Rogers:

I mean I think it's pretty obvious that the Matrix was a huge influence and reference. And I think you can't really make a sci-fi action film in our generation of filmmakers without even accidentally referencing and pulling from the Matrix. It was so influential. I just bought tickets to watch it on 35, actually, last night.

Sarah Taylor:

Nice.

Paul Rogers:

It's at a local theater. I haven't seen it in theaters since it came out. You know... I watched it when I was 15 or whatever.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, my goodness.

Paul Rogers:

Anyways, so that was a big one. And the temp score, half the temp score at the very beginning was the Matrix score because it just fits, and it also has kinda shorthand. They did a really good job of establishing... I guess it's the its kinda the water harp. I don't know exactly what it's called, but this sound that they use that just lets you know something funky is going on in the Matrix right now. Just pay attention. That kind of stuff was really useful. And Son Lux, our composer, ended up, I think, taking some inspiration from that and trying to figure out their own version of that. What was that version of the Multiverses, is something's happening you know... or something's coming. The Matrix Dan and Daniel had us watch Holy Motors, which is incredible; but it's less of a stylistic reference or storytelling reference and more of a reference of, "Hey, you can ignore the rules of filmmaking and storytelling and still have a really powerful emotional experience." you know... And uhhh. we watched Paprika, which is a great film from Japan, and Mind Game. And really for Mind Game, there was ...there's a section at the end of that film, it's animated, where they're trying to escape out of the belly of a whale. And it's like 30 minutes and I don't think there's any dialogue and it's just pure insanity. And so Dan Kwan always talked about that as a reference for the end of our film, kinda going up the staircase, that section. There's just so many like incredible films that would come up. Obviously, In The Mood For Love. they... I don't even know if we even mentioned it by name while we were cutting because it was just so obvious. This is in the In The Mood For Love universe you know; what we would call, I guess, the movie star universe. I call it a sexy wayman universe.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, that's true.

Paul Rogers:

The nice thing about audiences today is we're all... Because of streaming and because we grew up with just film as an... such a more accessible, even just because we had Blockbusters where we could rent movies and re-watch them; versus my parents' generation we're like, "If you didn't catch it in theaters, you didn't see it." Because of that, we have a really kinda ingrained knowledge of genre and an understanding of the tropes of each genre. Even if we don't have that kinda vocabulary, we're just general film goers, we know what it means, what it sounds like and feels like, to be in an action film or romance or rom-com or you know comedy. And so we could lean on those editorially as we're jumping back and forth between universes to just center people and ground people in what they're what they're in. Because its its... we're asking a lot of the audience. We talked a lot about this; the whiplash the whiplash the film is by design creating as you fly back and forth between genres. And it's nice to just give people a clue, like, "Okay, you are in the this is the Lifetime family drama genre." you know.. And the aspect ratio plays into that, the music, the color correction, you know... even their performances. They kinda dialed in to that you know... And the pacing of it, we would just try to emulate those things. Comedy genre or multiverse, the action universe, the horror film universe, or just you know... those moments. That was really fun to get to play in all those different genres and be like, "Okay, what are the things we can do to help the audience know where they where they are and what's going on and and how they can.. how they should be reading this andand and and ingesting this?"

Sarah Taylor:

You came up with a technique and I'm curious where it came from, to signal the audience that were you know.... there's going to be a shift, we're going to go into the multiverse. And there was the glass

cracking, the sounds. Was that some of stuff that was established within like the initial edits or was that after the fact?

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, it was editorially, we figured it out. And the glass cracking, I remember early on Dan and Daniel, they were just they were trying a bunch of stuff with Zak Stoltz, the VFX supervisor, and the glass cracking was just one of them you know.. They had a bunch of different ideas. And then I was playing around a lot with sound design you know. What would it sound like? That reverse bell ring that ended up being... It was just one of many options we had. And you know... the nice thing about the glass thing, too, was the sound of it is so visceral and gives you that feeling because it's not a pleasant sound and it sounds like something's going wrong. And that's how it should feel you know.. when she's split between these universes and trying to center herself.

