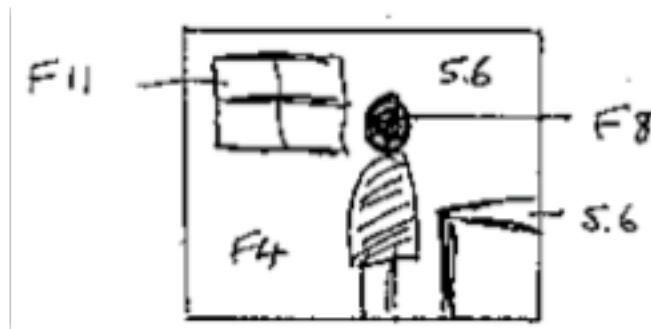


Film Directing: Directing Drama for Film and Television



Film Directing: Directing drama for film and television ©Eugene Doyen 2010
The moral right of the author has been asserted

CONTENTS

Directing drama

Essential terminology for directing	3
The role of the director	4
Preparing the script: character and plot	8
Preparing the script: setting and types of story	15
Working with actors	18
Preparing the role	21
Casting	26
Running the shooting day	29
Running set ups and calling shots	33

The continuity system

Continuity of action and dialogue	36
Continuity of costume and props	37
Continuity for lighting and camera	39
Continuity of sound	41
Visual continuity for editing	42

Blocking and choreographing action: coverage

Advantages and disadvantages	48
Success in shooting coverage	54

Blocking and choreographing action: shot by shot scenes

Advantages and disadvantages	54
Crib sheet: shot by shot and psychological realism	56
Techniques to enhance blocking, camerawork and sound	57

Blocking and choreographing action: single set up scenes

Single set up scenes: advantages and disadvantages	60
How to successfully design and stage single set up scenes	61
Crib sheet for single set up scenes	64

Blocking and choreographing action: film direction and film style

Coverage: the studio system	65
Coverage: contemporary television drama	68
Shot by shot and film style: the cartoon and the action movie	69
Psychological realism and film style	70
The single set up scene and film style	73
Social realism and film style: an alternative to studio practice	74
Designing the style of an individual production	75

Production techniques

Cinematography and videography: essential principals	78
The knowledge of the cinematographer	89
Designing lighting	91
The purpose and practice of cinematography	93
The script supervisor	96
Sound recording techniques for dialogue scenes	99
Production preparation and planning	101

Directing drama

Essential terminology for directing

This study guide often refers to *set ups* and *takes* rather than shots when discussing directing. This is because it is the terminology used on a professional film set.

During the filming of a scene, each time the camera is moved into a new position or adjusted to create a new framing this is called a *set up*. Each time that set up is filmed it is called a *take*. There may be several takes of the same set up before the director is satisfied with the results. Confusion would occur while filming if the term shot was used rather than differentiating between set up and takes. If a director calls for a new set up, the camera position or the framing, will be changed. If the director wants to do another take then the action of the set up will be repeated.

In addition to avoiding confusion on set, the terminology of set ups and takes is used for logging/recording what is being filmed. When the clapper loader holds the clapperboard in front of the camera, just before director calls 'action', the clapperboard will note of the number of the set up and the number of the take. For instance *Slate fifty-five, Take three*, would indicate that the shot that is about to be filmed is the fifty-fifth set up of the film and a third take of this specific set up.

Blocking

Blocking is the planning and choreographing of shots. It is one of the principal roles of the director, although this work is done in conjunction with the performers and the cinematographer. Some directors like to plan shots extensively beforehand through storyboarding and others will only block after they have rehearsed with the performers on the set. No matter when the blocking is planned and decided there are essentially only three approaches to shooting a scene:

Single set up

Coverage

Shot by shot

Each of these approaches to blocking is discussed in this study guide.

Directing drama

The role of the director

If there is one job that the director has above all others it is working with actors. All the other major roles in the filmmaking process; producer, production designer, cinematographer, editor, all have their specific areas of responsibility, but only the director has a specific responsibility for working with the actors.

A film, a drama, is a story where the audience experiences the emotions of the events through the characters. Therefore, it is essential for a successful drama that the audience takes on the characters' aspirations their thoughts and feelings and this happens when trained, professional actors are well directed.

A good director will want to ensure that characters and their emotions are at the core of a story. A good director will want the actors to give convincing, detailed and rounded performances based on a combination of actions, reactions, thoughts and emotions.

A good director works with the actors to help them, to support them and ensure that they get the guidance they need to give the best possible performance. The director can't control the actors, because actors are not puppets, but the director is an expert guide based on their knowledge of the script and because of this expert knowledge they can bring out the actors' talents and abilities to meet the demands of the story. The director helps the actors most by sharing their understanding of the script, not by telling them what to do.

In outline, what a film director does is the following:

- The director prepares the script for shooting, sometimes as part of the writing process and sometimes on the basis of a finished script. For a feature film production the director is more likely to commence work during the scriptwriting/development process while in television the director is more liable to receive a finished shooting script, which they will not develop in terms of any story or dialogue changes.
- In rehearsal and during filming the director works with the actors to ensure the best possible performance. This is the major role of the director. There are no other personnel working on the film to take this role.
- The director plans the blocking for shooting, working with the actors and the crew.
- The director works with key creative personnel for the production, notably the cinematographer in relation to the design of lighting and the blocking of set ups and the production designer in terms of the authenticity of sets and props and in terms of the style of the film.

- The authority and the responsibilities that a director carries on a feature film production are likely to be different than on a television production for a number of reasons. For a long-running television series the directors, there will be several of them, will work to the style of the production, while on a feature film the director may work from the start of production and collaborate with the production team in terms of script, costume design and production design. An experienced feature film director may well have more authority on a film than a first-time director. Above all else filmmaking is a collaborative process. The key personnel on a film work together as a team each bringing their skills to the process.
- Often the biggest personal barrier to someone becoming a competent and creative director, someone who can make a dramatically successful film is, more often than not, their perception about what directing is. They think it's about telling people what to do and this is a mistake

Mistaken beliefs about directing

In the public mythology of directing these are the myths:

The director tells people what to do. They are in charge making all the decisions.

The director is the author of the film; everything about a film has their fingerprint on it, and this shows how much control they had over everyone making the film.

When planning a film the first role of the director is to design shots using a storyboard, and on set their main role is to get those shots filmed with the actors and camera crew following the directors' instructions.

Following on from these mistaken assumptions about directing many people encounter problems when they first come to directing: they get bad performances, they block shots that don't edit well, or fail to tell the story. They get irritated and angry that the crew are letting them down, or the crew isn't good enough, and the crew in turn become demoralized and resentful.

These problems occur when an inexperienced director does not know how to prepare a script for shooting, does not know how to successfully block and choreograph action and does not know how to work with crew or how to direct actors.

When an inexperienced director feels that a film is failing, that it's not going to be as well made as they envisaged, when the performances are poor and the shots don't seem to be working, they're not telling the story, a new director can start to believe that actors are the biggest problem about filmmaking and that actors are too difficult to deal with and that actors will always be a problem for the director. Instead what is true is that badly directed actors will always give a poor performance and if a director can't

understand or remedy this situation then it's the director's problem, because they're not good enough. The director may feel that the actors are at fault, that they're bad actors, but the truth is that the director is failing, because they don't know what they're doing.

A new director may feel that they need to control a production so that a production is made exactly as they imagine it. This is a mistake. The making of film is an event. Each person on the cast and crew brings their own abilities to the production and these ingredients will shape and determine the film. The challenge for a film is to bring a good script together with the right people, which is the producers' role, and the director's job is to act as arbiter, guide and morale booster for everyone working on the production. A director who tries to rule by dictate will find it hard if not impossible to control in precise and intricate detail what people do, while a director who supports and trusts people to give the best they can will be supported by those around them.

By changing their assumptions about the role of the director and their attitude towards actors things will change for the better for an inexperienced director.

These are the assumptions that will help a director achieve success:

A good director uses their detailed and highly developed understanding of the script, the plot and characters in the story, to guide and support the performers and this in turn guides the blocking of the set ups.

Set ups aren't planned independently of performance. Directing a film isn't about treating actors like puppets who need to pose for a still photograph, directing is about blocking which produces a coherent, storytelling relationship between script, actors, and shot film.

A good director does not try to control the actors and make them do what they're told. This will not work, because it's over-controlling and de-motivating.

A good director will always to use the talents and skills of those around them. They will want to work with the best most experienced people.

The director's job is to help *everybody* to do the best they can. The director is the leader of a creative team, not a boss standing over underlings. The director makes many decisions but these decisions are made while working in collaboration with other production personnel.

These are the essential skills of a good director:

- As a good director will study and understand the script far better than anyone else. This is the director's most important preparation
- A good director helps everybody; they work as part of team
- A good director works with the best people benefitting from their talents
- To get the best: The director explains and asks, they don't boss people about telling them what to do.
- A good director always supports actors one hundred percent because their success is the director's success

Directing drama

Preparing the Script: character and plot

It's the job of the director to know the script better than anyone else; story, back story, characters, dialogue – everything. A good director will understand every nuance of a script and base their directing decisions on that understanding. Without a well prepared script a director has nothing to work with. The script can be studied, broken down from two perspectives character and plot. From the point of view of *character* so that actors can be successfully cast and directed and from the point of view of *plot*, so it's clear what the story is and what the audience need to know, which in turn will inform that planning and direction of set ups.

Character Breakdown

The director will make preparation notes and generate detailed information the characters in the script. These are the headings for these preparation notes are:

Character Background

Super-objective

Scene objective

Dramatic blocks

Performance beats

Character development

Character arcs

Character background

Each character has their own back story and background. This needs to be defined by the director in order to help the actor, because it will underpin the playing of the role. In the *Preparing the role* section of this study guide there is a detailed discussion of *Indicators and aspects of character*, which set out all the facets that inform character background. This section sets out the topic headings for script preparation.

Super-objective

Each character has a super-objective, something that motivates them that underpins their personality that moves them through the story. The super-objective for a character may be a simple statement - they want to love – but it has to be exact: a person who *wants to love* will give love and a person who *needs love* will want to be given love. These are two very different super-objectives. The super-objective for a character might be expressed by an external goal; I want to be rich, but this is underpinned by an internal super-objective, which might be; *I am desperate to have money so that I feel strong.*

The most important principal to work from is the fact nothing happens in a story without a character responding to their own internal dynamic, their super-objective.

When a character makes sense, what they do makes sense and the story is likely to be convincing on screen to the audience for this reason. The super-objective underpins the motivations of the character.

It's important to note here that the difference between fictional characters and actual people is that fictional characters are more coherent and their motivations more consistent. When a film is well directed and well acted the audience will feel that a character is authentic and genuine, this is what directors and actors mean when they say they want a character to be *truthful* to the audience, but a well constructed fictional character is an illusion; knowingly crafted by the director and the actor. A fictional character is actually far more limited and simplistic than a real person, but a detailed and coherent performance by an actor supported by a director will convince the audience otherwise.

The director prepares the script, but after casting the director and the actor chosen for the role need to decide and agree on what the super-objective for a character is, what this fictional person wants, and when they do this they will be working together on the same story. This is how a director works with actors; it's a process of understanding and collaborating, not controlling with the director in charge.

Scene objective

A scene objective is the character's specific objective for the scene, which may or may not result in the outcome they want. The scene objective can't contradict the super-objective or a character's behavior would become incoherent and senseless; the scene objective will stem from the super-objective.

Dramatic blocks

Dramatic blocks break the scene down into short significant elements, like the paragraphs in a written story. They help the actors focus on how each part of a scene is meant to be played. They break the story down so that it is clearly told to an audience and these dramatic blocks will offer the director ideas for blocking the actors and for shooting the scene. A short scene might be a single dramatic block, while a longer scene will have several dramatic blocks.

If the idea of a dramatic block seems puzzling it's actually the case that a well written script will naturally break down into dramatic blocks. For example: In the film *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid*, two outlaws being hunted by a posse find themselves trapped on the edge of a ravine with roaring river far below them. In terms of dramatic blocks the scene works like this:

- The two outlaws are trapped. They realize that they can't escape. One outlaw suggests jumping from the cliff the other rejects the idea. *This dramatic block sets up the situation and the conflict for the scene*
- The two outlaws argue about the merits of jumping or staying and fighting. One wants to jump one wants to fight. *This dramatic block builds to the climax of the scene, the decisive point, the turn in the action*
- Deciding to jump, the outlaws boldly leap from the cliff. *This is the pay off for the scene, the climax and it moves the story forward.*

Directing a scene is based on an understanding of the characters in the scene, their motivations and objectives, and an understanding of the structure of the scene. Watching any well directed scene in any film it will be possible to identify dramatic blocks, because there will be clear sections and breaks in the scene, decisive points. When preparing a script the director and the actors will be able to identify the dramatic block and decide how these will be performed and how they will be filmed.

The details of a performance can be broken down into beats.

Performance beat = character beat

A script is prepared by the director and the actor by working from the character's background and super-objective down to the performance beat; a very small element of the character's action and personality which might be portrayed by a tiny blink, a nod, the position of the shoulders, a step to one side. A good performance is carefully detailed to convey what is correct for the character at each moment in the story. A performance beat creates the reality that audiences will emotionally interact with and believe in. The performance beats are the decisions made about the delivery of the lines, the movement of the actors, their gestures and facial expression, their looks and reactions at each moment of the scene.

There are several ways to become aware of performance beats. Watch a film with the sound muted and carefully study the position, gestures, expressions and reactions of the performers. This silent watching will show the acting; what the actor is doing physically to convey their character. Another way to become aware of performance beats is to read a script before seeing the film. Read the script mechanically out loud, giving it no performance, no emotion. Then listen to the film, rather than watching it, and all the nuances provided by the vocal delivery; the pace, the tone, the pauses, hesitations, the intonation will come through.

In script preparation the director works to consider the voice and physicality that will convey the character and these beats need to be seen in the finished film. They guide the blocking. If a character draws away from another character because they are frightened, then this performance beat needs to be seen; the director needs to block to show this performance beat.

Character developments and character arcs

Some stories are about profound changes to a character's super-objective; a character who is only out for what they can get for themselves learns to be unselfish. Sometimes this can be referred to as the character arc. These changes in the super-objective will be identified as specific change of beats by the director and the final point when there is a profound change in a character arc will be a very significant climax.

Relationships

Relationships have a history, they effect the choices and actions that a character makes, they effect their emotions. Nearly all stories focus on how events challenge and change relationships so these need to be mapped out by the director and the actors. Is a person kind or cruel? It will depend what the situation is. A person may be capable of savage cruelty, but if they care for someone they will want to avoid being hurtful to them. No

person has the same relationship with everyone around them. If a relationship changes then the behavior of those involved will change. This is often what a story is about.

In the film *Scarface*, the gangster Tony can be cruel, proud and arrogant, but this changes when he is with his sister, Gina, because he loves her. Tony has a trusted friend, his partner, Manolo, they are great friends until Manolo finds himself attracted to Tony's sister, making Tony hostile and jealous.

When preparing a script the director needs to map out relationships and understand how these feed into character arcs scene objective, dramatic blocks, performance beats.

Conflicts

A story is about a conflict. A person wants something and they have to face some sort of conflict or challenge to get it. It could be the conflict, the challenge of an epic journey or the conflict between two people in a room. The essence of this conflict and how it plays out in a story is underwritten by a character's super-objective, but defined by their relationship to what they struggle against; nature, society, people. Understanding the conflicts for each character in the story and pinpointing how a character relates to this conflict at each point of the narrative creates a line of actions and reactions that the director and actors can trace out and follow through.

Tension

Conflicts and struggles create tension. Tension comes when people interact. One character wants one thing and another character wants something else. A story is battle of desires and wills. These tensions need to be expressed in the physicality of performance and put on screen by the director. The tensions between the characters need to be clear. A badly prepared script where the tensions are not identified and crystallized in performance will result in a story without tension and there are films which are poorly directed so that the stories and what the character wants seems weak and emotionless.

Stereotypes

A weak director will rely on the easy definitions of character defined by stereotypes. They will disastrously simplify a character using clichés: 'you play the thug'. This is bad directing and will lead to caricatured inauthentic performances that the audience don't believe in. The director needs to prepare the script to create depth and believability with each character.

No successful dramatic character is entirely a stereotype. A character might be recognizable as a 'tough, determined cop', but this stereotype is given depth, through their background, personal history and relationships and how these factors have influenced their personality.

Actors who might seem to have little or nothing to do, and who are portraying 'simple' roles such as a henchman who stands in the background behind the villain with no lines, can act well or badly, can be directed well or badly, and this is because even small nuances of performance, such as stance, or facial expression can provide the details that's needed to give a background character veracity for the audience.

Plot breakdown

The director prepares character breakdowns to underpin the casting and the directing of actors. The director also prepares a plot breakdown to make sure that it is clear what the audience need to know in order to be able to understand and follow the story; what the audience will learn visually and what they learn through the action and the dialogue. There's a terminology for storytelling and these terms are useful to because they identify what will make the story clear to the audience and what makes the story dramatic and involving.

Back story

There is the story as it happens on screen and there is the back story, the events that led each and every character up to the point where they join the story. Back story defines character, sets up relationships and situations, conceals secrets, adds depth. There's back story for what each character did, there's what each character knows and there's what the audience know about the back story. Back story can be used to design costume, sets and the audience will pick up the back story from what they're told in dialogue and how characters interact.

Narrative beat = Action beat = Story event = Plot point

There are performance beats which convey character which are one main element of the story and there are actions beats, events in the story. In terms of a story where a character leaves a cup unwashed on a table: this will have a performance/character beat; the way the actor/character leaves the cup and there is the story beat, the importance to the plot of the audience knowing that the cup has been left on the table. The two types of beats overlap but they are different in emphasis. If the story requires the cup to be on the table so another character can see it, this is essential to the plot and the director then need to make sure that the staging of the scene, the blocking makes this action clear to the audience.

Each event in a story can be identified as a beat. Each plot point/beat needs to be clearly understood by the director so that it can be shown on screen. There is very little redundant plot information in a well-made film and each narrative beat works as part of unified structure. With a well prepared script the director will know what each image, each sound, each line of action and dialogue is meant to convey to the audience in terms of plot and they will be able to convey this intention to the production team and the performers so that the film is successfully made.

Turning point = Change of beat

By definition every scene in a film progresses the story so it's going to have beats and there will often be significant complications, conflicts and decisions that creates a change of beat; a decisive event that alters the course of the story. Major turning points relate to structure; beginning, middle and end. It's when key actions and decision take place.

Set up and pay off

Sometimes a plot point is made and its implications for the story only becomes clear much later. Story points are set up and then their significance is paid off. Set ups and pay offs create a weaving interconnection between different parts of the story and these add the depth and detail to a story. For instance: A setup: a man is robbed of his

wallet. Pay off: later on in the story the man cannot prove his identity because he has been robbed. This first plot point puts in place the logic of the second plot point.

Complications

A plot point will often cause a complication; these effect the events in the story that follow. The implications for any complication, how it effects the story, what it changes throughout the story needs to be known. In the film *Speed*, there is a bomb on a bus. To escape the bomb the bus might simply stop and the passengers get off. However, there are two complications: the bus can't slow down or the bomb will explode, the passengers can't transfer to a vehicle pulling alongside the moving bus, because the bomber is watching and will explode the bomb if they do. Complications heighten a story, and need to be clear to the audience.

Reversals

A reversal is a very significant event which surprises the audience and sets the story on a new unexpected path. What the audience are anticipating for the story is now disrupted. Reversals keep the audience guessing and engaged because the story is less predictable. In *Speed*, the police find locate the name and address of the bus bomber, they raid his house, expecting to catching him. There is a reversal; the bomber is not at his house, which earlier scenes in the story suggested, but he has set a booby-trap. So, in a reverse of the expectation that the bomber will be caught he kills the police officers trying to catch him.

Misdirection

There are plot points that lay false trails. An audience is always thinking ahead, trying to work out in advance how a story will end and misdirection can deliberately lead them astray and make them assume things have happened or will happen, but these turn out to be false trails. Like complications and reversals misdirection can add depth and detail to a story. Too much misdirection will confuse and story and become gratuitous because there are so many false trails. Crime films, murder mysteries always have misdirection; the story suggests that one person might be the killer and then someone else is found guilty.

Raising the stakes

An event happens, the audience learns something and the stakes are raised; the challenge becomes more difficult, the threat more deadly and this increase in tension enhances the dramatic effect. This type of beat needs to be recognized in the script and communicated to the audience because raising the stakes is effective way to heighten the drama. In the film *Hostage*, the hostage negotiator is on the phone talking to a man who is barricaded in his house. The man is holding his wife hostage. Then the audience is shown that there is a child in the house. This child is an innocent who is in jeopardy. By releasing the information, who is in the house, in this order the stakes are raised and the tension of the story is increased.

Exposition

A story will show events happening, it may also be necessary to explain through dialogue who is who and what has happened, or what is planned. This is exposition. When it is done well it flows in smoothly with the narrative, but if it's done badly it will feel like the storyteller has intruded to make things clear, because the audience is

too dumb to work things out for themselves. If recapping is used, then this information can't be lost. In *Vicky Christina Barcelona*, a painter tells two girls he has just met about his wife; how wild she is, how she stabbed him. This is exposition for the audience, when the painter receives a phone call saying that Vicky has tried to kill herself, it's a believable event in the story, because the motive behind Vicky's action has been supplied by the exposition.

Suspense

Suspense is created when the audience know something that one or more of the characters do not. This is a very specific point of view. Recognizing it in a script and using it on screen can be very effective in pulling the spectator into the story. A man goes into a town square and is shot – this is surprise. A man goes into a town square and the audience sees that there is a gunman waiting in hiding; this is suspense and the tension of the story rises, because expectation of violence and the danger of the situation has been revealed.

Surprise

The characters in the story aren't able to anticipate what will happen and so face surprises. Surprises make a story dynamic. Too many surprises may make a story ridiculous. A police seems trapped by thugs when he's disarmed. He has a second, hidden gun and uses this to protect himself. This is a surprise. If he has three, four or five guns and each one is revealed as a handy surprise, this seems ridiculous.

