

The Editor's Cut - Episode 036 - Talking Comedy with Richard Schwadel (2020 Master Series)

Sarah Taylor:

This episode was generously sponsored by Finale Post, a picture company, Annex Pro, Avid, Vancouver Post Alliance, IATSE 891, and Integral Artists. Hello, and welcome to The Editor's Cut. I'm your host, Sarah Taylor. We would like to point out that the lands on which we have created this podcast, and that many of you may be listening to us from are part of ancestral territory. It is important for all of us to deeply acknowledge that we are on ancestral territory that has long served as a place where indigenous peoples have lived, met and interacted. We honor, respect, and recognize these nations that have never relinquished their rights, or sovereign authority over the lands, and waters on which we stand today. We encourage you to reflect on the history of the land, the rich culture, the many contributions, and the concerns that impact indigenous individuals and communities. Land acknowledgments are the start to a deeper action.

Today's episode is the Zoom event that took place on May 5, 2020, Talking Comedy with Richard Schwadel. Richard is a motion picture editor whose love of comedy sparked a career that includes credits on Loudermilk, Dead Like Me, The Drew Carey Show, The Simpsons, and Pee Wee's Playhouse. Over the years, he's had the good fortune of collaborating with such comedy icons as David Steinberg, Nora Ephron, Jason Alexander, Penny Marshall, and the Farrelly brothers. Richard's latest project was editing 14 chapters of the Farrelly's The Now for Quibi. This Q&A was moderated by Maja Jacob. To see the notes that Richard refers to in this episode, please check out the episode webpage.

[show open]

Maja Jacob:

All right. Welcome, everyone to the CCE's master series, Talking Comedy, featuring the one and only Richard Schwadel.

Richard Schwadel:

Woohoo.

Maja Jacob:

Yay. Hello from Toronto. I'm Maja Jacob, and I'll be your moderator today. So, Richard, how's Vancouver treating you?

Richard Schwadel:

Vancouver is great, unless you have to go to the bank. I just spent a half an hour in line at two banks, very frustrated, but it's all good. I'm happy it's sunny.

Maja Jacob:

And I heard you got an electric bike. So, you're zooming around on the bike?

Richard Schwadel:

Yep. I had it almost a year now, and I'd love it. It's really fun. It's great. I would ride it year-round if I didn't have to get wet all the time. It's fun.

Maja Jacob:

Nice. Richard, can you give us a brief overview of your career path? And were there any people or shows that made a particular mark on you?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I'll just give a bird's eye view of how my career went. I started as a PA, post production assistant on a sitcom. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it was a really top network sitcom. There wasn't any cable at the time. To me, it was just a cool job. I didn't know if I was really going to like it or not. But I hung in there, and ended up going from a post-PA to an assistant editor.

Richard Schwadel:

I did that job for a couple of years, and then wanted to try something different, and moved into what was then called reality TV, which was more like feature profiles of people. I worked on the show that some of you may know called Real People. It was a very popular network comedy. This is in the US. I'm from Los Angeles originally.

Richard Schwadel:

This show is like, it celebrated Americana, usually, really quirky, crazy stuff. And so, they go out and shoot little feature stories on people. It was an hour-long show. The editors, there were about 12 editors on that show, which was pretty amazing. We had our own building. That was a really good experience. And I worked in that genre for a while.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, went on to start directing in that genre doing kind of lifestyle stuff. I traveled around the US shooting stories on a couple of shows-

Maja Jacob:

You're American, right?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah.

Maja Jacob:

So, a lot of people don't know that he's actually a US dual citizen now.

Richard Schwadel:

I was born in LA. I grew up in LA, and then I moved to Canada. Actually, 25 years ago, this month. It's pretty amazing. So, yes, from the lifestyle stuff. I then started working in skit shows. There were a couple of sketch shows on TV, and I edited a couple of those. A lot of the shows back then were 22 episodes. So, they were almost year-long gigs. And then, from there, I went back into sitcoms.

Richard Schwadel:

The first show I went back to was Anything But Love, which was Jamie Lee Curtis and Richard Lewis. It was a great show. It's really funny. I had a great team of writers. Really cool show runner. We became close friends, and I then started all of these people who would work on these shows would get other shows. They'd write pilots, and I would work on their pilots.

Richard Schwadel:

They would get an order for a series. They'd asked me to work on the series. So, it really was, once somebody became familiar with your work as an editor, they wanted to continue working with you, which was very cool. The last sitcom I did in the US was The Drew Carey Show. I cut the pilot, and then ended up moving here to Vancouver, worked a little bit here.

Richard Schwadel:

But didn't find much work, and then went back, and worked for, I don't know how many episodes I did, a dozen or so Drew Carey episodes. And then, came back to Vancouver, worked on Police Academy with Daria. That was probably-

Maja Jacob:

Oh, nice.

Richard Schwadel:

... the first comedy series here. That was the TV version of the movie. It was a really hard transition going from solely comedy editing to dramatic, because all of the people here, the showrunners were like, "Well, you have no drama experience. We don't know if you can cut drama." And I would tell them, "Well, comedy is harder." And they were like, "Yeah, whatever."

Maja Jacob:

How did you get into the Vancouver market then being an LA editor, and then coming here, and try to find work? How did that go for you?

Richard Schwadel:

It was just a lot of banging on doors. I think Police Academy was the first series, and then trying to remember what I did the next one. I'd actually have to go to IMDb. It might have been The Crow. They did a TV version of The Crow, and I think I got hired on that after Police Academy. The Crow is like '97 or something. And so, then once I had a couple of series that made things a little easier.

Maja Jacob:

And do you remember the first producer that you worked with in Vancouver? I'm just throwing this question out here.

Richard Schwadel:

I can't remember who the first one was. Because Police Academy was a US show shooting here. The Crow was a US show shooting here. Might have been a show called These Arms of Mine, which I worked

on. I can't remember the year on that either. But anyways, in terms of just really quickly, any people, or shows that made a particular mark on me. They all do. They all have.

Richard Schwadel:

The ones I remember early on were the sitcom I worked on the first show was Barney Miller. And that show runner created the quad split. He is the first person to have stacked four cameras, and then make each one an isolated feed so that they would have more flexibility in the editing. And so, the technology, and stuff on that show was really impressive.

Richard Schwadel:

There were two editors on that show, two types of editors. There were the creative editors, and the assembly editors. I was an assembly editor. And what we did was the creative editors were film editors working in videotape. They had no clue about anything. Literally, they're like, "What, how do I," like you go right hand, and touch a button, or whatever, and help them.

Richard Schwadel:

Literally, this is all linear editing, okay? No nonlinear yet. They would write down the in and out time codes of every edit in the show, including audio-only edits into a log. They would hand it to the assembly editors. We would go into a different machine room, type it in, all the time code into the machine room with five different playback machines, one for each camera in the line cut.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, we would build their show, and then hand it back to them. And then, they make more notes. And it would go back and forth, back and forth. It was a really complex system. And I learned timecode in and out. But I also learned from these guys, how they made their decisions on how to cut, and where to cut, and how to separate picture from sound, which that was probably one of the best things I learned early on is how to cheat sound.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, the other thing that had a big impression on me was the show, Real People, where we would edit these feature, mostly comedy stories. It was an audience show. It was a one-hour show that was recorded live. It wasn't broadcast live. And they would play back the stories for the audience. I could sit in the audience, and watch my story, and see how people reacted to it, which was great.

