

WHITE
PAPER
FOR
FILM
POST-
PRODUC-
TION IN
FRANCE

DRAFTED BY
THE PARTICIPANTS
IN THE NATIONAL
CONSULTATION FOR FILM
POSTPRODUCTION

L'ASSOCIATION DES
ARTISTES BRUITEURS (ADAB)

L'ASSOCIATION
DES MIXEURS (ADM)

L'ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE
DU SON À L'IMAGE (AFSI)

LES MONTEURS ASSOCIÉS (LMA)

WITH THE HELP OF
L'ASSOCIATION
DES DIRECTEURS DE
POST-PRODUCTION (ADPP)

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INTRO- DUCTION

We organised a national consultation on film postproduction in France because of a simple fact: film postproduction is ailing. But we didn't realise how deep the unrest went and that it affects all sectors of postproduction.

The meetings on November 24th and December 15th 2018, which each attracted nearly 160 editors, sound editors, Foley artists, re-recording mixers and postproduction managers and were also attended by directors, were prepared thanks to patient, collective work. First of all, we carried out detailed surveys among professionals in our four sectors. We wanted to obtain accurate and relevant statistics concerning the practices and working conditions of film editors, sound editors, Foley artists, and re-recording mixers. Parallel to this, we examined and collated the figures published by the CNC¹ and the FICAM². We questioned our colleagues, we talked with other professional sectors, we called upon the expertise of postproduction managers and we strove to establish the most reliable and complete view of postproduction with regard to its economic and social aspects.

1- Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée—[see glossary](#)

2- Fédération des industries techniques du cinéma, de l'audiovisuel et du multimédia—[see glossary](#)

During the two days of national consultation, themed workshops followed by feedback allowed us to broaden, to complete—and more especially—to confront these analyses to our own practices. The aim was to collectively build up an overview of the difficulties encountered in our fields, but above all to imagine solutions that are suited to all sectors of postproduction.

Even though we already knew that our professions were treated unfairly in the film production collective labour agreement, this national consultation provided the tools to gauge the increase in the workload, the reduction in budgets, the compression of working time, incoherencies in schedules, the growing gap between our professions, the under-use of assistants, the increase in delocalisation...

To resume, it served to quantify and define what we all, individually, had observed in our day-to-day activity.

Besides these observations, which are partly linked to the evolution of technology and a reduction in the equipment and human resources allocated to postproduction, the national consultation brought to light another, worrying factor. Ever since the cascade of photo-chemical laboratories' bankruptcies and the collapse of major structures, postproduction has taken on a completely new look. What is happening is the industrialisation of our activities.

A particular economic model has the wind in its sails and gains market shares every year: packages or, in other words, turnkey postproduction. Productions now outsource—either partly or completely—the film soundtrack manufacturing process as well as the assistant editors' work. Even though this management model allows—at first glance—the amounts budgeted for postproduction to be secured, it seriously damages the film's creative process. This is because postproduction—in spite of the ambiguity of its name—is, at every stage, a moment of creation. Its technical and artistic issues form an integral part in the manufacture of a film. We must bear in mind the importance of what is taking place during postproduction, and guarantee that the director can choose his team for the benefit of films and their diversity.

It is urgent that we act.

This white paper comprises 14 chapters and 14 proposals. It is not a catalogue of standards to be observed, but it advocates good practice, taking into account the fact that every film is different. 14 proposals that must be implemented with the support of everyone involved.

Everyone? Yes, everyone:

This white paper is primarily intended for producers. For years now, our associations and our unions have made—in vain—numerous appeals to stop the deterioration of our professions. The time has come for us to finally make ourselves heard.

Our white paper is also intended for directors, some of whom have already assured us of their support.

It is also intended for institutions and organisations in our field, starting with the CNC, the SRF³, the ARP⁴, public and private schools, training organisations and AFDAS⁵, producers' and employees' unions, the FICAM and film technicians' associations.

Finally, it is intended for all of us: editors, sound editors, Foley artists, and re-recording mixers, department heads or assistants. We must act—individually and collectively—to fight the segregation, the fragmentation of tasks and regain control of our working conditions.

The future of our know-how and the quality of films depend on it.

Participants in the National Consultation
on Postproduction in Cinema,
ADAB, ADM, AFSI, LMA

3- Société des réalisateurs de films (Film Directors' Society)

4- Société des auteurs réalisateurs producteurs (Screenwriter-Director-Producers' Society)

5- Assurance formation des activités du spectacle (Entertainment Industry Training Fund)

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1

A FILM IS A TEAM

RESTORING THE NOTION OF TEAMWORK TO THE HEART OF OUR PROFESSIONS

Film-making is a collective art. A film is borne from its inception to its finalisation by the vision of a film-maker, but it is the fruit of the collaboration of a whole team during shooting and during postproduction. A film is built on dialogue, not just the addition of individual talents.

However, the surveys carried out by our associations have all revealed the increasing compartmentalisation of tasks, the isolation, the lack of communication and collaboration between people working on the postproduction of a film...

What went wrong?

- First of all, the arrival of digital editing gave producers the illusion that they could manage without assistant editors. Even though the technical side of editing has changed radically, the workload is by no means lighter and the development time for a film is not compressible. Hence, the role of the editing assistant is still just as essential, if not more so (see chapter 3).
- But the damage was done and since it is no longer systematic, the use of assistants has continued to decrease in all postproduction professions. A whole field of their non-measurable contribution has disappeared in one go: the ability to discuss work, benefitting from the perspective of a third party, relieving department heads of technical

and organisational matters... and above all, forming an indispensable link with the postproduction manager and other people working on the film, from shooting to mixing.

- Technical equipment has become less cumbersome and the need for high quality equipment for sound editing has led to the dispersion of editing venues. The geographical distance between the editors and the sound and dialogue editors, between the editing suites and the auditoria has also contributed to the dissolution of film teams.
- The compression of working time and the gaps in schedules are also responsible: how can one take time to discuss matters and communicate when each member of the team — from editing to mixing — is chasing their tail to complete their work within the given deadline?
- We can also ask ourselves whether the training provided for our respective professions is suited to promoting the collective approach to work... In particular the separate — and sometimes impervious — teaching of editing and sound professions in most schools is certainly responsible for the lack of knowledge, among young technicians of the implications of other peoples' work.

Our practices and work tools have evolved considerably. All of us — technicians and film-makers — have gained a lot thanks to the new fields of creativity that have opened up but films can only lose out from the increase in solitary practices. Replacing the notion of teamwork as the focus of our practices is absolutely essential.

Collaboration among all those involved in making a film — obviously including the director who chose them — is essential to the proper technical, economic and artistic conduct of postproduction and it must start at the same time that the schedules are drafted.

This is why the composition of the team must be decided as early as possible. It requires cooperation between the film-maker, heads of departments and the postproduction manager to choose the other members of the team, as well as post houses (and this choice should not be made solely according to financial criteria).

The presence of the editor, the sound editor and the re-recording mixer during the technical reading of the screenplay prior to shooting (this takes place with the director, the heads of departments for shooting and the production manager would be a precious help in making everyone aware of the issues connected with editing to avoid traps and to start thinking about the approach to sound.

Our surveys all revealed the same problems of insufficient working time and imposed schedules, which lead to overrunning deadlines, delays in schedules or ridiculous working days to stick to deadlines in the event of festivals or distribution constraints. This is why several meetings must be systematically arranged:

- A postproduction meeting is essential prior to shooting in order to establish a workflow and more especially, a joint schedule that takes into account the specificities of the

film and the director's wishes. This meeting with the director must include the director of photography, the person in charge of processing footage, the production sound mixer, the production manager, the postproduction manager and all those involved in postproduction: the editor and assistant editor, the sound editor, dialogue editor, Foley artist and the re-recording mixer. This meeting must take place prior to any budget adjudication between the production and postproduction managers. We must talk to each other and make decisions together;

- Another meeting must be scheduled at the end of shooting or at the start of editing, initiated by the postproduction manager in order to adjust the schedule and the budget depending on new constraints (quantity of footage, number of cameras, problems with shooting and actors, noisy sets etc.) and to calculate fair delivery times for editing, sound editing, Foley and mixing. It often happens that the quantity of footage explodes during shooting and this information must be taken into account as early as possible;
- Other meetings may be arranged during editing in the event of difficulties liable to lead to the editing deadline being overrun and which would thus affect the sound department's workflow.

