Interview Date: 22/6/2018

Interview Location: Telegael, Spidal, Co.Galway.

Interviewer: …just again to elaborate what was in the participant information sheets, you know this is totally voluntary and you can pull out at any stage and if you feel afterwards there were certain things you didn’t want or whatever you can obviously, I mean I can destroy it, but just wanted to say that the power is in your hands and again once it has been transcribed, I’ll send you the transcription and at least you can read back from it, if you ever need to or whatever but again the idea of this is as per the participant information sheet this is kind of part one so it’s the initial getting the ideas from you and getting the information from you and I might come back to you and say next time you’re out delivering your course you might try this simple little thing that won’t take up too much of your time when you’re teaching, this just might help you teach…

Participant: oh right

Interviewer: …it might add something to it and once you have done that, I might get you. I’m going to come back again, and we might talk again or maybe fill out just a questionnaire and that’s it ok?

(TIMECODE): 00:01:17:04

Interviewer: So, I’m going to start off I just want to start off saying can you explain your role here first in…?

Participant: Sure, you want me to say my name as well? Just I think you know who I am. I’m primarily a colourist here at Telegael, I’m also an online editor. I was originally hired primarily just to be an online editor because most of the work here were cartoons and there isn’t much colour correction and grading on that but when they saw how I worked with live-action because I have many years of experience colour grading in both Autodesk Smoke as well as in Avid Symphony they started putting me primarily on live-action shows and about six years ago I got them interested in using DaVinci Resolve because there’s a limit to how far you could go with Avid Symphony. There’s a lot you can do with it but the problem is that a lot of it becomes impractical and so it really required a dedicated piece of software that would do that and to do it for the least amount of money and so that’s how DaVinci Resolve got in the mix and so now again most of my time as well as when I worked in Dublin I was working on commercials a lot of commercials and a lot of TV shows mostly all for the Irish market. Mostly all for RTE or TV3. Most of my time was spent colour grading and the same is true now here to where that’s the majority of my time.

Interviewer: And obviously as well you're teaching for Black Magic DaVinvi Resolve in the sense that you deliver a training course, can you tell me a little about that?

(TIMECODE): 00:03:07:00

Participant: Sure, well this actually happened almost by accident. They had a colourist group that I am apart of that’s based in the States called the [Tao of Colour.](https://taoofcolor.com/) I had mentioned that black magic design was starting a certified trainer program and I had read their book that they had cuz I wanted to see if there were more titbits that I didn’t know about the latest version of Da Vinci Resolve which was 14 and this was really in January/February that I learned about this so they had a website, someone to contact and a very colourful lady in Los Angeles who gets very very excited about things and they really only had one other person in Ireland who was a certified trainer and they wanted someone who had a lot of experience with their product, who had enthusiasm for their product and perhaps and had some experience teaching. And I have really limited experience with that having just done a couple of one-day talks at Limerick Institute of Technology. So the only other times I’ve taught was years ago teaching photography so it wasn’t really something I did, I mostly just push, push colour buttons around or edit and but that was enough, she said all right, you're invited and the program is free but I have to, you know, have to travel to in this case London. I will be actually going to Burbank for some other training in September that they are doing on DaVinci 15 in Fusion but it’s at my expense in my holiday time, but I thought it was an interesting program and it’s very new it’s not even a year old with Blackmagic Design. Their biggest problem is if they keep upgrading the software so fast and make so many changes and put so much in it that the moment is very hard for their teaching materials to keep up with the evolution of the software. The software has changed a lot. When I first worked with it it was purely a colour grading program. That was all it did and that was all I wanted it to be. I was going in and out of Avid doing my online work in Avid and colour grading and then out going back into Avid. And when they started putting editing functions in it, I thought, what the hell do I need editing functions it’s like a colour grading program. Why do I need this, and so I really thought they didn’t, I didn’t see any future in it. But then I was working on a movie and had a director here who I’m grading and he suddenly says to me ‘you know I’d really like to make some changes to this montage can we do that’ and I had to be honest with it and said ‘well actually yes we can’ and that was when it first really hit me that oh my god you can edit in a colour grading program. And then,.. that was five years ago. So, the progression that has come with this product is just extraordinary and so therefore now it went to where I only use it for colour grading to now 95 percent of my work is done entirely in this one program.