Maja Jacob:

That's cool. That's cool.

Richard Schwadel:

I really learned a lot. It was during that time that I learned that my sense of humor connected with people.

Maja Jacob:

And that you had a natural talent for comedy.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I've always liked comedy, and I've been somewhat of a funny person, I think. I don't tell a lot of jokes. But I have a funny bone, no doubt.

Maja Jacob:

So, you mentioned my next question is you experienced the crossover from linear to nonlinear offline editing firsthand. So, you were there in the beginning of digital editing. Tell us about the first time you saw the Avid software.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. On the Warner Brothers lot, I was editing sitcoms at the time. And they weren't ready to sell their product yet to any shows, but they wanted people to see it. They do dog and pony shows, and go around, and invite editors. And then, I remembered going to look at it. And everybody was agreed the same thing. It was awesome. It was really cool.

Richard Schwadel:

But nobody is going to use it because in a wide shot, it was so pixelated, you couldn't see a mouth moving. So, it's like, it's going to be great when they get that part down, but until then.

Maja Jacob:

Big giant pixels on the screen. That was the first Avid.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. They weren't huge, but you could see the face, but you could barely see in a master, anyone's mouth moving, so yeah,

Maja Jacob:

So, editing comedies, what makes editing comedy different than cutting drama?

Richard Schwadel:

So, before we get to that, I want to just say, ask me what the most important thing about comedy is?

Maja Jacob:

What's the most important thing of-

Richard Schwadel:

Timing.

Maja Jacob:

All right.

Richard Schwadel:

Okay. I'm not going to say that dad joke again. But that really is it's a setup, and it was a subverted expectation. I jumped in, and somebody might have been expecting an actual answer. So, some really interesting things about comedy that are really basic. Ricky Gervais said, "Comedy is just a normal person trying to do something big that they're not equipped or ready for, and it really helps if they're arrogant and stupid."

Maja Jacob:

Nice.

Richard Schwadel:

That's a great quote. I actually think comedies are more difficult to edit. Because a lot of times, you're dealing with a wider range of emotions. And it could be in one scene, in a really short scene, even. Each beat has to really hit its mark. And if it's going from a dramatic moment to a funny moment, sometimes the actors pull it off without having to do anything, or a lot of times they do.

Richard Schwadel:

But sometimes you need to stretch and compress stuff to make a joke land funnier. Whereas in drama, literally, you could just hang on a shot, and know the composer is going to add some music there, and the camera is going to push in, and someone's eyes are going to tear up, and it's like, "Ooh, there's a moment." I think comedy takes a lot more work in that way also.

Richard Schwadel:

Reactions, finding appropriate looks to play off of dialogue, line inflections, that the subtle difference of a line, inflection can change whether a joke works or not. Going into a comedy, if you're working on a comedy, to me, the most important thing is know what the world that your characters are living in is.

Richard Schwadel:

You have to know that world because the joke will only work if it lives in that real environment. Even if it's a broad comedy, a broad stupid comedy, if you go to like Dumb and Dumber. I'm sure there were things that were thrown out in Dumb and Dumber, that didn't work in that world, for whatever reason. But I find constantly, all jokes, and character are measured by that yardstick.

Richard Schwadel:

And so, I've gotten into shows, I'm sure other people have too, where you may not have a chance to have big long discussions with the showrunners before you start. So, you almost have to figure that out based on the dailies you're getting, and whatever brief snippets of conversations you can have with the show runners, or director.

Richard Schwadel:

But in the edit room, oftentimes, every show runner I've worked with will question, "Is it real, or is it over the top? Does this line work, or is it too much? Is that too broad for this, or is the right tone for the show?" And I think what I've learned to do is trust my gut. When I laugh watching dailies, I make a note of that, and I protect that. You have to because you're going to see it 150 times.

Richard Schwadel:

When I'm screening for a network recut of something, often I'm not laughing at something that I was laughing at the first time I saw it. But I have to remember that I know it's funny.

Maja Jacob:

Because you've seen it so many times, right?

Richard Schwadel:

You've seen it so many times, and there're still things, like I'm going to show you clips of stuff that I still laugh at. And I was laughing the entire time. It just depends. It's really important to trust your initial reaction to the material. Your decisions should never be arbitrary, or what you think the director wants. That was a big mistake I made early on was, "Oh, the director wants this," or I'll get into this later, but could have a seven-minute take that says director favourite. Well, there's no way in hell, all seven minutes are great.

Maja Jacob:

And we'll get into that later.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. We'll get into that.

Maja Jacob:

Who has those seven-minute takes? There's one question here regarding timing, can you fix bad timing?

Richard Schwadel:

Yes, to an extent. If the joke is funny, yeah, you can fix the timing. Absolutely. Assuming you have the coverage. I do that all the time. When I was cutting sitcoms, there were two ways that I would cut. We had ScriptSync, but we also had a live switching feature, where you could play all four cameras at once, and go A, B, C, X, not D camera, X is the fourth camera.

Richard Schwadel:

So, I would go and A, C, X, B, whatever, and play something. And I would only go 20 seconds before I knew I was going to pull something up or change it. Oftentimes, it would be 10 seconds. Even in a live play sitcom, where you think the timing is great, and all, and it's awesome, it's not. There are frames to be pulled out. There's a lot of work to be done in material.

Richard Schwadel:

And so, you can fix it. But you got to have it there to fix, right? I read this in the Art of the Cut, which is a great book. "Your goal is to make the scene play as though it evolved, not that it was constructed." I think that's a great piece of advice.

Maja Jacob:

That's awesome.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah.

Maja Jacob:

Another question here is, do you have any rules that you follow regarding editing comedy?

Richard Schwadel:

No, keep it funny. Keep it moving and keep it funny. Story, obviously, you have to tell the story. So, you have to walk the line of does the story get in the way of the comedy, or the comedy get in the story, or is it how is that balanced? Hopefully, it's balanced in the writing, and not falling on you. Because if it falls on you, in that case, I think you're in trouble.

Maja Jacob:

Do you have some clips for us? Tell us what we're going to see, and why? And I'm just going to give everyone an FYI, there is some explicit language in some of these clips. So, just giving you some warning. So, why don't you tell us about some of the clips you're going to be showing us today?

Richard Schwadel:

Okay. I'm going to show you from three different shows. I worked on a show a couple years ago called Hit the Road that nobody knows about with Jason Alexander, who was the lead, and also the show runner, and the creator. And then, I've got a clip of a Disney MOW that starred Zendaya, broader goofier comedy. And last, I've got a couple of clips of Loudermilk, which is what I did with the Farrelly's. I've cut two seasons of Loudermilk with them.

Maja Jacob:

And then, you went on to edit the Quibi TV series with the Farrelly brothers, which is pretty awesome.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I call it a serialized feature, not a TV series, but-

Maja Jacob:

Yeah. So, let's start off with the first clip.

