

BRINGING PATIENCE TO POST

OVERSEEING TV POSTPRODUCTION REQUIRES DECISIVENESS, CREATIVITY AND A PASSION FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING. FOR STACIE BAKALAR, IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK.

INTRO BY KERI LEE

There are many reasons why relatively few humans take up figure skating in their late 30s or beyond. For starters, falling is inevitable, and ice is hard.

Still, post producer Stacie Bakalar found herself increasingly drawn to it, sneaking off into empty corners of a community ice rink during Saturday free skates with her family. She would attempt small spins—and imagine even bigger ones.

When her husband gifted her figure skating lessons for her 40th birthday, Bakalar went all in and quickly excelled. She's now mastered waltz jumps and is working on her salchows. She's also gained a powerful, unexpected benefit: Figure skating has given her greater patience—a vital quality for someone managing the unpredictable, time- and budget-constrained world of postproduction.

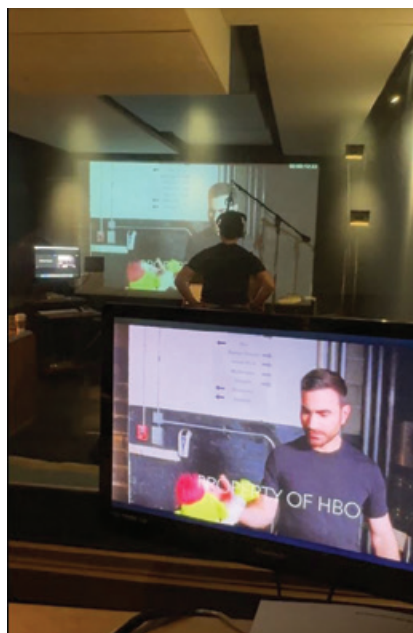
"As a post producer, I don't typically have patience because I want answers. I want things to work right away," says Bakalar, adding that skating has taught her the importance of giving things the time they need to develop. "Even with cuts or with figuring out music for a scene—sometimes we have to try this version first to get to that next better version."

While working on productions ranging from limited series like Starz's *Three Women* to sitcoms like Comedy Central's *Awkwafina Is Nora from Queens*, Bakalar has established



Bakalar and family ice skating at their local rink.

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Left: With Brett Goldstein during an ADR session for *The Second Best Night of Your Life*. Above: Bakalar (top row, second from left) Zooms with her *Three Women* post team.

herself as a skilled manager and a compassionate leader in the often-vexing puzzle that is post.

Here she describes a “typical day” in a role that rarely has one.

Morning

I live in the suburbs of New Jersey with my husband and my 10-year-old son. I wake up around 7:30 and get my son up and ready for school—or now, since it’s summer, for camp—and then out the door and on the bus. I have a 16-year-old dog, Marty, and I take him for a walk. The walks are not as long as they used to be.

Then I’ll exercise. I have the Peloton, so I’ll do the bike or Pilates. Or during the week, there’s open ice time and barely anyone on it. So sometimes I’ll go there, put my earbuds in, and just skate. It’s such an amazing workout.

From there, I start work. Depending on the life cycle of the show, I could be reading a script or taking part in a production meeting. I might be hiring the edit staff, composers and visual effects artists. If it’s a series, I might

be at the start of production for one episode and in cuts on another.

Post scheduling is a huge puzzle, and it always changes. Sometimes you think you’re on track to lock, and then this episode can’t lock, and another episode that was behind it all of a sudden locks first. Or maybe you lose an editor, or someone’s not working out. So it’s always about revising the schedule. It’s this constant living document.

Afternoon

Once we’ve gotten our dailies out or wrapped shooting, we’re in the throes of internal cuts, addressing notes and sending cuts to the studio. I’m managing everything to make sure the editors get all their footage. My editing team could be as small as one person, or for a scripted drama series, I might be managing teams of editors in LA and New York.

My favorite part is when we lock picture, and we get into the color and mix. Some days I’ll go into the city and go to the mix facility where they’re doing the audio mixing, and you have a bunch

of sound editors and dialogue editors.

I love to sit in a dark room with the mixer on a stage, just listening. You hear how it comes to life—how small changes can make a joke land so much better.

Or I might be doing the color, sitting with the director of photography and the colorist, and we’re fixing the color of an actor’s eyes or bringing out the reds in a scene. Other times, I’ll go into the city to record ADR and the actor comes in, and if the showrunner or director is not available, I’ll direct. That’s awesome.

Then I take the train home. It’s direct, and I work that whole hour on my laptop.

Evening

From 6 to 7 p.m., my editors are typically prepping and making the outputs. Because things pop up, I keep my phone nearby to answer questions. I’ll get my son to bed around 9, then go back on the computer.

I typically have a cut waiting, so I might screen something or just tie up



loose ends with emails, telling people if we're on track, we're not on track, we're over budget, under budget. I'll sum up the day's work so everyone knows what's going on.

I'm the communicator. I have to be a beacon of light to the studio, to the execs, to my department, and ask, What are we expecting? What needs to happen? What's going to happen? When things bump up or whatever, I have to be totally transparent and communicative, because there will be issues. There always are.

Everyone has different work styles. I'm a fixer. I'm not gonna complain when there's a problem. I'm more like, "OK, this happened. Let's take care of it. Let's move forward and resolve it and keep going." Some people are reactionary. I will just take it in, see what's happening and then come up with a plan.

Once I turn the email off, my husband and I will watch a few shows together. We're night owls, so we go to bed around midnight. And then, up again at 7:30.

I love how every day is different. I love getting to be a part of the creative process. I find it really rewarding to help the production land the plane. ■



Clockwise from top left: Working with DP Catherine Lutes on visual effects for *Three Women*. Wrap day for *Awkafina Is Nora from Queens*. Bakalar (right) with *Three Women* showrunner/EP Laura Eason.