Set piece

A story can begin with a large set piece where a lot of characters and events that will form the basis for the story are put in place. A feature film is likely to have several set pieces and the climax and conclusion of a film may well be set piece. A set piece needs to be delivered so what's happening in a complex scene is clear. And because a set piece will bring many events together it is like a chapter within a story, it will have its own mini-climax. A set piece, be it those that are easily recognized, such as a chase or a shoot out, or a set of events tied together in a complex dialogue-based scene, such as a wedding, offer the director the opportunity to hone and refine the story. The director will want to study a script to see what each set piece can achieve dramatically and work to enhance and clarify this. There will be a lot of action beats/plot points that need to be clear for a set piece to remain dramatically effective rather than confusing.

Climax

A story reaches a climax and this will resolve the plot and carry the audience to a height of emotion. The audience needs time to think through the significance of the climax and they need time to feel the emotion. A climax may well need more time than is essential for the telling of the story to fulfill its dramatic potential and satisfy the audience; these climatic beats will be identified by the director. The need for the audience to process the information can be supported by the way the scene is shot and blocked.

Directing drama

Preparing the script: setting and types of story

Stories are not real; they create an artificial reality. The audience accepts this reality as long as it is coherent. If the story-convention is established that people can fly then the audience will accept it, if a story establishes ordinary people in an everyday world then at some point in the story people start to fly then the realism of the story has been lost.

There are many conventions of storytelling. Being absolutely clear how the world of a story works, what is possible and what is not, is essential for the director to establish in terms of preparing the script. There are established genres and conventions for storytelling which offer a range of models for how a story world will work, but each individual story has to be specifically defined and sure of its conventions. There are realist conventions where a single blow will hurt a person, action-movie conventions where people can survive terrible beatings. There are supernatural worlds where the dead rise and there are ghosts, worlds where everything is glossy and glamorous and worlds that are gritty and dirty.

Setting

The director needs to clarify from the script. Where and when and in what type of world does the story take place? This needs to be exact and it will help define the look of the film, the dialogue, the way that characters behave and speak and if the setting is inconsistent or contradictory a story will be unconvincing and an audience will reject it as false. A period film where the actors gesture in a modern manner will be unconvincing, a story set in the future may want to create different social manners and customs; for instance the Vulcan salute given by Dr. Spock in Star Trek. Understanding the setting will allow director to support and guide the actors and then allow the director to judge the performances when they are filmed.

Tone

The tone of might be comic, or slow and gentle, or fast and furious. A script can be made in different ways and the tone has to be decided. Tone will affect choices in relation to performance, camerawork, editing and music; because tone often affects pace and all of these elements control the rhythm and rate at which a story is told.

Types of story

Set out below are three types of storytelling defined through their relationship to realism; three different approaches to storytelling in terms of how their plots and characters work to represent the real world.

MYTHIC REALISM

Stories which are: Idealistic, heroic, mythic, fairytale, wish fulfilment.

Good vs. Evil: A defined moral structure. A world in which there is clear justice and injustice

Archetypal roles: Heroes and villains, innocent and monster, incorruptible cops and criminal masterminds. Characters with super powers, special gifts, the ability to survive hardships and punishment without suffering long-term physical or psychological damage.

Mainstream Genre fiction: Broadcast codes. Epic drama, thrillers, action and adventure, horrors, romance.

Plotting: Plot driven. Happy endings. Heroic sacrifice. The villain dies. The crime is solved. True love is found. Justice is served.

Characters know themselves: what they are on the surface is the same as they are inside. External conflicts are between people on opposing sides not complex social conflicts or inner psychological conflictions.

Film examples: Any mainstream action blockbuster. Die Hard, Star Wars, Iron Man, Star Trek

BARDIC DRAMA/SOCIAL DRAMA

Bardic drama: Stories that mediate the values of a society; its norms, its morals: a narrative body of evolving social representations. Mainstream stories, broadcast codes.

Stories about: Social roles, social responsibilities, institutions, individual versus social identities: the tensions and dilemmas within society.

Institutional drama: cop shows, law firms, hospitals, politics, family structures. Not just drama, but comic-drama; sitcoms.

Good vs. Evil: as with mythic realism, a moral universe that more often than not punishes the wrong and brings the world to good order. There is plenty of wish fulfilment.

Stories are: primarily plot driven, but underpinned by consistency of character. Characters have back-stories which clearly create their social identity, beliefs and morals. Conflicts are external or interpersonal. Characters are usually understandable and consistent in their behaviour and actions. Character can change and develop, character is not fixed as it is with archetypal heroes and villains, but they remain clearly defined. Characters have understandable motivations.

On the edges of Bardic drama: social realism This is a very specific form of realism and perhaps should have its own category. One can see it as on the fringes of Bardic drama, because it is dealing with problematic social issues, or challenging and questioning dominant norms in terms of conceptions of society and individuality.

These are stories that focus on a specific and precise social environment. As such they tend to be understood as narrow cast and outside of the mainstream. A specific time, people and place are represented so that the audience's expectations for wish fulfilment, for justice to be served and for the moral order to be clear has to be put aside in favour of 'truth'. This is 'society as it is', not as it is convenient for a dramatist to depict it; No one has special powers, and 'convenient' happy endings are usually suspect. In these stories the concept of the historically and socially specific individual within a society is foregrounded rather than a character being based primarily on a social stereotype, (a stereotypical cockney Eastender) or a on a stereotype of their social role (a middle-class barrister). These stories represent a society where there is no over-

arching morality. Also, because these stories are often about tensions, flaws, or failures in a society they may well be labelled as 'political', or 'issue-based' drama. They are however dramas about external conflicts between the individual and the society and interpersonal conflicts between different social identities; characters are consistent and 'know themselves.'

INTIMATE REALISM

Identity is unclear: contradictory, complex. The idea of a coherent and rational social identity and individuality is diffuse and perhaps entirely lost.

Characters: veer between apparent free will and compulsion in their actions and motivations. Inner conflicts and motivations seem to underpin and determine action, but the reasons for why characters act as they do is not openly apparent. Characters do not know themselves. They cannot justify their motivations through any accepted moral norm. They are existential.

Morality is uncertain: Characters can be understood as immoral, amoral or even unmoral in relation to social norms. (Unmoral; because there is no clear moral universe by which to judge their actions) Social norms can be oppressive, contradictory, but are also often diffuse, indeterminate, even absent.

Motivations: stem from inner psychological conflict. Characters may have specific social roles, but that does not define who they are.

Narrow cast: These stories do not offer social or moral role models. They are narrowcast. Stories are character driven. These stories might be labelled extreme, inexplicable, irrational even perverse.

Relevant directors: Ken Loach, Michael Haneke, Ingmar Bergman, Andre Techine, Larry Clark.

Deciding on the realism

A director needs to decide on the level of realism. A comedy can be cruel and cutting, as long as it's clear from the tone of the performance and the design of the production that it represents an artificial world and not everyday life. Most audiences have experienced that feeling when a film suddenly loses its veracity and it feels like a different type of story is started. This needs to be avoided and a director who defines and controls the style of the film through directing needs to know what type of story they are directing.

Directing drama

Working with actors

During shooting a director's work is based on set ups, set ups and more set ups. A director may know little, even nothing about lenses, light, film stock, or cameras, but what they do need to be able to do is to get the best possible performances out of the cast and a good director will create the blocking and set ups which make this possible.

There is no point in being able to block a brilliant set up that looks good in terms of composition and action, if it destroys the spontaneity and quality of a performance. The importance of directing to support performers cannot be over stressed. It is crucial that the director can work well in collaboration with performers during production and to do this it is vital that a director understands what acting involves.

Acting can be understood to consist of three main elements

Voice

An actor needs to be able to use their voice to offer a clarity and quality which is not the norm in everyday life. They need to be able to:

- Speak with precision and pace
- Master a range of accents and speaking styles to match their character
- Use their voice expressively and with control; volume, tonality, stress, phrasing, rhythm, pace

Physicality

Like a dancer an actor has to be able to use their body with control in order to be precise and expressive. They need to be able to use:

- Posture: control of the position of the body at rest and in motion.
- Gesture: control of gesture with torso, body, limbs, fingers, toes
- Movement: control of walking, running and any form of activity
- Expression: control of the face and eyes

Listening and Reacting

An actor needs to be able to interact with other actors, by listening and reacting. They need to be able to control their performance in response to other actors in the scene. Acting is an interaction, not a machine-like performance or a recitation.

Training and Preparation

Professional actors are trained and skilled at what they do. They bring a wide range of abilities:

What skills does an actor bring to a role? What is good acting?

Acting will appear natural on screen through drama training and preparation for a role. In drama training, trust, intimacy and closeness exercises will develop the ability of an actor to be natural with other actors - people they do not know - because they will not be self-conscious about distance and touch.

An actor's training will involve performances before others, before peers, tutors and audiences. Actors will not be self-conscious in front of an audience or a camera crew. They will develop the ability to focus and stay in a role through practice and concentration. Actors will be trained in relaxation techniques to bring about calmness during a performance.

Actors will develop the ability to respond to others, through text-based performance, through improvisation through dance and movement. By developing a familiarity with written dialogue and scene-playing actors will be able to interact and respond to others. They will develop listening and reacting as skills.

Acting for stage or screen follows a set of conventions, the need to hit marks, to be able to repeat action and dialogue, to hold reactions, to keep in the role, to stay focused, to perform and repeat the beats required for their part.

Actors will develop the ability to study and understand plays and scripts and use their acting skills in movement, expression and voice to interpret a role in terms of character, motivation and plot.

Actors will learn to observe and study others in order to develop and store a repertoire of behavior, traits, accents, and movements.

Actors will develop a range of skills to support a wide range of potential roles; these may be performance related skills such as singing, dancing, mime, mask, accents, stage-combat, fencing, or they may be more general skills such as horse riding, climbing, swimming, scuba diving.

In preparation for a role an actor will research the part for the specifics of their character; history, background, movement, posture and speech

In preparation for a role actors will learn their lines and actions until there is absolutely no effort to recall them and they can repeat actions and performances with little or no difficulty.

In preparing for a role actors will be able to shape and determine their performance in response to the guidance of a director and in response to the performances of others.

Being natural is crucial for a good performance, but a performance is not 'naturalistic', it is not 'real-life', it is carefully structured and controlled so that a single character is one only part of a whole story that is coherent and understandable to an audience

The director's support for the actors

An actor who is trained, prepared and ready, who is supported by the director will have little trouble working to the demands of the stage or film medium. They will also have the stamina for the repeat performances or for the long hours of work that acting requires.

Working with the other actors and with the support of the director an actor will develop, define and hone their performance. This will be a collaborative and productive process.

The actor will trust the director to give advice and support during preparation and rehearsals. And during shooting the director will study and consider the actor's performance and be able to comment upon it. The actor will use the director's guidance to alter and shift their acting to change specific points and in their tone in general.

The main challenge to an actor's performance is an indecisive or dictatorial director who is unable to support the actor. In this case the director will make incoherent demands, or make specific demands as orders that cannot be challenged. Just as directors cast to test for good actors, so actors who are cast can ask and expect a level of support from a good director.

A script that is well understood and prepared before shooting is far less likely to lead to trouble on set. If an actor is not getting the support that they need during preparation this is best resolved before shooting.

The second challenge to an actor's performance is a badly run production where schedules are chaotic or non-existent, and worst of all gives no consideration to an actor. A badly run crew may want to do re-takes due to minor technical problems, they demand too many set ups for a scene, or have set ups that are not dramatically coherent; bits and pieces of a scene rather than playable chunks. Here, preparation and patience will help an actor and prevent their performance on camera being damaged.

An actor can ask for less takes or to move on to another set up, or ask that they have a technical run-through before they give a performance. These requests might seem by a weak director to be an actor 'causing problems', but an actor needs to be able to protect their role from the damage of constant repetitions, interruptions, retakes and unhelpful blocking.

Directing drama

Preparing the role

For the characters in a drama to appear realistic they have to behave in ways which are consistent with their established character. Both the director and the actors need to know who the character is, where they're from, what the character believes; their personality. How the character will act in any situation has to have a sense of purpose and unity and if this fails a story is in trouble.

A character can be defined by considering the following aspects and indicators of character and these can be incorporated into the actor's performance.

The social background and cultural identity of the character

These are the specific details of the character; name, age, race etc., and these are factors that put a person in a particular social and historical context. They will also influence how a person speaks, dresses, gestures, and also their beliefs and knowledge. All these characteristics represent a person's social identity. One might say that these are the externally discernable aspects of character, because they might be gathered from a census form. They don't tell you very much about an individual personality.

The abilities of the character

What can they do, and also, just as importantly, can't do. This will strongly influence their behaviour in a range of situations. This might also include their abilities due to their intelligence.

The character's personality

This would include their super-objective; what they want from life. While personality is to some extent flexible; a person is unlikely to be an entirely *kind person*, they are more likely to be kind in some circumstances, but not in others. However, it is still useful to create a sense of how a character is likely to behave and react in a range of situations. Personality sets out a number of motivations. For example a character in a story who likes company might seek out a friend and then they might be more willing to put up with bad behaviour from that friend which others might condemn. Such a situation might create a conflict that could be the basis for a story. Personality is also about emotion. Is the character usually tense, happy, angry? what mood do they convey as a personality?

The character's sense of themselves

A character may have a sense of themselves that is in tune with their personality and social identity, or they may be confused or mistaken about who they are. For example someone who is selfish may think of themselves as taken advantage of, or a miserly person may think of themselves as very poor and in need of money. A mismatch between ability, personality and a person's conscious understanding of themselves can contribute to a drama by creating an ongoing conflict. You can see this aspect of character emphasised in comedy, where for example the person who thinks he is charming and funny is actually a braggart and a bully. Comedy is often about people's ideas about themselves not being sustainable, or not standing up to scrutiny from others.

The relationship between the different characters creates changes

People's actions, reactions, decisions and thoughts are, more often than not, highly dependent on their relationship with others; It matters a great deal who someone is loyal to, who they hate, who hates them, and this will strongly dictate what someone will do. Dramatic circumstances can occur when a range of characters meet up; there will be alliances and antagonisms.

To develop a character it might be good to use the headings set out below and write a sentence or two about the character under each heading:

Indicators and aspects of character:

Physical and Actual

Name
Appearance
Accent
Speaking style
Abilities
Dress
Family
Job
Friends
Money

Social – Stereotyping

Social Status
Cultural Identity
Social History
Race
Ethnicity
Family History

Individuality

Characteristic Behaviour
Emotional Characteristics
Moral Characteristics
External Motives and Goals
Hidden Motives and Goals
Subconscious Motives and Goals
Ruling Passion/super-objective
Defining Relationships
Beliefs
Self Image
External Image

For an actor preparing a role can be broken down into two broad aspects:

Internalizing the role

Externalizing the role

Internalizing the Role

Film and television drama requires performers to undertake a wide range of 'naturalistic' roles; police officers, surgeons, commuters etc. and each or any of these types of roles is made convincing if the performer avoids being awkward or self conscious when undertaking actions which should appear so familiar that they are automatic.

To achieve the requisite degree of realism performers undertake a range of preparations:

- Following or taking up the real occupation. So that the performer can have actual experience of the real situation, the behavior of the participants and use this familiarity in their own characterization.
- Performance exercises create the sense of security necessary for performers to express close interpersonal body language in a public situation. So that when acting, any self consciousness about the body is overcome and performers who have met only moments before can behave as long time intimate friends, even members of the same family. When a performer has been trained to overcome self consciousness they can maintain an easy, even intimate familiarity with other performers even when in front of an audience or a camera crew.
- By rigorously learning lines and practicing physical tasks performers acquire an ease with the actions and dialogue of the script, which is not the case with superficial learning.

All of these preparations allow the performer to internalize the role; How to be a tired commuter, How to eat a sandwich on a crowded train and read a newspaper, etc.. The performer learns to 'just do it'

If a performer has successfully prepared their role then their performance can be supported by a director who avoids over-directing. A director who keeps on making a performer adjust their movements and behavior to try and make a set up work will soon destroy any spontaneous performance. Equally as poor as over-directing, is the director showing the performer their role as a piece of mimicry. A director who insists; "play the role like this", or "play the role like so and so", will only end up with a performer imitating what they think the director wants, which is extremely limiting, because it's a superficial interpretation of the role. The performer must have the freedom to give their best possible performance and any attempt to treat them as a puppet and dictate their actions will become stilted and unsatisfactory.

The same is true for dialogue. Most dialogue is naturalistic and if the performer finds it awkward then it should be revised in rehearsal to accommodate their preference. Forcing through and retaining awkward dialogue means that it will remain stilted and unsatisfactory. Any pushing of the performer to simply mimic the director's line reading of the script can only make the performer self-conscious and therefore defeats the internal preparations the performer has made. If a performer has studied a role, a director must never jump in and show the performer how to do it, because the performer knows best.

Externalizing the role

It might be the case that in the perfect circumstances the performer is so locked into the role that they can simply bring out the character on tap and their performance perfectly fulfils the part. However this is never completely realizable, because drama is not reality. The performer has to be open to work and develop their role with the director and the other performers as well as meet the demands of blocking and continuity. Performing is a live situation and requires a performer who can respond

creatively to evolving situations. Also, it is essential that performers can match the stylistic parameters of the style of drama they are performing in; a cop in a heroes and villains action movie does not perform in the same style as a cop in a social realist drama. To meet these challenges a performer has to be able to consciously focus their role and be able to channel and adjust the signals they are giving. Performers develop these externalizing abilities, showing what the character needs to express, in two main ways:

- By developing voice control through singing and vocal exercises. Emotion is carried through the voice and the voice can be consciously trained as an emotive tool.
- By undertaking exercises which teach the body to be expressive. Emotion is carried through the body and can be consciously trained through exercises in movement and dance.

Building voice and movement skills gives a performer strength, versatility and a broad range of expressive techniques to draw upon. A performer who is limited often cannot respond to meet the demands of their role when working with others. In isolation a limited individual performance may be fine, but may not support the piece as a whole. The performer must be able to create develop and externalize their role as a member of the cast and the director is the person who focuses the performers so that all the performances are coherent and integrated. Having a developed range of skills benefits a performer enormously and this grounding in voice and movement is the difference between a professional and a non-professional performer.

By sensitively responding to the performer's interpretation of the role the director can act as an emotional gauge and indicate what values they are experiencing. Does the director see the lethargy and tension of the commuter? Are these emotions being signaled to the director as a spectator to the scene? This type of 'coaching' does not tell the performer what to do; it offers a reaction for the performer to respond to and for the actor to fine tune their performance. This is why performers have to trust their director, because they have to respect the director's response. If a director explains that they find the scene unsatisfactory, the performers must be willing to shift their interpretation. A battle of wills between performers and director, or a lack of trust is a sure way to achieve an uneven and fragmented result.

One area of understanding and awareness that the skilled director can maintain on the set that the performers cannot is a sense of how the scene fits into the overall production. The first day of shooting may be the scenes in the middle of the plot and while the cast and crew may be perfectly satisfied with a set up, it is the director's job to judge this single element in relation to a whole production, which has yet to be shot.

In overview the skills of acting work in something of a contradiction. The performer internalizes the role so that it is not self-conscious, but they must at the same time be able to consciously adjust and externalize their performance to ensure they are communicating the right level and range of emotions. Performers train their voice and bodies to be expressive; they study and research their role in order to be confident, spontaneous and successful in performance. Like a musician they need the discipline so that they can be expressive

Successfully motivating performers

As already stated the director acts an emotional gauge for the performers. The performers have to trust the director and a director who is wayward or uneven in their responses will soon lose the trust of the cast. The director needs to keep a clear and focused understanding of the emotional pitch and pace of a scene. If they get bogged down in the placing of the camera or where the lights should go, then their concentration wavers. The director must remain free to work with and support the performers. The director can work with the crew during the technical set up of sound, camera and lighting, but apart from this they will be with the performers.

The good director does not tell the performers what they want, but indicates how they understand a scene and lets the performers work with this.

Directing drama

Casting

Once a script is prepared and it's understood what each role in the film requires in terms of interpretation and performance then casting commence.

Good casting is essential because a director needs the right performers in order to be able to direct of film well. If an unsuitable performer is cast a suitable performance cannot be battered out of them. Understanding how to identify the right performer during casting is a skill which can be developed using quite simple and consistent methods for auditions.

Cast a performer who understands and sympathizes with the text. Then it is possible for the performers and director to work in partnership. To do this ask the performer to explain their understanding of the role and the theme of the story they are auditioning for. Also ask them what skills they have for the role and how they would like to prepare to play the role. From these responses you know how they like to work and their understanding of the part.

Never cast a person, a non-professional who's character is 'right' for the role. Your own personality and reactions work unconsciously and asking someone to be themselves in front of a camera only makes them self-conscious and awkward.

When auditioning let the performer choose the section of the script they wish to perform. This should give them the opportunity to show themselves in their best light and their choice, if they are responsive, should indicate that they understand what the script calls for. After they have performed this piece ask them to make a change in the emotional focus of their performance and if they can achieve this it indicates that they will be responsive to working with others. If they are responsive to changing the emotional tone of their performance ask the performer to repeat their audition piece again and to perform a specific physical action at a specific point in the dialogue. This could be sitting, or standing, or walking to a window. If this new action is successfully incorporated in the scene it shows that the performer can keep up their quality of performance, still meet the demands of continuity and make their marks without faltering.

When the roles for the film are cast correctly the rehearsal and production phases becomes extremely creative and enjoyable periods. If the casting has failed the director must work to get the performer to give the best performance.

Once the casting has been done the director must trust the performers and in rehearsals must let them offer their interpretation of the role in the first instance. Rehearsals must be a discursive process and it is the performers who have trained and worked to learn how to act and it is not the director's job to try and teach actors how to act. The director wants the performers to give their best performance and so must avoid setting out how a role should be played, therefore limiting the performers.

If a performer gives a poor performance they have been wrongly cast, or the director has mishandled them.

Working with non-professionals

When casting non-professionals the audition process must, more than ever, make sure that the performer is responsive and understands what a scene requires. These two criteria are crucial when casting any significant role.

