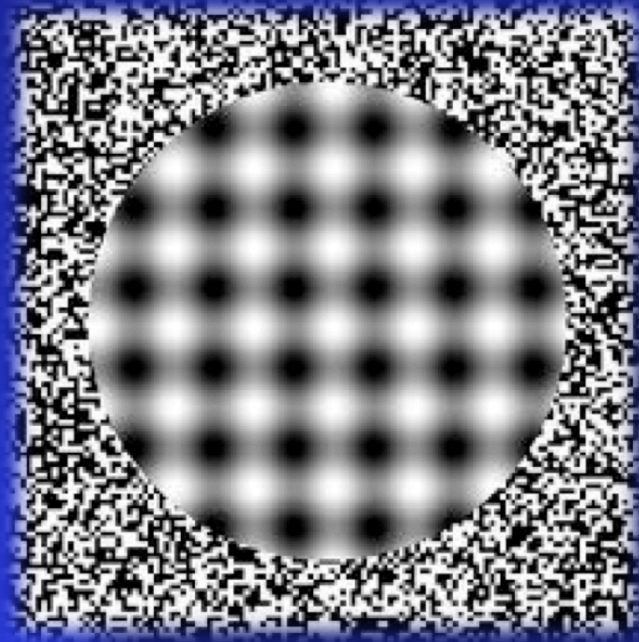


# The Visual Story



Ralph Vituccio

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412.268.9837

[www.ralphvituccio.com](http://www.ralphvituccio.com)

## About me professionally...

- Faculty: ETC and Pittsburgh Filmmakers
- Courses (partial listing):
  - Visual Story (ETC)
  - Video Production 1, 2 and Advanced (PFM)
  - Directing (PFM)
  - Lighting for Film and Video (PFM)
- Independent Filmmaker
  - Producer/Screenwriter/Director/Editor



# My interests...

- 2 kids: Matt, 19, fronts the punk band, “The Edukators” and Steph, 18, starting Chatham.
- 2 step kids: Millie, owns the “Goodie Truck” which you’ll see around Pgh and Claire starting at Temple.
- Gourmet cook.
- Make my own ‘vino’...