Regular work sessions must also be organised with sound and dialogue editors during editing to strive to jointly resolve any difficulties encountered. Obviously, the sound editor, the re-recording mixer and the Foley artist must attend the editing screenings. They are knowledgeable spectators; their opinions and suggestions are important during the course of the film-making process. It is through the artistic collaboration of all concerned that the best possible film will be born.

PROPOSAL #1

The notion of teamwork must — once again — become central to our professional practices. Collaboration between everyone involved in making the film — both between themselves and with the director — is essential to the proper technical, economic and artistic conduct of postproduction.

Such collaboration must be able to start before shooting to implement postproduction processes suited to the specificities of the film.

It is vital that the postproduction manager organises regular meetings with the director, department heads and the assistant editor.

2

AN AUTONOMOUS BUDGET FOR POST- PRODUCTION

A SIGNIFICANT DROP IN THE ALLOWANCES FOR POSTPRODUCTION

For several years now, the figures published by the CNC have shown a drastic drop in expenses allocated to the remuneration and the technical equipment for postproduction (editing, finishing and laboratory) compared to the total cost of a film. This drop has accelerated even more since 2010.

Means allocated to postproduction services

Over the space of 10 years (2008–2017), the amounts allocated for postproduction services compared to the cost of films has dropped by 51%, taking into account inflation.

Technological developments and in particular the evolution towards a fully digital fabrication process partly explains this drop. At every stage of postproduction (editing, sound editing, mixing, grading, visual effects (VFX)...), the technical equipment has become more efficient, more manageable and gradually less expensive.

This has allowed numerous small and medium-sized post houses to emerge and certain productions to equip themselves with integrated equipment. In this ultra-competitive environment, post houses have entered into a commercial war, the likes of which have never been seen before, sometimes applying unreasonable discounts or offering part of the services at a fixed price. Besides the massive restructuring of this field and its dramatic consequences (bankruptcies, disappearance of major, long-standing groups, multiple redundancies...), this mad competition and the tariffs applied have led to complete opacity when it comes to the true cost of services.

Everything contributed to productions having the greatest difficulty understanding the real cost of postproduction. It lost more and more value both financially and symbolically and this had a direct effect on expenditure linked to remuneration in the postproduction field.

Remuneration

Between 2008 and 2017, the expenses relating to postproduction staff directly employed by the production company (editing and finishing), compared to the cost of a film, dropped by 19% (source: CNC).

All the surveys carried out by technicians' associations reveal a significant reduction in the time set aside for each postproduction profession and terrible under-employment of assistants. This reduction is even more worrying because the number of hours of digital footage has shot up, VFX are far more abundant and the improvement of postproduction tools has broadened the scope of possibilities and therefore necessarily increased the length of time needed to complete this work.

Quite objectively, whatever the difficulties encountered by producers in financing their films, all the figures show that postproduction has lost the most in these budget assignments.

An under-estimated budget

All these factors have led to an alarming under-estimation of postproduction budgets. It looks as though the drop in the cost of postproduction technical services, the unbridled competition and the opacity of prices has led to a general depreciation of postproduction and encouraged productions to set aside ever-decreasing budgets.

In the space of 15 years (2003–2017), the proportion allocated to postproduction in film budgets has decreased from 12% to 8%, which is a drop of 33%. In the last ten years (2008–2017), the reduction is 20% (source: CNC).

Another factor that contributes to this under-estimation is the control that production managers still have over the drafting of postproduction budgets, even though they

are no longer present after shooting and they are not responsible for managing this budget. They therefore have a tendency to under-estimate postproduction budgets for three main reasons:

- Because they are not familiar with the technological evolution of postproduction, its new organisation, its possibilities and the appertaining risks;
- Because—since they are no longer present during postproduction—they are not required to manage the difficulties and the aberrations caused by an under-estimated budget;
- Because they will not be held responsible for any budget overruns.

Finally, the last reason for the under-evaluation of postproduction costs is their place in the film's fabrication process. Following on from shooting, postproduction often inherits new difficulties connected with the shooting (number of hours of footage, unplanned VFX) and is regularly the adjustment variable in the budget.

The consequence of all this is the under-estimation, in the initial quote, of the time required to do the work, which means technicians are responsible for any overruns which—in effect—are only the time needed to catch up with insufficient time allowances in the first place.

AN OVERALL POSTPRODUCTION BUDGET THAT IS DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY

From an accounting standpoint, a film's budget comprises 9 main items, under which numerous sub-items concerning postproduction are found. In particular, this is the case for salaries that are found in item 2, along with those of shooting technicians as well as the appertaining social security contributions in item 4, rights (archives, sound documents, translations for subtitles) in item 1, transport, compensation for costs and postproduction management costs in item 6...

This sub-division does not help clarify the accounts. It does not permit the immediate and overall view of the postproduction or an easy understanding of the postproduction financial situation come the end of the fabrication of a film.

Progress has been made with the new CNC budgeting template, which now includes all the postproduction facilities and services in item 8 (postproduction; sound and image). This is a step forward that must be continued to have a clear view of the requirements and costs specific to postproduction

AN AUTONOMOUS POSTPRODUCTION BUDGET, DISTINCT FROM THE SHOOTING BUDGET: WHY?

Grouping together all the expenses relating to postproduction in a specific budget item would be essential to establishing an autonomous budget, similar to the system in the UK, Germany and Scandinavian countries.

This would allow the postproduction manager to take full responsibility for this budget, from when it is drafted to the final rendering of accounts via the management of unforeseen circumstances, which are common in the postproduction phase (deadlines for delivering VFX, difficulty with putting a final stop to editing, multiplication of decision-makers towards the end of editing, amount of post-synchronisation work etc.).

INCREASING THE DECISION-MAKING POWERS OF POSTPRODUCTION MANAGERS?

For all the reasons previously mentioned, production managers have a tendency to under-estimate this budget. It is often based on the pre-shooting budget of a previous film and does not take into account the definitive financial situation of the latter or any specificities of the current film. Coordination between production managers and postproduction managers does exist, but it is always the former who obtain the definitive budgetary assignments.

And yet postproduction managers are the people who know the most about the realities in the field and they are in direct contact with the technicians and artistes who are involved in this final phase of film-making.

With real decision-making powers and in conjunction with the technicians involved (pre-shoot meetings), postproduction managers could emphasise their standpoint concerning questions that are often unknown to the producers. Better management, which better solves practical problems, would allow us to anticipate and make savings by avoiding pointless expenditure which is often the result of poor organisation.

Two examples:

- We are often faced with the under-estimation of timings in screenplays. It's quite common for a film lasting more than 2 hours to be timed at 1 hour 40 minutes. So how can we then make a fair estimation of the time needed for editing, sound editing, Foley recording and mixing?
- In many cases, digital shooting leads to an increase in the amount of footage. Since this increase is often discovered at the end of the shoot, it means the postproduction schedule — which was established before starting — cannot take this into account. How is it then possible to stick to the deadlines for finishing the film?

It would therefore make more sense for the production and the postproduction managers to draft their respective budgets and if a problem arises, the producer would serve as arbitrator. This would undoubtedly allow postproduction budgets to be better evaluated.

Our intention is not to deny the difficulties faced by producers, nor those encountered by all members of our profession, but it is necessary for budget arbitration to be better balanced and not — as is often the case — to the detriment of postproduction.

PROPOSAL #2

It is necessary to establish a separate postproduction budget for every film.

Real decision-making powers must also be granted to postproduction managers.

This position must be included in the film-making collective labour agreement, as is the case in the audio-visual collective labour agreement.

3

ASSISTANTS ARE INDISPENSABLE

If there is one recurring problem in all our professions, it's the disappearance of assistants. The results of all our surveys confirm this:

- Assistant editors work intermittently on 52% of fiction films under appendix I rules, 71% of fiction films in appendix III and 79% of documentaries. In France, films with a budget of more than €2.5 million are governed by appendix I rules; films with a budget of less than €2.5 million can, under certain conditions, be subject to appendix III rules, which allows them to lower the pay scales. For a quarter of all fiction films, there is no joint work between the editor and the assistant (who works elsewhere or at different times)
- Only 35% of films call upon an assistant sound editor
- Only 10% of films have an assistant Foley artist
- Only 7% of re-recording mixers have the possibility of working regularly with a co-recording mixer or an assistant re-recording mixer.