(TIMECODE): 00:06:37:24

Interviewer: You mentioned there about going to the states under your own time and your own expense, I mean, what drives a person to do that?

Participant: Ah well, (laughs), it’s a good question. It ah, I just thought this was an interesting program, to be certain, to be honest part of it also is it gives me an excuse to visit some of my colleagues back in Los Angeles and I’ve run out of reasons to go there as I’ve moved to Ireland almost 15 years ago. Quitting a contract job at Warner Brothers and cutting promos for their syndicated television shows and I had an interest of a producer friend of mine almost 25 years ago planted the idea of moving to Ireland in my head and anyway it’s 15 years ago that I gave up my job in the states, moved here to work with a small company in Dublin and got rid of sold or gave away virtually everything I had and came here with three suitcases and a box of several hundred DVDs as you do. I wasn’t going to give up my film collection and so I’ve run out of reasons to… I’ve only been back to LA about four times since I’ve been living in Ireland. So, it’s a great reason to do that and also, I’ll be at the headquarters for Blackmagic Design, so I’ll be meeting and talking to those people since I’ve annoyed them so much over the years with issues that it’ll be interesting to finally meet some of the people in the LA office.

(TIMECODE): 00:08:18:14

Interviewer: When you're teaching the Blackmagic DaVinci Resolve software to educators and so forth, what type of experiences or industry knowledge do you bring to that role? I mean do you find yourself using examples of I suppose your career?

Participant: Oh absolutely, now an awful lot of the program that I have delivered to LIT and to DKIT is quasi scripted in that they have got examples and issues that relate to the footage that they have got but I augment that with my own real experience and also try to tell them what actually doesn’t work. What is true, what I sometimes a lie, and also try to demonstrate lot of things that aren’t part of the curriculum that I think drive home what is really necessary and sometimes enhance the faculty’s understanding of the design of the software. So, I augment a lot, sometimes in very silly fashion but most of it comes from my own experience, not just with the product but just my own career experience. I’ve been working in post I guess for 35 years. I originally wanted to be a cinematographer. The USC film school was directing me more to be a director writer and then I wind up in post-production so career planning is not one of my strong points, but I actually love post it’s great fun and probably because I at one time was a photographer, a commercial photographer while in school and then out of school as a way to earn money. This is film because I’m quite old, we’re talking about film not digital in this case, that actually helps me a lot as colourist and I also find that that background helps me to be able to talk to cinematographers which helps me a lot with what I do here as a colourist. That’s probably one of the greatest advantages I have a s a colourist is having some understanding of photography when then would up moving on to digital photography. So that background I try to bring in and it helps me try to explain things.

(TIMECODE): 00:10:42:20

Interviewer: Right, we are going to get into a topic now, I want to hear about your interpretation of craft and craftsmanship, (okay) so if you could describe to me what your interpretation of craft and craftsmanship would be within say the post-production?

Participant: Okay, well I’m not sure I would be fully clear on the difference between craft and craftsmanship because craftsmanship is just to me the… performing the craft. I see it as a, craft as a skill that gets developed over time. It’s not just a question of knowledge it’s also a question of experience. And also, exchange is very important in talking to other craftspeople about their work getting talking with the DP about his craft of photography, with the editor about cutting because that can have a huge influence in terms of colour and the look of the image. So, it’s and I see film making is a craft. Sometimes it becomes an art but most of the time it’s craft. Usually it’s an art as it potentially is the end result that’s made up of many many different crafts. Why I think editing is particularly interesting is because editing is the only element of film and television which is unique to itself because otherwise the medium of film is using actors it’s using art directors and set designers, costumers, makeup people, photographers and cinematographers, directors, writers, but the only thing that is actually unique to film that separates it from theatre or operas the fact that you edit and you direct the audience’s attention to different things within the scene. And it’s a very very unusual craft and art unto itself but to me the difference between craft and art is; art is when is actually expressing an emotion and feeling directly to the audience; craft is simply the skill such as Van Gough would practice drawing hands for instance and he was an excellent fine artist as was Picasso but that was them learning their craft before they would then went on to do something that would that would emotionally connect with the audience in a unique way.

