

involved with music playback and such as I have been with later series I've worked on. Chris Welch was more involved with those aspects. That's the other area where post production might be involved with the actors, in pre-recording songs.

**DM: We are promoting a reunion campaign for a motion picture. Although Bruce has expressed that it's not likely to happen, what are your thoughts about it?**

**PN:** Doing a movie?

**DM: A movie bringing them all back together and give the show a better ending.**

**PN:** I think it would be great! I think it would be loads of fun and be very popular with a huge, huge following. I can't tell you how many people I've met who are in their twenties who follow reruns of the show religiously.

**DM: Hey, that's great to hear! Now, the first two seasons of *Moonlighting* will be released in May 2005. I'm not sure when they're going to release Seasons 3 through 5, but would you be interested in providing commentary?**

**PN:** Oh sure! Absolutely!

**DM: Have you worked or kept in touch with anyone from *Moonlighting* since it ended?**

**PN:** Well, Neil Mandelberg is working right next door on *Medium*. Artie Mandelberg has directed two episodes of *Medium* so I've gone

**(About *Boston Legal*) I think at the end of the day it can't be as serious as *The Practice* was. I think that the strongest episodes are those that have the undercurrent of a serious theme, but definitely lifted with these light-hearted moments.**

over and visited him. After *Moonlighting* was canceled, Artie and I worked together with Glenn on *The Making of Me*, which shows at Epcot in Florida. Chris Welch came by at the beginning of this season to have lunch with Neil but I couldn't join them – I was too busy finishing a cut on *Boston Legal*. But I talk with him every now and then. I think I ran into Curtis Armstrong a couple years after *Moonlighting* ended and spoke to him for awhile. I'm trying to remember who else. Jay Daniel – I've spoken with Jay a couple of times over the phone when he's been on other series and was asking questions about certain people that he was interested in hiring. I edited a pilot for Chic Eglee several years ago. And let's see... Allan Arkush has been a show runner here with David Kelley on *Snoops*.

**DM: Right.**

**PN:** Allan Arkush also directed a couple of *Ally McBeal's* – we worked together on one of them. Kerry Ehrin,

we worked on *Boston Public* together and now on *Boston Legal*.

**DM: Jeff Reno and Ron Osborn?**

**PN:** I actually ran into Jeff Reno up in Lake Tahoe, probably three years after the show was out. And Roger Director and Artie worked together on a pilot that I came in and did some last minute editing on. But other than that, I have not really kept up on a real consistent basis.

**DM: I think it's kind of ironic how you guys are now working next door to each other...Is that weird, kind of fateful or what? You've got Glenn and Neil next door, and Artie and Peter Werner directed episodes.**

**PN:** Actually, the way it worked out was last January (2004) I read that Glenn was writing a pilot for a new series called *Medium*. I called him in New York and said, "Wow! This sounds like a great story." After catching up on old news, he told me that if it went to series we should talk, or something to that effect. About a month later, it was February, I was on *Boston Public* and he called up and said, "Hey, are you available for some editing?" One of those last minute requests and I edited the screen test for *Medium*.

**DM: Oh really!**

**PN:** So Glenn came out here. I used one of the editing rooms - I was producing so I wasn't really editing on the show. I used one of the editing

rooms and cut the screen test with Glenn. We worked till midnight and Glenn, well, as soon as he walked in said, "This is a great lot!" He said, "If we sell the series, I want to bring it here," and sure enough!

**DM: That's great! Now, you were an editor on *Ally McBeal* which was influenced by *Moonlighting*, so would you tell us what it was like working on that show?**

**PN:** Before I answer that I just want to clarify that they were both very original shows in their own right. I can't really say that *Moonlighting* influenced *Ally McBeal*. Editorially, they were similar; some of what I learned on *Moonlighting* I applied to *Ally McBeal*, in the sense of keeping the comedy pace crisp. Anyway, the two series that I've had the most fun working on have been *Ally McBeal* and *Moonlighting*. And *Boston Legal* is getting right up there with them, as far as I'm concerned. It's been a lot of fun mostly because of the challenges the shows present to editors. It's like I said, *Ally McBeal* had that three-way style going on. It was a dramatic show, we used music, and we used comedy. The sense of timing for humor was crucial. Calista (Flockhart) was very talented and had a very good sense of comedy, just like Bruce and Cybill did.

**DM: How did your work on *Moonlighting* enable you to make suggestions on how to edit dream sequences and music cues?**

**PN:** David Kelley had a very astute sense of what he wanted as far as the dream sequences were concerned, and he would write in the script a lot of the needle drop music, in ways that would comment on the scene. But in *Ally McBeal*, there were occasionally sections that lent themselves to music after the fact so I would experiment and try needle drop songs similar to what I learned on *Moonlighting*. Steve Robin, our Producer on *Ally McBeal*, also came up with some good songs. I would try them out and sometimes they stuck and sometimes they didn't but the large majority David already had in mind how it was going to work. The dream sequences were pretty well scripted and we had a visual supervisor named Mike Most who helped bring them to light.