If the under-use of assistants is primarily to save money, it has serious consequences, mainly on their working conditions and those of department heads, on the transmission of our professions and in fine on the artistic quality of films. Such savings have great costs!

THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

A POSITION THAT IS STILL CRUCIAL

The assistant editor's function is crucial because they have in-depth knowledge of the project, they are familiar with the workflow and the complete postproduction process. They can anticipate problems and requests, as well as making collaboration between the various teams more fluid, thus making the department heads' work easier. For all these reasons, the assistant editor is a central actor and anchor throughout the postproduction phase.

We must not forget that an assistant's work cannot be reduced to their "useful" time, which they spend on technical tasks. The development of a film during editing relies on discussions and reflexion within the team comprising the director, the editor and the assistant editor, who is also an artistic partner.

Since the arrival of digital film production, our tools have changed radically, workflows have become more complex and the workload has increased. Assistants must therefore deal with this increasing complexity and its consequences on the communication between various departments. Their work is far more than just preparing footage and exports at the end of the project. Assistants can pre-edit scenes, prepare and manage VFX, subtitles and credits, work on the sound of the work print, carry out musical or archival research... thus relieving the editor of time-consuming tasks.

However, the presence of assistant editors on films is diminishing every year, thus undermining the work of all concerned in postproduction and hence the quality of films. This phenomenon also worries postproduction managers, who regret the disappearance of an essential participant.

DETERIORATION OF THE PROFESSION

The results of our surveys reveal an alarming precarity among assistants, due to the reduction and the fragmentation of their working hours and the drop in their salaries.

Assistants whose working hours are fragmented cannot involve themselves efficiently in the development of a film. At the end of the editing phase and when the project is transferred for the next phase of postproduction, assistants are regularly involved for short, intermittent periods that are difficult to plan. They are forced to remain available with no visibility of their schedule and often have to refuse offers of other work... and when assistants who have left the project because of the working conditions hand over to another assistant, this is frequently the source of mistakes, tweaking and therefore extra work. It sometimes happens

that assistants are offered work by the hour or asked to group their hours into full days. This is not acceptable and is illegal (see chapter 13 regarding labour contracts and overtime).

The savings made by the intermittent presence of assistants has to be weighed against the financial overrun that their absence can entail (editing overrunning, disorganisation of the editor's work, overtime, technical errors, tasks carried out and invoiced by the post house...). There is also an extra cost, the editor is paid to do an assistant's work to the detriment of his/her work with the director.

DOWNGRADING THE FUNCTION

We regret that, in spite of their important responsibilities, the profession of assistant editor is nowadays insecure and discredited.

We have found that assistants' salaries are — for the most part — the guaranteed minimum wage, even for the most experienced.

We have also found that part of an assistant's work is often sub-contracted to service-providing companies. This pronounced trend puts the profession of assistant under serious threat since they are replaced by technicians who only carry out a series of repetitive tasks on several films at the same time, without really monitoring the editing process and without it being possible to become part of a team. The externalisation of a profession results in the fragmentation of the job and industrialises the production line of a film.

Finally, we found that training for the position of assistant editor is non-existent in film schools and on-the-job training. Some students end up being department heads as soon as they leave school, without ever being assistants. From a practical point of view, they do not know what assistants can do for them, they have trouble delegating and often find themselves overworked, to the detriment of their editing activity.

ASSISTANT SOUND EDITORS

The rarefaction of this position is even more pronounced than that of assistant editor. Employing an assistant sound editor has never really been implemented by productions since the advent of digital sound editing and today, it is the subject of painful negotiations on most film projects. Quite often, they are only really recruited as a backup to enable deadlines to be met.

The absence of assistant sound editors is even more damaging since the under-estimation of schedules leads — almost systematically — to editing time overlapping the sound editing time (or even the mixing phase or later). Recruiting an assistant sound editor then becomes

vital to relieve the sound editor of recurrent configurations and allow him/her to devote their time to creative work. It is also absurd, from a financial standpoint, to entrust such technical stages to a department head.

The intensification of shooting schedules has led to a lack of time to record precious wild tracks, which regularly forces sound editors to re-record the background ambiances and effects in situ after shooting. This work should be done by an assistant sound editor.

Similarly, other “straightforward”, time-consuming tasks should only be entrusted to assistant sound editors: recovering exports, preparing timelines, sequencing, logging and classifying sounds that have become multi-channel, doing innumerable exports (for the editor, the musician, the dialogue editor, Foley, post-synchronisation, screenings), integrating all the elements ready for mixing. Assistant sound editors prepare rough mixes for the sound editing and conform the successive edited versions. Their presence during Foley recording and editing is precious (this is almost always required during mixing). This is not forgetting the unmeasurable contribution to teamwork as well as a critical ear.

Concerning the deterioration of the profession and the belittlement of the position of assistant sound editor, we can draw almost the same conclusions as for assistant editors: low wages, fragmentation of schedules, lack of oversight... as well as the difficulty of obtaining the assignment of a real position by the production.

FOLEY ASSISTANTS

Thirty years ago, the position of Foley assistant was systematic on nearly 60% of films. Today, they are only present on 1 film in 10 (source: [ADAB](#) survey).

The disappearance of assistants is a dramatic reality for French Foley artists since assistantship is the only form of training. One becomes a Foley artist by being an assistant for many years. Recruiting a Foley assistant is therefore essential for this profession and its unique know-how, recognised throughout the world.

The presence of a Foley assistant is a real time-saver. He/she is present from the first screening and takes part in all preparatory meetings with the editor or the sound editor. Foley assistants are in charge of preparing and organising equipment to save time for the Foley artist. They can prepare the work on a scene in advance, identify sound effects required, note locations or simply create sound effects themselves, with or without their department head. At all times, the assistant backs up the Foley artist, which allows him/her to concentrate on artistic issues. A team of two is faster, more efficient and more creative. The assistant also provides another viewpoint, hears things differently and has different responses to a soundtrack, which can only benefit the film.

In spite of this, employing a Foley assistant is almost systematically rejected, supposedly to save money.

THE ASSISTANT RE-RECORDING MIXER

The appearance of Dolby stereo in the 1980s stimulated the rise of the position of the co-re-recording mixer. Since then, consoles and devices have become more and more automated and they are now totally automatic. Under these conditions, it seems difficult to justify the presence of a co-re-recording mixer on films that are neither comfortably financed nor of any great technical complexity.

And yet two-thirds of re-recording mixers were assistants or co-re-recording mixers and unanimously state their wish to transmit what they have learned. Also, 50% of them appreciate the extra perspective afforded by the presence of an assistant re-recording mixer. Sharing work — for example mixing sound effects and ambiences — relieves the re-recording mixer of some tasks and encourages artistic discussions with the director.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

The under-employment of assistants is disastrous for the perpetuation of our professions and hence for film-making in its entirety.

Even though the problem of employing assistants differs depending on our profession, the question of handing down knowledge is common to us all. The disappearance of assistants makes it nearly impossible to learn “on the job” and training for our professions now takes place almost exclusively in schools (with the exception of Foley artists, for which there is no other training apart from assistantships). Nonetheless, training does not stop when people leave school. It is completed by working on a “real” film with experienced department heads. Discussions and the transmission of knowledge from department heads to assistants are vital to the perpetuation of our professions, their traditions and our know-how. The presence of an assistant is a demand we must all defend. The future of our professions depends on it.

PROPOSAL #3

Department heads must refuse to act as assistants. They must defend their assistants’ working conditions with productions (negotiating salaries, planning schedules for assistants and defining their tasks...).

Part of the teaching in schools and training centres must be set aside for the specific work taken on by assistants.

The role of assistants during postproduction must be reinstated, since they are precious allies for department heads and a key element of organisation and communication among those involved in making a film.

The assistant editor must work full time, for the full duration of the editing.

Foley artists reiterate their request to the CNC for a subsidy bonus to be created to safeguard the employment of Foley assistants. This means that films for which a Foley assistant is hired by the production, could get a bonus added to the support they receive from the CNC.

Any measures liable to encourage the employment of assistants must be examined.

4

THE FILM EDITOR AND SUPERVISION OF A FILM

It often happens that the film editor is not deemed to be responsible for the supervision of the film up to its completion. The organisation and coordination have been transferred to the postproduction manager. This transfer does not take into account the film editor's artistic involvement or the importance of his/her collaboration with the various people involved in the film.

