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AN INTRODUCTION

EXPERIENCE

THE FILM

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Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments and copyrights appear at the back of the book on page 527, which constitutes an extension of the copyright page.

- A picture:** A feature film with a considerable budget and prestigious source material or stars or other personnel that has been historically promoted as a main attraction receiving top billing in a double feature; see **B picture**.
- academy ratio:** An aspect ratio of screen width to height of 1.33:1, or 4:3, the standard adopted by the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1931 and used by most films until the 1950s; see **wide-screen ratio**.
- adaptation:** The process of turning a novel, short story, play, or other artistic work into a film.
- ADR:** Automated dialogue replacement, a widely used postproduction process in which actors watch the film scene and re-record their lines to be mixed into the soundtrack; also called **looping**.
- alternative film narrative:** Film narratives that deviate from or challenge the linearity of the main narrative, often undermining the centrality of the main character, the continuity of the plot, or the verisimilitude of the narration.
- analytical editing:** Continuity editing that establishes spatial and temporal clarity by breaking down a scene, often using progressively tighter framings.
- anamorphic lens:** A camera lens that compresses the horizontal axis of an image or a projector lens that "un-squeezes" such an image to produce a widescreen image.
- ancillary market:** A venue other than theatrical release in which a film can make money, such as foreign sales, airlines, pay television, cable, or home video.
- animation:** A process that traditionally refers to moving images drawn or painted on individual cels or to manipulated three-dimensional objects, which are then photographed onto single frames of film. Animation now encompasses digital imaging techniques.
- antagonists:** Characters who oppose the protagonists as negative forces.
- apparatus theory:** A critical school that explores the cinema as an ideological phenomenon based on a physical set of technologies, including the camera and the arrangement of projector and screen, that reinforces the values of individualism and the transcendence of the material basis of the cinematic illusion.
- archetype:** An original model or type, such as Satan as an archetype of evil.
- art director (also production designer or set designer):** The individual responsible for supervising the conception and construction of the physical environment
- casting director:** The individual responsible for identifying and selecting which actors would work best in a particular role.
- canted frame: Framing** that is not level, creating an unbalanced appearance.
- camera movement:** See **mobile frame**.
- camera lens:** A piece of curved glass that focuses light rays in order to form an image on film.
- boom:** A long pole used to hold a microphone above the actors to capture sound while remaining outside the frame.
- blocking:** The arrangement and movement of actors in relation to each other within the mise-en-scène.
- block booking:** A practice in which movie theaters had to exhibit whatever a studio/distributor packaged with its more popular and desirable movies; declared an unfair business practice in 1948.
- backlighting:** A highlighting technique that illuminates the person or object from behind, tending to silhouette the subject; sometimes called **edge-lighting**.
- B picture:** A low-budget, nonprestigious movie that usually played on the bottom half of a double bill. B pictures were often produced by the smaller studios referred to as Hollywood's Poverty Row; see **A picture**.
- axis of action:** An imaginary line bisecting a scene corresponding to the **180-degree rule in continuity editing**.
- avant-garde films:** Aesthetically challenging, noncommercial films that self-consciously reflect on how human senses and consciousness work or explore and experiment with film forms and techniques. Avant-garde cinema thrived in Europe in the 1920s and in the United States after World War II.
- auteur theory:** An approach to cinema first proposed in the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* that emphasized the role of the director as the expressive force behind a film and saw a director's body of work as united by common themes or formal strategies; also referred to as **auterism**.
- autour:** French term for **author**; implies a director with a unique vision or style; see **autour theory**.
- asynchronous sound:** A term that describes sound that does not have a visible onscreen source; also referred to as **offscreen sound**.
- aspect ratio:** The width-to-height ratio of the film frame as it appears on a movie screen or television monitor.
- in which the actors appear, including sets, locations, props, and costumes.

