

Excerpts from:
A Primer for Filmmaking,
“Montage”

justifies this treatment. Thus an attack on a wagon-train, a frenzied dance, a cavalry charge, or a wild bar-room brawl are ideal subjects, just as was the massacre on the Odessa Steps. Such scenes which demand full emotional involvement by the spectator and by the participants in the scene—scenes of deep emotion and high action—are the meat of montage.

The essence of the montage sequence is the impact of the cuts and the new sensations evolved by the juxtaposition of these images in collision; (obviously there is little impact of image in a dissolve). Here the editor will seek the meaningful cut, with little consideration for the unobtrusive cut. Still, he will avoid any obvious and distracting "jumps" in the temporal continuity caused by a careless mismatch. Since the mismatch is observable only when material is simultaneously present in both of the shots involved in the cut, the editor can avoid this by cutting from one segment of the action to another, entirely different segment. Scenes of mass action lend themselves to this. If some element must be present in both shots—a cut from a group of dancers to one member of the group—then the editor must match only that one element. If he cannot match it, then he must disguise the mismatch in some way. Two effective methods are *changing radically the angle and/or scale of the camera's approach* to the subject and utilizing the *cut-away*, the inter-cutting of a shot containing no elements in common with them between the two mismatched shots.

In the montage sequence the editor is much more concerned with an *aesthetic matching* of the cut shots. By the essential rightness of this matching he will ensure that vital unity of the scene which it is his responsibility to create.

As discussed above, the *completion of an action* and the *forceful, intelligible beginning of the next action* are important criteria in making the cut. Another important consideration is the *matching of image position* between the shots; the eye must not be distractingly jerked about from one portion of the frame to another at the cut. Nothing helps the montage cut so much as a *flow of action* within the outgoing shot, which directs the spectator's attention into the expectation of the cut. Such *directional cutting* can occur either as a wholly motional device—the flow in the outgoing shot runs left to right and then is either continued or smoothly reversed upon itself in the incoming shot—or a combination of motion and position—the flow directs the eye to that portion of the frame at which the incoming image appears. Also useful as a device is the *continuity of idea* between images, even if their form is dissimilar—the cutting from an ocean liner to a toy boat. *Cutting on form* is one of the most useful methods of lending unity—cutting from a fountain to a burst of fireworks, a spinning car wheel to a rolling hoop, from a lamp to the sun. *Tonal cutting* is also used, with a gradual progression from sharp to soft focus or light to dark image creating a sense of progression. And certainly, today, the understanding of the range of *complements of color* can be used in joining together the images of the montage. It is of course essential that the lighting key between shots not offer any glaring mismatch—sunny day to cloudy day, well-lit room to the same room

in deep shadow—and that any clashing of color between shots be avoided.

Film editing, then, is essentially a process of fitting together the separate pieces from which the film is to be built, pieces supplied by the cameraman. But editing is more than just a matter of finding a snug fit. The basic content of the shot may be affected both by its juxtaposition with other shots and by the rhythm to which it is cut. The editor's job, then, is to: *choose the shots to be used* (the others become *out-takes*); *choose the portion of the shot to be used* (the remainder becomes *trims*); *determine, within certain limits, the order in which the shots shall occur*; and, *determine the length of time the shot shall run*, taking into consideration the factors of intelligibility, mood, pace and rhythm.