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ANNE COATES TALKS ABOUT UNFAITHFUL

Sex, passion, infidelity, guilt, anger -- allow them to play out, cut the action stylishly, capture the subtleties of performance, and slowly draw the audience in. It may sound like a formula, but few execute it as subtly or with as much attention to detail as award-winning Editor Anne V. Coates, A.C.E. (**Lawrence of Arabia, The Elephant Man, Out of Sight**). In **Unfaithful**, Coates uses her talents to bring viewers deep into the entanglements and intrigues of a New York couple's marriage gone awry.

Unfaithful was edited using four Film Composer systems linked through the Avid Unity MediaNetwork shared media network. This setup enabled Coates, as senior editor, to easily access and share media simultaneously with the other members of the editing team. "The setup worked very well on a picture like this, where we were dealing with up to the very last moment changes," says Coates, who worked with Editors Robb Sullivan and David Bremer and Assistant Editors John Axelrad and Rolf Fleischmann.

ADR work, sound effects, and sound design were all done on a Digidesign Pro Tools digital audio workstation. "We didn't have a lot of time to do a conform and get it telecined to the sound guys, but the picture quality that the Avid [Film Composer system] gave us made our job -- and theirs -- a lot easier," says Sullivan. "Because of the highly increased quality of the Avid image, we were able to turn around a tape instantly for the other departments and just hand it off to them."

Nuances of Performance

Directed by Adrian Lyne, **Unfaithful** is not an action-based film; it is a story built on key moments. The drama unfolds slowly, allowing emotional tension to build. To sustain this kind of action required an editing style that was equally well-crafted. Coates, who says that she's an "actor's editor," focused on the nuances of each performance, allowing certain scenes to play out versus "cutting up" all the action. "Editing isn't about cuts -- it's about capturing the complete emotion and drama and maybe humor of a scene," she states, although, her penchant for experimentation also comes through in some unconventional intercutting of scenes, combining, for example, a love scene with pensive moments on a train ride or with women gossiping in a cafe.

One of the editing challenges was determining how and when to convey the right degree of suspicion that the husband has about his wife's affair. "Sometimes when we ran the scenes all together to see the cuts, we realized that I was making Richard Gere [the husband] too suspicious, too early," recalls Coates. "So, I made my cuts more subtle, so we see him asking Diane Lane [the wife], 'Do you love me?' instead of confronting her straight on. It's a way to show that he's uneasy with the situation without going too far."

Another challenge was achieving a balance between how much each character knows at what point in the film and allowing that drama to play out. Says Coates: "There are complex, layered scenes, where she knows that he knows, but he doesn't know that she knows. That's what I loved about the script: those tricky scenes that required a subtle balance."

Working from the Outside In

If someone knows about maintaining the proper balance, it's Coates, who has transitioned to digital editing after a 40-year career in film editing. "I find the Avid [Film Composer system] wonderful for experimenting and I've adapted it to my style, which is what's important. It's like working from the outside in, instead of from the inside out. Editing on film is an inward process of carefully thinking about your cuts beforehand, then making them in the right place at the beginning. With the Avid system, I often put the rough cuts in immediately where I think they should go, then work out the details afterwards. I like to have thinking time when I edit and the Avid gives me both the opportunity for quickly trying different things and for taking the time to feel the overall emotion, drama, or humor of a particular scene."

Coates' passion for editing and her unique style is obvious throughout *Unfaithful*, which has been called "fevered and intense." "I like films that have action and emotion," explains Coates. "After all, that's what motion pictures are about: drama in action. I hope I bring that emotion and drama to my work, along with a good storytelling quality -- and a sense of humor! "

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