- character actors:** Recognizable actors associated with particular character types, often humorous or sinister, and often cast in minor parts.
- character development:** The patterns through which characters in a particular film move from one mental, physical, or social state to another.
- character types:** Conventional characters (e.g., hard-boiled detective or femme fatale) typically portrayed by actors cast because of their physical features, acting style, or the history of other roles they have played.
- chiaroscuro lighting:** A term that describes dramatic, high-contrast lighting that emphasizes shadows and the contrast between light and dark; frequently used in German expressionist cinema and **film noir**.
- chronology:** The order according to which shots or scenes convey the temporal sequence of the story's events.
- chronophotography:** A sequence of photographs of human or animal motion such as those produced by Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey and the immediate precursors of the cinema.
- cinema verité:** French term literally meaning "cinema truth"; a style of documentary filmmaking first practiced in the late 1950s and early 1960s that used unobtrusive lightweight cameras and sound equipment to capture a real-life situation; the parallel U.S. movement is called **direct cinema**.
- cinematography:** Motion-picture photography, literally "writing in movement."
- classical film narrative:** A style of narrative filmmaking centered on one or more central characters who propel the plot with a cause-and-effect logic wherein an action generates a reaction. Normally plots are developed with linear chronologies directed at definite goals, and the film employs an omniscient or a restricted third-person narration that suggests some degree of **verisimilitude**.
- classical film theory:** Writings on the fundamental questions of cinema produced in roughly the first half of the twentieth century. Important classical film theorists include Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim, Andre Bazin, and Siegfried Kracauer.
- claymation:** A process that uses **stop-motion photography** with clay figures to create the illusion of movement.
- click track:** Holes punched in the film corresponding to the beat of a metronome that can help actors, musicians, and the composer keep the rhythm of the action.
- close-up:** Framing that shows details of a person or object, such as a character's face.
- code:** A term used in linguistics and semiotics meaning a system of signs from which a message is generated. In a communication act, a code must be shared by the sender and the receiver for the message to be understood. For example, traffic signals use a color code.
- color balance:** Putting emphasis on a particular part of the color spectrum to create realistic or unrealistic palettes.
- color filter:** A device fitted to the camera lens to change the tones of the filmed image.
- commodity tie-ins:** The saleable goods that are marketed with the "brand name" of a particular film or film characters.
- compilation or anthology films:** Films comprised of various segments by different filmmakers.
- computer-generated imagery (CGI):** Still or animated images created through digital computer technology. First introduced in the 1970s, CGI was used to create feature-length films by the mid-1990s and is widely used for visual effects.
- computer graphics:** Electronically generated images used to create special effects and elaborate settings.
- continuity editing:** The institutionalized system of Hollywood editing that uses cuts and other transitions to establish **verisimilitude**, to construct a coherent time and space, and to tell stories clearly and efficiently. Continuity editing follows the basic principle that each shot or scene has a continuous relationship to the next; sometimes called **invisible editing**.
- continuity script:** A screenplay that presents in detail the action, scenes and dialogue, transitions, and often camera setups, in the order planned for the final film.
- continuity style:** The systematic approach to filmmaking associated with classical Hollywood cinema, utilizing a broad array of technical choices from continuity editing to scoring that support the principle of effacing technique in order to emphasize human agency and narrative clarity.
- contrasting balance:** A use of color that creates dramatic oppositions and tensions.
- counterpoint:** Using sound to indicate a different meaning or association than the image.
- coverage:** Shooting a particular scene from different angles and setups to allow options for smooth editing of the finished scene.
- crane shot:** A shot taken from a camera mounted on a crane that can vary distance, height, and angle.
- crosscutting:** An editing technique that cuts back and forth between actions in separate spaces, often implying simultaneity; also called **parallel editing**.
- cue:** A visual or aural signal that indicates the beginning of an action, line of dialogue, or piece of music.
- cut:** In the editing process, the join or splice between two pieces of film; in the finished film, an editing transition between two separate shots or scenes achieved

documentary film: A non-fiction film that presents (presumably) real objects, people, and events.

edgeling: See **backlighting**.

ellipses: An abridgment in time in the narrative implied by editing.

establishing shot: Generally, an initial long shot that establishes the location and setting and that orients the viewer in space to a clear view of the action.

ethnographic documentary: An anthropological film that aims to reveal cultures and peoples in the most authentic terms possible, without imposing the filmmaker's interpretation on that experience.

exclusive release: A movie that premieres in restricted locations initially.

exhibition: The part of the film industry that shows films to a paying public, usually in movie theaters.

experimental films: Films that explore film form and subject matters in new and unconventional ways, ranging from abstract image and sound patterns to dreamlike worlds.

extratextual: Characterizes aspects of the film experience available to the scholar that exist outside of the film itself, including production, distribution, exhibition, and reception.

extreme close-up (ECU): A framing that is comparatively tighter than a **close-up**, singling out, for instance, a person's eyes, or the petal of a flower.

extreme long shot: A framing from a comparatively greater distance than a **long shot**, in which the surrounding space dominates human figures, such as in distant vistas of cities or landscapes.

eyeline match: A principle in **continuity editing** that calls for following a shot of a character looking off-screen with a shot of a subject whose screen position matches the gaze of the character in the first shot.

fade-in: An **optical effect** in which a black screen gradually brightens to a full picture; often used after a **fade-out** to create a transition between scenes.

fade-out: An **optical effect** in which an image gradually darkens to black, often ending a scene or a film; see **fade-in**.

feature film: Running typically 90 to 120 minutes in length, a narrative film that is the primary attraction for audiences.

fill lighting: A lighting technique using secondary fill lights to balance the **key lighting** by removing shadows or to emphasize other spaces and objects in the scene.

film genre: A set of conventions and formulas, repeated and developed through film history, which organize and categorize films according to repeated subjects, icons, and styles.

film noir: A term introduced by French critics (meaning literally "black film") to describe Hollywood films of the 1940s set in the criminal underworld, which were

without optical effects. A version of the edited film, as in rough cut, final cut, or director's cut.

cutaway: A shot that interrupts a continuous action, "cutting away" to another image or action, often to bridge time.

dates: The developed prints of a day's shooting that are viewed and evaluated by the filmmaker and other creative personnel.

deadline structure: A narrative structure that accelerates the action and plot toward a central event or action that must be accomplished by a certain time.

deep focus: A focus in which multiple planes in the shot are all in focus simultaneously; usually achieved with a wide-angle lens.

depth of field: The range or distance before and behind the main focus of a shot within which objects remain relatively sharp and clear.

dialectical montage: A concept developed in the theories and films of Soviet silent film director Sergei Eisenstein that refers to the cutting together of conflicting or unrelated images to generate an idea or emotion in the viewer.

digress: A term that refers to the world of the film's story (its characters, places, and events), including not only what is shown but also what is implied to have taken place. It comes from the Greek word meaning "narration."

diegetic sound: Sound that has its source in the narrative world of the film, whose characters are presumed to be able to hear it.

digital cinematography: Shooting with a camera that records and stores visual information electronically as digital code.

direct cinema: A documentary style originating in the United States in the 1960s that aims to observe an unfolding situation as unobtrusively as possible; related to **cinéma vérité**.

direct sound: Sound captured directly from its source.

directional lighting: Lighting that may appear to emanate from a natural source and defines and shapes the object, area, or person being illuminated.

disjunctive editing: A variety of alternative editing practices that call attention to the cut through spatial tension, temporal jumps, or rhythmic or graphic patterns so as to affect viscerally, disorient, or intellectually engage the viewer.

dissolve: An **optical effect** that briefly superimposes one shot over the next. One image fades out as another image fades in and takes its place; sometimes called a lap dissolve because two images overlap in the printing process.

distribution: The means through which movies are delivered to theaters, video stores, and television and cable networks, which make them available to consumers.

