





# Editing like a Hawkeye

Rosanne Tan, Terel Gibson and Tim Roche speak about their experiences editing the new Disney+ hit

**H**awkeye is Disney+'s most recent global television triumph, and the fifth series within the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) that continues after the events of *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). Starring Jeremy Renner as Clint Barton and Hailee Steinfeld as Kate Bishop, this festive offering was well-received by the public and critics alike, with many hailing its acting performances and editing sequences some of the studio's best yet.

Rosanne Tan notes that being able to sit with fellow editors, Terel Gibson and Tim Roche, was a useful way of bouncing ideas off each other, sharing opinions and finalising edits within Avid Media Composer, before pressing send to directors. "At the beginning of shoots, editing happened remotely. But we also met up and worked together, walking from one room to another, so it was a very comfortable set-up," she says. Roche's experience was similar. "Most of the time, we were based on the same floor together and that felt very organic. When editing, we could ask each other questions about how things work, from editor cuts to directors and so on. This meant that each one of us brought a different skill to the table that complemented the overall, final product." Gibson was impressed by the hybrid editing system, which meant they could easily compare and contrast – to ensure they were all heading in the same direction. "Given there were different directing teams, we were still able to

throw edits back and forth to each other instantly," he concludes.

## GETTING EMOTIONAL

The plot, which follows one of the most undervalued characters within the Avengers, is in fact a really funny up-and-coming hero origin story, led by a detective narrative, set against the backdrop of a New York Christmas. It tackles recognisable, high-energy action sequences, yet turns them on their head, in order to look at harder-hitting social issues such as deafness.

To work on storytelling and emotional beats amongst so much movement, Tan says: "Sometimes, you need to take all the edits, focus on the car chase shots first, then put all of that aside. It's better to return to the table with fresh ideas the next day. Of course, when it comes to editing more emotional scenes, it's a good experience because you wire your brain differently. You use the beats to do the work for you, quickly realising that some of those scenes need to be cut with fun, comedic moments.

"The biggest challenge was dealing with shots that were recorded at

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**"The set-up meant that each one of us brought a different skill to the table that complemented the overall, final product"**



**THE PROTÉGÉE** Hawkeye sees Clint Barton train Kate Bishop, portrayed by Hailee Steinfeld (above)





## Did you know?

Hawkeye was planned as a movie, which was even in Renner's contract. But Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige saw it more as a Disney+ show

different times. Sometimes you would be done editing one part, and the second unit come in with other action sequences. You find yourself adding bits in for the post service team, so they can fill in blue screens, add the arrows and put in all those other special effects. It's an ongoing editing process, going back and forward, but it's fun!"

The opening episode, when Kate Bishop notices Clint Barton for the first time, was primarily edited by Gibson. He brought those edits to life by transitioning between the past and present, to draw the audience into a connection with the characters. "I mean, very early on we were talking about the entire set-up, the challenges and hooks we were looking to add in. Typically, you'd want to develop an affinity and empathy for a new character – and structurally, that's unexpected, right? The show's called *Hawkeye*, but we're going to spend this first episode with a character the audience doesn't really know about." There were two big difficulties the editing team had to tackle. "One was introducing a new character, but then also where we're going with this story. You only have a finite amount of time to sort out how you're playing this out. With the audience knowing what's coming, this is the elephant in the room, so to speak. So, we fixed that by making the focus of the first episode about Kate and ensuring she is accepted as a character," he says. "We wanted to create a buzz or some form

of excitement around her introduction, especially as her character is not the most responsible. She's rich, young and naive – a challenge for the public to get on board, and understand her point of view within that world." Kate is portrayed by the amazing Hailee Steinfeld, who carried the role well. "It was exciting to introduce a new character into the MCU, especially someone female. I think Kate and Clint

worked really well together, as they both have this inward/outward sort of armour that they wear. There were moments when it became apparent that was a form of self-protection based on previous experiences, so I wanted to make sure that the audience understand why this is the case.

"This is where working as a team was helpful, when cutting shots

**"Sometimes you would be done editing one part, and the second unit come in with other action sequences. It's an ongoing process"**



**A WHOLE UNIVERSE** The show references previous events in the MCU, including the Battle of New York (above)



**PERFECTLY BALANCED** The editing team stressed the importance of getting the right mix of sequences – blending action scenes, like the one above, with humorous and emotionally charged moments

**“Throughout the episodes, we added more edits, polished up and triple-checked everything, before presenting and reviewing edits again – all within Avid Media Composer, which was really cool”**

for someone like Kate. Roche and Tan made sure I found a good balance and calibration for some of these shots, given I was so close to the canvas at times, playing on the importance of what’s not being said.”

