

Post-Production

The importance of Sound

Editing is a key element in the filmmaking process. It is where a film comes to life. One major task of an editor is to make a series of decisions: what takes to use, what footage to keep in and what to keep out, how to edit picture to the music, how to implement transitions between scenes, what kind of style to create and how to pace a scene.

What Is The Basic Theory Of Editing?

Like any skill editing has some basic rules that help us to understand what the filmmaker and editor wants to say. Take some time to study films and TV so you can learn these. What you add to the image and sound after it is filmed can hugely influence a film. You will notice that tension is indicated by music and close up shots on actors. Different camera angles break the scene down and make it interesting by leading the viewers eye to what is important. The way you cut between these, i.e. fast or slow, is also telling the audience more information about the story. The editor can alter everything about the film with their skills.

What Is The Basic Theory Of Editing?

When films were first shown there were no editing techniques. People marvelled at simple scenes of workers exiting a factory with no cuts in the filming or music playing. As audiences have become more discerning, editing has grown into a job in itself, cutting and sound are key to the language of modern films.

Get your audience to read your film

Understanding modern techniques is key if your audience is to follow what you mean with your edits. Watch lots of movies and examine how cuts are made. How do scenes end, what does a cut to black signify or a slow dissolve?

Create atmosphere

Editing styles can alter the feel of your film. Short snappy cuts give the film a tense, fast pace. Long gaps between cuts allow time for the audience to relax into the scenes.

Use editing shortcuts

Clever editing can create illusions, just the sound of a helicopter creates the illusion that there really is a helicopter just out of shot. Editing can also help smooth over problems, you can edit around a difficult interview by cutting out bits.

Use multiple camera angles

If you need to show more than one aspect of a scene, you can film the scene several times from different angles and in the edit cut between those angles. Explore the "montage" technique

Montage is the principle underlying all editing. The audience are trying to interpret your film as they watch, create meanings from the images and sounds you play them. If for example, you put together a politician's speech without sound, followed by images of war, then the politician is assumed to be talking about war. Montage creates a new meaning from two independent images. Similarly you can lead the audience this way, show separate images of two people walking down a street and the audience will assume the two will eventually meet.

How Do I Get My Clips Onto The Computer?

- Prepare your tapes and camera - Know what tapes you will use and put the camera in playback or video player mode.
- Connect your equipment - Use the Firewire cable to link the camera and computer. Avoid using the "USB" cable.
- Understand the layout of your editing software and files - Know the layout of your software. Know where your files are kept, save your work regularly!

Purpose

The editor's job is to juxtapose images and ideas together in order to build an emotional arc. According to Walter Murch's *In The Blink of An Eye*, the decision making process during editing should take the following into consideration, (in order):

1. Emotion
2. Story
3. Rhythm
4. Eye trace
5. Two-dimensional place of the screen
6. Three-dimensional space of action

The idea is that making emotion elements as a priority in editing assures, that the film communicates to the audience on a visceral level. Audiences tend to pay less attention to things like eye trace or 2D place of the screen if the emotional arc and story are strong.

When constructing a video sequence, especially for documentary, it is important to imagine how your video will look on the screen, how it will "cut together". The good video maker adapts to the situation, using what you come across

throughout the videoing process! Whatever you do, keep the message in mind and look for opportunities.

Videoing for the Edit

Documentary style can give the camera some freedom and a shot such as the broken "Welcome to..." sign to a town can really help the editor give the audience that message, though it may not have been planned. When videoing you should have an image of the whole video in your head, what you've recorded, how it will edit together, and what you need. When you come across an opportunity or a situation you know instantly how to respond, where to place the camera, how it will edit into the final scenes and how your sequences will edit together. Imagine a kitchen scene; you might video some shots preparing food, some cooking and some eating. If you are inspired you might decide to use a series of shots showing in different angles how the food is chopped, sliced, diced, fried, boiled and served. This gives the editor a rhythmic, stylish sequence adding a light hearted feel and quickening the pace of the video. Record wide shots and close ups in a logical, story led order i.e. what the chef is looking at (close up shot of her face), a knife (wide shot as she picks it up), which is chopping onions (close up of the onions and blurring knife), which is being put into a pan (overhead shot of the onions falling into the water). You not only tell a story, but you tell it in an interesting way.

Cover all the Angles

A common technique in fiction video technique, but also used in documentary, is to video from different angles. If you video someone walking down a corridor it might serve to stimulate interest in the scene if you show the event from different angles. If you have more than one camera and they don't get in each other's shots you can do this in one take. Alternatively you can ask the person to do the walk several times and film them from a different angle each time. When you come to the edit, these can edit together much easier. You may start with a wide of the whole corridor, a medium shot of the person walking to camera, a close up of the persons feet and then an extreme close up of their face. (See diagram).

Generally speaking there are different techniques or styles used for the two main formats of film, Fiction and Documentary.

Fiction film techniques

The key signature of camera work for narrative fiction film is the pace. Because of planning time and rehearsing your camera will be well placed to get all the action and may even be mounted on tracks (see appendices) or a wheelchair for that smooth tracking in shot to the actors face! Pans should be smooth, we should not see microphones and scenes will be well lit and recorded. All aspects of the mechanics of video recording are hidden.

Documentary film techniques

In recent years this has developed more because of the accessibility of cameras. So we have the video diary style, with the camera pointed at the video maker. The fly on the wall style is handheld and squeezes into every room. The secret videoing format is low quality as the camera is hidden. Handheld camera is the most common aspect of all these styles used because of flexibility and speed, you also may not have permission to mount a tripod. Crews seen in mirrors and mics are forgiven, interviewers can be heard and often seen. The mechanics of video recording are apparent. The key is to still use a tripod if at all possible, keep production values high, aim for the narrative standard and keep the message central.

List of Basic Equipment

1. Capturing Deck or Camera
2. Computer
3. Editing Software:
PC: Avid, Adobe Premiere
MAC Final Cut Pro, iMovie
4. Compressing Software
MAC: Cleaner, Compressor

PC:

5. DVD Authoring Program
MAC: iDVD, DVD Studio Pro
PC: Roxio

Process

1. Capture and log

- This involves importing all footage onto the computer hard drive, labeling the files clearly, and organizing them in the appropriate files

2. Rough Assembly

- Refers to a “first cut” of what scenes will be used etc. and how they
- will be sequenced This is usually 1.5 times **longer than the required time**
- No fine details are attended to here

3. Fine Cut/ Picture Lock

- Decisions are made as to what scenes or parts of scenes are cut out
- All fine details are attended to : ie. Transitions, pacing etc
- “Picture Lock” indicates that no other changes can be made to the sequence.

4. Colour Correction

- Here a colourist or an “on-line editor” will tweak and enhance the colours of the film such that the colours are balanced.

5. Sound Mix

- At this stage, the sound is leveled and mixed down
- Any special effects, ambient sounds, and music are all tweaked.

6. Export / Compression

- The final cut is exported either on tape or DVD
- OR the final cut is compressed for Web, ipod, and mobile videos.

Other Things to Consider in the editing suite

1. Music
2. Effects
3. End Credits
4. Subtitles
5. Graphics
6. DVD Menu

Conclusion

Understanding the editing process will offer a very unique perspective to the entire filmmaking process. At this stage, you will understand why certain decisions were made in pre-production and production.