- gauge:** The width of the film stock; e.g., 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, and 70mm.
- graphic editing:** A style of editing creating formal patterns of shapes, masses, color, lines, and lighting patterns through links between shots.
- graphic match:** An edit in which a dominant shape or line in one shot provides a visual transition to a similar shape or line in the next shot.
- handheld cameras:** Smaller, lightweight cameras (such as the ArriFlex) that can be carried by the operator rather than mounted on a tripod. Such cameras, widely used during World War II, allowed cinematography to become more mobile and fostered the advent of on-location shooting.
- handheld shot:** A film image produced by an individual carrying the camera, creating an unsteady shot that may suggest the point of view of an individual moving through space.
- hard lighting:** A high-contrast lighting style that creates hard edges, distinctive shadows, and a harsh effect, especially when filming people.
- high angle:** A shot directed at a downward angle on individuals or a scene.
- high concept:** A short phrase that attempts to sell a movie by identifying its main marketing features, such as its stars, genre, or some other easily identifiable connection.
- highlighting:** Using lighting to brighten or emphasize specific characters or objects.
- historiography:** The writing of history; the study of the methods and principles through which the past becomes organized according to certain perspectives and priorities.
- horror film:** A film genre with origins in gothic literature that seeks to frighten the viewer through supernatural or predator characters; narratives built on suspense, dread, and surprise; and visual compositions that anticipate and manipulate shocking sights.
- hybrid genres:** Mixed forms produced by the interaction of different genres, such as musical horror films.
- iconography:** Images or image patterns with specific connotations or meanings.
- ideology:** A systematic set of beliefs, not necessarily conscious or acknowledged.
- IMAX:** A large format film system that is projected horizontally rather than vertically to produce an image approximately ten times larger than the standard 35mm frame.
- independent film:** Films that are produced without initial studio financing, typically with much lower budgets; they include feature-length narratives, documentaries, and shorts.
- insert:** A brief shot, often a **close-up**, filmed separately from a scene and inserted during editing, that points out details significant to the action.
- considerably darker in mood and mise-en-scène than those that had come before.** Typically shot in black and white in nighttime urban settings, they featured morally ambiguous protagonists, corrupt institutions, dangerous women, and convoluted plots, and they used stylized lighting and cinematography.
- film script:** The text from which a movie is made, including dialogue and information about action, settings, etc.; also known as a **screenplay**.
- film speed:** The rate at which moving images are recorded and later projected, standardized for 35mm sound film at 24 frames per second (fps); also, a measure of film stock's sensitivity to light.
- film stock:** Unexposed film consisting of a flexible backing or base and a light-sensitive emulsion.
- filters:** Transparent sheets of glass or gels placed in front of the lens to create various effects.
- final cut:** The final edited version of a film.
- first release:** A movie's original exhibition, also referred to as its first run, often limited to specific theaters in major cities.
- flare:** A spot or flash of white light created by directing strong light directly at the lens.
- flashback:** A sequence that follows images set in the present with images set in the past; it may be introduced with a dissolve conveying a character's subjective memory or with a voiceover in which a character narrates the past.
- flashforward:** A sequence that connects an image set in the present with one or more future images and that leaps ahead of the normal cause-and-effect order.
- focus:** The point or area in the image that is most precisely outlined and defined by the lens of the camera; the point at which light rays refracted through the lens converge.
- foley artist:** A member of the sound crew who generates live synchronized sound effects such as footsteps, the rustle of clothing, or a key turning in a lock, while watching the projected film. Named after their inventor, Jack Foley, foley tracks are eventually mixed with other audio tracks.
- following shots:** A pan, tilt, or tracking shot that follows a moving individual or object.
- formalism:** A method of analysis and critical school that considers a work's form or structure to be primary. It posits that objective meaning is to be found in the work itself and not in an outside source, such as the author's biography.
- framing:** The portion of the filmed subject that appears within the borders of the frame; it correlates with camera distance, e.g., long shot or medium close-up.
- frontal lighting:** Techniques used to illuminate the subject from the front. Related terms are side lighting, under lighting, and top lighting.
- 35mm film:** The width of the film stock; e.g., 8mm, 16mm, and 70mm.
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intertitle: Printed text inserted between film images, typically used in silent films to indicate dialogue and position and in contemporary films to indicate time and place or other transitions.

invisible editing: See *continuity editing*.

iris-in: An optical effect used as an editing transition that gradually opens from a small, usually circular, portion of the frame to reveal the entire image. It is infrequently used in modern cinema.

iris-out: An optical effect used as an editing transition that begins by masking the corners of the frame in black and gradually reduces the image to a small circle. It is infrequently used in modern cinema.

iris shot: A shot in which the frame is masked so that only a small circular piece of the image is seen.

jump cut: A disjunctive edit that interrupts a particular action and intentionally or unintentionally creates discontinuities in the spatial or temporal development of shots.

key lighting: The main source of non-natural lighting in a scene. High-key light is even (the ratio between key and fill light is high); low-key light shows strong contrast (the ratio between key and fill light is low).

