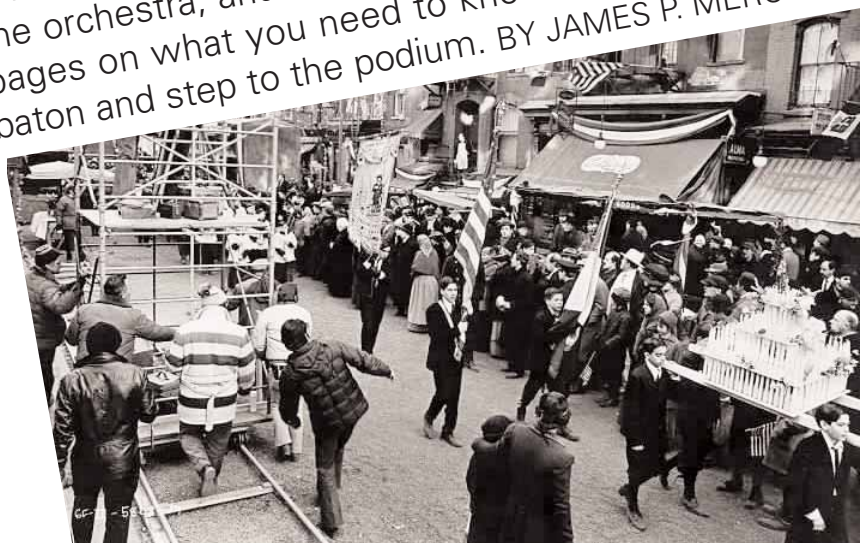
DIRECTING FOR WRITERS

FILM SCHOOL IN 9 PAGES

A screenplay is the sheet music, department heads are the orchestra, and the director is the conductor. Eight pages on what you need to know before you grab a baton and step to the podium. BY JAMES P. MERCURIO



As a former development exec, I have seen dozens of first films, movies that were scraped together and shot with Cousin Charlie's inheritance from Uncle Willy, movies that were made for $50,000, movies that were made for $500,000. And they all have something in common: the filmmakers made them because they could. Not for any other reason. These movies also have another thing in common: they aren't going to be seen by anyone. They won't be seen at the major film festivals. They won't be seen at any film festival. And they won't be coming to a theater near you ever. Even the ones that started with a semblance of a well-written script succumbed to a complete lack of producing or directing prowess. It was as if the goal were to just get a film—any film—in the can.

Before you embark on the several-year journey involving tens of thousands of dollars in resources and personal sacrifice, ask the question no one wants to ask, "Does this project lend itself to guerilla filmmaking?" Your budget and shooting schedule can hamper your production values. What kind of story lends itself to limited coverage, uneven production values, grainy (or worse) images, long uninterrupted takes, jump cuts, and continuity breeches? If you got $100,000 and a pro-sumer DV camera, subject matter like *Chuck and Buck*, *The Celebration* or *A Woman Under the Influence* is inherently more appropriate than *Love Actually* or *Like Water for Chocolate*. Fairy tale movies often require meticulous production value and time to control the images. A gritty and out of focus image would take us right out of, say, *Sleepless in Seattle*. You could shoot a workable version of *Requiem For A Dream* or *Laws of Gravity* on a dime and a DV camera, but I wouldn't try it with *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Godfather*, or *Cries and Whispers*.

What kind of story lends itself to limited coverage, uneven production values, grainy (or worse) images, long uninterrupted takes, jump cuts, and continuity breeches?

Someone told me that all the morons have ruined it for indie filmmakers. Too many smart rich people have already been burned by pouring cash into a filmmaker's Follow My Dream: I am Entitled, LLC—films that don't have a 1% chance of making back their initial investment—that they will never invest in your I Have a Good Script, Some Talent, and a Plan for my First Film, LLC. If that's true, then my motivation—to help prepare you to make your first and probably no-budget film—is very selfish. When you persevere and find the person who writes that check for $50,000 or $100,000, I want you to make a great movie. I want your investor to make his money back ten-fold and come back looking for more independent movies to make. Maybe mine.

