CB: Hello everyone, it's Crystal here, one of your hosts for IATSE 891's podcast, Apple Box Talks.

It's been nearly two years since we released an episode of the podcast, and for many of us, a lot has changed in that time. Our industry, our people, have come through an incredibly challenging two years, and now we take stock of how we want to move forward with this work in the future.

We're hoping to release season two of Apple Box Talks in 2025. Season one introduced you to some of the creative artists and technicians that make up the membership here and gave you a peek behind the curtain, with our episodes focused on helping those new to the industry learn more about what it means to be a part of our local. In season two, we want to take a step back, looking more broadly at IATSE 891's role in both the motion picture industry and the greater labor movement here in BC.

We're really excited about the upcoming interviews and the stories we will get to share with you in 2025. In the meantime, we've gone back to our archive and edited six previously unaired episodes from season one, and we'll be releasing those monthly for the rest of 2024. Since they were recorded in 2022, there are a few dated references, but there's still some excellent stories for you.

So, until we see you fresh again in 2025, pull up an Apple Box and let's talk.

[Theme Song]

CB: IATSE 891 presents Apple Box Talks

HB: The podcast where we get to talk to the very best in entertainment, the artists and technicians of IATSE 891.

CB: From prep to post and everything in between, we create worlds on screens of all sizes.

HB: Welcome to Apple Box Talks. I'm Hillary.

CB: And I'm Crystal and this week we're joined by the department who takes the pieces and stitches them together with credits to their names such as Freaks, 50 States of Fright, and Sisters and Brothers.

HB: Taking this seat on the Apple Box this week, Sabrina Pitre, member of the editing department. So pull up an Apple Box and let's talk. Welcome, Sabrina.

SB: Hi, thanks for having me.

CB: Thanks for coming in. So let's just start with what it is you do. What does a day in the life of an editor look like?

SP: I guess it depends what part of the process you're in. Right off the bat, you're receiving dailies. So I guess my day starts with my assistant usually shuttles me the scenes that were shot the previous night and they're organized into scenes and so I just kind of grab a scene and start getting into it, really. We get paperwork from set we call a Lined Script and Facing Pages, and that sort of tells us–gives us a bit more information about what was shot, what kind of setups were used, how many takes there were, just kind of a nice reference to what you're seeing in your non-linear editing program. And yeah, just sort of assemble scene by scene, self -contained. And then once everything's in and you've got all the footage, then you start piecing it all together and making the story a little more cohesive. So it's–it's a process.

CB: So you said two words in there that are film lingo.

SP: Oh, sorry!

CB: No, no, that's okay. So for people listening, can you explain to us what dailies are? And can you explain what a non-linear editing system is.

SP: So dailies are the raw footage that's shot on set. So when you see like a film set somewhere in your city shooting, that's just the raw footage that comes into us and then we're in charge of piecing it together and choosing the best takes, like where the best performances were, what worked out best technically on the day, because there can be some snafus there time to time. So a non-linear editing system is essentially just, uh, editing software that you use on your computer, so Final Cut, Premiere, Avid Media Composer. I think when people were editing actual film film, those were linear systems whereas non-linear in the software that we use, we can sort of just drag and drop and grab pieces from all over the place.

CB: Did you go to film school?

SP: Yeah, that's actually why I came out to BC. I'm from Toronto originally, and I really fell in love with the program out here and also the opportunity to move far, far away from home. I love my parents very much, but you know I also wanted the adventure, so I decided to come out to UBC for their film production program.

CB: So you have a particular skill set as an editor, but what is that you needed to get into the department? What skills were transferable from where you started to where you are now?

SP: I didn't have any real jobs lined up or prospects coming out of film school. I probably could have done a little bit more work to network with my professors and fellow students, but that's where I was at. So initially, I was just sort of canvassing the area with resumes with very limited experience, obviously, and I got hired by a sound studio called Ocean, and they record cartoons. So that was sort of where I got started. I was sort of a coordinator there. So nothing to do with film editing necessarily, but kind of in the rough area of entertainment. So it was a start anyway. And I was grateful that they gave me the opportunity. And interestingly enough, it's sort of come full circle with me at that sound studio because they were also the first people to give me a shot at voice acting. Because they knew me, they were willing to have me in and audition

and I just happened to book something and I guess the rest kind of just happened after that. Yeah.

