

ASPECT RATIO: The shape of the overall picture—so called because the screen shape is identified by the ratio of the screen's width to its height. Screen shapes vary from the normal nearly square ratio of 1.33:1 to very long rectangles. The ratio of most of today's cinema wide screens in the U.S.A is 1.85:1 whereas European Cinema evolved to 1.66:1 (which is very close to the 16 x 9 aspect ratio of HDTV). In the 50's, Hollywood began to compete with television by developing various wide-screen systems such as Cinemascope, Cinerama, and Vistavision. If the director is preparing a scene that will not look good in a wide-screen format, he may use natural blocking to reframe the image. For example, he may shoot through curtains or doorways that are ostensibly part of the set but appear dark in the foreground.

CINEMA VERITE: An approach to filmmaking that tries not to interfere with reality that emerged in post-WWII France. It plays down the technical and formal means of production (script, special lighting, etc.) at the director's disposal and emphasizes the circumstantial reality of the scenes. It often uses natural sound, available lighting, and conspicuous camera work (e.g., zoom and hand-held shots), since flexibility is considered more essential than perfection of technique. The term is applied to documentary work of Jean Rouch, the Maysles Brothers, Richard Leacock and others.

CONTINUITY CUTTING: A style of editing marked by its emphasis on maintaining the continuous and seemingly uninterrupted flow of action in a story. One of the salient characteristics of Hollywood Cinema which seeks to preserve the "suspension of disbelief" in the viewer.

CROSS-CUTTING: Switching back and forth between two or more scenes—for example, a serial episode that alternately shows the heroine nearing the waterfall and the hero galloping to the rescue. Cross-cutting can create parallel action, time and space. In cases like the above last minute rescue, excitement and tension are often heightened by shortening shots and accelerating the rhythm of the cross-cutting. Developed early in film history in the work of D. W. Griffith and Edwin S. Porter and furthered by Soviet filmmakers of their silent era.

CUT: A transition made by splicing two pieces of film together. Types of cutting defined in this glossary include: continuity cutting, cross-cutting, cut-away, cutting on action, and jump cut.

CUT-AWAY: A shot of short duration that supposedly takes place at the same time as the main action, but not directly involved in the main action. For examples of cut-aways, see REACTION SHOT and INSERT SHOT. Cut-aways are sometimes used less for artistic purposes than to overcome continuity gaps when footage is bad or missing. If Nixon picked his teeth while speaking, a sympathetic editor would keep the sound but visually cut away to a shot of someone listening that was taken earlier to cover up for such routine mishaps.

CUTTING ON ACTION: Cutting from one shot of a particular action to another shot of the same action, another view that "matches" and creates the impression of a continuous time span. Example: the actor begins to sit down in a medium shot and finishes in a close-up. By having an actor begin a gesture in one shot and carry it through to completion in the next, the director creates a visual bridge, which distracts us from the cut.

EXPRESSIONISM: A mode of shooting developed in Germany during the 20's (e.g. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Metropolis*) which used highly unnaturalistic lighting, sets, make-up, acting, etc., to give a dramatic effect where the above suggest or represent psychological aspects of the characters. Its influence on American films can be seen in Walsh's *Pursued* and Welles's *Citizen Kane*.

FAST MOTION: Action that appears faster on the screen than it could in reality. This special effect is shot by running the camera more slowly than usual (e.g. at 12 frames per second instead of the normal 24 for sound films in the U.S.A) and then projecting at normal sound speed. Since camera and projection speeds were not standardized until the silent era was almost over, we often see silent films at a much faster speed than originally intended as they were probably not transferred to video at the correct frame rate.

FOCUS: An object in focus has a sharp and well-defined image. If it is out of focus it appears blurred. Focus is mainly affected by the lens of the camera, the projector and your eye.

DEEP FOCUS: In deep focus, objects in the immediate foreground and those at great distances appear in sharp focus at the same time. Welles's *Citizen Kane* utilizes this technique.