lighting: Sources of illumination—both natural light and electrical lamps—used to present, shade, and accentuate figures, objects, and spaces, or *mise-en-scène*. Lighting is primarily the responsibility of the director of photography and the lighting crew; see *key lighting, fill lighting, and highlighting*.

limited release: The practice of initially distributing a film only to major cities and expanding distribution according to its success or failure.

location scouting: Determining and securing suitable places besides studio sets to use for shooting particular movie scenes.

long shot: A framing that places considerable distance between the camera and the scene or person so that the object or person is recognizable but defined by the large space and background; see *establishing shot*.

long take: A shot of relatively long duration.

looping: An image or sound recorded on a loop of film to be replayed and layered.

low angle: A shot from a position lower than its subject. **masks:** Attachments to the camera or devices added optically that cut off portions of the frame so that part of the image is black.

master shot: A continuous shot of a scene's entire action that is usually intercut with other shots (such as close-ups) to form a completed scene; see *coverage*.

match on action: A cut between two shots featuring a similar visual action, such as when a shot in which a character opening a door cuts to a shot depicting the continuation of that action, or when a shot of a train moving left to right cuts to a character running in the same direction.

matte shot: A shot that joins two pieces of film, one with the central action or object and the other with additional background, figures, or action (sometimes painted or digitally produced) that would be difficult to create physically for the shot.

medium close-up: A framing that shows a comparison between the camera and the subject compared with a *medium shot*; it shows most of an individual's body.

medium long shot: A framing that increases the distance between the camera and the subject compared with a *medium shot*; it shows most of an individual's body.

medium shot: A middle-ground framing in which we see the body of a person from approximately the waist up.

metteur-en-scène: Derived from the French term for director (particularly a theater director); in *auteur theory* this term refers to a director who conveys technical competence without possessing a strong streak of individual vision, in contrast to an *auteur*.

music-key-mouning: Overillustrating the action through the musical score, drawn from the conventions of composing for cartoons. An example of music-key-mouning is accompanying a character walking on tip-toe with music played by plucked strings.

miniature model: A small-scale model constructed for use during the filming process to stage special effects sequences and complex backgrounds.

mise-en-scène: A French theatrical term meaning literally "put on stage"; used in film studies to refer to all the elements of a movie scene that are organized, often by the director, to be filmed and that are later visible on-screen. They include the scenic elements of a movie, such as actors, lighting, sets, costumes, make-up, and other features of the image that exist independently of the camera and the processes of filming and editing.

mix: The combination by the sound mixer of separate soundtracks into a single master track that will be transferred onto the film print together with the image track to which it is synchronized.

mobile frame: A property of a shot in which the camera itself moves or the borders of the image are altered by a change in the focal length of the camera lens.

montage: The French word for "editing." It can be used to signify any joining of images, but it has come to signify a style that emphasizes the breaks and contrasts between images joined by a cut, such as in Soviet silent-era filmmaking or in certain rapid sequences in Hollywood films used for descriptive purposes or to show the rapid passage of time. See *disjunctive editing*.

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non-narrative films: Films organized in a variety of ways besides storytelling; they employ organizational forms such as associations, lists, repetitions, or contrasts.

nontheatrical formats: Formats such as video and narrow gauge film (8mm, Super 8, and 16mm) and documentary, short, and experimental genres in which films intended for community, artistic, or educational use rather than theatrical exhibition are produced.

objective point of view: A point of view that does not associate the perspective of the camera with that of a specific character.

offscreen space: The implied space outside the boundaries of the film frame.

omniscient narration: Narration that presents all elements of the plot, exceeding the perspective of any one character; see also **third-person narration**.

180-degree rule: A central convention of continuity editing that restricts possible camera setups to the 180-degree area on one side of an imaginary line (the **axis of action**) drawn between the characters or figures of a scene. If the camera were to cross the line to film from within the 180-degree field on the other side, onscreen figure positions would be reversed.

onscreen space: Space visible within the frame of the image.

optical effect: Special effects produced with the use of an optical printer, including visual transitions between shots such as **dissolves**, **fade-outs**, and **wipes**, or process shots that combine figures and backgrounds through the use of **mattes**.

optical printer: The photographic equipment used by technicians to create **optical effects** in films by duplicating the already exposed image onto new film stock and altering the lighting or adding additional components.

optical sound recording: A sound recording process that converts sound waves into electrical impulses that then control how a light beam is projected onto film. The process enables a soundtrack to be recorded alongside the image for simultaneous projection.

orthochromatic: A property of black-and-white film stock used in the 1920s, sensitive to greens and blues but registering red light as black.

overhead shot: A shot that depicts the action from above, generally looking directly down on the subject; the camera may be mounted on a **crane**.

overlapping dialogue: Mixing two or more characters' speech to imitate the rhythm of speech; the term may also refer to dialogue that overlaps two scenes to effect a transition between them.

overlapping editing: An edited sequence that presents two shots of the same action; because this technique violates continuity, it is rarely used.

pace: The tempo at which the film seems to move. It is determined by the duration of individual shots and rather than their fictional, or invented, re-creation.

nonfiction films: Films presenting (presumed) factual descriptions of actual events, persons, or places, rather than their fictional, or invented, re-creation.

sound and semidiagegetic sound.

nonidiagegetic sound: Sound that does not have an identifiable source in the characters' world and that consequently the characters cannot hear; see **diegetic sound** and **semidiagegetic sound**.

nitrates: The highly flammable chemical base of 35mm film stock used until 1951.

nondiegetic insert: An insert that depicts an action, object, or title originating outside of the space and time of the narrative world.

nondiegetic sound: Sound that does not have an identifiable source in the characters' world and that consequently the characters cannot hear; see **diegetic sound** and **semidiagegetic sound**.

