**GLOSSARY OF FILM TERMS**

**Adapted from Dembrow**

I.          VOCABULARY RELATING TO THE SHOT:

Take:   The length of film exposed between each start and stop of the camera.  Thus, a shot that goes on for a long time without an edit is called a "long take."  During filming the same piece of action may be filmed from the same camera setup several times (e.g., trying for different emotions on the part of the actors); each time is called a take.

Shot:    A take, in part or in its entirety, that is used in the final edited version of the film.  In a finished film we refer to a piece of the film between two edits as a shot. Whereas an edit can take the story to a different time or a different place, the action within a shot is spatially and temporally continuous.  We can therefore think of a shot as a "piece of time."

Shots are described by distance from the subject (ECU, CU, MCU, MS, MLS, LS, ELS), by camera angle (low, high, eye-level), by content (two-shot, three-shot, reaction shot, establishing shot), and by any camera movement (pan, track, dolly, crane, tilt).  The average feature film contains between 400 and 1,000 shots.

Scale:  The "bigness" of the subject in a given shot, determined by the camera's distance from it.

Extreme closeup (ECU):  Closer shot than a closeup; a single detail occupies most of the screen image.  e.g., a mouth, a gun.  Sometimes called an "insert."

Close-Up (CU):  The camera is close to the subject, so that when the image is projected most of the screen shows a face and its expression, or some relatively small part of a larger whole.

Medium closeup (MCU):  Shot whose scale is between MS and CU:  a character shown from the chest up.

Medium Shot (MS):  A human subject in MS is generally shown from the waist up; background begins to be visible and potentially important, and two-shots are possible.

Medium Long shot (MLS): Human subject is shown from the knees up.  Also called an American Shot because Hollywood movies of the Thirties and Forties used it so often for dramatic action.

Long shot (LS):  The camera is a considerable distance from the subject(s) being filmed.  The whole human figure from head to feet is included in the frame, with the surrounding environment very visible.

Extreme long shot (ELS):  The camera is very far away from the subject, giving us a broad perspective.  Often used to create an "establishing shot," setting up a new scene.

Camera Angle:  The position of the camera (in terms of height from the ground) in relation to the subject being filmed.

Low-Angle Shot (LA):  The camera is positioned below the subject, and shoots upward at it.  The effect is to make the subject look dominating, powerful, as if a child were looking up at an adult.  An extreme low angle(ELA) would be an extreme variant.

Eye-Level Shot:  The camera is located at normal eye level (five to six feet from ground level) in relation to the subject.  Unless otherwise noted in the script, the camera will automatically be set up at eye level.  When analyzing a scene, eye-level shots do not need to be indicated as such; the reader will assume that this is the position of the camera, unless otherwise indicated.

High-Angle Shot (HA):  The camera is positioned somewhere above the subject and shoots down at it.  An extreme high angle would be an extreme variant. In a bird's eye shot the camera is placed directly over the subject.

Dutch or Oblique Angle Shot:  The camera is tilted so that on screen, the horizon appears to be tilted.  Often used as a subjective shot to indicate stress, such as when a character is drunk or drugged.

Two-Shot: Medium or medium-long shot of two

                                    characters.

Three-Shot:  Medium or medium-long shot of three characters.

Moving Shot:  Produced when the camera moves.  When the camera remains fixed but swivels horizontal-ly, it is called a pan; when it swivels vertically, it is a tilt.  When the camera itself travels horizontally, it is a tracking shot.  When the camera travels in closer to a subject or away from a subject, it is called a dolly shot.  When the camera travels vertically, it is a crane or boom shot.  More info:

Crane Shot:  Shot taken from a crane or boom (a sort of huge mechanical arm, which carries the camera and cameraman, and can move in virtually any direction--vertically, forward-backward, transversely, or in a combination of the above.

Tracking Shot:  The camera is mounted on a dolly or truck, and moves horizontally on wheels or railroad-like tracks to follow the action being filmed or to survey the setting.

Dolly Shot:  The camera is mounted on a dolly and moves forward (dolly-in) or away from (dolly-out) the subject.

Hand-Held Shot:  The camera operator carries the camera while filming the action; this has become possible over the last thirty years with the invention of lighter cameras.  Can be used with a "Steadicam" system, a hydraulic harness device that allows the movement to be kept very smooth, almost as smooth as a dolly or crane shot.  Usually, however, hand-held shots are used for their lack of smoothness, to give the impression of the point of view of a person walking--for greater naturalism or to create suspense.

Zoom Shot:  Technically not a moving shot because the camera itself does not move, the zoom is made by the zoom lens, which has variable focal length  (see Section IV).  The zoom became a popular technique in the Sixties.  On screen a zoom-in resembles a dolly-in, but its telephoto optics as it moves in on the subject differ from the more realistic, dynamic look that a dolly or hand-held shot retains.

