



ScreenCraft Works Cross-Border Conversation: The Role of the Assistant Editor

Conversation between Alice Degrassi (industry newcomer), Scott Clements (film & TV first assistant editor), Helena Beeson (VFX editor and assistant editor) and Prince May (assistant editor).

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Elizabeth McIntyre:

Welcome to our Cross-Border Conversation about the role of the assistant editor. My name is Elizabeth McIntyre. I'm from ScreenCraft Works. My pronouns are she/her and I'm a white woman with light brown hair and glasses. A really big thank you to our partner Genelec for supporting this series. Thank you also to our mentoring scheme partners Brunel University London.

ScreenCraft Works is a not-for-profit community of cross-border mentoring, cross-border talks and cross-border networking for all those in production and post-production. Our speakers are drawn from our mentoring community and we're thrilled to have such inspiring and impressive speakers here with us today.

Helena Beeson:

Thank you, Elizabeth. My name is Helena Beeson and I have been working in post-production in the UK for about eight years now, starting out as a second assistant editor, developing into a first assistant, and now I'm currently working as a VFX editor, a role that I didn't see myself in, but it's an avenue that we'll discuss this evening. I've worked on a range of stuff from low budget feature films all the way up to Sky, Netflix programmes, so I've got a reasonable range of experience within different workflows. One film that I worked on that I'm incredibly proud of is *God's Own Country*, which was released in 2017, and I'd like to show you a little clip of that now.

[Trailer for *God's Own Country*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1YAhYU6-tA>]

As I say, that was a film that I'm incredibly proud of having worked on. It was, I think, only my second job and I was incredibly lucky to have been brought on to that film.

I'd like to pass over to Scott now for an introduction.

Scott Clements:

Thanks, Helena. Hi everyone. My name is Scott and I'm originally from Toronto, Canada. I started off out of film school as a corporate video editor in Canada. I then wound up in features, first as a behind-the-scenes videographer, and then I transitioned over to the VFX department as an assistant, and while I was there I saw the editorial department, fell in love

with it, wanted to be in it. I eventually moved to London and about nine years ago I just decided to get into assistant editing. I started from the ground up and I've just been working away, as I say, for the past nine years, worked on a range of stuff - everything from micro budget features up to studio films. Actually one of the first films where I was really trained as an assistant was on a major studio film that I was lucky enough to get on.

[Trailer for *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXfxLIuNJvw>]

I'll just pass on to Alice now.

Alice Degrassi:

Hi there, everyone. I'm Alice. Originally I'm from Italy and then I moved here in London to study Film Production. I recently graduated from Brunel University and now I'm working as a freelance video editor and camera trainee, just got my first credit in the camera department, and now I'm looking forward to get one in the editorial department as well. I'm working mainly as a video editor, editing, but it's for a few companies, mainly interviews and short videos, also a bit of podcasts. I've been working with my mentor, Trace Taylor, on this editing exercise mainly. I just did a little teaser about this short film.

And now there goes our last speaker of tonight, Prince.

Prince May:

Hello everybody. I actually didn't want to do film in the beginning! I went into gaming and I wanted to sculpt and design the characters, so that's what I went to college for. But alongside that we had to do film as well. During the time doing that, I actually fell in love with editing, and for my final year in college I went down that path, and then took film practice in uni. I thought I was not going to get anything after that, but luckily during work experience I managed to get a job doing corporate videos, as well as Scott. It was great, I learned a lot. But then after that I wasn't sure which direction I wanted to go, what I'd do, because it's different from applying for other jobs. Eventually I got into a training scheme for the BBC, and that's how I've got my first credit. But then Covid hit and I thought I wasn't going to find work for years, because we didn't know how long it would last. But luckily I did find something else, and that would be called The Fear Index, which we shall roll right now.

[Trailer for *The Fear Index*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvEMwfOqIk8>]

Helena Beeson:

It's great that we've all got such a range of experience, I feel like that's gonna be quite handy in this chat. The first thing I want to talk about is, from your experience and opinions, what do you see the role of the assistant editor being? For me, it is very much the person who quietly runs everything, so the 'grown-ups' can do all the hard decision-making. So all the backroom, quiet engine room stuff is happening in the assistant editor's room. How do you guys see it?