**DM: Now you are one of three editors on *Boston Legal*, which is another David Kelley show. What is it like working on this series?**

**PN:** To quote another editor, "If it's this much fun, how can we call this work?" Like all of David Kelley's shows, *Boston Legal* is extremely keen-witted, has the comedy mixed with drama, and very distinctive music. I thoroughly enjoy it. I think James Spader and William Shatner are tremendous together. There's just real talent going on there. They're able to do comedy and drama and have exceptional skills in both.

**DM: And James Spader is not really known for comedy.**

**PN:** It's fun to see how he handles it and how he can just present things so deadpan and do it so well.

**DM: Do you interact with any of the cast members? James and William or the others?**

**PN:** I worked with William Shatner briefly on *SeaQuest* when I was one of the producers on that. I had to loop him for an episode he did – I don't know how much he remembers that. I've talked with Monica Potter and Mark Valley, but I'm definitely not as involved as if I was producing. There's not as much interaction that goes on from the editing room.

**DM: Who's singing (in the underscored music), who's got that R&B craggy voice?**

**PN:** His name is Billy Valentine. He works with Danny Lux, our composer, and he'll embellish the score a bit where it's needed. I think musically the series has a really distinct feel. I've needle-dropped songs here and there when I'm editing *Boston Legal*, and sometimes they stay and sometimes they don't. There's an episode that aired just before Christmas about a woman who may or may not have killed her husband and his lover after she catches them in bed. She has hysterical amnesia and doesn't know for sure if she killed them or came home and discovered them already dead. Anyway, in the end there's a really good scene in the witness room. I like that scene because it's the first time I've ever seen the players immediately after the verdict. David Kelley has been a lawyer so of course the lawyer stories are very genuine. The woman



**DM:** You're talking about the episode *Hired Guns*, which I believe is the best episode that has aired, so far.

**PN:** Oh great!

**DM:** It was both funny and tense and I loved the way you cut back and forth between Alan Shore being

held hostage and Brad Chase arguing a case before the jury.

**PN:** Right.

**DM:** Defending the woman who may or may not have killed her husband and his lover. So can you describe some of the challenges telling the story? And by the way, you said you were nominated for...

**PN:** The ACE Eddie, American Cinema Editors. They have what they call the Eddie Awards every year. I was nominated for *Hired Guns* and I'm running against *The Sopranos* and the pilot for *Desperate Housewives*, so

we'll see.

(Note: Phil won the ACE Eddie Award for BEST EDITED ONE-HOUR SERIES FOR TELEVISION on February 20, and deservedly so! Congrats!)

**DM:** When it came to editing *Hired Guns*, can you tell us a little bit about it?

**PN:** There's one part where David Kelley scripted intercuts between the closing arguments and the SWAT team arriving. I thought this was very effective. Using this idea, the producers suggested I try intercutting more, with Alan Shore being held hostage. We broke up the sequences more with Shore and the gunman, and it was a challenge to find good moments to transition from one segment to the next. In finding music that would fit all three of those stories, we discovered that it was best to keep it one piece of music even though it went against the grain with the SWAT team. It seemed that when you see the SWAT guys you expect the music to become more aggressive and a little bit more biting, but we just kept it with this percussive, driving piece that sort of pushed the closing scenes along, and playing

is found innocent and Brad and Lori tell her, "The doctor said it may take you awhile to get over this," and you can see the woman is tormented like "Is this for real? Could I have done this and not know it?" They say, "Yes." And the look on her face reads ambivalence like "What do I do? Did this really happen or didn't it?" It's something that's going to haunt her. And I remember it's the Christmas episode and I would hum to myself *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, as we studied this woman's face. Just the irony of it. So I went on iTunes and listened to a bunch of versions and I found one I liked because it was acapella at the beginning and that's what seemed to work best, just the voice with no instruments for the first half-verse. I edited with this song, transitioning it to the scene where Shore and Denny Crane are out on the balcony and that just wrapped up the episode nicely. Although at other times you drop in music and they say, "Get rid of that. That's horrible. We'll get something else." But again, I'd say working on *Moonlighting* has helped me think in those terms as I edit.



**(Referring to *Boston Legal*) I like the way the camera has movement, even if it's subtle movement with the slight push-ins when the actors say certain dialogue, it gives it a texture that's really interesting and can emphasize what's being said.**

over the SWAT team. It added this dimension that made it feel like everything's going to culminate at once.

**DM: And what I also liked about this episode was in the beginning with the court case you had like a long...it felt like it went on for five minutes, the questioning of the police detective about the blood spatter.**

**PN:** That was a tough scene. Yeah.

**DM: I mean, just to hold it without editing and let the actors keep going and build momentum.**

**PN:** Yes. That was a tough scene because it's long and it's courtroom, which is hard to edit anyway and it's the beginning of the show so you don't want it to be too long and slow. But the way it was written, it was so compelling that it didn't feel nearly as long as it was.