So pretty early on, we we.. I think Dan and Daniel and Zak decided that that was the move. And then it was just a matter, for me, of kinda sound design and how can I play within that space and how can we all just experiment so that no no like no multiverse shift is ever exactly the same. And can we can we tailor them each to what's going on in that moment, and can we have fun and play and subvert expectations now that... Once we establish a language, can we play within that you know...

Sarah Taylor:

Break those rules.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. I like it. Was there a scene that was the most challenging?

Paul Rogers:

God, I mean the whole thing was challenging. I think we for different reasons, different scenes. The first 15 minutes in the laundromat were challenging, only because we found out pretty early that if we didn't nail the characters and who they are and their motivations and and also just make the audience care about them within the first 15, that the rest of the film just never worked. And especially that end scene, the parking lot between Evelyn and Joy. The first couple cuts, like people got it, but they didn't feel it. People weren't crying as they watched that you know. And it was because we weren't doing what we needed to be doing in the first 15 minutes.

Sarah Taylor:

Right... yeah.

Paul Rogers:

And we ended up really dialing in the performances. and... Not that they weren't there, but we just weren't using them the way that we needed to be. And then they added a.. a pickup shot of Joy driving away crying; because the way that her character was handling all this drama with her mom in the in the script and the way that it was shot was she was putting up a brave face and just giving it back as much as she was giving it to her mom, for the most part. We were trying to figure out ways within what they shot

to just like, "Okay, can we hold on Joy as she's upset with her mom for calling Becky her friend." And we were pushing that as much as we could. And then finally, Dan and Daniel were like, "I think we just need to do a pickup." And so they shot that moment of her weakness and her vulnerability and it really just carries through for the rest of the film.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I think that... Yeah, what a good... what a good decision.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Knowing that you have a background in music videos, did you find that was really helpful for a lot.. lot of the action scenes and the speed ramping, those skills... technical skills that you would've taken from the music video world?

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, I think the more expansive the type of work you can do, the better. I mean... you know I wish I had done more weird stuff and it all would've been helpful. Music videos are fun because there's a general like lower stakes quality to them that allows you to really just get weird and experiment. And whatever makes it fun and enjoyable to watch, works. So you don't have to follow many rules. The only rule is try to make the song better, somehow you know. I feel like Turned Down For What, because of the treatment of the way that they made that music video like, it makes me like the song more and I picture that. And.. you know... same with Until The Quiet Comes by Kahlil is like. That song means a lot to me when I hear it because I see those images in my head.

Sarah Taylor:

Mmm. Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

It's one of the sources of anxiety, sometimes, in working on a music video for a really good song, is like...if you don't elevate it, then you might run the risk of the opposite, of making it be like, "Yeah, when I... now when I hear that song, I see that terrible music video in my head."

Sarah Taylor:

They ruined it.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah. And that's scary. That's a real responsibility that editors have, I think, in everything we do is like I felt that on this film. "Man, if I screw this up, it's going to make Michelle look bad, it's going to make Ke look bad, Stephanie Hsu, it's going to make Dan and Daniel look bad, the production designer, Jason you know... These are all my friends that work on this stuff. And so it passes through my hands at the very end; and in my mind, that means if it's not good, it's my fault and I'm letting all these people down. I think it's important to hold that responsibility every day.

Sarah Taylor:

I'm curious about your choice to use Premiere. I'm primarily a prem...Premiere editor myself and so...

Paul Rogers:

Mmhmm..

Sarah Taylor:

And what were the advantages... Obviously, productions was...very handy for you, but what were some of the other advantages you found using that system?

Paul Rogers:

I learned Avid in school and liked it. And I also learned Final Cut in school. It was probably 4, Final Cut 5, or I don't know 3 I dont know what it was.

Sarah Taylor:

3 was their big one that came out. We were like, "Whoa."

Paul Rogers:

That was probably it. Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

Final Cut 3. And then I... when I got out of school, my job at public television, they were on Final Cut Pro, so I just got used to that. And then when they decided to go to X...Final Cut X, me and Luke, I remember, were working and we were like, "Should we do Avid? Should we go to Avid or should we go to Premiere?" And we were both like, "We don't really want to go to Premiere," because we don't know it and it it... didn't have a good reputation and so.... Because we were dismissing it, we were like, "Well, we should try it then because that's dumb to not try it and just dismiss it." you know And so we gave ourselves a week and it was a pretty slow week and we had maybe a music video or something. And we cut it and you know.. Premiere was smart and you could choose Final Cut 7 keyboard shortcuts, which I've still... My shortcuts are super modified, but they're kinda based on that.