Scott Clements:

It can be so many things. I think it's really just to facilitate the edit and the editor getting their job done. The biggest thing is always getting the rushes, getting the dailies to them, and making sure that those dailies are going to have all the metadata to translate into a finished product. It can be doing sound effects passes and temp visual effects, sometimes cutting the before and afters, because a lot of television editors hate doing those. It can be so many different things.

Helena Beeson:

Do you have a favourite part of the assistant editing role? Because for me it was always VFX. I love just tinkering around on Avid and just putting something together that didn't exist before.

Scott Clements:

Visual effects. For me, I'm currently dabbling in assembly editing and I love that. I love it whenever I get a chance to actually cut something. That's my favourite part of the process. How about you, Prince?

Prince May:

I would say essentially you're there to help support the first and the editors, and without you it can fall apart, because everybody's working - it's like a gear. When the gear goes, everything goes, it's all smooth and nice. But then something goes wrong, everything is broken. I think everybody's role is important, but without you, if there's more stress on the first, and then with stress on the first, then the editor doesn't get what they need, and then it's just a whole mess.

My favourite, I would say I do like VFX as well, I mean it can be stressful at times if it doesn't go the way you want and then you have to keep repeating it, but that's also kind of the fun to it, because you have to try and solve that problem, and then once you've solved, it's very satisfying.

Helena Beeson:

Absolutely. That's the best part of being an assistant is when you get those hard logic puzzles that you just, after days, manage to crack. Then okay, I can do my job, this is great!

Scott Clements:

What have you learned, Alice, about everything so far?

Alice Degrassi:

I think it depends mainly on what kind of production you're in and also on budget, because there are some editors that work totally alone and other productions that might have an editor and then a second assistant editor and a first assistant editor. I think, like Prince said, the role of the assistant editor is really important because you need to facilitate the work that the main editor is doing. It's kind of making sure that everything is falling in the right pieces, if that makes sense, in the right little things, that will make the final project. I think there's also a really, well maybe not so clear difference between the first assistant editor and the second one. I think the second one doesn't have as much insight as the first one would have, and you could tell me a bit more about it if I'm wrong or if I'm right.

Helena Beeson:

I think I might have a slightly skewed experience of it, because, both when I was the second and when I have been a first with a second, I have very much been a fan of the collaborative, everyone jumps in with whatever comes up at the time. Obviously when I've been a first, I've not put so much on my second that they're doing my job for me, but I think what's great about the first and second assistant dynamic is that the first assistant, as well as obviously getting the work done, can really mentor the second assistant in a way that sets them up to run their own cutting room. That is a part of being a first. I personally really enjoy being able to share the things that I've learned, see what they come with and the information they've already had, and sometimes by speaking to your second, they find a workflow that's just so much more efficient, that you've been doing wrong for years, and then suddenly your entire workflow has changed and it's so much better. So for me personally it's always been a very collaborative relationship between first and second. Scott, what's your experience?

Scott Clements:

I mean some seconds, they really should be firsts, they're so good that it's surprising. And then there are some seconds who are starting off. Personally I think that television and independent film give the most opportunity for advancement of an assistant. I find that in a major studio productions the roles are a lot more rigidly defined, and the seconds have a much harder time going up the ranks, even though they might be doing more complicated stuff. It's quite limiting. That's why, even though I started off a major studio - well, I didn't start off, but that's where I was really trained was a major studio film, I saw that it was going to be really tough to advance. So I was just itching to get into television, independent film, specifically UK-driven as opposed to US-driven.

Helena Beeson:

What was it about the UK TV that drew you to it?

Scott Clements:

It's just the people that you're working for are here, and if you're here you can form a relationship that goes beyond one film or one series. It's really just about working in your home country. It allows you to build a career, and over time, as opposed to just being sort of a hired hand. Also UK productions tend to be smaller scale and there's just more room to advance, in my opinion.

Helena Beeson:

I think you bring up two really interesting things that I'd love to touch on. One is the location - obviously the UK is quite small, especially compared to the US, obviously - so there's a chance, if you walk down the street in Soho, you're going to know someone, just through having worked in the same post house or what have you. And then the other thing I'd love to talk about is the progression of the career path, because I think that's really interesting in the sense that there are a lot of people who have come in to assistant editing as runners, there are a lot of people who have come from different types of editing that have taken the step back to learn the ropes in TV. I personally was incredibly lucky in that, whilst I was at university, an editor showed me great kindness and gave me a chance to cover his assistant while he was on holiday, and I was lucky enough to sort of leap frog over the running stage. But I know that, generally speaking, running in a post house is the clear way into the industry in the UK. I don't know if that's the case in Canada.