(TIMECODE): 00:13:13:05

Interviewer: So, does that remind you, do you consider yourself a craftsperson?

Participant: Ah I try to (laughs), on a good day and with reasonable footage. An awful lot of what I do is image repair and an awful lot of what I do is craft and not as creative because an awful lot of the work the majority of the time is often just shot matching or fixing things with the shot in the same way that an awful lot of editing is also ends up becoming repair of performances or pieces before it gets to a point where it is purely art and expression.

(TIMECODE): 00:13:54:20

Interviewer: Do you at any stage when you are giving your training courses in DaVinci, do you refer to it as a craft or craftsmanship?

Participant: I don’t. I don’t, because for one thing I’m new to presenting the class and it’s a little bit tricky because there is an awful lot of material that is in that class and also its just teaching software. So, it’s not about, … I try to infuse some of my passion for the work when I teach but the majority of it is simply teaching the software not the craft of colour grading or the craft of editing. It is merely teaching people where things are and giving them an overview of where it works. So, I think in my case I wouldn’t necessarily put it at craftsmanship in there especially with some of the bad jokes I tell so… am I’m not sure am I answering your question I’m not reviewing…give me some feedback if I’m not telling you what you want?

Interviewer: It’s all good, it’s all good because it’s your interpretation, it’s not my interpretation of you and it’s good, it’s great to hear this. And so, when you are giving those courses and I know as you mentioned you only mentioned a few. (only done twice) how did you find them; how did you find delivering that?

(TIMECODE): 00:15:27:07

Participant: For me it’s much easier if I can go completely off their script. When I feel more confident is when I’m actually explaining something that often isn’t part of the course explaining concepts in the same way that I’m probably more comfortable when I’ve been giving those colour and film talks or whatever. In fact, the first time I went to LIT, the parameters I was given for giving a colourist talk was to tell the students what I did and what my job was. And I did that, but I really didn’t think it landed. I didn’t think it worked with the audience because I because what I do did not connect with the student’s experience. What I did had no relationship to what they were doing. I think in terms of colour grading explaining raw versus log, explaining online editing versus offline and conforming none of which were things that the students would be doing, and I could kick myself from that first talk I did at LIT for… I should have thought back that no don’t or just tell them what I do, talk about what might be relevant to them and their experience and how what I might do might help them. And I tried to do that the second time I went there and hopefully, hopefully that landed a bit better. But even when I do the classes I go off-script for teaching, a number of aspects of it in the material and then I feel a lot more confident. It’s trying to follow what they want me to cover for a little evolution they’ve worked out to explain a point which sometimes I think works and sometimes just don’t. Sometimes it’s just simply familiarity with it but it’s much easier for me if I’m just off script and just explaining it the way I think it can be done.

(TIMECODE): 00:17:25:03

Interviewer: Do you think the students who take part in that then that they like that more when you go off script rather than on script?

Participant: Well I would tend to think they would for the simple reason that I probably come across as more confident or more animated and less ‘oh I cover this and this and this’ and it’s probably a lot drier simply because I’m trying to fit, I’m trying to do what somebody else has designed. And sometimes I, it’s even whether or not I agree with it a lot of its simply familiarity. In fact, to a certain extent if I just went in and taught it without their material that probably would be better, but I think the audience will receive, receives it better when I’m… simply because I’m going to probably come across better as more confident in presenting the material.

(TIMECODE): 00:18:23:04

Interviewer: In the two different locations of LIT and Dundalk IT, the spaces and tools that you had to work with obviously a lot different than the environment we are in here at the moment, were you limited by them?

Participant: Well I would… I don’t think so. The, I think, because for presenting the class all was needed was simply for me to have a computer running the software and there’s a projector that they can see what I’m doing that was really all that was needed, and everyone have a workstation. You could never teach a class like that with that much material in my actual grading suite because this is the kind of thing to where for them to remember it, they really have to so it. There are times where I would do a so called ‘chalk and talk’ and just demonstrate but I think because I’m not as experienced as a teacher I’m probably not often enough demonstrating and then having the students do it because I know when I’m in classes learning things it’s very difficult to follow along and follow what the instructor is doing, what the instructor is doing at the same time and often the best ways for the instructor to demonstrate it and then take the students through it. And my last of experience I think, I’m not often enough clear on when I should be doing that because obviously that also takes more time.