Success in directing non-professionals is made possible if they are really well prepared before shooting. When lines of dialogue have to be exact these must be thoroughly learned. In rehearsals the director can assess what the performer is capable of and design their blocking accordingly. It is the director's attention and support that can allow non-professionals to offer terrific performances. It is trust and understanding that builds the quality of the performance, not instruction and control. Every performer must be supported in achieving the best performance they can give and this is especially true with non-professionals.

Holding successful casting sessions

Use the relevant web sites to place adverts.

When contacting or auditioning actors be professional which means organized, positive, punctual and prepared.

You want to make sure that your potential cast has confidence in you and your production. Do not share any doubts, worries, or problems you have about your production planning with your actors, it is not their job to be concerned with such things. However, be honest in your comments about your script and don't try and over sell anything. Just say what the role has to offer.

What you are looking for in an actor is someone who understands the type of story and the type of character the script requires. Intelligence and ability is the key ingredient for casting, looks are secondary.

Do not make decisive judgments about who you are going to audition and then cast based primarily on appearance, especially when planning auditions and looking at CV's. Photographs are deceptive.

Being absolutely fixed on what a character must look like is not a good idea as it severely limits who you might choose. Many, many, actors who are very physically and culturally different have played the same role in different productions of the same play with great success. What you want most of all is a committed actor who can produce the character and emotion required for the part.

Give out copies of the script, your contact details and shooting dates to potential actors. Also get contact details and availability from your actors. People need to be able to contact each other and a production needs to be planned and scheduled.

Hold auditions properly; meet where scripts can be read and discussed in a professional manner; use a professional rehearsal room or office, not an open public place like a pub or in a private residence.

Give very clear and precise directions where actors are to come for casting and who they are going to meet. Be sure that an actor can have a drink or a snack if they have travelled to get to the audition location.

An actor's CV will have given you some idea of the roles they have played and their experience. Ask them about some of the roles they played and get an idea of what they enjoyed doing and perhaps what they might like to do in the future.

At auditions for a short film read through the whole script with the actors taking on any role they might be suitable for and interested in. At the end of the reading ask the actor for their impression of their role and performance. Give your impression of the role and some support for the actor's performance. Do not make snap judgments over who to cast. Discuss the within the production team. Reply politely to all actors whether or not you offer them a role.

Directing drama

Running the Shooting Day

The protocols and courtesies of production

Most productions work to a similar pattern of organization for the shooting day and they observe a range of courtesies to help the performers. An experienced production team will know that they are there to help the performers, because no matter how far has been travelled to get to the location, or how much money spent on sets, costume and special FX, what any drama still relies on to a very great extent, is the face, voice and bodies of the performers. And when the camera record the shot the performers are the only ones who can deliver their roles: everyone and especially the director works for the performers.

To assist the performers certain courtesies should be observed. Performers are never moved out of the way by the crew, or ignored as if they were unwanted furniture. The technical aspects of a set up have to be in place, tested and ready, before the performers are called. Fiddling with lights, moving cables are all distractions and must be kept to the absolute minimum once the performers are ready. Similarly, the crew is concentrated on their jobs and the crew have no chats, coffees, or snacks when performers are rehearsing or preparing for a take.

Everyone is focused on the crew and no one does anything which may be detrimental to the concentration of the performers. Often a film crew at work will look like it's a case of people standing around with little, or nothing to do. The opposite is actually true. On a proficient set everyone is doing their part and is keeping focused on their role, so that they don't let everyone else down during the take. Experienced crews can work very quietly and efficiently. There little need for talk to clarify things and there is no chit chat, because this can disrupt the concentration of others. On a professional crew, which is ready for a take, if one single person among forty or more people on the set opens a sweet wrapper everyone will hear it, because the concentration is so intense that even this tiny disruption will sound like a roar.

The typical pattern for a shooting day will be:

In a short briefing the director outlines to the cast and crew the day's shooting will involve. Call sheets will already given out this information, but the briefing allows for clarification and questions.

Everyone will now know how much work is expected to complete the day's shooting. If a production is moving between locations during the day a mini-briefing can be held as soon as everyone has reached the new location.

The director and the principal cast prepare the scene. On the set or at the location the performers walk through the scene developing and confirming with the director their ideas on how their roles should be played. If the scene is storyboarded the director will want to try out this blocking, but will allow the performers to create their own idea within this framework. Nothing is fixed at the start of this preparation, but when it is finished decisions on the dialogue and the action will be finalized, so that continuity can be properly kept. The script supervisor locks actions and dialogue.

The performers must not act out the scene at this rehearsal stage, because it would wear out their performance. They only walk through the scene. Also, there is no camera needed at this early stage. The only exception to the rule that there is no camera needed during the first rehearsals is in the case of a single set up scene, but even here the camera crew must be discrete and not let the planned set up restrain the performers.

The preparation of the scenes to be shot during the day will take only a short while if the director and the performers are properly prepared. For a full shooting day this rehearsal will often take less than an hour, unless the scenes to be shot are extremely complex in terms of performance and blocking. The director and the script supervisor may be the only members of the production team present at this first rehearsal if the performers want maximum privacy, although the cinematographer and the camera operator can usually be present as observers. However when the scene is prepared the whole crew will be called in.

The performers and the cast now put in the blocking for the camera. Marks for the performers and the camera are put down.

If the scene is not storyboarded in advance it will be here that the set ups will be decided. The performers are now here simply to assist framing and camerawork and there is no rehearsal of the scene in terms of performance. When the marks and camera positions are clear the performers will take a break and finalize costumes and make up. From the storyboard or from the decisions made at this point the crew will know how many set ups are required and this will let everyone know how fast they have to work. It could be an average of a set up every hour, or every twenty minutes.

Now the technical crew prepare the camera, lighting, sound, props and special FX. The performers clear the set after their marks are set and this leaves the space free so that all the paraphernalia of shooting can be put in place. Camera, sound and lighting can all be set up in turn, then practiced and tested before the first set up is filmed. Not until everything is checked and ready do the cast return and they will be in costume and make up, rested and ready for the scene. The performers will have used this break to learn any line changes and the cues for their actions during the scene.

The actors have prepared and decided the scene and are now ready for a take. The production team have prepared and tested everything required for the set up and are now ready for a take. The director will now call for a full rehearsal without the actors performing. The rehearsal will confirm that everything is ready and it is time for a take.

On a professional crew there will be little, or no need for multiple takes; two or three at most are usually sufficient.

Nothing should go wrong at this stage, but if it does immediate and clear remedies should be made. If the performance isn't right by this time, fiddling with the detail won't help, because it risks breaking apart everything decided in rehearsal. The director can only suggest a broad, perhaps even radical reinterpretation of the scene or suggest a completely different emotion and pace for the actors to follow; merrier,

firmer, weaker, slower, stiller. This may sponsor a fresh and live response in the performer's acting.

If technical problems occur, no more takes can be attempted until the problem is fixed. There is no point wasting a performance if the take is going to be technically poor. If the problem will mean a very short delay the performers may remain in place. If it is going to be more than one or two minutes the performers should be given the choice to stay or to take a break. Normally, this kind of crisis is rare and the set up goes ahead as planned.

When the camera is running no one calls a cut except the director, because performances should not be broken. The planning of the set ups must also avoid abrupt cuts in performance and must allow the scene to flow and develop. If a set up cuts a performer's speech in two, then there is probably something wrong with the set up, because no performer should be asked to play scene from halfway through a speech. Even if there is a technical fault shooting a take should not be stopped, because of the damage it may do to the concentration of the performers. After the director calls cut the problem can be dealt with. The only time when a crew member, besides the director, will call for a cut is when a long take will be entirely ruined by a technical problem, such as a loud and constant background sound. Most problems such as the boom in shot, or unsteady camera movement only damage a moment or two of the whole take and are therefore not reason enough to call a halt to the entire take.

When the camera is running the director's job is to watch the performance. The director must have the clear concentration to do this and be able to make an effective judgment when the take ends.

After the director calls cut no one moves until the director has made their decision. First, the technical crew confirm that the shot was performed correctly in terms of camera movement, framing, sound and lighting. The script supervisor will confirm continuity. If these are all good then no more takes are necessary unless the director wants to give the performers another opportunity to play the scene. If the performers want another go the director will usually give them this. After one or two takes it is likely that performance will be good and if there are no technical matters causing problems it is time to move on to the next set up.

After one set up is finished and if the next set up is happening swiftly, usually because the director is shooting coverage of the same action and the new set up will only require the camera to be moved to a different angle, while everything else will remain as is, then the performers may well want to stay at their marks. If the time between set ups is more than a couple of minutes the performers can clear the set if they wish.

A strict rule for all cast and crew is that there is no loitering on a set. If performers are on set, they are at their marks and ready. No one takes any sort of mini-break on a set, because it is a work area and another space will have been set aside for performers and cast to rest and snack – the green room.

If during the shooting of the scene the performers stay at their marks the production team will set sound, camera, props and lighting, and when these are tested and ready one or two walk-throughs will complete rehearsals and another set up will be taken.

Working this way, with actors' rehearsal, technical set up and then shooting, the shooting day has a clear pattern and a concentrated cast and crew can develop a sure momentum. To keep a crew focused and a production running smoothly everyone needs to know where they are in the process of taking the set up. A good director will keep the morale of a crew high by working clearly and confidently.

Directing drama

Running set ups and calling shots

On set the procedure for starting and stopping rehearsals and for starting and stopping takes must be consistent at all times and must be understood by all cast and crew.

Below is the procedure for co-coordinating set ups which will be familiar to all professional film crews and can be adapted to a non-professional crew where the script supervisor or even the director calls the shots.

On a professional film set when the performers have prepared for a take and the camera, sound and lighting are ready, the director will make sure that the performers are ready and will then ask the first assistant director to start a rehearsal or go for a take.

For a rehearsal the first assistant director will call:

STANDBY, QUIET PLEASE

Everyone must go quiet and be attentive, even if they are not ready.

The Clapper/loader takes their place in front of the camera with the slate.

The first assistant director will call:

THIS IS A REHEARSAL

The first assistant director will then confirm that everyone is ready:

**PERFORMERS?
CAMERA?
SOUND?
SLATE?
EFFECTS ?
DIRECTOR?**

If everyone is not absolutely ready the rest wait in silence until they are ready. When the last person has confirmed that they are ready the first assistant director calls as a final reminder.

THIS IS A REHEARSAL

In a rehearsal there is no need to start the camera or start sound recording, so the Clapper/Loader calls the slate, clears from in front of the camera and the director calls:

ACTION

At the end of the take, even though it is a rehearsal the director calls:

CUT

In a rehearsal there is no need to interrupt the take for any reason, because any problems can be discussed at the end of the rehearsal. In a rehearsal the cast will walk through and speak their roles, but they will **not** perform their roles. Giving a full performance would be a waste in a rehearsal because the camera is not running to record it. On a large budget production stand-ins will take the place of the major actors in order to save the energy of the key players.

In order to run the set up and shoot film the first assistant director will call:

STANDBY, QUIET PLEASE

Everyone will go quiet and be attentive, even if they are not ready.

The Clapper/loader takes their place in front of the camera with the slate.

The first assistant director will call:

THIS IS A TAKE

The first assistant director will then confirm that everyone is ready:

PERFORMERS?

CAMERA?

SOUND?

SLATE?

EFFECTS ?

DIRECTOR?

If everyone is not absolutely ready the rest wait in silence until they are ready. When the last person has confirmed that they are ready the first assistant director calls as a final reminder.

THIS IS A TAKE

The first assistant director gives the instruction for the camera to start:

TURNOVER

The camera operator will respond:

CAMERA RUNNING

On a film crew the sound recordist will respond:

SOUND RUNNING

When camera and sound are running the Clapper/Loader calls the slate, clears from in front of the camera and the director calls :

ACTION

When film is running the actors perform their roles and special effects, are set off

At the end of the take the director calls:

CUT

After the call to cut all the cast and crew hold and the director confers on each aspect of the shooting. The script supervisor will confirm that continuity was kept, camera operator and sound recording will confirm if sound was good. The director then makes a decision regarding the next step to take: Another take of the same set up or a move to a new set up.

The Continuity System

The aim of the continuity system is simple. It allows a narrative drama to go from shot to shot and from scene to scene without confusion. However, in order to achieve this narrative clarity every aspect of production has to be carefully and successfully monitored and a high level of consistency maintained. Continuity can be split into several distinct areas. There is continuity of:

- Action
- Dialogue

On a small production these will be the responsibility of the performers and the script supervisor. Continuity must also be maintained for:

- Costume
- Make up
- Set
- Props
- Special FX

On a large production there will be personnel responsible for each of these areas during pre-production and production, but in a small crew these areas may all be put under the control of the scripts supervisor and a costume/props person.

Continuity of lighting and camera covers:

- Colour balance
- Colour temperature
- Contrast Range
- Exposure

It is necessary to maintain continuity of:

- Sound

To be sure that shots will cut together without problems it is necessary to maintain visual continuity for editing and there are six aspects to this:

- Change of image size
- 30 Degree rule
- 180 Degree rule
- Screen sections
- Eye line match
- Change of screen direction
- Movement in and out of frame

The prospect of controlling all the elements required for continuity when itemized as above can seem daunting and on a complex, large scale production, the work that goes on in terms of detailing and maintaining continuity is indeed immense, but on a short production with only a few scenes and only a handful of principal characters, with just one or two changes of costume and a few props, the challenge of keeping continuity is far less. It is still the case, however, that whatever the size of a production continuity has to be properly kept, if not, then set ups will be unusable, time and effort will be wasted and the film as a whole will be damaged in terms of coherent storytelling and consistency of style.

Continuity of action and dialogue

The action and dialogue needs to be consistent from take to take and from set up to set up when it covers the same action. If it is not the continuity of dialogue and action is lost; lines of dialogue will change perhaps becoming insensible and changes in action will prevent shots being cut together in post-production

The final continuity for the action and dialogue will be decided at the rehearsal stage and noted by the script supervisor. During the take, when the camera is run, the script supervisor checks that the dialogue and action is correctly performed by the actors and confers with the director over any mistakes.

When shooting coverage any errors in dialogue and action should be corrected by shooting another take straightaway, because the consequences of even a small error are hard to foresee: any minor change in action or dialogue may confuse a scene or make a take unusable for editing. If a take is to be edited with other takes, which is the aim of coverage, then continuity of action and dialogue has to be good.

Trained actors will know how to learn lines so that they can repeat them without mistakes and also how to repeat planned action on cue. The self-discipline of

professionals makes keeping continuity of action and dialogue relatively easy, because mistakes and changes during shooting will be rare. If, however, a performer is erratic the blocking must be adapted to accommodate this.

To solve any difficulties where the actors cannot keep continuity of action and dialogue a director can simplify the action of the set up, or shoot actors in singles, where they are individually framed and their actions are seen separately. If a set up isolates a performer and their continuity is erratic this type of framing creates the least problems, whereas cutting between wide shots and close up will not be possible because they will not match. Similarly, with erratic performers, reversals cannot be used.

The blocking must also be simplified if the performers are going to be allowed to improvise on camera, which may well be the case with comedy performers, where any manic physical expression can never be performed exactly the same way twice.

If overlapping dialogue is to be used, because two or more characters are speaking at the same time there will be differences each time a take is made and line-by-line continuity with dialogue exactly matching the order in the script is not possible. The set ups for overlapping dialogue must accommodate this.

The rule of thumb is: if keeping continuity of action is becoming difficult then simplify the set ups. Shoot singles, isolating the actors, or shoot single set ups for the scene to allow for improvising and overlapping dialogue.

When planning the blocking the director should be aware how easy or difficult it will be to maintain continuity of action and dialogue. If the continuity requirements are strict it will require a highly competent cast and production team, if the requirements are flexible this places less demands on all concerned.

Continuity of costume and props

The continuity of costume and props has to remain consistent within a scene: they cannot suddenly change or appear or disappear.

Also, costume and props have to be consistent over the course of a film and this needs to be planned in preproduction. This is especially important as films are not shot in narrative order. For instance, if the first and last scene of a film take place at the same location they might well be shot on the same day, but they might also have quite different continuity: actors will be wearing different clothes, the setting will look different. Hair and make up will have changed, all because time has passed in the story.

In pre-production for continuity purposes a scene by scene breakdown of the script is made which itemizes the costumes, hair and make up for every character in every scene. These various breakdowns also list props for specific scenes, the dressings for every scene and all special FX.

These breakdowns mean that in preproduction all these necessary items for the filming can be thought through and prepared and also these breakdowns put in place the continuity from scene to scene across the length of the script – what is needed for which

sense. When the actual shooting is underway and all the scenes in one location are being shot, if these breakdown are properly done the gathering and preparing of items can be efficiently achieved and continuity will be maintained.

What the preproduction break down does not note is the continuity of costume and props being used *within* a scene. Continuity of costumes and props for a scene is finalized during the rehearsals on the set and like dialogue and action the decisions regarding continuity will be strictly adhered to if set ups need to be edited together. Anyone dealing with costume, set dressings, props, make-up or special FX will prepare the necessary items according to the script breakdown and on the set the script supervisor will note the continuity for their use within the scene. For instance, when an actor picks up and puts down a glass during their dialogue.

The simplest way to help performers keep continuity of costume is to itemize their appearance at the start of a scene. For example:

Suit jacket undone
Tie on.
Top button undone
Glass of wine in left hand

After a take has been made or the shooting moves to a new set up the performers and the script supervisor can simply reset any costume and props as required for the start of the scene.

The need to keep continuity of costume and props is another reason why with coverage set ups should run through as much of the scene as possible. Starting and stopping scenes haphazardly can soon lead to confusion and situations with mistakes soon arise. For instance, someone is wearing a jacket at the start of a take when for continuity reasons it should have already been taken off. Keeping the set ups clear helps the continuity of action, dialogue, costume, props, special FX and make up, and a good director will want to help maintain a high standard of continuity. A director who makes up their minds as they go and then shoots bits and pieces of the scene in no particular order or pattern will soon lose continuity and the resulting material will be hard to edit.

Continuity for lighting and camera

As with costume and props the continuity of the lighting has two stages. The first is a breakdown of the script, so that lighting can be planned and suitable equipment chosen. A lighting breakdown makes it possible to work out what lamps, camera filters, lighting gels and other equipment will be needed for a scene and also to identify the needs to appear in the scene in terms of practicals – lighting that can be seen in shot.

A lighting breakdown will identify when locations will be lit the same way and therefore these scenes can be grouped and shot together.

The level of detail required by the planning of lighting depends upon the complexity of the production, but the intention is always the same; the script breakdown allows the

lighting to be planned and controlled so that the results are not erratic and uneven. If, for example a lounge scene was brightly lit for sunshine and the next interior scene in the bedroom was flat and dreary this would be unacceptable, but such incongruities can pass unnoticed and mistakes occur when scenes are shot out of order and no lighting breakdown is prepared.

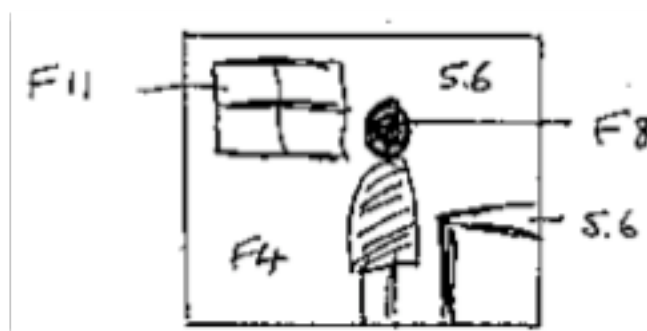
The script breakdown for lighting ensures that scenes will be lit to a prepared plan and this also ensures that the necessary equipment needed for each scene will be in place and ready for shooting. When filming begins the continuity of lighting concentrates on keeping continuity within a scene, from set up to set up and take to take and this includes:

- maintaining colour balance and colour temperature
- maintaining contrast range
- maintaining exposure

All the set ups and takes used to film a scene should have the same colour temperature unless there is a deliberate lighting change, which causes a shift in colour temperature. As an example of where a colour temperature change would occur is when a deep blue moonlit room has a warm amber domestic table lamp switched on when someone wakes up.

On a small crew the camera operator will ensure that the camera white balance is set and the correct filters and gels are used, but the script supervisor, or another person delegated needs to check and confirm that the right procedures have been followed by the camera operator. Maintaining continuity of lighting depends upon the quality and the consistency of the camera crew's working practices and keeping continuity of lighting is an essential professional skill for a cinematographer.

Contrast range is the relationship between the brightest and the darkest part of a scene. During shooting when a scene is lit the cinematographer will note the relationship in terms of exposure readings between the characters in the scene and other elements of the set or location. Usually the cinematographer will draw a small picture of the scene for continuity purposes and note the light measurements in F stops.



In the illustration above the light readings for the window, wall, the table and the standing figure are noted. The scene has a contrast range of 4 stops going from F4 to F11. For the framing illustrated the camera exposure can be set for a high key exposure at F5.6 so that the window will be very bright in the frame, or the exposure could be set to F11 for a low key lighting which would make figure darker and the wall, especially under the window barely visible, except as an area of black.

It is often the case that the cinematographer will light a set for a wide shot then move in for the close ups.

It is easier to light an entire set or location and then photograph a smaller part for two reasons. Firstly, the lighting used for a wide shot may prove sufficient for the close ups and so the scene will only need the lighting to be put in place once, therefore saving a lot of time. Secondly, lighting small parts of a set in detail and then moving out for a wide shot means that the exposure and contrast range will need to be maintained for a small area closely lit and a wide area more broadly lit and keeping the contrast range consistent when moving from a small area to a large area can be a difficult task, especially if this means lighting anew for every set up.

When the lighting is rigged for a wide shot this can be left in place for several set ups and with the exposure and contrast range remaining constant continuity of lighting is easy to maintain. No lights are moved, but the scene is re-metered before each set up to ensure that nothing has changed. The camera is set to the same F stop and this is checked before and after each take.

When framing for close ups, or inserts the cinematographer will often make small adjustments to the lighting of characters in order to provide good modeling, high lights and eye lights, but when the cinematographer is doing this they will ensure that the contrast range remains the same. If there is a two-stop difference between the foreground and the background this will be maintained and if the actor has been given a high key or a low-key exposure this will also be maintained. If this practice of retaining contrast range and exposure is not done then characters and setting will become lighter and darker as the edited scene cuts from a wide shot to a close up and this is unacceptable. In postproduction slight changes can be made in the exposure of a shot, but if the contrast range is altered between set ups there is nothing that can be done in postproduction to resolve this.