Scott Clements:

People do start off doing runner-like jobs in editorial but it's just those sort of lucky leaps are harder to come by because there's seniority levels and all sorts of things. It wasn't something that I even really delved into when I was in Canada, it was almost like a barrier that just kept my interest of getting involved with it very low. Every time I investigated it, I thought, no, I just can't navigate that political structure. Then when I came to the UK, I wasn't even planning really on getting into editorial, I just mainly came to the UK because it has a filmmaking tradition. I knew I wanted to work in the industry here in some capacity, but you had the freedom to get in on your skills, and any connections that you're lucky enough to make, you could capitalize on.

Helena Beeson:

Prince, what's your experience been of - and obviously at a different stage of your career - but what's your experience been of that sort of slightly more open industry?

Prince May:

I also skipped the runner stage.

Helena Beeson:

Nice!

Scott Clements:

Ah, so we all skipped the runner stage!

Helena Beeson:

We are very lucky in that, I would say.

Prince May:

I was lucky enough to get a training scheme, as I mentioned before.

Helena Beeson:

Oh yes.

Prince May:

Then from the connections I made there, I managed to get more and more work, and then new jobs, you meet new people, you build up your connections, you just have to make sure that you stay in touch with them, and you also check up on them, how they're doing, so they don't forget about you, and send your CV to them now and again when it's updated to maybe say, hey, I'm still here. Otherwise the relationship could fizzle out and then they'll forget about you and they won't offer you work if they get something and they don't need it.

Helena Beeson:

I think an interesting point that's just come up in my mind is, when you say staying in touch with people and checking in how they are and what have you, I think finding work as an assistant, at least in my experience, has been 50% being available at the right time and knowing what I'm doing, and the other 50% being hopefully pleasant enough that people want to work with me again. That's something that's so so valuable as a skill, if you can get on with your other assistants, your editors, even your producers and directors. I think it's much more likely that you're going to stick in the mind of someone if you can - even if you're just bringing someone a cup of tea when they haven't necessarily asked for it or whatever, it just makes a huge difference to team morale and stuff like that.

Scott Clements:

What is the situation like in Italy, in the Italian film industry?

Alice Degrassi:

What I understand, they're not as rigid and organized as they would be in the US or even in the UK really. Even if you want to get a runner job, I don't think you could. I think if you wanted to be recognized as an editor in Italy, you would probably need to start as a video editor, doing short films as well, sure, but it's not as inclusive as the UK. I've had experience recently, because I've been doing some shifts as a runner for several post houses here in London, and once the runner that I was working with, he got a call from his editor that was working upstairs, and was like - I just have 30 minutes and I don't know what to do, do you want to come upstairs and I can show you what I'm doing and we can work on this project and whatever. It was just really nice to see, because, like you said, you can really just get a runner job and work your way up there. I don't think in Italy is really that possible.

Scott Clements:

The runner route is the one that you hear all the time. I hear that all the time. So many editors, they all started off as runners. It kind of makes me a little sad that I never did it!

Helena Beeson:

I know what you mean! I find that camaraderie thing going on.

I do always try myself, if I have a free afternoon and I'm working in a post house, if there's a runner who's particularly nice to me or gives me extra biscuits with my tea, I'll see if they want to - and they might not always have time or they might not always be interested in specifically what I'm doing, but I always try and give that opportunity, because as you say that's how people build up those skills, definitely.

We've had a question to give a general overview of the roles of the first and second assistant and an edit trainee, in terms of specifically tasks that they perform. I would say that on a job that has a first and a second assistant, I think generally speaking the first assistant would be the one in charge of the big picture things, like turnovers and keeping track of all of the various paperworks and things going out, things coming in, liaison with the producer and the director, whoever needs anything from editorial essentially, and generally speaking is the point person for whose speaks to the editor as well. Obviously not saying that they both don't talk to the editor, but generally speaking they're the point of contact in the assisting room for anything that anyone needs. The second assistant, and again I could have this wrong because my experience is a little skewed, generally I think they are more in charge of the day-to-day rushes coming in, ingesting media, organizing bins, organizing the paperwork that comes from certain stuff like that.