(TIMECODE): 00:19:55:12

Interviewer: You are actually answering a lot of questions as we’re going through it, okay so you’ve done two lots of training at the moment, how do you see it yourself and the course evolving as you become more confident?

Participant: Well I have no intention of being or doing this a lot. It was just sort of for my… I thought it’d be interesting and because I do have an enthusiasm for the product and I see a need for it because I think that LIT as well as DKIT and probably other schools realise there’s a definite that they to prepare their students to potentially get work. It’s actually, they’re going to have to learn this software. It’s going to be a certain point to where they definitely need to learn Avid which is still by far for entertainment and for more, I would say… not trying to put pictures, let’s just say more high-end broadcast documentary work and certainly scripted work, avid is still a very serious choice but they’ve been losing market share over the years. They were losing it to Final Cut Pro. Premiere Pro is becoming more of a force, but I think that resolve is going to become something that the students to be to prepare them to try to get work they will need to learn. And not necessarily just for colour grading but for really for editing which is what Blackmagic is helping to get in, get the students into but a number of facilities, the commercial facilities that we work with, and actually do co-productions with have switched to resolve. In fact, I just finished a stop-motion feature online and colour grading it, to where one of our partners is a company in Belgium called Grid who specialise in visual effects and animation and they all, I also went to them to do the DCP. Telegael has had a relationship with them for a few years and last time I was down there which was about, or the first time I was down there was about three years ago and they were a nuke based house for their visual effects and when they were doing our movie over the past year and a half, they had switched entirely to Fusion which is owned by Blackmagic Design and is now part of the DaVinci Suite. So, they had changed and another company also in Belgium who does cinema grading had dropped their Dakota system and has switched to resolve. So, it’s really happening in the professional marketplace and therefore it’s going to become more and more important for the students to actually get a handle on this because it’s becoming quite a force. Mostly because of cost and also because they are because inexpensive but also, they’re developing faster than probably any other product I’ve used in my 35 years of post-production experience.

(TIMECODE): 00:23:15:20

Interviewer: When you are delivering the courses, and again with a lot of other lecturers they put on a front, you know, they present themselves a certain way to their students and then they present themselves to their professional clients separately and so forth. When you’re delivering your course, so you see the students as clients or do you see them as students or trainees or, you know, what I think I’m asking is your professional front, as it were, is this the true version of the participant we would see in the industry?

Participant: Well is maybe, is your question is there, would I interact differently with a client than I so with the students, sort of, is there a different role that I’m playing? To a certain extent yes. I would say when there is a client I’m going to be, I don’t treat the students like they’re clients. I actually see them as an audience. And my biggest concern when I’m presenting the class is that I’m not entertaining enough. And I need more jokes, I need more entertainment, that’s why it’s a lot easier when I’m off script and just presenting. Whereas when it’s a client they’re either paying or they’re a partner with the company I work for so therefore I have to be a lot more careful with what I say. I have to be, I’m fairly similar I think you probably would find that I can be equally silly with the clients as I am with the students, but I would say probably closer to the real me when I’m doing for the students and I need the performance, I see it as a performance. One of my old jobs I used to be a magician and work my way though as a teenager through film school doing magic and photography, so I do see things as a performance and that’s why I’ve my concerns when I presented classes if it’s too dry because I’m not presenting it the way I would want to. I’m presenting it the way it’s been written and designed.

(TIMECODE): 00:25:35:13

Interviewer: With that in mind then do your students, do they accept your performance? Do they buy into it, the presentation of self that you give them?

Participant: Ah you’d have to ask them that question (laughs)

Interviewer: In your own opinion, do you think it works?