Richard Schwadel:

The first clip needs a lot of setup, the others won't. So, Hit the Road. It was 10 episodes of basically, a dirty, nasty Partridge Family Band's adventures on a tour bus touring around the US. I'm going to show a clip from the pilot towards the end. The story of the pilot was they're about to start a US tour as an opening act for an old rock and roller who's doing a tour, and the rock and roller dies midway into the episode.

Richard Schwadel:

So, Jason Alexander, his character is Ken, comes up with a plan for a memorial concert for the guy, but needs publicity. So, he goes to a local radio station, and tries to get a plug for publicity, begs, brings a kid with him for sympathy. It doesn't really work. But the station salesguy he's talking to says, "I'll go ask the manager. We'll see what he can do. But I got to tell you he's a really weird dude."

Richard Schwadel:

So, Jason Alexander says, "Yeah, whatever, I'm in rock and roll, I've seen it all." The guy comes back, and tells him that the manager agreed to do the publicity, but only if Ken gives him a hand job. They actually showed him giving the hand job.

Maja Jacob:

That must have been interesting to cut.

Richard Schwadel:

It's pretty funny. It's sad because it went through many permutations because of the subject matter. And it ended up getting a little bit milktoasted down, but it's still pretty funny. So, this is the scene that plays right after. And what I really love about this scene is the acting is amazing.

Richard Schwadel:

Pay attention to their reactions, their reactions to one another are great. It's a scene between Ken and his wife, Meg. So, they're all part of the band. They're all singers. The kids aren't in this part. But the ebb and flow of the scene is the way it was written and directed is just awesome.

Maja Jacob:

And this is a recent show, right?

Richard Schwadel:

2017. And just to give everybody a little context, the Harvey Weinstein story dropped. Ronan Farrow's stuff dropped the week this show came out. And this show was specifically written to be politically incorrect, and really over the top, and pushing boundaries. And the critics could not get behind it. They trashed it. And also, was in the AT&T audience network, which barely anybody knows about. I don't know where it is now. It might be on Crave. I'm not sure.

[Clip plays]

Maja Jacob:

That was really funny. All right. So, we're going to open up to questions. Hi.

Audience Question:

First off, thanks for doing this. This is great. That was an awesome cliff. I really like that. Is there a conscious effort to make Jason Alexander less George from Seinfeld? Because I feel like he's always in that realm, and I don't know if it was a conscious decision about that.

Richard Schwadel:

I think when he gets worked up, he goes into that mode. You just can't help but think he's George. I never once mentioned the name George Costanza because I'm sure he is so fucking sick of hearing those two words. No. to answer your question, Jerry Levine was the director. He's an amazingly talented guy. He's done everything from Sunny in Philadelphia to Everybody Hates Chris.

Richard Schwadel:

He's done dramas, Hawaii Five-O. The way they shot this show was a 350-page script, which is all 10 episodes, and they just shoot it for 40 days. There were 10 really different episodes. I agree with you. He's very George Costanza like in that scene. And he's not that way throughout the series. So, yeah, I think it is more about that scene.

Maja Jacob:

So, Nancy has a question. Nancy.

Audience Question:

Hey, thank you, Richard. And thank you, Maja, and everybody, this is great. Richard, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what your creative influence is as an editor in comedy. And if you're given a nice breath to be creative with the material, and have the input to maybe change something up, or I don't know...

Richard Schwadel:

I do it regardless, like you're always fighting the schedule. In television, in particular, there's never enough time to do anything the way you'd really like to do it in terms of living with something. We all know, if you cut something, let it sit in the drawer for a while, for a week, and then take it out of the drawer again, and look at it, you're going to see all kinds of stuff that you're going to want to change. And sadly, we don't have that time to do that in the schedule. So, what I do is cut with my gut, and I find what I think is the funniest stuff. But if there's a scene that I'm not sure of, I'll always do different versions of it, or at least the part that I'm not sure about.

Richard Schwadel:

I'll go to my assistants, or I'll go to other people, or I'll let it sit for a while, and then look at them. Or sometimes I won't show anybody, and I'll show the director when they come in and go, "Yeah, I'm not sure work the way I did it the first time, but I want you to look at this version, tell me if this is any better." So, I think doing alts on things is a good idea.

Richard Schwadel:

But in terms of the creativity of it, you're following the script, but you're also following the movie, or show that you're seeing as the editor. And we all know oftentimes, it's two different things. It's a joke. Typically, they're shooting, a half-hour comedy would be three-and-a-half, four days of shooting. And then, you'd have about a day, day-and-a-half, maybe two days, if you're lucky, after they wrap shooting to do your cut, and then the director's in the room.

Richard Schwadel:

With these shows, because it was such a different schedule, I had a little more time because they shot 40 days in a row. And then, we figured out roughly, me and the post-super, "Okay, I need about this much time." So, I could go back, and massage things, and look at things again, which really helped. But the typical television schedule is brutal. It's really brutal.

Richard Schwadel:

And I'm going to show you in a bit, some paperwork from Loudermilk. When you get six hours of dailies, and you've got to cut ideally, all of that in one day. It's really hard, and it's really hard to keep a fresh eye without getting exhausted. So, yeah, there's that.

Maja Jacob:

Thanks, Nancy.

Richard Schwadel:

Sure.

Maja Jacob:

I'm going to allow Daria to speak now.

Maja Jacob:

Hey, Daria.

Richard Schwadel:

Hi, Daria.

Audience Question:

Hi, guys. Hi. Richard, when you were talking earlier about finding those great moments, like the Adam McKay stuff you were talking about, would you ever prioritize something that is super hilarious over obvious discontinuity?

Richard Schwadel:

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Continuity is so out the window now. Watch a Scorsese movie, watch Curb Your Enthusiasm, Curb jumps all over the place. I think if you're working with somebody, and this often happens in the TV movie realm, where people go, "Oh, that glass moved. That's a real problem for us."

Richard Schwadel:

It's like, "Okay, so we'll put the glass where it should be, and you'll have a crappy performance, do you prefer that?" Most of the smart people working in television today, they'll pay attention to it, but they won't let that dictate a performance change, I found.

Maja Jacob:

So, we have a question here for Paul St. Amand.

Audience Question:

I thought those clips were hilarious, by the way. Like laugh out loud moments, so that was great. Thank you.

Richard Schwadel:

Oh, cool.

Paul St. Amand:

Question that I have. Have you thought of, or maybe you've already done this, but transitioning from editor to directing?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I've done some directing. It's really hard now to be an old white guy, and get a job directing. Even people who are pretty busy, normally, aren't working the landscape has changed. And it's time for more women, and younger people, and people of color who are getting their chances now. So, I'm willing to step aside, and not fight that. It was something that I tried.

Richard Schwadel:

And I directed a Drew Carey Show. I directed a couple episodes of funny show that David Steinberg did here in Vancouver called Big Sound. It was about the music business. I directed a Flava Flav sitcom, which Daria knows well, because she worked on that as well. And also, for me, I'm not a real political person. And in that world, you have to really enjoy politics, and work politics.

Richard Schwadel:

It's fun. It's without a doubt, it's really fun to do. But I don't have any aspirations anymore. If somebody offered it to me, I would do it. I don't think I would take a job though now saying, "Well, I want two episodes." My advice, though, is if you're an editor, and you want to direct is take an acting class, and understand how to talk to actors, and what their process is, because I did it, and it helped me immensely.