“It’zza soooo good. You gonna like!” quote from Uncle Luigi

# My interests...

*THE SUGAR GRINDERS*

*Contact:*

*Ralph Vituccio*

*412.260.8868*

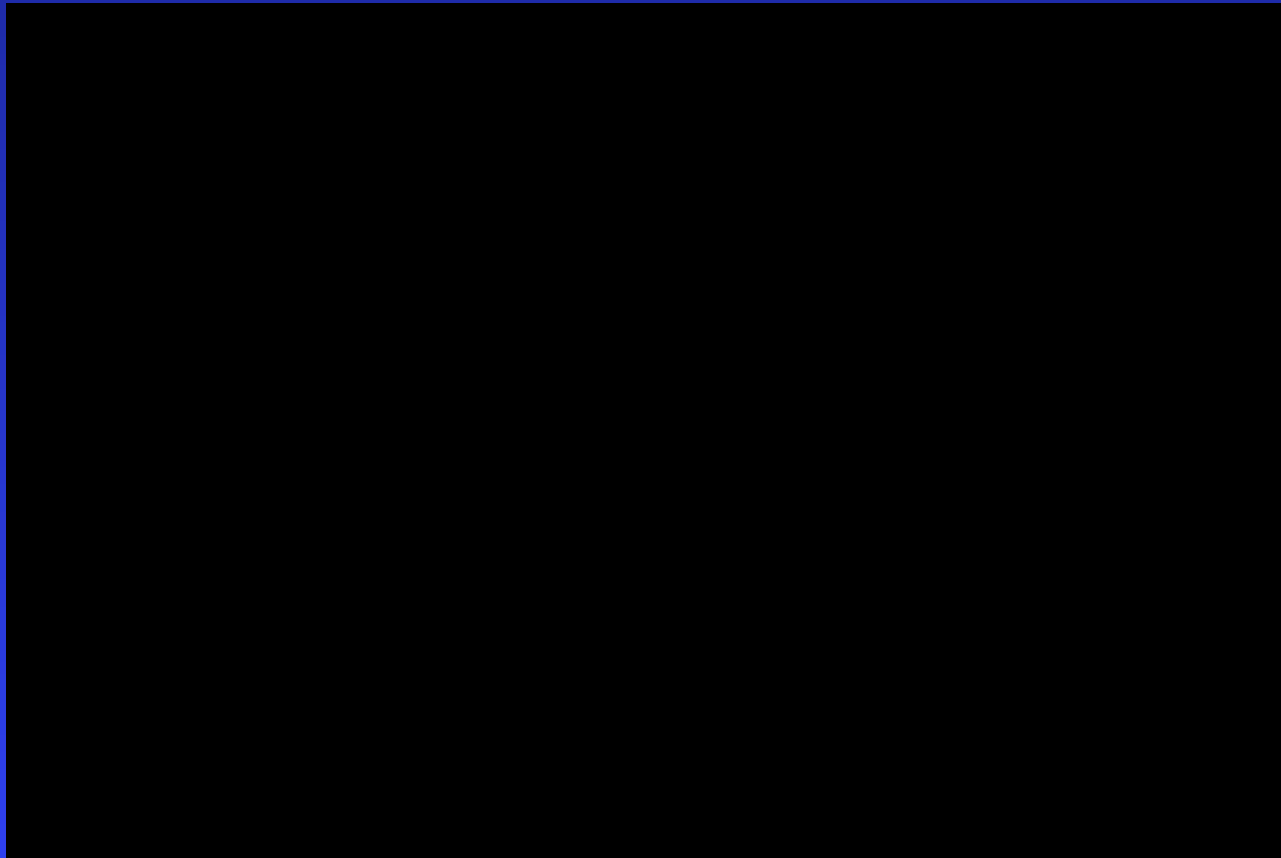
*rv0a@andrew.cmu.edu*

Blues harp in the band, "The Sugar Grinders".

## What you *really* want to know about me...

- Do I like teaching this class?
- Formal or informal?
- How available am I?
- Harsh or easy grader?
  - The Product
  - The Process
- How flexible on deadlines?
- My two big pet peeves:
  - Sleeping in class!
  - Slackers!