Participant: I think a lot of them do, I think they understand, I think they see when I’m literally looking at notes and trying to follow the order of a script and I think they know when I’m going completely off script and presenting something for them. In fact something I did for LIT and DKIT and the faculty there all have their own careers in production as well as they do at LIT but I was very surprised how many of them literally had their own production companies and have their own websites with reels and they’re all doing lots of stuff as well as teaching and I hit them with the with something that was not in script which was coming up with their own crazy look and then telling them to all come up with something crazy doing all kinds of wild controls and then telling them I’m the stupid director and ask them back it off 40% and the look of abject horror on their faces when I asked that, showed that it was definitely working and then I showed them that there was a very easy way to do it. So very often when it’s off script it becomes more effective.

(TIMECODE): 00:27:00:00

Interviewer: Here’s an interesting one, are there any types of informal or hidden knowledge that you don’t see in books, so for example on Da Vinci’s or even Avid, I there any type of curriculum almost like hints and tips are the secrets of editing that you pass on anyway even though they mightn’t be part of the course?

Participant: Oh all the time, that’s and I usually, in fact what I’ve been doing in the resolve course I tell the audience that this is not in the book, this is not on the test, this is not part of the class because there are often I think there’s some at least in terms of resolve there’s some gaping things missing. In terms of other knowledge that a lot of that comes just through experience on the job and that’s where those kinds of tips that would be very very hard to give because they would be personal to a particular colourist or editor for that matter.

(TIMECODE): 00:28:03:08

Interviewer: I’m just going to finish up with this last couple of craftsmanship questions again (Okay) in your own opinion do you think a lecturer in third level not so much yourself or myself, do you think a lecturer in third level who is teaching post-production would benefit from a history of working in it rather than just teaching from text books and such.

Participant: Oh absolutely, absolutely because there is a lot that someone with a career in it that is going to bring to it because otherwise, they are just reciting what someone else has written. The and don’t, they would not have the same level of understanding of the material. But its very common I think in film schools that there will be, at least I’ve been to three of them and I think it’s probably prevalent everywhere to where there are some people that have been students in the school and then they never left and that they wind up becoming faculty and they stay in the warm room of the school as opposed to being on the outside. And I think that can be a limitation. They know the material in the way it’s been taught at the school but they’re not going to be bringing something else to it and I tend to think that I don’t know I would tend to think I usually can I usually can tell, when I’ve been a film student, since I was a film student about 150 years ago, but I can usually tell the people who have never left but also that when you bring in pros from the outside that doesn’t mean that they can teach. You’re very lucky when you get someone who you know can who’s had a career and can also is gifted at teaching and that’s a, that’s a special gift.

 Oh, can I just at one thing to that, (of course), at the same time also an effective teacher itself is a gift. So even if they are presenting material that they’ve just read and haven’t actually, you know, had a career in the craft, there are people that are simply just gifted at teaching, in which case then they are presenting their craft. Their craft might not have been editing or cinematography or whatever on the outside but their gift in craft may be the way that they can contact with the students and inspire them. And that, the number of good teachers that I’ve had in any of the schools I’ve been to would be, you know, a very small percentage. I would say if you get 30% of instructors that really inspire you as a student, you’ve had a major win.

(TIMECODE): 00:30:45:15

Interviewer: Craftmanship and craft, and your craft as a colourist and online editor, is this part of your identity?

Participant: Part of my identity… well I guess it depends on in which way you mean identity. I can take you two different ways, one would be that how much is my personality from a psychological point of view affected by what I do and what I bring or not to the profession. Or do you mean or are you asking how am I defining myself by the profession, by the title or whatever. I’m not sure, there are two different ways I can see that and I’m not sure which way you want the question.

Interviewer: I’ll rephrase it so, if we have established that it is a craft (yes) do you feel it forms part of your identity as you process your craft or as you deliver your craft even if you're delivering to your students on those courses. Does your identity come across?

Participant: I think, I think it would be more personality and passion would come through. It would be part of the identity but that would be true regardless. It wouldn’t be specific to colour grading. It would be whatever I was feeling passionate about. I would feel the same way about cinematography. I would feel the same way about magic, which I never lost, a love passion of… is that answering your question?

(TIMECODE): 00:32:31:16

Interviewer: I’m going to probably finish up there but, yea you’ve answered that one… sorry I’m just going through the questions there.

