

Integrative Arts 10

Film Terminology and Other Resources

"The cinema? Three cheers for darkened rooms!"

-Andre Breton

[Internet Movie Database \(IMDB\)](#)

[Entertainment Weekly](#)

Animation - The process of photographing drawings or objects a frame at a time; by changing a drawing or moving an object slightly before each frame is taken, the illusion of motion is realized.

Auteur (French for "author") - literally the director, who is regarded as the "author" of a film because he/she has primary control and responsibility for the final product. The Auteur theory insists that a film be considered in terms of the entire canon of a director and that each Auteur earns that title by displaying a unique cinematic style.

Background Music- Music accompanying action on the screen, but coming from no discernible source within the film.

Blocking - The arrangements made for the composition of a scene, especially the placement and movements of actors.

Boom - A long mobile beam or pole used to hold a microphone or camera.

Cinema Verite - A candid-camera style of filmmaking using hand-held cameras, natural sound, grainy high-contrast black-and-white film, and the appearance of no rehearsal and only basic editing.

Cinematographer (camera man or director of photography) - The person who supervises all aspects of photography from the operation of cameras to lighting.

Clip - A brief segment excerpted from a film.

Commentator - A voice (the person speaking may be either seen or unseen) commenting on the action of a film. A commentator, unlike a narrator, provides supposedly unbiased information, maintaining apparent perspective and distance from what occurs on the screen.

Composition - The placement of people or objects within the frame and the arrangements for actual movements within the frame or by the camera.

Continuity - The narrative growth of a film created through a combination of visuals and sound (resembling the "story" in print literature).

Continuity Sketches (See Storyboard.)

Crane Shot - A shot taken from a boom that can move both horizontally and vertically.

Cross-Cutting (parallel editing) - A method of editing in which the point of view (p.o.v.) switches alternately from events at one location to those of another related action. The action is usually simultaneous and used to create a dynamic tension as in the chase scene in D.W. Griffith's *A Girl and Her Trust*. (See Intercutting for the distinction between cuts.)

Cut - An individual strip of film consisting of a single shot; the separation of two pieces of action as a "transition" (used when one says "cut from the shot of the boy to the shot of the girl"); a verb meaning to join shots together in the editing process; or an order to end a take ("cut!").

Cutter (See Editor.)

Dailies (See Rushes.)

Deep Focus (depth photography) - Keeping images close by and far away in sharp focus simultaneously.

Depth of Field - The area within which objects are in focus; a large depth of field allows a great range of objects to be in focus simultaneously, while a shallow depth of field offers a very limited area in focus. Depth of field normally depends on how far "open" a lens is (a lens works much like an eye, with the pupil opening or contracting to control light). An "open" lens (for example, f 1.4) creates a shallow depth of field while a "stopped down" (contracted) lens (for example f 16) creates a large depth of field.

Director - The person responsible for overseeing all aspects of the making of a film.

Dissolve (lap dissolve) - A method of making a transition from one shot to another by briefly superimposing one image upon another and then allowing the first image to disappear. A dissolve is a stronger form of transition than a cut and indicates a distinct separation in action. Dolly A platform on wheels serving as a camera mount capable of movement in any direction.

Dolly Shot - A moving shot taken from a dolly. A Dolly-In moves the camera toward the subject, while a Dolly-Out moves the camera away from the subject. A dolly shot creates a sense of movement through space by capturing changes in perspective.

Double Exposure (superimposition) - Two distinct images appearing simultaneously with one superimposed upon the other.

Dubbing (lip sync) - The process of matching voice with the lip movements of an actor on the screen; dubbing also refers to any aspect of adding or combining sounds to create a film's final soundtrack.

Editing (continuity editing, narrative montage) - The process of splicing individual shots together into a complete film. Editing (as opposed to Montage) puts shots together to create a smoothly flowing narrative in an order making obvious sense in terms of time and place.

Editor (cutter) - The person responsible for assembling the various visual and aural components of a film into a coherent and effective whole.

