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# Cutting SyFy: Editor Shiran Amir on Rejecting Rejection



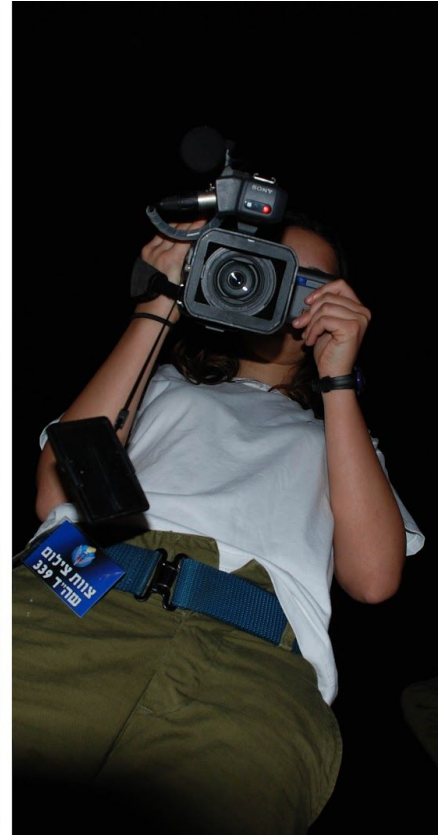
When talking about her career path, you get the immediate sense that rejection isn't a "no" for Shiran. There's never been an obstacle that's kept her from living her dream. Shattering ceiling after glass ceiling, she makes her rise up through the ranks look like a piece of cake. However, her story is equal parts strategy and risk – and none of it was easy.

After taking countless chances in her career, of which some aspiring editors don't see the other side, she has continually pushed herself to move onward and upward. She's been an assistant editor on ***Fear of the Walking Dead***, ***The OA***, and ***Outcast*** to name a few, and is now a full fledged editor of ***Z Nation***'s fifth season, editing the 4th and 9th episodes of the zombie apocalypse show. She's currently on the Editors Guild Board of Directors and is involved in the post-production community in Los Angeles.

And she's only 30 years old.

Born and raised in New York until she was eight years old, her Israeli parents decided Shiran should grow up around her grandparents and family back in Israel. She was educated in a small suburb of Israel and studied theatre and media studies in high school. Using Adobe Premiere on the old computers in the school's lab, she slowly fell in love with the art of editing.

“I realized when I was 16 that I wanted to be an editor, and I was fortunate to figure that out pretty early on.”



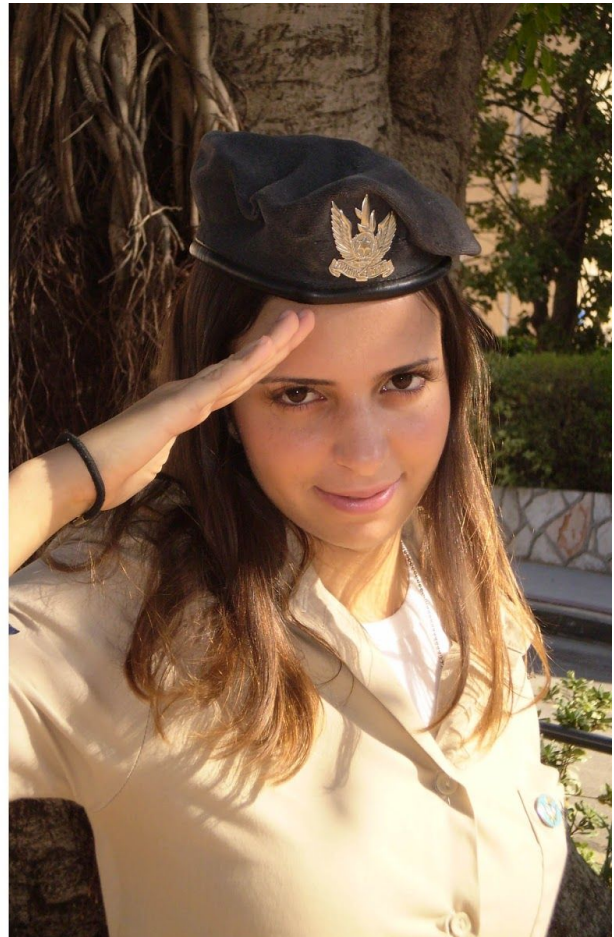
*(seen here behind the camera during her time in the Israeli army, but spent most of her time in front of a computer editing)*

After graduating from high school, Shiran, like all Israeli women, was required to serve in the Israeli army for two years.

