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Film terminology and cinematic effects

The shot: is the building block of all filmmaking.

It is how the object will be positioned within the shot, or how much of the frame of the movie screen the object will occupy.

The three main framing types are the long shot, the close-up, and the medium shot.

A director will choose to use a given type of shot in order to achieve a particular effect.

This type of shot can establish the scene, by showing, for example, the Manhattan skyline, so that the viewer knows where the film will take place.

Long Shot: the object on the screen appears small or appears to be seen from some distance away. If a person is shown, then generally you will see his or her entire body but you do not see his facial expressions. It can also serve to show distance or separation between characters in a way that other shots cannot, or to show that a character is integrated with his or her surroundings.

Close-up or Close Shot

The object or subject takes up nearly 80 percent of the screen space and therefore appears to be very large. This shot can be used by a filmmaker to direct the viewer's attention to a crucial clue in a detective story and to emphasize a facial expression or gesture....

Medium shot

A medium shot (between a long and a close shot) is probably the most common and most naturalistic of the three types, since it is also the most common in our real lives. Generally we see each other in medium shots because of personal space distances. Unlike the long and close shots, the medium shot does not necessarily communicate much in the way of cinematic effect, and it could best be called a sort of "neutral shot."

There are almost unlimited variations on these framing choices. There is an extreme close-up, and a "deep- focus shot," where, in a single shot, one object is shown in a close-up while others in the background are shown in a long shot

Focus:

Film directors use varying degrees of focus/ 'play' with the focus in different ways in order to communicate something to the audience.

Soft focus: A director can film his/ her subject slightly out of focus which creates a texture called soft focus. It is common to see soft focus in romantic films to help create a lighter mood.

But it can also be used to blur an image slightly in order to communicate uncertainty. Example: many scenes with the Judy/ Madeline character in Hitchcock's Vertigo are shot

Rack focus

A director uses a rack focus to force viewers to direct their attention where he/she wants them to look.

A director can use this technique to bring either the foreground or the background suddenly into focus. with a soft focus since her identity and motives are always in question.

Deep focus:

Deep focus refers to having everything in the frame, even the background in focus at the same time, as opposed to having only the people and things in the foreground in focus. The deep focus technique requires the cinematographer to combine lighting, composition, and type of camera lens to produce the desired effect.

Camera angles:

Low angle/low-angle shot: the camera is below the subject. How do you look when viewed through that camera below you? Huge, powerful, dominating, and in control. Characters shot with a low angle are often the more powerful ones in the film.

High angle/high-angle shot: the camera is above the subject.

How do you look through the camera? Small, weak, powerless or trapped. Characters presented with a high-angle shot in films are the ones who appear a little weaker and less in control.

Eye level shot

Shot at eye-level the subject of the shot meets the camera, and thus the viewer, "eye to eye" or on "equal terms". Unlike the high-angle shot, which makes the subject appear smaller or weaker or the low-angle shot, which makes the subject appear bigger or more dominant, the eye-level shot is a fairly neutral shot as far as impact and emotion. Characters are on an even balance with this type of angle.

Dutch angle: to create a Dutch angle, the camera tilts slightly, so the image appears sideways, to one extent or another, within the frame.

This type of angle is often used in horror or gangster films to show an evil character or a dangerous situation.

A Dutch angle can create tension or peculiarity in an otherwise static or normal situation, thus implying danger or moral uncertainty.

Camera movement

Pan: technically the camera does not move, only the camera's head pivots along the horizontal axis to follow the action. This movement is called a pan.

It is often used in films to introduce the setting.

It is also often used from the point of view of characters as they take in their surroundings or situations.

Tilt: technically as with the pan the camera does not move and tilts along the vertical axis.

Tilt is an effective way to communicate distance, size and strength.

Zoom: When the camera zooms, the focal length of the lens changes, thus making the object appear to move closer or further away. The zoom is a way to direct the audience's attention to a detail that the director does not want to miss.

Tracking or dolly shot: when the camera moves while following the action, the shot is called a tracking or dolly shot.

Lighting

Low-key lighting

It's chief characteristics are its darkness, shadows, and patches of bright key light. Obviously, low key lighting can create moods of suspicion, mystery and danger

High-key lighting:

This type type of lighting is distinguished by its brightness, openness and lack of shadows between light and dark. Romantic comedies, musicals and costumed dramas are often filmed with high key lighting, characters and situations are seen without misunderstanding or threat.

Neutral lighting:

Every scene must be high-or low-key, a scene could be sort of average, or lacking in much to distinguish its lighting. When the lighting is balanced throughout the shot, it is called « neutral ». Most TV programmes are shot with this type in mind.

Bottom/ Side lighting:

The light illuminates only parts of the character's face and the shadows distort it so he/she looks a little scary. This type of lighting has the effect of creating characters that may be evil, are hiding something, are morally ambiguous, or are conflicted in some way.

Front Lighting:

Light shines across the character's face so that no shadows appear. This effect is called front lighting. It is often used to show innocence and openness. A character who is honest with nothing to hide will often be shot this way- the hero or heroine in particular.

Sound

Diegetic sound: any sound that could logically be heard by a character within the movie environment: if the character speaks or coughs; this type includes background noise, traffic, dialogue between characters. The audience and the characters hear roughly the same thing.

Nondiagetic sound:

Any sound that is intended only for the audience and is not part of the environment of the film. Oftentimes this means music, but it can also take voice-over narration.

Internal Diegetic Sound:

When the character is talking to himself or remembering sounds he heard before.

What's the point in making these three distinctions between types of sounds?

Sometimes the director-like a writer-wants to give information or clues directly to his audience without giving that information to the characters, and it is important to know how and when the director is doing this.

Through the varying use of diegetic and nondiegetic sound, the director can create suspense, irony...etc.

The sound in film acts as a sort of Greek chorus to catch the audience up with the story.

Editing

The most common type of edit is called a « cut », but is not the only type available to the director or editor. Others include: the fade, the crosscut, the flashback, and the eye-line match.

The fade

This type of edit occurs when the image on-screen slowly fades away and the screen itself is entirely black (or some other color) for noticeable period of time and then a new image slowly fades in from that black screen.

Directors use the fade to denote the end of a scene, as an author might do by ending a chapter, but it can also be used within the same scene to show that some measure of time has passed.

The Dissolve

As with the fade the image slowly begins to fade out, but instead of fading all the way to black, it is replaced by another image that is slowly fading in.

The dissolve is a slow transition, too, and because two images are on-screen its effect cannot be underestimated.

The dissolve is often used to make a connection between two objects or characters that the viewer have not made without its use

Cross-cutting

Editing that alternate between shots occurring simultaneously in in two or more different locations .

Can be used to create linkages between characters, themes, or plots.

Help to create suspense.

The flashback and the flash-forward:

like a flashback in literature, this method of connecting shots is designed to give the viewer important information about what has happened in the past.

The flashforward takes the audience ahead of the story's present time. This device can add tension and can be used as foreshadowing.

Eyeline-match

This type of editing is important because it can reveal waht a character is thinking. (we learn the thoughts of a character without his having said anything.

The eye-line match is a way to create empathy – or at least a connection to selected characters because we ultimately feel what the characters feel when we look through their eyes.

This ability to demonstrate the thoughts of characters and to create connections to them through editing is a very important tool for a director.

Mise en scène: all the elements in a single shot of a film.

It includes 4 major components:

1- Setting (location)

2- Costume and make up

3- Lighting

4-Acting