Ironically, a great place to start talking about directing is with a playwright. David Mamet, in his book *On Directing* (a great book for screenwriters), supports the Sergei Eisenstein school of filmmaking (see sidebar). He says every shot should be uninflected. It is through the juxtaposition of neutral shots that an idea is expressed. Whereas to express the idea of "earliness" a filmmaker might establish "The sun is rising," "The street cleaners are out," "The janitor is the only other person in the building," Mamet suggests that a more concise way would be with the following three shots: One—A person walks to a door tries to open

it; Two—His hand jiggles the locked door; and Three—He sits down next to the door.

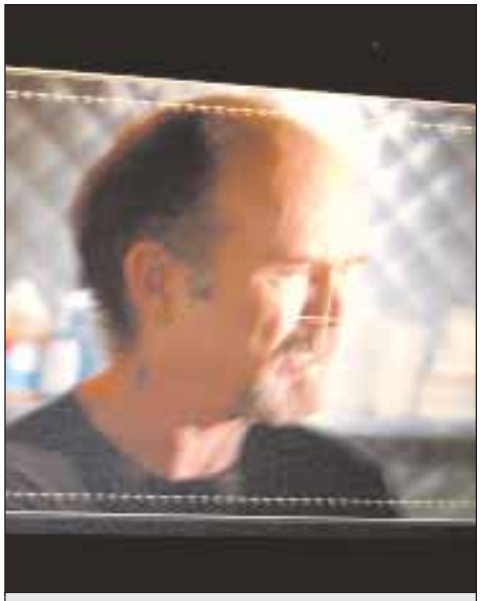
In the Neorealist classic *The Bicycle Thief*, written by Cesare Zavattini, there is a scene where young Bruno is ready to leave his bedroom for the day. In a combination of shots and actions, Bruno looks at an open window and then he looks at his baby brother on the bed where the bright sun shines on him. Bruno goes to the window and closes it, so that the light no longer shines on his brother, and then he leaves the room. It's clear to the viewer that Bruno is, at the very least, protecting his brother. The context and simple and succinct actions and shots, most of which are uninflected, create a concise meaning and emotion.

Are Mamet and Eisenstein right? Are their styles the only way to tell stories? No, but their principles are invaluable for the indie-no budget filmmaker. I love character-driven stories and some of my most exciting moments on *Hard Scrambled* (see page 54) were watching Kurtwood Smith bring his A-game. Fight the good fight to get name actors and, at the very least, professionals. Do this so that you have a shot to make your money back and, more importantly for your career, to get the movie seen. But you may not get the perfect actor. However if you write or translate a story into succinct, clear actions, you protect yourself as a writer and director.

As a director, you have to use every available tool to make your best movie. As oxymoronic as it may sound, to make a successful independent film, you will need to be dependent. You will have to rely on other hard-working and talented people. Forget the auteur theory. A director is like a conductor and the department heads are your orchestra and the script is the sheet music. If your movie is going to sing, you will have to get inspired performances from your DP, production designer, costume designer, editor, and everyone else. Understanding the creative possibilities within each department allows you to master the tools of cinema. By discussing key issues for each department, I want to put you in a better position to communicate with, inspire, and conduct your orchestra.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER & LOCATIONS

A sure sign of bad low-budget filmmaking is when all the walls are blank, all the characters live in similar dwellings, and there is no relationship between a character and his/her space. *Kissing Jessica Stein* did a fantastic job of creating mood, atmosphere and art galleries on a modest budget. I have seen so many undistributed first films—even ones that take place in one location—where there the filmmakers paid no attention to the look of the sets and locations. If a character is a yuppie, find that angular, sterile loft. If a character is an earth mother, find a brown house with a green garden. Or completely turn my stereotypical examples upside-down and find a reason to put the earth-mother in the loft. A production designer can help every character and location to have a distinctive feel and tie in or contrast with other characters and locations in the film. Your production designer, director of photography, and you should agree on the color palette—the groups of colors you are going to use for a scene, for a section, and for the entire film.