nickelodeons: Early movie theaters, typically converted storefront or arcade spaces, where short films were shown continuously for a five-cent admission price to audiences passing in and out. They were prominent until the rise of the feature film in the 1910s demanded more comfortable settings.

niche market: A term referring to a segment of the audience with specialized tastes, which Hollywood increasingly has come to recognize as lucrative.

negative cutter: The individual who conforms the negative of the film to the final cut. Release prints are then struck from the negative.

naturalistic acting: An actor's effort to embody the character that he or she is playing in order to communicate the essential self of the character.

natural lighting: Light derived from a natural source in a scene or setting, such as the illumination of the day-light sun or firelight.

narrator: A character or other person whose voice and perspective describe the action of a film, either in voice-over or through strict limitation of what is shown to a particular point of view.

narratology: The study of narrative forms, encompassing stories of all kinds, including films.

narrative frame: A context or person positioned outside the principal narrative of a film, such as bracketing scenes in which a character in the story's present begins to relate events of the past and later concludes her/his tale.

narrative: The telling of a story or description of a situation; the emotional, physical, or intellectual perspective through which the characters, events, and action of the plot are conveyed. In film, narration is most explicit when provided as asynchronous verbal commentary on the action or images, but it can also designate the storytelling function of the camera, the editing, and verbal and other soundtracks.

narrative: A story told by a narrator or conveyed by a narrational point of view; see **plot**.

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the style of editing, as well as by other elements of cinematography and mise-en-scène and the overall rhythm and flow of the film's action.

pan: A left or right rotation of the camera, whose tripod or mount remains in a fixed position that produces a horizontal movement onscreen.

"pan-and-scan" process: The process used to transfer a widescreen-format film to the standard television aspect ratio. A computer-controlled scanner determines the most important action in the image, and then crops peripheral action and space or presents the original frame as two separate images.

panchromatic: A property of a black-and-white film stock introduced in the 1920s that responds to a full spectrum of colors, rendering them as shades of gray, for a more nuanced and realistic image.

parallel editing: An editing technique that alternates between two or more strands of action in separate locations, often presented as occurring simultaneously; see **crosscutting**.

parallel plot: The implied simultaneity of or connection between two different plot lines, usually intersecting.

parallelism: An instance in which the soundtrack reinforces the image, such as synchronized dialogue or sound effects or a voiceover that is consistent with what is displayed onscreen; see **counterpoint**.

performative development: Changes in a character described through an actor's performance.

persistence of vision: The eyes' retention of a visual imprint for approximately one-fifth to one-twentieth of a second after the object has disappeared; as a result, the continuous projection of a series of still images at a rate of sixteen or more frames per second will give the illusion of movement; see **phi phenomenon**.

perspective: The manner in which the distance and spatial relationships among objects are represented on a two-dimensional surface. In painting, parallel and converging lines were used to give the illusion of distance and depth; in film, perspective is manipulated by changes in the focal length of camera lenses.

phi phenomenon: The psychological illusion of motion when two or more still images of an object in different positions are shown in sequence; see **persistence of vision**.

pixilation: A type of animation that employs stop-motion photography (or instead simply cuts out images from a continuous piece of filmed action) to transform the movement of human figures into rapid jerky gestures.

platforming: The distribution strategy of releasing a film in gradually widening markets and theaters so that it slowly builds its reputation and momentum through reviews and word-of-mouth.

plot: The narrative ordering of the events of the story as they appear in the actual work, selected and arranged according to particular temporal, spatial, generic, causal, or other patterns.

point of view: The position from which a person, event, or object is seen or filmed; in narrative form, the perspective through which events are narrated.

point-of-view (POV) shot: A subjective shot that reproduces a character's optical point of view, often preceded and/or followed by shots of the character looking.

postproduction: The period in the filmmaking process that occurs after principal photography has been completed and usually consisting of editing, sound, and special effects work.

postproduction sound: Sound recorded and added to a film in the postproduction phase.

postsynchronous sound: Sound recorded after the actual filming and then synchronized with onscreen sources.

process shot: A special effect that combines two or more images as a single shot, such as filming an actor in front of a projected background.

producer: The person or persons responsible for steering and monitoring each step of a film project, especially the financial aspects, from development to postproduction and a distribution deal.

production: The industrial stages that contribute to the making of a finished movie, from the financing and scripting of a film to its final edit; more specifically, the actual shooting of a film after preproduction and before **postproduction**.

production mixer: The sound engineer on the production set; also called sound recordist.

promotion: The aspect of the movie industry through which audiences are exposed to and encouraged to see a particular film; promotion includes advertisements, trailers, publicity appearances, and product tie-ins.

protagonists: Individuals identified as the positive forces in a film; see **antagonists**.

rack focus (or pulled focus): A dramatic change in focus from one object to another.

reaction shot: A shot that depicts a character's response to something shown in a previous shot.

reception theory: A theoretical approach to the ways of different kinds of audiences regard different kinds of films.

reestablishing shot: A shot during an edited sequence that returns to an "objective" view to the spectator seemingly "objective" view to the spectator.

reflected sound: Recorded sound that is captured as it bounces from the walls and sets. It is usually used to give a sense of space; opposed to **direct sound**.

reflexive narration: A mode of narration that calls attention to the narrative point of view of the story in order to complicate or subvert its own narrative authority as an objective perspective on the world.

