The Invisible Art - DW Griffith
The Invisible Art

- DW Griffith (Birth of A Nation)
  - 1st great editor
  - basic grammar of film
    - close ups
    - flashbacks
    - parallel action
  - The invisible cut
    - match action
  - In service of the story
The Invisible Editor

• Editors not partners
  • hands for hire
  • worked in shops
  • 2nd class citizens
• Jimmy Edwards Smith
  • Griffith’s editor
• The Last Tycoon (Alfred Kazan)
  • editor dies in screening room.......no one notices
Editing

- controlling and structuring a sequence of shots
- 7 topics
  - I. juxtaposition
  - II. timing
  - III. transitions
  - IV. alternative transitions
  - V. continuity and the logic of editing
  - VI. montage
  - VII. the “art” of editing
I. Juxtaposition--Film experiment

- Kuleshov Experiment--1917
- same image--actor neutral expression
- expressionless face of Tsarist matinee idol Ivan Mozhukhin
  - CU-soup-CU.....hunger
  - CU-woman-CU....love
  - CU-coffin-CU...grief
- Viewers praised the acting
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grCPqoFwp5k
• Kuleshov Experiment
Juxtaposition

- The standard Hollywood movie today has 5000 cuts.
  - Walter Murch
- The average shot length (ASL) for U.S. films released in 2007 was 2.5 seconds.
- Each one changes the one before it and the one after it
II. Timing of shots

• a. when to change shots--determined by
  • dialogue
  • Content/complexity of shot
  • director/editor intention--
    • Tease/confuse
    • inform/explain
    • pace/rhythm-fast or slow
Timing of shots

• When to Change also determined by:
  • too long, attention wanders.
  • too short, cannot comprehend
  • subject familiarity
  • how much action, change or movement pic has
  • Picture quality (contrast, detail, composition)
Timing of shots

• - correct duration depends on purpose
  • Nuclear bomb fuse
    • Lengthy shot ok for explanation
    • 1 sec ok for drama about terrorism
Timing of shots

• Pace--audience perception of speed of show
  • affected by
    • attitude to topic
    • psychological and emotional perception

• Rhythm--actual timing and duration
Timing of shots

- Rhythm
  - beat/pulse of the film
  - has accents
  - affects mood and feel
  - similar scenes altered by rhythm
  - one of most important elements
  - requires sensitivity, understanding
Timing of shots
Deconstructing Harry--Woody Allen-1997

• Rhythm
Timing of shots
Deconstructing Harry--Woody Allen

• Rhythm
  • Fast cuts
    • jump cuts, pans
  • angles
  • close ups, medium close ups
• Disagreement
• Warmth and immediacy
• uneasiness
Timing of shots

Cries and Whispers--Ingmar Bergman

• Rhythm
Timing of shots

Cries and Whispers--Ingmar Bergman

- Rhythm
  - frontally shot
  - little dialogue
  - sound is minimal--clicking/clattering
  - tight space-confined (metaphor)
  - slow pace/rhythm
    - accelerates when glass breaks, but slows
    - magnifies the accident
- Cold relationship
Timing of shots

The Good, the Bad, the Ugly--Sergio Leone

- Rhythm
Timing of shots
The Good, the Bad, the Ugly--Sergio Leone

• Rhythm
  • music as a rhythmic device
  • music first, then shooting and editing
  • begins slow
  • builds to crescendo
  • rhythm of cutting dictated by music
  • tighter shots
  • builds tension
  • Tension releases after gunshot
Timing - One frame counts
One Frame Counts

- Quentin Tarantino (Pulp Fiction)
  - Writer---word
  - Musician--note
  - Editor--frame
    - one frame is difference
- Spielberg (Jaws)
  - Verna Fields (mother cutter)
  - 2 frames made the shark real
- James Cameron (Terminator)
  - cut a frame every 24--junk
  - every frame important
VI. Montage Editing--editing for effect

- Ignores or deliberately breaks continuity rules.
- Montage editing
  - --images related by theme only, not by being part of a scene
- Often an External rhythm
  - music
  - narration
- Communicates via totality of effect, not the continuity of the images
• from *the Godfather*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CDIBLvc3YE
Godfather Montage

• Juxtaposition
  • Catholic Baptism and series of “hits”
  • uses Latin liturgy
    • time period
    • mystery
  • “I do renounce him”
    • all his works
    • all his promises
• the sacred and the sinister
• the hypocrisy of the Mafia
Montage from “Adaptation”
Montage from “Adaptation”

- Answers question
  - “what am I doing here”
  - no closer to understanding after 40 years
  - “How did I get here”
- Compresses time
- provides glimpse into writer’s mind
  - “outsider”—on the periphery
- great evolutionary achievements of nature and of man
- last stage—Charlie Kauffman in LA restaurant
Montage from “Adaptation”

- Charlie’s Historical and philosophical continuum
- His standard for meaning in his life
  - his neurosis
    - he cannot succeed
- Music provides atmosphere
  - not cut to the beat
Montage
from “Adaptation”

by Charlie and Donald Kaufman

This sequence shows the entire history of mankind from a world sparsely populated with primitive hunter-gatherers to today’s overcrowded technological society. We see the history of war, religion, commerce. We see murder and procreation. We see man interacting with his environment: farming, eating meat, admiring a view. We see old age and birth. We see it again and again at dizzying speed.

from the original script