Pan Shot:  The view sweeps from left to right or from right to left.  Differs from the tracking shot in that the camera is not mounted on a movable object but stays fixed.  It pans on a horizontal axis (short for "panorama").  In a Flash Pan or Zip Pan the movement is very rapid, so that the filmed action on the screen appears as only a blurred movement.

 Tilt:  Like a pan, but the camera tilts up or down along a vertical plane.

Stock Shot:  A shot "borrowed" from the archives of a studio.  Generally, this would be a shot made for another film, frequently a documentary--e.g., the New York Skyline, the White House, a WWII naval battle scene.

Subjective Shot:  The camera is positioned at an angle, or has something about its content (distortion through misfocus or strange color, etc.) to suggest that the shot is seen from the viewpoint of a particular character in the film, usually a character in an abnormal frame of mind (e.g., through drunkenness, or fear, or heightened sensitivity).

Long Take:  A shot that lasts a long time (as distinguished from a long  shot, where "long" refers to camera distance.

Mise-En-Scene: A theoretical term coming from the French, meaning, more or less, "staging."  In general, concerns everything within a shot as opposed to the editing of shots; includes camera movement, set design, props, direction of the actors, composition of formal elements within the frame, lighting, and so on.  In film theory Mise-En-Scene is one of the two major categories of film analysis; "Montage" (Editing) is the other.

II.         VOCABULARY RELATING TO EDITING AND SEQUENCE CONSTRUCTION

Cross-Cutting:  Cutting back and forth between shots from two(or more) scenes or locales.  This alternation suggests that both actions are occurring simultaneously.

Cut: The most immediate, and common, of transitions from shot to shot.  It is effected in the laboratory simply by splicing one shot onto another.  On screen the appearance of the second shot immediately replaces the first.  "To cut" also means to edit; in addition, during filming "to cut" means to stop the camera.

Editing: The joining together of shots to make a sequence or a film.  This also includes the process of matching the soundtrack and the visuals.  The European word for editing is montage, which has become the critical term for editing.

Establishing Shot:  Also called a master shot.  A long shot usually at the beginning of a scene, to establish the spatial relationships of the characters, actions, and spaces depicted in subsequent closer shots.

Insert: A shot of a static object, such as a book, letter, clock, murder weapon, pile of cash, inserted during the editing process, generally between two shots of a character looking offscreen, usually to indicate that this is what s/he is looking at.

Jump Cut: A break or cut in a shot's temporal continuity, caused by removing a section of a shot and then splicing together what remains of it.  On screen the result is abrupt and jerky; in certain films it is deliberate.  Also, a jump cut is a transition indicating a break in temporal continuity between two adjacent shots.  For example, a shot of a character opening a car door followed by a shot of him driving the car; we don't see the character actually getting into the car, starting the motor, beginning to drive.  The term is also used to indicate an abrupt and unexpected shift in locale.

Match Cut: A transition that involves a direct cut from one shot to another, which "matches" it in action, subject matter, or actual composition.  This kind of transition is commonly used to follow a character as s/he moves or appears to move continuously.  Film continuity is often dependent on match cutting.  Match cutting can also be used in a montage sequence, to show a similar activity occurring over a passage of time.

Montage:    (1)       Editing; putting together shots and creating a "film reality."

                   (2)       a short, impressionistic sequence used to show either the passage of time or an accumulation of objects or events used descriptively.

                   (3)       In critical terms, montage is often opposed to mise-en-scene, to refer to the creation of a film reality through piecing together fragments of reality (or shots).  Montage is all that happens between shots.  A filmmaker who stresses this tendency (i.e., using much editing) has a montage style; a filmmaker who tends not to cut--who favors long takes, lots of camera movement, etc.--is considered a mise-en-scene director.

Parallel Editing:          Same as cross-cutting.

Reaction Shot:             A shot showing the reaction of a character to something or someone seen in the previous shot.

Reverse Angle Shot:  In filming conversations, an alternation or cross-cutting of shots filmed from an over-the-shoulder position of each character in turn is reverse angle shooting.  Each shot shows the face of one character and the back of head and shoulders of the other.

Scene:  A portion of the film in which all of the action occurs in the same place and in the same time span.  A scene may be composed of any number of shots.

Sequence: Any section of a film that is self-contained enough to be intelligible when viewed apart from the rest of the film.  Unlike a scene, it can consist of action occurring in various places and at different times.

Splice: The physical point at which two shots are joined by glue or tape during editing.  A machine called a splicer aids in creating a splice.

III.       TRANSITIONS

Burn in:  Gradually going from a white screen to a an image.

Burn out: Gradually going from an image to a white screen.

Cut: The most immediate, and common, of transitions from shot to shot.  On screen the appearance of the second shot immediately replaces the first.  The cut is increasingly being used as a transition between sequences as well (traditionally the fade and the dissolve have been used for this purpose).

Dissolve: The end of one shot merges slowly into the beginning of the next; as the second shot becomes increasingly distinct, the first slowly disappears.  Traditional way of moving from sequence to sequence.