HB: So this is something we touched on earlier is that often when we're doing research for these interviews, we look at people's profiles and it tends to be that they've kind of started in one place and then followed a trajectory to wherever it led them to today. But looking at your profile, you have a lot of different disciplines, different things you've tried out in film. How do you feel that shapes your work as an editor?

SP: I think it certainly gives me an appreciation for some of the other roles people play in the film process, you know, it's such a collaborative field that every person has a role to play and it's important, it all makes the end product what it is ultimately. No one person can say they did it all, right? So yeah, I think a lot of it is, yeah, the appreciation for what some of those other departments do and the understanding I have in VFX, graphics, and sound, you know, helps me on my end as an editor give them materials that aid their process as well. You know, you don't want to hand over a project that's just a mess and it makes their life difficult, so I feel like if I can understand some of their pains, then I can alleviate it ahead of time.

CB: So in interviewing members who have carved their pathway into film, there's a lot of on-the-job learning that occurs in this industry. So I wanted you to speak to that from an editor's perspective. And did you have any mentors along the way?

SP: Yeah. So learning on the job is huge. There's only so much that school can teach you. Once you get into the workforce and you're exposed to situations, people, all those things that come with editing, you have to kind of hit the ground running and sort of take things in stride. So coming out of school, I had a certain base level of understanding of how to work in NLE's– nonlinear editing systems–and how to piece a story together. But what you don't learn is how to work with people and troubleshoot necessarily, and those sorts of things you do pick up when you're just sort of thrown into it. And my first opportunity, I actually got my first assistant editing job loading footage at night on a show called The Shopping Bags. I think they just sort of took a chance on me. I mean, obviously I had zero credits, but it was loading at nights and there was somebody there to show me the ropes. So yeah, I would say, you know, when you ask about mentors, I feel like every person along the way that showed me something new or gave me an opportunity, all of those people are mentors. I wouldn't be here without them.

HB: I think you've touched on something interesting that a lot of people think about an editor as someone who sits by themselves at a computer, but it really is such a collaborative process where you kind of become the centre of several different pieces of work, kind of all converging at your desk. Can you talk a little bit to that collaboration, how you work with the other departments?

SP: I think as an editor, you're kind of a wrangler of different departments. And that's an important skill to learn as an up-and-coming editor or somebody interested in that role, is you're dealing with people on set sometimes, you're dealing with directors, obviously, producers, network people, and everybody's got their own personalities and their own ways of approaching an idea creatively. And sometimes what they give you is–it needs interpretation. So, you know, you might get a note, for instance, that says, like, oh, we're not really liking that character. There's something not working here. And so you sort of take that and kind of process it and be like, okay, well, what is it about this scene that's not working? Like, what can I adjust that would address the note and make them feel like there's something that's changed or improved? And

often times you're sitting in the room, you know, back in the before foretimes, you're sitting together with somebody in the room with you, and you're working for hours on end, so you really need to learn how to, I guess, not manage, but just collaborate with somebody that doesn't necessarily have the same opinions as you and do it professionally without ruffling feathers and being, you know, courteous to that person too. Because oftentimes, you know, it's easy to get a narrow-minded vision of your work. There is a time when you are isolated and you're cutting together the footage and you're like, this is great, this is exactly how it should be, done. And then the director comes in and he's got all kinds of different ideas and they've had different experiences being on set. And so their memories of what happened and the struggles they went through, they're like, well, you know, I really would like to see this or I want to try to work this in. And you're like, oh, really? Come on. No, my edit. But then you're like, okay, okay, you can't be too precious about these things and that's important. And oftentimes, those suggestions make it better. They force you outside of your little frame sometimes, and the end product is always better.

HB: I think a common thread through a lot of these questions and answers has been ego management.

