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# 'Nope' Editor Shares What Makes His Collaborations with Jordan Peele Work

BY JESSICA DERSCHOWITZ | JULY 20, 2022



Photo Source: Courtesy Universal Pictures

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## **How do you and Peele complement one another?**

Jordan is a fearless risk-taker and is extremely confident in what he likes and what he's trying to do. A lot of it comes down to him knowing what he wants and how he wants to work with people. I've tried to adapt to how people want to work. Having made things myself, I know everybody comes at it from a different background. If it were me, I would want an editor who was trying to understand how I was coming at it, not coming at it with their own rigid set of rules.

## **Have you two developed any kind of shorthand over the years?**

We know what to expect from each other. He's always challenging himself to do something he hasn't done before, that nobody's done before, so you can't get too comfortable. You have to continually evolve and adapt to new challenges. Just knowing each other's personalities—him knowing my strengths and weaknesses and knowing what to put in my court and what not to—is probably a big part of it for him. Then I can try and stay one step ahead, knowing from experience that he's going to keep the target moving the whole time.

## **Where do you begin when you're starting on a new project?**



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before a script, I am so happy to talk about the script with them—because [when you] flash-forward to a year or two later when we're trying to make a scene work in the edit room, often what we're up against is whatever was first imagined. And then I like to inundate myself with research, either in terms of the content or the style. Very often, the



challenge in movies is: It's a bunch of people in a room trying to talk about something that's really hard to put into words. So having some kind of reference that I can visualize, if I feel like what we're talking about is something like a trope or an idea I've seen someone else do well—or badly—then I can narrow it down, get closer to what they're talking about, and shape it into something really unique.

## **What is it like working on a show like “Key & Peele” versus a film like “Us”?**

The main difference is focus and the experience of time—how to shape a one-and-a-half-to-three-hour experience and how you build

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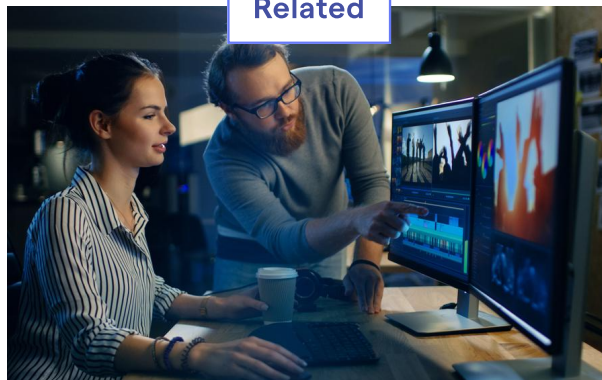
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wants to be.

On “Key & Peele,” we would go in and cut a sketch a day. There’d be notes and revisions, but that first version would come out in an afternoon. It was a great way to learn, because the filmmaking on that show was so great. The director, Peter Atencio, the writers, the hair and makeup [team], and the actors were all working at such a high level—it felt like getting to go in and work on the best scene of a different movie every day. It was a fun, stylistic kind of playground.

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**You’re in the thick of working on “Nope.” I know you said that Peele is always evolving how he’s working and what his films are like. What’s the vibe of this one?**

It has a literal and metaphorical scope that the other ones [don’t]—and very intentionally. They shot it on 65 mm film and IMAX film, which is basically as epic a filmmaking format as you can use. It wasn’t just



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I think “Nope” as a project, for Jordan, is more interested in staking new ground, genre-wise. It reminds you of a bunch of different things, but it would be a very wildly disparate list of things. He’s developing a new kind of genre, and that’s really terrifying, because you don’t exactly know what the rules are going in. But it’s also incredibly creative and exhilarating when somebody’s doing that and has the resources to really follow that through. At its heart, it’s a story about a brother and a sister. And I can’t think of that many movies that really plumb the emotions of a sibling relationship and family issues in a really fun, imaginative way.



## **What was it like transitioning from comedy to horror?**

It was great. My professional work in TV and film was comedy, but for 10 years before that, in art school and other video work, I’d been working on serious documentaries and weird, scary, unusual things. It





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## What advice would you give to someone coming up in the industry?

I always try to think of editing as a position where you're trying to help someone else accomplish something. I've told directors before, like, "I've been a bass player in a lot of bands." In a way, you're the rhythm section—you're supporting another songwriter's ideas and trying to flesh it out with them. So having that kind of attitude toward it is great. It's a very strange position, because you have to have the creative impulse to make things yourself and your own ideas about stuff, but you also have to be there to help someone else make their version and leave your ego behind.

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