**DM: Yes, definitely.**

**PN:** What helped, too, was Mark Valley as Brad; David wanted him to look professional, in control of his domain. This is where he should shine, and he should always know where he's going with this witness. It was important to have him be aggressive at certain points and then to slow it down and take those beats so that you knew he was moving on to the next chapter, how he was going to cross-examine this guy. The actor who they got for the detective was excellent, and Dennis Smith, the director, shot great stuff as far as

different angles and performances. We always shoot courtroom with three cameras so there were probably six or seven hours of film that came in on that scene. There were always areas to drop back wide and the camera was always moving. The other thing, when we are editing the show, is to give it that *Boston Legal* look where the camera hands off, you know, fast pans and hand-offs with the camera always moving around. So you're trying to intermingle all three of those things, worry about the story, worry about the look, and the performance. It's a big challenge. In the end, editorially, I was very happy with that scene.

**DM: The other memorable scene was when Denny Crane rescued Alan Shore.**

**PN:** Loved it! When I read it, I just busted out laughing and I said, "Oh God! "This is a challenge!" because if it reads that funny, it doesn't always end up looking funny. But it was great the way it was shot, the way William

Shatner played it, the way that James Spader played it; it just all culminated beautifully. And for fun when I put it together I used *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* theme to get him (Denny Crane) up out of the chair, and walk over, but we just thought it was too cute for the scene. This was one of those scenes where it had to build, build, build, and then there's very quick cuts at the end. Of course, all the scenes prior to the gun shooting are what help make it work so well, like when William Shatner says, "It's okay; I'm an ex-Marine. I was a trained sniper. Or was I a pilot?" Moments like that are just wonderful.

**DM: And when he sees Tara and Sally cowering in his office, he thinks they are there for other reasons (as in sex).**

**PN:** Yes – "Let's take off our clothes." I mean, it's fun because there's a serious situation going on outside with Shore being held at gun point and at the same time you've got this whole comedy thing going on. I don't want to say comedy routine, but you've got Crane being Crane in his office and that's what David does so well because it's comedy mixed with drama. Then it sort of comes together in the end. I also like the camaraderie that develops between Shore and Crane. There's a wonderful moment at the very end when, out of relief, Shore sort of leans his head against Crane, and also, prior to that, the timing of William Shatner saying "Denny Crane" as he walks forward, is wonderful. By the way, the script that I'm going to start editing next, Episode 17, is every bit as good as

*Hired Guns*. (*Death Be Not Proud*). It's such a good one. Same kind of writing and everything, just mixing it up. It's a very serious subject matter but also very funny.

**DM:** Another very good one you edited was *It Girls and Beyond*. The episode about "L...l...lesbians." I just love saying that word now!

**PN:** Yes, yes. L...l...lesbians! The show turned out great and Mike Listo, our Co-Executive Producer did a very nice job directing it.

**DM:** I liked how Lori was drilling Brad about what was it about the case that he had a problem with.

**PN:** Yes. That's right. I think Lori was there to keep an eye on Brad's interest in the one lesbian he's attracted to.

**DM:** And she kind of ridicules him in the staff meeting by asking him what the case is about (and giving Alan Shore an opening to taunt him by saying the word "L...l...lesbian" many times over).

**PN:** Yeah, just sort of exposes him and finds out what his hang up is.

**DM:** And now you have Shirley mixed into it now. Shirley Schmidt (Candice Bergen).



**A much needed addition.** Since Candice Bergen (Shirley Schmidt) joined the cast she created a balance to reign in Alan Shore and Denny Crane (not pictured).

**PN:** Yes, exactly, what an outstanding actress! Watching dailies everyday is never a dull moment. And it was a great scene in *It Girls and Beyond* with William Shatner when he discloses that he's taking medication.

**DM:** And also in that scene when he has that showdown with Rene's character in the men's room.

**PN:** Right.

**DM:** That was excellent, too.

**PN:** Yeah, that was really well done.

**DM:** Now, even though the show is described as a dramedy, it has screwball elements to it and it's continuing to evolve. I think it's trying to find its tone. Some episodes would be very dramatic, and others would be more comical. Maybe that's what David wants. To be a little unpredictable with the

**tone of the episodes. So what would you like to see the show evolve into?**

**PN:** I think at the end of the day it can't be as serious as *The Practice* was. I think that the strongest episodes are those that have the undercurrent of a serious theme, but definitely lifted with these light-hearted moments. I think that the show remains topical. There's always a story that they're talking about that ends up in the newspapers pretty shortly either before or after the episode. I think that it's important to keep in that direction. The one that I just finished editing is a more serious show. That one airs next Sunday (*Tortured Souls* on 2/20). I like the direction that it has been going in – a good balance between dark and light and I like the way that David uses the cast. If it's too much of the screwball element, ultimately it's not going to be as interesting. I like the fact that we see the serious side of Crane every now and then and the serious side of Shore every now and then. I'd like to learn more about Schmidt and some of the other characters that are coming on board. I like Mark Valley. I think they're all interesting characters and we actually have Kerry Washington (from *Ray*) for several episodes. If she stays on board a little more, she'd be an interesting character to investigate.

**DM:** A couple of things I could say about the show is you really don't know everyone's background or what their history is so maybe that needs to be fleshed out a bit more.