SP: Yeah, if you tell somebody no one too many times, then they're not going to want to work with you, right? Like, you want to be a facilitator. You know, it's difficult. You know, you have to put yourself in their shoes because they don't know the footage as intimately as you do. So sometimes they just want to see something, you know. You know in your mind like, okay, this isn't going to work, but it's important that you try. And sometimes, you know, by forcing yourself, you're like, oh, actually, I was kind of wrong about that. This is possible and this does work better. Or you find a happy medium between what you had and what they're suggesting and just kind of ends up great.

CB: So I want to talk about Sisters and Brothers for a moment because it sounds like not only was it your first feature film, but it was improv?

SP: Yeah.

CB: So talk to us about how you handled that and how you got through that because being an editor is extremely technical, but also very, very creative.

SP: Honestly, I couldn't tell you how I got through that. It's almost like you have amnesia after a while where it's like, how the heck did I manage this? How did I pull that off? But, you know, what was awesome was that the director, Carl Besai, he put so much faith in my skills. And I was, that was my first feature, that was my first kick at the can. So the confidence that he had in me was remarkable. And I took that. And it almost gave me more confidence to be like, yes, I can actually, I can do this. I just have to take it, you know, one step at a time, one piece at a time. So with improv, obviously, every take is different. And the cameras were constantly roving, too. So the same setups weren't necessarily there from take to take. So it was a lot of combing through. And essentially, you just have to watch all the footage. And what I did was I chose the pieces that made me laugh kind of in its raw state, because that's good indicator that you're on the right track. When it comes down to piecing everything together, I'll start to pull from there and see if I can make something cohesive and get all my favorite bits in there in a way that works. So yeah, it was definitely a process. It was a labor intensive many days, many hours. They shot a ton of footage too. I think it was three cameras shooting constantly.

CB: So how would the takes at work then. Circle takes are takes that are the preference of the director, right? So you literally probably had to look at every single piece of footage.

SP: Yeah, I'll be honest with you. I don't take circle takes into consideration ever. I just look at all the footage. And usually the circle take is one of the better takes for sure. There's things that they've gotten technically correct as well as improved performances. Sometimes a scene will kind of evolve from take one to say take five. So usually the later takes are going to be the ones that you're going to use, but that's not always the case. And everything is worth looking at. You can find pieces, little stolen pieces that were never intended to be used, that you can fit somewhere. That's kind of how you make something out of nothing sometimes, which also you get asked to do. But that's kind of the fun part. You know, it's sort of like every project is a new puzzle that you kind of have to piece together and you don't necessarily have all the instructions.

CB: Justin talked about a situation where he was given a scene and he just completely flipped the perspective from one character to another.

SP: Mmhmm.

CB: And it made the entire scene so much more powerful. And that's the one that they went with in the film in the end. Do you have any moments like that?

SP: I have a funny moment like that, actually. Yes, I was working on a short film and I read the script, I loved it, I thought it was hilarious. So I cut it together, it was this tight little comedy kind of piece, and the director came in and he's like, yeah, so this is actually a dark drama. I was like oh, oh, okay. Crazy. How different I was able to make this. So, yeah, we ended up working together to take it into that darker place, you know, with a certain amount of pacing, choosing different takes, sound design, obviously, and music. But I just thought it was hilarious how easily that slipped into the comedy side. So that would be my experience with that kind of that power that you have in the edit suite to command, yeah, a performance and a story.

HB: How do you feel that fits with the reality that a lot of stuff is not filmed in a linear way? You might have read a script, but then you're getting dailies from the end of the show at the beginning of your editing process. How do you hold those two things in tandem?

SP: Yeah, I actually worked, so Freaks, a feature film that I worked on, that was interesting because they shot a later scene on the first day and it was an intense scene, full of emotion, crying, it was heavy. And I don't think the actors were quite there, they weren't as comfortable with each other early on as they were much later. And the filmmakers recognized that and so they asked me, hey can you look at this footage, piece it together, let us know if that emotion that we need is coming across. I mean, that's another great thing about assembling while they're shooting because you're able to quickly put something together and show them like hey this is working or this is not working or we could use a pickup here, a different angle, that kind of thing. So I put it together and yeah, it definitely needed a boost. And so they were totally grateful. It was awesome that they even asked me to do that, it just shows like a certain confidence and trust in your editor. And, yeah, they ended up shooting some additional footage and almost reshooting the scene a little bit later once the characters were comfortable with each other. So, yeah, I'd say it's super important.