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COSTUME DESIGNER

Many low budget films barely have a costume budget, but even the smallest effort can go a long way in creating a unified world. There are creative ways to overcome budgetary limitations. Send your wardrobe person to raid the actors' closets. Have all your crew members bring in their old clothes. Take the unusable batch and strike a deal at a second-hand store. Bribe the Salvation Army clerk to keep an eye open for that old letterman's jacket. Maybe you can't be as groundbreaking or influential as *Annie Hall*, but understand the types, colors, and condition of clothing are crucial tools you have in your directing arsenal.

PROPERTY MASTER

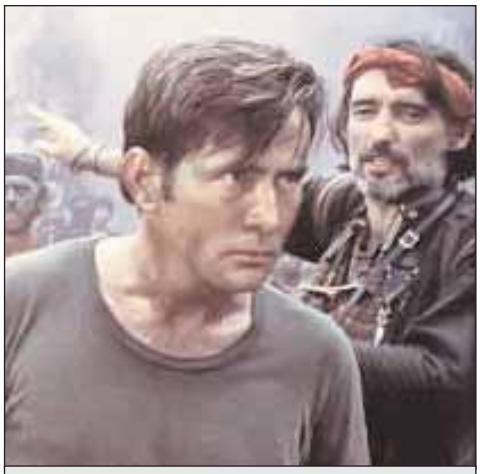
Novice directors don't think about or use props. When actors win Oscars, they are often touted as having given a multi-faceted performance, full of contradictions. Well, we learn early on in screenwriting that we can't write, "His perfectly calm face also betrays a hint of anger," because it's impossible for an actor to play. However, if you have the actor with a perfectly calm face crumple a piece of paper, then suddenly you have the hint of anger and a performance "full of contradictions." Props are a subtle, inexpensive, meaningful, and visual way to combat all the talkiness of some low-budget films.

In *LA Confidential* and *Wonder Boys*, Curtis Hanson uses a small prop in the first act that sets up the entire movie. In *LA Confidential*, Smith innocently offers Exley a glass of holiday punch while they are on duty. Smith tests him and confirms the flaw—that Exley never breaks rules—that would allow Smith to defeat him. In *Wonder Boys*, Michael Douglas finds out that his lover is pregnant. He is not able to show her affection or say wants her to keep the baby. When she puts a cigarette to her mouth, he, without thinking, pushes it away. This small action reveals more about his true feelings than a page full of dialogue.

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

First, here's a crash course in Coverage or Master Scene Technique, the way 99% of narrative films are shot. For any given scene, you start with a relatively wide angle and then shoot the entire scene. This is called the establishing shot or the master shot, because it establishes where and when all of the action and dialogue take place. Now when you move closer to get different angles such as medium shots or close-ups (the coverage) on the individual actors, this master scene dictates the actors' performances so that the shots will match (i.e., cut together smoothly). So if you have a scene between two people, the master might be the long shot. The coverage might include an over-the-shoulder shot of each actor performing the entire scene and then single close-ups that cover part of the scene. These shots "cover" the action to make sure there is enough material to edit.

Most films are shot out of order. Two people might shake hands in a wide shot and then a year later, the director realizes he needs the close-up and reshoots in a different country with different hands. When we cut from the wide shot to the close-up, the illusion that this action happens in continuous time and space is what we call continuity. A script supervisor's job is to keep track of continuity. They keep track of the following areas: props, actions, costumes, makeup, eye lines, lightings, etc… If a person says a line before he sits down in the long shot master, and later, in his medium shot coverage, he sits before he delivers the line, the two shots won't cut together smoothly.

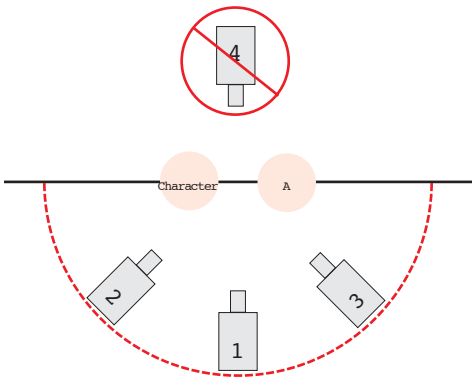


That cool scene with the cult, the ritualistic murder and those four-hundred candles really becomes torture when you try to match the candle heights during your coverage.