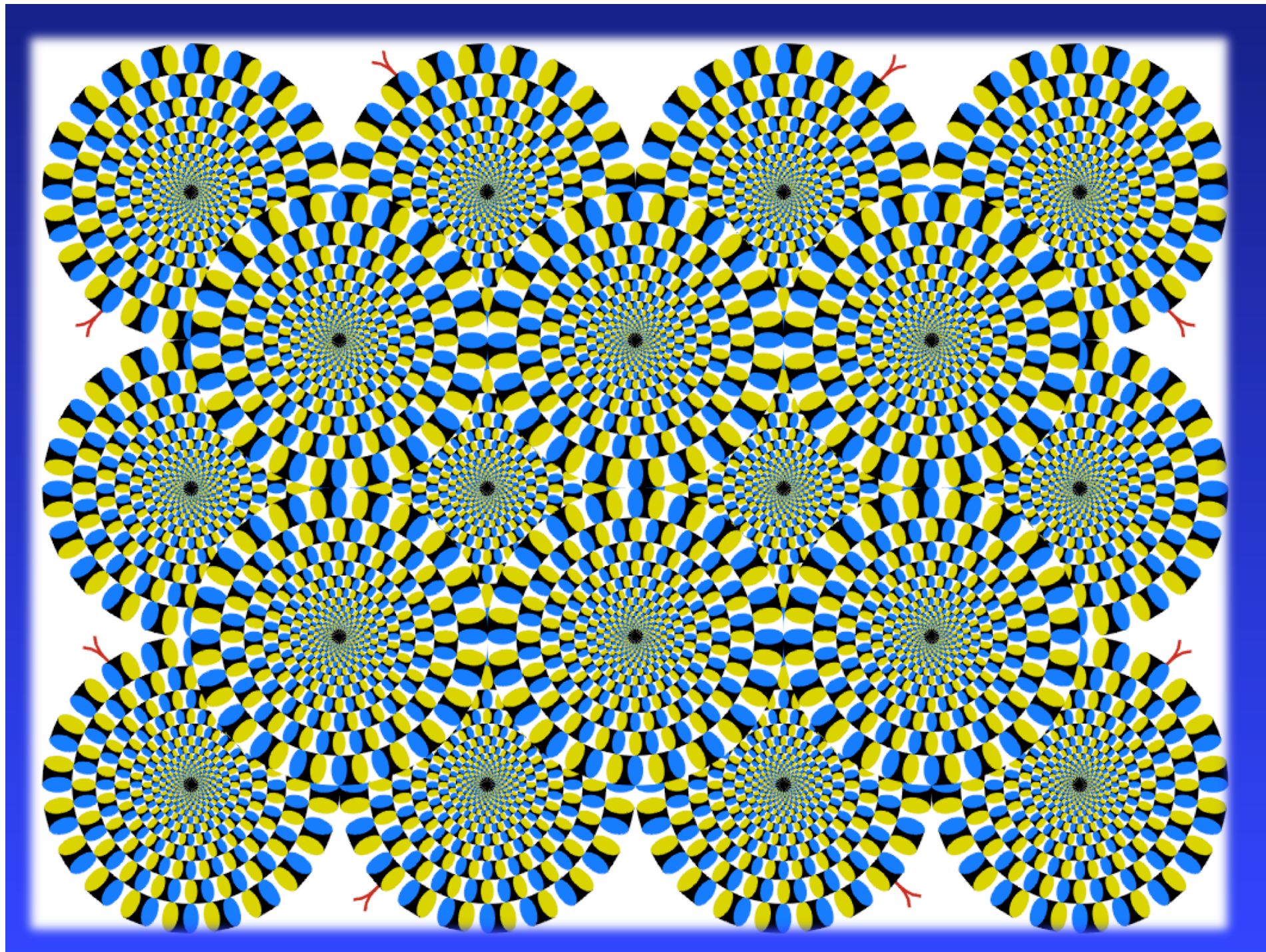
## In Service: Iraq to Pittsburgh (2009)



# Shipbreakers







# Course Objectives

1. Learn basic principles of visual language and cinematic techniques and how they are deployed to tell effective visual stories.
2. Understand how camera dynamics, cinematic continuity and editing technique work together in order to achieve dramatic results.
3. Develop an intelligent vision of how the dynamics of visual storytelling work across all media such as video games, the web and interactive entertainment.

# Motion Pictures

## ...a very curious history.

- A miraculous but primitive amusement.
  - Entertainment maybe..... but not really a serious art form.
- Today.... film scholars consider some films as great works of art, and directors viewed as great artists.
  - Outside of academia, still viewed as popular entertainment rather than an art form.
- Commercial cinema has always been a **profit-motivated** enterprise designed to produce a **consumer product** for a **mass market**.



# Art vs Entertainment

*“Entertainment’s job is to pass away the hours; art should make profound, eloquent and affecting statements about the human condition”*

NY Times quote

# One's entertainment is another's nightmare.

- Divisions are really meaningless. Any film's value may lie on the personal, political, cultural, religious or philosophical plane.