Thanks to his/her technical competence, experience, proximity to the director and the fact that he/she is generally selected relatively early, before filming begins, the film editor is an essential partner during the reflection about the postproduction organisation and he/she is the essential point of contact with heads of departments during shooting (script supervisor, director of photography, sound engineer).

The film editor also guarantees the coherence of this creative phase of the film, which only ends once the mixing is completed. However, our surveys have revealed that the editor has less and less to do with supervising work on the sound and his/her relation with the sound editor, dialogue editor, Foley artist and re-recording mixers has become more distant. This is explained, firstly, by the under-estimation of the means allocated to these phases of film-making. The film editor no longer receives remuneration — or only partially — for this supervision.

Of course, thanks to technological developments, it is possible to start working on the sound, the music, the VFX etc. during the editing phase. Since there can be a very high picture quality at this stage, a film can look “finished”. It has become more difficult for producers and some directors to perceive the added value of sound editing, mixing and colour grading. But even though a film is “born” during editing, it is continually re-discovered during the successive stages of postproduction. It continues its construction and enhancement thanks to the contributions of all participants and the exchange of viewpoints.

The film editor holds the memory of the narrative essence of the film. After months of day-to-day collaboration on the editing, he/she could be the director’s spokesperson, since he/she knows their intentions and the requirements of the film. In this respect, the film editor is a precious go-between for the head sound editor, the Foley artist, the re-recording mixer, the musician, the head VFX technician, the grader... He/she communicates the intentions defined during editing and supports the contributions and initiatives of other collaborators that correspond to the director’s expectations.

The remuneration for this presence and responsibility must therefore be taken into account when the budgets and schedules are drafted, in conjunction with the postproduction manager.

PROPOSAL #4

The film editor must be present at every stage of the fabrication of a film, from the editing to the verification of the final print, in order to ensure proper supervision and to work efficiently with all team members.

5

EDITING TIMES ARE SHRINKING, AND YET...

According to the survey carried out by LMA⁶, film editors do overtime on 80% of films and 46% of fictional films exceed the planned editing deadline... and yet in the last fifteen years, the time allocated for editing has been reduced.

... and yet, since the digital revolution, the average quantity of footage has increased considerably. The number of takes and camera angles has grown and it is no longer rare to use several cameras. The duration of logging has increased proportionally. During the editing phase, the number of choices has also multiplied.

... and yet, there are numerous, regular working screenings and these now require a lot of work on the sound and music. The number of audio tracks is no longer limited. Working on sync sound and the film's ambience and effects is now possible and has become the norm. It is almost unimaginable to present an edited print without the music. This demands a huge amount of research, listening and experiments, and sometimes entails devoting time to a new contributor: the music supervisor.

Close collaboration ensues with the musician: the editor receives the music outlines, adjusts them, cuts them and re-arranges them. This necessitates numerous trips between the editing room and the music studio.

Once the basis for the sound track is outlined and the music is inserted in the work print, the editor provisionally balances the levels to optimise the screening.

6- Les Monteurs associés - [see glossary](#)

All too often, the equipment in the editing room (audio and sound-proofing) is not up to scratch. It does not guarantee homogeneous listening conditions throughout the process of creating the soundtrack and this can lead to awkward surprises and therefore waste time.

... and yet, there are more and more special effects and visual effects in films and they take up a lot of time in the editing room.

Even in films that don't have any visible effects, they are still there: removing a boom or its shadow, slowing down, accelerating or reversing shots, grading or re-framing are all day-to-day tasks. It is possible to provide mock-ups for many things and the editor is therefore asked to do this. As for visual effects that have been planned and budgeted, these require numerous discussions with the VFX team to process the mock-ups that will be successively integrated into the work print. The delivery of the definitive VFX overruns and extends considerably into the end of the editing. They still require the film editor's eye to insert them properly into the continuity of the film.

... and yet, the editing room has become the place where the first credit list evolves, along with subtitles and many other requirements, such as the choice of still frames or a selection of footage for the trailer or any other promotional operation involving the film.

... and yet — and this is an essential point — the validation of the definitive cut can take a long time. The producer accompanies the editing, attends the screenings and there are regular discussions between him/her, the director and the editing team. But towards the end of the job, the distributor may express his/her own demands and challenge the film, its length, its essence. He/she may state a new viewpoint, emit doubts or ask for changes. The editing is then questioned. The editor is at the heart of a power struggle between all the participants. Screenings and changes can continue even though the editing appeared to be finished and it is not rare for the editor and assistant to have to remain available for weeks after the end of their contracts, pending feedback and decisions. As often as not, it is the constraints that are imposed upon entering the mixing stage that mark the end of work on the film.

PROPOSAL #5

It is essential to establish schedules that take into account the new editing workloads and budgets that include remuneration for finishing touches.

The equipment in the edit suite (picture and audio monitoring, sound-proofing, internet connection) must be sufficient for requirements resulting from technical progress. This is a pre-requisite for working efficiently, which avoids awkward surprises during screenings or when postproduction carries over into the sound editing phase.

6

SOUND EDITING, A CHANGING PROFESSION

EXERCISING THIS PROFESSION

Sound is one of the structural elements of a film. Sound editing is a major element in the creation of the soundtrack.

In the space of 30 years, technological possibilities and the evolution of broadcasting standards have considerably complicated the fabrication of film soundtracks, from shooting to mixing. For a long time, sound editing has been a fully-fledged speciality.

The sound editor takes on the artistic and technical responsibility of choosing and matching the sound from shooting to the picture, additional sound and if necessary, creating or having sounds created that are required for developing the film's sound universe, as defined with the director.

EVOLUTION AND OBSERVATIONS REGARDING SOUND EDITING

Nowadays, a sound recordist would not be able to supply all the sound necessary for the film and it is not always possible—during shooting—for him/her to record extra sounds even though they are essential.

The sound recordist's workload has therefore increased. He/she must now organise or carry out essential sound recordings and search for and provide almost all the additional sound to permit the creation of the film's sound universe.

The increased quality of sound editing rooms, with regard to both acoustics and technology, as well as the high level of qualification of sound editors allow them to offer directors the possibility of listening to a balanced soundtrack. But what used to be an extra option has now become a demand. Our work has to be more and more accurate, more accomplished. Productions now want to be able to use it during working screenings.

Even though our workload is increasing, the time allocated for editing is growing shorter. Sound editing is often the first to suffer the vagaries of the postproduction schedule.

A lack of dialogue and consultation during the drafting of schedules leads to the inaccurate estimation of the duration of work and deadlines that are too short, which result in overruns during editing whereas as often as not, the mixing and delivery dates remain unchanged.

This means editors often have to work under pressure, starting their work over and over again, chalking up overtime (which — in 69% of cases — is not remunerated) and in certain cases, not being able to be present during mixing. Result: a lot of time and energy wasted doing secondary tasks and a lot less time spent on their core profession.

The disappearance of assistant sound editors amplifies these constraints, since work that they should have done is now done by the sound editor (see chapter 3).

The absence — more and more frequent — of film editors during the sound editing phase deprives the sound editor of essential information concerning the film, of the history of versions, specific intentions and requests that the director cannot fully transmit. It is therefore essential that working sessions are organised in the editing room with the director and the editor and these must be integrated into the schedule and become a regular fixture.

Finally, we are forced to admit that the true value of the work done by sound editors is not recognised, from either the technical or the artistic point of view. The sounds they choose and create for the construction of the soundtrack, with the director, are not due to chance. Consequently, this work is not recognised financially, either. Sound editors have the lowest minimum wage of all department heads in the postproduction field. For reference, according to the AFSI⁷ survey, 81% of sound editors with at least 15 years of experience are paid the basic minimum wage. This shows the importance of upgrading our profession.

7- Association française du son à l'image (see glossary)

PROPOSAL #6

Meetings must be organised to bring together all the participants in postproduction, ahead of shooting, to jointly establish schedules and specific facilities.

The expertise of sound editors must be used to define the sound requirements of a film, then, throughout the fabrication of the film to anticipate problems and ensure better collaboration to promote quality and efficiency.

During shooting, the sound editor's work time for the requirements of postproduction must be planned and organised.

The necessity of having the dialogue editor and the sound editor present during the mixing stage must be emphasised, in order to supervise our work and contribute to the coherence of the soundtrack as a whole.