CB: So one of the first films, and I had a little chuckle at this because the film that I first saw in the theaters was Fantasia.

SP: Okay.

CB: And I saw that your first movie was Home Alone, which is significantly later in the timeline, if we're looking at a timeline. But tell us, was there any sort of one movie or one thing that kind of inspired you to get into film?

SP: Yeah, you know, it's hard to pinpoint any one thing. I just couldn't get enough of film. Like I was going to Rogers Video back when they had those deals where you could get like seven movies for seven days.

CB: Oh, yeah, I remember those.

SP: Yeah, I would just go there and get movie upon movie and just binge watch everything. I just wanted to consume it all, and I just loved that aspect of storytelling, like I can remember back in elementary school I would write all these kinds of crazy stories, usually about alien abductions, I don't know why but I was obsessed with that and like, toilet use. Anyway, I got a lot of like red notes from teachers on this like can you maybe talk about something else? But anyway, it was more just like quirky, weird, interesting stories that, you know, I thought would grab people. And I think that storytelling aspect and all that immersion that I did in watching films from all eras to, like, especially the old stuff. Anything was sort of part of what, I guess, built up in me in that I realized like, oh, this is like a career that I could pursue and this is exciting. And my parents got me like a little digital camera and I would just run around shooting like guerrilla filmmaking, shooting all kinds of like silly little shorts that me and a friend of mine would piece together. We'd actually shoot little shorts specifically to edit on the new software that was coming out. So, you know, like Imovie and Final Cut Pro, we learned how to use those programs specifically just by messing around with them, you know? They're so intuitive that you just figure it out, right?

CB: Can you think of any industries where skill could be transferable into your department, like any sort of like, quote unquote, normal jobs that could fit well into your department?

SP: What's a normal job?

CB: Right.

SP: Hmm. I'm not sure how to answer that one. You know, I think, I don't necessarily think it's a different job. I think it's a certain type of personality. Somebody who's curious, is interested in how things work, perhaps. Certainly an attention to detail is important. Yeah, somebody who's interested in storytelling or I think that willingness to play and have fun as well, I think is important.

HB: So storytelling is actually a learned skill and not everyone's good at it. We've all had the times when you're listening to a story kind of trying to work out where it's going or how it's going to end. How do you hone that skill for yourself?

SP: Yeah, that's tricky because I do feel like some of it is learned, but some of it is in a–there's a certain amount of gut feeling that I rely on when I'm editing something. If it doesn't feel right when I'm watching it back, then there's a problem. And I need to work something out in terms of performance or pacing. And it's that that I fall back on time and time again. So I do think, like

you say, you know, it is something that you can improve upon as you continue to work. But I also think that there's a certain amount of instinct there that maybe you're just born with, I don't know. But it's a gut feeling. And yeah, I use that as sort of my baseline for anything that I put together.

CB: That requires an incredible amount of trust in yourself.

SP: Yes.

CB: Is that something you've had to build and hone?

SP: Yeah, I mean everybody's got that sort of imposter's syndrome going to some degree in their line of work, and I have learned over time that more confidence in myself, whether it's forced or not, breeds confidence in how others perceive you and how you approach your own work. I, yeah, I can't say enough about that like honestly, the fake it 'til you make it is so true. Nobody likes a wishy-washy answer to anything and the more direct and confident you can be about a decision, the more people are gonna be on board with you. Even if it's the wrong one! Sometimes I've been like yup, this is great, I'm confident with this and then I've been proven wrong, dead wrong. I'm like, okay, yeah, well, great. We'll just, we'll just fix that. Like, it's, it–you just kind of own it and move on. You know, you're not going to ever be 100 % right about everything. But I think if you can at least just trust yourself and, and move forward with that in mind, I don't know, it just kind of, it aids the process and, and helps you in your career, ultimately.

CB: That's good general life advice.

SP: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

HB: So what kind of role does research take in the life of an editor?

