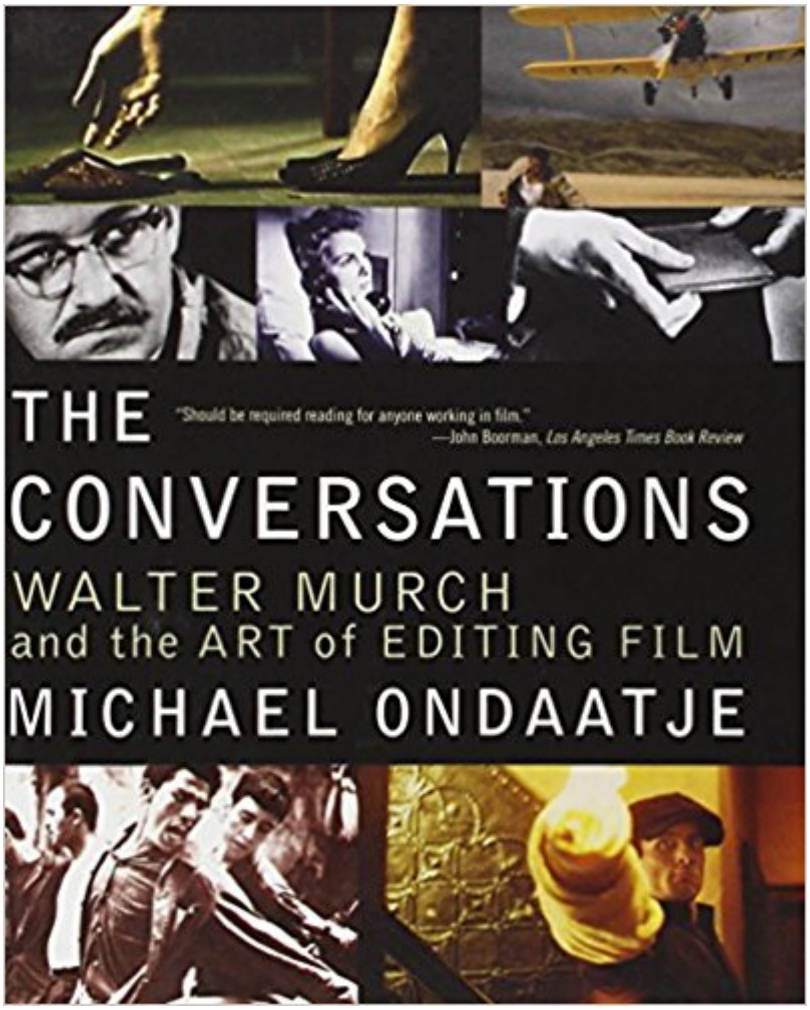
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The Conversations: Walter Murch And The Art Of Editing Film



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Synopsis

The Conversations is a treasure, essential for any lover or student of film, and a rare, intimate glimpse into the worlds of two accomplished artists who share a great passion for film and storytelling, and whose knowledge and love of the crafts of writing and film shine through. It was on the set of the movie adaptation of his Booker Prize-winning novel, The English Patient, that Michael Ondaatje met the master film and sound editor Walter Murch, and the two began a remarkable personal conversation about the making of films and books in our time that continued over two years. From those conversations stemmed this enlightened, affectionate book -- a mine of wonderful, surprising observations and information about editing, writing and literature, music and sound, the I-Ching, dreams, art and history. The Conversations is filled with stories about how some of the most important movies of the last thirty years were made and about the people who brought them to the screen. It traces the artistic growth of Murch, as well as his friends and contemporaries -- including directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Fred Zinneman and Anthony Minghella -- from the creation of the independent, anti-Hollywood Zoetrope by a handful of brilliant, bearded young men to the recent triumph of Apocalypse Now Redux. Among the films Murch has worked on are American Graffiti, The Conversation, the remake of A Touch of Evil, Julia, Apocalypse Now, The Godfather (all three), The Talented Mr. Ripley, and The English Patient. Ã¢â ¬Å“Walter Murch is a true oddity in Hollywood. A genuine intellectual and renaissance man who appears wise and private at the centre of various temporary storms to do with film making and his whole generation of filmmakers. He knows, probably, where a lot of the bodies are buried.Ã¢â ¬Â•

