

**EDITING:**

**It is a Presentation**

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# SHOT

- A single piece of film of any length or duration which is exposed by the camera being turned on, then off, *a single time only*. Neither the type of action which a shot may cover, nor the nature of the camera movement which may be executed during the shot (if any), alter the definition.

# SCENE

- A self-contained, continuous series of shots which define a specific dramatic and/or narrative moment. In some instances an entire scene may be contained within a single shot if it is an appropriately long take.

# SEQUENCE

- A self-contained group of sequential scenes. The grouping should coalesce around a specific set of dramatic and narrative imperatives.

# EDITING:

- At the most basic level, this means simply joining individual pieces of film to make up scenes, sequences, groups of sequences, and finally the entire film. At its first stages the pieced together version is called an assembly. As this is further refined it is called a first cut, then, many refinements later, a final cut.

- The basic level, however, doesn't nearly tell the whole tale, for it is precisely the juxtaposition of shots, the one to the other throughout a film, which gives motion pictures their unique power, whether the shots are arranged according to the precepts of continuity editing or montage theory or some combination of the two. Editing, therefore, makes a fundamental contribution to the construction of meaning which the whole film text generates.

# Film Editing

- In the first decade of filmmaking, pioneers Georges Méliès and Edwin S. Porter found that the effect of motion could be warped, shooting the film at a slower speed than it was projected to produce a speeded-up image (and vice versa) which could be used for comical or fantastical purposes. Porter and especially D. W. Griffith discovered that cutting, or editing, strips of films did not destroy the viewer's ability to comprehend the flow of images.

- Griffith developed the use of the close-up, a full view of a detail within the larger image, often a hand, face, or object, the audience retaining the context of the scene into which the close-up was cut. With this method, Griffith was able to bind the audience closer to the characters on the screen, intensifying emotional involvement with the story. Griffith also experimented with cutting scenes widely separated in space but meant to communicate a temporal simultaneity.

- Thus, in *The Lonesdale Operator* (1909), when the heroine is menaced by the villain, Griffith could cut to her approaching rescuers and through ever-shorter alternations between the two actions could imply that the rescuers were coming closer until, finally, the two converge in the same frame and the heroine is rescued. Griffith's use of editing became extremely sophisticated, but was a largely intuitive process.

- The initial codification of editing possibilities and the theory and application of it for aesthetic purposes began in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Montage, the cutting of images so that meaning could be generated from their juxtaposition, was devised by Sergei M. Eisenstein and demonstrated with unusual power in the scene depicting the slaughter of civilians by Russian troops on the Odessa steps in the classic film *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

- In this scene, hundreds of shots, some on screen for no longer than a second or two, communicate an overwhelming sense of violence and terror while depicting no direct violence in any one image. Filmmakers in general incorporated editing as one element of a total work rather than the determining element of the work itself.
- In Europe editing is called MONTAGE.
- MONTAGE: simply...EDITING.

# SOVIET MONTAGE:

- Basically a theory which develops the proposition that it is through editing that film finds its greatest--and most unique--powers of expression. This premise is based on the dialectical relationship between two shots, "A" and "B", in a cut. By putting shot "A" in juxtaposition (and in opposition) to shot "B" the result is not a sum of the two, but a new idea which might be called "C".

- Obviously, there has to be significant involvement on the part of the audience to make the dialectical relationship effective. Thus simply put, this brief definition does not convey either the theoretical and artistic force nor the profound influence which the theory had on subsequent film making. Clearly, though, these theories, and the practice in film making to which they gave rise and through which they were developed and refined, stand at the diametric opposite from continuity editing.

# Some history:

- following Lenin's admonition that "Film is the most important of the arts", the first film school in the world, the USSR State School on Cinema Art, was founded following the Soviet victory in 1917. In charge was a young film maker by the name of Lev Kuleshov. Under his tutelage, a workshop for the development of Soviet Film makers was organized at the school.

- This workshop operated under the most severe material handicaps, principal amongst which was the almost total shortage of raw film stock, which prevented them from shooting their own footage with which to experiment. As a result, in order to both develop their various theories and begin to work with film in spite of these shortages, the members of the workshop began to reedit whatever existing footage they were able to forage.

- The subsequent experiments with this "found footage" led them to discoveries about the nature and effect of film editing which subsequently developed not only into whole theoretical constructs, but which theories also formed the basis of the films they subsequently went on to make. Among others of Kuleshov's pupils were Sergei Eisenstein, and V.I. Pudovkin, both of whom became profound influences on the evolution of the motion picture and its techniques.

# CONTINUITY EDITING (CLASSICAL CONTINUITY)

- The editing technique most favored by Hollywood and generally throughout the world, continuity editing seeks to create the illusion of seamless action, movement, and, ultimately, narrative. It does so by deploying a strategy consisting of procedures which, in direct contradiction to montage theory, hides (or at least minimizes) the shift from one cut to the next, in effect making the edit as "transparent" as possible.

- This strategy has several component parts, the principal ones being:
  - Shots which establish the cinematic space: establishing shot from "Casablanca"
  - Shots which carry an action across a cut (match on action cuts). scenes from Hitchcock's "Vertigo". The first one also contains eye-line match cuts after the match on action cut.

- Camera set ups which observe the action from alternating points of view (angle, reverse angle)
- Rigorous respect for the 180 degree line, assuring continuity of the direction of screen action.
- Cuts which are "led" by a character's on-screen actions. For example, if character "A" looks off-screen and a direct cut to character "B" ensues, the effect is that character "A" is looking at character "B"; sometimes called eye-line matches; not to be confused with locking glances, which is when one character (or individual) looks at another straight in the eye.

# CUT

- The simplest and most basic joining of two shots; the abrupt transition between one shot and another without any intervening device or effect; generally considered the most direct possible transition, either between scenes, or between angles within a scene; sometimes called an edit.

- Straight cut: An edit which is designed to maintain either temporal or spatial continuity, or both; the backbone of continuity editing.
- Jump cut: An edit in which, contrary to the straight cut, either temporal or spatial continuity, or both, are not respected. Once thought to be an egregious editing error, the jump cut has become thoroughly conventionalized and commonplace. The title sequence on the clip is in fact a series of jump cuts.

# MISE-EN-SCENE

- Literally translated from the original French, the phrase means "to put upon the stage"; otherwise, staging. In film practice, however, the term has come to designate the totality of how the director designs and actuates a given scene.

- All films use essentially the same techniques and processes. However, each individual film assembles and/or employs all of the variable elements provided by the technology and the imponderables of production in its own distinct way. The elements generally used to define and/or analyze mise-en-scène are:  
Setting Actor Placement Actor Movement  
Actor interpretation (ideally but not always a collaboration between director and actor)  
Camera movement Costumes Make-up



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