And we liked it and there was a lot of like freedom in the Premiere workflow. It's a little more kinda improv jazz. It's a little less tied to the film workflow. Avid is very much like emulating the film workflow, which is great for people who came from film, who cut in film for years and years and years. Because Final Cut was less of a film workflow, as well, I think I was just separated from that workflow so much that Premiere made more sense and felt more free to me. And and honestly, it just like... I feel like it's like arguing over what brand of drill you like its like.

Sarah Taylor:

Hundred percent.

Paul Rogers:

They both fucking drill holes like.... you know.

Sarah Taylor:

Nobody knows the difference between those two holes, what drill happened. Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, that's what I'm saying so like.... As long as the work gets done, it doesn't matter. It's just a personal preference of what frustrates me less; and Premiere personally frustrates me less. And I like i like Avid. I'm working on Avid on a project right now. It's just because certain projects are started, then it's a pain to convert them. I like, also, the fact that Dan and Daniel... And I think 95% of the VFX in this film were done in After Effects. And they would just you know.. shoot it off to After Effects and bring it back and it was so easy and so fast.

And I love... I temp in a ton of VFX in my projects and I do a ton of audio effect work. And so it's heavily sound design and heavily affected. And being able to like... do a really fast mat over someone and split screen to combine two takes, like it takes me four seconds to do a really pretty solid key. you know... And there's this good amount of green screen in this. And then once... I'd never really used time-remapping keyframes on the timeline; and once I figured that out in Premiere for this film especially, it became huge.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, it's a game changer once you can wrap your head around how to make it work.

Paul Rogers:

Man it was like... we.. they shot a lot.. Because of the music video background, they shot a lot of their stuff at high frame rates so that we had the option to slow down. Even if we didn't, I could play so much with just like... Not so much performances, but like... what's going on in the background while someone's doing something in the foreground you know.. in a non-action scene. But in the action scenes especially, we would really like... Because we wanted to not... A lot of the reason that indie action movies get so cutty in their in their... action scenes is because they have to. Because they just don't have the time for rehearsal, they don't have the time and money for a four-day shoot on a one scene fight. And that was how this was. like... The fanny pack fight they shot in a day, I think, which is crazy. They spend a week on that stuff in Hong Kong.

Sarah Taylor:

Wow.

Paul Rogers:

And we wanted to stay in the wides as much as we could and we wanted to not be cutting around where you didn't know what was happening. And a big way of leveling that playing field between us, indie action film and big blockbuster film, was time-remapping and splitting the screen and combining takes; and you know... making a punch that may not have been thrown quite with the force it needed, like... speed ramping it, and making it feel better. And when someone flies back, slowing them down in mid-air so there's more of a weight, and then speeding it up right as they hit the ground so that you feel that impact. and so that was...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

...that was... These are all just little reasons why Premiere worked out really well.

Sarah Taylor:

Very effective. Okay, so let's jump to the Oscars. like... What a ride for your whole team.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

It came out, I think, when it needed to come out.

Paul Rogers:

Mmhmm.

Sarah Taylor:

It Landed in the right spot, I think, when it needed to land. What was that journey like for you?

Paul Rogers:

It was overwhelming. It was a lot. I think no... no one was expecting it. i mean.. There's a joke in.. you know.. when... when.. Jobu is cycling through the weapons in her hand and like... One of the VFX guys threw an Oscar in there as a joke because it was such a silly idea....

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

And now, you know... if we had known it was actually going to happen, we would not have put that in there because you know... then it's like... not cool.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, it's totally cool.