Props that cause continuity nightmares include candles, cigarettes, translucent glasses, and clocks. If you have ever seen a cigarette shorten by two inches or a glass gain four ounces of wine unexplainably in a cut, then you know what I'm talking about here. That cool scene with the cult, the ritualistic murder and those four-hundred candles really becomes torture when you try to match the candle heights during your coverage. There are prop candles that won't burn down. You can take the batteries out of clocks. And try using opaque glasses for all of your beverages. However, there is also something to be said for shooting around continuity issues. Consider a Thanksgiving scene involving ten people around a table. Show the actual meal only in the master shot and when you set up the individual singles, frame the food out of the shot.

The next continuity issue, the 180 Degree Rule (The Axis, The Line), is rather infamous as something that takes a minute to learn and decades to master. Not to downplay its importance, but I have heard this rule called the Organizing Principle of Narrative Cinema. At the basic level, this principle of continuity says that when we are looking at a scene, what is on the right stays on the right and what is on the left, stays on the left.

Imagine two people, A and B, facing each other. Then imagine drawing an imaginary line that connects them and continues out in each direction. The 180 Degree Rule says that only shots taken from one side of the line will cut together with each other. Let's say we shoot a close-up of person A, who is on the left, facing right. Then let's say we went to the other side of that imaginary line and shoot a close-up of person B. If you're

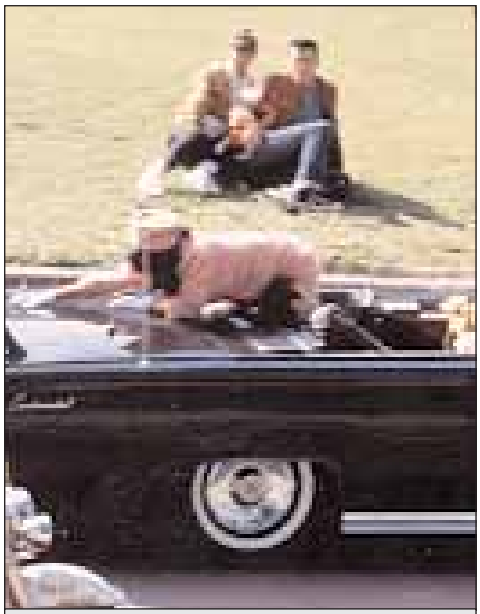


standing there on the set, these two people look like they are facing each other. However, when you cut these two shots together, the two people now appear to face the same direction. It is a disorienting manipulation of space and something that will jar the viewer. Once you have established that line between two people in the scene, then all the shots must be from the same side of the line.

Movement works the same way. What is moving left in one shot should be moving in the same or a neutral direction (i.e., straight toward or straight away) in the next shot. This principle is what makes football on television a coherent viewing experience. For an entire quarter, your team is heading in only one direction. The camera angles will be from one side of the field or the neutral angle looking straight up or straight down the field. It would really be confusing if the quarterback throws to the right, the receiver catches the right-moving ball, dodges a tackle, and all of a suddenly, in the next

shot, he is running to the left. Once you set up the space in a scene, you have to respect the viewer and allow him to familiarize himself with the geography.

There are ways to change screen direction involving the use of neutral shots and cutaways. Screen direction can also be changed by adding another character. However, there are times when fixing the screen direction is necessary because it is an integral part of the storytelling. In the long battle sequence near the beginning of *Saving Private Ryan*, good guys travel right and the bad guys face left. There would be no way to sustain coherency with that pace without the rigid codification of left and right throughout the entire sequence.



If an unmotivated cutaway to a bird or a car passing by is your only option, you're in trouble.

EDITOR

David Lean and Robert Wise are two directors who were former editors. It is a natural transition because the ability to think like an editor is an invaluable directorial skill. From a creative standpoint, it helps to be able to visualize a scene and know how it will be cut together. But, for making a low-budget film, it is probably more important from a practical standpoint.