The technical and artistic contribution of editing work must be recognised and represented in upgraded salaries. The basic minimum wage for a sound editor must be on a par with that of the sound engineer during shooting. For the same level of responsibility, they must have the same pay.

7

DIALOGUE EDITING, INCREASING RESPONSIBILITIES

The purpose of the editing stage devoted to dialogue is to improve and enrich the film's sync sound, in order for it to attain maximum quality from both the technical and artistic standpoints. This requirement permits the director's intentions to be implemented as closely as possible. It is the link between the editing stage – which is restricted to the management of sync sound – and mixing, the responsibility for which has been partly transferred to the dialogue editor, in particular because of technological development.

A PROFESSION IN ITSELF

Over the past fifteen years, dialogue editing has become a niche profession and the dialogue editor is therefore a head of department. The appearance of new tools (multi-track recorders, dedicated software...) and increased demand for quality (sound restoration...) have necessitated the transfer of this responsibility from the assistant editor to a head of department in the sound editing team. In this respect, the dialogue editor works directly with the director, the film editor, the sound editor and the re-recording mixer.

ILL-CONCEIVED SCHEDULES

The amount of time spent on dialogue editing varies according to several criteria: the film's duration and shot breakdown, quality of the sync sound, number of tracks recorded during shooting, the editing team's progress, the director's artistic intentions... The dialogue editor must therefore be consulted to define the length of time necessary for working on each film.

Moreover, the frequent overruns in the editing schedule regularly entail extra work for the sound team. This must be taken into account and solutions must be found: re-arranging the schedule and/or reinforcing the teams.

PRESENCE DURING POST-SYNCHRONISATION

The sound editor is an essential contributor at this stage. (see chapter 8)

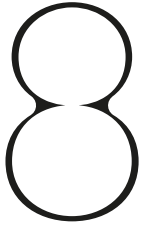
PRESENCE DURING MIXING

As a department head and in charge of sync sound, it is necessary for the dialogue editor to be present — on a par with the sound editor — during mixing in order to ensure the continuity of his/her work with the director, in collaboration with the re-recording mixer.

PROPOSAL #7

The dialogue editor holds a key function during postproduction and his/her responsibilities are increasing. He/she must be consulted for every film, in order to better estimate the organisation and the time required.

The dialogue editor must be present during the mixing and post-synchronisation phases.



POST- SYNCHRONISATION, A PHASE OF TECHNICAL AND ARTISTIC CREATION

DETERMINING POST-SYNCHRONISATION

The post-synchronisation determination session is an important event because it is the first time the sync sound is heard in an auditorium with the re-recording mixer. Post-synchronisation may be decided for technical or artistic reasons. The presence of the director, the film editor, the sound editor, the dialogue editor and the head of post-synchronisation is essential. It makes sense that they should receive remuneration for this session.

The dialogue editor must have had time to start work on the sync sound (conforming and arranging the field recorder tracks, searching out dialogue replacements, cleaning up) in order to avoid pointless post-synchronisation. The determination session must be scheduled for when the dialogue editing is sufficiently advanced.

RECORDING SESSIONS

Post-synchronisation implies directing actors. It is therefore a staging exercise that requires the presence of the director and his/her collaborators, the film editor and the dialogue editor. The editor guarantees the coherence of the current film and helps the director make choices. As for the dialogue editor, he/she knows the ins and outs of sync sound, its limits and may — during recording — suggest different timings and editing that permits the closest possible gauging of the integration of new recordings. His/her presence allows a better understanding of the director's intentions and once the post-synchronisations are integrated with the rest of the sync sound, new editing suggestions can be made if required.

The presence of the sound editor during the recording of ambient post-synchronisation is important, because he/she is the best positioned to determine what is needed to enrich the soundtrack. Ambiences — if they are to be effective — must be prepared: written text or suggested bases for improvisation, finding and casting actors for additional ambiences, directing on set. The editing schedule must be adapted to allow the sound editor to do this preparatory work with the floor manager who is in charge of post-synchronisation.

The presence of a boom operator during recordings is vital because it allows greater freedom of movement for the actors and makes sound recordings that are easier to match with sync sound.

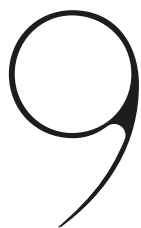
Edited post-synchronisations are sent to the dialogue editor, who integrates them into the sync sound. In any event, adjustments are necessary. The director — accompanied by the film editor — must validate the choice of post-synchronisations once re-timed and edited, to avoid wasting time during mixing. The majority of choices must have been made in advance in the dialogue editing room. This time is rarely included in the provisional planning of the overall deadlines granted for dialogue editors. It must be scheduled on top of the time devoted to editing sync sound.

PROPOSAL #8

As well as the presence of the director and the re-recording mixer, post-synchronisations require the presence of the film editor, the dialogue editor and the person in charge of post-synchronisation. The sound editor must also be present during ambience recordings.

The use of a boom operator is essential.

The validation of post-synchronisation by the director and the film editor must be done with the dialogue editor, prior to mixing.



FOLEY ARTIST, A PROFESSION UNDER THREAT

PRESENCE OF THE DIRECTOR, THE FILM EDITOR AND THE SOUND EDITOR

The Foley recording phase is a time of artistic creation, during which discussions are easy and quick. This work is done in real time and the results can be evaluated immediately, which makes it a precious creative laboratory. Directors and film editors know this and yet Foley studios are now deserted.

According to a survey carried out by Foley artists, directors were present during Foley recording on 63% of films ten years ago, but only on 28% of films today. Editors are now only present in 10% of cases. The presence of sound editors has become a rarity due to compressed schedules and the lack of assistants. The lack of time and the superposition of work phases explain the director's difficulty to attend the Foley recording.

Nowadays, Foley artists are far too isolated from the rest of the crew. They prepare their work on their own and in their own time. They don't meet the rest of the team during preparatory work screenings. Their discussions with the sound editor take place remotely. The sound editor and the re-recording mixer are generally the only people to send them artistic directions specific to the film and then to give them feedback on their work. But this is no substitute for interaction with the director, the film editor or the sound editor in an auditorium, which allows the director's intentions to be finely and accurately implemented.

Depopulating Foley studios boils down to considering that this phase is just a formality.

THE QUESTION OF THE RE-SYNCHRONISATION TASK

Only 29% of films benefit from the presence of a Pro Tools assistant for the Foley recording. The importance of this item is under-estimated and if this function does not exist, it is the re-recording mixer and the Foley artist who replace it. This slows the film down and breaks up the work dynamic.

The great majority of Foley artists consider that the presence of a Pro Tools assistant is essential. Firstly, he/she allows the Foley artist and the sound engineer to concentrate on essential tasks and thus increase the speed and quality of their work. Secondly, he/she guarantees the perfect synchronism of Foley sounds with the sync sound, which is a prerequisite for Foley sounds to be usable during mixing for the original language version. If this re-synchronisation task has to be done outside the time allotted for Foley recording, it must be entrusted to one of the Foley team members or to the assistant sound editor, but not to the sound editor because his/her schedule does not allow enough time for him/her to cover this task.

WORKING TIME

78% of Foley artists regret they do not have enough working time and yet it is a common occurrence for working times to be adjusted and increased during the Foley recording phase. The reason for this is that there is hardly ever a Foley assistant, very rarely a Pro Tools assistant and the choice of auditoria is sometimes inadequate. Moreover — very often because of a time shortage — it is not possible to organise screenings with directors in an auditorium.

Consequently — in a large majority of instances — extra days or overtime in the evenings are granted to complete the Foley recording. To avoid this absurd situation, the Foley artist must be consulted when the postproduction schedules are drawn up.

THE QUESTION OF ASSISTANTS

We should remember that 30 years ago, the position of Foley assistant was systematic for 60% of films. Today, they are only present for 10% of films.

The question of underemployment of Foley assistants is very worrying, since the only way to learn Foley art is through assistantship. French Foley artists are renowned throughout the world, but their know-how is simply going to disappear if no measures are taken in the short term to safeguard the position of their assistants.

Foley artists have been discussing, with the unions, a project for a subsidy bonus devoted to assistants to Foley artists, emanating from the CNC, which could be granted to productions. It is a matter of urgency that it be finally implemented ([see chapter 3](#)).