Maja Jacob:

That's good advice. Definitely good advice.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. It was scary as hell, but worth doing.

Maja Jacob:

So, we are going to show another clip now. And this is from Zapped, and is the actress name is Zedekiah or how do you-

Richard Schwadel:

Zendaya.

Maja Jacob:

Zendaya. She's a huge star now. She's in the Spider-Man films, so you will recognize her.

Richard Schwadel:

So, what you're going to see, I'll just tell you the story briefly. She downloads a phone app because she's living with this family with an out of control dog. And she thinks that this app is for controlling dogs. It makes this weird sound. But something happens to her phone before she downloads the app.

Richard Schwadel:

It gets thrown out a window, and weird electrical stuff happens. It slides down a solar panel, and it magically becomes a magical phone that doesn't control dogs. It controls something else, and you'll see what it controls in a minute. So, I selected this because much goofier style of comedy, obviously, less grounded in reality; Disney.

Richard Schwadel:

But more importantly, this was cut for score, and the score really helped drive the comedy of this scene, and call out to James Jandrisch's score in this. He's an amazing composer. He's brilliant. And he did an incredible job in this show.

[Clip plays]

Maja Jacob:

So, do we have any questions regarding that clip? That's the school in Vancouver?

Richard Schwadel:

I think that was like in Maple Ridge or something. It was out of the zone somewhere.

Maja Jacob:

All right. So, that's obviously a different type of comedy compared to what we just saw with Hit the Road. It's more of family-type comedy. Is there a difference between cutting family type comedy like that, compared to what we just saw in Hit the Road?

Richard Schwadel:

Well, that one in particular was more difficult because you had to have the phone sound before we saw how it affected the person. And then, you had to have the person do this. And then, all of that was a real tricky timing thing. And I remember in that instance, the sound, I can't remember what I had temped in, I temped in something, like a whistle-y thing.

Richard Schwadel:

And it went back and forth once picture was locked for weeks, and weeks, and weeks before they finally decided what the sound was going to be. Obviously, it had to fit in the hole that was designed for it. But I noticed sometimes they would pitch it down at the end, which is cool. Again, it's just make the jokes land, and play funny. I think there were certainly more rack focuses that I thought worked really well in that clip, which I like using if they work.

Maja Jacob:

Okay. So, let's move on to our next clip, Loudermilk.

Richard Schwadel:

Loudermilk is a show that was created by Peter Farrelly and Bobby Mort. Bobby Mort used to work on The Colbert Report. I guess he started writing TV and-

Maja Jacob:

And do you want to explain to the audience if they don't know who the Farrelly brothers are? What kind of movies they've done?

Richard Schwadel:

They did Dumb and Dumber, which put them on the map. They did There's Something About Mary, they did The Three Stooges, Shallow Hal, the last movie they did was actually just Peter Farrelly. He directed Green Book, which won-

Maja Jacob:

Which won the Oscar.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. It won two. I think it won two. One for writing and one for, isn't it win best picture?

Maja Jacob:

Well, we were working on Loudermilk together, that's the season two, and it was -- you were editing with him remotely while he was in LA. He was working on Green Book and some capacity. And we had no idea at that time that he was going to be nominated for an Oscar. So, that's pretty cool. There's another thing I feel like nowadays, remote editing with directors is a big thing now, as well.

Richard Schwadel:

Well, the funniest thing is I worked remotely. So, I did season two and season three of Loudermilk. We finished season three sometime towards the end of 2019. So, I did almost two years on Zoom. And when all this happened with COVID, people go, "Do you know Zoom? Can I call you with Zoom? I was like, "Yeah, I don't want to Zoom."

Richard Schwadel:

I had enough Zoom. I've been doing it too much every day. No, Zoom has been a great tool. But I think I worked with him for three, or four days, or a week. And then, he was off onto his next project. He's a really busy guy. He's constantly doing multiple things.

Maja Jacob:

And then, after Loudermilk, they called you up for the Quibi film long-

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I really was hoping that Quibi show would have dropped on so that we could play some clips because there's some really great stuff, but I can't, it hasn't. So, I can only talk about some stuff.

Maja Jacob:

For the people that don't know, I've worked with Richard on a couple of shows. And so, what he would do is, as an assistant, I would get all the paperwork, and he'd have a certain way that he would like things in his binder. So, you'll see some of the paperwork they get.

Maja Jacob:

And then, every editor has their own way of putting binders together, even Avid bins. So, I actually got used to the way Richard would organize his Avid bins, and then I adopted a lot of that into how I edit now because of the way Richard did it. I don't know if you know that Richard?

Richard Schwadel:

No, I didn't. But then, yeah, everybody has got their own, I like my lined script and facing pages open. So, when I open, I see both. Some people like the facing pages at the back of the script. Every editor has got their own preferences. On Loudermilk, they would just because there were so many speaking roles in the group, I think there were like eight or nine principal actors, they, as directors, neither of them like to cross the line.

Richard Schwadel:

So, often, they'll be shooting A, B, and C camera for one setup, for each of the setups so that sometimes the C camera may be rolling. You may have eight minutes of a scene, and the C camera may only be for two lines for an angle that was over somebody's shoulder, or whatever. So, as an editor, you have to learn how to watch multiple-sunk cameras.

Richard Schwadel:

And know - you figure out where they're needed, and where they're not needed. And because I came from multicamera, I watch group clips. So, if there's three cameras, I'll watch them all at the same time. And I'll make marks while I'm watching the dailies. So, for this scene in general, Loudermilk, I figured out, it was about a 50-to-1 shooting ratio.

Richard Schwadel:

So, for every one minute of finished material, there's 50 minutes that are shot. So, my process is, the first thing I do is I look at the daily progress report. And I'm assuming most of you know how to read this. I'll just go over it briefly of some stuff here. Here's the biggie in this one. So, in this day, they shot 13 and three-eighths pages. That's just huge. It's a huge amount of material.

Richard Schwadel:

As soon as I saw that, I went, "Uh-oh." So, I knew that I probably wouldn't finish this day that I'd have to split it off some of it to the next day. Next, I'll look at how many setups there were, 68 setups. So, a normal day is what, 30, 35? Huge, huge amounts of cameras, camera angles. And then, the other thing I'll look at right next to it are the running times.

Richard Schwadel:

So, the estimated time is what the script supervisor estimated when she read the last version of the script. But there might be four versions after it. So, you never really know, ideally, how accurate this number is. You hope it's accurate. The actual running time is what she, or he timed on set, and figured that's how long it actually runs in production, not as edited.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, the plus minus is whether the difference between these two. In this, because they shoot a 350-page scripts, basically, my take going in was, "Guys, you can't worry about our timings in editing,

because there's no way to tell how to time out a show, because you're shooting every episode. You're mixing everything up, you're block shooting. We can't time out an episode because the tail end of the episode may be all the group scenes, we have no clue."

Richard Schwadel:

So, they're like, "Don't worry, we're writing long." So, we didn't have to worry about that, thankfully, too much. And then, here, I'll look at the scenes fully credited down here. And the first one is the monster. It's six and two-eighths pages, seven minutes long. That's a lot of work. That's a full day right there. And ultimately, I had what, 10... I had, on this day, they shot a half of an episode basically, more than half of an episode. So, it can be incredibly overwhelming. So, when the-

Maja Jacob:

Especially, when you see the setups for the one-

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. So, here's setups. And if you look, I'll scroll down here. So, just pay attention to the sevens. This is all seven, all seven to here. So, there were 33 setups.