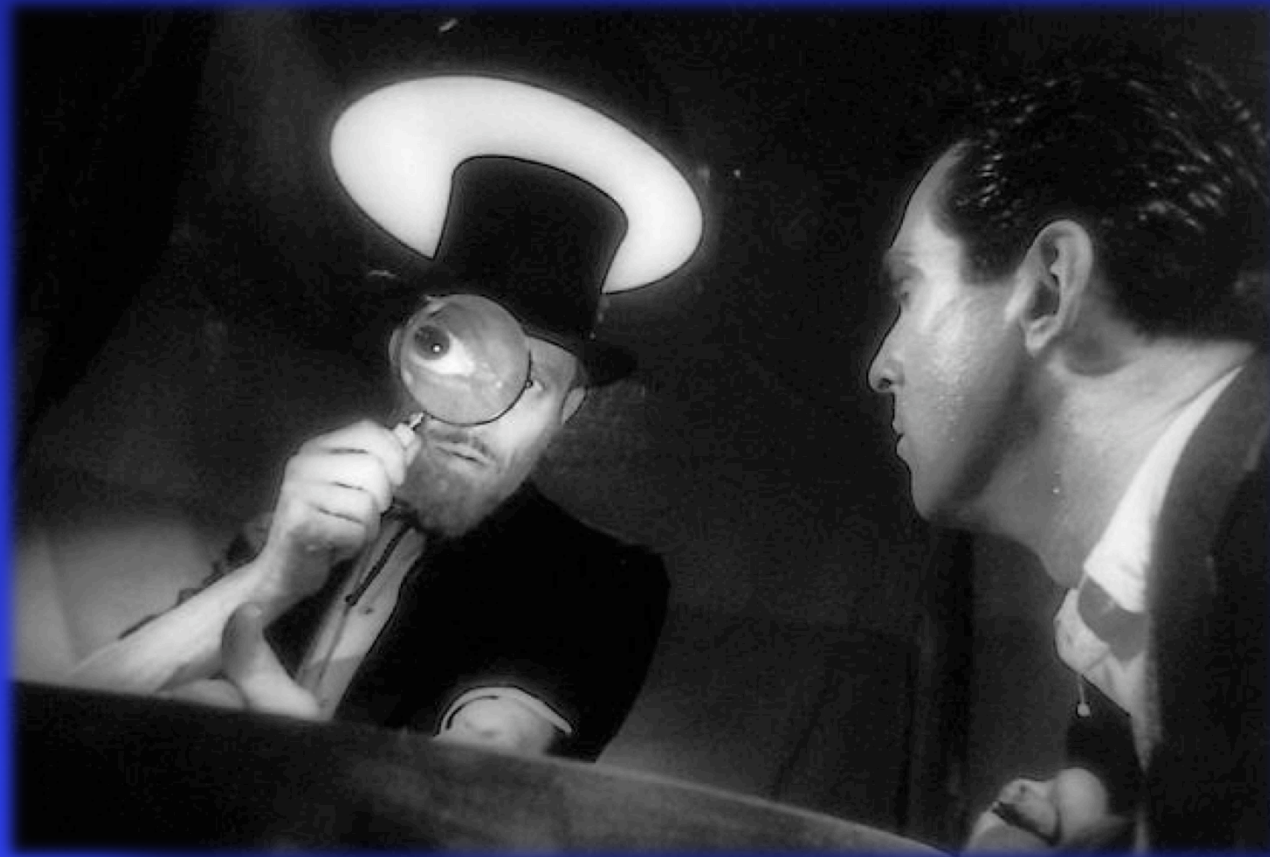


Any way you cut it

# **FILMS AFFECT US**



# Film Grammar - What is it?



# Film Grammar



- ✓ Not quite a language in the sense that English or French are.... but.... it's like a language.

# Film Grammar

- Often compared to the grammar of language.
  - Shots = words; scenes = sentences; sequences = paragraphs
- Not a collection of hard and firm rules.
  - More like collected experiences - changing in small steps from one generation of filmmakers to another.

# Linguistic Grammar

- The study and description of words (*shots*), their relationship to each other, (*editing*), their arrangement into sentences, (*scenes*) and the syntactic rules of language (*film grammar*).



