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Why these four directors of Oscar nominated films cut out key scenes



Illo for la-et-env-0401-deleted-scenes. From top Lakeith Stanfield and Daniel Kaluuya from "Judas and the Black Messiah," Riz Ahmed from "Sound of Metal," Carey Mulligan from "A Promising Young Woman," and Olivia Colman from "The Father." Credit: Illustration by Kay Scanlon/Los Angeles Times Clip art: Getty Images Photos: Warner Bros./Amazon Studios/Focus Features/Sony Pictures Classics (Kay Scanlon/LAT/Getty Images/Warner Bros./Amazon Studios/Focus Features/Sony Pictures Classics)

By RANDEE DAWN

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A deleted scene from a movie is a sad sort of orphan: It went all the way through the moviemaking strainer — conception, writing, shooting, editing — and still didn't make the cut. And although today, deleted scenes don't always go unseen thanks to bonus DVD material or director's edits, it's always fascinating to discover how filmmakers made the final decision to splice out a scene that worked all the way until it flickered on the (test) screen.

Here, directors from four of the best picture Oscar nominees give us a peek into the edit suite to understand how they cut, where they cut and — most important — why we'll never even know what we're missing.

Olivia Colman as Anne in "The Father." (Sean Gleason / Sony Pictures Classics)

‘The Father’

Missing scene: Paul (Rufus Sewell) and wife Anne (Olivia Colman) discuss putting her father (Anthony Hopkins) into a care home for the elderly. He tells her she doesn’t have to feel guilty about it. “It was a really good scene between them, and Olivia has such emotional power and was heartbreaking,” says [director Florian Zeller](#).

Why it got cut: “When you’re in the editing room, you have to question every scene to make sure it is necessary — not only to the story itself, but what you’re trying to achieve,” Zeller says. “I had final cut, so this was all about the film I wanted to make. I realized if I stayed with her face and had her say nothing, all the painful decisions she was about to make — the guilt, the ambivalence — was understandable without words. It was better to *feel* everything without being told. I believe the audience is intelligent, and they have to be in the active position of being part of the narrative. They have to be part of the process. So the decision was made to cut that scene even though I really loved it, because you can feel everything through Olivia’s magnificent face.”

Lakeith Stanfield and Daniel Kaluuya appear in "Judas and the Black Messiah." (Glen Wilson/Sundance Institute)

‘Judas and the Black Messiah’

Missing scene: Informant Bill (LaKeith Stanfield) gets kicked out of the Black Panthers for suggesting they blow up City Hall, then has to talk himself back into Panther leader Fred Hampton’s (Daniel Kaluuya) apartment to create blueprints of it for the FBI. “It’s arguably LaKeith’s best performance in the movie,” says [director Shaka](#)

[King](#). “He shows up on the doorstep of Fred’s apartment, and he’s in tears, he’s sobbing uncontrollably. It’s scripted in such a way that you as a viewer don’t know if he’s crying because he feels a sense of guilt or not. He says, ‘I’ve been a bad Panther.’ And you don’t know if he’s talking about City Hall or withholding this secret of being an informant the whole time. You don’t know if he’s going to come clean or tell a lie — and he tells a lie.”

Why it got cut: For one thing, King says, the sequence didn’t happen in real life. “Once something didn’t happen, it’s on the chopping block,” he explains. “There were a million reasons why we couldn’t do it, but we shot it and were sad to see it go from a filmmaking perspective — but knowing this would be a major part of the historical record, it felt irresponsible to include it in the movie. It worked on the page and in the edit, but it didn’t work philosophically and politically.”

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Carey Mulligan as Cassie acts as bait for men in clubs in "Promising Young Woman." (Focus Features)

‘Promising Young Woman’

Missing scene: After Cassie (Carey Mulligan) smashes up her car, she goes home and is pulled by her mother (Jennifer Coolidge) into working on a crafts project. Her mother says she’s been worried about Cassie and asks if the young man in her life makes her

feel better. Cassie takes her mother's hand and says that nothing makes her feel better. The scene then shifts to a nightclub.

Why it got cut: The film was shot in just 23 days, and there wasn't much left over that could be cut from [writer-director Emerald Fennell's](#) bare-bones script. But Fennell says she felt the words didn't need saying explicitly and, later on, Cassie's father (Clancy Brown) says something similar, so it was repetitive. "It was an amazing scene, but it felt more taut to go with the momentum — she goes from the car wreck to dancing in a club, where she's tweaked and antsy," she says. "It's a beautiful scene, but it interrupted the momentum of where we were going, and just didn't quite work."

Riz Ahmed in a scene from "Sound of Metal." (Amazon Studios)

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‘Sound of Metal’

Missing scene: In a continuation of another scene that did make it into the film, Lou (Olivia Cooke), Joe (Paul Raci) and Ruben (Riz Ahmed) are speaking about Ruben joining the deaf community. Ruben leaves for a moment, and Lou and Joe continue talking, and Joe tells Lou it’s best to pull the Band-Aid off all at once with Ruben and just leave him to cope.

Why it got cut: The full scene was in the film all the way through its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, but [director Darius Marder](#) took it out after that. “There’s this rule [for us] that the audience can never be smarter than Ruben,” he says. “This scene makes us smarter than Ruben — we know something he doesn’t. It undermines our language, and it undermines the character of Lou. It takes power away from her [by having Joe tell her what she should do]. Taking it out, her character got stronger; she didn’t need anyone to tell her what to do. That’s the power of editing — you can remove a scene and the film can become more powerful for it.”

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