Fade - A transitional device in which either an image gradually dims until the viewer sees only a black screen (Fade-Out) or an image slowly emerges from a black screen to a clear and bright picture (Fade-In). A fade provides a strong break in continuity, usually setting off sequences.

Fast Motion - (accelerated motion) Movements on the screen appearing more rapid than they would in actual life. For example, a man riding a bicycle will display legs pumping furiously while he flashes

through city streets at the speed of a racing car. A filmmaker achieves fast motion by running film through his camera at a speed slower than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection of 24 frames per second speeds up the action.

Fill Light - Light used to control shadows by "filling in" certain dark areas.

Film Stock - Unexposed strips of celluloid holding light-sensitive emulsions.

Filters - Transparent glass of gelatin placed in front of or behind a lens to control coloration; some filters cut out certain types of light (such as ultra- violet); others create a soft, hazy appearance, and still others provide a dominant color when used with color films.

Fine Cut - The final assembling of all the various audial and visual components of a film.

Fish-Eye - An extreme wide-angle lens taking in (and distorting) an immense area.

Flashback - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to time past. Flashback may be subjective (showing the thoughts and memory of a character) or objective (returning to earlier events to show their relationship to the present).

Flash Forward - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to a future time. Flash forward, like flashback, may be subjective (showing precognition or fears of what might happen) or objective (suggesting what will eventually happen and thus setting up relationships for an audience to perceive).

Flashframe - A shot lasting only a few frames; the shortness of a flashframe makes its content difficult to assimilate. When many flashframes follow each other, they create a feeling of intense action and often visually resemble the effects of stroboscopic light; when used alone, flashframes usually act as flashbacks or Hash forwards.

Flip - A transitional device (now used rarely) in which an image appears to flip over, revealing another image on its backside; the effect is much like flipping a coin from one side to the other.

Focal Length - The distance from the focal point of a lens to the plane of the film (for viewers and cameramen, this is seen as the amount of area a lens can photograph from a given distance.)

Focus-Through (racking) - A change of the field in focus taking the viewer from one object to another that was previously out of focus.

Frame - A single photographic image imprinted on a length of film; also the perimeter of an image as seen when projected on a screen (a filmmaker sees the frame as the boundaries of his camera's view-finder). Freeze Frame A single frame repeated for an extended time, consequently looking like a still photograph.

High-Angle Shot - A shot taken from above a subject, creating a sense of "looking down" upon whatever is photographed.

Intercutting- The alternation between actions taking place at two distinct locations to make one composite scene. For example, cutting between two people involved in the same telephone conversation. The distinction between this and cross cutting is one of compression of time. The intercut can be used to speed up a scene and eliminate large pieces of time that would slow a story down.

Iris - A technique used to show an image in only one small round area of the screen. An Iris-Out begins as a pinpoint and then moves outward to reveal the full scene, while an Iris-In moves inward from all sides to leave only a small image on the screen. An iris can be either a transitional device (using the

image held as a point of transition) or a way of focusing attention on a specific part of a scene without reducing the scene in size.

Jump Cut - An instantaneous cut from one action to another, at first seemingly unrelated, action. Jump cuts will usually call attention to themselves because of the abrupt change in time and/or place.

Key Light - The primary source of illumination

High-Key - light brilliantly illuminates a set;

Low-Key - light provides dim lighting, usually with heavy, dark shadows.

Lap Dissolve (See Dissolve.)

Library Shot - (stock shot) Any shot not taken for a particular film but used in it.

Lip Sync (See Dubbing.)

Local Music - Music originating within a scene and audible to both the characters in the film and the audience.

Location - A place outside-the studio where shooting occurs.

Long Lens - Any lens with a focal length greater than normal; a normal focal length approximates the size relationships seen by the human eye, while a long focal length creates a narrower angle of vision, causing a larger image. A long lens alters perspective by flattening a subject into its background. (See telephoto.)

Loop Film - A film with ends joined, creating a loop that can be run continuously through a projector.