The best practice is to get the continuity of lighting and camera right, and this includes colour balance, colour temperature, contrast range and exposure. If continuity of lighting and camera is not maintained the result will be that whole set ups become unsatisfactory and often unusable and it is a great shame when well acted material is ruined due to poor continuity of lighting.

Continuity of Sound

Continuity of sound is easy to maintain if all dialogue scenes are shot so that only the voice is recorded and all other sounds are lost. When this is achieved different takes and different set ups can be cut together with only minor adjustments to match the

audio levels from shot to shot. Any atmosphere sounds or specific sound FX for the scene can be added in postproduction.

This goal of recording for voice-only is easy to set, but is often not achieved on low budget productions for several reasons:

The wrong location is chosen. Far too often the visual choice of location dominates and even though there is noise from traffic, machinery or crowds of people, the location is still used for shooting. Trying to cut together shots where the relationship between the voice level and the background level changes is like going through a tunnel; in one shot the background roars away, in the next it is silent. Adjusting the sound levels in the editing suite won't improve the situation.

A second problem for continuity of sound is when the boom work is poor. During rehearsals the boom operator fails to pay attention to a scene, doesn't learn the basics of the action and dialogue and makes little effort to plan out the best way to record the performers. During the take the boom operator doesn't keep the microphone close enough, so the recording levels are low, and the sound recordist doesn't anticipate the performers' moves so dialogue becomes inaudible.

Lack of attention to boom work is not helped by a production team which as a whole offers the work involved in good sound recording little or no attention. Carefully setting up the camera and lighting and putting in the boom at the final moment when everything else is ready will not produce satisfactory results. A boom operator needs time to get ready: to figure out the best place to capture the dialogue, to be positioned to anticipate performers movements and be ready to follow them. This quality of boom work will not be achieved if it is done at a rush at the last minute.

The director has a responsibility to ensure that the sound recordist and the boom operator are given time and support to do their job well and the director should not allow the visual image to put sound in second place.

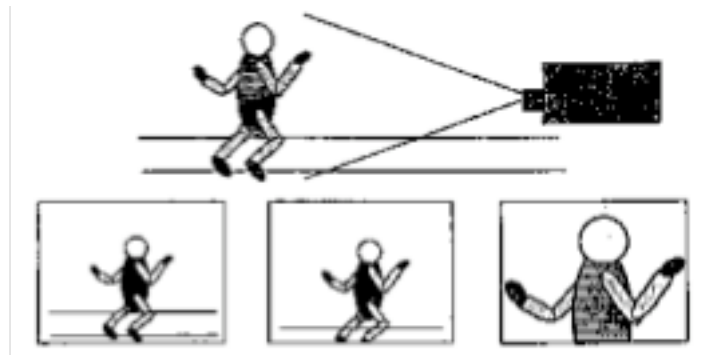
Visual continuity for editing

Even when a production maintains continuity of dialogue, action, props, lighting, camera and sound, the material shot will not edit together unless the set ups maintain visual continuity for editing. This is the area of continuity that covers aspects of framing, the relationship of the camera to the performers and the movement of the performers.

The rules for visual continuity are:

- Change of image size
- Screen sections
- 30 degree rule
- 180 degree rule
- Eye line match
- Movement in and out of frame
- Screen direction

Change of image size

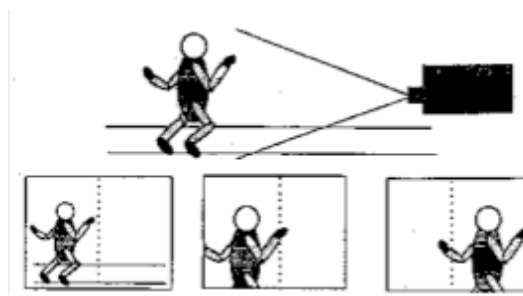


In the diagram above the wide shot on the left and the mid shot on the right will edit together, because the two framings have distinct differences in image size. However, the shot on the left and the shot in the middle have only minor differences between them and if they were edited together the effect would be of a small irritating jump, because the framings are so close together.

When set ups are framed care must be taken so that there are significant differences in the size of the figures in the image. The framing conventions of long shot, wide shot, mid shot, close up and extreme close up set out how figures should be framed.

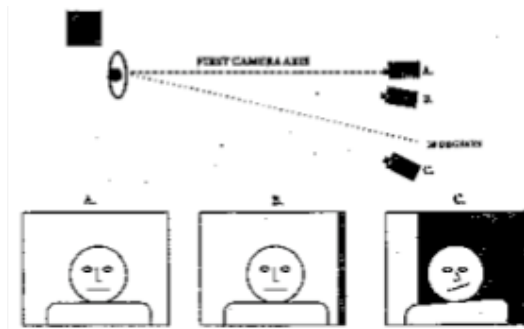
Another guide for framing is to ensure that figures are not cropped at the joints. If the framing of a set up crops through the neck, the head will look like it is floating, if the framing crops through the waist, the knee, or the ankle all these compositions will tend to look awkward. Framings that crop across the chest and across the thigh remove any visual oddities when framing shots with performers.

Screen sections



If a set up frames a figure at one side of the frame, then any other set ups must keep the figure at the same side. In the diagram above the framings on the left and in the middle maintain screen sections while the framing on the right jumps the figure across the frame, which in editing would only confuse the audience. When designing set ups the director and cinematographer may divide the frame into halves, thirds, or quarters for the composition of their shots. This will ensure each character in the frame retains the same screen section from set up to set up.

30 Degree Rule

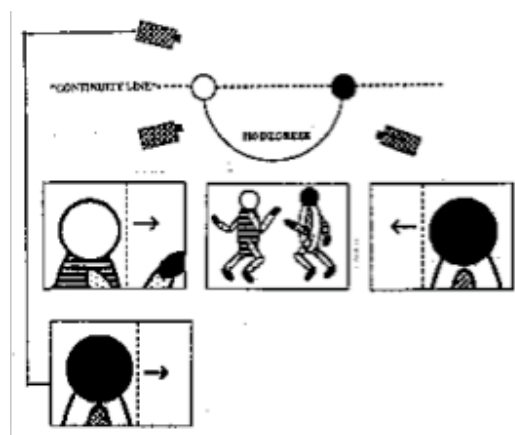


When a camera set up moves to a new position to cover and reframe the action it should move directly along the axis of the lens, forward or back, so that the new framing keeps exactly the same relationship between the figures in the scene and the background, or the camera will move at least 30 degrees to the side.

In the diagram for set up A. the figure is framed with a plain white background, but when the camera is moved to B. the grey rectangular block jumps slightly into the frame, because this small camera move changes the background. Framings A. and B. could not be cut together because the change in angle makes little difference to the framing of the face, but the background changes significantly. The effect in editing would be like a glitch, a small jump where the shot flicks momentarily.

In set up C. the camera has moved over 30 degrees from the camera axis in set up A. and these two framings will cut together, because they are significantly different. The changes in background will not be experienced as odd or unexpected because the change in camera angles makes the difference in background part of a new and distinct framing.

180 Degree Rule

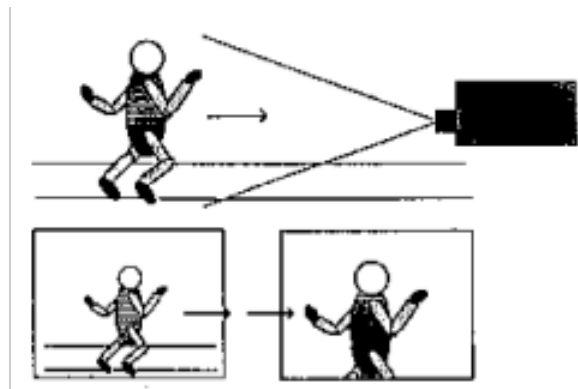


In the diagram on the previous page the camera positions below the line joining the two characters keep the figures in the same spatial relationship and their eye line matches correct. The camera position above the line breaks the 180 degree rule and

results in both the figures looking in the same direction and occupying the same screen sections in close up.

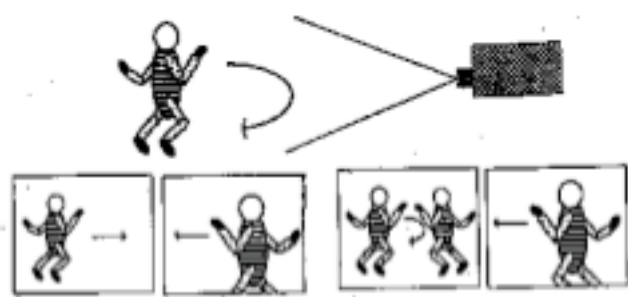
Weak directors will often block so that the continuity line is rigid, but this can result in static, undynamic coverage. The skill in choreographing and blocking is to create action so that the line can be changed and re-established. To do this sets up can be designed which move the line, so a new set of camera positions can be used. Also, performers can change positions during a scene and in doing so create new spatial relationships and therefore offer a fresh range of camera positions. When rehearsing a scene a bold director will allow performers to create their own motivations and blocking and then design set ups to make this work.

Movement in and out of frame



If two set ups are meant to produce a matching edit and a character leaves one framing they must enter the next frame from the opposite side, so that their movement will maintain the same screen direction. In the diagram above the character leaves frame right and enters frame left. What this rule maintains is screen direction. In the diagram above the figure is travelling from left to right in both framings.

Change of Screen Direction



Screen direction has to be consistent so as to avoid confusing the audience. If a character is looking one way or moving one way different framings must retain this direction. What this means is that when a character changes the direction they are looking, the direction they are standing in, or the direction they are moving in then this

change of direction must be shown on screen. In the diagram above the figure changes direction in the two framings on the right, but this is not seen in the shot, so the figure is facing in opposite directions for no apparent reason. In the two framings on the right the change of screen direction is shown in one of the framings and then the new screen direction is explained and is perfectly clear.

During rehearsals the performers will want to move and the director will create blocking which requires changes of direction. These are crucial points in terms of visual continuity and if different set ups are covering this action they must clearly show any change in screen direction. These are also points when a performer has to get their continuity of dialogue and action correct. If a performer says the line and then moves in one set up and then moves before saying the line in another set up the result in editing will be two incompatible set ups.

Summary

Visual continuity has a clear set of rules and a good director will understand how to plan and rehearse set ups without any errors occurring. A director who does not understand the continuity system is basically shooting at random and will end up producing shots that do not match and cannot be edited together.

Blocking and choreographing action: coverage

Advantages and disadvantages

Coverage involves shooting a scene from several camera angles with each of these differing set ups covering most, if not all, of the scene. Coverage dominates in the filming of dialogue scenes because this blocking technique means that the dramatic emphasis of a scene can be controlled in editing:

- The best of an actor's performance can be selected and other material dropped.
- The feeling and emotion of a scene can be shifted by choices in editing.
- If the pace of a scene is too fast or too slow in relation to the whole drama this can be adjusted.

There are specific benefits in deciding to shoot coverage. It is very hard for a director to always correctly judge the pace and emotion of a scene while shooting, because the stresses and strains of production distort perception. A director can feel confident because a crew is working well and therefore feel that every set up is good, or the director may feel despondent because the morale of the crew is low and the director feels discouraged about the set ups accordingly. In the ebb and flow of energy and morale during production it can be difficult to assess how a scene will play to an audience, so well shot coverage gives a good chance of success.

Disadvantages

If the director is inexperienced and can't design and plan set ups which cover most of the scene and if the director can't block performers to work within those set ups the shot material will end up being merely bits and pieces that can only be roughly cobbled together during the editing process. The key to success in shooting coverage is to plan, rehearse and shoot set ups that cover most, if not all, of the action of the scene.

Other disadvantages are as follows:

- Set ups with poor visual continuity may be interesting in themselves, but in editing the framings will look like separate chunks of disjoint action and most of the material will be unusable, because it simply won't edit.
- If set ups don't adequately cover a scene the performances will be stilted or uneven, because it is very difficult to get the same pace and flow when performing set ups which start and stop at arbitrary points in a scene
- Without careful attention to continuity of action, dialogue and props the overlapping set ups won't cut together and all the advantages of shooting coverage are lost.
- Shooting coverage is a skilled discipline. It needs a competent director, cast and crew

Success in shooting coverage

Shooting coverage requires careful and proper use of the rules of visual continuity for editing and some aspects of this system are set out below. **See also:** *The continuity system* in this study guide

Reversals are matching shots that are mirror images in terms of framing. These can be shots framing two or more people, close ups, mid shots, wide shots or long shots. The pair of set ups illustrated below are correctly framed over the shoulder reversals.



While there may seem like little difference between the set ups illustrated above and the set ups illustrated below. Those below are not correctly framed in terms of being over the shoulder reversals



Although the immediate differences appear to be slight between the two sets of framings they are different to the extent that the framings in the lower pair are not mirror images and the positioning of the figures is closer and further apart in the different frames. For an audience seeing these differences there would be an unconscious confusion and an irritation. The shots are not the same, but what is the significance of this in terms of narrative? If there is no dramatic purpose to this idiosyncratic framing then the differences are merely a distraction: a mistake.



The pair of set ups illustrated above are not reversals even though they are both close ups. The framings above could however be successfully used for shooting coverage,

because their framings are plainly different and the audience will not make any attempt to compare them as similar, each is quite definitely distinct.

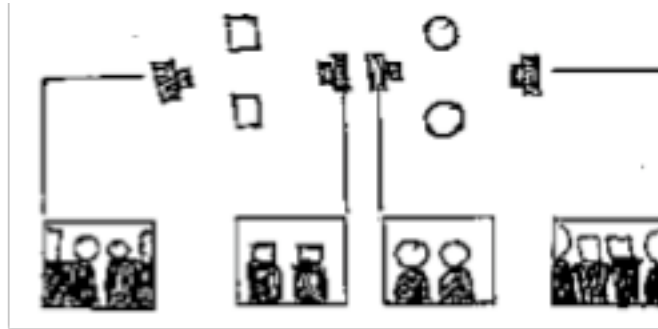
In terms of framing the rules for shooting over the shoulder reversals is simple. Either framings should be reversals, they match and mirror each other, or they should be distinctly different. When shooting reversals the composition and lens angle must be standardized. A failure to observe the mirror-matching rule will be perceived as sloppy and amateurish by the audience. In production this rule even extends to ensure that people who are different heights and different builds are framed as mirror images in reversals unless the drama of the story necessitates that the shot reveals that a one person is bigger or taller than the other. Altering the framing of a shot or the lens angle between two set ups without any clear intention just acts as interference in telling the story.

When a director blocks to shoot coverage it means that a set up will cover most of a scene and may be intercut during editing with several other set ups. This means that set ups must be standardized and reversals are one very important part of this. In practice coverage neutralizes the importance of the composition through the standardization of framing. With coverage it is not possible to frame set ups for one specific part of a scene if they are going to run the entire length of the scene.

The most common problem in shooting reversals is lack of attention and inexperience. The camera is set up and the zoom adjusted until the shot is framed as desired. Then for the next set up the camera is repositioned, the level of the camera slightly tilted to adjust for the height of the performer and the zoom adjusted to give apparently the same framing, but these two simple adjustments; a slight tilt and a small change in lens angle, mean that the resulting pair will cut awkwardly. Another fault related to minor adjusting is when filming takes place in a small location; the camera operator simply films the same scene from different positions fitting in the camera wherever possible. Once again lens angle is changed and while the characters haven't moved their positions in the room the framings for reversal are wrong. The solution is to move the positions of the performers in a small location, so that the shot is correctly framed as the audience will see it.

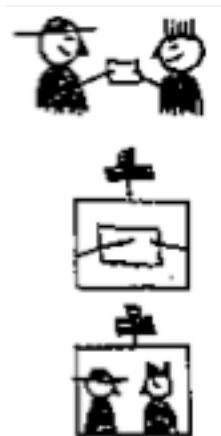
There are certainly occasions when a director and cinematographer will choose to use uneven framing to create unease, tensions or uncertainty, but this will be a deliberate choice at a certain point in the narrative. It should never be due to poor technical control.

Internals and externals: Set ups can be framed to be either apparently within the space between the performers, or outside the space between the performers, as externals or internals. In the example below there are two pairs of reversals, one pair is external and one pair is internal.



The importance of internals and externals is first of all dramatic, since the tendency of these options is to make a spectator feel that they are participating in a scene, because of internals, or observing a scene from outside, because of externals. These two simple options give the director a very powerful tool for controlling the audience's point of view in the story.

Two very useful shots to help give coverage a more dynamic and dramatic edge are inserts and cutaways. Inserts cut in on a detail in the scene and this can be done in three ways. The close up can be framed so it is exactly on the axis of the lens of the wide shot. This, like other continuity rules is clear: if the set ups are meant to share the same lens axis this must be precise; the framing of the two set ups will stay exactly as if it were on a line from the centre of the lens in the wide shot to the centre of the lens in the close shot. Any minor adjustments in framing will only provide an irritating jump. The diagram below shows an insert framed on the axis of the lens in the wide shot.



If the close up is not on the axis of the lens it must be completely distinct. Such a close up can be confusing, because an audience may not be clear what the close up is showing. If, for instance, during an edited scene of two people conversing, the shot cuts to a close up of a pocket, whose pocket is it? When framing off-axis the insert needs to be very clearly motivated by action. For example: In the wide shot the character reaches into their back pocket. Cut to close up: Hand goes into back pocket and brings out the wallet. This kind of insert is a very strong cut, because it so clearly details action, but it must be clearly motivated to have a dramatic, rather than a confusing effect. The third method for motivating a close up is to use an eye-line match. In the diagram below the character looks at their watch and the next set up

frames their point of view of the watch in close up. This usually works very well, but sometimes performers are too brief in their look and because of this the insert shot which should be motivated by the actor's look is difficult to edit. The director should make sure that the actor's look is clear and definite when the set up framing the actor is taken if the shot or it will not be useable to create an editing point for an insert.



Cutaways are the opposite of an insert. A cutaway shows something that is not part of the main action of the scene. For example: Two people are at a racetrack having a conversation and the shots cuts away to the race that is underway. Using cutaways is another very effective dramatic tool for a scene, because cutaways can be aggressive, or sensual, or ironic, and a good director will constantly be thinking of ways to use effective cutaways to help define and delineate a scene.

The power and potential of both inserts and cutaways should be highly appreciated. They can both add considerably to what might otherwise be a rather pedestrian coverage scene.

If continuity is not maintained then shooting coverage becomes a waste of effort, because the set ups will not cut together effectively. Instead of the editor being able to make creative choices in the editing process it will become a struggle to find matching material, which drastically limits the shots available. Set ups that are interestingly composed and well performed will prove impossible to use if they lack visual continuity for editing. Having to discard set ups during editing because they won't cut in terms of visual continuity, because the reversals and eye-lines don't match is very poor practice indeed.

The production team needs to work well for continuity to be maintained. There must be a script supervisor to ensure continuity is properly kept and set ups must be run with the concentration and skill that maintaining continuity requires. A crew operating without a clear structure, or good working practices, are bound to damage a production because they won't be able to keep continuity.

Storyboarding: For an inexperienced director and crew the range of demands placed by the continuity system can seem overwhelming. Dialogue, action, costume, props, sound and visual continuity all have to be maintained and it is here that storyboarding proves an invaluable tool, because the issues related to visual continuity in each scene and each set up can be checked in the calm of preproduction rather than under pressure on the set during shooting. It is also for this reason that storyboarding cannot

be effective when a director works in isolation. At a minimum in the production team, the director, the script supervisor and the camera operator must understand and be able to work to the requirements of visual continuity for editing.

Of course the rules of continuity don't always have to be observed and they may often be flaunted to create deliberate tensions, uncertainties or confusion. The horror genre specializes in creating uncertain and undefined space and the same is often true of action and suspense scenes, but simply ignoring the requirements of continuity is not an option. The experienced director is not challenged by the rules of continuity, but uses them as a tool to help create clear dramatic action.

The easiest way to direct coverage is to have the performers move, reach their marks and then start their dialogue. Simple moves will not involve actors walking and talking at the same time. For example: two people are standing at a bar conversing. This dialogue can be covered using any simple combination of reversals. The two people then move out of shot and move into another shot to sit at a table. The performers have moved and repositioned to keep the scene from going stale, and becoming visually uninteresting but once they are sitting down and static a simple set of reversals covers the dialogue. When blocking in this way there is no complex movement within a pair of matching set ups. With this simple approach to blocking it's a case of getting the characters to their marks and then shooting a number of set ups to act as coverage.

This approach to coverage, actors delivering the dialogues when they are still does provide the material necessary for continuity editing, but such a static approach will certainly become boring over the course of a long production. For an inexperienced production team it's a question of balancing their ability to keep continuity with the way the director wishes to block the action and the need to keep the film visually interesting. Everyone on set is in some way involved in keeping continuity, so creating complex blocking cannot simply be forced through by the director who simply expects good results: The performers, the director, the script supervisor, the cinematographer and the camera operator all have to have the level of skill necessary to meet the continuity demands placed on the production due to the difficulty presented by the blocking. Just because the director understands the continuity won't make it successful on the set.

Shooting coverage without storyboarding: On an inexperienced crew when keeping even basic continuity requires a great deal of effort the blocking has to be simple and the performers have to accept this simplicity and acknowledge the restraints of the storyboard, but once the director and crew have the knowledge and experience to feel confident in shooting coverage then preproduction storyboarding can be dispensed with and this allows performers and director a great deal of freedom to work creatively on a scene during rehearsals. In an experienced production team, rather than working to pre-planned set ups, the director and the performers can decide in rehearsals on their motivations for movement, how they wish to physically interact, how they want to position themselves, etc. Then once rehearsals are finished it is possible to work out an instant shooting plan through a simple shot list, rather than having to rely on a number of carefully storyboarded set ups which have been determined in preproduction. This open approach to blocking and interpreting a scene is possible because the system of shooting offered by coverage means that an experienced

production team will know how to control continuity so that the set ups used to cover a scene will produce material that can be successfully and creatively edited.