# Visual Grammar

## Codes & Signs

- Visual language contains a set of vocabularies and sub-languages via:
  - Composition
  - Visual design
  - Lighting
  - Image control
  - Continuity
  - Movement
  - Point-of-view.





# Soooo....

- Film may not have a grammar exactly, but it does have a system of “codes”.
- It may not, strictly speaking, have an exact vocabulary, but it does have a system of “signs”.
- Film also uses the systems of signs and codes of a number of other communication systems as well;
  - Music
  - Painterly
  - Narrative
  - Poetry

“A film is difficult to explain because it  
is easy to understand.”

Christian Metz

# Reading Films...

- Since 1960, semiotics (the study of signs and their meanings), presented an interesting approach to the logical description of the language-like phenomenon of film.
- We used to think that a film had a given meaning and it was the function of the film critic to point it out.
- But everyone doesn't interpret a given film the same way. The simplest visual images are interpreted differently in different cultures.
- Much of what we see and get out of a film is related to what we know and have experienced in life.

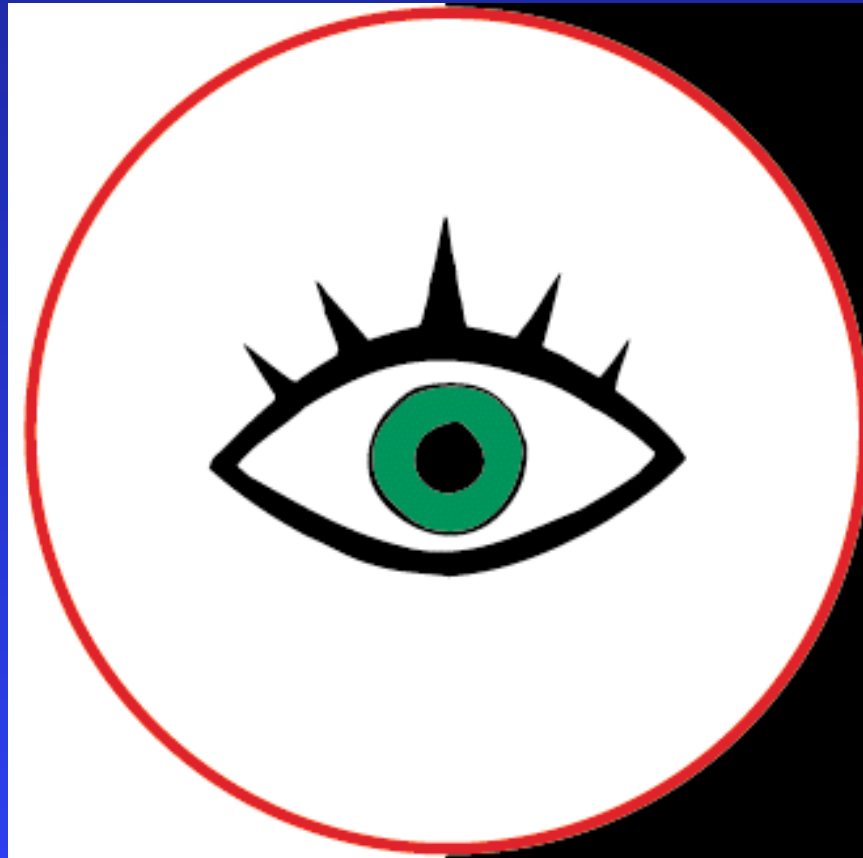
Film is not just something up there on  
the screen -



It's a happening in your head!