With money and the time constraints of a short shoot, a low-budget film director has to know the least amount of setups and coverage acceptable for the editing room. The skill to visualize how your film will cut together allows you to save time and limit your coverage. If you're pretty sure you are only going to use the master for the intro and outro of a scene, run it all the way through once for safety. And then do one more take of the first and last ten seconds only. Then move on to your medium shots. And then if you know you the close-ups will only be used in the climax of the scene, just do a pick up of those four lines.

If you shoot an entire two-page scene between two people talking in the *In the Company of Men*-style in one two-shot, it might take you four hours and eight-hundred feet of film. Later in the editing room, you might want to shorten the scene or add a dramatic pause, but you will have no editing options. If an unmotivated cutaway to a bird or a car passing by is your only option, you're in trouble. However, if you shoot the exact same scene with two reverse singles and each actor did two takes that were each 80% usable, you would easily be able to edit the scene with the option of shortening, lengthening it, or shaping a performance.

The editor on both of my features, Andrew Frank, always reminds me to get "handles"—a little extra on either side of the shot just in case. Even when you are sure you are not going to cut to the medium shot until after the character has already sat down, still get the clean entrance when he sits. These little bits of safety can save you in the editing room.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

As a director, you should be well-versed in the principles of cinematography. This section won't begin to cover the basics, but hopefully it will give you some tools with which to be able to communicate with your cinematographer.

The basis for all lighting comes from a three-point technique. There is the main source of illumination, the Key Light, a Fill Light that fills in the shadows created by the Key Light. The third light is the Back Light that gives the illusion of depth since it separates the object from the background. A Back Light can also be used for an angelic or halo-like effect.

The ratio of the intensity of the Key light and the Fill Light is what determines the lighting style. If the two lights are close in intensity, there are very little shadows. This style, high-key lighting, has everything lit evenly, and is associated with comedies, musicals and sitcoms. When there is more of a contrast between the Key and the Fill, there are more distinct shadows. This style is called low-key lighting. As the contrast grows from mild to extreme, the look of the

film moves, in sequence, toward the style associated with drama, thriller, horror films, and all the way to film noir.

So many films' style and thematic content are related to their photography. Think of the wonderful contrast of light and dark in *Seven*. In *K-Pax* there are a lot of bright backlights and highly exposed areas that create the subjective experience of Kevin Spacey's character who is sensitive to light. In *JFK*, all the disparate stocks, color saturations, and processing techniques contribute to the *Rashomon*-like ambiguity of the multiple-POV stories.

Depending on the types of shadows you want, there are two different types of light. There is hard light (specular light) which creates harsh and distinct shadows and there is soft light (diffuse light) which creates an indistinct and seemingly nonexistent shadow. Whether or not you know a Fresnel casts hard light and a broad light casts soft light, you can talk to your DP about what style you want.

Another topic in which first-time directors could use a crash course is the properties of lenses. Focal length measures the length of the lens (from the optical center of the lens to the film plane). A lens with a normal perspective (approximate focal length of 35–50mm in 35 mm film format) will make something that is two yards away seem two yards away. Long lenses and short lenses will make an object seem closer and farther away, respectively.

Long Lens (telephoto)—A telescope is an extremely long lens. Mars and an asteroid millions of miles away might seem like they are not so far apart because of the magnification of the image. Because of this, movement toward the camera seems to slow down. However, movement left and right seem exaggeratedly fast. If you want to show that your character is alone and depressed and you have him walk slowly down the street, if you shoot him from the side with a long lens—especially up against "vertical stripes" like a group of trees—you can create a really dynamic shot.

Short Lens (wide angle)—A peephole lens in a doorway is often wide angle and when a finger moves toward the hole, it seems to expand rapidly. Because a wide lens exaggerates the distance, movement toward the camera seems really fast. Although a character comes ten feet closer, he appears to have covered twenty feet or more. This is why wide lenses unflatteringly distort a person in close-up; their nose will seem to jut forward.

Here is an incomplete list of other basic topics which a novice director should become familiar: color, composition, depth of field, film stocks, processing, shutter angle, and color temperature.