Blocking and choreographing action: shot by shot scenes

Advantages and disadvantages

Shot by shot blocking is simply shooting a scene in a series of set ups which will be edited together one after the other with each set up having little overlap. This is unlike coverage where set ups will almost always overlap and cover the same action.

Advantages

The advantages of shot by shot is the ability to frame expressively with each set up in the scene being carefully designed for its specific dramatic effect. Coverage does not allow this because its set ups must follow regular patterns such as reversals and therefore be rather predictable.

Shot by shot blocking is ideally suited to action sequences; fights, shoot outs, car chases, etc., where each piece of action can be framed in a dramatic way through the choice of camera position, camera movement and lens angle. Shot by shot technique also allows for careful concentration on special FX and stunts, because this kind of set up can be carefully designed to make sure the results appear believable to the audience and also, that these set ups can be safely performed. If coverage was used for special FX and stunts then there might be a need to perform the same stunt action several times when in fact it could not be exactly repeated for continuity purposes. For example; falls, or explosions would differ each time they took place. Of course very expensive stunts or Special FX may well be covered using several cameras simultaneously, but this builds a very high cost into filming a scene and would only be applicable to very high budget productions.

Disadvantages

The need for a large number of set ups for a scene produces a very slow shooting rate. While single set up scenes and shooting coverage can produce a lot of material per set up, shot by shot blocking might only produce a few seconds of material for a set up which took the same time to plan, rehearse and shoot as a single set up covering an entire scene.

In allowing for the dramatic framing which shot by shot makes possible the need for continuity is not lost, but increased:

Continuity of lighting from set up to set up needs to be maintained and if the camera is dramatically changing position, set ups may well need to be re-lit to ensure continuity of lighting is maintained.

Continuity of sound will not be possible to maintain during shooting, especially where there are stunts and Special FX, which will not sound 'realistic' when they are being recorded, so that in the editing of a shot by shot scene the soundtrack will usually have to be built up from scratch, requiring extra effort and attention during post-production.

Continuity of props, dialogue, costume and make up can be severely challenged when a scene may take several days to shoot and is broken up into very small elements. Precise attention to detail is necessary to be sure that set ups won't be unusable

through poor continuity. A top class production team is required for such accurate continuity

Visual Continuity has to be maintained. Shot by shot blocking allows for a great deal of manipulation of space and time; trains can be made to appear as if they are rushing at excessive speed, or a shoot out can be elongated into heightened suspense as two gun fighters reach for the same weapon, etc. In these circumstances knowing what will and won't work in terms is related to the director's knowledge of visual continuity and their production experience. Excellent storyboarding is obviously vital for complex shot by shot sequences.

To try and offer a rule of thumb when preparing shot by shot blocking: always keep visual continuity for editing from set up to set up. If visual continuity is going to be broken be sure this is deliberate and this is done because the set up offers an intentional dramatic emphasis.

As a general guide: when moving from set up to set up the continuity of screen direction and eye line will be maintained, but the consistency offered by matching reversals will be discarded in favor of more dramatic compositions.

Shot by shot blocking presents a particular challenge for dialogue scenes as this kind of set up is particularly disruptive to someone wishing to give a sustained and detailed performance. It is for this reason that this approach to blocking is favored in the action scene where the needs for subtle performance may be minimal. If a dialogue scene is blocked using shot by shot it is essential that the performers are robust and experienced enough to sustain this kind of disruption. Some feature film and television adverts solve this problem by having so many set ups covering a scene that one entire set up may only be used for a brief shot in the final edit, but this is a choice which is open to very very few professional productions because of the high costs and the production time that detailed shot by shot entails.

The ability of the director, cast and crew needs to be carefully assessed before taking up the challenge of shot by shot, because if one or two set up are failures then the entire scene may be ruined, because there is no coverage available to solve any problems.

The need for time and money and experience are the drawbacks to using shot by shot blocking and the advantage is a cornucopia of expressive choices. In good shot by shot direction each new set up will carry the emotion and intention of the scene and in poor shot by shot the cutting may be intense, the angles ever- changing, but the effect on the audience will be soporific. Just because a scene has a large number of set ups and frantic editing does not make it more successful in dramatic terms.

Success on the set

The staging of shot by shot scenes can be extremely simple or extremely complex.

At its simplest the performer will go through the action required by a scene. For example; a character will get into a car and to break this down into shot by shot blocking the performer will merely go through the same action again and again with every changing set up covering a different part of the action. The level of complexity of shooting such a scene depends on the demands on the storyboard and the difficulty of achieving this. If the planned set ups require cranes, tracks, zooms, pans, the building of cut away cars and the re-lighting of the scene for changing set ups the work involved in the scene will substantially increase. Further complexity may be added if the performer can't simply perform the action, but has to move faster or slower, or in different ways to make the set up works as intended.

On a small scale production with limited time and perhaps limited experience there is therefore only a limited scope for shot by shot blocking. As with single shots success lies in good preproduction storyboarding, but if this preplanning proves unattainable on the set the director and the production team must be ready to be adaptable to keep the shooting moving forward.

It important to stress that shot by shot is not done simply done to create a highly edited scene. If all that is needed to show someone getting into a car is one set up, that is enough, if it requires twenty set ups for dramatic purposes, then that many set ups can be justifiable.

Crib Sheet: Shot by Shot and Psychological Realism

A scene can be broken down into small elements and each element shot as a specific set up. This is shot by shot blocking, which has its merits and its problems:

Shot by Shot can work well because: This blocking technique produces very carefully crafted shots that can be dynamic and dramatic when edited together. Shot by shot matches the predominant contemporary style and taste for fast action with a lot of cuts per scene. Shot by shot allows set ups to be designed for special FX on set such as dangerous stunts or events; explosions, crashes, injuries, etc. and for S/FX in post-production such as CGI. These features make shot by shot the chosen option for contemporary actions scene and for scenes where the information is primarily visual, such as adverts.

Shot by shot is a failure when: Set ups do not match because of poor continuity and so they will not edit together. The performance of the actors is broken up by the demands of shot by shot so that they cannot play their scene effectively and their performance is damaged; stilted, artificial and lacking dramatic credibility.

To successfully shoot shot by shot: You need a good understanding of all aspects of continuity. You need to use shot by shot on suitable scenes. You need to spend the time planning your set ups for shot by shot by making storyboards and shot lists to ensure continuity. You need the necessary time in production to be able to shoot all the set ups you have planned. You need to ensure that actors are not worn out by multiple takes

and their performance is not undermined by the demands of shot by shot. You need to ensure that sound FX and wild tracks are available when editing shot by shot material so that continuity of sound is maintained.

Psychological Realism

Psychological realism is a very special type of shot by shot blocking that gives the audience the impression that they are directly experiencing what a character in the scene is thinking or feeling. The steps to achieve this are very specific:

During the course of a scene the editing moves to a close up of a character in order to establish that the next shot will show their point of view. At this moment the sound of the scene shifts and establishes a sound that matches through the manipulation of diegetic sound and sometimes expressive music the emotions and feelings of the character. The audience will be keyed into this moment to some extent by what is already happening in the scene. The point of view shot will then make use of some sort of camera or lighting technique; slow motion, shaking, craning, tracking, flickering etc.. that creates a visual sensation that emphasises how the character is experiencing this moment in the scene. The audience take their visual experience of this shot to match the emotional experience of the character in the scene. The point of view shot will then be followed by a shot of the character where the audience will see the character in a shot using a camera technique; slow motion, shaking, craning, tracking, flickering etc.. that reinforces the audience's connection of the emotional effect of the shot to the inner perception of the character. To move back from the psychological realism to an objective view of the scene, a shot will show another element of the story and re-establish 'natural' sound.

The simplest example of shooting psychological realism might well be that of a person on a roller coaster ride and use the following sequence of set ups: Establishing shot of roller coaster travelling at speed. Close up on a character on the roller coaster; The sound of the roller coaster is very much louder than in the establishing shot, there is also a scream. The point of view shot shows a rushing, frantically shaking shot of the roller coaster travelling down a ferocious drop. The next shot cuts to a frantically shaking shot of the character in the roller coaster with a roar of sound mixed in with the sound of roller coaster itself. A long shot of the roller coaster shows the ride going round its circuit and 'natural' sound returns.

Blocking and choreographing action: shot by shot scenes

Techniques to enhance blocking, camerawork and sound

When planning set ups there are a number of techniques, use of camera and use of sound that can add dramatic effect.

Change of image size

Sudden changes of image size from long shot to extreme close up, or vice versa can be very dramatic. They can also be used to cover dangerous action like punches. Cuts directly along the axis of the lens are very sudden.

Big cut/Shock cut

Besides a change of image size an extreme change of camera position can create a sense of jump and extremity that enhances a scene. It can also mask dangerous action. The big cut/shock cut can even break the 180 degree/continuity line if this will be dramatically effective.

Screen sections

In the horror film or thriller film where a character may be under menace or threat, the screen sections can be used to create a sense that there is a space for a character on the who is not actually there. This type of deliberate mis-framing manipulates the audience's unconscious understanding of the conventions of the continuity system. They know what the correct framings should be, so when there is a mis-framing that creates and unconscious unease.

Movement out of frame and into frame

Breaking an action into a sequence of shots where characters or other events move out of frame and then into frame on the next cut is very dynamic and makes it possible to stage dangerous action effectively.

Open framing

Framing can create the sense that what is shown is all that that exists in the drama and that might be called a closed framing. For example closed framing can isolate a person and make them look alone in the crowd. For action and horror scenes a sense of things happening outside the frame or danger or threat existing nearby can be achieved through opening framing. In open framing the cropping of objects in the frame is clipped so that there is a sense that there is space just outside the frame. Characters can move in and out of frame. This 'untidiness' is a useful approach to creating tension.

The creeping camera/ The following camera

The slowly tracking camera or the camera that follows a character, or even moves into empty space can suggest a menacing off screen presence.

Tracking, panning, zooming,

Fast tracks towards dramatic action or reactions, pans with and against the action. Fast pans, whip pans, zooms and snap zooms can all increase the intensity of what is happening. They can also increase the sense of realism in a scene.

Focusing

Snap focus, or a sudden change of focus can add to action by highlighting an event. In horror and suspense out of focus elements in the foreground or background can create unease.

Use of lenses

Wide angle lenses create distortion and heighten perspective. This distortion can add to the emotional reaction of a person in terror and make their objective seem farther away than it is. Long lenses flatten elements that are on different planes. The apparent nearness of a person to a dangerous event can be enhanced with a long lens.

Undercranking/Fast motion and Overcranking/Slow motion

A slight increase in the speed in terms of the action that is being filmed can make it appear more dynamic, furious, or aggressive. The use of this technique when noticeable is laughable, but it is still discretely used. Slow motion suspends and delays a moment it can hold an audience's emotions and build them. It can show them details they would otherwise miss. The use of slow motion has to be very specific or it will simply slow down the pace of the story and add nothing dramatic.

Holding and bouncing

Many edits can be approached two ways. The action being shown can be completed and held. This holding will allow the audience to react emotionally and fully and understand the action. Cutting on the bounce finishes before the action is complete and pushes the pace and the story forward. Good editing will present a scene and stories where there is a suitable mixture of holding and bouncing.

Loss of sound

Loud sudden and expressive sound can make an image more powerful. For instance the clash of blades during a swordfight. It can be just as effective to lose the sound at key moments, because it creates an emotional effect like a held breathe, a sudden pause.

Distorted sound: Artificial sound/expressive sound

Sound can often move well beyond what is realistic, because an audience is concentrating on the story and the visuals. A piano playing somewhere in a building while the new tenants move into their apartment can add eeriness that 'natural' sound might not. A dangerous machine might have animal sound added to the engine noise. Sound design is a very important element of making a scene as effective and dramatic as possible.

Blocking and choreographing action: single set up scenes

Advantages and disadvantages

One way to block a scene is to shoot it using a single set up. This blocking technique is a sometimes called 'editing in camera', because the staging and choreographing which produces a single set up scene replaces the need for post-production editing and therefore this 'editing in camera' is appropriate. The technique is also known as 'long takes' and sometimes 'plan sequence'.

Advantages

There are several advantages in using a single set up to cover a scene.

The single set up scene is economical in terms of time and therefore money, because only one set up is required for the scene. Even if the single take is complex it will still produce more finished footage in less time than several set ups covering the same action from different angles. The use of a single set up for a scene also reduces editing time, making it a very effective budgeting tool and for this reason it is a favorite with low budget productions.

When a scene is shot using coverage, involving a number of camera set ups, the actors have to control and repeat their performance quite precisely to prevent continuity problems. In a single set up scene the performers' need to make their marks and the camera needs to be carefully choreographed, but the performers can perform more freely during a take knowing that they will not have to repeat the same actions for set ups covering the scene from different angles to allow for editing.

There are several cinema directors with particularly good reputations for working well with performers and they often use a single set up for a scene. These directors would include: Jean Renoir, Orson Welles and Martin Scorsese. What this link between an 'actor's director' and single set up blocking reveals is that a good director will choose to work with and trust performers rather than trying to control them and the single set up scene gives the performers a special opportunity to show their talent. The skills of the performers help make the reputation of the director.

Inexperienced director's can benefit from using single set up scenes because, 'what you see is what you get'. The performance the director sees in the single set up is not going to be altered by editing. It is easier to judge the pace, quality of performance and the overall effectiveness of a scene if an inexperienced director does not have to imagine how the set ups will appear when they are edited.

Disadvantages

There are some disadvantages and problems in using a single set up to shoot a scene:

If the single set up does not work well within the film as a whole there is little or no way to change it apart from cutting off chunks at the beginning or the end of the shot. It requires confidence and skill to rely on a single set up scene to work well within a story.

If a drama is shot in a series of long single set up scenes the pace may become stodgy and the story loses dramatic emphasis. This can be due to the lack of change in the use of camera angles and because the absence of cutting makes the audience feel that the tone of the story is somewhat predictable. With a good director and a good script this is not necessarily true; Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* was shot using single set ups with each take running ten minutes in length and Woody Allen uses a large amount of single set up scenes so that the comedy can flow freely and also because his films are low budget productions which need to be shot quickly.

In the television soap the single set up scene can be used, because of the need to shoot a lot of material very quickly and the short snappy scenes of the soap opera suit this treatment. However in the 'quality' television drama the single set up scene is avoided and scenes are usually covered from several angles. Coverage is used for television drama because these programmes have to fit specific time slots; eleven minutes between adverts, etc. Also, television production is producer controlled and this control can be exercised in the editing if multiple set ups are used. Also, productions may need to be re-edited due to broadcast policy and further re-editing may also take place when different versions of a programme are prepared for screening in countries around the globe. In the television drama frequent use of the single set up scene is rarely an option open to a director, because the single set up scene severely limits the options in the editing stage.

How to successfully design and stage single set up scenes

The primary rule is simplicity:

- Keep the camera movement simple and repeatable and move the performers. It is easier to get people to move intricately rather than a camera and its crew.
- Use a simple panning shot, or a single straight track.

The options for framing and blocking in the single set up scene are numerous. If the camera is simply static performers can:

- Move away or towards the lens
- Change sides in the frame
- Move into and out of frame and across the frame

If camera movement is added:

- The camera can reveal and frame a range of spaces with a variety of backgrounds and compositions
- The camera can reveal performers
- The camera can move with performers or away from performers

- The camera can participate in the action
- The camera can comment on and tell the story by leading the audience towards a certain viewpoint. For example by allowing the spectator to see one character's private reaction.

A director will find this procedure useful when planning and storyboarding long single set ups:

Draw out a simple overhead diagram, a basic map of the performance space, Choose a spot for the camera to be positioned. Choose the angle of the lens and through imaginary camera movements and which follow the performers' movements work through the possible options for framing and choreographing the shot.

Planning the single set up just on paper is one option, but this creative process can be made three dimensional by using some small miniature figures to acts as the performers and then they are actually moved around in front of an imaginary camera. Trial and error will eventually produce a result where the drama can unfold in front of a single set up. If getting the framing with a single lens angle proves difficult this is an occasion when an adjusting zoom can prove highly effective.

The warning for preproduction planning is that if set ups are very complex in terms of camera and choreographing it may be difficult, if not impossible to successfully stage them on the set. As a rule keep the camera movement to a simple movement. For dramatic effect move the performers in decisive ways; into and out of shot and from the foreground to the background. The single set up scene offers a great deal of variety if properly designed and many scenes can be successfully covered using this type of blocking.

The biggest potential problem in rehearsing a long, complex set up is the possibility that the performers will be forced into such a rigid and precise pattern of movement that they will become worn out in rehearsal and as consequence produce a tired, stilted and unconvincing performance. Similarly, if a single set up is designed to be overly-exact the camera crew will never be able to achieve the necessary precision in performing the shot and frustration will set in. In practice if the director has the skill to thoughtfully design a long single set up then the actors' movements will be fairly straight forward and the choreographing of the set up will match the dramatic intention of the scene. In these circumstances, when the director takes care not to become too fussy or complex, the performers and the camera crew will be able to work well with the necessary blocking and they will not find it a restriction.

In order to avoid problems during rehearsals and filming an inexperienced director's attempts at the single set up scene should be kept as simple as possible. Any overly complex, impossible to rehearse shot, evidences poor direction: if the performers can't make the required marks to match the camera it is the director's fault and the director should adjust the set up if this begins to occur. The procedure for running a single set up scene on the set should be as follows:

The performers and the director develop how the scene will be played in relation to the set up in the storyboard. Nothing is finalized before this stage.

The camera is placed in the approximate position for the storyboarded set up and the scene is simply walked through until the choreographing and continuity is clear. The director should not expect to finalize and fix the camera position or the performers' marks during the first stage of this process, because it is during this rehearsal period that the director and performers can usefully improve and develop the scene and putting down marks at the very start will only hinder the rehearsals and even slow down the shooting time, because marks will change and the performers and the camera crew will become unclear as to what blocking and marks have finally been decided. The director when agreeing to the performers' wishes will be quietly bearing in mind that the scene is to be recorded in a single set up, but this will be done subtly and not be used to confine the performers' own interpretation of the scene.

There is a trade-off to be made between the performers' suggestions for staging the scene and the pre-planning of the set up. A good director will balance these without conflict and a weak director should always bear in mind that a poor performance will badly damage a production, while a simplified set up may make little difference to the overall film. The director will, in most circumstances, favor the performers' wishes if rehearsing the scene proves difficult.

During the initial on set rehearsals for a single set up the camera operator and the cinematographer may well be observing and considering how the single set up will work, but the camera operator and cinematographer do not decide how a scene should be played. The camera operator will be considering which lens angle and which camera position will be best for the scene, but will never be the person who tries to control the blocking of a scene. The production team are working to support the director and the performers, not to confine them. If it turns out that the performers' ideas are completely unusable for the planned set up the director will either guide them back to the original plan for the set up, or devise a new set up.

Crib sheet for shooting single set up scenes

Single set ups are used to shoot scenes using a single long-take set up. They can be complex or simple. They are a fast and efficient ways to cover a scene and save time in production. For this reason they are often favored by low-budget filmmakers.

Single set ups simplify continuity for a scene because there is no need for the director to break a scene down into separate set ups that overlap and therefore need to match in terms of continuity of action, props and dialogue.

Single set up scenes can be dynamic, complex and may require a high degree of skill. They allow actors to show off their talents, because actors can change their performance for each take.

There are three approaches to single set ups with a growing level of difficulty at each stage:

One: Keep the camera movement simple; completely static, or a simple pan or track, and then move the actors rather than the camera. It is easier for a person to move and change direction in a complex path than a camera.

Two: Use complex camera movements; twisting, curving, following, panning, tilting, etc., but keep the movements of the actors simple; standing, walking, etc.

Three: Use complex camera movements and complex actors' movements where both camera and actors need to be highly choreographed and co-ordinated.

Plan your set up in advance of shooting using a floor plan of the location and small models for the actors and the camera positions.

Plan the scene in a rehearsal prior to shooting where the actors, or stand-ins for the actors, and a camera operator work slowly through the scene and the camera positions. This will take time and effort.

Do not try to prepare a long single set up on a production day with a full crew in attendance as it results in time being wasted and having a large crew standing around doing nothing is often frustrating for them.

What the director needs to identify for a successful single set up are the **key frames** for each part of the shot. These are the framings that match the camera position to the actor's positions in relation to the action and the dialogue at key parts of the scene. These can then be noted on the script so that the set up as practiced on paper or in rehearsals can be reproduced on set. A good single set up will clearly show the action and reactions of the actors in the scene; it will help tell the story. It will control the pace and dynamism of the story because single set ups are expressive; they can be frantic, formal, stately, chaotic etc., depending on the camerawork used.

On set single set ups will be prepared by actors slowly walking through the action and dialogue for the scene with the camera movements being made at the same time and marks being put down for the positions of the camera and actors for the key frames. It is important to note that keeping the camera movement simple and moving the actors

is the first level of skill for shooting single set ups. If a set up too complex for the skill of the actors or the crew it will fail.

A single set up scene will be a success if:

- It is properly planned in advance and the key frames identified.
- If it is planned within the skills and experience of the cast and crew.
- If the camera operator is competent, concentrated and prepared.

Single set ups will fail:

- If they are only imagined in the mind of the director and there is no physical planning or rehearsal for the set up.
- If the set up is too complex for the camera operator and the cast to perform.
- If actors do not know their lines and their performance of the scene breaks down during the shooting of a long take, then the planned set up will fail.

Blocking and choreographing action: film direction and film style

Introduction

The previous sections on blocking and choreographing action clearly set out three methods of blocking; *Coverage*, *Shot by shot* and *Single set up scenes*. These approaches may seem to be merely practical solutions to the filming of action and dialogue, but each one has its own historical development and its own use within the cinema and television industries. Each method of blocking can be related to a style of production which might be categorized as either Mainstream, Cult, Art House, Independent or Social Realist and when one considers the options for choreographing action in relation to these different types of production one can see how practical techniques become related to a specific style of direction, with directors choosing to block action as the style of production and the type of dictates.

This section on film direction, and film style, sets out the basics of the historical relation between blocking and film style. No style of blocking is exclusive to any particular type of production, Mainstream cinema can use single set ups, shot by shot and coverage, but there are general codes and conventions of film style which are created by the ways in which the action is staged and shot by the director for different types of story within different production systems. The importance of understanding this historical context is to clarify how strongly production conventions influence a professional director and the methods they will use to block and choreograph a production.