SELECTIVE FOCUS: In selective focus, the main object of interest is in focus, the remainder of objects are out of focus.

SOFT FOCUS: In soft focus, often used for romantic effects, all objects appear blurred because none are perfectly in focus. In years past, this diffused effect was sometimes used to photograph aging female stars. Soft focus can be obtained with filters as well as with lenses.

FREEZE FRAME: The effect in which action appears to come to a dead stop. This is accomplished by printing one frame many times. TV's instant replay sometimes "freezes" a crucial action to let us have a better look at it but this is done electronically, not with film.

GRAPHICS: The formal structured content of a cine-image.

HAND-HELD SHOT: A shot made with the camera not mounted on a tripod or other stabilizing fixture, generally operated with the hands. While the camera operator gains flexibility he or she loses stability. It is often used for Cinema Verite and other documentary approaches, subjective point-of-view shots, and was often a characteristic of New Wave directors like Godard.

INSERT SHOT: A cut-away shot inserted for the purpose of giving the audience a closer look at what the character on the screen is seeing or doing, e.g. we see a medium shot of the actor raising his wrist to look at his watch; then an extreme close-up shot of the watch face, then a medium shot of the actor finishing looking at the watch and lowering his wrist.

JUMP CUT: A cut that jumps forward from one part of an action to another separated from the first by an interval of time. It thus creates geographical dislocation within the unity of space. It often connects the beginning and ending of an action, leaving out the middle. Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* spawned a 60's vogue for jump cuts.

LIGHTING: The distribution of light and how it models the subjects and affects the graphics is a main aesthetic element of film. Light can be natural (sunlit) or artificial (electric). It can be flat (not highly contrasted in bright and dark areas of the frame) or highlight. Highlights create dramatic graphic effects. Low-key lighting is recognized as the absence of a strong source of light from a defined direction that creates highlights. When extra lights are not brought along for shooting, as is often the case with cinema verité, available lighting (whatever is normally there) is used.

LOCATION: Any place, other than the studio or studio lot, where a film is shot.

MISE-EN-SCENE: A term generally used in reference to staging a play or film production—in considering as a whole the settings, the arrangements of the actors in relation to the settings, the lighting, etc. Some critics use the concept of mise-en-scene to describe what goes on within the frame in contrast with cutting, as the two key approaches to analyzing a filmmaker's style.

MONTAGE: From the French "monter" meaning to assemble. In Europe the process of putting a film together; the editing and splicing the shots to create a motion picture. The term in the U.S. has come to mean an aesthetic style of editing based on a sequence of images, often disparate in content, cut together to produce a distinct effect or emotion in the audience. Based on a group of images creating new meaning beyond their intrinsic content.

OPTICALS: In years past, special effects usually created in the laboratory with an optical printer. Many of them could also be created in (early) film camera. These include transitions such as dissolve, fade, iris, wipe. Current digital technology using computers has replaced the optical printer. See also: SUPERIMPOSITION.

PARALLEL ACTION: An effect created by cross cutting that enables the viewer to follow the events of two or more filmic locations concurrently. Using parallel action, a filmmaker can extend or condense real time and create a screen time with a logic of its own. For instance, if the filmmaker wants to intensify (and lengthen) the suspense while the heroine has but one minute to answer a question on a TV quiz show, he/she can cut between the homes of her friends in four cities who are watching intently waiting for the outcome. Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* used this technique.

PERSISTENCE OF VISION: The phenomena that cause a projected image on our retina to be mentally retained for an instant. If a second similar image replaces it within a period of about a 1/16 of a second, no visible discontinuity or flicker can be detected, even though each frame comes to rest briefly in the projector.

REACTION SHOT: A cut-away shot to a person reacting to the main action as listener or spectator.