ACTORS

After I directed a feature film, my writing changed forever. Sometimes when I would write a minor character in a script, I would not give them the same attention that I would the main characters. But when you actually cast a film, all that changes. The actress who plays that supposedly small role builds a back-story for the character, creates the essence of the relationship between her and the main character, and has a million other questions about her character. She is—appropriately—thinking of herself as the most important character in the movie.

As a director, you have to look at a scene just like each of your actors. Think of each character as the most important element in the scene. When actors come to you and ask you what am I fighting for, what is stopping me from getting it, what just happened

You have to look at a scene just li
of each character as the most im

between me and him, you have to know the exact answer.

When you are preparing to direct a film, you can kick around lofty ideas in your head. When you are on the set, directing the film, you have to boil it down. Consider the scene in *The Bicycle Thief* where Bruno closes the window to block the sun from his brother. Did director Vittorio DeSica pull aside the eight-year-old Enzo Staiola, a non-actor by the way, and say, "The look to your brother should have a wistful etherealness that, in a Marxist way, says the child you are really protecting from the broken war-ravaged society is yourself"? No, he probably said, "Close the window."

An important part of the directing process is giving adjustments to actors where you modify or tweak their performance. Although a few times when the clichéd "less" or "more" might be adequate, usual-

ly you want to plan succinct adjustments. Of course you let them do it their way first, but at some point you may have to give an adjustment. You can tell a person to speak more slowly, but an adjustment like, "Explain it to your husband like he is an eight-year-old," is infinitely more expressive.

Actors are human. What they create is delicate and sometimes ephemeral. Because the stock for video format is less expensive, keep the camera running more often to keep them in the groove. However, if you make an actor perform a scene too many times, you may effectively "kill" the performance. By the time you are ready to have him perform it again for the close-up, the performance might be dead. Also, some actors give their best performance the first time. If you have an actor like this and you have an important emotional scene, consider shooting the close-

ike each of your actors do. Think portant element in the scene.

up first and then working backwards.

Several people independently have suggested Michael Shurtleff's *Audition* as a way to understand how actors think and to learn their "language." Judith Weston's books have also earned high praise. I recommend studying acting in one way or another before you direct professionals.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Despite the name of this magazine, when you are on a set and ready to shoot a scene, the importance of the words on the page goes away. You are usually looking at the scene from a bigger perspective. Suddenly what becomes more important than any given line of dialogue is finding the turning point, the climax, the event, the point of the scene. Story guru Robert McKee will tell you in screenwriting there are only two ways to turn a scene: with an action or a revelation of new piece of information. That is what a script can do. An actor can take the scene and bring other elements to it to help to convey that change. An actor can use facial expressions, volume of speech, pace of speech, movement or the lack of movement to convey a turning point.

Screenwriters write a scene, actors interpret it, and now the director has to shape all of this. Once you figure out what the scene is about then, as important as the words, is the way to communicate that moment of change. There are times when it's all going to be about the acting and words, but there are times when as a director, you will have to augment or even create the climax/turning point/change in a scene using your tools: costume, blocking, movement, pace, shot selection, editing, etc…

In *LA Confidential*, Bud White goes to the office to beat up and probably kill Ed Exley when he finds he has slept with his girlfriend. It is in this scene, that White has his character arc and changes. He is able to overcome his child-like violence and decide to move forward with Exley in the case. As a director, you have to be able to specify the point of the scene, "He is mad as hell and is beating him up, but at some point, he is going to make the decision to stop." The entire scene, shot with stedicam, has a frenetic and kinetic quality to it. Their fight is shown in quick cuts from close range. The moment White changes, there is an action (he throws the chair, not at Exley, but through the window), a change in blocking (all of a sudden White is still) and there is also a corresponding change in shot and pace: we're suddenly in a full shot of White that has a long duration. In this scene, by controlling the blocking, pacing, shot selection, and actions, the director pulls it all together. It is your job to use all the tools at your disposal to tell the story.