Fade-in: Slow brightening of the picture from a black screen to normal brightness.  Suggests passage of time.

Fade-out:  Reverse of the fade-in.  The shot gradually darkens to blackness, usually signalling the ending of a sequence.

Iris-In:  A shot that opens from darkness in an expanding circle of image, as if a circular window were opening on the image.  Frequently used in the silent cinema.

Iris-Out: The opposite of an iris-in, ending with a shot with a progressively narrower iris.

Jump Cut: See Section II above.

Match Cut: See Section II above.

Wipe: Transition from one shot to the next, in which the second appears and wipes or pushes off the first, looking kind of like a windshield wiper.

IV.       VOCABULARY RELATING TO PHOTOGRAPHIC AND TECHNICAL PROPERTIES OF FILM

Aspect Ratio:              The proportions of the frame, the ratio of the width to the height of the image area.  The traditional aspect ratio for 35 mm. film is 1.33:1 and is known as Academy Aperture.  For wide-screen processes such as Cinemascope, the aspect ratio may range from 1.65:1 to 2.55:1.  All film gauges are wider than they are high, a factor affecting formal composition within the frame.

Depth of Field:            The degree to which an image is in sharp focus in depth (usually a function of the size of the camera lens opening).  In shallow focus (shallow depth of field), a very narrow zone of depth is in focus at any one time (foreground or midground or background), and everything closer and further from the camera is out of focus.  In deep focus all distance planes (foreground, midground, and background) remain clearly in focus, from close-up range to infinity.

Film Stock: The "raw," unexposed film that is loaded into the camera for shooting.  Film stock can be color or black-and-white, "fast" or "slow."

Focus: The degree of sharpness and clarity in a film image.  "Out of focus": the images are blurred and lack linear definition.

Footage: Exposed film stock.

Frame: An individual image on a strip of film.  In silent films frames were projected at the rate of 16 frames per second; in sound film they are projected at the rate of 24 frames per second.

Lenses of the Movie Camera:

Wide-Angle: A lens with short focal length, having a wider than normal field of view.  Has the effect of appearing to expand the depth of the image, and can cause visual distortion when the subject is close to the camera.

Telephoto:  A lens with a long focal length, which gives a narrower than normal field of view, and compresses depth in space, appearing to bring distant subjects nearer, and giving the image a flattened effect (opposite of wide-angle photography).

Zoom:  A composite lens that allows one to move from wide-angle to normal to telephoto or the reverse.  Makes it possible to move toward or away from the subject without moving the camera.

Optical Printer:           An elaborate mechanical device used to create special effects in a film print, such as fade-ins and fade-outs, dissolves, superimpositions, and other effects.  Much of this work is now done through Computer Graphics technology.

Overexposure:             A shot brighter and more contrasty than normal, resulting from too much light having entered the lens and reading the film.

Rack Focus:                When the zone of sharp focus changes from foreground to background (or vice-versa) within a single shot.  The viewer's attention is thus drawn from one plane to another.

Soft Focus:                  The image is softened by diffusing the light and reducing the sharpness of the lens.

Superimposition:         When two different shots are printed onto the same strip of film.  Every dissolve contains a brief superimposition.

V.        MISCELLANEOUS TERMS

Auteur:  French for "author."  The auteur theory was popularized by the New Wave French critics of the Fifties and Sixties, and emphasized the director as major creator of film art.  A strong director--an auteur--stamps her/his film with a personal vision, often in spite of external impositions such as producers and studio pressures.

Exterior:  A scene apparently shot out of doors.  The exterior may be simulated in the studio or it may be filmed "on location."

Eyeline: The direction in which a character is looking.  Eyelines are often a way of letting us know what (or whom) a character is interested in.

Genre:  A recognizable type of film which depends on certain established conventions and expectations.  Common American genres are the Western, the Gangster Film, the Horror Film, the Musical, the Detective Film, and so on.  Examples of generic conventions would be the Gangster Film's urban setting, fast cars, drinking, moll, pistols, machine guns, flashy clothes.

Interior: An indoor scene, filmed either on a studio set or on location.

Intertitles:  Frames with written text, coming between image shots, used in silent films to transmit necessary verbal information, such as explanations or dialogue.

Lighting:  The illumination of the set.  Lighting may be described in terms of the direction from which the light enters the set (front-lighting, back-lighting, side-lighting, top-lighting, cross-lighting).  Lighting may also be described in terms of the contrast between light and dark:  High-key lighting (the main or key lights produce a diffuse illumination, with few shadows created); Chiaroscuro or low-key lighting (very contrasty, with some parts of the set  highlighted and the rest in darkness; lots of shadows.  Highlighting can also be a means of emphasizing a character's hair or eyes.

 Voice-Over: The voice of a narrator is heard, although the character speaking is usually not presented visually.  If the character is visually present, there is no lip movement, a convention indicating that we are hearing the character's thoughts.