Knowing there were several filming units in certain divisions of the Israeli army, she went to her teacher for advice. He told her there's no way she'd get in, and that her competition would be too tough. That kids coming from a school more devoted to the arts were more likely than her to get accepted. That she would need connections she didn't have.

**“It fueled me to prove him wrong. I believed that if I'm good enough and motivated enough then there will be a spot for me, and sure enough, that's what happened. They saw potential in me and I became an Avid editor for the Air Force Filming Unit. I was lucky to have a lot of hands-on training with Avid there. It was like my own version of film school - except we were making real products for real clients.”**

“I ended up saving that teacher’s number. Sounds like a petty thing to do but I was so dedicated to proving him wrong because there’s nothing worse than someone you really appreciate saying you can’t do this. Later on in my career, I called him to say that I had served in the filming unit and it led to me moving out to LA for editing, and he was actually really happy for me. Early on, it provided me with motivation in my career to give it my all and see what happens.”



*(Shiran in full uniform for the Israeli army)*



*(Editing on Avid for the Israeli Air Force Filming Unit)*

Shiran served her two full years and when she was needed further, was enlisted briefly for reserve force, where she met a connection that got her next job editing local celebrity news bulletins at E! News. She spent six months there while using her studies stipend money from the army to take an evening After Effects course.

Using forums, training videos, and (happily for us) Creative COW, she improved with After Effects and acquired a great additional skill to have up her sleeve. But on her day job, Shiran quickly realized editing celebrity news bulletins wasn't her cup of tea.

**“I got depressed because it wasn't what I really wanted to do. I could see that Israel didn't have a lot of production going on at the time, the industry was small, so it motivated me to move to LA as soon as I could. One night while doing research for the move, I googled 'post-production houses in LA'. I sent resumes out to all of the search results I found, but Nadav Streett was the only one who replied, because he was Israeli too. He told me 'I can't help you if you're in Israel, you have to come to LA first.' And with the help of my dad, I did exactly that.”**

Shiran had lived in Israel for 14 years, but at 21 years old she packed up and headed to LA. Her dad went with her, staying for about a month to help her find an apartment and a car. One of her first jobs was working for Nadav as an Assistant Editor on a reality show for Spike TV for a year. Like many

budding editors, she was grateful to find that first job, but after doing several reality gigs assistant editing and sizzle reel editing, she knew she had to put everything aside and make the jump to scripted content.

“I would visit Israel every year since I left. And it would be like a status check for me. My family and friends that were still in Israel would ask me ‘So, what are you doing now? How are you doing in LA?’ I would be compelled to show them some progress, but for the first three years I would keep saying ‘I’m assisting in reality’ again and again. And I realized I had to stop. I wasn’t in the genre I wanted to be in, I didn’t come out here to work on reality TV. Just like with the celebrity bulletins I was doing in Israel, it was time to hit the brakes and swerve away from that.

“So I started actively refusing jobs and made a new circle of connections with people who work where I want to work. I started cutting short films for director students in film schools. I applied to the ACE Internship program and met a whole new group of friends there that all had the same goal. One day I heard a big Hollywood editor gave a lecture in Israel where I used to study After Effects, it was Dan Lebental. I reached out to him on Facebook and wrote him a long message in Hebrew saying we had mutual friends and explaining what I wanted to do in life, and I got no response. After a month, I thought “what am I going to do?”

“So I tried sending it again. I never usually send things again, but this time I thought I should. And I got a one-line response: “Sorry, I don’t speak Hebrew.” I was certain he spoke Hebrew because he was lecturing in Israel and his name was Israeli! So I wrote to him in English and he invited me to meet him. He always stayed interested in my career path and is passionate about helping promote more women in post-production. Always asked to see what I was cutting.”

“One day I sent him a rough cut for a short film my friend had directed (director Eyal Resh, who was also in the army with me). He ended up offering me an assistant editor job on an indie film that lasted a year. The film never came out, but the job was a great learning opportunity for me.”

A well-known Marvel editor, Dan Lebental worked on *Iron Man*, *Iron Man 2*, *Thor: The Dark World*, *Ant-man*, *Ant-man and the Wasp*, and *Spider-man: Homecoming*. He saw potential in Shiran because of her work in reality TV and short films, and taught her the ins and outs of scripted like dailies organization, visual effects tracking, script sync, and more. She went on to assistant edit for an indie film called *Revolt*, then turned to scripted television assisting Chris McCaleb for *Fear of the Walking Dead’s* first interstitial web series – and eventually the actual season 1 finale – then assisted on *Outcast* and season 1 of Netflix’s *The OA* for nine months. She even worked as a VFX editor for *Channel Zero* season 3 on Syfy.