SP: I would say research is a very important part of editing, especially if you're delving into a genre that you're perhaps not as comfortable with or familiar with. It's great to watch other projects that have been done in that genre, see what other filmmakers have done, what other editors have done. Oftentimes you'll get references in scripts or from you know talking to a director or producer directly, they'll say oh we're thinking you know kind of like this and this movie and this movie, and I'll absolutely go out and watch those if I have haven't seen them already and make that sure I understand what it is that they're after. You know, you don't want to give them something that's completely out of left field necessarily, that doesn't always go over so well, I mean it's nice to show them different ideas but if they've got a pretty solid concept, then you kind of want to work your creativity through those parameters as best you can.

CB: And so looking into the future, if you could work with any filmmaker, who would it be in why?

SP: There's a lot of filmmakers I'd like to work with. But I guess the one that stands out to me right now is Ari Aster. His films that have come out have surprised me and challenged me as a viewer and that really excites me as a creative person like that is somebody that I would love to see his process and and I would love to collaborate with it's–it's also because he's got a really twisted mind and I feel like I've kind of leaned towards that end myself so I feel like we'd have a lot of common ground that we could we could build on there.

CB: And where do you see yourself in 10 years from now?

SP: 10 years. Oh my god. I feel like I'm already on this trajectory, which is great, because what I'm trying to do is really decide which projects I work on. I don't want to take just anything anymore. And so I think, you know, in 10 years, I'm hoping I can just sort of really pick and choose and sort of almost work, you know, I wouldn't say part-time, but if like only two or three projects that interest me come along in a year, then that's what I'll do. You know, I don't want to just go crazy and work on everything because I feel like I have to. I want that luxury of choice, and that's what I'm working really hard towards right now. So if I can be there in 10 years, then that's great. I will be happy.

SP: Is there a particular genre that really speaks to you as an editor?

SP: Yes, I would say I love working in comedy. I feel like I've got some kind of, I don't know, I mean, I feel like I've got certain instincts that lend themselves well to that kind of editing, as well as horror. I kind of have a huge love of horror. So any opportunity to work on something scary is fun. And yeah, I'm all for it.

HB: Yeah, I was listening to a podcast interview with a writer and an editor who said it's often the most fun to work with those fringe kind of things…"

SP: Totally

HB: …the most funny or the most gross or the most awful are the ones where you just get to really let loose and have fun.

SP: Yeah, that's the thing. It's like you get this opportunity to experiment in a way that you wouldn't necessarily in other formats. But I mean, that's not to say that, you know, every project, you know, you can bring a certain level of creativity to, but I feel like, yeah, those extremes really let you kind of let loose and just play around until you find something that works or surprises you.

HB : So editing as a craft has advanced enormously. I mean, the whole film world is constantly changing, but if we think traditionally with people sitting, splicing together actual frames of film versus you now sitting at a computer deck, what do you think the future of editing looks like going forward?

SP: There's this thing online where you can type in your line of work and see how, like, how safe it is moving forward like if you know you'll be replaced by robots and tuff like that. I think for the most part, we are pretty safe as editors just because you know yes, a robot can certainly take algorithms in place and assemble say a trailer or a scene, but it's that personal approach, that individual touch that we bring to a story that I feel like can't really ever be replicated truly. But moving forward, you know, in the future, I feel like more and more we're going to be working on like digital screens and moving things around physically with your hands, like a touch kind of abilities. That would be kind of cool. I think it's already kind of here. I have no idea, no idea. I just hope I–I hope we can still be working, you know, 10 or 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now.

HB: That was very Minority Report with the…

SP and CB: …yeah, yeah…

HB: I was totally imagining that I wanted a computer like that so bad.

SP: Right. I mean, yeah, I feel like it's not necessarily the norm right now, but I feel like that technology obviously is there, but it's not sort of integrated and mainstream right now.

HB: I was listening to an interview with a writer, which obviously writers go through extensive editing processes as well. So I'm wondering if it kind of applies to you and what you do. They talked about how sometimes they're looking at a show and they can't be too precious about any one moment because sometimes that moment that you might be really attached to just has to go. Can you walk through how that process works and how you manage kind of the feelings versus the work?