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plot: The narrative ordering of the events of the story as they appear in the actual work, selected and arranged

- reframing:** The process of moving the frame from one position to another within a single continuous shot.
- restricted narration:** A narrative in which our knowledge is limited to that of a particular character.
- rhythmic editing:** The organization of editing according to different paces or tempos determined by how quickly cuts are made.
- room tone:** The aural properties of a location that are recorded and then mixed in with dialogue and other tracks to achieve a more realistic sound.
- rough cut:** The initial edited version of a movie in which an editor approximates the finished film.
- saturation booking:** Releasing a film simultaneously in as many locations in the United States—and sometimes the world—as possible.
- scene:** One or more shots that depict a continuous space and time.
- screenplay:** See *film script*.
- segmentation:** The process of dividing a film into large narrative units for the purposes of analysis.
- semidiagegetic sound:** Sound that is neither strictly *diegetic* nor *nondiagegetic*, such as certain voiceovers that can be construed as the thoughts of a character and thus as arising from the story world; also known as *internal diegetic sound*.
- sequence:** Any number of *shots* or *scenes* that are unified as a coherent action or an identifiable motif, regardless of changes in space and time.
- sequence shot:** A shot in which an entire scene is played out in one continuous take.
- set lighting:** The distribution of an evenly diffused illumination through a scene as a kind of lighting base.
- shallow focus:** A shot in which only a narrow range of the field is in focus.
- shock cut:** A cut that juxtaposes two images whose dramatic difference aims to create a jarring visual effect.
- shooting ratio:** The relationship between the overall amount or length of film shot and the amount used in the finished project.
- shot:** A continuous point of view (or continuously exposed piece of film) that may move forward or backward, up or down, but not change, break, or cut to another point of view or image.
- shot/reverse shot:** An editing pattern that begins with a shot of one character taken from an angle at one end of the *axis of action*, follows with a shot of the other end character from the "reverse" angle at the other end of the line, and continues back and forth through the sequence; often used in conversations.
- slow motion or fast motion:** A cinematic special effect that makes the action move at unrealistic speeds (achieved by filming the action faster or slower than normal and then projecting it at standard speeds).
- soft lighting:** A diffused, low contrast lighting that reduces or eliminates hard edges and shadows and can be more flattering when filming people.
- sound bridge:** The term for sound carried over a picture transition, or a sound belonging to the coming scene playing before the image changes.
- sound continuity:** The range of scoring, sound recording, mixing, and playback processes that strive for the unification of film meaning and experience by subordinating sound to the aims of the narrative.
- sound designer:** The individual responsible for planning and directing the overall sound of a film through to the final mix.
- sound editing:** Combining music, dialogue, and effects tracks to interact with the image track in order to create rhythmic relationships, establish connections between sound and onscreen source, and smooth or mark transitions.
- sound mixing:** An important stage in the *postproduction* of a film that takes place after the image track, including the credits, is complete; the process by which all the elements of the soundtrack, including music, effects, and dialogue, are combined and adjusted; also called *re-recording*.
- sound perspective:** The apparent location and distance of a sound source.
- sound recording:** The recording of dialogue and other sound that takes place simultaneously with the filming of a scene.
- sound reproduction:** Sound playback during a film's exhibition.
- soundstage:** A large soundproofed building designed to construct and move sets and props and effectively capture sound and dialogue during filming.
- source music:** Diegetic music; music whose source is visible onscreen.
- special effects cinematography:** A variety of technical processes that alter the filmed image to achieve a visual effect, such as *slow motion*, *color filters*, *process shots*, and *matte shots*.
- spectatorship:** The process of film viewing; the conscious and unconscious interaction of viewers and films as a topic of interest to film theorists.
- splice:** The physical join between two pieces of film.
- spotting:** The process of determining where music and effects will be added to a film.
- Steadicam:** A camera stabilization system introduced in 1976 that allows a camera operator to film a continuous and steady shot without losing the freedom of movement afforded by the handheld camera.
- stinger:** Sound that forces the audience to notice the significance of something onscreen, such as the ominous chord struck when the villain's presence is made known.

stop-motion photography: A process that records inanimate objects or actual human figures in separate frames that are then synthesized on film to create the illusion of motion and action.

story: The subject matter or raw material of a narrative, or our reconstruction of the events of a narrative based on what is explicitly shown and ordered in the plot.

studio system: The industrial practices of the large production (and, until 1948, distribution) companies responsible for the kinds and quality of movies made in Hollywood. The five major studios are MGM, Paramount, RKO, Twentieth-Century Fox, and Warner Bros.

subgenre: A specialized genre that defines a specific, more limited version of a more general genre, often by refining it with an adjective, such as the spaghetti western or slapstick comedy.

subjective point of view: A point of view that recreates the perspective of a character.

supporting actors: Actors who play secondary characters in a film, serving as foils or companions to the central characters.

surrealist cinema: One of the most influential of the avant-garde movements, surrealist films confronted middle-class assumptions about normality using the powers of film to manipulate time, space, and material objects according to a dreamlike logic.

suture: A term that refers to our sense of being inserted in a specific place in the film, from which to look at its fictional world through editing and point of view.

synchronous sound: Sound that is recorded during a scene or that is synchronized with the filmed images; as used by scholar Siegfried Kracauer, a term that describes sound that has a visible onscreen source, such as moving lips; also referred to as onscreen sound.

syntagma: A term derived from linguistics for sequential units of meaning and used by Christian Metz to refer to the smallest combinable narrative units of film—sequences, scenes, and autonomous shots.

take: A single filmed version of a shot during production or a single shot on screen.

talking heads: An on-camera interview that typically shows the speaker from the shoulders up, hence "talking head."