Low-Angle Shot - A shot taken from below a subject, creating a sense of "looking up to" whatever is photographed.

Mask - A device placed in front of a lens to reduce the horizontal or vertical size of the frame or to create a particular shape (for example, periscope eyepiece, binoculars, or gun-sight).

Match Cut - A cut intended to blend two shots together unobtrusively (opposed to a Jump Cut).

Matte Shot - A process for combining two separate shots on one print, resulting in a picture that looks as if it had been photographed all at once. For example, a shot of a man walking might be combined with a shot of a card table in such a way that the man appears to be six inches high and walking on a normal size card table.

Metteur-En-Scene - A director or filmmaker (often used to indicate a director who does not deserve the title auteur).

Mise-En-Scene - The aura emanating from details of setting, scenery, and staging.

Mix - The process of combining all sounds at their proper levels from several tracks and placing them onto a master track.

Montage - (dynamic editing, expressive montage, conditional montage) A method of putting shots together in such a way that dissimilar materials are juxtaposed to make a statement. A shot of a man followed by a shot of a peacock, for example, declares that the man is pompous. (See Editing.)

MOS - Any segment of film taken without sound. (The letters MOS come from early foreign directors

who wanted pictures taken "mit out sound.")

Moviola - A special projection machine (used by film editors) that holds several reels of film simultaneously and can run at variable speeds, backward or forward, and stop at any frame. (Moviola was originally a brand name but now refers only to a type of projection machine.)

Negative Image - An image with color value reversed from positive to negative, making white seem black and black appear white.

Neorealism - A film style using documentary techniques for fictional purposes. Most neorealist films rely on high-contrast black-and-white film, nonprofessional actors, and natural settings. Neorealism began as a movement among a group of filmmakers in Italy after World War II.

New Wave (Nouvelle vague) - A recent movement in French filmmaking based mainly on the notion of the Auteur. The movement was begun in the late 1950s by a group of young filmmakers (including Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Goddard, Louis Malle, and Alain Resnais) interested in exploring new potentials for film art.

Nonsynchronous Sound - Sound that combines sounds from one source with visuals from another, such as intense argument with only a man walking alone visible, or the sounds of a rooster accompanying visuals of a classroom lecturer. (See Synchronous Sound.)

Objective Camera - The attempt to suggest that the camera acts only as a passive recorder of what happens in front of it. The use of objective camera relies on de-emphasis of technique, involving minimal camera movement and editing.

Optical Printer - A device used to "print" the images of one film onto another film through direct photography.

Out-Take - A take that is not included in the final version of a film.

Pan - A shot in which a stationary camera turns horizontally, revealing new areas.

Parallel Editing (See Cross-Cutting.)

Perspective - The way objects appear to the eye in terms of their relative positions and distances.

Pixillatxon - A technique using cartoon methods to create movement by objects or people. For example, a man will stand with feet together and be photo-graphed, then he will repeat this action over and over, but move slightly forward each time; the result will show the man apparently moving forward (usually rapidly) without moving any part of his body.

Process Shot - A shot coordinated with another image created by Rear Projection, making the resulting picture look like a single simultaneous shot. A typical process shot shows the faces of two people riding in a car; behind them (as seen through the rear window) moves the usual traffic of a city street. The traffic has been added by rear projection, creating a process shot.

Producer - The person who is responsible for all of the business aspects of making and releasing a film.

Racking (See Focus-Through.)

Reaction Shot - A shot showing one or more characters reacting to an action or statement. Rear Projection (back projection) The process of projecting an image onto a translucent screen from the back side rather than over the heads of the viewers as is usually done. Filmmakers use rear projection to film

an action against a projected background, thus recording on film both the stage action and the rear-projected image. (See Process Shot.)

Reverse Angle Shot - A shot of an object or person taken in the direction opposite that of the preceding shot (for example, a shot of the gates of a prison from within followed by a reverse angle shot showing the gates from outside). Rough Cut The initial assembling of the shots of a film, done without added sound.

