

[MUSIC PLAYING]

BILLY

When editing a scene, the emotion is as important as the story. The subtext is as

GOLDENBERG:

important as the text. What I mean by that is that what's going on inside the character's mind and inside their heart is as important as what's happening in the literal story. Because what's going to happen when you cut a scene is that you want to lock your audience into your characters. And the way to do that is through what they're feeling.

In *Argo*, there's a scene in the movie where Tony Mendez, played by Ben Affleck, has to decide whether he's going to leave Iran, and basically leave them there to be captured or killed, or disobey orders and take them out anyway. And it's a huge decision. And it's Ben in a hotel room, sitting there throughout the night drinking and smoking, and deciding whether he's going to let them live or die.

And the way he shot it was he just walked into a hotel room with his bag, dropped his bag. He had a bottle of liquor in his hand and a pack of cigarettes. And he just improvised. So it's my job as the editor to find just the right pieces to convey the progression of emotions that he goes through throughout the evening.

So the way I do that is I watch the material, get really familiar with it. And then I try to look for the pieces that make me feel how I want the audience to feel. And you have to use your instincts to do that. And it's a series of trial and error, trying different pieces juxtaposed against each other, and seeing whether at the end of it you reach this culmination of emotion which ends with Ben looking down and then looking up almost into the lens. And that's the moment you know that he's going to do it. And then all things kick into gear from there.

In close up sometimes you can't tell whether the frame rate has been changed or not. And it gives it this sort of otherworldly feel. And he shot this up at 60 frames a second. So he looked up. And just the speed of his eyes rising up in combination

with the way the light hit his eyes when he rose up, it just felt like that would be the right moment of decision. And it's about juxtaposing against the right piece of film so it feels like, even though that if you looked at it by itself you might think, oh, he just looked up, but when you juxtapose it against the images of these people eagerly waiting for his arrival, then all of a sudden it feels like, wow, this is a great moment of decision.

When you're getting ready to cut your scene, here are some things to think about. The first thing I do is read the scene I'm about to cut in the script, and read the scenes around it, so I can just remind myself of where I'm supposed to be emotionally, where I am in the story. Because you may find a great piece of film in the dailies that just doesn't work.

When I was cutting this movie called *Pleasantville*, there was a great moment of William H. Macy crying in the scene. And it was beautiful. And then as I read the pages around, I reminded myself that he's just not there emotionally in the movie at that point. So it may be a great moment, but you can't use it, because it doesn't fit where you are in the story. So you always have to constantly remind yourself of where you are.

I write down everything I like about a particular shot. And it could be anything. It could be just a look. It could be the way someone walks across a room. It could be just a little piece of visual information that I can use as an interstitial piece, just any little special piece, anything. And I'll just write everything down just to remind myself of where it is, because you never know what you're going to need later.

Before you start cutting, you have to have a point of view. You have to know what story you're telling, what your emotional story is, how you're doing it, who is the center, whose point of view is the scene from, and do all that before you start cutting. Because if you start cutting blindly, you're going to find yourself with something where you'll understand what the scene is about, but it won't have any emotional depth.

What I like to do is what I refer to as losing your forebrain. It means stop thinking.

The best times I've had as an editor is when I start cutting at 9 o'clock in the morning, and then I look up and it's 6 o'clock at night. And all this time has gone by because I've lost my sort of-- I'm just operating purely on instinct and just doing it as I feel. And then it's weird how I just will wake up at the end, and I'll be like, whoa, there's a scene cut here. And it's just because I've lost myself in the footage to the point where it's not work anymore. You're just kind of going with the flow of it. But it's all the setup time you've done before which will allow you to do that.

I'm Billy Goldenberg, and I'm an editor.

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