Coverage: the studio system

The studio system instituted the ubiquitous use of coverage to ensure that productions were shot in a consistent and disciplined way. This type of blocking was used in conjunction with particular styles of set design and costume design and reinforced by conventions in script and performance which all contribute to what is recognizably the studio style of Hollywood and European cinema from the 1920's to the late 1940's.

The film *Casablanca* would be a premiere example of the dominance of coverage in the studio era.

The stylistics of the studio system were as follows:

In the studio system script was derived from theatrical dialogue. The dialogue carried the clear conscious ideas of the characters. The subtext comes from the emphasis given in delivering lines and the facial reactions. Performers stand and converse, any sense of the vernacular is created by the use of superficial accents rather than actual vocabulary or regional accent.

Performance was controllable and repeatable for continuity: relying on the face and voice for expression and reaction rather than gesture and movements. This style is once again linked to a theatrical performance style; standing and talking.

Lighting was designed to make the central characters, the stars, as appealing and attractive as possible and often used the standard formula of three-point lighting. In lighting a scene for mood and atmosphere it was the background that was controlled

by adding ominous shadows or sunlight from windows. The performers however were kept glamorous and good looking whatever the setting of the scene.

Framing followed a functional system which suited coverage; wide shot, close up etc. The framing was rarely changed to match the mood of a scene. Camera angle and lens angle were kept consistent for using coverage. Independent camera movement was rarely used. The camera stayed with the performers.

Editing was functional, with the cutting moving from character to character as they spoke in order to unfold the drama. The editing was motivated by the characters' interaction. The editing stayed with the performers.

As with the lighting design, costume design was made as appealing as possible. Stars were glamorous and well dressed even when the characters they played might not have possessed such fabulous clothes.

Set design was functional and linked by social codes; a mansion for the rich, a hovel for the poor, etc. But sets were rarely designed to display the internal psychological state of the characters who inhabited them.

The studio system as a production system

The classical studio system was producer-led and the director filmed a script shooting coverage to a set standard of quality. There were A grade directors and B grade directors and personnel were effectively interchangeable between productions. A director might direct a Western then a romantic comedy. The design of a film in all aspects, including the style of direction, was centralized by the control of the producer whose methods would conform to studio practices.

The technique of direction to match the need for a high level of output was coverage, which also, vitally, allowed for the careful control of lighting, performance and costume, with the selection of the best takes and the use of editing to follow each performer as required. The continuity of the filming had to be excellent which required the static talking performance. The voice and the face were the key to acting success in the studio era. Stars dominated in the studio system and the system served the stars.

In essence the classic narrative cinema technique was about making films attractive, maintaining stylistic coherence, maintaining control at all times and producing a narrative which was easy to read and enjoy.

The handful of directors who are noted and studied for their specific directorial style were able to achieve this status because of their ability to direct financially successful films, which in turn led to them obtaining a substantial degree of directorial autonomy. Film directors such as Hawks, Ford and Wyler are often used as examples of directors who were successful enough in the studio system to gain directorial control so that their films show specific characteristics of style. However they are the exception to the rule and stand somewhat apart from the studio system; where most directors remain effectively anonymous. For instance, Michael Curtiz, was a top director at Warner Brothers, directing over fifty features, but he is not noted for any particular directorial style. Today's television directors are for the most part anonymous, and this was how

the studio system functioned: the vast majority of directors worked to the style of the studio system.

Coverage: contemporary television drama

In the contemporary television drama the influence of the studio system is still exceedingly strong. The main change has been a shift from the glamour of the studio system to a more naturalistic, but still attractive style of production.

Script has moved to a greater naturalism, but still retains the use of dialogue to convey clear conscious ideas. Standing and talking is still the norm. The apparent naturalism TV drama stems from the setting of dramas in 'real' situations; the hospital, the police station, the court, etc.

These are the stylistics of contemporary television drama:

Performance. Still relying on face and voice, like the studio system, with gestures and setting becoming more naturalistic. The performance is carefully controlled to meet the demands of continuity editing using coverage as the primary blocking technique.

Lighting. Still designed to be attractive for the performers, but again given a more naturalistic tone. In the studio system beautiful people were made handsome, glamorous and sensual, while in contemporary television ordinary people are made appealing and attractive.

Framing. Still following the methods created during the studio system and not used expressively in contemporary television.

Editing. Still following the methods created during the studio system and not used expressively.

Costume. Still attractive, but again more naturalistic. Costume is neat, tidy and clean, rather than fashionable and exclusive.

Set design. Still attractive, but again more naturalistic. Sets only very rarely used in a psychologically expressive way.

In television drama the blocking technique of coverage has been maintained as this allows dramas to be cut to match the time slots, broadcast policy and the re-editing of programmes for global markets. In the television industry centralized producer/editor control is ubiquitous as in the classical studio system, but in terms of television production style there has been an aesthetic shift towards an apparent, but still pleasing naturalism. This naturalism is reinforced by the subject choice of crime dramas and period costume dramas as subject matter which both make use of a recognizable social milieu.

Potential, alternative styles for television drama such as psychological realism, or social realism are extremely rare. In amongst the thousands upon thousands of hours of television dramas that have been made there have been perhaps only a handful of directors who have developed any form of recognizable individual style. Most

prominent among these few would be, in the UK, Mike Leigh, who moved from theatre to film bringing his own style and working methods. There are also, again in the UK, Ken Loach and Alan Clark, two distinctive television directors and they owe their recognizable style to a foundation in social realism rather than mainstream drama production.

The contemporary television industry functions very much like the classic studio system: the director works to the norms and practices of the industry and as part of a team.

Coverage: sitcom and soap opera

The use of masters and coverage not only dominates in the 'quality' television drama, but also in other television formats.

The sitcom is easily recognizable as offering the same form of drama as stage comedy and classic studio film comedy. Performance is fast paced, with highly rehearsed, snappy dialogue. The sitcom is of course actually performed as a piece of live theatre in front of a studio audience. The use of the multi-camera studio produces coverage which can easily be intercut.

The sitcom in its setting and blocking is very strongly related to the practices of the theatrical stage because the director records the action from a set of basic camera positions which always stay on one side of the drama: as if it were being shot through a proscenium arch. In the sitcom the potential for crossing the line, or shot by shot blocking is not an option for the director.

The contemporary television soap

The main TV soaps presents an issue-based social drama which uses coverage, or a simple single set up for a scene in order to retain an unobtrusive and functional style of framing and editing. Lighting, costume design, set design and performance are all made 'authentic' by an apparently specific cultural and ethnic setting, this ethnicity being indicated by naturalistic performances and domestic settings. The gloss of the studio system is not suitable for the soap opera, but those soaps with a more utopian aspect still retain the cleanliness and wholesomeness which is associated with the early studio system.

Shot by shot and film style: the cartoon and the action movie

The classic studio feature film and the contemporary television drama depend almost exclusively on the use of coverage. While the contemporary feature film, with the action movie as its dominant form, can afford to make use of the dynamic qualities of shot by shot blocking.

When looking for the origins of this shift in the shot by shot style of the action from the standardized coverage of classic studio system it might seem unlikely that the cartoon studio of Walt Disney would be the first purveyor of this movement towards individually staged and carefully planned set ups, but it is precisely because drawn cartoons can frame shots from any angle and create astonishing camera movements at the same cost as any other type of shot, which means that the cartoon feature film,

from its inception with Snow White, was able to block scenes in ways that live action films of the same period could not.

The blocking used in the cartoon feature films of the 1940's and 1950's is only now being matched in the live action feature film of today, because the production technology for live action is now also able to perform the same sort of complex set ups, as drawn animation, but the cost of using this new technology is astoundingly high. With the average budget for an action movie reaching 100 million dollars and this sum being an understood by the film industry as an acceptable budget for an intended blockbuster. This much money means that an action scene lasting five minutes can have three hundred edits and take weeks to shoot, while a film for television has thirty days to shoot and must produce ninety minutes of footage with two hundred set ups.

Also, of course the live action film and the cartoon movie have now converged with live action being only one part of the final image with most of the image produced digitally through CGI.

Shot by shot and the high style

Shot by shot, in designing each set up as a single dramatic element, means that a lot of investment will be made in lighting, costume and set design. These will be vitally important elements of the drama and the set ups will be want to exploit the potential for visual design as much as possible. This type of filmmaking has been identified as the high style of drama where it is not primarily people standing, talking and reacting which carries most of the drama of a film, instead it is the visual image which carries as much of the emotion of the scene as the performers

By using the high style of detailed shot by shot blocking this type of filmmaking becomes more like fashion photography, or advertising, where every element of the image is designed to fit the overall impression. Television drama cannot achieve this, because it does not have the budget for such a comprehensive and detailed control of all aspects of production. With the high style of production the director now works to ensure that that design elements of a film are shown to the audience as much as the performers. The use of shot by shot and the high style stems from advertising, where gloss and quick cutting are the norm.

The role of the director in the high budget feature film

Through the use of shot by shot blocking, elaborate sets, sophisticated costume design, complex special FX and stunts, the contemporary feature film retains its unique position as a premium media product. In these circumstances the director is only one key member of the production team with the production designer and the cinematographer taking on a great deal of the responsibility for the overall look and style of a film. Given the prestige of many directors and the lack of public recognition accorded to production designers and cinematographer it is ironic that in a Hollywood film shot today if the production designer goes ill and cannot work the production company will receive twice as much compensation from their insurers than if the director were to fall ill for the same time. This indicates how important production design has become. Also, today, the feature film director will rarely control the special FX and these will usually be prepared through a specialized company with the director

left to handle the potentially more mundane task of providing live action and dialogue set ups which will be used by the Special FX team in digital post-production.

In looking for films where the high style emerged *Star Wars* indicates the key shifts in production practices, because this series of relies heavily on production design and special effect. In the 1970's the action movies of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg brought the shot by shot blocking of the cartoon feature film to the live action feature film and this has become the dominant type of direction for mainstream high budget cinema.

Psychological realism and film style

Psychological realism involves a calculated distortion and control of sets, framing and lighting with editing emphasizing a single character's point of view. Here shot by shot blocking becomes an important technique since it allows for an individual framing for each set up rather than returning repeatedly to familiar reversals and functional camera angles. The table below identifies the key elements of psychological realism

Psychological Realism - Expressionism

Psychological experience

Participation: use of point of view

Distorted lighting and framing

Unmotivated camera: expressive movements

Expressive framing: close ups and movement

Stylized blocking: turning, twisting, tracking

Expressive editing: jarring continuity and jump cuts

Within the action movie, the thriller and the horror film there is obviously a great deal of scope for the use of psychological realism to heighten the experience and present a psychological state, but surprisingly few productions make extensive use of this style of blocking. This may well be because it falls outside the tradition of the Hollywood feature film where the narrative is constructed as a realist form with audiences given the perception that the film is an objective, if fictionalized, representation of events. Maintaining believability, no matter how outlandish the plot, is a measure of success in mainstream filmmaking: if the script calls for a character to jump fifty feet and land safely the director's job is to make this appear believable on the screen. The realist style of the mainstream narrative is in most cases supported by an apparent realist, objective style of filmmaking and psychological realism would undermine this authenticity.

The tradition in cinema of psychological realism historically stems from the German studio system of the 1920's which was strongly influenced by expressionism in theatre

and fine art. There was no such influence in Hollywood and when German émigré directors such as Fritz Lang moved to Hollywood they worked stylistically within the aesthetic parameters of the studio system.

The only enduring, minor, stylistic influence of expressionism in the American cinema is in the genre of Film Noir, which uses distortion to create a heightened menace, but this is only partly psychological realism, because this menace is created mainly through lighting and setting to create a reality which the protagonists inhabit, rather than the distortion being depicted as a character's specific point of view.

Most of the camera work and editing in Film Noir retains the studio practice of coverage to block action. It is also important to note that Film Noirs were low budget productions and as such could make stylistic forays outside the dominant style of studio filmmaking with its glossy production values.

Psychological realism: key directors

During the classical studio period only Alfred Hitchcock made frequent use of psychological realism. His use of this type of blocking may well be due to his early work at the German UFA film studios and when he moved from Europe to work in Hollywood he brought with him his established reputation and his expressionist influenced style. In terms of film history Hitchcock is so isolated in his use of psychological realism that this type of direction is often taken to be a style individual to Hitchcock, so that what might be seen and understood as psychological realism is frequently identified as Hitchcockian technique.

Martin Scorsese is the only contemporary director who has built strongly upon the use of psychological realism and to a lesser extent Spielberg, Oliver Stone and Spike Lee make use of this approach. Scorsese's use of psychological realism may have been aided by his early experience as an editor, which gave him the necessary knowledge and confidence to know how set ups would work at the editing stage and in going on from being an editor to working as a director he was able to successfully stage shot by shot set ups from the start of his career. Crucially his first films were low budget independent productions which gave him the opportunity to use and refine this type of blocking on the set rather than working under the control of a studio producer where coverage would have been predominant.

It is through familiarity with the blocking used primarily by Hitchcock and Scorsese that the potential for psychological realism can be studied.

The single set up scene: directors in the mainstream

The single set up scene gives a director two things: total control of the final result, because there can be no editing of the scene and the opportunity to show their skills at designing and achieving a whole scene in one long, single, complex set up.

Using the long take to display the verve and panache of the director was demonstrated by Orson Welles, who is another example, like Hitchcock, of someone coming to Hollywood with an established reputation and because of this being given directorial control over his projects. Given his émigré status Hitchcock was also able to work with the long take on several productions. The impetus of these directors has meant that working in long takes is one way to establish an individual reputation as a director and contemporary audiences are keyed in by reviewers to notice and appreciate this type of set up.

In the contemporary mainstream directors use the single take to show off their skill and to display the technology at their command. The ability of set ups to pass across roads, through crowds, along corridors, down stairs, under floorboards and up walls all adds to the enjoyment offered by spectacle of Hollywood cinema.

The single set up scene: independent, low budget, art house, cult

The Art House cinema of the 1960's and 1970's had its basis in the exhibition of films made outside of mainstream studio production. These would usually be European films with directors working in a comparatively low budget environment outside of large scale studio production. Some of these directors exploited the single set up scene for aesthetic rather than economic reasons. In the thirties and forties Jean Renoir often used the long single set up to favour the performer and Max Ophüls used the long take within the melodrama genre. In the sixties Antonioni and Fellini used extravagant single set ups and the French directors of the New Wave, Truffaut, Godard and Rohmer all used the single set up to cover scenes as a resistance to Hollywood production methods and as a naturalistic style of blocking.

During the sixties in America John Cassavetes used long takes like Renoir to favour his performers and Martin Scorsese beginning his career under the aegis of Cassavetes and also under the influence of European directors took the extravagant single take into the mainstream.

From this briefest of outlines of the range of directors using this type of blocking it is plain that the single take has had a significant influence on the work of many directors and its use can be followed from the thirties to the present day in both European and American Cinema. Paul Thomas Anderson's films *Magnolia* and *Boogie Nights* follow the tradition of using long single set ups for character-based drama.

Directors to look at for single set ups: Jean Renoir, Max Ophüls, Hitchcock, Orson Welles, Brian de Palma, Martin Scorsese, Oliver Stone, Spike Lee, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Paul Thomas Anderson, Michael Haneke.

Social realism and film style: an alternative to studio practice

The only film style which is not heavily dependent upon the historical influence of the classic studio system is Social Realism. This is because it is a style developed as an alternative to the mainstream, primarily through the Italian Neo-Realist films and Social Realism has strong stylistic links with documentary practice. Its aim is to produce an unobtrusive naturalism and to do this:

- Editing is kept to a minimum, because it implies editorial control, especially emotional manipulation of the audience.
- Single shots are simple, often static and only very rarely expressive through movement and distortion.
- Coverage is only used in a simple pragmatic way with one or two set ups per scene at most.
- Psychological realism is not used. Scenes are shot from the point of view of an observer.
- Script, costume, casting and direction are all designed to be naturalistic.

All in all social realism aims to be as stylistically neutral as possible.

Claims are made that social realism can represent a more authentic practice than the mainstream because it offers:

- An alternative to the dominance of the studio system
- A form potentially responsive and representative of social issues
- A basis for the formation of national and culturally specific cinemas

These claims can be sustained to some degree and the idea of a socially centered rather than an industry-based entertainment cinema is the appeal of this style of filmmaking. Equally, no style of filmmaking can make any intrinsic claim to show reality more authentically than any other form. Every form of cinema is a representation.

The stylistic aims of social realist cinema are:

Social Realism - Naturalism

Neutral observation

Non-participation: audience as observer

Undistorted lighting and framing

Motivated camera: stays with performers

Conventional framing: mid-shot and wide shots

Pragmatic blocking: walking and talking

Functional framing: two shots, singles, mid-shots

Designing the style of an individual production

The relation between blocking and film style will almost always be understood by any professional practicing director without much resort to theorizing or the consideration of historical specificity. In simple terms each industry has its own production norms and directors work within these norms.

The previous sections on types of blocking and film style may well have made it appear that the design of all films is determined by the industrial and historical context, but there is a stylistic span within these parameters and much work still needs to be done by the director in developing the style of an individual production. More importantly each film tells a specific story and this can either well told or badly told in relation to how it is directed a successful film uses blocking successfully to tell the story even if that blocking is limited by the production system that the director works in.

The difficulty of creating any decisive criteria for designing the style of a film is that any project may be successfully designed in many ways and design in itself is essentially about making a set of choices between different elements. There is no absolutely right choice. For instance; when designing a period film the director may choose to adopt the framing style of photographs, or paintings of that period, or instead may compose set ups in a thoroughly contemporary way. What decides a choice like this may well be the way the director feels the script needs to be blocked; either for the dramatic effect of the contemporary blocking or because of the need to maintain an imitation of period composition. Design and style are all about making a set of choices and on any production and these choices effect:

- Script
- Performance
- Lighting
- Framing
- Editing
- Costume
- Set design

If you are designing a high gloss, high style production, or a social realist drama the stylistic choices in each of the categories of script, performance, lighting, framing, editing, costume and set design will be different and a production is more likely to be successful if each of these areas is adequately considered. No element in the design of a film can be taken too much for granted and success is often linked to making a simple set of coherent choices in order to create a sustained look and feel for a production. If a director and a cinematographer were to choose any lens angle they thought suited the particular scene they were working on the end result would be a production using a hodge podge of lenses and no set pattern to guide the audience. The same is true of blocking a mish-mash of coverage, shot by shot and single set up would be a stylistic mess.

Deciding on the lenses to be used and the type of composition and blocking are all necessary if a production is to be stylistically coherent in visual terms.

Influences on the style of an individual production

The influences which will affect the choices in designing a production are due to:

The use of pre-existent codes and genre conventions; films covering the same kind of subject matter will indicate how a type of plot is usually designed and directed.

The blending and the reformulating of narrative conventions, stereotypes and styles is part of the process of creating a new and unique production, which is at the same time familiar to audiences and easy to follow. For example; a contemporary comedy may well be recognisable as a 'screwball romantic comedy' therefore offering the fun and pleasure associated with this sort of film, but contemporary discourses in relation to such topics as gender, sexuality, class and race, have changed and therefore effect how the film is constructed. For example in the classic studio era sex between non-married couples could only be tangentially alluded to, but in a contemporary film a non-married couple may well have sex, but this will not be given an explicit 'sex scene', because it is still considered an unsuitable ingredient of the romantic comedy. The design of a production is changed and recombined to suit changing social expectations and norms. Today's audiences cringe at the diffused, golden lighting, the depiction of romantic sex that was the norm in the 1970's. Styles of lighting and blocking change from era to era.

From cinema the influences on designing a film will come from:

- The classic studio systems in the USA, Germany, France and Italy.
- Contemporary cinema on a global basis with the increasing influence of Asian cinema on the mainstream.

More specifically the stylistic influences of cinema can be set out so that they include: the expressionism of Film Noir and the stylistic saturation of Melodrama.

Naturalism is the opposing influence to expressionism with links with Social Realism, Neo-Realism, Poetic Humanism, and the 'gritty' style of some crime and domestic dramas.

Also, today, cinema is now drawing more and more heavily on television for material and turning an original small scale domestic production into a global product.

From outside film and television there are obviously other influences on the design of screen production from:

- Theatre
- Literature
- Painting
- Fashion
- Advertising
- Photojournalism
- Documentary filmmaking
- Avant-Garde filmmaking

- The music industry
- Computer games

Without doubt the potential influences on the design of a particular film can come from a huge span of cultural products, but quite often the eventual design choices may be straightforward; they will follow production norms. A television director will usually shoot coverage with a pleasing and attractive style of lighting and costume and it will be rare that a television director will choose poorly lit drama documentary type set ups. The influence of cultural products on film production is reduced by the standards and style of production that operate within the industry. The stylistically daring film or television production is a rare and unusual item.

This rather patchy overview of the issues involved in designing a production are to indicate, above all else, that blocking has a history, that it is linked to styles of realism and style of realism are linked to types of story. A director working within a particular system may be aware of other potential stylistics choices, but will not go against the production norms of their own particular industry: it is easy to spot the visual difference between a European and an American film.

To be a good director is necessary to be in control of choices in terms of blocking and if a production makes something daring possible this can be pursued with confidence and flair. While standard direction is good enough for standard productions there is still room for creativity and innovation on particular projects.

Production techniques

Cinematography and videography: essential principals

*Every scene in every drama is set in a specific place at a specific time.
So, in lighting drama representing place and time is the first principal.*

The aim of cinematography and videography is to control the technical elements of image making, to aesthetically structure an image, to stylistically structure a production and in controlling these elements support and enhance the story that is being told. Framing, camera movement, the staging of action, and the control of the lighting are the tools of the cinematographer. In terms of lighting the primary controls are:

Colour temperature

Visually perceived as the quality of light in your surroundings or the quality of an image. We can perceive our surroundings or an image as warm/yellow/amber or cold/blue/grey. Often we do not consciously note colour temperature and this makes its use a very effective tool for image-makers to create moods and feeling and to code a story so that it has greater dramatic clarity

Colour temperature is measured in degrees Kelvin: It reverses our common-sense view of light and warmth. An overcast day is approximately 7000k (a high CT) but is usually perceived as cold, however a candle burns at 1500k which is usually perceived as a warm light but it is in fact far colder in terms of Kelvin than an overcast day. If one remembers Bunsen burners at school, then Kelvin makes sense. The flame burns warmly orange/red until the porthole on the Bunsen burner is opened and then a blue cone forms that is at a hotter temperature as it gets energy from the additional oxygen. The blue flame is the higher temperature in terms of degrees Kelvin.