Scott Clements:

It's such an important role too. They really have to - to me rushes is like the most important, it's really high on the list of important things. You really want a good second there. The only other thing, I'm not sure if you touched on it, Helena, was the trainee. That is a very rare position in my experience, and you tend to only get it on really big budget things. From my experience, they're almost like an office PA. Is that you guys' understanding?

Helena Beeson:

I personally have never worked with an edit trainee. But that is my general understanding that they're there to facilitate the more pastoral side of it. As you say, like PA who's around, I believe.

Scott Clements:

It used to be printing off paperwork, that's not so much the case any more with the digital workflows. On one major studio film it was writing down what scenes were on what shoot days on a big blackboard that we kept in the hallway, doing lunch runs, and anything that needed to be picked up from town. It was like an editorial PA almost. It sounds as though they're actually going to be working on an Avid, but from my experience the edit training is not really that, it's almost like a editorial PA.

Helena Beeson:

Again I've had similar experience in that the editorial trainees I've been aware of, not directly worked with but sort of around the post house, have been in that role, from a personal standpoint on their point of view, have been in that role in order to be around it and absorb it and if anyone has free time to ask questions and get experience that way, rather than, as you say, sitting down at an Avid and actually day-to-day being able to do things. That is my understanding of it. I agree with you, I have very rarely seen that in the UK, unless it is on a particularly big show that just has so many moving parts to need that extra bit of help. I will also say that, as a second assistant, I have also done a lot of those editorial training duties of the lunch runs and things like that. It's very much everyone pitch in sort of vibe with that.

Prince May:

From my experience when I was a trainee, I essentially did similar things to the second. I did lunch runs, as you said, in charge of petty cash, and just making sure all the paperwork is in the right spot, but I also did rushes and sound effects, as well as some of the effects.

Scott Clements:

Oh wow! So that was your title, trainee, and they were allowing you to do that?

Prince May:

Yeah, they were, yeah.

Scott Clements:

That's amazing.

Prince May:

But I never used Avid until I started that, because I was taught on Premiere Pro, until I got to that job, and I was surprised that Avid was actually the preferred software. They actually taught me how to use that. The editor unfortunately didn't have time, but the first was really nice and she helped me, and she gave me work, and I actually cut some scenes as well while I was there. It might have been because we did have four assistants, including myself we had four, and we were in a little room together, so I guess while they were doing most of the work, I got to actually play around with Avid and they gave me stuff to do. But as you said, Helena, it does depend on the budget and how many people they need and if they could afford to actually have a trainee on.

Scott Clements:

So that must have been a big budget production.

Prince May:

It was. It was for the BBC. It was pretty big actually. It was really fun. I enjoyed it a lot, especially as my first big TV show.

Scott Clements:

Cool.

Helena Beeson:

Going back to something you said earlier, Scott, about the location of being on hand in London with all the film and TV industry going all around it, I think, particularly since the pandemic, the opportunity to work sort of everywhere in the world is slightly more available to a lot of people. I think that, in terms of assistant editing, can be a little tricky because such a large part of the role of the assistant editor is to support the editor, and if the editor requires an assistant on the ground, whether by personal preference or workflow or what have you, then someone who's based remotely wouldn't be a viable option for that production. Myself, in the middle of the pandemic, I realized that I was paying London rent and not going into London, so me and my partner moved back to Yorkshire, which is where I'm from originally, and there was a real and genuine fear of am I ever going to find work again because I've moved away from London and that's so much of where the UK industry is. I think I've been incredibly lucky to be able to get solid work since moving up, and I think in no small part I've been able to get that work because of, as Prince was saying, because I check in with people I've worked with before when I've been working down in London, built those relationships, and I have a vague idea of which editors would be open to working remotely. Funnily enough, I was working remotely before the pandemic even hit, because the last film we did in 2019, the editor was up in Yorkshire and I was down in London, so I got quite comfortable with that workflow, and because of that I feel like working remotely has

become a more viable option for me. How do you guys feel with that? Are you all working in person, are you remote? Prince?

Prince May:

I'm actually planning to move out of London soon. I don't have equipment or anything at all. The current job I'm on, I'm actually working remotely, but the company actually bought kit for me, but when I move out obviously I'm going to supply my own kit. I was actually worried that, because I'm remote, I'm not in London, it will be harder for me to find work, but I think now, because of the pandemic, a lot of people are more working remotely, which is good if you're moving out of London. But it is easier to work with editors and other firsts and seconds in person. I feel like that helps me more grow and gain more knowledge, whereas working remotely, it's not as personal and you don't really feel that connected to the editor and to the other assistants. It's just working with them in the same room, they could help you more, you could ask questions, you could help them, they're just down the hall, you could be like you - want some tea? Something just like that. I think it makes it easier to be there with them. But working remote is easier for other people, and especially if you want to be a second who's not in London, that is a very good option to have that working remotely.