“Many tongues.... one eye”

Navaho proverb



# You see what you want to see....

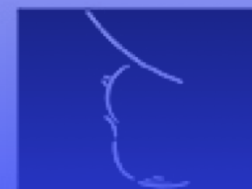
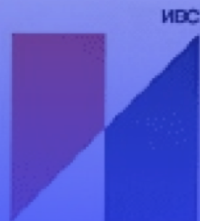
perception vs comprehension

image vs imagination



# Film Semiotics

*Signs, signs, everywhere signs...*



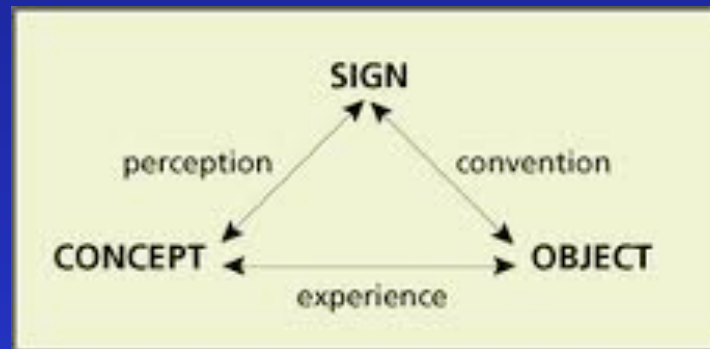
# Film Semiotics

*Signs, signs, everywhere signs...*

- The study of signs and their meaning.
- Signs are everywhere and everything is a sign -- words, images, sounds, and the absence of them -- in short, anything from which some meanings may be generated.
- The Semiotics-Machine is constantly working in our brains. We need to have this "meaning" so bad and we give our "reading" to everything we see.



# Semiotics



1. **SIGN** is composed of a.....
2. **SIGNIFIER** - the material form of the sign...
  - ✓ What we can see, touch, smell and/or hear.
3. **SIGNIFIED** - the concept it represents...
  - ✓ The idea or mental construct rather than the thing itself.

# Semiotics

**Sign** -- The written word STOP



**Signifier (Denotation)** -- The letters S-T-O-P



**Signified (Connotation) concept** -- The motion category "stop"

# Semiotics

- In film, the “signifier” and the “signified” are almost identical.
- In cinema, an image of a rose is a rose.
- In prose, a rose can simply be a rose or it can be modified or confused with similar words or sounds.
  - Read the word rose and you may think of the rose bush in your parents backyard, or maybe a dried rose comes to mind from a loved ones funeral or the fresh rose you gave a lover.

Is a rose just a rose...



A B C

# Semiotics

Three categories of signs:

1. **Iconic** -- a sign which resembles the signified (portrait, photo, diagram, map)
2. **Symbolic** -- a sign which does not resemble the signified but which is purely conventional (the word *stop*, a red traffic light, or a rose)
3. **Indexical** -- a sign which is inherently connected in some way (existentially or causally) to the signified (e.g. smoke signifies fire; and all the little symbols you see on web pages -- mailboxes, envelopes, arrows).



ICON

This image is what it is



# SYMBOL

Coffins and corpses



# INDEX

Denotation and Connotation





# Film Semiotics



- Every image in a film can be an iconic sign. We recognize & understand screen images across cultures. In the early days, before dialogue, film was the new "international" language.

# Film Semiotics

- The "richer" the sign the more "powerful" it becomes. By moving between iconic, symbolic and indexical levels the sign takes on a life in our brain's processor.
- Photography is extremely iconic. A dog is recognized as a dog.
  - The CHALLENGE for an image-maker is to overcome the natural mimesis of film.
  - The shot of a dog has to express something else, we have to assign a different meaning to the shot -- we have to take it to the next level.



# Semiotics

The power of language systems is in the great difference between the signifier and the signified. The power of film is that there is not.



# Visual Story

The artist's choice in cinema is without limit.

The artist's choice in literature is limited.

The reverse is true for the observer:

- The great thing about literature is the imagination is employed much more.
- The great thing about film is that you're under the employ of the directors imagination.

In this context, film does not suggest....  
it STATES.

The reader of a page invents the image.  
The reader of a film does not.