Paul Rogers:

And we... Yeah, it is kind of funny, but we you know... we just never, ever... And you know.. people would say like, "You know.. you think you'll get awards?" And I'm like, "This is not that kind of movie. I'm just going to tell you, it's just not." There's a lot of butt plugs and there's a whole fight where just stuff shoved up at people's asses. People were eating their boogers in the movie like you know.... It's just weird. The first thing was that we were just really excited that people were watching it. And it grew

pretty slow. It wasn't like it hit and had like a huge opening weekend. It just kept expanding and growing organically. But I remember the first week it came out, Dan Kwan was in a coffee shop down the street from my office and he was like.. texted us. He was like, "I heard somebody talking about our movie. They'd just seen it. Isn't that crazy?" The fact that someone in a coffee shop had seen the movie was a big deal for us.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

And then obviously, it just kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. And then we were like, "Oh, my God." And you know... I remember... I don't have a Twitter, but you can search on Twitter, and I would go and search the title of the movie and just see is anyone talking about it. And there would be six tweets in a day and I'd be like, "Oh, my God, it's amazing. Six people are talking about the movie." I remember Ke Quan at one of... not the friends and family, the crew screening, basically, where everyone got... finally got to see the film. Ke, we were talking and he said, "you know... I think this could really be big. I think it could... could win some Oscars." And I was like... I kinda gave that same dismissive like, "No, that's so that's not going to happen, Ke." And he was right. And now... and now.. now I'm just like, "God. Man, we just need to all learn the lesson to just not doubt Ke, because is.. you know like.. he is ...he just knows what's up." And he is uhhh... you know... it's the same thing. That's why he ended up having to leave Hollywood, was people just kept doubting him and he's like he's a fucking amazing actor you know....

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally.

Paul Rogers:

So I was like, "God, now I'm in that line of like... assholes that just...doubted."

Sarah Taylor:

Shut him down.

Paul Rogers:

you know... Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Oh, man.

Paul Rogers:

But he was right and he won an Oscar... like.. That's crazy. He came back. First film like... after, what, 20, 30 years and came back and won an Oscar.

Sarah Taylor:

It's amazing. Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

It's amazing. And I was just really, really excited for the most part for Michelle and Ke and Stephanie and Jamie you know.... Jamie's a legend, but it was crazy that her first Oscar nomination... oscars... was mine; like... that our first Oscar was together was really strange. It was overwhelming because I don't... I mean... Editors are not we are not... designed or built for that kind of attention and for that kind of like... interest. And I also realized that we... aren't built to talk about what we do. We're just built to do it. And so a lot of my early interviews, they talk about my process and I would just make it up. I'd be like, "This is what I do and da da da." And then later I'd be like, "That's not what I do." I mean... I did that once.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

I did that on a... for a day; but like... I was just trying to make it interesting and then I So.. The more I would do them, the more I realized like I've just got to be honest and be like, "Every day it's different." you know... Because I get bored if I get... have one process. If I only do dailies and selects one way, I'm going to get bored. And my timeline's messy. My bins are messy like... you know... That's why there's this timeline floating around from the film. I was like... doing a presentation and I had Zuken and Aashish clean up the timeline for me. And I was like, "I want it to look good." And they did and they sent it over; and then I was looking at it and I was like, "That is'nt... It is unrecognizable to me." It's not me, it's not the way I work. And I don't want like... people out there just getting started to be like, "Oh, I can never be a real editor unless I spend a lot of time being organized."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

Because thats like... being creative is messy and weird And you know... I can look at a crazy timeline with literally 40 layers of video and a bunch of disabled clips and I'll be like, "Oh, I know. That this was an idea I had..."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

-here and that might come back, so maybe I'll keep that on a timeline and just disable it.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

"So I was like, "Just put out the messy one." And even that messy one is like... half cleaned up because they would clean as I went you know...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

Like if y'a ll saw the real one, I don't know if I would ever work again. That shit is crazy.

Sarah Taylor:

Well, other editors would appreciate it, because I am definitely one of the messy ones.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah. I should dig up like some of my early... you know.. The act one, the first timeline of that is just insanity.

Sarah Taylor:

What I found really interesting with the whole Oscar thing and you winning... which is Congratulations.

Paul Rogers:

Thank you.

Sarah Taylor:

I'd never seen an editor be shared memes and your speeches from people who are not in the film industry. like.. You became a famous editor. And I was like, "What is happening? This is amazing." I don't know if you felt that. I'm sure you have.

Paul Rogers:

A little bit. I mean... I'm not on social media, so it was nice that I could just turn my phone off and-

Sarah Taylor:

You could do it from afar.

