

Pipe(r) Dreams Become a Reality

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Depending on the project, Piper Kroeze either works from her home office or at a studio. Either way, she has a nice workspace setup.

PIPE(R) DREAMS BECOME A REALITY

Ever since she was in high school, Piper (Kucera, '10) Kroeze knew she wanted to be an editor and that, one day, she would move to Hollywood.

"I wanted to edit, and I wanted to do movies, and then it happened," she says.

Over the past 12 years, she has worked as an editor for television shows like *Quantum Leap*, *You*, and *God Friended Me*. She just cut her first feature film, *Unit 234*, a thriller directed by Andy Tennant that follows a remote storage employee who "must fight to survive the night against a ruthless gang, dead set on retrieving their precious cargo at any cost."

"It's tough to pinpoint exactly when it happened," she says. But like any good editor, she can look back and identify events in her story arc that got her to where she is today.

As a kid, she enjoyed making movies with a big VHS camera; she'd shoot footage of her friends at school in chronological order and then turn the footage into a short film. Eventually she moved on to Windows Movie Maker, a computer software that allowed her to

take recordings and try out nonlinear editing—that is, making edits to a video without it being in chronological order.

"I started editing and putting music to it. And I realized, 'Oh, if you move this clip around, you can make it funny. If you put music here, you can make it serious.' You can make viewers feel something, just by how you put it together. That was a lightbulb moment for me."

When it came time to look for a place to go to college, "Dordt" kept showing up in

her Internet searches. Then at a college fair in central Iowa, she spotted a Dordt booth. Mark Volkers, who had recently started Dordt's digital media production program, was at the booth.

"He told me about the program, and it sounded really cool because it seemed very hands-on and editing-centric, which is what I wanted in a program," Kroeze recalls. "I didn't want to go to a big film school because, at film schools, you mostly learn film theory but might not get as many opportunities to make movies. Volkers got me really excited about going to Dordt, and he's probably the reason that I ended up going there."

As a student, Kroeze appreciated that Dordt was small enough that where "you knew of almost everybody, but it was big enough where I didn't feel like everyone knew everything about everybody. There's a comfort in being able to see faces and recognize people all the time—that brings with it a sense of community."

She also felt that she had many opportunities at Dordt.

"Maybe a bigger university has a wider variety of opportunities, but everyone doesn't have access because there are so many students vying for the same opportunities. At Dordt, I could start a Film Club and do film screenings. I could participate in Comedy League. I could help lead worship on campus. I could be involved in choir. At Dordt, there were a lot of opportunities because there were fewer people, so there was more room to pursue what you wanted."



She was also involved in Residence Life and served as a Resident Assistant while at Dordt.

Kroeze had opportunities in the classroom, too. During her junior year, she took an advanced editing class. As part of an assignment, she had to interview an editor who worked in the industry.

"We had to pick a name out of a hat, and I happened to get Alan Heim, a well-known film editor in L.A. I connected with him."

Kroeze also took advantage of the opportunity to study abroad in Los Angeles as part of the L.A. Film Studies Center. That semester-long experience made it easier for her and her husband Jacob ('10) to make the cross-country move to live in L.A. after graduation. But it didn't make landing an editing job any easier.

She found that getting into the Hollywood industry was hard. "It was during the recession, and I couldn't find a job at all. I didn't know anyone in the industry. I was answering editing ads on Craigslist just to make ends meet," she says.

She reconnected with Heim, who told her about an internship program with the American Cinema Editors (ACE).

"I didn't get the internship. I didn't even get an interview for the internship," she says. "One night I went to a panel discussion that ACE was having. I ended up speaking with some of the event organizers afterward, and they must have seen something in me, because they said, 'We want to give you an internship.'"

Getting connected with the ACE internship program was

important. "Through that, I got my first job, and then my next job. I literally have not stopped working since."

Her next big break was being able to join the union, the Motion Picture Editors Guild.

"To work on the big shows and movies, you have to be in the union," she explains, "and you have to earn a certain number of hours and meet

“You never know if a show is going to be popular or not. As an editor, I could work on something that I think is the best show or movie in the world, but if no one watches it, then that's it.”

— Piper Kroeze



Piper was part of the Comedy League while she was a student at Dordt.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS

Kroeze says that "there is absolutely no way" she would have a career without her mentors.

"I've had really great mentors all throughout my career," says Kroeze. "A good mentor is somebody who guides you gently but also pushes you to do something you might not feel you're ready for."

She credits her mentors with helping her secure work, gain notoriety in her field, and continue to pursue her dreams.

other requirements to be able to join the union."

As time progressed, Kroeze gradually moved from entry-level work to calling more of the shots. She made the jump from assistant editing to editing a few years ago, which allowed her to get an agent and cut a feature for a well-known director.

So what does a film editor's work look like? It depends on what's being shot. But for a TV show like Quantum Leap, which Kroeze is working on this fall, the production process is fast.

DORDT ARCHIVES



Kroeze worked on the Fourth World Documentary, a film production led by Mark Volkers that "sought to change perspective on slum life and the poor of the developing world."