Approximate colour temperatures:

Candlelight	1500k
Sunrise/sunset	3200k
Tungsten lamp and tungsten balanced film	3400k
Partly cloudy daylight/Daylight balanced film	5200k
Sunny daylight	5500k
Overcast sky	7000k
Blue sky	10000k

Photographers, cinematographers and videographers use colour temperature, which changes throughout the day to create a sense of time and place. This work in controlling the look and feel of a film is done in conjunction with production designers and wardrobe designers who with the director of photography (DoP) choose the colours for costumes and sets.

White balance is an aspect of colour temperature. In video the white balance sets the colour temperature of the camera. This may be set to match the lighting sources in the surrounding environment or shifted up or down for aesthetic effect. It can produce an image that is warm, cold, or neutral in terms of its visual appearance.

Contrast range

The terminology that is in common use in relation to contrast range is: flat, high contrast, low contrast, and 'contrasty'. These terms are familiar to those using television sets or computer monitors.

The terminology that relates to contrast range in photography, cinematography and videography is:

- High Key
- Low Key
- Full Range

- Full Scale
- Over Scaled
- Under Scaled

- Highlights
- Mid-tones
- Shadow

- Tonal Range
- Greyscale

There are three aspects of contrast range that are of interest to photographers:

- The contrast range of the subject to be recorded
- The contrast range of the human eye
- The contrast range of the recording medium
- The contrast range of the image

The contrast range of the subject to be recorded

Contrast range is a relationship in terms of light between the brightest and darkest part of a scene. On a bright sunny day the contrast range between light and shade can be more than 1:1000.

The contrast range of the human eye

The human eye can cope with a very wide range of contrast. When a scene is very bright with very high contrast people begin squinting, because the iris of they eye and the receptors in the retina cannot cope with light entering it. In very low light when there is very low contrast it can become difficult to distinguish between objects as their outline becomes visually unclear.

The contrast range of the recording medium

While natural light can offer a very high contrast range and the human eye can cope with most situations the contrast range of both film and video is nowhere near as large. This limitation in film offers a technical challenge when it comes to producing images that appear 'realistic' but is also offers an opportunity to use contrast range as an expressive tool for creating a sense of time and place. Video has a contrast range of about 1:50.

The contrast range of the image

If the contrast range of a subject matches the contrast range of the recording medium then a correct exposure will reproduce the highlights, mid-tones and shadow with accuracy (full scaled) If the contrast range of scene falls below the contrast range of the recording medium (under scaled) the resulting image will appear flat, in fact flatter than it appeared to the eye because unlike the eye the recording medium cannot effectively record such a sort range of contrast.

In a film studio the contrast range of the lighting can be controlled, but shooting on location is where a high contrast range (over scaled) can become a problem, because it is too high. In this situation there are a number of ways to control the contrast range. Firstly, to reduce the contrast range to technically acceptable limits:

- Diffuse the natural light so that it become softer and produces a lower contrast range
- Increase the lighting in the shadow areas of the scene to reduce the overall contrast using lights or reflectors
- Shoot at a location during a time of day when the contrast range is suitable for filming.
- Shoot at a location where the contrast range will not cause any unwanted technical problems

The other option is to shoot with the over scaled subject and either produce an over scaled, 'burnt out' image, or reduce overall exposure so that the highlights, the brightest area of the scene and the picture are not severely burnt out. This second option will however distort the appearance of an image and produce an image that may well appear 'odd' because its tonal range does not match the common perception of such a scene. It is important to note however that an over scaled scene is not necessarily a problem as it can in fact be the kind of image that suits the story being told and the style of storytelling. Historically, in photojournalism, television news and documentary filming the choice of location and lighting are not always under the control of those making the images and so the results can often be burnt out or flat. But these technical 'faults' can then be used as creative elements in designing the look of a film, because an audience is unconsciously familiar with over scaled or low contrast images and the sense that they may be more 'realistic' than glossier studio produced images. The main use of over scaling in fiction films is to have the lighting coming through windows 'burnt out', which creates a sense of light from the outside illuminating scene.

Exposure

When taking a photograph three factors impact upon the brightness or darkness of the final image:

- The brightness of the scene
- The sensitivity of the recording medium – film stock or CCD
- The exposure that the recording medium receives

Exposure is the relationship between the size of the opening to the light in the lens, aperture/iris/f-stop, and the length of time that the recording medium is exposed for (shutter speed).

Shutter speed

The higher the shutter speed the less light enters the lens because the time that the recording medium is exposed for is shorter. Shutter speed is nearly always set in fractions of a second. A single setting increase in shutter speed halves the light entering the lens (1/125 to 1/250). A single setting increase in shutter speed double the light entering the lens (1/500 to 1/250)

The Iris/F stops

The iris is a feature on a lens that adjusts the amount of light passing through it. The aperture of a lens iris is measured in F-stops. Opening the iris by one stop doubles the light (F5.6 to F4.0). Closing the lens by one stop halves the light (F11 to F16). F-stop numbers run as follows:

F0 F1 F1.4 1.8 F2.0 F2.8 F3.5 F4.0 F5.6 F8.0 F11 F16

Reference source: <http://www.theledlight.com/lumens.html>

18% Grey and tonal range

In photography working with and understanding exposure and contrast range is based on the use of the standardised 18% grey scale card and an understanding of tonal range.

The calibration for photographic exposure is based on a standardised 18% grey card. A handheld light meter or the light meter in a camera reading off an 18% grey card will accurately reproduce that tone in the resulting image. However, a light meter reading off a white piece of paper will reproduce a grey image. This is because the light meter is calibrated to the grey scale. To set the exposure for a scene a photographer can use a light meter reading off a 18% grey card, or with a luminance cone on the light meter which acts as an 18% grey or use an object in the scene which has an 18% grey reflectance or estimate that the overall tonal range of a scene is 18% grey. Setting the F stop and shutter of a camera using this method will result in the correct exposure for objects in the scene which are 18% grey and therefore for the whole scene.

An understanding of the use of 18% grey in photography can be used to make a reading of contrast range. If an exposure was taken of a grey scale card and a number

of exposures made of the card closing down the lens and opening up the lens using a stop at a time a tone scale would be produced. The tonal scale would run from black through a range of greys to white. The number of F-stops between the exposure when the image of the card is burnt out and the exposure on the card renders it completely black would represent the contrast range of the recording medium. When metering a scene it is then possible to take a range of readings of highlights and shadows and determine the F-stop range of the scene. If this exceeds the contrast range of the recording medium then the scene is over scaled.

It is often the case that a photographer will want to set their exposure so that the tones of 18% grey are represented as 18% grey, but often a photographer will want to shift the exposure either up or down. An image that shifts the exposure so that tones lighter than 18% grey dominate that scene is a high key image. An image that shifts the exposure down so that tones below 18% grey dominate is a low key image. As with all the other aspects of photography the choice of exposure has a creative as well as a technical element.

Creative lighting for drama production

Every scene in a film takes place in a particular place and a particular time. The lighting of a shot must reflect that if it is to convince an audience. If time and place is the first challenge of cinematography and videography, the second is to structure the look of a film so that it supports the structure of the story and its themes. Reality will feed into the overall style for a film and the history of film and photography will feed into the style of a film, because most people have seen so many photographic images and watched so many television programmes. To develop your knowledge of cinematography you need to:

Study light in the real world

Study film and photographic images

Study and be able to put into practice photographic technique

Practice and hone photographic skills

INTERIOR LIGHTING

Three-point lighting

This traditional approach to interior requires a large number of lamps and therefore a complimentary amount of space for rigging the lamps and electrical power. Three-point lighting was developed as a standard lighting method during the classic studio era, where space and power were plentiful. It is not suitable for contemporary location shooting where space is at a premium. It can be a useful system for purpose built studios, but even in these conditions there are other simpler alternatives. Three approaches are suggested below.

Illuminate and highlight

Use a soft light source to illuminate the playing area, then add low power lamps, either direct or diffuse, if required, for modeling and highlights. The illuminating soft light can be a bounced light, a lantern or a diffused broad light. Even with a single soft light a subtle range of effects can be achieved by using the lamp as a side light or a top light, by allowing areas to fall off into darkness, or by using colour balance to add a warm, cold or neutral ambience to a scene. Highlights on the actors or areas of the set easily give scenes an added sense of depth and realism.

This type of overall soft illumination can be used for natural settings. Rooms supposedly in indirect sunlight with an additional lamp to give bright highlights to the actors and if the specific effect of sunlight coming from a window is required a high power direct light can be shone onto a mirror and reflected into the scene. For scenes set at night the same soft illumination can be given less exposure and the effects of lamps actually in the scene created by low power direct sources coming from an appropriate position out of shot, or actual domestic lamps with a suitable power bulb can be used.

The advantages of this system is that it uses the minimum amount of lighting and by illuminating an area the blocking of a scene becomes more flexible. It helps performers who do not always make their marks in the precise way that three-point lighting can require.

Supplementary lighting

With contemporary video the need for high power lamps to obtain a suitable level for exposure is not required and the available light can be successfully used either on its own or by adding supplementary fill lighting. If the available light is too contrasty electrical lights, or window lights can be diffused. A soft fill light with a correction gel, if required, can also be used to reduce the existing contrast.

As with illuminating and highlighting this is a simple solution to lighting. However if a room is being illuminated by daylight the location should be treated as though it were an exterior scene and the time of day chosen for shooting carefully thought through.

Selective lighting

Taking a cue from the low budget lighting of film noir direct low power lamps can be used to selectively light a scene. Large areas can be left in darkness and striking effects achieve with little difficulty.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING

The English grey day/the drizzling grey day

All too often the British weather provides a washed out grey, or an insipid washed out blue day. The advantage of these is that they provide a constant, low contrast illumination so that it is possible to shoot extended scenes without having to make adjustments for the movement of the sun or the high contrast lighting that the sun provides. The downside is the lack of colour and lack of definition that these days provide. Colour can be added by using correction filters on the lenses and a single lamp with a correction gel can act as a fill to model performers and give eye lights.

Often on these kind of days the sky is washed out and white if no lighting is used. So, for any set up with the sky in the background and the performers in the foreground it is essential to add a fill light to the performers in order that the contrast range between sky and figures is reduced. Using a reflector does not add sufficient light to the performers in these conditions because there is an overall uniformity to the level of lighting and no extra light is being bounced back in from a reflector. A redhead adds sufficient power for this kind of situation.

Shooting in shadow and in north Light

The simplicity of the grey day can be taken advantage of by choosing locations where there is natural shadow. Streets with high buildings running North to South will be in shadow for much of the day and buildings, which are North facing will receive soft light throughout the sunniest day. These solutions offer a constant and even level of illumination, which is easy to work in, but the flatness and dullness requires added lighting and can be alleviated by strong colours in costumes and props.

Sunlight

If rich full colour is required sunlight offers the saturation and detail necessary, but is far more difficult to work with. Certain factors become crucial:

- Weather
- Time of day
- Direction of shot and position of performers
- The need to use the sky as a background
- Continuity of lighting and the length of time required for shooting.

Weather

All times of year in Britain can offer days of sunlight, but there is no period when this is certain. The only sure way of having daylight is having a shooting schedule which is flexible enough to rush out and shoot when the sunlight is there, or if a lot of sunlight scenes are required the time necessary to wait for the weather to be suitable. On short films which require a lot of sunlight scenes the chances for obtaining this are down to luck. If only one or two short scenes require sunlight then the schedule can usually be

flexible enough to accommodate this. If a short film is set mainly in exteriors it is safer to work to grey days and shadowed locations to give a consistent result.

Time of day

Sunlight is softer and easier to work with during the first and last hours of the day, but time is short. This is when long shots and landscape shots are best taken and close ups and dialogue scenes may be left to other parts of the day if they cannot be taken in the time available.

When the sun is strong and bright the choice of a fill light is not workable unless very high power lamps can be set up, which is rarely the case with low budget productions. A practical alternative is using muslin cloth, stretched on frames to act as a diffusers to soften the sunlight or using reflectors which can provide fill light.

Direction of shot and position of performers

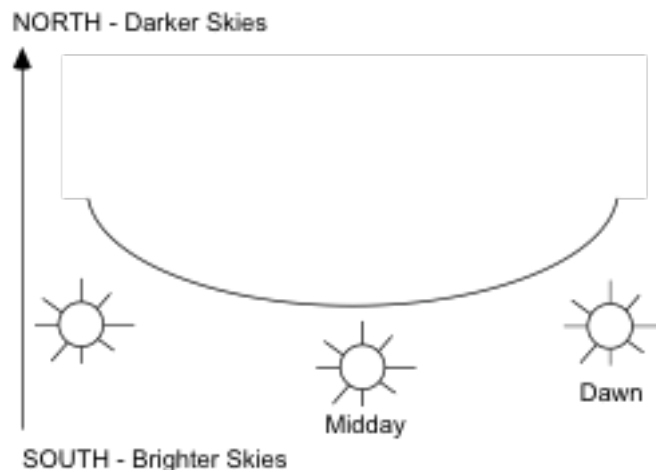
It is essential that the layout of a location is carefully studied and the direction of shooting planned before actually using an exterior location. You must note the direction of shot and position of shot in relation to a compass position. In a town maps usually suffice, in the countryside it is best to confirm using a compass. It is necessary to look out for high buildings, forestry and mountains, all of which may cause unwanted shadows to fall on the location for long periods throughout the day. In a location surrounded by office buildings some of these may be highly reflective and therefore change the apparent direction of the Sunlight.

When deciding on and checking the lighting at a particular time of day and a particular direction of shot it is possible to do this away from the location simply by building the most basic model and lighting it. A book can be a building, a forest, or a mountain and a cylinder, such as a tube of deodorant can act as a performer. A torch or any small direct light source can be the sun and the position of the sun for any time of day can easily be estimated.

The ambient room light should be left on as an approximation of the ambient light of the of the surrounding sky. Using this model the props are set up in relation to the geography of the location and the effect of the sun easily seen. Technical books provide guides as to the angle of the sun at any time of day in any part of the world at any time of year, so that any confusion over the sun's position can be checked. From this simple modelling exercise the position of the performers can be studied and the placing of diffusers or reflectors prearranged. The right time of day for the location can then be chosen. continues on next page

The need to use the sky as a background

Often the performer will need to be photographed with the sky as a backdrop and the contrast between the two reduced, so that the sky does not appear burnt out. As a general rule the lightest part of the sky is where the sun is, although this can be greatly effected by cloud cover. In the Northern hemisphere in the morning the South and East are the brightest, Due South is the brightest at midday and the West and South are the brightest at the end of the day. This tends to lead to the need for shooting in a Northerly direction if skies are required.



If for example two performers are arranged directly facing one another so that one actor is facing South with a Northern sky behind them their sky will offer a blue background. The other actor facing North will have a bright Southerly sky behind them and will have a washed out background. The practice here is for long shots to face North and for all the closes up to be shot facing North with the actors swapping their positions and the camera crossing the line to keep continuity. Other options for ensuring skies are not overexposed are polarising filters or graduation filters. Polarising filters work best when the sky is at right angles to the camera axis and graduation filters are only feasible when the sky is above the level of the performers in the framing.

Continuity of lighting and time required for shooting

At an exterior location take all long shots first. Choose the time of day appropriate for those shots and these will form the basis for keeping continuity in any other shots to be taken. Keep a careful note of the contrast range between figures in the foreground and the brightness of backgrounds using a light meter. Make sure you have chosen and set to a particular colour temperature. For close ups match the contrast and colour temperature by using diffusers, reflectors and if necessary reposition the performers to do this. The more time you have to take to shoot any exterior scene the more difficult keeping continuity will become. The rule of thumb is; keep it fast, keep it simple.

Using sunlight to create unnatural lighting

The presumption so far is that sunlight is being used to create a natural/realistic style of lighting and the cinematographer is working to make the harsh sunlight and its position suitable to the contrast range of film or video. However the excessive contrast of sunlight can be used to unusual effect in various ways.

By exposing a scene as day for night and creating an artificial darkening. By using the sun as a backlight to bleach out a background and produce glare and extreme contrast. By using mirrors which will produce a direct strong light from a low level onto performers therefore placing the light source in an illogical position and giving backgrounds an unnaturally low illumination level while the foreground still has the quality of daylight lighting.

Other possibilities are coloured reflectors for mixed or unusual lighting and the use of patterned or shaped flags to provide dappling or unusual shadows.

TOP TIPS FOR LIGHTING

Good lighting requires experience and practice

To light well you have to know how a particular type of light will look; will it be too much for the room, will it be too little? Similarly, you have to know where to set up the light for the shadowing and modelling you want; Will you get eye lights? What will you be able to see in the shadows? In daylight you have to be aware of colour temperature and how sunlight and shadow will effect a location. Without experience the choice of using only trial and error during the rush of shooting will always be uneven and unsatisfactory. If you don't have the experience to know how to light a scene lighting tests should be made, or the location visited at different times of day. Obviously, this requires a great deal of dedication, and enthusiasm, but without experience much greater effort is required.

The key to success

With careful thought and planning a very simple approach to lighting can offer a wide range effects and moods; a room with bare floorboards can look either like a squalid, dreary squat, or a gentrified dwelling for the professional classes. The key to success is having a precise aim of what you want to scene to look and feel like and to ensure that the production has a consistent approach to lighting, which is developed through the script. Without a clear intention lighting cannot be effective, because it has no specific role to fulfil in supporting the story.

You can design lighting to suit the setting, the characters, the emotional focus of the scene, or as a way of coding locations to match the narrative.

The less the better

Far too often too many direct lamps are used spreading too much light, to create an over illuminated and nondescript scene.

Always plan and build from a single lamp and avoid over lighting.

The more lamps there are the more difficult the lighting is to control, especially in small locations. If you reach a stage with too many lamps, simply turn them all off and start again from a single lamp.

Be bold in the use of colour

Obviously, there are technical requirements in terms of contrast range and level of illumination, which differ between different formats of film and video. More crucially in aesthetic terms, low band video, does not reproduce the range of colours which film does. This simplification of the colours by video is usually dealt with commercially by being very cautious over the lighting and a great deal of effort goes into making productions nice, natural and neutral, so that they approximate the tonal range expected from film. This may suit a drama, but it is visually un-stimulating.

Instead be bold and use the simplification offered by video to go for strong simple colours and even push it farther with mixed lighting and coloured lighting. This choice will be striking and dramatic, but others may dislike it and judge it to be bad lighting because it moves away from naturalism/realism. However with less experience it is easier to work towards a strong simple use of colour rather than to make video produce a tone and range approximating film. Your approach however will be based upon your personal choice and the demands of the script.

Choose locations, props and costumes carefully

The simplest of lighting can be made a great deal more effective if set and costume design are carefully thought through. When looking for locations the planned design for colour and the type of lighting needed for a scene should be decisive when making selections. Finding the right locations can be a considerable effort.

Use colour temperature effectively

Don't use a neutral white balance unless that is the effect you want. Light for warm and cold, even mixed and coloured lighting can be used effectively. Never let the automatic white balance on a video camera decide the colour temperature of a scene.

Use exposure effectively

While colour temperature can add to the feeling of the time of day and the tone of a scene, so too can the exposure add ambience and mood. Never let the camera's auto iris/shutter set the exposure for a scene.

Basic make-up is essential

The heat from lamps and a small number of people in a crowded room will soon make people hot and sweaty. Faces glisten in the intense lighting and simple pancake make up will make faces take the light better and avoid unwanted highlight.

Eye-lights are essential

A performance is automatically more expressive if the performer has an eye light. Dead eyes must be avoided unless they are a very specific choice, carefully used.

Keep a handy supply of lighting accessories

Gels, diffusers, white boards, mirrors, a range of domestic and coloured bulbs, gaffer tape, scissors, clothes pegs etc. All these are cheaper and easier to transport than a lot of lighting. A grey card with a step scale is also useful for judging exposure and contrast if you are inexperienced.

Production techniques
Designing lighting

The knowledge of the cinematographer

A competent cinematographer requires:

- Knowledge of visual history; painting, theatre, photography, film, television
- Working knowledge of technology; film, video, lighting equipment
- The ability and experience to pre-visualize how the lighting in a particular setting will be reproduced by the recording medium
- The ability to develop a lighting style for the production in relation to visual history; the specifics of the script and the technology to be used.

The skills of the cinematographer or how to hire a cinematographer

The qualities one looks for when hiring a cinematographer illustrates the skills they require:

CONSISTENCY A cinematographer must be able to achieve a consistent level of quality over a long period of time. In still photography the photographer can choose one shot out of thirty six frames. A cinematographer is expected to shoot every set up so that it is technically competent, because a failed take can mean a ruined scene, or even a ruined story.

SPEED If a cinematographer is consistent, but this takes too much time and they are too slow a faster cinematographer will always be hired in their place. A cinematographer needs the knowledge and skill to work at speed.

STYLE It is absolutely essential that a cinematographer is able to collaborate creatively with the director, the producer, the set designer and the costume designer. These are the key people responsible for the look and visual design of a production. A successful cinematographer may favor a particular style of lighting and be hired for this reason, but they must be fully adaptable to the evolving aims and demands of the production.

Lighting and cinematography: a vocabulary for cinematography

A cinematographer working on a film will have to collaborate with many people who have no particular knowledge of lighting or photography. It is therefore essential for clear communication that lighting is discussed in terms, which are commonly understood. In fact there is little need to develop a specialist terminology for photographers and cinematographers. What is necessary is for the cinematographer to be able to put into practice what has been agreed. Everyday terms can be used to describe the goals the lighting should achieve. The terms for discussing lighting in familiar terms can include:

Bright

Dark

High Contrast

Low Contrast

Flat

Washed Out

Full Colour

Saturated

Desaturated

Warm

Cold

Neutral

Complimentary

Harmonious

Natural

Unnatural

Realistic

Unrealistic

Artificial

Production technique
Designing lighting

These are the steps for designing the lighting for a film.