Maja Jacob:

Of one scene.

Richard Schwadel:

In one scene. Yeah. I knew going in, I had my work cut out for me. It depends upon how I'm feeling on the day, whether I want to start with the big scene or not. But if I didn't start with it, I would certainly start with the smaller scene to at least get going, and not get bogged down.

Richard Schwadel:

So, I would have done probably this one, one and three-eighths pages if I didn't start cutting the big scene. So, then I would look at the lined script. I'm assuming all of you know how this works. I'll just tell you briefly if you don't. Let me just get my drawing tool here.

Maja Jacob:

So, a lot of squiggly lines and a lot of colors.

Richard Schwadel:

Anytime you see a straight line, that means that person is speaking on camera. Anytime you see a squiggly line, that means that they're not speaking on camera. So, that means at this point here, this guy Tony, the first line isn't covered in this take right here. I looked at this and went, "Holy shit," holy crap, I mean. And because they had to dupe a page, because there was another setup here. So, it's a tremendous amount of overwhelming things when you look at the entire thing, and you just go, "Oh my God, there's so much-"

Maja Jacob:

This is not normal. This is not what you would normally see, maybe on a Farrelly's.

Richard Schwadel:

With the Farrelly's on the big group scenes, this is fairly normal, when there's a lot of people talking. But also, this is a really long scene. This is a seven-page scene. So, then I would look at the facing page, which gives me the information that I will take into account, but not cut by, and I'll tell you why. I use the facing pages as a general flow of information for me to know, and any red flags.

Richard Schwadel:

And also, it gives me a lay of the land looking at it where I go, "Okay, this is a long take, this is a short take, this has a lot of resets." And for instance, right here. So, this is how long the scene ran on these three cameras. And then, as soon as you go down here, you go, "Oh, they did some resets from six minutes to 15 minutes." So, this is a great example of a director saying, seeing in the script, director loves this take.

Richard Schwadel:

Okay, I've got a 15-minute take with two resets on a seven-page scene, he or she really loves the entire take top to bottom, no way. And with every project, it's different. With the Farrelly's, I do know, they like the editors to work off the last take. Because they don't stop until they know they're happy with what they've got. And so, typically, they do like, I don't know, four takes, but resets in between stuff.

Richard Schwadel:

Again, what should have been like a six, seven-minute take, I've got nine minutes, I've got seven minutes, and I got eight minutes. It's just a tremendous amount of material. So, the way that I attack it is, especially in a scene like this, I'm going to go back to the lined script here real quick. So, the way that I would attack this to stay sane, because here's the deal.

Richard Schwadel:

If you're an editor and you get all this, then you get, this day I know is over six hours of material. So, even if I watch just this scene, which was four plus hours, there's no way I'd remember everything. It's impossible. I would make markers. I put green markers on lines that I like. But it's not going to help me when I have 33 setups, over four hours of material, and seven pages.

Richard Schwadel:

It's too overwhelming. So, my process is I work in blocks. And what I'll do is I'll look at the script. I'll read it through, and see how far I want to cut to. And so, in this instance, I took it to the point where this guy was telling his story and stopped. And then, Loudermilk, the lead calls out the guy who just walked in the room. So, it was a little over two pages.

Richard Schwadel:

So, what I would do then is I would go through all the takes up until that moment on the next page. And then, I would start editing that. And one thing I learned in this show in particular, that's handy is if you've got three readings of a line, and you like all three, cut all three in. And then, move to the next line of dialogue.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, you can build a scene that way, watch it, and as you watch the scene, you'll deselect stuff, and go, "No, I like that other one better. I like that one better," or whatever. So, you may have two pages of this cut, which normally should have been a little under two minutes, and it may be three minutes because you've got the same person saying the same line.

Richard Schwadel:

It might be two different sizes. It might be funnier on one size, but the other size might be the one that you think you want to use. So, I found for me, it really helps to cut them both in, ignore it as I'm building it, until I'm watching it, and really deciding before I move forward to build the next part of the scene. And also, I always cut with waveforms initially when I build my first cut.

Richard Schwadel:

Because it's much easier to cheat dialogue. You can tell immediately where presence is, and where there's beats. And you can just get the flow of what it looks like, how the scene plays by looking at the waveforms also. I highly suggest working that way. I never cut music, or sound effects, or anything until I'm happy with my cut of the scene. I always keep it dry as long as possible.

Maja Jacob:

Now, did you want to show the corresponding scene of this paperwork?

Richard Schwadel:

So, this was day 10 of my first time working on this show. And if I had gotten this scene today, I would have cut it differently. I'm not happy ultimately with the way it is. Part of it, I realized after watching it, and looking at the script was how it was written. Part of it is just how I've evolved in my work. Some things that I would probably do a little bit different now.

Maja Jacob:

It's always a learning process. You're always changing it up, right?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah.

Maja Jacob:

Even after how many years of editing?

Richard Schwadel:

Don't ask.

[Clip plays]

Maja Jacob:

That's really funny. And it's just crazy how many reactions, and which reactions to choose. So, that's the question like, which reactions do you choose with such a giant group like that?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. That's where I've gotten caught up looking at it again. And I discovered part of it is the writing, because what I would have preferred to do was to hold off seeing him with the dart in his head, for as long as possible. That's what I would want to do now. But the problem is, is he comes in the room, and he sits down, and the other guy starts telling a story.

Richard Schwadel:

But the way it's played is everybody's looking at the dude with a dart in his head. And so, if you play that entire thing without seeing him, it still wouldn't work very well. Because it would go on so long, you can't just cut to reactions of people while this dude is telling a story, wondering, what are they looking at? What are they looking at for so long? So, part was in the writing, but that was a really tough scene to do.

Maja Jacob:

How many versions of that scene did you end up doing?

Richard Schwadel:

We worked on it for a while, because I think we pulled some time out of it, too. But it's still a long scene, it goes on, I think it's still like five-and-a-half or six minutes. There's a whole second half to it. It's weird. One thing I find sometimes is, I don't know if anybody else feels this way. But you may be successful at something that you cut, and your producers, and directors go, "Yeah, that's great. We're good."

Richard Schwadel:

But you're working so fast, you're on such a tight schedule, that a week later, you may see things you may want to change the scene. You might find better things, just because that's the nature of the business. The longer you live with it, the better it can get. So, I find sometimes the schedule is frustrating in that way.

Richard Schwadel:

And that I probably would have tried to take a whack at that scene again. But Peter said, it's good. Let's move on. And then, once it goes to the network, if you totally change a scene, I mean it's done sometimes, but they want to know what you've done.

Maja Jacob:

So, we have a question here from Alad. Okay.

Audience Question:

How are you doing, Richard?

Richard Schwadel:

Good. How are you?

Audience Question:

Good. I wonder, so with a scene like this, where it really is big, and there's a lot of players, can you speak a little bit about how you strategize before you jump in? And what's your thought process when you're trying to think about how to tackle a scene that's as big as this?