Helena Beeson:

I think something that the pandemic really highlighted to a lot of people is the work life balance that working remotely allows. I know a lot of people started families during the pandemic, and then there was the worry of - am I going to be able to stay in this industry, which, as we all know, is very long hours and can be very very stressful. Being able to do that remotely just allows things like school drop-off to happen and things like that which is, I think, a great step forward, personally.

Scott Clements:

I love that idea that remote working could be more widespread. I would love to have a dog, but I can't have one now. I have worked remotely, but I've found that if the relationship, personally, was not built in person, it's not as good of a relationship. I feel, when I've worked for an editor remotely and they've never met me in person, there's not that same level of trust and respect, and I've found that a bit challenging. But I have worked for editors remotely who I've worked with in person and it's been great. It would be nice if it was more widespread, because it gives a lot of flexibility in life. The hours that we work are very very long, and sometimes it would be nice to get away and be able to do the things that you need in order to live, personal upkeep.

Alice Degrassi:

I've only worked remotely. I'm assisting in editing some interviews. I just hate emailing them about certain things that I'm not sure about. I would be so much more comfortable just turning around and be like - do you like this, or do you think that's good, or what else should I do next? That's just what what I wanted to add to it.

Scott Clements:

Helena, your sort of remote working, is it mostly for people that you've worked with before in person or is it new experiences where you've been working with completely new people that you've never met in person?

Helena Beeson:

That is a good question. I think, just casting back over the last few years, I think it's been a mix of the two, but I will say that I think generally - and I think this goes back to how I was able to find the work in the first place - generally speaking the first editor on a project will be one that I've already met, because they're obviously more likely to think, Helena, she knows

what she's doing, than someone who's never met me and has no idea what I can do. I have worked with editors over the last couple of years who I've never met, and still have never met, who I feel I've built up a good relationship and rapport with, but what I will absolutely agree is that it's so much easier when on the ground and in the same building, if anything just to sense when's a good time to ask a question and when it's not. You don't know, if you're working remotely, if your editor's up against - I mean, I'd like to think you'd know if they're up against a deadline - but you don't know if their Avid has just crashed three times in a row and they're ready to flare, or if they're just really calm and relaxed and a great time to chat. That is something that's definitely harder. What I will say about that sort of assistant / editor relationship is that, in my experience, the jobs that I have gotten the most out of and the jobs that I have felt the proudest of are the ones in which myself and my editor have had a fairly, not a collaborative relationship necessarily, but a fairly free-flowing back and forth about editorial in general, and not even just that, just life. Editors have so much knowledge and experience that they can pass down to assistants, and it's really great when they are willing and able to do that, obviously not all the time, they're very busy and it's a very stressful job to be honest, but that that is something - I think some of my best experiences have been when my editor has been more like a mentor than a Head of Department. Just wanted to get that out there!

One other thing I'd love to touch on is progression from assistant editing, because we've talked about how we get there, but progression after that. I don't know what you guys feel about what you want to be when you grow up. Personally, my experience is that a lot of my colleagues and peers are assistant editing but desperate to be assembling and editing. I always thought there was something a little bit wrong with me, because I actually really enjoy the assisting, and I'm not sure - I will happily do the editing but I don't think it's a passion for me in the same way that assisting is, even though assistants have to work longer sometimes, or they have to do the nitty-gritty bits that no one really likes doing.

Scott Clements:

Before I mention what my interests were, do you think if you hadn't gotten involved in the sort of visual effects side of things, that maybe you might have not been as interested in assisting?