Technicolor: Color processing that uses three strips of film to transfer colors directly onto a single image; developed between 1926 and 1932.

telephoto lenses: A lens with a focal length of at least 75mm, capable of magnifying and flattening distant objects; also **zoom lens**.

theatrical trailer: A promotional preview of an upcoming release presented before the main feature or as a television commercial.

third-person narration: A narration that assumes an objective and detached stance vis-à-vis the plot and characters, describing events from outside the story.

30-degree rule: A cinematography and editing rule that specifies that a shot should only be followed by another shot taken from a position greater than 30 degrees from that of the first.

three-point lighting: A lighting technique common in Hollywood that combines **key lighting**, **fill lighting**, and **backlighting** to blend the distribution of light in a scene.

tilt shot: An upward or downward rotation of the camera, whose tripod or mount remains in a fixed position, producing a vertical movement onscreen.

tone: The shading, intensification, or saturation of colors (such as metallic blues, soft greens, or deep reds) in order to sharpen, mute, or balance them for certain effects.

tracking shot: A shot that changes the position of the point of view by moving forward, backward, or around the subject, usually on tracks that have been constructed in advance (a dolly shot is mounted on a dolly that follows a determined course); also called a traveling shot.

treatment: A succinct description of the content of a film written before the **film script**.

two-shot: A shot depicting two characters.

underscoring: A film's background music; contrasts with **source music**.

unreliable narration: A type of **narration** that raises questions about the truth of the story being told.

verisimilitude: The quality of fictional representation that allows readers or viewers to accept a constructed world, its events, its characters and their actions as plausible; literally "having the appearance of truth."

voice-off: A voice that originates from a speaker who can be inferred to be present in the scene but who is not visible on screen.

voiceover: A voice whose source is neither visible in the frame nor implied to be offscreen; it typically narrates the film's images, such as in a flashback or the commentary in a documentary film.

walla: A nonsense word spoken by extras in a film to approximate the sound of a crowd during sound dubbing.

wide-angle lens: A lens with a short focal length (typically less than 35mm) that allows cinematographers to explore a depth of field that can simultaneously show foreground and background objects or events in focus.

wide release: The premiere of a movie at many locations simultaneously, sometimes on as many as 1500 to 2000 screens.

widescreen processes: Any of a number of systems introduced in the 1950s that widened the aspect ratio and the dimensions of the movie screen.

The Film Experience

By Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White

Available Free
for Students

- ▶ MISE-EN-SCÈNE
- ▶ CINEMATOGRAPHY
- ▶ EDITING
- ▶ SOUND
- ▶ NARRATIVE

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

backlighting A highlighting technique that illuminates the person or object from behind, tending to silhouette the subject; sometimes called **edgelifting** [Figure 1].

blocking The arrangement and movement of actors in relation to each other within the mise-en-scène [Figure 2].

fill lighting A lighting technique using secondary fill lights to balance the **key lighting** by removing shadows or to emphasize other spaces and objects in the scene [Figure 3].

key lighting The main source of non-natural lighting in a scene. High-key light is even (the ratio between key and fill light is high); low-key light shows strong contrast (the ratio between key and fill light is low) [Figure 4].

mise-en-scène A French theatrical term meaning literally "put on stage," used in film studies to refer to all the elements of a movie scene that are organized, often by the director, to be filmed and that are later visible on-screen. They include the scenic elements of a movie—such as actors, lighting, sets, costumes, make-up—and other features of the image that exist independently of the camera and the processes of filming and editing.



Figure 1
Sweet Smell of
Success (1957).
Backlighting.

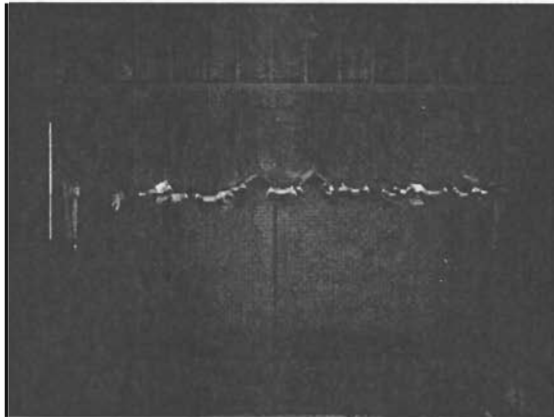


Figure 2
Metropolis (1927).
Blocking.

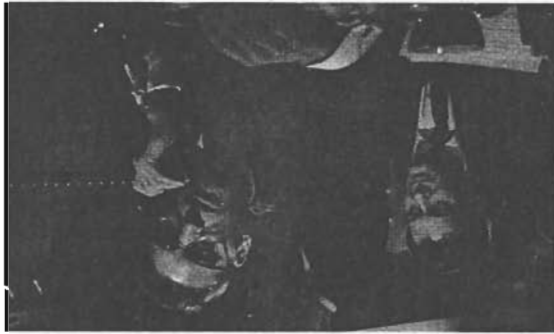


Figure 3
Sweet Smell of
Success (1957).
Fill lighting.



Figure 4
Sweet Smell of
Success (1957).
Low-key lighting.

deep focus A focus in which multiple planes in the shot are all in focus simultaneously [Figure 5].

depth of field The range or distance before and behind the main focus of a shot within which objects remain relatively sharp and clear.

framing The selection through the camera viewfinder of a portion of the subject; a measure of the portion of the filmed subject that appears within the borders of the frame and correlates with camera distance, e.g., long shot or medium close-up [Figure 6].

high angle A shot directed at a downward angle on individuals or a scene.

low angle A shot from a position lower than its subject.

offscreen space The implied space or world that exists outside the boundaries of the film frame.

pan A horizontal movement of the camera, whose tripod or mount remains in a fixed position [Figure 7].

process shot A shot in which actors are filmed in front of a projected background.

tracking shot A shot that changes the position of the point of view by moving forward, backward, or around the subject, usually on tracks that have been constructed in advance or on a dolly that follows a determined course; also called a **dolly shot** or a **traveling shot** [Figure 8].