Participant: Oh I could say something about identity and that before I even knew what I was going to do, well I knew I wanted to work in film I was making films in super 8 with my friends in secondary school and such I knew at some point I wanted to be in the business, I didn’t know how I would get in or what would happen which I think is probably true with most people who don’t have relatives…

Interviewer: What age were you when you realised, do you know when you said, ‘that’s what I wanted to be when I grow up?’ cos when was that point when that film bug got you?

Participant: Oh I would’ve been ten, I would have been ten years old and I was also interested when my father was a documentary filmmaker as part of his work so I had the opportunity to go you know on set and see him shoot or and see him work for the crew, he was a regular director as part of his work and spent a lot of summers when I was in secondary school at a film production company in Texas so I knew what I wanted to do ultimately very early on that it was going to be behind the camera even though I was supporting my film making habit by performing magic but no it would be early on but I guess what I was getting at was that regardless what I was going to do I had this point of view that I never wanted to be one of those people who just walks off a job or gives their word and doesn’t follow through and to make a long story short I was working three different jobs and another one for free once I got out of film school in Los Angeles and one of the jobs just shooting casting sessions and. Not terribly creative and I was also interviewing, you know, at other places and I didn’t, it was just part-time minimum-wage and I had agreed to do a shoot and then got an interview and got a call to where someone said okay, we’d like you to be an assistant editor on this feature film. But you have to go up, you have to show up tomorrow and so I called the commercial production and said can you please get somebody else. They said no there’s no one else available. I said you’ve got to have somebody else since I really, this is a great opportunity and really like to do this and they said no, said we’ll call around and call you back five minutes later, nope, we’ve gotta have you and I was with my long-time girlfriend, we were together for twenty years and I didn’t take the assistant editing job which would by the way would have been for nine months of work. And could have really perhaps launched my career a lot more than shooting casting sessions on VHS tape at a production studio. And oh we had such an argument about that. She was absolutely livid. She said if they think they’ve offered you nothing. They have no loyalty to you at all. Why would you do this? But I just couldn’t do it. And she thought it was the stupidest thing I’ve ever done and I proved her wrong for a lot of other stupid things I could do. But to this day it still bothers me. I’m still uncomfortable I would have been uncomfortable making a different decision and even though it could have completely changed my career path it could be an interesting moral question. Maybe even to pass onto students, ‘what would you do if you actually have an offer for to work on a movie for you know nine months as opposed to work for minimum wage for two hours shooting a casting session. So, it says I’m not a businessman I guess if anything that’s what it that’s what it says about identity funny.

(TIMECODE): 00:36:34:20

Interviewer: This is some fantastic stuff here in your online suite. Do you have a suite at home?

Participant: I did in Los Angeles. I set up an Avid just because I wanted to learn Avid because I was editing on a nonlinear system called Smoke which became purchased by Autodesk. And that was the only nonlinear editing suite I ever worked with. I was a linear tape editor before that and actually worked in film a bit before that but mostly tape. But I did in Los Angeles. I also had a had a lot of spare income. I didn’t intend to be poor when I moved to Ireland, but you know nonetheless but I do have an Avid on my laptop. And sometimes I will do work at home, but I don’t do outside work outside of Telegael. I edited stuff for my ex-girlfriend. I did a 50th anniversary of James Bond Pub Quiz with people at Telegael. So, it’s not being used for any professional work, but I absolutely maintain my Avid. I have a permanent Avid licence. And but no I don’t per say and I can set something up if I need to but it’s not a full time, a full-time gig.

(TIMECODE): 00:37:53:07

Interviewer: Well that’s it, is there anything you wanted to add about any of the topics we were talking about?

Participant: Ah not that I can think of unless there is something else that would assist you, because you have a very obviously a very focused of where your, of where your paper is going so, I don’t know if there is anything else you want to ask me?

Interviewer: I don’t think so, I don’t think so. I think I’m happy enough with that. Thanks a million.

Participant: Okay, you are very welcome.

Interviewer: Thank you.

(TIMECODE): 00:38:18:00 INTERVIEW ENDS.