Paul Rogers:

I love the stuff about work-life balance, and all the other stuff was not fun and kinda anxiety inducing.

Sarah Taylor:

You taking that opportunity when you were in the limelight to make that statement like, "Well, this kind of thing happens to guys that look like me all the time," thank you. That was a moment where I feel like you did service to our industry. What made you feel like this was the time to make that.. to say that? Is this something that you are trying to change how our industry is not as diverse as it could be behind the scenes?

Paul Rogers:

Yeah, I think.. it felt very obvious to me because it's something that, we... in our company at Parallax, we talk about it all the time. And its.. it's also just obvious when you look around the room at the Oscars or wherever I was you know... At all the other award shows that I got invited to, it was like it was really obvious that it was mostly white men. And I didn't feel like I was like... breaking news. And it's something we think about a lot with how how.. we hire and the interns that we bring on and who we're mentoring and really, a lot of it is just like what kind of projects and stories are we giving our pretty considerable time and energy to ...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

-telling?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

-right? Because that's really where we have the most power, is like... we are storytellers. What stories are we going to tell, are we going to help people tell? And its also like.... I recognize that when I came out here, I went to college, I had no college debt you know.... I got some grants and then my parents paid for my college. And I had a wife who paid all my bills and I could also just walk into a production house and no one would be like, "What are you doing here?"

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, you could use that code and you wouldn't get kicked out.

Paul Rogers:

Yeah. I just... you know...I look like I belong coz like... all the other interns were young white guys...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

-and so I kinda like... just fit into the... you know... And that's just not the way it works for everybody. And so.. I can't be like, "Just do it the way I did it. Just show up to where you want to be and pretend you work there."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

You know.. That just doesn't work. I mean... You know how it is with editors... like.. We don't go out and go to these big functions a lot. And so I ended up meeting a lot of other editors or former editors. And you know... I was talking to a woman, she was like, "Yeah, I was a picture editor. Loved it. It was my life. I had kids. It became harder. And then I got a divorce and became a single parent and it became impossible and I quit and I became a music editor." And its like... that's also a problem with the fact that we work 12, 14-hour days.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

Not even just 12 to 14-hour days. The fact that we work 10-hour days is too much. And I know... like... I... I for a long time had the feeling people would be like, "Man, this is... you know... 50 hours a week is a lot." And I'd be like, huhhh.. you know.. "Come on."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

I work 12 hours a... a day...

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

you know... for... 14 hours a day.... like...Just buck up and deal with it.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

It's a bigger issue like.... It's really like... if you want... And it's not just for parents and people with families like... But for me personally, if I go to work, if I start at 9:00, 10- hour day is 9:00 to 7:00, that doesn't include a lunch break. So let's throw 30 minutes in for lunch. Drop my kids off at daycare. I go to... get to the office at 9:00. I work til.. 7:30. I drive home. By the time I get home, it's 8:00. Both my kids are in bed. I'm just going to accept that I just don't see my kids until the weekends. And then the weekends are recovery.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah

Paul Rogers:

Weekends shouldn't be recovery. Weekends should be like... we fly into the weekends with a bunch of energy and we do all the stuff that we want to do. But because of the way that we work, we spend a full

day recovering and then on Sunday we just do all the shit that we need to do really fast and clean up our house and do-

Sarah Taylor:

Exactly. Yeah.

Paul Rogers:

It's not a sustainable way of working. And so I want to figure out a way where we can work eight, nine-hour days and still get the work done. Because also, what happens is when you work a 12-hour day, you pace yourself. You're not working as fast and it's hard because you're like, "I'm going to be fucking here all day like...." I'm going to take a ton of breaks. We can do the work in in...-

Sarah Taylor:

Here. Yeah, exactly.

Paul Rogers:

... a reasonable amount of time and we need to figure out a way to got to-

Sarah Taylor:

Got to get another coffee.