Rushes - (dailies) The lengths of footage taken during the course of filming and processed as the shooting of a film proceeds.

Scenario (See Script.) - Scene A series of Shots taken at one basic time and place. A scene is one of the basic structural units of film, with each scene contributing to the next largest unit of film, the sequence.

Script - (scenario, shooting script) - A written description of the action, dialogue, and camera placements for a film.

Sequence - A structural unit of a film using time, location, or some pattern to link together a number of scenes.

Shooting - Ratio The ratio in a finished film of the amount of film shot to the length of the final footage. Shot A single uninterrupted action of a camera as seen by a viewer (see Take). Shots are labeled according to the apparent distance of the subject from the camera: extreme long-shot (ELS) also called an establishing shot; long-shot (LS); medium long-shot (MLS); medium or mid-shot (MS); medium close-up (MCU); close-up (CU); and extreme close-up (ECU). Although distinctions among shots must be defined in terms of the subject, the human body furnishes the usual standard of definition: ELS, a person is visible but setting dominates; LS, person fills vertical line of the frame; MLS, knees to head; MS, waist up; MCU, shoulders up; CU, head only; ECU, an eye.

Slow Motion - Movements on the screen appearing slower than they would in actual life. For example, a diver will seem to float to the water gently rather than fall at the speed dictated by gravity. A filmmaker achieves slow motion by running film through his camera at a speed faster than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection at 24 frames per second slows down the action.

Soft Focus - A slightly blurred effect achieved by using a special filter or lens, or by shooting with a normal lens slightly out of focus.

Still - A photograph taken with a still (versus motion) camera.

Stock Shot (See Library Shot.)

Storyboard (continuity sketches) - A series of sketches (resembling a cartoon strip) showing potential ways various shots might be filmed.

Subjective Camera - Shots simulating what a character actually sees; audience, character, and camera all "see" the same thing. Much subjective camera involves distortion, indicating abnormal mental states. Shots suggesting how a viewer should respond are also called "subjective" (for example, a high-angle shot used to make a boy look small and helpless).

Superimposition (See Double Exposure.)

Swish Pan - A quick pan from one position to another caused by spinning the camera on its vertical axis and resulting in a blurring of details between the two points. Sometimes a swish pan is used as a transition by creating a blur and then ending the blur at an action in an entirely different place or time.

Synchronous Sound - Sound coordinated with and derived from a film's visuals. (See Nonsynchronous Sound.)

Take - A single uninterrupted action of a camera as seen by a filmmaker. A take is unedited footage as taken from the camera, while a shot is the uninterrupted action left after editing.

Telephoto Lens (See Long Lens) - A lens with an extremely long focal length capable of making distant objects appear nearer and thus larger. (A telephoto has greater power of magnification than a Long Lens.)

Tilt Shot - A shot taken by angling a stationary camera up (tilt-up) or down (tilt-down).

Tracking Shot (traveling shot, trucking shot) - Any shot using a mobile camera that follows (or moves toward or away from) the subject by moving on tracks or by being mounted on a vehicle.

Trailer - A short segment of film that theaters use to advertise a feature film.

Trucking Shot - Any moving shot with the camera on a mobile mounting, but chiefly a moving shot taken with a camera mounted on a truck.

Two Shot - A shot of two people, usually from the waist up.

Voice-Over - Any spoken language not seeming to come from images on the screen.

Wide-Angle Lens - Any lens with a focal length shorter than normal, thus allowing a greater area to be photographed. A wide-angle lens alters perspective by making nearby objects seem relatively larger than those far away and by increasing the apparent distance between objects both laterally and in depth.

Wipe - A transitional device in which one image slowly replaces another by pushing the other out of the way.

Zoom Freeze - A zoom shot that ends in a freeze frame.

Zoom Shot - A shot accomplished with a lens capable of smoothly and continuously changing focal lengths from wide-angle to telephoto (zoom in) or telephoto to wide-angle (zoom out).

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Web page created by [Gregory J. Golda](#)