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Customer Reviews

Ask most moviegoers, "Who is Walter Murch?" and they’re likely to stare uncomprehendingly. Ondaatje (The English Patient) seeks to eradicate that ignorance by providing an expert analysis of Murch’s consummate film editing skills, and pointing out along the way the monumental contributions editors make to motion pictures. Murch, a three time Oscar winner and integral collaborator on such cinematic milestones as The Godfather, Julia, The English Patient and American Graffiti, attended the University of Southern California with George Lucas and bonded early on with UCLA film student Francis Ford Coppola. A relative neophyte, he worked on Coppola’s The Rain People and a low-budget sci-fi picture, THX 1138, which has since become a cult classic. Murch adhered to a rule of not watching other movies while concentrating on a project of his own, calling himself a "queen bee who gets impregnated once and can lay millions of eggs afterwards." Through his eyes, and Ondaatje’s remarkably insightful questions and comments, readers see how intricate the process is, and understand Murch when he says, "The editor is the only one who has time to deal with the whole jigsaw. The director simply doesn’t." He also offers insightful thoughts on Orson Welles, Marlon Brando and Fred Zinnemann. Although Murch claims the actors on his films rarely know who he is, this excellent, eye-opening book done in a question-and-answer format will make readers glad Ondaatje has shown them the significant role he plays behind the scenes. Photos.Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Editing is an often invisible part of the filmmaking process; the audience tends not to be aware how the editor’s eye has crafted a film. Ondaatje reveals some of its mystery through several conversations with Murch, the editor of The Conversation, The English Patient, and Apocalypse Now and Redux. In the late 1960s, Murch, along with Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas (who describes Murch as "strange like me"), helped form Zoetrope, the independent company where films like THX 1138 and The Godfather were born. Murch finds his own profession difficult to accurately describe, comparing quirks in actor dialogue to signs in the wilderness that only a hunter might detect. Ondaatje and Murch walk the reader through key scenes from several films, providing a glimpse into the editing process; the origins of his masterful re-edit of Orson Wells’ Touch of Evil are particularly fascinating (especially for film buffs). These conversations allow readers a peek

behind the curtain to reveal a man as mysterious as his art. Carlos OrellanaCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

A really interesting meditation on editing and storytelling. I bought this expecting a more how-to book on editing. It is not that. It is very different than that. It's more round about and indirect. It's more about the principles around the moves you might make as an editor than any particular step by step move guide. But given that, it's really interesting to hear an acclaimed and accomplished novelist talk with a really talented film editor. It's really interesting to hear about their tricks for story telling and how they relate. It's more about how to tell a story in general than how to edit or write in particular. But as far as that goes it is completely memorable and very instructional.

This is a wonderful book -- five stars for insight, not only about movie editing but about how a brilliant craftsman uses his broader knowledge to enhance his work. and as the record of a conversation, a pleasure to read. less than five stars for the quality of the paperback edition, however. the paper is cheap and the photograph illustrations, which do so much to clarify meaning in the hardback version, are blurred and flat in the paperback, a definite disappointment. i'm thinking of writing off my purchase and finding a replacement hardback.

A great book if you are interested in editing.

An excellent book for anyone interested in the king of audio in the movies. Walter Murch may no be a household name, but his movies are. I loved reading this book and the stories Walter would tell about how he discovered something or what drove him to try something. His passion really comes through in everything he says.

Of all the books I have ordered about film, film making, cameras, story telling, etc, etc this one was the best. I was sad when I finished. Walter Murch is a legend and Michael Ondaatje is superb as a writer. Even if you are not passionate about the art of film this book is worth reading. If you ARE passionate about film and story telling then don't even think twice...order it.

I loved this book because it is intensely literary and thoughtful. It gives great insights into the creative process which transcends film, sound, and writing; and Ondaatje's thoughtful questions are a huge part of what makes the book great. If it were just a 'normal' author interviewing Murch, they

wouldn’t have gotten to half the interesting topics which they end up covering. This book is also wonderful because it’s such a departure from other books -- it’s not trying to fit a type or a genre of writing, so it seems to end up in this essential but interstitial place in between ’how to’ ’memoir’ and ’philosophy of’. The first couple dozen pages are a bit slow as Ondaatje finds his footing, but after that, the book is compelling.

When you’ve got a great writer, Michael Ondaatje, and a compelling topic, movies, it’s hard to miss. That assumes, of course, that, like me, you’re hooked on words and movies both. If that profile fits you as well, you will find this volume highly worthwhile. By the way--and not a surprise, I suppose--there are great photos.

I highly recommend this book to photographers, filmmakers, and any other creative people where editing is an essential part of the creative process. I own a copy that was given to me as a present some years ago. The two copies that I purchased recently were to give to two young film students, one in upstate New York, the other in Mexico City.Many thanks for carrying itSylvia

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