Sergei Eisenstein labeled two types of montage, Montage of Collision and Montage of Attraction. The former was when disparate elements collided and the latter was when similar elements collided. Either way, once they did, they created something new. He said, "Film is montage" and then he said, "Montage is collision." A simple logical leap allows us to conclude that film is collision. It is the constructive clashing of similar and different ideas, images, talents, visions and passions. This collision creates something that is above and beyond what any one of these elements could be alone, something that is magical. Creating that collision is, ultimately, directing. CS

DIRECTING STYLES: FILM SCHOOL THEORY TO NUTS & BOLTS

Lev Kuleshov, a Russian filmmaker in the early 1900s, performed what is called the Kuleshov Experiment. He took a shot of a several things including a girl, a child's coffin and a shot of an actor. He intercut the exact same (reaction) shot of the actor in with the girl and then, separately, the coffin. People responded by saying the first shot of the actor conveyed happiness and the second shot conveyed sadness. The perceived content of the reaction shot was dependent on the shot that it followed.

Later, Sergei Eisenstein made a case that since editing was the most intrinsically filmic technique, it was at the root of all artistic film expression. He expanded on the principles of the Kuleshov Experiment and stated when you edit shots A and B

DIRECTING STYLES USING EDITING

LOGIC OF THE INTERESTED OBSERVER.

The practice of or the calculated violation of this practice is probably the basis for every cut ever made in the history of cinema. The theory behind it is simply: Show the shot that an interested viewer would want to see next. A quarterback throws a football. What do we want to see next? How about the receiver catching it? Person A says something nasty to the off screen Person B. The logical cut might be the reaction shot of Person B. Often times, the simple breaking of this rule can be used to great effect to create suspense. In a horror movie, a person walks around a corner into a close-up, sees something off screen and screams. But by specifically not making the obvious cut to what they see, suspense and mystery is created.

INVISIBLE EDITING

Also called classical continuity style editing, this uses acceptable editing conventions and the rules of continuity to make all cuts seem as seamless and unobtrusive as possible. Here are most of the rules with which to make an "invisible" edit.

Cut on actions—Movement in the frame prevents the eye from noticing the cut. Percussive cut—Cut on a sound or on the beat in music. Cut on a flash of light—MTV uses this too often. When they want to cut between two shots of the exact same size and angle, which creates an awful jump cut, they put a flash of light in between the shots. The flash displaces the image for an instant, lessening the jarring impact. They sometimes smooth this cut with a pffft sound. Use match cuts—Match cuts are cuts that respect the rules of continuity. Matching actions, movement, speed, screen direction, etc…

Change the angle or the size of the shot—This is to prevent a jump cut. A lesser known rule of continuity is called the 30 degree rule which says change the angle of a shot at least 30 degrees. Cinematographers and editors ignore this rule if there is a big difference in the sizes of the two images.

DIRECTING STYLES WITHOUT USING EDITING

MISE-EN-SCENE

Mise-en-scene style is the opposite of montage and it involves long uninterrupted takes that are usually in deep focus. Whereas editing and montage create meaning from outside the frame (in the cut), mise-en-scene style creates meaning from the interrelationship of the elements (sets, costume, lighting, actors, etc..) within the frame.

Bazin loved this style for its ability to mimic reality, and several filmmakers like Robert Altman and John Cassavettes use it to that effect. But this is not its only use. Consider P.T. Anderson's clever in-depth compositions in *Punch Drunk Love*, Wes Anderson's kooky flat-perspective tableaus in *The Royal Tennenbaums* that play around with formal balance or Antonioni's stylized and threatening use of setting in *L'Avventura*.

There is a great scene in *Manhattan* where after getting caught in a rainstorm, Woody Allen and Diane Keaton tale shelter in the Natural History Museum. In her tight, wet t-shirt, she stands against a large mural of the universe. She is in silhouette and the Milky Way creates a beautiful backlight for her. She is worried that she doesn't look good. He tells her she looks beautiful. This is mise-en-scene at its best. As a director, Allen uses everything in the frame—costumes, setting, set design, light, wardrobe and, oh, yeah, actors and dialogue to create meaning. The ambiguity of this scene would have made Bazin happy: Is Allen saying sexual attraction between man and women is the basis for the entire universe or if he is saying we are neurotically obsessed with the smallest things that amount to nothing in the bigger scheme of things?