PROPOSAL #9

A Foley artist's expertise must be taken into account when evaluating their working times and conditions.

The Foley artist must attend a screening of the film in order to discuss the artistic impact of Foley sounds with the film and sound editing teams.

The director, the film editor and the sound editor must attend the Foley recording to accompany the Foley artist's work.

The presence of a Pro Tools assistant (if possible the assistant sound editor) must be systematic during the Foley recording.

The presence of a Foley assistant is necessary. In order to guarantee the future and the know-how of this profession; we are asking the CNC to urgently implement a support fund bonus intended for Foley assistants.

10

A COHERENT SCHEDULE FOR MUSIC

Surveys by editors, sound editors and re-recording mixers have all reached the same conclusion: work on music—which is vital for a good many films—currently seems to lack supervision and organisation. Consequently, the definitive delivery of music is often too late.

According to the LMA survey, it is the film editor who edits the music for 98% of films, but for 64%, it is temporary music or drafts supplied by the musician. The definitive music arrives later, after the end of the editing phase, or even in the middle or at the end of the mixing stage.

ADDITIONAL MUSIC

Negotiations for the musical rights for additional music may be complex and therefore lengthy. When a piece is too expensive or cannot be used and the news arrives too late, the whole cut can be affected.

ORIGINAL MUSIC

It is rarely possible for composers to supply their compositions prior to shooting because very often, they haven't yet been chosen. In general, it is during picture editing that the composition work and his/her collaboration with the director begin.

If the choice of the composer occurs late in the editing phase, the editors have to place temporary music that permits the understanding of the film's musical universe and to evaluate it during screenings. The later the musician intervenes, the more difficult it becomes to divest the film of the temporary music.

Nowadays, composers are in a position to propose mock-ups of the pieces they have composed, which allows them to be exchanged, tried, moved or rearranged and thus allowing the construction of the film's musical score.

These mock-ups must be sent to the sound editor as early as possible, so he/she can work on the soundtrack depending on the musical proposals. If the compositions arrive too late, the sound editing of certain scenes may be unsuitable or even have to be completely redone. Sound editors are involved in artistic discussions concerning the music for 25% of films (source: AFSI survey).

Even though mock-ups are very useful, they cannot render the ambience of musical arrangements, the tone of the instruments, the performance or the sound recording and its spatialisation. It can also happen that the tempo is altered during the recording or that the musicians make alterations to their scores.

It is therefore essential to plan recording and mixing of the original music sufficiently early, before the mixing stage. This means the director and the editor will have time to work together on synchronising any new pieces and make changes if necessary. The sound editor can also adapt his/her work. The re-recording mixer is not forced to do the music editing in an auditorium and can devote his/her time to mixing rather than having to reassure a director who discovers these new elements.

PROPOSAL #10

It is preferable for the composer of any original music to be selected as early as possible so that all those involved—the film-maker, the musicians, the film editor, the sound editor, the re-recording mixer—have time to do their work and to discuss it.

It is important to correctly schedule the delivery of the first proposals and of the definitive music. Time for editing must be allowed in between the delivery of the music and the start of mixing.

Any additional music must be negotiated as early as possible.

11

IN FAVOUR OF LESS SOLITARY MIXING

Under the direction of the director, the mixing work consists of playing, transposing and completing the proposed soundtrack, as drafted during the editing phase and again during the sound-editing phase. The mixing is finalised when it puts over the desired meaning and emotion to the spectator.

This artistically and technically complex task should be carried out in the presence of the film editor and the sound editor, who are essential collaborators when it comes to transmitting intentions that have been previously thought through.

Mixing is the last phase during which sound staging takes place; this makes it all the more decisive.

OBSERVATIONS

The results of the survey carried out among all re-recording mixers in September 2018 lead us to observe a deep-seated evolution of this profession, which brings its very foundations into question.

The ever-growing illusion that a film's sound is completed before the mixing stage, the dispersal of working places and the schedules that often overlap the different phases of postproduction all lead to the re-recording mixer's job being more and more solitary and this is not without consequence on the results. It is essentially thanks to numerous discussions between team members that the mixing achieves the level of coherence that is vital for its completion.

Once this teamwork starts falling apart because of the increasing uncertainty of the director's presence, the participation of the sound editors and dialogue editors often being questioned and the regular absence of film editors, the impoverishment of the work becomes a reality. In this context, the re-recording mixer does his/her work without having an overall view and risks paying more attention to technical demands and a personal interpretation than to the spirit of the film.

The time allocated for mixing is often too short, rarely involves any discussions and pays less and less attention to the specificity of each film, thus contributing greatly to this impoverishment.

Moreover, the almost systematic disappearance of mixers' assistants no longer allows for the direct handing down of a profession that takes a long time to master. Schools are now the only source of training and they are not enough. Occasions are few and far between for young people to take advantage of a real apprenticeship and the probable consequence is the risk of youngsters being entrusted too early with responsibilities for which they are ill-prepared.

Finally, since the start of the digital era, equipment has evolved considerably. Higher quality for a more reasonable price now allows the construction of a studio for a far lower price than that of a traditional auditorium, as long as it is reasonably small. This also contributes to the disappearance of large auditoria.

Teamwork is made more difficult because of the recent appearance of studios that do not fulfil the main two criteria that form the basis of our work:

- A mixing auditorium must simulate a cinema screen through its volume and listening conditions (acoustics and sound system) so that it can ensure the "transportability" of the mix into cinemas. Failing this, investments in the creation of the soundtrack may turn out to be a partial or total waste of time;
- Thanks to its size and layout, a mixing auditorium must allow all participants to achieve similar listening conditions to those of the re-recording mixer to allow for criticism, proposals and completing the film with a common base.

PROPOSAL #11

A re-recording mixer must refuse to mix a film if the sound editor is not scheduled to attend the mixing. The presence of directors during mixing must become the norm once again and productions must set aside the means for film editors to also be present in the auditorium.

Mixing conditions — the time allocated, the choice of the auditorium and the presence of an assistant — must systematically be discussed in advance.

The CNC — via the CST — must draft the minimum specifications — both technical and architectural — for a cinema auditorium. These specifications would replace the old Dolby approval and would guarantee that mixing conditions are conducive to directing the film, teamwork and the transferral of the soundtrack to a cinema screen. Any post houses that apply for technical industry funding must comply with these specifications: the CST would be entrusted with the mission of ensuring this is implemented.

12

FIGHTING DELOCA- LISATION

Rampant delocalisation has hit sound postproduction hard in recent years.

This has disastrous consequences for sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers.

According to a survey carried out by the AFSI in 2017, part or all of sound postproduction was delocalised abroad for 33% of French films in the preceding two years.

Moreover, most of these films received public funding in France and yet the aim of the CNC is not to encourage the delocalisation of film production.

Against a European context of fiscal competitiveness, the CNC took measures to counter the delocalisation of French cinema by raising the tax credit. Unfortunately, we can now see that this has not solved postproduction problems in the slightest.

Why is this?

The introduction of the new tax credit since January 1st 2016 mainly benefitted the shooting and to some extent, special effects, but definitely not postproduction.

Figures provided by the FICAM do not allow us to differentiate between the image and sound elements but they are revealing:

- In 2016, 10% of image and sound postproduction services were delocalised;
- In 2018, 15% of image and sound postproduction services were delocalised.

This is a 50% increase in delocalisation between 2016 and 2018.

If we combine FICAM and the CNC data with the results of the AFSI survey, we can deduce that it is sound postproduction activities that are most affected by delocalisation.

Sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers are not recognised in the collective labour agreement as “creative executives contributing to the film”, in spite of their technical and artistic contributions. Because of this, no specific points in the certification protect them. Their positions are therefore not taken into account in the calculation of points that give entitlement to the tax credit.

Assigning the status of “creative executives contributing to a film” to sound professionals may not solve the whole delocalisation problem but it would definitely reduce the effects on postproduction.

Besides the consequences of delocalisation on the employment of these professionals, it is highly regrettable that the members of a team can be imposed on a director for strictly financial reasons.

PROPOSAL #12

In accordance with the requests made by the unions, we are asking that the qualification of “creative executive contributing to a film” should be granted to sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers so that they are taken into account in the points system for tax credits.

We are asking producers to realise the seriousness of this situation and not to reduce the value of these professions to accounting variables.

13

LABOUR LAW MUST BE ENFORCED IN POSTPRODUCTION!

