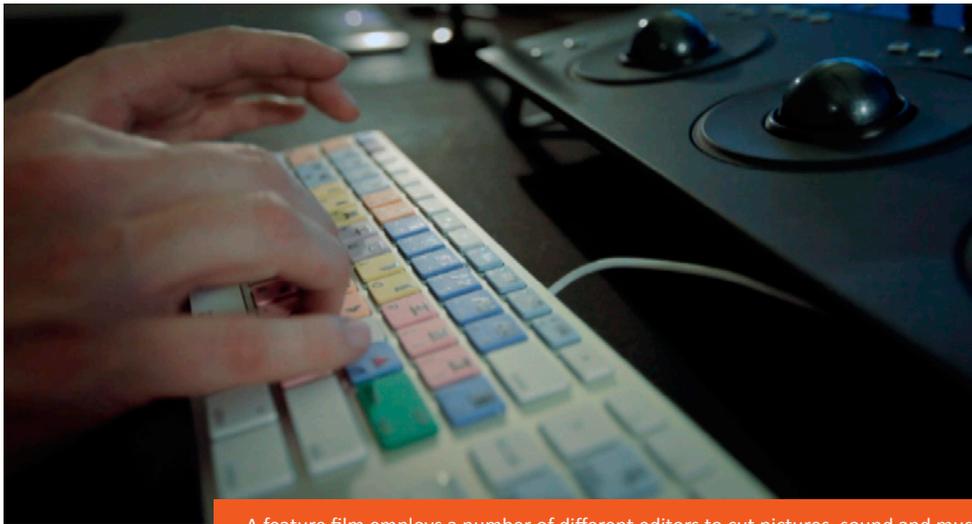


## What is an editor?



A feature film employs a number of different editors to cut pictures, sound and music

The editor has two key tasks to achieve: to ensure the story makes sense, and to cut the footage in the best possible way so that the film moves and entertains its audience.

The career path for many editors starts with work experience, acting as assistant editor for short films, television programs or low-budget features, then moves on to major features films and big TV dramas.

A feature film employs a number of different kinds of editors. The main editor cuts the picture. The editor may work with one or two assistant editors, depending on the scale of the project. Once the image is locked, the sound editors start work on the dialogue and effects tracks, and the music editor lays in the music tracks. The cut image, and all the tracks, are pulled together in the sound mixes.

Let's focus on the role and tasks of the picture editor, who is the most senior editor and is head of department.

In pre-production, the editor works closely with the director to refine the creative elements of the film. They confer on the story structure and script, and on the pace of the editing, as this will determine the nature of the shots – fast and frantic or slow and reflective?

The editor is also assembling his or her team of assistant editors who check and refine the equipment supplied in the cutting rooms hired for the production. The assistant editors are also involved in the liaison between the on-set crew and the post-production teams, to be sure all the computer codes will talk to each other, and that the film meets the technical specifications for delivery.

If the film contains a high proportion of computer generated imagery, like *The Great Gatsby*, the editor works closely in pre-production with the visual effects supervisor. Detailed storyboards and pre-visualisations may be created as a result of these discussions.

During the shoot, the editor starts receiving rushes, assembling each scene as the shoot proceeds. The director and key crew are given feedback throughout this process. There might be a shot missing – a character falls off a ladder, but we haven't got the close-up of his foot slipping off the rung. An otherwise good scene might be made great by another close-up. The relevant people are advised and the crew picks up these shots or organises a reshoot.

At the end of each week, the producer and director view an assembly of cut scenes with the editor, and might make further creative adjustments as the shoot proceeds.

During the shoot, the producer might request other work-in-progress cuts from the edit team: for a festival submission,

for an advance teaser trailer to go into cinemas, to support a valuable publicity opportunity. And, three quarters of the way through the shoot, to screen to the tired cast and crew so they can see the results of their hard work and long hours, and return energised for the sprint to the finishing line.

In post-production, the long hours in a dark room begin. Following the shoot, the editor will assemble the film in script order, using the best takes as selected by the director.

