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Evaluative Report on Two Practitioners in the Specialism of Post Production

In this evaluative report, I will be discussing and analysing the careers of two inspirational post-production editors that have been a heavy influence on myself and how I view film and my chosen specialism. I will try to understand the patterns emerged from their two very different lives, and how they managed to make successful careers in order to set myself a standard for my own future. It is important that I look and discuss the information subjectively, but I will be expressing my opinion and personal connection to these editors and the lives they have lived so far.

Jonathan Amos is a British film and TV editor that worked on such films as Baby Driver(2017) , Scott Pilgrim vs the World (2010) , and Attack the Block (2011). The reason I am choosing to discuss this practitioner and his journey in relation to his work because I am inspired by his skill on editing such projects. In his early life he edited three short films from 2002-2005. It appears that most editors start out this way, gaining a portfolio of work before setting out into the industry to try and find work on films. As it is such a priority to have an exquisite knowledge and experience in order to have the responsibility to edit a full feature length film, I understand that for my own practice its going to take small steps until I finally end up where I want to be.

During an interview on a panel for ACE, Amos discusses his early life and how he built his editing career. He got a job in a film production company after he graduated from university. However he was working on the other side of film work and could not edit. He had a burning aspiration to get to edit anything, so he started to teach himself how to edit during his spare time on his own projects, and by the time he left his job, he had a show reel. This is something that I personally have to understand in terms of my career and how I want to execute it. Any job within the industry is important, even if its not working as an editor to begin with, I have editing experience behind me which will help later on. Networking and making connections with people seems to be the best way to seek opportunities within the industry. Amos went on editing corporate videos for two years after he taught himself how to edit, and built up quite a big contact list through this experience.

In his early career, he is credited for a couple of episodes of several TV shows such as 'Peep Show' (2005-2008), Ashes to Ashes (2008-2009) and Spooks (2006-2007). The fact that he is only credited for two or three episodes could mean that he was getting into his editing career and learning from more experienced editors, or TV shows have short, single episode long contracts with many different editors across the seasons.

Amos met Edgar Wright during his visit to Ealing in 2004 when Wright was filming Shaun of the Dead, into which he met Chris Dickens who edited the film, and also edited the following two films of the cornetto trilogy. For Amos, it seemed that this was his calling card to editing film, as Wright and Niro remembered him from cutting TV shows, and also worked as an assistant editor for Hot Fuzz. His work on Scott Pilgrim vs the World is by far the most interesting from his early career in my personal opinion. This was his first feature

film edit and it was absolutely brilliantly composed, with such precision and passion. It is evident that his relationship with Edgar Wright really blossomed through this production, and lead him onto editing another masterpiece in 2017 which was Baby Driver. He was nominated for 21 awards and won the BAFTA for best editing in 2017 shared with his co-editor on the project, Paul Machliss.

Amos explains in his Award Circuit interview in 2018 how the relationship between himself, Paul Machliss and Edgar Wright was of paramount importance when editing Baby Driver;

"That's absolutely correct. We worked together on "Scott Pilgrim [vs the World]" so I think we all have a shorthand. Paul's worked with Edgar on "Spaced" and I worked with him on "Hot Fuzz." We have a sort of long history and a kind of an understanding between us all of what our abilities are and how we can best use those to make the film as good as it can possibly be."

Looking forward, I want to look at the experiences of John Amos as a guideline and mindset which I want to go into the film industry with. To finish this chapter, I would like to reference a quote from Paul Machliss in his interview with Awards Circuit in 2018 which speaks volumes in terms of my philosophy on being an editor;

"It's almost like the first day of school. How are we gonna do this? And there are lessons you learn and new techniques and problem solving and you add that to your arsenal of tricks that maybe something will come along and that you think "Oh, this is similar to something we did on 'Baby Driver.'" But the fact that you never stop learning, You never, as an editor, think it's just the usual thing. It was a new way of doing things. You add to your experience and you add to your craft. And hopefully, you come out just a little better that you were at your profession than going in. "

The second practitioner I will be studying is Chris Dickins, who edited Shaun of the Dead (2005), Hot Fuzz (2007), and Paul (2011) to name a few. I'm focusing on these editors not just because of their skill and renowned credit list, but because the films they have edited are my favourite films, that I have a true sentimental connection with. It could be argued that this makes my evaluation of them biased, however I believe that it expresses my inspirational thought process.