This chapter should not exist. Laws are made to be enforced, even if they are labour laws! Even though they have been considerably rearranged in recent years, numerous legal obligations still apply to employers... some of which are virtually never observed in our field... once shooting is over. Most productions are therefore operating illegally.

THE QUESTION OF CONTRACTS

Let's start with work contracts. In the great majority of cases, whether in the field of film editing, sound editing, Foley or mixing, contracts are drawn up after the event, once the work has been done. Strictly speaking, this means they are not really contracts — which bind two parties, the employer and the employee — but reports, the only purpose of which is to present justification documents to the CNC. We're sorry to state the obvious: contracts must be signed *"within 48 hours of starting work"* (section 1242-13 of the Labour Code) and respect certain requirements as stated in section 14, chapter 4, paragraph 1 of the Film production collective labour agreement.

THE QUESTION OF OVERTIME

Let's move on to salary premiums, first of all for overtime. For editors and sound editors — particularly assistants — this involves intermittent, intense periods of activity: specific deadlines for delivering various elements (for VFX, post-synchronisation, Foley,

music, preparation for mixing and grading), screenings (which always need a lot of preparation because so much is at stake), final editing etc. We should not forget that overtime often compensates for insufficient schedule allowances (see chapters [2](#), [5](#), [6](#)...) or can be the consequence of schedule compressions, resulting in increased to-ing and fro-ing between the various people involved in postproduction. For Foley artists and re-recording mixers, the fact that auditoria no longer systematically invoice time overruns—because of the competition—means that very long working days have become a possibility.

In all these cases, overtime is rarely counted and even more rarely paid as such. At the very best, it is settled by a fixed fee which is generally less than it should have been. This reveals a glaring injustice compared to practices on set, where working days are collectively fixed for most of the team and where everyone fills out a time sheet. Why is it so difficult—or even guilt-inducing—for people in our profession to ask for overtime to be counted? If a time sheet was handed out to employees by the production, it would be the first step towards making everyone realise what is going on.

What is true for overtime is even truer for other premiums: night work, Sundays, public holidays... Our surveys reveal that this is hardly ever applied.

THE QUESTION OF GROUPING HOURS

Another practice seems to be emerging for assistant editors: grouping working hours. Contrary to what occurs for overtime, every hour worked by assistants is counted. For example, if they come to work for 2 hours on Monday, 3 hours on Tuesday and 3 hours on Wednesday, these hours will be added together and they will be paid for one 8-hour day. Grouping hours in this way is completely illegal. The Cinema labour agreement stipulates this in section 34 (heading 2, [chapter 6](#)): *"The guaranteed minimum daily remuneration may not be less than 7 hours."*

Ditto if they work for 2 or 3 days a week, they will be asked to group their days into consecutive 39-hour working weeks, which are paid less than single days. This adds to the insecurity of an already fragile profession. Assistants therefore become relentlessly exploitable employees.

THE QUESTION OF TRANSPORT ALLOWANCES

With regard to public transport allowances, section L3261-2 of the Labour Code—which provides for the employer covering 50% of a season ticket (travel pass etc.)—is hardly ever respected. We should remind you that these allowances must be listed on wage slips and they are not taxable.

THE PROBLEM OF SUB-CONTRACTING

We would particularly like to draw the attention of producers and the CNC to another point concerning which the labour laws are regularly bypassed. This is the sub-contracting of certain tasks that should befall postproduction teams through packages that are proposed by service providers. It is not rare to see film soundtracks being delivered “turnkey”. However, section 15 of heading 2 in the Film production collective labour agreement clearly stipulates that our professions must be directly linked to the producers:

“In no event can positions—as provided for by one of the functions defined in section 3 of heading 1—be filled by calling upon a French or foreign temporary job agency or by calling on another, third-party firm.

All technicians mentioned in this agreement must be employed by the (or one of the) executive producers or by the executive film production acting on behalf of the executive producer companies.

In the case of an international co-production, jobs are shared out between the film’s co-producing firms in each of the countries taking part in the production.”

There is no reason for these violations of the labour laws to continue. Producers must act quickly and firmly to put a stop to them, either within their own productions or by putting pressure on their unions. The CNC and the Certification committee must be particularly vigilant, since support funds are subject to the observation of social duties.

PROPOSAL #13

Labour laws must be applied in the field of postproduction: contracts must be signed within legal deadlines, wage premiums must be counted and paid.

Public transport allowances that are provided for in the Labour Code must be systematically put forward in the information sheet completed by employees.

Single days must be paid as such; grouping working hours is illegal.

Sub-contracting activities—by means of packages—that should be assigned to the professions listed in the collective labour agreement is forbidden.

14

SALARIES ON A PAR WITH OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The mobilisation and strikes that took place in winter/spring 2018 were based on a certain number of wage demands. Even though negotiations have not moved since April 2018, this white paper shows our will to clear up the discussions and allow us to find a positive outcome.

SALARIES

With regard to salaries, this is not just a request for an increase, but for a pay scale to be drawn up, taking into account the true responsibilities and competencies of editors, sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers, as well as their assistants. All these professions were treated unfairly during the negotiation of the Film production collective labour agreement. Employment equality with shooting must be established.

Film editors have historically been considered as the “fifth wheel on the wagon” as stated in a petition signed by many film-makers in 2012. This injustice was mainly due to sex discrimination, because editing was — for many years — a profession mainly carried out by women. The requirement for an agreed minimum of €2100 per week, before deductions,

filed by a union is reasonable when it is compared to the salaries paid to department heads during shooting.

Assistant editors' salaries are even more deserving of adjustment since they were lowered in comparison to the salaries previously paid by many productions when the Film production collective labour agreement was signed. The demand for €1185.42 per week before deductions is on a par with the salary paid to an assistant sound operator.

The position of **sound editor** appeared in the last collective labour agreement. Prior to this, they were paid the same as a film editor. When this happened, the agreed minimum was lowered, which made it the lowest minimum wage for a postproduction department head. Moreover, according to the survey carried out among sound editors by AFSI, this agreed minimum wage was the maximum allocated 80% of the time...

The responsibilities that befall a sound editor are the same as those taken on by the sound operator during shooting. Salaries must be equivalent, i.e. €1810.91 per week before deductions.

Sound editors are also asking for the creation of a specific position of assistant sound editor.

In the old 1950 collective labour agreement, **Foley artists** were classified as artistes. In the current agreement, they are now technicians and their minimum wage was fixed way below customary rates. This difference is even more noticeable because appendix 3 introduced a major deduction. They want a wage of €2605.66 per week before deductions.

Re-recording mixers do not appear in the 1950 agreement. Their position was therefore created in the current agreement, but with an agreed minimum wage equal to that of the sound operator, i.e. much lower than what they were previously paid in practice. This caused numerous problems, especially with appendix III and its major deductions, but also with young people entering the profession who—by accepting the agreed salaries that are lower than those practised—are in competition with more experienced re-recording mixers. Re-recording mixers are asking for an agreed minimum wage of €2605.66 per week before deductions, which is closer—although lower—than salaries currently paid.

For **Foley assistants** and **assistant re-recording mixers**, the salary they want is €1705.60 per week before deductions.

Other points in the collective labour agreement could be improved to ensure equal treatment of shooting technicians and postproduction technicians.

Meal allowances exist during shooting, but nothing is planned for later phases. We must note that in the Audio-visual production collective labour agreement, a meal allowance is included even though budgets are often much lower. The cost of meals was calculated on the basis of an allowance of €17.29, the same as that for the shooting phase. On the

following basis: 18 weeks of editing with a full-time assistant editor, 10 weeks of sound editing, 7 weeks of dialogue editing, 6 days of Foley with an assistant, 3 days of post-synchronisation and 4 weeks mixing, the total cost of meal allowances would be €6 400... this is a very reasonable price for establishing the fair treatment of all technicians who contribute to making the same film.

In the event of a dispute, postproduction staff do not have the benefit of any mediation with their employer. Shooting technicians can elect a set representative. Here again, the treatment is unequal and this is reinforced by the fact that postproduction technicians are very isolated in their relations with the production. We could imagine that a postproduction representative could be appointed or elected, or even an outside third party (employee advisor or other) to reconcile the parties.

It is necessary to draft the application of wage increases for postproduction more clearly, just like those set out for shooting.

