VII--The **Art** of Editing

Walter Murch
The Art of Editing
Walter Murch

• How do they talk about it?
• Intuition about where is the attention?
  • “carry it around like a cup--don’t spill”
  • invisibly controlling attention
• Anthony Minghella (Director--Cold Mountain)
  • Why do we not care about character?
  • Why did we lose the thread of development?
  • Why “feel” deceleration at end
• Like the immune system
  • allow in the body? Not if the wrong blood type
The Art of Editing

Walter Murch - from “In the Blink of an eye”

• “The Rule of Six”
  • 1. emotion------51%
  • 2. story----------23%
  • 3. rhythm--------10%
  • 4. eye trace--------7%
  • 5. 2 dimension--5%
  • 6. 3 dimension--4%

• 1 is worth more than others combined
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• Ideal Edit--does all 6
  • true to emotion of moment
  • advances the story
  • rhythmically interesting--“feels” right
  • acknowledges the audiences “eye trace”
    • how we see and follow the screen elements
  • 2 dimensional plane--preserves stage line
  • 3 dimensional continuity of actual space
Emotion over Continuity
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Walter Murch

- Preserve emotion at all costs
- if you must sacrifice something, start at the bottom
- if an edit does the first 3, viewers will not be bothered by lower-order problems
- getting higher order elements right obscures lower order errors
  - unless catastrophic
- we care most about story and feeling
The Art of Editing
“Visual Poetry”
The Art of Editing
“Visual Poetry”

• Anne Coates “Out of Sight” 1998
  • bar scene and bedroom scene intercut
    • separate dialogue
  • not show everything--sexual tension
  • brief stop frames--emphasize the moment

• Joe Hutshing “JFK” 1991
  • Oliver Stone said “play jazz”
  • fragment time and space
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“Visual Poetry”

- Rob Cohen “XXX” 2002
  - Interested in Cubism all his life
  - watched extreme sports
  - going around the event “in pieces”
  - experience the cycle jump as if you are the rider
  - not like experiencing it from outside looking in........not like real life
  - relishing the moment
  - “cubist editing”
The Art of Editing
“Visual Poetry”

• Cubism
  • objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form
  • instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.
  • often the surfaces intersect at seemingly random angles, removing a coherent sense of depth.

Picasso: Woman w/mandolin
The Art of Editing
“Visual Poetry”

- Fast Cutting
  - Ridley Scott “Gladiator”
    - MTV
    - nothing new---- “Wild Bunch”
  - Spielberg
    - can be too much
  - Scorcese
    - everything goes by too quickly
    - consume and throw away
    - take time to see and experience time a different way
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“Visual Poetry”

- Carol Littleton “Places in the Heart” 1989
  - know when not to cut
  - have a silence
  - let the moment be itself
  - musicality of editing (not the score)
  - “held on her, held on her, held on her”
  - remember phrasing--power of silence, of slowness, of lingering.............
The Art of Editing

The editor shapes the story

KATHARINA
Moved! in good time: let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence: I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.

PETRUCHIO
Why, what's a moveable?

KATHARINA
A join'd-stool.

PETRUCHIO
Thou hast hit it: come, sit on me.

KATHARINA
Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCHIO
Women are made to bear, and so are you.

KATHARINA
No such jade as you, if me you mean.

PETRUCHIO
Alas! good Kate, I will not burden thee;
For, knowing thee to be but young and light--

KATHARINA
Too light for such a swain as you to catch;
And yet as heavy as my weight should be.

PETRUCHIO
Should be! should--buzz!
Come, come, you wasp: i' faith, you are too angry.

KATHARINA
If I be waspish, best beware my sting.
Editing Tips

• Use Head and Heart
  • Engage the viewer
    • Emotion
    • Interesting content
• Try to “be your audience”
• Tell them something clearly
• Keep them interested
• Don’t break the flow
• Not just tell story….show it
Editing Tips

• Maintain flow
  • Edit pauses
  • Add breaths (rhythm)

• Provide context

• Best content only
  • Essence
  • technical quality
  • fluency/flow
Editing Tips

• Exposure
• Color
• Contrast
• Voice quality/timbre
• Audio levels
• Background sound
• Check every edit
Editing Tips

• Interest
• Clarity
• Focus
• Meaning
• Accuracy
• Visual interest
• Technical excellence
• Editor must keep ALL in mind
Editing Tips

• Look for excess--it’s always there
• Look for clarity--it’s never there
• Make a rough
  • Have others view it
  • Listen to every edit in context
  • Watch every edit in context
• View entire piece in viewing environment