

Talent profile

Lights, Action... Cut

Geoffrey Macnab is illuminated by the leading lights of the Dutch editing sector.

It takes a particular mindset to be a film editor. You need artistry, intuition and huge reserves of patience. These are qualities that leading Dutch practitioners in the field all possess. Speak to a handful of them and it quickly becomes clear that they are absolute perfectionists.



"I like sitting down in a room and figuring out to put stuff together," is how Job ter Burg (a Golden Calf winner for *Tirza* – the leading Dutch film prize) sums up the appeal of editing.

For Katarina Turler (who recently cut *Tamar van den Dop's* Berlinale entry *Supernova*), editing is a way of telling stories and solving problems at the same time. "I was always good at puzzles," she jokes. "That's the passion - to be able to make something out of little pieces which are nothing without the mind that puts them together." Turler also cut the 2012 multi award-winning *Matthieu's Leas* by Marc Schmidt and Mischa Kamp's upcoming *Boys*.

Renowned industry veteran Sander Vos talks of the childhood

pleasure he experienced cutting together *from* films and "creating" reality. "That's still what I enjoy the most. You have something shot one week in one specific place and something shot another week somewhere else - you cut them together and it feels like it's done at the same moment!"

There is an obvious camaraderie between Dutch editors too. Almost all belong to the Netherlands Association of Cinema Editors (NCE), co-founded by Peter Alderliesten and Job ter Burg. The association, which now has over 70 members, provides a forum for Dutch editors while giving newcomers the chance to network with more experienced practitioners. The aim behind the group (Alderliesten suggests) is for editors to "inspire" each other while offering practical assistance when they can.

'Editors need to be very versatile...'

"It does feel that people have respect for each other's work and help each other out without being in a competitive situation," Ter Burg says of the solidarity that now exists.

For Turler, one pleasure in editing is the independence it gives her. She is her "own boss." Her editing studio is on one floor of her house. "After film school, I invested in (my own) equipment because I never wanted to be at a company." Her starting point is always the material. She works on documentary as well as fiction film. Documentary makers, she observes, tend to shoot more material. That gives the editor the chance to "discover" the film in the process of cutting it together.

"Maybe there are more expectations with fiction. With documentary, I sense a little more freedom," she says.

Alderliesten's career underlines just how versatile editors need to be. His feature film credits range from kids' movies like Vincent Bal's *The Zigzag Kid* (2012) to several comedies with Joran Lürsen and Marco van Geffen's brooding family drama *Among Us* (2011). He has also cut trailers, advertisements, short films and pop promos. He sees his collaboration with Bal as one of his most rewarding. The two worked together on *Minnes* (2001) and reunited for *The Zigzag Kid*, a yarn about a Walter Mitty-like boy with a very vivid imagination. In cutting the film, Alderliesten's task was to make clear where the reality ended and the fantasy began. It helped that Bal was "very precise" and knew exactly how he wanted the film to be shaped.



Job ter Burg, meanwhile, speaks highly of legendary director Paul Verhoeven whose big budget, second World War epic *Black Book* (2006) he edited. Ter Burg "auditioned" to get the job by cutting together a sequence. Once he was hired, he relished working on a film of such scope

and ambition. "There were so many options to choose from to shape the scene", he says. Verhoeven was "very open" to his ideas and gave him the room to express himself.

'It is not possible to work 9 to 5...'

Equally rewarding was his collaboration with Alex van Warmerdam, the maverick art house director whose recent *Borgman* (2013) was the first Dutch film in competition in Cannes in over three decades. Like Verhoeven, Van Warmerdam trusted Ter Burg. The editor talks of "eliminating the baroque curls" in the movie - that's to say, footage van Warmerdam had shot that was stylish in itself but wasn't tied in to the rest of the film. Even after the film had been submitted to Cannes, the editor and the director continued to tinker with it. "Van Warmerdam never quits until he is satisfied with all the details. That, to me, is very inspiring."

One problem that has dogged editors of feature films is the financing landscape in the Netherlands. The Dutch haven't had their own soft money/tax incentive scheme for many years. This has meant that Dutch and international movies have increasingly gone elsewhere (for example, to Belgium with its tax shelter) to do their post-production.

Ask Dutch editors about figures in their field they admire and several cite Thelma Schoonmaker (best known for her work on Scorsese's films.) What they like about her is her refusal (as Alderliesten puts it) to take the



Mischa Kamp's *Boys*, produced by Pupkin Film, edited by Katarina Turler

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"easy option" and make films too flat and predictable.

Like many of his colleagues, Alderliesten didn't start his career wanting to be an editor. In fact, he was a physics student. During university, he took a short course in video filmmaking. That was what inspired him to apply for film school. He decided at that point how he wanted to specialise. Nevertheless his background as a scientist was helpful. "I really want to find out how things work... what I do in editing is try to see the whole film and dig very deep into all the options we have to make the film as strong as possible. So it has similarities with science."



Vos waxes nostalgic about the "tactile" sensation of feeling the celluloid in the old days before "digital," when films were still edited on Steenbecks and Moviolas. He doesn't like the sense that editors now worked in what looked like ordinary offices rather than with "all those wonderful" old machines. However, the consensus among Dutch editors is that digital allows more creative freedom.

Ter Burg recalls that even as a kid, he was messing around with "quarter inch tape, sound,

re-mixing and re-cutting music tracks." Soon, he was editing professionally. "I never lost the love for the process," he enthuses. "I sometimes say it is like the best video game ever where every day you get new levels of footage. You never get the same level of footage. It is always changing!"

Most editors enjoy taking on a variety of assignments. "No job is typical. Every film needs its own new recipe," says Turler. Ter Burg likewise has moved between genres, doing everything from kids' movies (*Fuchsia The Mini-Witch*) to wartime epics and contemporary drama such as *Tirza*. Early in his career, he was determined not to be pigeon holed. It helped that he was interested in many different genres and styles." Every film, he suggests, has its "own challenges" which force him to reflect on what he does.

When editors are on deadline, they invariably have to work punishing hours. "It is not possible to work 9 to 5!" comments Turler.



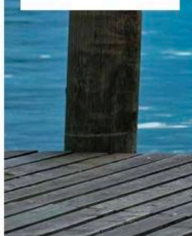
"I mainly choose the projects that I can work on in a normal way - so that I can also sleep a little bit and see my family!" says

Alderliesten. "To me, it doesn't help to have a harsh deadline. I don't get better." As a point of principle, he tries to have assistants with him during the editing process so that he is never completely alone. Their presence helps him concentrate and gives him the chance to test out and discuss new ideas.

'Like the best video game ever'

Sander Vos moonlights as a singer. He has his own band, De Waterlanders. Hany Abu-Assad recruited him to edit the Oscar nominated *Paradise Now* after hearing him perform. That's the most unlikely way in which he has been hired for a job.

Editors may be unsung heroes by comparison with directors, actors and even cinematographers but their influence on how movies are put together is huge. "You have all the tools to form the movie," Alderliesten muses. "When I was on the set as an assistant, I didn't know what the film was going to be. But when I am the editor, I am the one shaping the exact form and feel of the movie."



Short film *Greifensee* by Sonja Wyss, edited by Katarina Turler