



Teacher's Notes

The Mechanics of Film Part Two

Grades: 7-12

Duration: 13 mins

Timing Information

| Minutes | Topic |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| 00:01 | Start – The Mechanics of Film Part 2 |
| 00:09 | Post Production and Marketing |
| 00:29 | Editing |
| 05:32 | Post Production Sound |
| 08:06 | Music Composition |
| 10:26 | Marketing the Film |
| 12:26 | End Credits |

INTRODUCTION

In this video we explore the final steps required by the filmmaker to finish the film and then to market it so that as many people as possible can see it. Post production often takes as long as the pre-production and production phases on feature films. However, on a short film with a limited budget, it is often necessary to keep post production to as short a period as possible.

It is in the post production phases that all the elements that were created in the production and pre-production phases come together and make the final, cohesive whole. Through interviews with the crew members involved in the post production phase of the short film 'Caravan', this program explains the different roles involved in the final steps of the film, and gives an overall view of the marketing phase, aiming specifically at the student film market.

Post Production:

The Editor

- The Editor's Role
- The 4 phases of Editing:
 - Digitizing the footage
 - The Assembly Cut
 - The Rough Cut
 - The Fine Cut
- The Difference between Film and Video in the Editing Phase
- Sound Design:
 - Cleaning the sound track
 - Creating and adding foley
 - Mixing in the music
 - The Final Mix down
- Composing Music
- Conclusion
- Marketing the Film

AIMS AND OUTCOMES

This program aims to complete the series begun in Mechanics of Film Part 1 by exploring the techniques used by filmmakers to make a film a watchable, and therefore marketable, product. Through interviews with the post production crew of the short film "Caravan", the video illustrates how each facet of post production is essential to the completed film. As with Part 1 of this series, the video aims to make each step easy to understand, in order that students can tackle their own project with confidence and ability.

Through viewing this program, students will:

- Understand the process of post production – taking the completed footage and finishing it in a manner that will make it the best film possible.
- Understand the process of post production, what each crew member needs to do to make the film complete
- Increase their awareness of the complexity of filmmaking
- Explore how each crew member involved in the post production phase, whilst working separately from each other, all work hand in hand with each other
- Understand the available routes to take to increase their available audience
- Develop an understanding of the marketing of a short film
- Develop skills in areas which interest them
- Enhance their ability to make a short film
- Be better able to 'read' film through understanding the process behind making it

POST PRODUCTION

THE EDITOR

The editor plays a major role in what the film will look like on screen. It is also through the editor that the pace and rhythm of the film is finally decided. An editor must understand the meaning of the film, and most importantly, must have a strong sense of drama (for drama productions, which 'Caravan' is). Choice of shots that further enhance the story or the drama of the film is essential to its success, as is the length of each of these shots. The pace of a film is an almost intangible aspect of the editing process, but vital nevertheless. It is a good editor that will dictate

the correct pace for a film, ensuring that each shot appears for the exact amount of time it is needed to further enhance the story, the sequence, the tension and/or the emotion of that moment.

It is in the editing phase that many shots and scenes are decided upon. There are times when entire sequences, themes, subplots or secondary story lines are taken out if they are in any way hindering the smooth flow of the story. Unless an aspect of the film is advancing the story, it is often deemed unnecessary and damaging and it is removed. There are times when the mood of a film is affected by a shot or sequence or scene that is differently lit to the rest of the film and it is decided in the editing phase to take it out, unless it is absolutely essential to the story.

It is in the editing phase that mistakes made in production come to light, and if they are no fixable, they are removed completely. Many a short film fails because of these mistakes – the shots are not able to cut together to make a scene, and without the scene the film cannot work. This is why an extensive knowledge of editing – or the theory of editing at least - is required by the director, the director of photography and the continuity person is absolutely essential. An editor can only fix so much before it becomes unworkable.