Richard Schwadel:

Well, number one is story, how do you tell the story. In this particular scene, it wasn't just telling the story, it was trying to protect the joke. Try and find some funny reactions, try and keep the dialogue of the story going, the guy talking about how he avoided taking a drink. And then, once the beat of the scene changes, and the guy, Mugsy, starts admitting or denying, "Hey, everything's fine."

Richard Schwadel:

It's playing that reality from his point of view, but playing the reactions off of everybody else who knows, no, nothing's fine with you, dude. He's totally oblivious to it. So, then, it's just again, looking at a gazillion cameras, and pulling stuff you like from those cameras, pulling the reactions you like.

Maja Jacob:

Is it like on a timeline, would you just have all the three clips there, group, and then just drag them onto the timeline as your favorites?

Richard Schwadel:

I typically mark an in and out, and cut it in. Like I was saying earlier, I might have three lines, or four. Typically, it's lines, not looks, but I might have three versions of something that I move on to the next line of dialogue. And then, pare it down from there. If it's a montage, I will make select reels of the material.

Richard Schwadel:

I usually don't make select reels for dialogue, some people do. Some people line up every take of dialogue, and other feature editors, who have their assistants do that. Insane, but it's one way to work, I guess.

Maja Jacob:

Jana is going to ask another question here.

Audience Question:

So, what was the deadline you had for this specific scene? Because you were saying that you took a while to work on that. I just wanted to know the deadline you work.

Richard Schwadel:

Typically, your deadline is the day you get it, because it's not that you're showing it to anybody, but you've got dailies coming the next day. So, if you only do half of that scene, and you've got that half of the scene, plus two other scenes that you have to do the next day, you're going to you're going to fall behind.

Richard Schwadel:

Which I do on occasion, and as long as the schedule allows for it. If it's day 10 they're shooting 40 days, and I look ahead at the schedule and go, "Oh, there's going to be an easy day on Thursday. Here I am on Tuesday, I can stretch this out if I need to." But one big consideration is, if they're at a location that they're about to leave, you have to have stuff cut up to camera.

Richard Schwadel:

Because somebody may phone you and say, "Are we good? Do we need any pickups? Do we need any inserts? Do we need blah-blah-blah, whatever?" Because we're leaving the location, or this is that actor's last day. So, you have to be aware of that too.

Maja Jacob:

And then, we have a written question here. If you're running out of time, in many cases, you mentioned, and you're happy with, let's say, all eight of the takes for one line, are there any tips to avoid having to watch all eight takes before moving on to the next setup?

Richard Schwadel:

I would never cut all eight, and the most I would do would be three. Because to me, there's always one that works the best. I would look at the three, and make a decision. And if I felt like I was unsure, then I would probably mark that section to do an alternate cut on it, and use the other take.

Maja Jacob:

And then, how many hours in a day is your typical work day?

Richard Schwadel:

For dailies, it's about eight hours, eight or nine hours. I tend to work pretty fast. It depends upon how many hours of material I get. If I get three hours of dailies, it's an eight-hour day. If I get six hours of dailies, it's an 11-hour day.

Maja Jacob:

Okay. And then, here's a question. Could you elaborate more on how you cheat sound? So, we're talking off-screen dialogue. You mentioned first learning of this from film editors on the Barney Miller Show. So, explain how you would cheat sounds.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. A good trick for cheating sound. Typically, what I mean by that is stuffing dialogue from one take into another take. So, let's say I've got a funny line that's in a two shot, but I want to be on the single. So, I'll cut in a single, and I'll steal the dialogue from the two shot. If it lines up, using the waveform, you cut with the waveform on track one.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, you take the line on track two. And you cut it in, and you just move it frame by frame until it's in sync. You can watch it, and gauge it, and then you listen to it. And it'll either work or it won't. And oftentimes, it usually works pretty well.

Maja Jacob:

So, basically, you're actually seeing them speak, and you're cheating the audio underneath it even though it's a different take.

Richard Schwadel:

Yes. And then, the other cheating is when you're on someone's back, you can cheat any line of dialogue, as long as their chin isn't hobbling, moving up, and down a lot, and it's a short line. Anytime I'm stuffing dialogue into somebody over the shoulder or whatever, I'm really trying to make sure that it looks like they're actually saying it.

Maja Jacob:

Now, on this show, ScriptSync was not used. But you mentioned that you used ScriptSync on the Quibi series The Now. Explain why that didn't work on The Now because Bill Murray is actually an actor in that show.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. So, ScriptSync is an amazing tool. The big issue with ScriptSync is, it's incredibly labor intensive for the assistants, as anybody who's done it knows. And they need time built into the schedule, you have to fight for that time before you even start. When you're looking at a schedule with the Post Super and go, "I want to use ScriptSync on this show. I need it, here's why.

Richard Schwadel:

And we're going to need to build time into the schedule." Nine times out of 10, they're going to say we can't build the time into the schedule. With the Quibi show, because of how they were shooting it, and the amount of time I fought for it, and we did it. But we didn't do it on everything. And I was hoping to be able to cut with it for my work because there was so much material.

Richard Schwadel:

The only thing we ended up using it for was director cuts, and producer cuts beyond the director cut, which was still great. Because when you're working, and they want to hear six different reads of that line, rather than having to cut them all up. You just go bing, bang, boom, and you can listen to them. So, the bane of ScriptSync is somebody going off book.

Richard Schwadel:

Meaning, saying different dialogue than what's scripted because it uses a phonetic algorithm. And what I've since learned is you can line a script for ScriptSync if there's improv, and put markers manually in it. And by turning off the phonetics, and just so, if you've got a big long improv scene, you could ScriptSync it, and put the markers roughly where things are being said.

Richard Schwadel:

So, what happened to us with Bill Murray is first of all, I was amazed when I found out he was in this Quibi show. It was like I was just floored that I got to cut Bill Murray.

Maja Jacob:

I was so jealous. I was like, "What?" Yeah.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. It's an amazing cast. It's Bill Murray, Daryl Hannah, Dave Franco, O'Shea Jackson.

Maja Jacob:

Pete Davidson.

Richard Schwadel:

Pete Davidson has a short role. He's hysterical in it. And this guy named Jimmy Tatro, who's hysterical. This guy is going to be a star in no time. He's so funny. So, Bill played this. It's called The Now. He plays a hippy psychologist. He's got a little rat tail. Dave Franco goes to him because Franco's suicidal. And so, I think there's about four scenes with the two of them, some of them fairly long.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, there's a couple of other scenes with Bill. And so, when I got my first day's dailies with Bill, it was like, "What's happening here? He's not saying what's scripted." It was like, "Where is he going?" And I went, "Okay, that's take one." Then I go to take two. Different than what he did in take one, and still not what was scripted.

Richard Schwadel:

I think I did a cut of a scene. And then, I went to set, and I cornered Pete. And I took him aside, and I said, "What's the deal with Bill?" And I said, "I'm trying to cut his stuff, it's great, but it's not." He goes, "Here's the deal with Bill, you give him the script. And then, he does what he's going to do. And you work with him from there."

Richard Schwadel:

So, I was hoping to ScriptSync Bill scenes, we didn't. What I ended up doing was having them transcribed. Because I figured that there would be a lot of work in those scenes. There was no other way to go through them without having a transcription of what his actual dialogue was.

