



Cannes Film Festival 2016

CinemaEditor talks with the editors of films including Palme d'Or winner *I, Daniel Blake*

BY ERIC KENCH

Though many filmmaking auteurs are known for their concise vision, the fact of the matter is that sometimes the footage, once in the editing room, can present itself differently than originally intended. *CinemaEditor* attended the Cannes Film Festival in May to learn how editors with films playing in competition found the unique pace and rhythm of what they were cutting.

I, Daniel Blake is a simple and heart-rending story by acclaimed British director Ken Loach, of a construction worker who suffered a heart attack and has been informed by his doctors that he is not yet fit to return to work. Daniel struggles to collect his social benefits in order to survive but suffers great indignities as he is stalled, shuffled and denied by a broken social service system. A very human film where the rhythm and pace of the editing reflect the emotions of the characters, this intimate story won the Palme d'Or this year at Cannes.

CinemaEditor caught up with the editors of several festival films, including *I, Daniel Blake*'s Jonathan Morris, who has edited many of Loach's pictures including *Carla's Song*, *Riff-Raff*, *Hidden Agenda* and previous Palme d'Or winner *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (2006).

***CinemaEditor:* How did you and Ken Loach work together in the editing room?**

Jonathan Morris: We watch the rushes together and we put it together. It's really quite simple. We might look at a scene and we might think it's a little bit long but let's leave it for the time being. And that's how we work through the film from the first shot to the last, and we keep working on it for five or six screenings. The thing is a matter of trust at this stage and Ken trusts my instincts.

***CE:* I noticed how patient the film was with the story. How did you achieve this simplicity in the cutting room?**

JM: This is kind of the problem of editing digitally. It's terribly

easy to cut fast and it's terribly easy, especially when you can go back and back and go over the material and re-cut, to get impatient with what you've done the first time. You just have to stay with the performance as you saw it the first time and not get impatient with the way you've done it. One thing we did was decide how we're going to shorten things. We didn't lose many scenes, but the main thing that we did was shave things down a little bit which helped the pace of the film.

***CE:* How does it feel to be the editor of the film that won the Palme d'Or?**

JM: It's fantastic, it's terribly prestigious. This is the 12th time I've been to Cannes with Ken and I thoroughly enjoy it. To win the Palme d'Or is fantastic and also of course we consider it to be for the team – everyone that's been involved with it.



The next editor *CinemaEditor* had the opportunity to speak with was Affonso Goncalves, ACE (*Carol*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*) who edited two films at the festival, both directed by indie filmmaker Jim Jarmusch. The first was the

Iggy Pop documentary, *Gimme Danger*, and the second was the narrative feature, *Paterson*.

Paterson stars Adam Driver as a bus-driving poet who shares the same name of the town he lives in, Paterson, NJ. Paterson enjoys a simplistic life of routine and domesticity.



He's driving his bus during the day, spends time with his wife after work, and has a nightly beer at his local bar. But Paterson's spiritual center is his poetry, which he writes in a small plain notebook. A meditative film that is as much about mood and atmosphere as it is about the plot, it has a unique rhythm and pace.

CE: How do you find the right rhythm when you are cutting a scene?

Afonso Goncalves, ACE: Usually I take my cues from the actors. You look for the truth in their delivery and I just follow their natural rhythm.

CE: In the film, the scenes of Paterson writing his poetry are rendered in a beautiful collage of images. I was curious to hear your approach to these sections.

AG: Fred Elmes, ASC, shot a lot of really beautiful footage so first I tried to straight cut it but I kind of wanted to use more. I wanted to see something a little dreamier, like the way he is thinking. His mind is kind of stacking up, ideas are stacking up with images. So I started playing with that and I showed it to Jim and he was really into it and he said just go for it, keep going in that direction.

CE: Were there any scenes that changed or moved around in the editing room?

AG: It was a little tricky because the structure had to be seven days, but we changed one night when he goes in the bar from a Thursday to a Wednesday; we thought, 'Oh this feels like a Wednesday night.' And we added a poem when he was walking home. Jim felt we really needed to know this guy, how poetry is so important to him. In editing I think you should be open to change and discovery and be able to add or subtract to the original idea. I think the film grows in the editing room and you should be allowed to grow with it.

CinemaEditor also talked with Job ter Burg, ACE, who worked with director Paul Verhoeven on the film, *Elle*. A sinister and

seductive thriller, *Elle* follows the main character, played by Isabelle Huppert, as she is stalked and threatened by a mysterious assailant. A unique character study as much as it is a 'whodunnit,' *Elle* has a wicked sense of humor that is reflected in the film's propulsive rhythm and screw-turning pace.

CE: How do you first approach a scene in *Elle*?

Job ter Burg, ACE: I try to respond to what I'm getting. I try to feel what the footage does for me and what a scene does for me. And it's only after you've gone through everything once that you start seeing it and start putting the whole thing together.

CE: What was your working relationship with Paul Verhoeven like?

JB: I've found it very liberating to work with him. He always gives me room to do with a scene whatever I think is right. The first thing he said to me was, 'I don't want to see your



cut of the scene showing me what I shot because I know what I've shot.' He said, 'I want to see a version of the scene that you think is a great version of that scene.'

CE: Were there any scenes in the film that posed a challenge or transformed in the editing room?

JB: In the middle of the movie there is a really long scene which we called the 'Christmas dinner.' It was about finding the right flow to that scene. So many characters in it with all the relationships – all those had to be balanced without losing the main character. It needed tweaking and it's not something you can do right at once. A lot of it is just gut reactions to what it is you see and feel and then in the later stages you get more of a sense of control.



Eric Kench worked as an assistant editor on three films that played at Cannes: Nicolas Winding Refn's The Neon Demon, Matt Ross' Captain Fantastic, and David Mackenzie's Hell or High Water. 