Class Discussion after viewing and taking notes:

What is meant by the pace of a film? What are the differences between the different stages of editing? How would an editor dictate that pace? Not taking into account the cost of equipment and stock, why is shooting on video (digital or vhs) less expensive than shooting on film? What tools – not counting the footage and the equipment in the editing suite – would the editor need from the production phase in order to do his or her job properly? Why would

having a sense of drama be important for an editor? What would a director do in the editing suite with the editor? What is a reshoot, and why would it be deemed necessary? What is meant by the oft-said "we'll fix it in post"? What does 'shoot to cut' mean? What personality traits would make a good editor? What reasons would there be for eliminating shots, scenes or sequences? What is crosscutting? Why would crosscutting be used in a film? Is there any crosscutting in "Caravan"? What are transitions, and what are they used for? What does colour grading mean? Why would it be necessary? Why are slates used for post production purposes? What is telecine? What does it mean to kine a film? Why would films not be shot in sequence? What does that mean in terms of making the editor's job harder?

Student Activities:

- Take 4 sequential scenes from "Caravan" and identify and analyze their shots: the type (e.g. pan, zoom, tracking, close up, medium close up, wide shot), the angle (character height, low angle, high angle etc.) and the sequence in which they are laid out. Explain the reasoning behind the choice of shots that the director and/or director of photography made keeping in mind both the psychology of the shot and the theory of editing.
- Examine each scene transition used in 'Caravan' and explain how they are used to effectively move from scene to scene, linking each one.
- Identify and explain each shot that is subjective i.e. the shots that are used to allow the audience to see the world through the eyes of the character Saul.

- Find a film that makes use of crosscutting (e.g. Breaker Morant) and examine one of the series of scenes in which there is a great deal of this editing technique. Explain why it is cut this way.
- Examine the film "Caravan" and, as the editor, write a letter to the director explaining that you need to cut out another 2 minutes of the film in order for it to fit into a specific timeslot. Explain the reasons behind your choice of what you will cut out to shorten the film, without changing the story or the theme of the film.
- Examine the film "Whale Rider", in particular the DVD which shows the deleted scenes. Explain why you think each of these scenes were removed, and whether or not you agree with the director and editor's choice in doing so.
- Research mistakes made in films (for e.g. using the website: <http://www.moviemistakes.com/best.php>) that you have seen and do a presentation to the class explaining who of the crew would have been responsible that mistake, and why it was not fixed in post.

THE SOUND DESIGNER

The sound designer on a short, student or low budget film is often the same person who recorded the sound on location. His or her role is vital to the final success of the film, as much of the emotion in a film is enhanced, indeed *created*, through the use of sound. Sound (and music) add atmosphere to the film's images, manipulating the audience into feeling exactly what the director wants them to feel. Sound is used in the same way to create a sense of anticipation, and to further engage the audience into knowing what to expect next. The sound designer is responsible for not

only cleaning up the sound track, i.e. removing all unwanted sounds recorded on location, but for creating the entire sound scape for the film – enhancing the emotions and moods of the film, creating suspense, sadness or fear which all works hand in hand with the visual images captured on screen.

Class discussion after viewing and taking notes:
 What is foley? How did sound enhance the sense of anticipation of the audience in 'Caravan'? What sorts of sounds would be removed from the location sound track? What is dubbing? Why would dubbing of dialogue be necessary? If you had a scene of people dancing to music in a club, how do you think that scene would be shot? Would it be shot to music? If not, why not? If a film has a voice over, when and how do you think it would be recorded – in post production or on location?

Student Activities:

- Make a list of sound effects commonly used in films and link them to the emotion that they would evoke in the audience
- Take the scenes from 'Caravan' that use sound effects (not music) to enhance the mood. Design an entirely new series of sound effects to completely change that mood.
- Take the script that you are going to shoot and break down every sound that you think will be needed in the final film. List the sound, when it should be recorded (ie. on location or as foley) and how it can be made if it is not a real sound.
- As a group, recreate all the sounds that have been listed as 'foley', making and recording each of them until they sound real.