Maja Jacob:

And that must have been tough choosing the best takes of it. I bet there's a lot of good takes.

Richard Schwadel:

There was a lot of good stuff. They were long. Some of the scenes, the network felt like they were too long because it's Quibi, and everything has to be short. A couple of our episodes were 10 minutes, which is their maximum, and they felt seven was ideal. So, they were always shooting to try and get to that seven-minute mark. There was one line of Bill's that I loved.

Richard Schwadel:

And he did it three or four times, all of them really similar. But Pete ended up changing it. And I was like, "No, I really want that one." And I tried to fight for it, but lost. But they were so close, but it was just

something that got me that that's, again, where you get into comedy words. It's like a little bit inflection, or a little bit of pause makes me laugh more than another take.

Maja Jacob:

We have a question here with Leslie, and we're going to let Leslie speak.

Audience Question:

Hi, there. Thank you, Richard. I was just curious if your experience with you being the type of thing where everybody's got a slightly different taste or take on things. Suggestions that you have with dealing with executives or broadcasters who maybe don't fully get the joke that you and the director trying to put across?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. That typically is up to, if it's a series, it's up to your show runner to fight that. What I found with series is the show runners, for me, whether it was Jason Alexander or Peter, if they didn't agree with a note, they would fight it. And they would give their reason why they weren't going to do it.

Richard Schwadel:

If it's a TV movie, I found more often than not, it's more up to the editor to fight over notes. Because more often than not, people tend to not fight notes as much, or they fight different notes, and maybe are willing to lose some things that you as an editor might find more valuable.

Maja Jacob:

Tell me about in The Now show, you are telling me about this one scene, the bookie scene. Just tell me about the bookie scene because this is like a typical, what do I do with this scene? Especially, with like working with Peter like, "Oh my God, how do I cut this?"

Richard Schwadel:

This was a really scary moment for me, a confidence moment. So, I had a scene. It was an actor. He was a secondary role, and he's a bookie. He's a Korean bookie guy, middle aged. And the scene is he goes to meet with Dave Franco to tell him that Dave Franco is responsible for his dead brother's debt. And it's like 70 grand or something.

Richard Schwadel:

Two people in the scene, four pages, and about four-and-a-half hours of dailies. I noticed immediately that there was a really big disparity in how this guy played his character. So, take the first few takes. He was very straight, and dry, and very businesslike. And then, as they went along, he got a little goofier and looser. And then, the last takes, he was broad as hell and nutso.

Richard Schwadel:

And it was such a huge difference. I was going, "I don't know what to do here." Because usually, these guys like to work with the last take. So, I just started building the scene. And I decided in watching it, the guy punches Dave Franco twice. The first time comes out of nowhere. He leans in, he goes, "There's something you should know about me." Boom. And he says, "I'm mean."

Richard Schwadel:

And then, Franco goes, "What the hell, man?" And then, the guy says something else, and punches him again. And totally out of nowhere. So, what he did was in his giddy takes, he got, it was funny after he punched him, I noticed. He smiled, and laughed, and got happy. And so, what I figured was, and I thought, "This is what I think they want. But this is what I think I should do."

Richard Schwadel:

It's a combination of the two. As I played the bookie straight, all the way up until the punch, and as soon as he punched Franco, all of a sudden, he went nuts. He went giddy, and happy, and this guy just went nuts when he got violent. I cut that scene. I cut it that way. I showed it to my assistants. They laughed. And I was like, "I hope they're laughing at the right places and all." It feels like they are.

Richard Schwadel:

I had to work with Peter that day. And the scene was directed by his brother, by Bobby. Peter was off doing something else. I was working with Pete on something else. And I asked him, I said, "Have you looked at the dailies? What's your take on this Jun Ho character? I'm not sure what to do." And he goes, "Well, show me. Have you cut anything?" I said, "Yeah."

Richard Schwadel:

And he goes, "Well, let me see it." And I was like, "I'm not sure I want to show this to you." He goes, "No, let me just look at it." And so, I showed it to him. And he was like, "This is a great first cut. Love it. It's great. I love the guy." And what they ended up doing was a later scene that they were shooting, they said, "Play it straight until you punch the guy, and then go crazy." So, it became this guy's signature move. He's really funny in it. It's really-

Maja Jacob:

So, you created his character for the rest of... well, not I created, but-

Richard Schwadel:

Well, I didn't create it, I chose it.

Maja Jacob:

You chose that.

Richard Schwadel:

I chose some options. And again, I went with my gut. It took a lot in that scene to decide, which way to do it. But then I went, "Okay, this is how I'm going to try and do it." And I don't even think I cut an alt in that scene. I think I just went, there's four-and-a-half hours of dailies, this is going to be a long haul, but I'm going to do it this way. Yeah.

Maja Jacob:

And the way you chose it ended up being what that character was going to be throughout the rest of the series.

Richard Schwadel:

Well, no, there were two fight scenes. It was that and something else. But they liked it so much. That's the way they went with the other fight scene, which I thought was cool. Yeah. Still, the amount of years I've been doing this, I still was really nervous when showing him that scene because there were so many options, and they were so different.

Maja Jacob:

For animation editing, such as dialogue for The Simpsons, what would you say was your biggest takeaway from this experience? Was it beneficial learning more about the editing process for comedy animation?

Richard Schwadel:

The Simpsons? No, to answer your question. The reason why is the edict on The Simpsons was no air. You just cut tight, tight, tight, tight, tight, tight, no pauses, anything, unless somebody was walking and not talking. And so, when I worked there was a long time ago, they would record all the dialogue. They would do it in one giant room.

Richard Schwadel:

So, the entire cast, and the guest stars would come in, do the read. They record it for, like they wouldn't re-record it. That was the official recording. And then, they get passed off the editor. And the editor would cut it together, and then they would listen to it as a radio show. Give suggestions on takes, changing takes, but it was always tighter, tighter, tighter, lose the air, lose the air, lose the air.

Richard Schwadel:

There really isn't much I learned on that show, other than they don't like air. Just one aside, sadly, when I was there, I don't remember what season, it was early on. Sam Simon, who was one of the creators of the show with Matt Groening. The two of them were not getting along. So, the editors have to screen with them separately. And then, sometimes you got conflicting notes. And it was like, "What do I do?"

Maja Jacob:

Oh, man. We have a question here from James. I'm going to read it. Hey, Richard, thanks for all the great clips. My question goes in a different direction. Many editors will reach a point in their career, whether at the beginning or later, where they have to go into interviews, and defend some of their credits on their resume.

Maja Jacob:

Whether it'd be to convince a producer that you can cut their type of genre, or attitudes towards certain networks that appear on your resume. Richard and I have talked briefly about this in the past. And I wonder if he had more to elaborate on this?

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah. I'll tell you a quick story about, I think I told you this, James, I can't remember. But when I got hired on Hit the Road, they wanted an LA editor. They wanted the tax credits, but I could just tell they didn't want to hire anyone out of Vancouver because of experience. And so, I met with a director in person here. And we got along, and we bonded.