His early life shares a similar path as that of Jonathan Amos, he edited many short films during the years of 1991 to 1994. This is interesting to me as back then 2 decades ago the technology and software for film editing must have been hard to acquire let alone practice. When I think to my childhood and how accessible my editing software was, I consider myself very lucky. What I find incredibly interesting when researching Chris Dickins, is that he started out when he was young making Super 8 films and animations for fun, which in comparison is very similar to my beginnings as a 'film maker'. He explained in a 2009 interview with HDFilmtools.com, that he wanted to be an artist at 16/17 years old, but changed tax due to lack of income from that sort of career. So he went to film school at 18 , and enjoyed editing the most as he found the physical filming tough and stressful. Whereas he found editing more satisfying because the material is all laid out for you. I can

relate to this experience. I also find shooting on location or on set quite hectic and challenging, but find myself very comfortable in post-production.

Similar to John Amos, Dickins spent a lot of his early career doing a lot of TV shows being an assistant editor, and a lot of volunteering to be able to network with people in the industry. Similar to that of Amos, Dickins is very persistent about networking being the pinnacle way into the industry, as his entire career began with building up a network ladder of reliable people, doing small jobs constantly. However an interesting discovery is that Dickins actually worked in the sound department before becoming an editor. I find this interesting because a lot of my own work is heavily influenced by sound, and the way my mind works is more toward sound than visuals. This seems evident for Dickins also, as his work in Hot Fuzz and Shaun of the Dead is also heavily influenced by sound as he explains in his Provideo Coalition interview;

"Sound was the thing I was originally interested in doing, but that was mainly because I didn't think I'd ever get to do any picture cutting. I thought sound editing would be a way into the biz. I suppose it was the thing that I got interested in first and so when I started picture editing, I realized that I had a lot more tools to play with. Now I suppose I don't do as much of the actual sound editing as I used to. I used to do a lot during the rough cut of the film and the director's cut of the film."

Later on during his career he worked with Edgar Wright on 'Spaced' from 1999 to 2001, into which he explained was a comedy with a lot of 'special ingredients' , most likely referring to the intricate camera work and comical writing for the show being as precise as possible during the editing process. This is one of the reasons Dickins was asked to return to edit 'Shaun of the Dead' in 2005, as he had already had a working relationship with Edgar Wright, and working for so many years builds an effort of understanding.

He also worked with Wright on Hot Fuzz in 2007, which was a very intricate and tight edit with intense soundscape and sound effects. He explains in his Digital Films Blog Interview;

"Hot Fuzz used sound in a very stylized way, because it is a comedy. I initially did a lot of sound editing when I started in the business, so sound has been very important to me. Of course, it is fifty percent of any feature. In Hot Fuzz, we used a lot of whooshes and other elements to help pay off the jokes. This would certainly be over the top for a drama, but Edgar [Wright, the director] and I both saw this in the same way; so, I built up the soundtracks to create a sense of heightened realism – to be like a super-hero film. Then the sound editors took that to the next level. When you work with sound, you have to think about what works for the picture and how to manipulate the audience's emotions. I love to intertwine music and sound effects to create a 'soup' that is very atmospheric – so you can't tell the difference between the music and the effects."

Dickins also worked on Slumdog Millionaire in 2008, where he was recommended to Danny Boyle from another editor in the industry. Again another example of knowing people being the biggest asset to success.

Dickins won the 2009 Oscar for Best Achievement in Film Editing for Slumdog Millionaire. In the same year he also won the BAFTA for best editing. He was also nominated for several awards for various other projects throughout the years.

Chris Dickins to me is an inspiration to my own work. I find it interesting how Amos and Dickins had similar working experiences during their early career. Even though by most accounts 'luck' seems to be a big factor in their success, persistence and dedication to the art form seems to be the true driving force for them personally.

In conclusion, there are many similarities between Amos and Dickins, especially during their early lives and careers. However their mindset towards working within the industry is something which I have to hold close to myself, as these experiences can help me create a successful career for myself in the future.

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