PROPOSAL #14

The agreed minimum wages for editors, sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers and their assistants must be increased, to take into account their qualifications and their responsibilities.

Meal allowances must be included in the Film production collective labour agreement, as they are in the Audio-visual agreement.

THE 14
PROPOSALS
FOR GOOD
PRACTICE
IN EDITING
AND SOUND
POST-
PRODUC-
TION

1 We propose reinstating the notion of teamwork at the heart of our practices. Collaboration among all those involved in postproduction, as well as with the director, is a necessity. This must begin before shooting even starts. The postproduction manager must organise regular meetings with the director, department heads and the assistant editor.

2 We propose establishing a distinct budget for postproduction. Real decision-making powers must also be given to heads of postproduction.

3 We are asking for assistants to be reinstated.

The assistant editor — a key position for organisation and communication — must be employed full-time for the whole duration of the editing. All measures liable to encourage the employment of assistants must be examined. Foley artists ask that the CNC implements a support fund bonus devoted to Foley assistants, as a matter of urgency.

4 We propose that the film editor should be present at every stage in the fabrication of a film, from editing to verification of the final print, in order to ensure proper monitoring and efficient collaboration with the various team members.

5

We propose that the evolution of the editing profession, its increased workload and the pressure it undergoes should be taken into account when evaluating the time needed for editing and for remunerating the finishing elements.

Equipment in editing rooms (monitor, sound system, soundproofing) must be adequate for the demands resulting from progress in technology.

6

We propose that the true value of sound editing should be acknowledged from the artistic and technical complexity standpoints. Sound editors must be given enough time to do their work and time with the director, the film editor and the re-recording mixer must be organised (in particular planned work sessions).

7

We propose that dialogue editing should be recognised as a key function, in view of the profession's growing responsibilities. The dialogue editor must be consulted in order to better evaluate the organisation and time necessary for the work required. He/she must be present during mixing.

8

We propose that the presence of the dialogue editor and the film editor during post-synchronisation recording should be recognised as being essential. The sound editor must be able to attend ambience recordings. Using the services of a boom operator is necessary.

It is essential that the post-synchronisation is validated, once edited, by the director, prior to mixing.

9

We propose that Foley artists should be less isolated. The presence of the director, the editor and the sound editor must be arranged, to listen to their work and/or accompany them in their research. The presence of a Pro Tools assistant must be systematic during Foley sessions.

The future and the know-how of this profession must be protected. We are asking that the CNC implement a subsidy bonus devoted to Foley artists' assistants, as a matter of urgency.

10

We propose that the composer of the original music should be chosen as early as possible so that everyone — film-maker, composer, editor, sound editor, re-recording mixer — has time to work together and exchange views.

Time should be allowed for editing in between the delivery of the music and the start of mixing. Any additional music must be negotiated as early as possible.

11

We propose that there should be no mixing outside the presence of the sound editor and we ask directors and producers to bring back film editors into the auditorium because they are essential at this stage.

Mixing conditions — mainly the time allocated, the choice of the auditorium and the presence of an assistant — must be systematically discussed ahead of time.

We suggest that the CNC — via the CST — drafts the minimum specifications for a film auditorium, which must be respected by all post houses who apply for the technical industries subsidy.

12

We propose that the delocalisation of sound postproduction should be reduced, under penalty of the disappearance of French Foley effects and job insecurity for all technicians in this field.

In accordance with the requests made by unions, we ask that sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers should all be classed as creative executives so that they are taken into account in the calculation of points for tax credits.

We ask producers to realise the seriousness of this situation and not to reduce the contribution made by these professions just to financial data in a film's budget.

13

We ask that labour laws should be applied without exception in postproduction.

14

We ask that the Film production collective labour agreement should be improved and the fair treatment of filming and postproduction technicians implemented. The agreed minimum wage for editors, sound editors, Foley artists and re-recording mixers and their assistants must be increased to take into account their qualifications and their responsibilities. Meal allowances must also be extended to the postproduction phase.

**These proposals are realistic;
they just have to be implemented!**

We ask all those involved in this field
(especially producers,
but also production managers,
postproduction managers,
the CNC, the FICAM, Audiens,
private and state schools,
employers' and employees' unions)
to implement these proposals
in order to keep these professions alive
and ensure the diversity
and the quality of films.

The associations' surveys are available as PDF files at the following addresses:

Survey of editing practices in cinema (fiction and documentaries) – November 2018:

www.monteursassocies.com/publications/enquete-sur-les-pratiques-du-montage-dans-le-secteur-du-cinema

State of sound editing in cinematographic production in 2017:

www.afsi.eu/articles/27330-etat-des-lieux-du-montage-son

Summary of the Foley artists' questionnaire sent to ADAB members – December 2018:

www.monteursassocies.com/content/medias/adab-synthese-questionnaire-bruiteurs.pdf

State of mixing venues – November 2018:

www.associationdesmixeurs.fr/2018/11/19/etat-des-lieux-du-mixage-rapport-complet

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A FEW WORDS OF VOCABULARY FOR FRENCH CINEMA ADMINISTRATION AND RULES

- Appendix I / Appendix III: In the Collective Labour Agreement for cinema production drafted in 2012, an “Appendix III” rule was negotiated in order to help finance low-budget French films: for films with a provisional budget of less than €2.5 million (and subject to other conditions), the production can – with the approval of a special commission that will examine their requests – be allowed to apply for a modified pay scale for the team with lower wages.

For example, film editors must be paid a minimum of €1763.60 for a 39-hour week on an “Appendix I” film (with a provisional budget of €2.5 million or more), but they may be paid a minimum of €1074.54 for a 39-hour week on an “Appendix III” film.

In return, should the film be successful and achieve high profits, technicians should later benefit from profit-sharing.

GLOSSARY

- ADAB: Association des artistes bruiteurs – Association of Foley artists
- ADPP: Association des directeurs de post-production – Association of postproduction managers
- ADM: Association des mixeurs – Re-recording mixers’ association
- AFSI: L’Association française du son à l’image – Association of film sound professionals
- LMA: Les Monteurs associés – Association of film editors and assistant editors
- CNC: Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée (National Film Board) – an agency of the French Ministry of Culture, responsible for the production and promotion of film and audio-visual arts in France. The CNC is a publicly owned establishment, with legal and financial autonomy.

The CNC, under the ægis of the Ministry of Culture, manages funds derived from taxation within the sector (including ticket sales) and distributes grants:

- for film production and distribution, creation and modernisation of cinemas, technical industries...
 - for the production of programmes intended for various television channels (terrestrial television, cable and satellite broadcast channels).
- Collective Labour Agreement: Most French professionals work under the rules defined in a Collective Labour Agreement, written jointly by unions and employer organisations. This document defines the minimum salaries for each profession, working times, meals, specific rules etc. The Collective Labour Agreement for film production was first written in 1950 and a new one was negotiated in 2012 and it officially came into effect in 2013. The Collective Labour Agreement for Audio-visual production was signed in 2006.
 - “Creative Executives Contributing to the Film” (“Cadres collaborateurs de création”) Some professions in the field of film-making have a status of “Creative Executives Contributing to the Film”. This can have an impact for productions that wish to benefit from a subsidy from the CNC or from tax credits. For example, a production that wishes to receive French tax credits or subsidies for a film is required to employ a minimum number of French technicians for these professions. Hence the importance of these professions when it comes to delocalising a film abroad: it is easier to delocalise professions that are not recognised as “Creative Executives Contributing to the Film”.
 - CST: Commission supérieure technique de l’image et du son (Higher Technical Commission for Image and Sound) – an association of French professionals in the film and audio-visual sector. Its purpose is to ensure the technical quality of the production and broadcasting of images and sounds for cinema.

Under the authority of the CNC, the CST ensures that technical standards and specifications are respected by all technical installations for film screenings, prior to obtaining a licence to operate.
 - FICAM: Fédération des industries du cinéma, de l’audiovisuel et du cinéma (Federation of Film, Audio-visual and Multimedia Industries): a French employer federation grouping more than a hundred firms whose activities embrace all professions and technical know-how in the field of pictures and sounds. It promotes the interests of technical and creative industries in this field.

ADAB

ADM
ASSOCIATION DES MONTEURS

AFS ASSOCIATION
FRANÇAISE
DU SON
E L'IMAGE

L/M+A LES
MONTEURS
ASSOCIES

FRANCE
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