Richard Schwadel:

And then, he talked me up to the guys. So, Jason, and the other producers, and then I had to do a phone call interview with them. There were like seven people in the room, I could tell. And I was sinking because they're looking at my resume going, "We only see hallmark and lifetime movies. You cut a couple of series in Vancouver, but you've only done TV movies."

Richard Schwadel:

And I said, "Go to IMDb and go further down." Because I knew they were all looking at IMDb, actually. And they go, "No, I only see something called The Debaters." I go, "Farther down, farther down." I kept saying, "Farther down. Find my sitcoms." And then, finally they went to the sitcoms I had cut.

Richard Schwadel:

And I had to pull every name in the book that I had ever worked with, drop every single name to let them know that back when I was cutting in LA, I was on the pilot list, which they wouldn't let any editor do pilots unless you were on some special network list. And I was on that list after having cut sitcoms. So, that was a real struggle. And yeah, the TV movies don't bode well for high-end LA producers, I can tell you that.

Maja Jacob:

So, here's a question for someone starting out. What advice would you give to someone who is just starting out, and wants to make their first step into the industry as an editor?

Richard Schwadel:

Cut as much as you can. You have a lot more opportunities than I had when I was starting. You can cut people's shorts. You've got software on your computer now. You can edit. You can teach yourself how to cut it, and then put yourself out there, and offer your services to people. Because you only get better by doing more.

Maja Jacob:

And that goes into the next question here. What makes Avid the software of choice for so many editors, especially here in Vancouver? I'm an Avid user, but I find myself using Premiere Pro a lot more because it seems a bit more user friendly.

Richard Schwadel:

It's a preference. I typically don't change edit systems until I have to. I've done a Premiere course with Gary Lam, and I remember a bunch of people keep asking, "Why do we have to do it that way?" A lot of it had to do with assisting, and not editing. So, we stick with the stuff we're comfortable with.

Richard Schwadel:

And as long as people keep using Avid, and Avid workflow, and it works, and they're comfortable with it, and it's proven, it's going to stay around. I think Premiere had some workflow issues with features, and I think that probably scared some TV post-sups, I'm guess.

Maja Jacob:

Here's a fun question. Have you ever cried?

Richard Schwadel:

I cry all the time from dailies.

Maja Jacob:

From dailies, or just being in the cutting room, have you ever, "Oh my God, this is just crazy," have you ever got a little emotion or cried? Come on, you're a man.

Richard Schwadel:

No, I cry from footage all the time. If it doesn't hit me emotionally, then I shouldn't be doing what I'm doing because I'm the audience. You guys have to remember that. You're the audience, and if you're not feeling it, the audience isn't going to feel it. Yeah. This stuff hits me all the time. There's a scene with Dave Franco where he breaks down, and yeah, I was crying watching it.

Maja Jacob:

But have you ever cried looking at your workload like, "Oh, my God, this is a lot?" That kind of crying.

Richard Schwadel:

I just swear a lot. I don't cry. I just swear.

Maja Jacob:

Do you ever find the quality of your work suffers if you are not in love with the project? If this was ever the case, how do you overcome this obstacle?

Richard Schwadel:

It's weird. Well, not weird. I have a work ethic where I do the best I can with what I have. So, if I'm doing a project that isn't the greatest, not the greatest script, maybe not the greatest directed show, I will always put my best into it. Because I think the only thing you have in this business is your reputation.

Richard Schwadel:

If you come in with an attitude, and you only look at the last take of every setup, and only use that, you can work that way. And you know that you'll change it with the director and all, but I think as editors, we should know the material, and know where the best takes are.

Maja Jacob:

Okay. What was it like working on Pee Wee's Playhouse?

Richard Schwadel:

Oh, God, it was awesome. It was linear editing at the time. I can't remember what the edit system was exactly. But there were so many different creative elements on that show. There were little animation bits. There were the puppeteers on set. There were all different kinds of puppets, and puppeteers, and voices.

Richard Schwadel:

It was so much fun to put together. It almost put itself together because the genius of Paul Reubens, and that nothing was left on the cutting room floor, basically. Except, for tying a few things here and there from what I remember. It was just everything was timed out. Everything worked. Everything was funny, and everything was well done.

Maja Jacob:

It was a good experience. It was a good experience.

Richard Schwadel:

Yeah, it was great. I wish it lasted longer. I only did three episodes. And what happened to him was just so sad. Yeah. He's such a talented guy. Great show.

Maja Jacob:

Here's a question. How are the work prospects in Vancouver for scripted editors these days pre-pandemic?

Richard Schwadel:

Pre-pandemic, good thing you prefaced that. It's pretty good. Things with the streamers, Netflix in particular, things were really busy. Quibi was doing a number of projects here. Netflix, and then the usuals. Yeah. It's the busiest Vancouver has been that I can remember since I've been here.

Maja Jacob:

And for someone that is looking to edit, I worked with Richard as an assistant. And now, I'm moving into editing and directing. Richard is, I feel like he's my mentor and good friend. And he would bring me into his room. And he would ask me what I would think about the scene, and we'd sit down, and I'd watch it. And I'll say, "Well, I like this part, or whatever. And I'm not sure about this."

Maja Jacob:

So, it was a really great experience to collaborate with someone like Richard. And that's something that I'm not sure that all editors in Vancouver have the time to do. But he took that time for me. So, I just wanted to say thank you so much for that. And you'll be my mentor and friend for life because of that.

Richard Schwadel:

Well, assistants are so overwhelmed with what they have to do that I know a lot of them want to cut. And I always encourage them to cut scenes. And sometimes, they just don't have the time to do it, or they don't have the time to do it to the way they really would have wanted to. So, I just encourage, that's how I learned too, is I jumped on edit systems when people weren't on them, and cut material.

Richard Schwadel:

I think it's really good to do that. And don't be afraid of your editor criticizing it because that's how you're going to learn. If you do it, never look at how they cut it until after you've done yours, and you've discussed with them what they like, and what they don't like about it.

Maja Jacob:

This has been a great chat here. And I hope everyone enjoyed the Zoom show, the Masters' Comedy Zoom show, and yeah. So, I think that's it. I hope everyone enjoyed it.

Richard Schwadel:

That was great. Thank you all. Great questions, and I appreciate everybody attending. And thank you, Maja.

Maja Jacob:

And thank you, Richard. And thank you Alison, and the CCE. You guys are awesome. And all the sponsors, Finale, Vancouver Post Alliance, IATSE 891, Annex Pro, Avid, and Integral Artists.

Richard Schwadel:

Yay.

Maja Jacob:

Thank you.

Richard Schwadel:

Right.

Maja Jacob:

Bye.

Richard Schwadel:

Bye.

Sarah Taylor:

Thank you so much for joining us today, and a big thanks goes to Richard and Maja. A special thanks goes to Trevor Mirosh, Jane MacRae and Maureen Grant. This episode was edited by Nicolas Lehmann.

The main title sound design was created by Jane Tattersall. Additional ADR recording by Andrea Rusch. Original music provided by Chad Blain. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bao. The CCE has been supporting Indspire - an organization that provides funding and scholarships to Indigenous post secondary students. We have a permanent portal on our website at cceditors.ca or you can donate directly at indspire.ca. The CCE is taking steps to build a more equitable ecosystem within our industry and we encourage our members to participate in a way they can.

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

[Outtro]

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