EDITING

continuity editing The institutionalized system of Hollywood editing that uses cuts and other transitions to establish verisimilitude, to construct a coherent time and space, and to tell stories clearly and efficiently. Continuity editing follows the basic principle that each shot or scene has a continuous relationship to the next; sometimes called **invisible editing**.

disjunctive editing In contrast with Hollywood **continuity editing**, this term refers not to a single editing system but rather to a variety of alternative practices that call attention to the cut. It may be organized around any number of different aspects of editing, such as spatial tension, temporal experimentation, or rhythmic or graphic patterns, and serve a variety of aesthetic, conceptual, ideological, or psychological purposes, including disorienting, or viscerally affecting, the viewer, or engaging the viewer's thought processes.

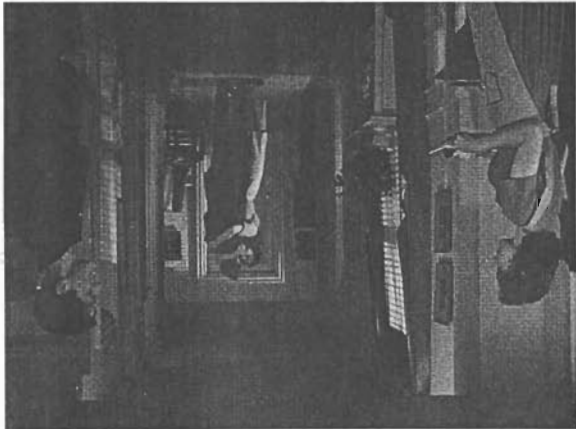


Figure 5 *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). Deep focus.



Figure 6 *Vertigo* (1958). Framing.



Figure 7 *Death in Venice* (1970). Pan.



Figure 8 *Goodfellas* (1990). Tracking shot.

establishing shot Generally, an initial long shot that establishes the location and setting and that orients the viewer in space to a clear view of the action [Figure 9].

eyeline match A principle in continuity editing that calls for following a shot of a character looking off-screen with a shot of a subject whose screen position matches the gaze of the first character.

shot/reverse shot An editing pattern that begins with a shot of one character taken from an angle at one end of the axis of action, follows with a shot of the second character from the "reverse" angle at the other end of the line, and continues back and forth through the sequence [Figures 10 and 11].

SOUND

diegetic sound Sound that has its source in the narrative world of the film, whose characters are presumed to be able to hear it [Figure 12].

nondiegetic sound Sound that does not have an identifiable source in the characters' world and that the consequently the characters cannot hear.

NARRATIVE

alternative film narrative Film narratives that deviate from or challenge the linearity of **classical film narrative**, often undermining the centrality of a main character, the continuity of the plot, or the verisimilitude of the narration.

classical film narrative A style of filmmaking in which narratives are centered on one or more central characters who propel the plot with a cause-and-effect logic wherein an action generates a reaction. Normally the plots are developed with linear chronologies directed at certain definite goals, and the film employs an omniscient or a limited third-person narration that suggests some degree of realism.

diegesis A term that refers to the world of the film's story (its characters, places, and events), including not only what is shown but also what is implied to have taken place. It comes from the Greek word meaning "narration."

narration The telling of a story or description of a situation; the emotional, physical, or intellectual perspective through which the characters, events, and action of the plot are conveyed. In film, narration is most explicit when provided as asynchronous verbal commentary on the action or images, but it can also designate the story-telling function of the camera, the editing, and verbal and other soundtracks.



Figure 9 (*Lueless* (1995)). Establishing shot.



Figure 10 (*The Big Sleep* (1946)). Shot . . .



Figure 11 (*The Big Sleep* (1946)). . . . reverse shot.



Figure 12 (*Blazing Saddles* (1974)). Diegetic sound.

ESSENTIAL VIEWING CUES



Preliminaries

- Consider your expectations about the film you are about to see. What do you know in advance about it? The genre to which it belongs? The historical period or culture that produced it? Is it a big-budget film or a more modest production? Do you know other films by the same director or star?

Mise-en-scène

- What are the most significant elements in the mise-en-scène of the movie? Settings or sets? A particular prop or other object? Costumes or clothing? Make-up? Lighting? The performance of an actor? Why?

Cinematography

- What are the two or three most important shots in this movie? Describe them. Is there a pattern of certain kinds of shots in this film? If so, consider the significance of that pattern.
- How do the colors (including black and white) of particular images in this film communicate certain emotions, attitudes, or even ideas?

Editing

- Select a scene and tap each time a cut appears. Would you have noticed each cut if you had not been attempting this exercise?
- Find an example of continuity editing. Are there cuts that are more disjunctive? What are their effects?

Sound

- Listen carefully to the musical score. Try to identify a motif associated with a particular character, setting, or situation.

Narrative Films

- How does the plot construct the story? Is it a linear plot? If not, how would you describe it? What information is highlighted? Omitted? Delayed?

Experimental or Documentary Films

- If the film you are watching is a documentary or experimental film, how would you describe its organization? Is it expository, imaginative, or rhetorical—or a combination of these?

Overview

- How would you describe the main argument or chief themes of the film? Can you relate them to the style and structure of the film?
- Why might this film be historically or culturally important? What are its main achievements? Its shortcomings?
- Is there a particular topic that would lead to an illuminating or interesting essay about this movie?

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