Helena Beeson:

Yeah, it's a great question. I actually had no intention of being a VFX editor, to the point where, when I was offered the role, I said, Are you sure? Really? Quite a few times, actually. I'm surprised they hired me! No, I've been thinking for a few years, because I spoke to my friends, who were sort of at the same stage and who were all making those leaps to assembling and editing, and they were all saying, I wish I could cut more, and and all of this. And I was sort of thinking, well, I don't really care if I cut more. If someone gives me something to cut, it's more of a hassle than anything for me. So I had definitely been thinking for a good couple of years before the pandemic even hit, I wonder if I will be a career assistant and just do that, because I know it, I enjoy it, I like to think I'm good at it, and it's a job that will continue to be needed, whether I progress out of it or not. The way that I fell into VFX editing, as I mentioned, was very much - they were looking for someone to fill the role, they had my CV, they thought I could do it, and I sort of said, okay! Now that I'm remote, a thought that I have is VFX editing allows a little bit more flexibility to be remote, because you don't need to be on the ground with anyone. If I'm just working away on a database, I don't need to be in the same room as an editor who needs a track clean done or what have you. So I think part of what made me say yes to that opportunity was potentially this might be more viable for working away from London than assisting. I've only done two jobs of it and it's been on the same production, so who knows if I'd ever get it again on something else,

but so far I just really enjoy it. For me it's all the best parts of assisting, honed down into VFX editing. That is how I got there.

Scott Clements:

There's a huge demand for it. so I think if that's your interest, I think it's great, because people are always looking for VFX editors.

Helena Beeson:

Hopefully! So why didn't they let me be remote? It was, I have to say, one of the hardest things I've ever had to do was turning down Star Wars, and saying no, actually I want to move away from London. It had to be done, and it was the right position in the end.

Scott Clements:

I actually know some people who have worked in Continental Europe remotely for London productions as VFX editors, so it totally happens.

Prince May:

I would like to progress as an editor. I want to take one more job as a second after this one, and then I will step up to be a first. There's not really a kind of signal to know when you should make that jump, it's more take the leap, if it doesn't work out then you could take a step back, gain more knowledge, do more things that you think is your weakness, and then once you feel like you're ready to make that jump again, keep going, and eventually it will work out. That's my mindset at the moment.

Alice Degrassi:

For me instead, I will try to get a job as an assistant, for sure, because I want to try it, I want to know what it's like. But I'm also interested in the camera department, so I'm just trying to juggle both at the same time. Also, like Scott said, it's not a very glamorous life. You work long hours, you mostly stay in the same room looking at footage all the time, sometimes, even while editing short films like I did at uni, it's really sometimes stressful, because you keep looking at the same footage and sometimes you just get bored of it, you're just like, oh God, I need to stop my laptop and just take a walk, and get back and watch everything again with fresh eyes. It can be a lot. It's not certainly a career for everyone.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Thank you, Alice. I just wanted to also bring Scott in. Did you want to touch on your desires for your career progression?

Scott Clements:

I've had a long path. I'll just say that, from the age of four, I wanted to be a writer-director. I've never lost that, but the stars didn't align for it. But my favourite part of making a film is editing it, that's always been my favourite part. To me it's like writing, it's like writing with pictures, so I would love to be an editor, with maybe getting to direct one day, maybe. But if I could be an editor, if I could be a working editor, that would be enough, because it is like writing a movie. Assisting editors that I respect is incredibly rewarding, and this clip that I believe you're going to play now is from a movie called *Living*. It was a very artistically rewarding experience. It's a remake of one of my dad's three favourite films, so it was so great to be able to tell him that I was working on this, great creative team, and it has been nominated for two Academy Awards, which I'm incredibly proud of. It was a fantastic experience.

[Trailer for *Living*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2L8CP31-14>]

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Thank you very much, Scott. If we had more time, I'd love to hear more of your comments on that, but I would love to give Helena and Prince the opportunity just to show their second clip as well, just to give the audience more of a sense of the breadth of the projects that you've been working on and talking about. So, Prince, would you like to show a little bit of your second clip?

[Trailer for *Three Pines*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxGjjUDWOJg>]

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Thank you. Again, that just reflects some of the breadth of experience that you have been having as a second assistant. And Helena, you have a second clip as well, don't you?

Helena Beeson:

Yes. This is the series that I'm working on as VFX editor.

[Trailer for *The Crown*, series 5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ej0vb8xhvbw>]

Elizabeth McIntyre:

That's great to see. I know you've touched on this but did you want to talk just a little bit about how you can combine two roles?