Paul Rogers:

... adapt so that the work... its... our workdays are set up differently for people with different needs. People with different mental health needs, people who are single parents, people who just can't swing the crazy schedule that we have all just become accustomed to. And not even accustomed. We're like... thankful for an 11-hour day. We're thankful for a 10-hour day and that's not good. I'm excited that people are talking about that. I don't know what all the answers are. I'm trying to figure it out and my company's trying. We're now... we're... we're doin... doing our best to try to figure it out. We still have the needs of these clients that have these expectations that are set from decades of overworking us. And so it's it's... a battle sometimes, but it's worthwhile. And as we've all matured and the pandemic helped a lot of just letting us know like, man, you can really have a great life and you can do great work. I did this whole movie during the pandemic. I saw my family all the time. And there would be days where I was like, "Look, Dan, Daniel, I'm tired. I really need to go to the park with my kid. He's.... he's 3 years old." And they'd be like, "Sweet. can we... We're going to go grab some beers and you know... we'll throw you a beer from six feet away." And we hang out in the park. like... that sounds great. It was such a great way to work.

Sarah Taylor:

If we grind all day long, all the time we're telling stories about life, but we're not living life. We need to be able to go out there and live life. Right?

Paul Rogers:

I totally agree. Yeah. And the more... the more the life you live, the better the stories you can tell, is exactly what you're saying. But I also think that like... it's a diversity issue in the sense of the more interesting and diverse and... and... varied the people you surround yourself with, the more interesting

and real the stories that you tell, and the... the ways that you can tell stories are going to be much better. And so... it's like if you make a gumbo with one ingredient, it's going to taste like that one thing. I don't know if that metaphor makes any sense.

Sarah Taylor:

We need to have more flavor.

Paul Rogers:

We need to have more flavor. Right.

Sarah Taylor:

How can we as individuals in the sys... in the system that we're in right now help make a shift, especially people who have more privilege? What are we able to do to help?

Paul Rogers:

I don't know if it's possible to just shed your privilege, but it's definitely possible to re-weaponize it for a different... And.. and retool it and use it. It's definitely something that we think about and talk about a lot. And its.. you know... it seems... it just seems so obvious.

Sarah Taylor:

I agree.

Paul Rogers:

you know.. its like... It's crazy that people were like, "Wow, he said that." I'm like, "Y'all aren't saying this every day?" I think just... it's so minimal. Just be deliberate and think about what you're doing.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally.

Paul Rogers:

I think that's kinda... the genesis of it. Just think about what you're doing. Can we do that?

Sarah Taylor:

One last question is, what's coming up next? Is there anything that we can watch out for?

Paul Rogers:

I just finished a film called The Legend of Ochi, directed by Isaiah Saxon. He's another first-time director. And uhmm... it stars Willem Dafoe and Wolfhard and Emily Watson and and Helena Zengel. and it's this kinda cool... It's a little bit of a throwback and that... it's about a girl who learns to speak to animals, but it's like... all animatronics and people in... in... puppetry and-

Sarah Taylor:

Cool.

Paul Rogers:

so...its... you know... It's got that little old... old school vibe to it, which I love. And then I'm working on a film with Kahlil Joseph, who's my partner at Parallax, his first feature called Black News, which is based on an art installation, an urban project that he has had ongoing for the last couple of years. And that's a big fun one because it's a its...a ton of editors and it's years of edited material that we're also pulling in from all kinds of editors with varying levels of ex... experience. And so thats... we're still working on that one. so.. and then you know... maybe a little break. We'll see.

Sarah Taylor:

Well, I hope you can take that break and I look forward to all this great stuff coming out. And yeah, thanks again so much.

Paul Rogers:

Thank you for having me. It was great.

Sarah Taylor:

Thank you so much for joining us today. And a big thanks goes out to Paul for taking the time to sit with me. Special thanks goes to Allison Dowler and Kim Taggart, CCE. The main title sound design was created by Jane Tattersall; additional ADR recording by Andrea Rush. Original music created by Chad Blain and Soundstripe. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bao. The CCE is proud to support HireBIPOC. HireBIPOC is the definitive and ubiquitous industry-wide roster of Canadian BIPOC creatives and crew working in screen-based industries. Check out hirebipoc.ca to hire your next group or create a profile and get hired.

Speaker 4:

The CCE is a non-profit organization, with the goal of bettering the art and science of picture editing. If you wish to become a CCE member, please visit our website, www.cceditors.ca. Join our great community of Canadian editors for more related info.