"They shoot one day and process all the footage, and the editors get it the very next day. It's important to keep up with the camera. So ideally, I cut all the scenes that they shot the day before and have them done by end of day," explains

Kroeze. "It's a process known as 'dailies.'"

For Quantum Leap, there are three lead editors (who each have an assistant editor), and each editor gets every third episode. Kroeze worked on episodes three, six, nine, 12, 15, and 18. She's not allowed to get rid of lines, but she does have freedom to tell the story well with the footage she's been given.

"Once I've put the episode together, the director takes a look, and we get rounds of notes that help us shape the storytelling to their intent. The director's cut goes to the showrunner or the producers, and they get to work with us for a week or two. Then it's sent to the studio, who get a couple days to send us more editing notes, before the cut is then sent to the network."

Production and review are quick, but review can take a while. Kroeze doesn't mind; she loves what she does and that she gets to work on interesting shows like Quantum Leap.

"It's a really fun show. The concept of leaping to different points in time lends itself to different kinds of genres. In one episode, we're in the Wild West and it's almost like a western, and in another,

DORDT ARCHIVES



"Telling stories about messy things is key because it's what people can relate to, and hopefully they can discover something about themselves and the world in the process."

there's tension between brothers and it's like a good drama. There are different feels for each episode, which is fun."

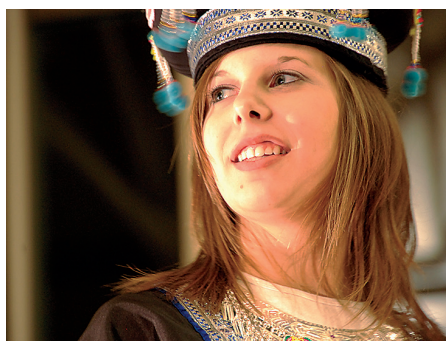
Working in television has its ups and downs, especially since no one truly knows what shows will go the distance.

"You never know if a show is going to be popular or not. As an editor, I could work on something that I think is the best show or movie in the world, but if no one watches it, then that's it. I think that's happening more now. With so many streaming services and so much great content, people aren't able to watch everything, for better or worse."

Take the show *You*, which follows a bookstore manager-turned-serial killer who becomes obsessed with love interests. While working on season one, Kroeze recognized right away that the show was good.

"It came out in September 2018 on Lifetime, and I remember telling my friends to go watch it, but nobody watched it," she says. "Then in December it dropped on Netflix, and suddenly everyone was watching it. It kind of felt like whiplash. It also felt validating because I'd told my friends that it was

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"I wanted to work in Hollywood because I had the idyllic thought that I could change the world and have an impact," she says.

a good show. But that's the thing—you never know what people are going to think. We didn't know *You* would be big until it got quite big."

You is a dark show. Joe Goldberg, who is played by Penn Badgley, "tries to do good and right things, but he does them for all the wrong reasons," she says. Kroeze doesn't see anything redeeming in Goldberg's actions, but "there's something to be said about showing things that are messy and imperfect."

Kroeze's favorite episode is season three, episode eight, which she worked on.

"I love that episode because it's bonkers. I am proud of it, and that episode is a fan favorite of that season as well. We were given a really good script, had great actors, and a great camera crew. That makes the editing job a lot easier."

Faith plays a big role in how Kroeze approaches her work, especially when working with others.

"My job is constantly working with people—it's basically like a giant group project all the time," she quips. "I'm constantly interacting with different departments and people, and I try to treat people the way I want to be treated. When people find out I'm a Christian, they're often surprised because their interactions or ideas of what being a Christian is, is not what they've experienced with me."

When working on the two-season television show *God Friended Me*, Kroeze and her coworkers spent more time talking about faith and religious beliefs. A coworker gave Kroeze a copy of the New Testament, which she takes with her to each office she has on each new job.

"So if someone sees that it leads to a

PIPER'S ADVICE FOR WORKING IN HOLLYWOOD

What's Kroeze's biggest piece of advice for those who want to work as an editor in Hollywood?

"Apply for the ACE internship, full stop," she says.

It's also important to make connections, even from afar.

"Ask somebody to go to coffee, or send an email to an editor you admire. Whatever you do, do your research and ask smart questions."

You are not going to get a job in Hollywood if you don't live in Hollywood, adds Kroeze.

"If you move to L.A. you might not get work for a very long time," she says. "So you should have enough money to get by for six months to a year without a job."

Follow these steps, and it's likely you'll eventually get your big break, says Kroeze.

"It'll happen if you do all those things really well, because there's so much work right now and not enough editors to go around," she says. "If you connect with people, live in Hollywood, and show that you're serious about it, then it'll probably happen."

conversation," she says.

Film editing work is all about telling a story, whether that's the story of someone time-traveling or someone committing unspeakable crimes.

"Stories about people are messy, but I think that's something people need to see and relate to."

Kroeze has achieved all the career goals she set out to accomplish as a young person. She's worked on notable television shows, and she's cut her first narrative feature film. Now, she's open to what's next. In the meantime, she's doing what she's always wanted to do: telling great stories through video editing in Hollywood.

SARAH MOSS ('10)



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Kroeze walked the red carpet with friends at the ACE Eddie Awards.