



**OVER THE SHOULDER:
A FREELANCER'S GUIDE TO
TELLING STORIES
AND EDITING FILMS**

by Mark Solomon

Published by 7 Pines Publishing
Available on Amazon

Addressing up-and-coming storytellers, *Over the Shoulder* is a primer to becoming a successful editor, with tips on how to make it in Hollywood, from an outsider who became an insider.

The author is British editor Mark Solomon, whose credits include Tim Burton's Oscar nominated animated feature *Frankenweenie* and Aardman's *Chicken Run*. He swapped London for a chance at success in L.A. in the mid-1990s, cutting student films for free and getting in contact with editors whose work he liked before landing a breakthrough on *Space Jam* (1996).

He brings his more than 30 years' experience to bear on storytelling insights that can take years to figure out. "I'm your ally without an agenda who just wants you to succeed," Solomon confides.

Half the book delves into learning the craft of editing. Take an acting class, he advises, "at the very least learn the vocabulary of actors and directors."

He emphasizes the value of brevity ("pro tip: half as long is twice as good") and explains the Japanese concept of Jo-ha-kyū – which translates roughly as beginning, middle, end or in some contexts 'beginning, break, rapid' which means that all actions or efforts should begin slowly, speed up then end swiftly.

"Everything from a single character's expression to the entire story will benefit from this gathering sense of rhythm," Solomon says. "Hana, the Japanese word for blossom, represents the highest climactic moment of your story. If the rhythm has been well constructed the audience is breathing complete in sync with the performers as the pace gathers intensity and the noise leads to a rare moment of calm."

The second portion of the book has personal insight into the practical matters of freelance work and how to maintain a healthy work/life balance.

He recalls attending the 2013 ACE Eddie Awards – he and fellow editor Chris Lebenzon, ACE, were nominated for *Frankenweenie* – at The Beverly Hilton in the company of Steven Spielberg; Jay Cassidy, ACE, and Lebenzon.: "I could play the jaded cynic and scoff at the whole scene, but there was such a feeling of fellowship in that room, a respect for the contribution of editing to the moviemaking enterprise and a celebration of editors telling a visual story. Experiencing an evening like that was a reward by itself."

Solomon's pithy, witty and accessible book is timely enough to address recent developments in AI. As with the rest of his advice, Solomon approaches this with a can-do attitude.

"No matter how fast AI technology disrupts the process, secrets continue to be passed down from old masters to new students on how best to use tools to produce an emotional, memorable result. These tricks of the trade were shared with me and I am passing them on to you here." 📺 – ADRIAN PENNINGTON