Roche’s perspective on this is quite similar. In an earlier scene between Kate and Clint, at the diner in episode 3, various directions came through to the editors. “It could have been excessively comedic, for example. Kate had so much

excitement, with the fan/mentee mindset. We had to work out if this was a scene where she annoys him, or he wants to be back home with his family. There are different ways to work a scene and you won’t know until you’ve cut it together, shown it to various people and received their feedback.”

The character Maya, who had such a difficult life before transcending into a villain, was another interesting figure. “To see her go up against Clint and Kate, witnessing her character arc from the beginning and throughout the episodes, was fascinating,” says Roche. “Working with American Sign Language (ASL) was something very new to me. We wanted to make sure it was given the amount of time and light it truly deserves. We had to make sure the edit was respectful, but also portrayed the emotional differences between what Maya went through and Clint’s own narrative. Of course, Maya is completely deaf, but Clint is slowly losing his hearing.

“We didn’t want to disrespect any characters, and really told their stories through the lack of any sound, which was a tricky process.”

**SOUND DESIGN**

When it comes to sound and audio, Tan says that they cut everything at once, to avoid waiting for sound design. “Typically, an editor would cut a scene, then hand it over to an assistant editor who would do the sound design. Then, we would go back and forth to tighten



those edits up. Personally, I’ll cut the scene and apply the sound design myself,” she explains. “But for those scenes where Maya can’t hear other voices or sounds, that’s where we experimented a little bit. In episode 3, when she’s in a classroom, we didn’t want to make it feel like she can’t hear anything, so we left it with just a score taking over. The assistants built it from there on. The moment she witnessed her dad killed, we took a more creative approach with the edits, because she cannot hear all that. We wanted a dreamscape, where you can hear the shooting through muffled sound design.”

Tan slowly took the score down and added sound design, bringing in Roche and Gibson to check it worked from an emotional perspective. “Throughout the episodes, we built it up, added more edits, polished up and triple-checked everything, before presenting and reviewing edits again – all within Avid Media Composer, which was really cool.”

Gibson notes the importance of the tools used to edit the audio. “We had access to the full toolkit of Marvel Skywalker Sound, as well as the Avid library. We also tapped into older archives within the MCU, so that we could match that universe consistency across all



**THREE IS A MAGIC NUMBER** The editors at the Hawkeye premiere, held at the El Capitan Theatre, Hollywood





## Production Fact File



### LOCATION

Though primarily filmed in New York, Canton and Atlanta were also used



### CAST

Renner and Steinfeld both learned ASL to welcome Alaqua Cox to the set



### FILMING

Production went by the name 'Anchor Point' to stay secret







films and series,” he explains. “There were new elements, such as Clint’s hearing loss and trying to figure out how to represent that. We wanted to find the balance within those audio edits and designs to make sure the audience weren’t taken aback by the lack of sound – thinking their TV is not working – and communicate those character emotions.” Gibson and Tan had many conversations on how to present deafness to those watching, the majority of whom are used to media which relies heavily on soundscapes. They also had to grapple with playing out tricky high-end sounds in a way that didn’t irritate. “We had an

early conversation about metal, and the idea of what it sounds like, making sure you feel the experience through Clint’s point of view. When you arrive at the scene with Clint on the phone to his son, that seems emotional and present. It feels as if it’s coming out of a natural place,” says Gibson.

What were the biggest challenges for our editing trio? Gibson says it was the dinner scene, where Clint and his children are eating Chinese food. “I remember, in the dailies we received, one of the younger characters had a lot of energy and it made it harder to know where to cut. Sometimes the simplest scenes can be the most difficult, when there’s a lot of general speaking, the actors spend a full day in one place – and tons of coverage to go through. It takes time and attention to push these through,” he notes.

Roche’s dilemma came towards the end of the last episode. “From the ice

rink all the way to the end, I probably had 47 different versions. To me, it was all about pace – you want to leave at the right moment and come back at the right moment. That was the toughest aspect about it.”

For Tan, it was a toss-up between episode 3 and the macaroni scene in episode 5. “In episode 3, there are so many elements that continue for a long period of time and lots of different beats, like when Clint jumps over the bookshelves or his hearing aid gets knocked out. The trick was to ensure a smooth flow throughout those edits, while keeping things interesting and everyone’s eyes fixed on the screen. The macaroni scene was tricky, too. You assume this would be something easy to edit, but keeping a ten-minute talking scene interesting and relevant to a wider audience is not a simple task.” ●

[Watch Hawkeye on Disney+](#)

**“The trick was to ensure a smooth flow throughout those edits, while keeping things interesting and everyone’s eyes fixed on the screen”**



**CONTENT GIANTS** With high-budget productions like this Disney+ series, editors have to go through a massive amount of footage in order to produce the final cut. The real challenge is timing – finding the specific shots at the right moments in order to create the perfect tone, energy and emotional range of the show