



## Conversations: Walter Murch And The Art Of Editing Film

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During the filming of his celebrated novel *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje became increasingly fascinated as he watched the veteran editor Walter Murch at work. *The Conversations*, which grew out of discussions between the two men, is about the craft of filmmaking and deals with every aspect of film, from the first stage of script writing to the final stage of the sound mix. Walter Murch emerged during the 1960s at the centre of a renaissance of American filmmakers which included the directors Francis Coppola, George Lucas and Fred Zinneman. He worked on a whole raft of great films including the three *Godfather* films, *Julia*, *American Graffiti*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being* and many others. Articulate, intellectual, humorous and passionate about his craft and its devices, Murch brings his vast experience and penetrating insights to bear as he explains how films are made, how they work, how they go wrong and how they can be saved. His experience on *Apocalypse Now* - both originally and more recently when the film was completely re-cut - and his work with Anthony Minghella on *The English Patient* provide illuminating highlights.

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## Conversations: Walter Murch And The Art Of Editing Film Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ask most moviegoers, "Who is Walter Murch?" and they're likely to stare uncomprehendingly. Ondaatje (*The English Patient*) seeks to eradicate that ignorance by providing an expert analysis of Murch's consummate film editing skills, and pointing out along the way the monumental contributions editors make to motion pictures. Murch, a three time Oscar winner and integral collaborator on such cinematic milestones as *The Godfather*, *Julia*, *The English Patient* and *American Graffiti*, attended the University of Southern California with George Lucas and bonded early on with UCLA film student Francis Ford Coppola. A relative neophyte, he worked on Coppola's *The Rain People* and a low-budget sci-fi picture, *THX 1138*, which has since become a cult classic. Murch adhered to a rule of not watching other movies while concentrating on a project of his own, calling himself a "queen bee who gets impregnated once and can lay millions of eggs afterwards." Through his eyes, and Ondaatje's remarkably insightful questions and comments, readers see how intricate the process is, and understand Murch when he says, "The editor is the only one who has time to deal with the whole jigsaw. The director simply doesn't." He also offers insightful thoughts on Orson Welles, Marlon Brando and Fred Zinnemann. Although Murch claims the actors on his films rarely know who he is, this excellent, eye-opening book done in a question-and-answer format will make readers glad Ondaatje has shown them the significant role he plays behind the scenes. Photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

Editing is an often invisible part of the filmmaking process; the audience tends not to be aware how the editor's eye has crafted a film. Ondaatje reveals some of its mystery through several conversations with Murch, the editor of *The Conversation*, *The English Patient*, and *Apocalypse Now* and *Redux*. In the late 1960s, Murch, along with Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas (who describes Murch as "strange like me"), helped form Zoetrope, the independent company where films like *THX 1138* and *The Godfather* were born. Murch finds his own profession difficult to accurately describe, comparing quirks in actor dialogue to signs in the wilderness that only a hunter might detect. Ondaatje and Murch walk the reader through key scenes from several films, providing a glimpse into the editing process; the origins of his masterful re-edit of Orson Wells' *Touch of Evil* are particularly fascinating (especially for film buffs). These conversations allow readers a peek behind the curtain to reveal a man as mysterious as his art. *Carlos Orellana*  
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Review

"Immensely stimulating....This book should be required reading for anyone working in film and a pleasurable option for moviegoers who wish to deepen and enrich the experience." -- John Boorman, director of *Deliverance*, *Hope and Glory* and *Excalibur*, reviewing **The Conversations** in the *LA Times*

"As the subject of Michael Ondaatje's offbeat, exhilarating new book, [Walter Murch] makes poetry out of an arcane, invisible craft.... Readers with even a passing interest in the movies should find many pleasures here.... **The Conversations** should be required reading for every aspiring writer -- and anyone else involved in learning to shape a work of art." -- *Quill & Quire*

"Here's one of the more interesting cross-disciplinary meetings of minds to hit book form in some time.... In a series of long conversations recorded over a two-year period, Ondaatje and Murch, both highly intelligent and thoughtful artists, transcend the interview-book genre by following tangents, engaging in arguments, contextualizing everything and reminiscing.... this is compulsive and compulsory reading for anyone in film

school or interested in film history." -- *NOW*

“**The Conversations** is an homage and an exegesis -- effortlessly inquiring and creative. Constructed as a sequence of five discursive interviews ... **The Conversations** is companionable, but not excluding, and intellectually exhaustive, though not for a moment tedious. The friendship of the two men throws an illuminating torch light on Murch’s shadowy profession. The editor should be thrilled to have his genius commemorated in this way.... The probing thoughtfulness Murch displays in his conversations with Ondaatje reveal a preoccupation not just with theory, but with the prospect of a system of notation that might provide a common language to a cinematic profession that is still, essentially, an infant one.... fascinating.” - *The National Post*

“It’s not often that a quick read provides so much insight.” -- *The Ottawa Citizen*

“It is the movie book of the season, in fact, the movie book for every season.... engrossing ... What the book sparks, aside from rarely probed thoughts about editing, is a desire to see again the movies Murch has edited and to do this at home hand in hand with reading it.” -- *The Toronto Star*

“**The Conversations** is delightful mainly for Ondaatje’s palpable pleasure, the novelist’s pleasure for eccentric characters discovered in emblematic moments. Murch ... is certainly eccentric.... **The Conversations** faithfully represents Ondaatje’s reverence for a man normally beyond public attention.” -- *The Georgia Straight*

“There’s much in store here for film fans.... many fascinating revelations about film as art.” -- *Star Phoenix* (Saskatoon)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Lenore Ryan:**

Book is usually written, printed, or created for everything. You can understand everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As you may know that book is important matter to bring us around the world. Beside that you can your reading talent was fluently. A publication *Conversations: Walter Murch And The Art Of Editing Film* will make you to always be smarter. You can feel a lot more confidence if you can know about everything. But some of you think that open or reading some sort of book make you bored. It's not make you fun. Why they could be thought like that? Have you in search of best book or appropriate book with you?

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