

## **THE GRAMMAR of the MOVING IMAGE**

by Andrew N. Gagg FRPS

from a text by

Dr. Daniel Chandler

- Television and film use certain conventions often referred to as their ‘grammar’. Most of these are also common to Audio-Visual
- It is a language we all understand, although we may not necessarily know how it is constructed
- Perhaps we should exploit more of this ‘language’ now that we have so much AV technology at our command...?
- But keep in mind, these conventions are *not* rules: expert practitioners break them for deliberate effect...

•

### **PART ONE - Transitions**

#### **Editing Techniques**

##### **THE CUT**

Cutting may:

- change the scene
- compress time
- vary the point of view
- build up an image or idea
- There is always a reason for a cut...
- you should ask yourself...
- *what the reason is?*

##### **MATCHED CUT**

In a ‘matched cut’ a familiar relationship between the shots may make the change seem smooth:

- continuity of direction
- a similar centre of attention in the frame
- a one-step change of shot size (e.g. long to medium)
- a change of angle (conventionally at least 30 degrees)

e.g. a similar centre of attention in the frame

##### **JUMP CUT**

Abrupt switch from one scene to another. May be used deliberately to make a dramatic point

Sometimes boldly used to begin or end a scene, or create a sharp change of mood

## **Cutting rhythm**

A cutting rhythm may be progressively shortened to increase tension. Cutting rhythm can create an exciting, lyrical or staccato effect in the viewer

## **Cutaway**

A bridging, intercut shot between two shots of the same subject. It represents a secondary activity occurring at the same time as the main action...

## **BUFFER SHOT (neutral shot)**

A bridging shot used to separate two shots which would have reversed the continuity of direction.

“Crossing The Line”

## **Less abrupt transitions are achieved with:**

fades

dissolves

and wipes...

## **FADE or DISSOLVE (‘mix’)**

A slow fade-in is a quiet introduction to a scene; a slow fade-out is a peaceful ending...

## **FADE or DISSOLVE (‘mix’)**

Time lapses are often suggested by a slow fade-out to black and fade-in

## **FADE or DISSOLVE (‘mix’)**

Defocus dissolves are sometimes used to indicate flashbacks in time

## **SUPERIMPOSITIONS**

Two or more images placed directly over each other to create a visual metaphor

## **THE WIPE**

The Wipe is a technique which draws attention to *ITSELF!*

(It also acts as a clear marker of change)

## **THE WIPE**

An optical effect marking a transition between two shots

It appears to supplant an image by wiping it off the screen (as a line or in some complex pattern, such as by appearing to turn a page)

## **SPLIT SCREEN**

This can convey the excitement and frenzy of certain activities, but it can also overload the viewer

## **SPLIT SCREEN**

This can convey the excitement and frenzy of certain activities, but it can also overload the viewer

### **SPLIT SCREEN**

This can convey the excitement and frenzy of certain activities, but it can also overload the viewer

© **Andrew N. Gagg FRPS and Dr Daniel Chandler 2020**

## **PART TWO - Camera Technique and Movement**

### **Establishing shot**

Opening shot or sequence, frequently an exterior 'General View' as an Extreme Long Shot (ELS)

Used to set the scene

### **Point-of-view shot (POV)**

A shot near to the line of sight of a person who seems to be watching the action shown in the POV

### **Selective focus**

Rendering only part of the field in sharp focus through the use of a shallow depth of field

### **Selective focus**

A shift of focus from foreground to background or vice versa is called 'pull focus', or rack focus

### **Soft focus**

An effect in which the sharpness of an image, or part of it, is reduced by the use of an optical device

### **Wide-angle shot**

A shot of a broad field taken with a wide-angle lens.

### **Tilted shot**

When the camera is tilted on its axis

Often used in mystery and suspense films to create a sense of unease in the viewer

### **Tracking**

Tracking in draws the viewer into a closer, more intense relationship with the subject

(Unless we use actual video, we can only *simulate* tracking when using AV software. Strictly it is a zoom.)

### **Tracking**

Rapid tracking (especially tracking in) is exciting

### **Tracking**

In a dramatic narrative we may sometimes be drawn forward towards a subject against our will

### **Tracking**

Moving away tends to create emotional distance

Tracking back tends to divert attention to the edges of the screen

### **Tracking**

Tracking back relaxes interest

The speed of tracking may affect the viewer's mood...

### **Zoom**

- Zooming in rapidly brings not only the subject but also the background hurtling towards the viewer, which can be disconcerting
- Zooming in and then out creates an ugly 'yo-yo' effect

### **Panorama ('Pan')**

- A pan usually begins and ends with a few seconds of still picture to give greater impact
- The speed of a pan across a subject creates a particular mood as well as establishing the viewer's relationship with the subject
- 'Hosepiping' is continually panning across from one subject to another; it looks clumsy

### **Surveying pan**

- The camera slowly searches the scene: may build to a climax or anticlimax

### **Whip pan**

- The camera moves very fast to merge between two scenes which may be far apart in distance

### **Tilt ('pan up' & 'pan down')**

- A vertical movement of the camera - up or down

### **Crab**

- The camera moves ('crabwise') right or left

### **'Hand-held camera'**

- A jerky, bouncy, unsteady image simulating a hand-held camera may create a sense of immediacy or of chaos
- Its use is a form of subjective treatment

### **Montage**

- A succession of shots describing one particular object or concept.

### **And Finally**

All the movements and effects you have seen are used for a reason...

If there is no reason for their use... DON'T USE THEM!