To Do: Pre-Production	
<p>Decide on an overall style and approach to the lighting</p> <p>Decide on colour temperature for scenes</p> <p>Decide on choice of lenses, framing and blocking and create a consistency across the film</p>	<p>Basic styles: Gritty realism Soft naturalism</p> <p>Attractive Realism Glamour</p> <p>Stylized: Expressionistic Non-realistic</p>
Scrutinize the script for potential lighting effects or ideas	<p>Relate lighting to the time of day or the location</p> <p>Relate lighting to the characters, their situation emotions and relationships</p>
Make best use of the HD technology	<p>Shoot tests to see how colour correction and other tools in Final Cut can help you create the style of your production</p> <p><i>Don't just use color correction in post-production just to try and save badly taken shots</i></p>
Choose locations to increase the potential for lighting effects	Even with a zero budget you can still control locations and carry out some degree of production design.
Schedule to shoot exteriors at the best time and plan to light and shoot in interiors within the time given	You need to allow time for lighting and this means scheduling to meets these needs You may need to reduce the number of set ups to match the time available
<p>When casting is done design how each person/actor will be photographed to match the character</p> <p>Plan hair, make up and costume</p>	<p>Shoot tests</p> <p>Plan for continuity in terms of change of costume, make up to cover such things as tiredness, illness, sweating, dirt, etc.</p>

To Do: Production	
<p>The first approaches to lighting is:</p> <p>Enhance the available lighting</p> <p>Add lighting for highlights and rims</p> <p>Add light or block light for emotional effect: to the characters to the location</p> <p>Add practicals</p> <p>Don't over light or add multiple shadows: keep to a single source</p>	<p>Enhance the lighting to:</p> <p>Avoid flatness. You need highlights, rims, facial modeling, lighting effects.</p> <p>Avoid over scaling: high contrast</p> <p>Avoid washed out skies or white featureless walls</p> <p>Correct for: wrong direction of source lighting</p>
<p>The second approach to lighting is:</p> <p>Light the set from scratch: light from black</p> <p>Avoid: Multiple sources, especially multiple red heads</p>	<p>When lighting from black:</p> <p>Create a sense of a source: a window, a doorway, a lamp</p> <p>Add rims and highlights</p> <p>Add practicals: lamps, windows, something that adds highlights</p> <p>Don't over light. Don't allow walls to wash out. Don't create flat featureless lighting</p> <p>Light for 180 not 270 or 360</p>

Production technique

The purpose and practice of cinematography

Imagine what a film would be like without the technical and aesthetic control of the cinematographer. It would be an indecipherable, chaotic mess. There would be no reality and no story. So what does a cinematographer aim to do?

This is a more theoretical discussion in relation to the role of cinematography in filmmaking and it provides insight in the aims of the cinematography in conceptual terms

What does a cinematographer aim to do?

Create verisimilitude (*the quality of appearing to be true*)

Through a range of visual clues photographic images create a sense of reality.

Lighting offers a source for the image that is evidenced through appearance and shadow. Lighting and framing create depth and space. The quality and position of the light that forms the image creates time and location.

In a simple formula: The position of the light + it's quality (soft, diffuse, warm, cold) + composition = verisimilitude or realism.

The cinematographer aims to control and produce realistic images through the choice of location and shooting time, the choice of lighting, its position, the framing of the scene and the technical control of the camera; focus, exposure, depth of field, colour temperature.

While there is a very widespread assumption that photographic images are inherently 'realistic' they do not in fact reproduce 'what the eye sees' and this limitation is overcome by the control of cinematography primarily by an understanding of the relationship between light and the image gathering medium; film or video.

All two-dimensional images that offer a representation of three-dimensional space are an illusion and this is achieved because of the spectator's unconscious relationship to the image. (In the cinema the spectator is looking at white screen with patches of differing tones, colour and brightness, and this is - through a range of primarily unconscious judgments - experienced as 'realistic') This contract, the illusion of realism is not fixed or universal. Each person has their own eye (we differ in perception of colour, depth, space, and in perceptual psychology and we each have a history of seeing in terms of reality and in terms of images) Realism in photography is very much dependent on the history and technology of representation, first of drawing, carving, tapestry stained glass, etching and painting, then photography and cinematography. Styles and aesthetics in film have developed from monochromatic B&W stock, into colour and then into analogue video and now digital. To achieve and maintain the illusion of realism in film a cinematographer negotiates a relationship between this development history and the expectations and judgment of the audience. It is not a simple and linear relationship. The reality of the fiction film is mediated; It may claim to represent 'the present' and therefore need to be seen as stylistically 'modern', but

what is 'modern' might be created through reference to formalist composition (a style within Modernism) or by reference to representational practices in documentary, photography and television, which are in turn determined by history, convention and practice.

To continue and develop forms and styles of representation using technology, techniques and stylistic practices from both within and outside of cinema

A cinematographer can develop their approach to cinematography in a number of ways. They can be 'part of the system' and therefore accept the practices and technique of a particular era as normative and correct. This is most clearly seen in the Hollywood studio era, where there was a long period of stabilised production. However, technology and production practices change and therefore what is normative and realistic will alter. In these circumstances some cinematographers will use the new technology, cameras and lighting, to develop and redefine styles of representation. Given that cinematography has had over one hundred years of development it is now possible for a cinematographer to weave together the way in which they create images between contemporary and period aesthetics.

Films claim to visually reproduce the present, the past, and even a time that has never been seen; the future. This is an aesthetic and technical challenge. We know the past from images made in the past, but these images are based on normative conventions that have been superseded by other technology and conventions. So, for a cinematographer to formulate 'the past' they have to mix the old and the new without this selection and mixing appearing to be artificial, quaint or out of date. What the future or the fabulous or the other-worldly will look like has been depicted for centuries, so oddly, to create the future a cinematographer needs to rely on past artifices without this being over-apparent. What has emerged from the history of images gives the cinematographer a pallet of styles which allows for an individual film to be created by following present tastes - which are fickle - established generic styles, and aesthetic influences from film, photography, drama, video, painting, fashion and a range of other visual mediums. This potential for expression and fluidity also has the risk of creating a hodgepodge of choices for a cinematographer which is unconvincing in terms of verisimilitude and is therefore a failure. There is a tension for the cinematographer between what is established and what is new. What will be accepted by an audience and what will be rejected because it is outmode, distasteful and therefore unrealistic.

To utilize lenses, lighting, framing, and camera movement to enhance and articulate a particular story

While one clear aim of the cinematographer is to create an accepted 'realism', which is an overall goal for a film, there is a desire to use cinematography to define locations and characters expressively to suit the story. Therefore within a film these features may be coded by lens, by framing, by camera movement, by lighting and this may be static or change and develop. As with verisimilitude the way in which the audience are persuaded to accept the naturalness and reality of what they are seeing has to be accepted primarily unconsciously. The photographer wants to make the location and the characters believable in general sense and also specific to the story and there is a tension between these aims. If the lighting and camera control becomes too schematic or symbolic the contract of verisimilitude between audience and film will be broken.

When the work of a cinematographer is seen as 'daring' or 'controversial' or 'new' this reflects that they are working across of previously defined boundaries, which have limited the domain of realism. This can result in a number of effects and changes: the acceptance of personal or auteurist style, a specific type of style, a significant development and change in the norms of realist representation.

Production techniques

The script supervisor

On a small crew the script supervisors' role will be as follows:

The script supervisor keeps a master copy of the script, and storyboard. There is no need for a set to be swamped with copies of paperwork held by every crew member. The initial briefing at the start of the day will tell everyone what is required. The script supervisor is always with the director so there is no need for the director to keep any paperwork. The director may wish to keep notes for the scenes to be played during the day and one or two pages of script, but that is all that they need.

The director and cast rehearse with the script supervisor in attendance. The script supervisor will primarily observe, but can act as a prompt to remind of any forgotten dialogue.

When the preparation comes to any end any changes in dialogue and decisions on action will be confirmed between performers, director and script supervisor. This will set the continuity for the scene and is the reason why script supervisors' role is so important, because they will ensure continuity is kept when takes are made. If no one notes continuity it will fail during the set ups, because someone will forget, or make changes without considering the implications for continuity. This also makes clear why multiple copies of paperwork must be avoided. The performers will wish to annotate their script, so that it is perfectly correct, but the more copies of script there are on a set the more likely it is that confusion will occur, because someone will refer to a script which is a different version from the one being held by the script supervisor.

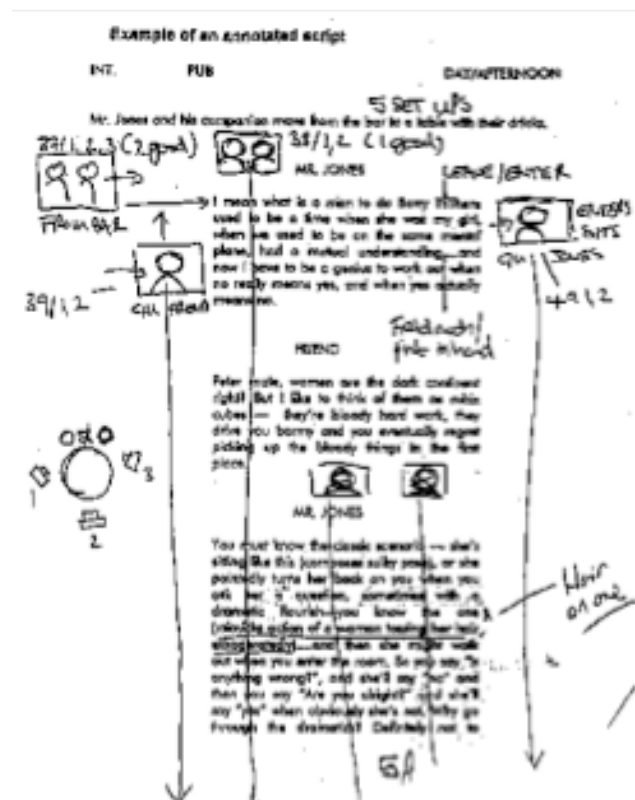
When the camera, lighting and sound are being prepared the director, the camera operator and the cinematographer will confirm with the script supervisor the set ups which will be taken, how they will be framed and the order in which they will be made.

If special FX are involved in a scene the person responsible for this will now know which set ups will be requiring these. The set ups may follow those storyboarded, or may be decided on at this point. Visual continuity can be checked and included in the notes on framing kept by the script supervisor.

All these notes do not require extensive paperwork and can simply be added to the master script. The need for annotating the scrip explains the reason why the format of a screenplay requires large margins. These extra wide margins are to give space for the script supervisors' notes.

When the performers' return in costume and make up for the first set up of the scene and walk through their actions for the first time the script supervisor will watch to ensure that the performers have kept to the agreed continuity. Before correcting any mistakes in continuity the script supervisor will quietly check with the director and ask how they feel about any change in continuity. Usually the director will let the change remain, unless it confuses an essential narrative point and the script supervisor will note any final changes as the agreed continuity rather than disrupt the performers.

Example of an annotated script



- In the example above of a page of script has been annotated by the script supervisor and shows how it will appear after all the planned set ups have been taken. It notes:
- When the performers will leave and enter shot, When the pint glass is in the hand. When someone parodies a woman tossing her hair. These and any changes to dialogue will have been noted during the preparation of the scene.
- The script notes that there are five set ups to cover the scene
- The framing of each set up has been roughly drawn, noting the direction of performers movements in and out of shot.
- The lines running down from the drawings of the set ups, indicates how much of the scene the set up covers.
- A small overhead plan illustrates, the basic position of the camera and the order that the set ups will be shot in.
- These notes will have been prepared when the camera sound and lighting were prepared and the number set ups for the scene and the order for them to be shot in agreed.
- Besides each rough drawing there is a note of the set up number and a note of each take made.

These notes will have been recorded as the set ups were taken and indicate that every set up was performed. The sample script page illustrates that continuity of dialogue, props and action, the framing of set ups and the logging of shots can be kept without a great deal of paperwork. The director, the cast and the crew can all refer to the script supervisor script to assist their work and without this role uncertainty and inconsistency must occur. The work of the script supervisor also speeds up the postproduction editing, because a thorough log of each set up and every take has been made, and the editor can refer to this as an accurate record.

Production technique

Sound recording techniques for dialogue scenes

Record for the voice only

Aim for clear crisp vocals with a good level

Close technique is required to isolate performers

Isolate the voice and leave out all other sounds for the best possible result

Reduce the background sound level to a minimum by:

The choice of a suitable location in terms of background sound level

The choice of the time of day used for shooting

'Deadening' a set, or location through the use of boards, baffles, blankets, etc.

If the background sound level varies significantly in comparison to the voice from shot to shot during recording, then at the editing stage it will be very difficult to keep sound continuity and retain audible vocals

Testing Locations

To test the aural quality of any location close your eyes and the volume and range of the ambient sound will become apparent.

Record a wild track of every location running at least twice the time of the scene being shot

Do not record sound FX during dialogue

Since specific sound FX will not occur at exactly the same point on any two takes, continuity problems will occur if Sound FX are recorded during the shooting of a dialogue scene. For example, a door will close at different moments in different takes and this will create a mismatch for sound continuity and makes editing problematic. Without the sound on the shot the Sound FX can be inserted in post-production at any moment the scene requires, or omitted as unnecessary.

In dialogue scenes render silent all Sound FX, door slams, footsteps, telephones, etc., because sound balance may be hard or impossible to achieve between voice level and Sound FX level.

Be sure however to record the sound FX to be used in track laying at the location to ensure a suitable sound quality. It is more often than not easier to record the specific Sound FX at the time rather than find it later.

Plan set ups with full consideration of sound recording

Ensure in advance the best place for the microphone to cover the action and dialogue

Ensure enough time is available to get a good sound recording. If the sound isn't right in a dialogue scene it isn't worth shooting.

When all else fails ask the performers to alter the voice levels to provide a satisfactory recording.

Key elements for successful dialogue recording:

- Record for voice only
- Close record
- Plan for sound recording in advance
- Allow time to when setting up shots to get the sound right. Putting in the microphone at the last moment, without proper rehearsals is a sure way to get poor sound

Sound recording techniques for action scenes

- Record for Sound FX as if these were spoken dialogue
- Isolate the sound FX from the background sound level
- If the specific sound FX are clear these can be used in editing and the atmosphere added as wild tracks
- If the framing of the shot will not allow for close recording be sure to record the sound as an FX
- Record wild tracks so that a single atmosphere track can be laid for the entire length of the scene. This will assist sound continuity between shots.

Production technique

Production preparation and planning

Pre-production

What follows is an extremely simplified version of the pre- production planning process for a narrative drama. By organizing and planning thoroughly it is possible to save time and produce a higher quality project, because the effort spent on the set is used to achieve the best possible result rather than trying to organize and plan after shooting has begun. What you need to plan a simple production is as follows:

- Script
- Storyboard
- Script Breakdown

Script breakdown

Working from the script, the numbered scenes are sorted into location then day or night and then the characters and extras in any scene. This creates an essential grouping of locations and performers to help prepare a production schedule.

Scene		Tony	Paul	Sarah
Lounge/Day	1	Yes		Yes
	2	Yes		
	9		Yes	
Lounge/Night	10			Yes
	17	Yes	Yes	Yes

Props breakdown

Props per scene, making special note of useable props, which require resetting for separate set ups. For example bottles of wine being opened. A continuity chart should be prepared for these in relation to the script. So it is clear during shooting when items must be the same from scene to scene, or should be different. For example two dining room scenes with the same characters may be on two nights of the same week, or years apart and the continuity and choice of props should reflect this.

Sets breakdown

How a set is to be made or dressed should be noted and a continuity chart prepared for all sets in relation to the script. For example: as a person goes to work they leave the

kitchen in a mess, this should be the same when they return from work, but not if it is a different evening.

Location breakdown

Plans should be made of locations and their facilities. The compass direction of windows in interiors and any outside location will be greatly affected by the time of day and the time of year.

Costume breakdown

Costumes should be prepared in sets for each performer and a continuity chart made for each costume. It is important to note the continuity on the condition of a costume. If it is mud caked in one scene this continuity must be maintained.

Make up and hair breakdown

Make up should be noted and planned and a continuity chart prepared for each performer.

Special effects breakdown

The preparation of any special effects should be planned and the need for repeated takes considered in relation to the storyboard.

Artist and crew availability

A week by week chart should be made noting who is available and when. On a professional production this may be done late in the pre-production process when people are being hired, but on a student production this can be done at the start of planning.

Cinematography and lighting

Lighting plans should be made for each scene with reference to the script and the storyboard. A continuity chart should be made with reference to lighting, so that a person leaving a bright sunny interior does not walk into a dull grey day.

The lighting plans will also allow the preparation of list for:

- Camera Equipment
- Lighting Equipment

The camera crew should prepare camera check sheets to ensure mistake should not occur. This is especially important when a range of colour temperatures or mixed lighting are being used.

A shot list should also be prepared noting the number of planned set ups for each scene.

Sound

Working from the script a list of the Sound FX required should be made and a list of the necessary atmos, tracks. A scene may be set a race course, but be filmed at the location when no races are taking place, so it will be necessary to acquire this sound elsewhere as a wild track.

Production technique

Crewing

Organizing a non-professional production team

During the shooting day every aspect of production is interdependent. Good performers need a good director who is supported by a committed and skilled production team. If any link fails the quality of a production will deteriorate. A poor director will destroy the casts' spontaneity and confuse the crew and a poor crew will produce inferior set ups no matter how good the performers and the director are.

On a professional production each member of the team will be an experienced person who is able to take responsibility for the jobs they have to do. A professional director will expect, without needing to check, that every set up is taken to a high technical standard. Camera, sound and lighting problems during a take are very rare with an experienced crew. On a non-experienced crew it is difficult to achieve this consistency because people lack the necessary experience. To prevent problems passing unnoticed or being inadequately dealt with there are certain remedies that can be taken:

Ensure that the shooting day is run to an established pattern and the pattern of briefing, cast and director rehearsals without camera, technical set up of camera, lighting and sound, and then the taking of the set up, gives a simple structure that everyone can follow and understand. A bad crew are easily recognized, because everyone is trying to do everything as once; Setting up the camera while performers prepare, taking shots when continuity is not finalised, fiddling with sound and camera when performers are ready and being unable to start and stop takes effectively. Lack of pattern will mean that no one gets a break, no one knows how far away they are from performing the set up and each take has a poor performance, poor continuity or a technical problem.

Ensure that set ups are coherent. If shooting begins and the cast and crew aren't clear as to where the set up starts and finishes and what part of the scene is being covered this will lead to poor, even unusable results. The set ups won't help the performers and continuity will be unclear. If the number of set ups required for a scene is uncertain too much time may be spent on each take at the beginning of the day and at the end time may run short so that the final set ups of the day will be scrappy and inferior. Intercutting good quality work shot at the start of the day with poor quality work shot at the end of the day shows that time ran out and that having to hurry to meet the schedule has damaged the production

Ensure that the cast and crew have clearly delegated tasks.

If everything needed to perform good set ups is not being done problems will occur and how the crew operates needs to be decided in detail before shooting. Who will check that the camera is running? Who will put in the marks? Who will set the tripod and camera? When situations arise where the performers start the set up, but the camera isn't running, or rehearsals and preparation are still taking place, but the camera is running, are sure signs that tasks have not been delegated properly and the crew has no clear organizational structure.

Since non-professional crews are usually quite small one way to organise effectively is to run what might be called a checking crew with one person acting as a checker to ensure that everything has been properly done on each take. This role can be seen as an extension of the role taken by the script supervisor on a professional crew, because they are the person who will ensure that continuity of dialogue, props and action is maintained and that all the set ups required by the director are actually performed.

The script supervisor's role can be extended to include a check on the camera and sound. This role can also cover the calling of shots so that the script supervisor becomes central to the organizing of set ups. Since the script supervisor will already know what set ups need to be taken, whether or not they have been taken and whether or not there have been any technical problems, the work of calling the shots will only add a small requirement to their workload. If a non-experienced crew are left to make their own checks, or worse still no one is delegated to make checks problems will remain unnoticed and lead to unnecessary and avoidable errors.

On a small video production the crewing roles can be divided between four people:

- Script supervisor
- Camera operator
- Boom operator
- Director

This four person crew provides a simple and clear division of roles. The script supervisor calls the shots and keeps continuity. The director monitors the sound recording by using headphones during the take, which should not prove an inconvenience or a distraction, because many directors already use headphones so that they can concentrate carefully on the dialogue and hear it as the audience will hear it from a microphone recording. A director listening to the dialogue at a distance from the performers, because they are standing out of shot by the camera does not give them a truly accurate impression of what is being recorded, while using headphones does. With the director listening to the sound the boom operator can concentrate on correctly shadowing the performers rather than trying to listen to the quality of recording at the same time and the camera operator can concentrate solely on taking the shot without having to worry about continuity.

Within this structure the lighting can be undertaken by any member of the crew, because this work is done separately to the performers' rehearsals and the actual taking of the set up. Resetting props can be shared between the script supervisor and director, but extra crew will be needed if there is a significant requirement for camera movement during takes, or scenes require a wide range of props, or special FX.

Production paperwork consists of:

Shooting schedule

By working through the pre-production breakdowns the availability of the cast and crew, the location of scenes and the number of scenes to be shot at one location it is

possible to prepare a shooting schedule, which organises the production as efficiently as possible. The number of set ups per scene and the complexity of preparing the location determines how long each scene requires.

Call Sheets

These are prepared for each day of shooting and ensure that everyone involved in the day arrives in the right place at the right time and brings everything that is required. By using the costume, props, make up and other continuity charts it become relatively easy to prepare correctly for each days' work.

Continuity sheets

The script supervisor keeps continuity of action and dialogue within scenes and ensures that a record of all set ups and takes is recorded. On a small student production the script can be used for this purpose.

Post-production

If all the paperwork has been properly kept during shooting then the material on the camera tapes has been recorded by the script supervisor and the post-production process is simply the selection of the best takes, the editing, titling and sound work.