REAL TIME: The actual time an action would need to occur; as opposed to screen time, a principal aesthetic effect created by filmmakers in transforming reality into art. Real time is preserved within the scenes of a play but (usually) only within the individual shots of a film.

SCREEN DIRECTION: Whichever direction, left or right, the actor or object is looking or moving toward, described from the audience point of view.

SCREEN TIME: Duration of a shot as manipulated through editing, as opposed to real time. A principal aesthetic effect by which the filmmaker transforms reality into art. Cut-aways and insert shots are two ways of stretching or condensing real time to give the film a different time. If we cut between a race and the spectators' reactions, we often lengthen the actual time of the race. If we cut away for part of a movement, when we cut back we may cut out a large chunk of the action. For other ways of manipulating time see: FAST AND SLOW MOTION, CROSS CUTTING, JUMP CUTS, and PARALLEL ACTION.

SHOT: A piece of film that has been exposed, without cuts or interruptions, in a single run of the camera. The shot is the elemental division of a film. Shots may be categorized:

- (1) according to the distance between the camera and its subject (e.g. a long shot) these designations vary among directors and are relative to the size of the subject filmed and the way distances have been established in the film
- (2) according to the angle of the camera in relation to its subject (e.g. a high-angle)
- (3) according to the content, nature or subject matter of what is being film (e.g. a reaction shot or two shot); or
- (4) according to the means by which the shot is accomplished physically (e.g. a dolly shot).

(shot continued)

(1) ACCORDING TO DISTANCE:

LONG SHOT (LS): The camera seems to be at a distance from the subject being filmed.

MEDIUM SHOT (MS): A shot intermediate in distance between a long and a close shot.

CLOSE-UP (CU): The camera seems very close to the subject, so that when the image is projected most of the screen will be taken up revealing a face and its expressions, or a plate of stew or cream pie.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP (ECU): The camera seems very close to what would ordinarily be a detail of a close-up. For example, the whole shot is dominated by a tear welling up in an eye or a single peak of meringue on the fluffy top of a cream pie.

(2) ACCORDING TO ANGLE:

HIGH-ANGLE SHOT: A shot that looks down on the subject from some height.

LOW-ANGLE SHOT: A shot that looks up on the subject.

EYE-LEVEL SHOT: A shot taken from eye-level of camera-person; most home videos employ this type of shot.

REVERSE-ANGLE SHOT: A shot from a camera positioned opposite (about 180°) from the preceding shot. A reverse-angle of a dog walking toward the camera would be a shot of it walking directly away from the camera. If a reverse-angle is made of two people in a two shot, the rules of crossing the axis have to be observed by their reversing positions.

(3) ACCORDING TO CONTENT:

ESTABLISHING SHOT: Often the opening shot of a sequence, showing the location of the scene or the arrangement of its characters, often a long shot. For example, if the story jumps from lover's lane, where an athlete is breaking training on the night before The Big Game, to his disastrous fumble the following day, we will probably see the stadium and teams from a high-angle long shot before we close in on the hero's bobble. Compare SLOW DISCLOSURE.

MASTER SHOT: Single shot on an entire piece of dramatic action. A standard Hollywood practice that facilitates the editing of a scene. For example, a conversation is likely to be photographed first as one lengthy two-shot then it will be reshot in pieces at the different angles and distances needed to reconstruct the scene.

TWO-SHOT: Close-shot of two persons.

THREE-SHOT: Close-shot of three persons.

DOLLY or TRUCKING SHOT: One in which the camera physically moves from one place to another.

PAN SHOT: One during which the camera stays in one place but rotates horizontally on its axis.

SWISH PAN: A pan so rapid that the image appears blurred upon projection.

TILT SHOT: One in which the camera pivots along a vertical plane.

PAN/TILT SHOT: Diagonal move of the camera that combines the pan and a tilt.

TRACKING SHOT: A dolly shot in which the camera moves parallel with its moving subject. If the camera moves in on a seated person, that is a dolly-in and if it moves away it is a dolly-out; if it travels alongside of a person walking down the block, that is a tracking shot.