SP: Yes. That's happened to every editor, guaranteed. There's just something that you put together that you love, that you know ultimately either it doesn't work in the overall movie or it's just not in a style that the director's jiving with and you just have to lose it or rework it. You know, I would say more and more as I've built up experience, that happens less but it happens. And it's hard because you do get attached to things. It's kind of your baby, you know. You don't want to see it destroyed. But again, you just kind of have to let it go. I mean, ultimately, you're working with people. You're not working on your own. This isn't your project solely. And so I think it's important for you to step back, take a breather, realize that it's nothing personal. You know, everybody's just trying to make the best end product they can. So save that if you want for like a reel or or I've done that before, you know, you just, you save it. It's for you. You can look back on it and be like, hell yeah, I did that. That was great. But, you know, ultimately you do have to make some sacrifices. It's just part of the process, you know. And like you say, everybody's got to do it. There's compromises that the writers make, that the directors make on set where it's like, hey, we can't get this scene the scene anymore. We run out of time. That's got to be devastating, especially if they've planned it for months and months in advance. So, yeah, the whole process for everybody, there's compromises and solutions that you need to come up with in order to patch those holes that come up. And yeah, you just kind of need to roll with it and remember that you're having fun and this is a cool job and not everybody gets to do this. And ultimately you're making something that's going to entertain others. So yeah, it's best not to take yourself too seriously.

HB: And you never know when that moment will come full circle, right? Like I heard a casting director once say they call it they're good for something box.

SP: Yeah.

HB: Where it's not for the moment, but it's good for something.

SP: Yep, absolutely. There's been times where you just, you save it for later and sometimes a piece of it or if you rework it a little bit, it fits somewhere else. Like, It's great. Oftentimes, you know, with writers, what they've written doesn't necessarily translate over to what the end visual product is. So there can be a lot of rewriting in the edit suite as well. You get asked that sometimes where it's just like, oh, we wish we kind of had written it this way, but can you make this, you know, this character a little more evil or can we make this sort of happier? It's be like, okay, I can steal this from there, I can take this from over here and kind of make it work and kind of gives you a new piece to the edit.

CB: Sounds like my garage. It's the good for something space.

SP: Totally.

CB: So we work some incredibly long hours and intense schedules. How do you maintain your work-life balance?

SP: Yeah, that can be difficult. As I've worked more and more, I think you get better at that. When you're young, you kind of want to get ahead really quickly and you want to be as pleasing as you can to everybody and accommodating, I should say. So you tend to push yourself a little bit more than you should. I think your body just lets you too. Like now it's like my body's like, no, you're, we're not going past 12 hours. Sabrina, just stop. So yeah, I think I once worked a 36 hour shift and drove home and I was like, I should not be driving. Like the world just seemed weird. But again, you know, it wasn't like I thought about the consequences. I was too young and a bit of an idiot. But now I think more and more, especially as we're getting more information about how important your health is, you know, I think I'm hoping that younger people are better informed now than I was back then. What I try to do is take breaks as often as I can. You know, I mentioned that I have a little bit of ADHD, and what that does is either you get super distracted by everything, or you get hyper -focused on something to the degree that you neglect everything else around you, like eating and drinking. Yeah, and it's just important to get up and take walks. Like I find, you know, I've been in situations working intensely with a director where we're just sort of, you know, butting our heads up against a wall pretty much, like trying to figure out how to work a scene and it's nothing's coming to us. Often we're just like, okay, you know what, like let's just get up, let's go for a walk, you know, just talk about something else other than this. And ultimately when we come back, you know, we're refreshed and we come up with solution every single time it's worked this way. So I would stress the importance of taking breaks. Don't be too hard on yourself if you're running into a problem that you can't seem to solve. Like you will get there. It will work itself out. Sometimes you just need a break. Also stay hydrated because nobody wants kidney stones.

CB: True enough. More good life tips with Sabrina.

HB: Right. We're basically all just pot plants with feelings. Get some sunshine. Have some water.

SP: Yeah.

HB: Take a beat. You'll probably feel better in the morning.

CB: Well, Sabrina, thank you so much for coming in today and giving us your insight into what it is to be an editor.

SP: Thanks. Thanks for having me. Appreciate it.

HB: And that's a wrap for another episode of Apple Box Talks.

CB: For more episodes and to find your fit in the film and TV industry, check out ourwork.ca.