Helena Beeson:

What I have found quite pleasantly to my surprise is that a lot of my experience as an assistant editor has set me up in order to be able to do the VFX editor role. A lot of what I would think the similarities would be - the organizational side of it - I'd say that one of the most important things about being an assistant is just keeping track of everything that is going on at any time. For me it's thousands of Post-it notes, but whatever whatever works for you. It's just about being able to spin those plates constantly without letting any of them drop, because, especially as an assistant editor, as Scott was saying earlier, it's very much, if something goes wrong, you've got to fix it as quickly as possible so the rest of the machine doesn't get clogged. Then, of course, the actual - the temporary VFX and things like that, the VFX list that I made as an assistant was sort of a precursor to the databases that I'm making now. So it really is a viable option as a progression from an assistant, if you're not wanting to go the editor route necessarily, because it's a slightly more advanced assisting role, but it has the creativity and the problem-solving in there as well, which I personally really enjoy.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

I would love to just turn to a couple of the questions in the Q&A before we draw this talk to a conclusion. Do you each have three hot tips to leave people with at the end of this discussion? I'm also just looking at - should the working hours be so long? Maybe that's one of your hot tips about keeping an eye on working hours, so that might be one of your hot tips. So I'm going to throw it out to each of the speakers, what are your final hot tips for being a good assistant?

Helena Beeson:

In regards to the hours being so long, personally I've found it very very difficult at the start of my career to set the boundaries, almost explaining that actually I need to get home, and there were a few times when I'd be close to getting the last train home and I'd have to say, I'm going to go. That, I feel, has gone easier with experience. I think it's a case of, now I'm able to determine which job is actually urgent and needs to happen that night, and which job could maybe wait until tomorrow, and maybe it's not as urgent as it first seems. That sort of confidence and that determination is something that, in my experience, only came with experience. I will also say that most nice editors, and I've been incredibly lucky to work with

some excellent ones, are just as aware of the work-life balance as you are, and therefore will say, I'm going to work late, you don't have to, see you tomorrow. Those are the ones that you want to stay in touch with, definitely.

My top three tips I would say are: be friendly and personable, be organized (I cannot overstate how useful that is as an assistant) and I would also say to ask questions, because I think it's very very easy in such a high-stress department to internalize and not want to disturb anyone, but most people that you work with will be absolutely lovely and will be willing to give you that advice. That is how you progress, in my opinion. So ask those questions.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Prince, what are your final three hot tips?

Prince May:

Don't be afraid to say no. But, as Helena said, if it's coming towards the end of the day, and you must make that train, sometimes you could say - don't be afraid to say no, could this be done tomorrow? I'm not going to make my train, then you're going to have to get a cab back. What some editors do is they will take advantage of you, especially if you're inexperienced. So sometimes you do have to set those boundaries and say, all right, I have to be out of here by a certain time, but I could at least get home, if you have kids or anything, or anything that you need to attend to it with your responsibilities. Another tip: don't be discouraged if you're not getting any work. I know I found it stressful when I was emailing, I was posting on the Facebook groups, and every time nothing happened, or they will get back to you and they never do, or say sorry, we went with somebody else, it can be really depressing. You just want to be like, you know what, forget it, we're going to take a different path now. Just keep at it. There are a lot of assistant jobs out there, a lot more nowadays, because a lot of people actually want to step up to editor, so there are a lot more assistant roles up for grabs.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Thank you, Prince, that's a really that's a really good final hot tip. Alice, do you have a hot tip for those beginning to come into the industry?

Alice Degross:

Yeah, like we mentioned already, do search for runner positions if you want to get into the editorial department. And like everyone said already, make sure to track your time and make sure to know when to say no and take time for yourself, because even now that I'm starting out as a freelancer, sometimes I feel like I'm not working enough, and I say yes to a lot of things, and at the end of it I might not have enough time for myself, and that's not the right balance that you want to have in your life. Make sure to to balance your work life.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

Thank you, Alice. Scott, if you'd like to give your final one or two hot tips.

Scott Clements:

I totally agree with what everyone else has said about protecting yourself, but I don't know anyone who works in this business who's lazy, so you have to develop a very strong work ethic or you won't survive, because it's so competitive. Secondly I wouldn't go into this industry if you can do anything else. You have to - not you have to want - you HAVE to make movies, or you just should not do this. Third, learn Avid, there's no way around it. If you want to work in scripted drama, you really do need to know Avid inside out, or very well, you need to have a very strong working knowledge of it.

Elizabeth McIntyre:

It has just been so thrilling to have you speak with us and share your knowledge and insights. It's been absolutely fascinating. That leaves me to thank Helena and Alice and Prince and Scott for sharing your knowledge, experience and giving your time to our audience. Thank you all ever so much for this wonderful Cross-Border Conversation.