THE MUSIC COMPOSER

The role that music plays in a film is well understood by anyone who has ever seen a film. It is such an important factor in the success of a film that often it is used as the main selling tool to create an audience. The role of music in a short film is not less important, though it is rare for it to actually be the selling tool used for the film. The rights to music for its use in a film is generally very expensive, therefore most low budget and student films have the music composed specifically for their film. Many directors of short films prefer to have original music in their film, not just for the cost, but because it further enhances their ownership of the film, and their ability to further express the message they are trying to convey. There are many very talented musicians in the world that have never been discovered, and by composing – normally for free – for a film, not only are they doing the director a favour, but themselves a favour too. This is the beauty of film – one short film can discover many talents, one short film can be the showpiece and beginning of many careers.

Class discussion after viewing:

What are music rights? What is original composition? What films can you think of used their sound track to further increase their market? Why would selling the sound track of a short film be quite difficult? Why is the relationship between the composer and the director symbiotic? What would the reason(s) be behind the choice of music for Caravan – the single instrument, the sparsity in occurrence etc.

Student Activities

- Think of some of the most effective musical themes from films or television programs that you know, and list why you think they work so well.

- Act out the brief that the director would have given the composer for the film "Caravan".
- Take any of the scenes of Caravan that has music and choose a different piece for it. Explain to the class your choice, and the effect it has on the scene.
- Research the composer of a film of your choice. Take the film that you are going to shoot and write a letter to that composer, detailing what you would like and why you think he or she is the perfect composer for your film.
- Considering the end of 'Caravan' write a song that adequately reflects the mood and emotion of the film.

MARKETING THE SHORT FILM

Although literally thousands of short films are made each year by filmmakers, film students and high school students, there are very few avenues from which to make money for the film. Television networks do buy short films, but they are few and far between and almost all have specific themes that they adhere to. Unless your short film falls within that theme, and is very professionally made, the chances of making a sale are almost nil. That leaves only one other avenue for the short film – the film festival circuit. The good news is that there are thousands of film festivals around the world, almost all of which will show case short films. The bad news is that competition is fierce – a good film festival will receive 1,500 – 2,000 films from which to choose 100 films for the festival. Entry fees can also become prohibitively expensive, as can postage and print costs (copies of your film, posters, stills and video or dvd slips), meaning that eventually it becomes impossible to enter festivals. The best way to circumvent all these negatives is to research. There are many websites, articles and books that comprehensively cover the festival

circuit. Each festival has an extensive list of rules and regulations, as well as an explanation as to what the festival looks for in their choice of film. There are many festivals that are strictly student festivals – both secondary and tertiary students – and many that have a student category. With proper research, a filmmaker can streamline their marketing, and therefore have a larger audience with a minimal expenditure – the true essence of a good marketer.

Class Discussion after viewing:

The producer incorrectly used the word pathos during her interview. What word should she have used that would explain what she was trying to say? Why do you think there are so many festivals around today? Why are so many short films being made? What is the difference between marketing a short film and a feature film? What would a good marketing package for a short film comprise of?

Student Activities

- List what could go into a marketing package for a short film.
- Create a poster for the short film "Caravan".
- Write the synopsis of the short film "Caravan".
- Research the festivals available in your country. Take one of these festivals and do a tutorial to the rest of the class on it, convincing them of your reasons for entering the film into that specific festival.
- As a group, create a marketing package for your short film.

In conclusion:

Student Activity:

- As a group, create a presentation for your chosen short film from its original concept to the finished project. Pretend that your

audience are all potential investors, and you need to convince them to invest all the money that is required to make that film.

Credits

Written, directed and edited by

Tresa James

Produced by

Jennifer Ussi

Executive Producer

John Davis

Music Composed and Performed by

Sarah Gall

A big thank you to the cast and crew of

Caravan

Footage from the film "Caravan"
supplied by agreement with *Jennifer Ussi*

Teachers Notes

Jennifer Ussi

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