Session Notes
Using Cinematic Language Elements in your Video

For over a hundred years filmmakers have been evolving a language for communicating efficiently using a stream of visual and audio elements over time, learn how to apply this language to your video in order to increase viewer engagement.

Podcamp NYC
http://www.podcampnyc.org/
April 7, 2007
New Yorker Hotel
4:00pm - 4:59pm

Presenters:
- David Tamés, http://Kino-Eye.com
- John Herman, http://JohnHerman.org

Topics:
- The importance of production value (or lack of) in video
- Cinematic techniques and their development from the 1920's to today
- How the techniques you use (whether you care about production value or not) convey a message
- Specific techniques and the potential messages to the viewer
- Art (expression is primary) vs. Design (communication is primary)

Thoughts:
- Story trumps production values
- sincerity is key
- discipline is still valuable
- know thy audience
- consistency with brand
- you know the rules because you were raised on them

Format:
- *Discussion* (*not lecture*, where do you want to go today? anyone in the room should feel free to join in, comment, question, at any time)

HOW IMPORTANT ARE PRODUCTION VALUES?

We are redefining what high production values are and how important they are.

Video that follows (or does not follow) established cinematic techniques convey a message whether they intend to or not

EXAMPLES OF SHOW WITH HIGH AND "low" PRODUCTION VALUES (and the message that is conveyed)

- Ze Frank (unique, minimalist aesthetic)
- Galacticast (a "Hollywood 3.0" production, mix of campy production values with amazing software foo)
- Rocketboom (good example of a well produced, but not over produced, internet news show)
- Steve Garfield's video blog (point, shoot, post aesthetic, a delightful mix of stuff that is unique in the vlogosphere)
- The Eye (John's video blog, shot from the hip with substance -- David's comment, John is too modest)
- Chasing Windmills (gritty indie film aesthetics with excellent performances, writing and music)
- Lets Knit2gether (higly produced video podcast)
- Josh Leo's Vlog (sincere, direct, entertaining perspective, content over production values)
- Amanda Congdon (has been experimenting with the form in interesting ways)

Note: Sure would be nice if we had a projector, will we? I'm not sure about the room we're in

CINEMA TECHNIQUES DEVELOPED IN THE 1920's and 1930's STUCK OR DIDN'T STICK (and

why)

STUCK
- the 180 degree rule
- cutting continuity
- eye/gaze match
- cut on movement

NO STICK
- the smoky halo effect (Metropolis, for example)
- iris transition
- wipes are not used very often any more

ADDED
- Jump Cut
- Mix of multiple textures
- Fast editing
- Flash frames
- Imperfections (either left in or added)

Point: We are making choices that will influence the future of moving pictures

Examples: Breaking the rules, for example, what were once mistakes, like "jump cuts" were used in *Breathless* for effect and are now a cinematic element

CINEMA TECHNIQUES USED TODAY

- panning
- trucking
- zooming (most commonly used in kung fu films OR home videos!)
- smash zoom, having fun with the camera
- lead room
- head room
- Composition, especially Rule of Thirds

EASY WAYS TO INCREASE PRODUCTION VALUES

- Good sound (this is soooooooooooooo important)
- Getting cut-away shots
- Getting good B-Roll (help illustrate the story, tell the story trough visuals rather than talking heads)
- Editing (pace, emotion, excitement, it's partially in the editing)
- Composition (balance vs. tension in the frame)
- Use of music that supports the story or idea, rather than competes with it, creating an emotional bed.

Note that fancy lighting or anything that requires additional equipment is on the list, except for a good mic and audio recorder, when it comes to getting more gear, start with improving your sound recording capability.

HOW WEB VIDEO CAN BE MORE THAN JUST VIDEO ONLINE

- reaction - comments, wiki, blogs, etc.
- community
- interaction with the media producers
- collaboration, mash up
- user generated media involved in the primary media content (Ze, and now others)

Video is just a component in a more complex media system, for example, Glorianna Davenport changed the name of her research group from Interactive Cinema (name used in the late 80s and through the 90s) to Media Fabrics. Media is everywhere, it's becoming the fabric that ties us all together. No longer

a one-way one-many message, becoming part of our everyday conversation.

PARTING THOUGHTS

How your message should dictate how much you follow or don't follow established cinematic language conventions and techniques.

FURTHER READING

Applied Media Aesthetics by Herbert Zettl (A textbook that offers encyclopedic coverage of television and cinema aesthetics, older editions are much more affordable that current edition and are quite good)

The Visual Story by Ned Block (a concise summary of the visual elements)

Secrets of Video Blogging by Michael Verdi, Ryanne Hodson, Diana Weynand, and Shirley Craig (Filled with both technical and creative tips, this fun, fast, full-color guide provides everything you need to get started video blogging)

The Digital Filmmaking Handbook by Ben Long and Sonja Schenk (good basic introduction to classic video production)

Editing Techniques with Final Cut Pro by Michael Wohl (even if you don't cut with Final Cut Pro, the editing aesthetic discussions are along worth getting the book)

(title links take you to to book pages on Amazon.com)

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