ZOOM SHOT: A shot taken with a zoom lens (i.e. a lens that makes it possible to optically magnify or demagnify the subject without moving the camera). We can get closer to a subject with either a zoom shot or a dolly-in shot. When we dolly towards the subject, objects pass the camera, giving a feeling of depth. When we zoom, the sensation is two-dimensional, much like coming close to a still photograph.

SLOW DISCLOSURE: An opening shot of a scene or sequence starting in close-up that does not reveal the location of the subject at first. It then moves back or cuts to full revelation of the geography, which comes as a surprise. A shot typical of cartoons would show an animal sleeping comfortably and then zoom out to reveal that his enemy is lowering an ax or chainsaw over his head. The opening of Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* is an excellent example of slow disclosure that also incorporates a long take where screen time emulates real time.

SLOW MOTION: Opposite of FAST MOTION. The action appears slower on the screen than it would in reality. Popular for dream and romantic effects, and to show the movements of athletes. Can be achieved, like other effects and transitions, with computers and digital technologies. In years past, it could be done by OVERCRANKING the camera, i.e., shooting at an accelerated frame rate and then projecting back at the normal frame rate.

STOP MOTION: The method by which trick photography is created pioneered by Frenchman Georges Méliès. the film is exposed one frame at a time, allowing time for rearrangement of models, etc., between shots and thus giving the illusion in the projected film of motion by something normally inanimate. This is how King Kong was filmed and also how flowers can grow, bloom and die within a

few minutes in a film. Stop motion applied to objects is animation, applied to people is pixilation. See the *Wallace and Gromit* films or Tim Burton's work for contemporary examples.

SUBJECTIVE SHOT or POV: A shot that seems to represent the point of view of one of the characters in the story. It may be what he sees (e.g. a shot through the keyhole she is peeking through into the next room), or how she sees it (e.g. a blurred shot looking up at the surgeon from the operating table as the character awakes from anesthesia). In *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, we learn at the end of the film that the distorted, expressionistic mise-en-scène reflects the fact that the film's narrator is a mental patient.

SUPERIMPOSITION: An optical or digital effect in which two or more images are on one piece of film, so that there appears to be a multiple exposure. Can be used when two characters played by the same actor have to meet; also for dissolves, dream sequences, etc. Note the superimpositions in Porter's *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend*.

TRANSITIONS: Means of connecting two shots. The following transitions can be created either in the laboratory with an optical printer, in the camera, or with digital technologies.

DISSOLVE: The merging of the end of one shot with the beginning of the next; as the second shot becomes distinct, the first slowly fades away. Thus, for a while, the two images are superimposed. Also called "lap dissolves" and in England "mixes."

FADE: A fade-in shot begins in darkness and gradually assumes full brightness. A fade-out shot gradually gets darker.

IRIS: An iris-in shot opens from darkness into an expanding circle within which is the image. An iris-out is the opposite.

WIPE: A transition in which the second shot appears and "pushes" off the first one; usually they are separated by a visible vertical line, but the variations of wipes are many. Unlike the iris, there is a picture on both sides of the dividing line.

UNITS OF FILM LENGTH:

FRAME: The individual picture on a strip of film. standard sound films are shot and projected at 24 frames per second in the United States. 25 FPS is the standard in Europe.

SHOT: A piece of film that is exposed without cuts or interruptions. (Defined in detail under its own alphabetical listing.)

TAKE: Each performance of a piece of action in front of the camera (from "lights, camera, action!" to "cut!"). Each recording is numbered sequentially until the director feels she has satisfactory results. From the takes she chooses one for each shot.

SCENE vs. SEQUENCE: Although the two terms are used constantly, there is no agreement on what these units comprise. One definition is that a scene is determined by unity of time and place (like a dramatic scene) whereas a sequence is determined by unity of action (a more filmic unit).