One purpose of editing is to keep the audience's attention. With long takes, you have to do the same thing within the frame by continuously using movement, composition

together, you end up with A + B = C, where C is a completely new idea or emotion. The juxtaposition of the two images creates a gestalt, something beyond the individual elements.

A little bit later, Andre Bazin, founder of *Cahiers Du Cinema*, was falling in love with movies like *Citizen Kane* and neorealism. He thought film's magic was its ability to show reality. To him, editing was practically blasphemy, because it was a temporal and spatial violation and because it was didactic. He heralded long, uninterrupted takes in deep focus because they force the audience to take a more active role in the film viewing experience. Multiple people could experience different things from the same shot, and this ambiguity mirrors reality.

Using this simple theoretical overview, film styles available to directors can be broken down into two categories: ones that primarily involve editing and ones that involve uninterrupted takes.

SUBJECTIVE STYLE

The first teacher I know who specifically singled out this style was Jim Pasternak. It involves a person looking, the POV shot of what they see and then the reaction shot. This contrasts to an objective style done without edits. If a single wide shot shows a person walk into a room, look at a box and react, that's objective. However, if you break it up into three shots—the person looks, the box, the person reacts—then the audience experiences the introduction of the box via the character, in a subjective way.

Although this style seems very basic, the Kuleshov Experiment principle comes into play. If you cut from a child in her coffin to the blank face of her mother, there is emotion created in the cut itself. This is why most directors will tell actors not to signify in a reaction shot. Here, if the actress "plays" or "overplays" grief, it may merely seem redundant. Often times a blank stare for a reaction shot is the most honest acting an actor can do.

MONTAGE

To Americans, Montage is series of shots that shows the passage of time (e.g training sequence in *Rocky*). Here, I refer to the Soviet filmmakers' definition: juxtaposing shots to create higher meaning and emotion. Editing can be used for basic reasons like, "Hey, look at this," but Eisenstein compiled categories of montages that might lead to a better understanding of the expressive power of montage.

Metric and Rhythmic montage are where the lengths of the shot and the lengths of the shots relative to material within the shot, respectively, create an effect. Tonal and overtonal montage are where rhythm and shot selection combine to create a mood or elicit a specific emotional feeling. Eisentein's categories culminate in intellectual montage where images collide together to create abstract ideas. In theory, shots are neutral. For example, consider separately a shot of George Bush and a shot of Osama Bin Laden. Now edit those two shots together and suddenly an entire other set of ideas and emotions come to life.

in depth (at least three planes of action), blocking, lighting, selective focus, color and light to hold the audience rapt.

On a very practical level, this style of filmmaking can save your neck. Sometimes you run out of time. If you only have an hour left to shoot a scene with five setups, think about how you could use one setup yet still convey all the important dramatic elements in an interesting way.

FLUID CAMERA

Another style that uses what's inside the frame instead of editing is fluid camera. This encompasses everything about mise-en-scene, but it adds another dimension: camera movement. Classic examples of this are the opening of *Touch of Evil*, the ensuing homage in *The Player* and, of course, the *GoodFellas* scene where Ray Liotta goes across the street and into the club all in one shot. What's so great about Scorsese's scene in *Goodfellas* is that it's not just showy. It's related to meaning. The usage of the shot irrevocably shows the character's entire world, power and influence.

Long uninterrupted takes with camera moves can be dynamic. And, of course, the little director devil on you shoulder is saying, "Go for it!" But in addition to the expense of the stedicam, boom or crane, it can be very expensive to prep all the extras, sets, and lights necessary to do an elaborate shot. In *Touch of Evil*, every few seconds, there is something visual and new being added to the shot: the bomb, planting it, the huge shadow, cars, the vendor's cart, more of the town and its traffic, new characters, etc… If you do not have the resources and time to spare to sustain an interesting two-to-three-minute shot, you may want to save it for your next film. CS

— JAMES P. MERCURIO