In the following weeks, the director and editor work together in the cutting room to refine the cut. Some scenes are shortened, some removed. Even the sequence of telling the story may change. Every decision increases the power of the film – for emotion, for comedy, for tension, for euphoria. At the scheduled point, the director and editor call the producer in for a look at the rough cut.

The producer will request some changes. This may be for creative reasons, such as cutting a scene to increase tension, or for practical considerations such as the overall running time or potential classification issues.

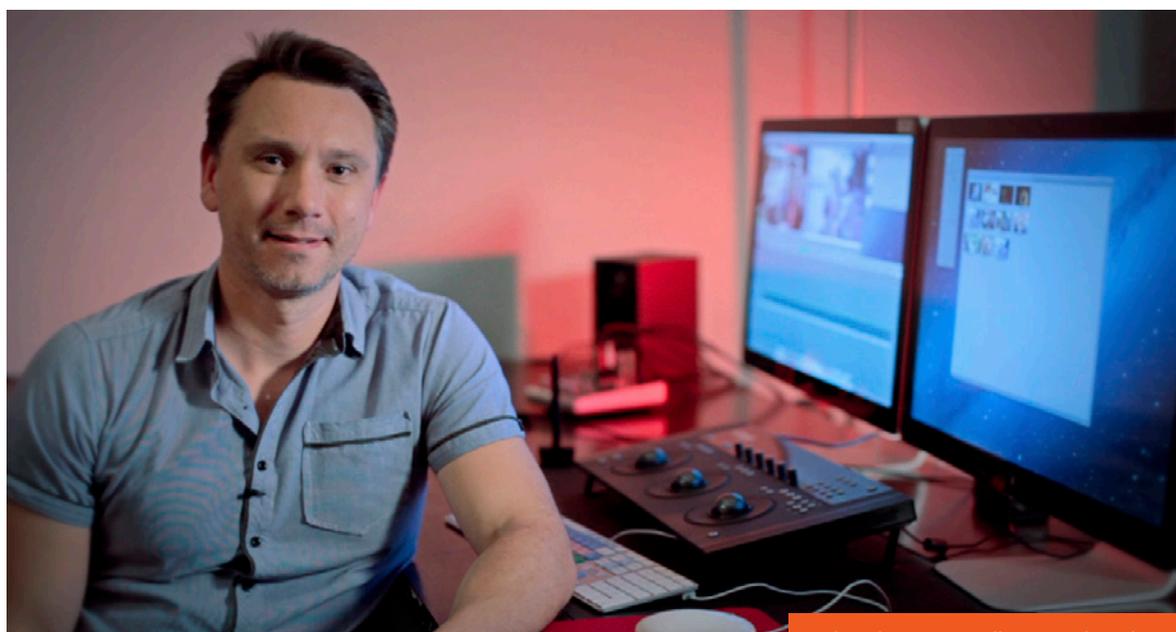
With this fine cut complete, the producer screens the film to the distributor and investors, who usually request a tweak here and there. The distributor is usually focused on the ability to screen the film to the widest possible audience.

Once the fine cut is locked, the editor's main task is finished, but if the budget allows he or she stays on to insert the visual effects, liaise with the sound editing team and the sound mixers, support the director and cinematographer through the colour grading process and give technical support and advice as the release copies of the film are produced.

[Click here to view interview with editor Jason Ballantine](#)

#### Useful resources:

- [HowStuffWorks: What does a film editor do?](#)
- [Inside the Edit: The Editor](#)



Film editor Jason Ballantine in his edit suite

Creative Content Australia is a not-for-profit organisation committed to raising awareness of the significance of copyright, the value of screen content and the impact that downloading and streaming pirated films and TV programs has on the creative industries: [www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au](http://www.creativecontentaustralia.org.au)

Creative Content Australia develops and distributes free online education resources to schools throughout Australia to stimulate classroom discussion about copyright and promote the value of creative content and good digital citizenship online [www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info](http://www.nothingbeatstherealthing.info)