*(Dan Lebental, editor of the **Iron Man** series and other blockbusters, took Shiran under his wing)*



(Shiran and *The OA* post team)

“I found it easier to move genres as an assistant editor and then work my way up once I found the genre I wanted to be in. I was mentored by a lot of great people along the way.”

After about eight years of assistant editing, she received an email from a friend saying the show *Z Nation* was looking for editors. She applied and interviewed with showrunner Karl Schaefer, and directors Jodi Binstock and Steve Graham.

“I heard that after my interview with Karl [Schaefer] where he heard my story, what I’ve been through, and how long I assisted... he said ‘If she were a guy, she’d be editing by now.’ I don’t know if there’s truth to that, maybe or maybe not, but the bottom line is they hired me and gave me my first editor position on two episodes.

“And I don’t take that lightly. It’s really difficult to break into scripted editing, you need to be mentored by another editor over the course of a few projects, then co-edit with them for a while if they let you, and eventually, the studio and everyone will feel comfortable with you being an editor. I worked on various different shows with different editors so I didn’t have that. But *Z Nation* nevertheless saw my potential and gave me a shot.”

Shiran became the first female editor on Z Nation, breaking a five year run of exclusively male editors, in part due to the advocacy of director Jodi Binstock and her priorities toward an equal workplace.



*(Shiran in front of her edit bay at Z Nation)*





*(Shiran and Jodi Binstock, director)*

On Jodi's recommendation, Shiran watched the entire **Z Nation** series and quickly got the feel for the style of the show. While editing, she was careful to heed the director's input and uphold the show's style, which is full of comedy, action, and drama, but also tries not to take itself too seriously. Editing on Adobe Premiere Team Projects, she took the crew's five main days of shooting and cut it down in four short weeks to a 42 and a half minute episode.

“It’s an extremely reduced time schedule. A little over a week for first assembly, then a week of working with Jodi or Jen and their notes. During the directors’ cut, we would lay in temp score and create rough versions of the VFX. We’d have another week for the showrunner cuts, which was Karl. Every other day I would send Karl a new version of the episode and he would watch it as a fan and give me notes that would probably come from our viewers. Then a week for studio and network notes. All within just one month for one episode.”



*(from left: Jodi Binstock, Shiran Amir, and Jen Derwingson)*



*(Shiran and the Z Nation post production team)*

“This season [Z Nation] has very big social issues that mirror society today...what the world is dealing with and what the United States is dealing with. There’s polarization between the camps and between the people [on the show].

“In past seasons, it’s been kind of a road trip show where characters need to get to a secure place, but this season something big happens that causes another in-between zombie race called ‘Talkers.’ So they don’t just turn into a zombie, they’re more of a zombie with a conscience. You can talk and have feelings, but you crave brains.

“So it’s interesting between these two camps of people, the pro-human camp who don’t want to be involved with the ‘talkers’, and the pro-unity camp who want everyone included and working together. It can be a metaphor for a lot of things we’re dealing with [in today’s world], like treatment towards immigrants and people of other races.”

You can see this intense polarization first hand in this scene from Shiran’s fourth episode, Pacifica, which aired on October 26th.

[Embed] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKr2SyGL\\_jA&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKr2SyGL_jA&feature=youtu.be)

Shiran is an active member of the post production community in Los Angeles that prioritizes mentorship. She is often asked for advice in making the jump from reality to scripted, and from assisting to editing.

**“Perseverance and passion are really important. When I was in the army, someone told me ‘what sets you apart from others is being an editor that actually cares about what they’re editing.’**

**“In the air force, I was making boring tutorial videos on mechanical skills like taking apart a plane engine and putting it back together. But I stayed passionate about the art of editing, and even if [the content] was boring - I took a curiosity to it, as with anything else I worked on.**

**“Also, get out of your comfort zone and meet people! You have to network to expand your opportunities. Look up the people that are working on what you really enjoy working on and reach out to them. Make it a personal message, don’t just copy and paste, be interested and ask them questions about their work. Never fear rejection!”**



*(Shiran in her natural habitat)*

Be sure to catch Shiran's work on episodes 4 and 9 of **Z Nation**, which airs Fridays at 9/8c on SyFy.

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