



WHERE TECHNOLOGY AND TALENT MEET

Jay Cassidy, ACE, on editing *Silver Linings Playbook*

As awards season heats up, editor Jay Cassidy, ACE, is humbly overjoyed to see the movie he worked on this year, David O. Russell's *Silver Linings Playbook*, receive consideration in a year that features critically acclaimed films as diverse and celebrated as *Lincoln*, *Life of Pi*, *Argo*, and *Zero Dark Thirty*, among others. Cassidy's cutting expertise, in partnership with co-editor Crispin Struthers, on the psychological comedy-drama was crucial to its success. After all, the story is about a bipolar man, his family, and the woman that perhaps he is growing to love, or perhaps not, as he grapples with manic bouts of rage and confusion. It was, in fact, an ultra delicate balancing act to make sure that the character Pat, played by Bradley Cooper, was portrayed as tiptoeing the fine line between controlled behavior and manic behavior, without slanting too far in either direction.

"With Bradley's character, especially in the first act, there was a lot of calibration on just how crazy he was, how manic he was coming out of the hospital," he explained during a recent conversation with *Post*.

"Because, in the structure of the film, in the first act, he is not taking his medication at all, until he has [an explosive confrontation in his parents' attic with family members]. At the end of act one, he takes his medication. But that first act, especially, was quite a challenge."

That was only one of the project's many challenges for Cassidy and Struthers. Cassidy says the experience of laying out a character's psychological state in the context of a larger story on behalf of a highly intense and involved director such as Russell in a year when several highly acclaimed films were in play reminds him of the last time he received great awards' attention — for his 2008 work cutting *Into the Wild* for Sean Penn, which earned him both Oscar and ACE Eddie nominations. (Cassidy was also nominated for an Eddie for Best Edited Documentary in 2011 for his work on *Waiting for Superman*.)

"There are a lot of similarities actually [in working on *Into the Wild* and *Silver Linings Playbook*]," he says, although they are certainly very different films. "Both directors believe in actors — they believe that the actor's contribution is something that [determines] why the movie is going to work or not work. So they are both very good at casting the movie, which is a real art in itself. And as far as collaborating with the actor — certainly in the case of *Silver Linings Playbook*, [the lead actor was greatly involved in the final product]. Bradley Cooper was very involved in post production. He camped out in the cutting room for weeks at a time, because he was so interested in how his character would resolve itself."

Indeed, in the case of *Silver Linings Playbook*, Cassidy certainly had major acting performances to honor in terms of the work done by both Cooper and his leading lady, Jennifer Lawrence, playing the character Tiffany. But he also had Robert DeNiro in a supporting role, as Pat's father, and several other fine performers. Another great challenge in a project like this one, he suggests, involves giving such performances their due without deviating from the story's arc.

"Your obligation [as editor] is telling the story, certainly," he says. "You are not there to headline a particular actor. But with somebody like DeNiro — his character's relationship in the movie with his son is so strong and interesting that [you have to emphasize it]. When David ended up casting DeNiro, in fact, there was substantial rewriting done to take advantage of that. The plot [in some areas], such as the character's gambling, was expanded. With an actor like that, you have to take advantage of him, but you are still obligated to the story."

All around, when discussing his success on the project, Cassidy returns the discussion to the collaborative aspect — from the actors to working with his co-editor to his work with the director and others. But, in particular, Cassidy suggests that, in some ways, the movie was made easy to edit thanks to the expertise of cinematographer Masanobu Takayanagi. Although Cassidy was involved in the digital intermediate to offer input, he suggests the editing and finishing processes did not require anything radical in terms of adjusting the visual look of the piece.

"To [Takayanagi's] credit, he did a fantastic job of creating environments for the photography and designs of the rooms," Cassidy says. "I mean, basically, you had the look of the movie in the dailies, and it was a matter of just executing that correctly and evenly and consistently in the DI."

Cassidy points to the climactic dance competition sequence to exemplify how all elements came together for compelling storytelling. He credits dance choreographer Mandy Moore for designing a dance routine that could reflect the nature of the plot's requirements and benefit from Takayanagi's design for "a lighting event that occurred during the dance. You don't see it, but it was very complex and required a lot of cues."

Those elements allowed editors to cut the sequence in such a way as to build what Cassidy calls "the level of surprise within the dance" that is central to the story — will the characters achieve the minimum score the plot requires of them to save Pat's family from financial disaster?

And more generally, throughout the piece, Cassidy is proud of how sets were designed to allow Takayanagi to strategically move the camera so that the editing team could achieve Russell's goal of frequent 360-degree coverage.

"There was a certain feeling, let's say in the [main character's] house, where David wanted to be able to shoot 360, so this was not a film shot with very precious lighting setups for particular angles," he explains. "It was shot with an ability for David to move the camera a lot and unpredictably."

By Michael Goldman

To hear more of Michael Goldman's conversation with Cassidy discussing *Silver Linings Playbook*, click HERE <http://listmgr.copcommdirect.com/t/469498/1774335/2637/15/> for their entire podcast conversation.