Excerpt from:  
*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*  
By Salman Rushdie



*Only a few can speak the  
language,  
the rest consume it.*

“Those who can speak it well, hold incredible  
power”

# The Key Cultural Form of the Twentieth Century is Cinema



The theory and history of cinema serves as a lens in which we can view all media including the internet, video games, interactive games, virtual reality.... And anything else that attempts to tell a story through the juxtaposition of images.

Film is....

“The ritual dance of our culture”

## Visual Story in 00:02:00:00

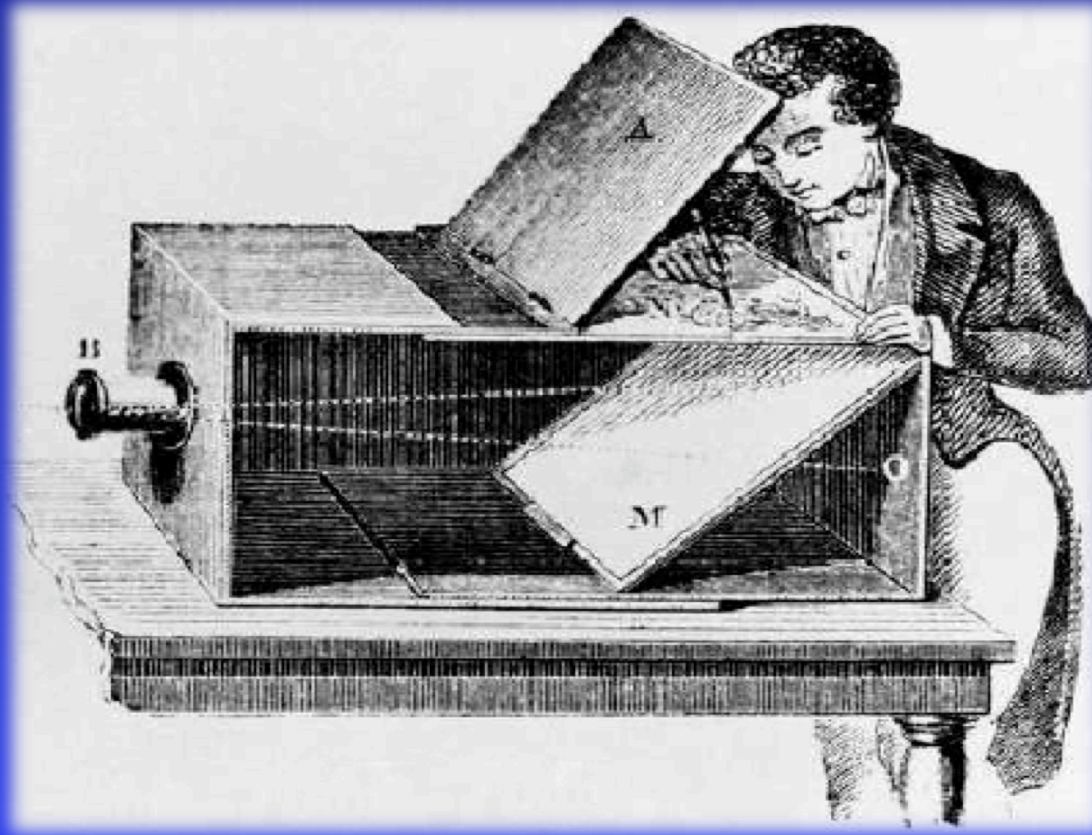


# The Speedy Gonzales Version of Film History



A Very Brief Archeology of Moving Pictures

The invention of cinema (the moving image) is a historical junction of several routes:



A search for realistic reproduction of the world that became an obsession with painters in the 19th century, competing at the time with the invention of photography.



# The invention of cinema...

That strange tendency of human beings to gather in groups, usually at night, facing a source of light (the fire) or a lighted area (the stage) for the sole purpose of watching and listening to someone else's story, song, music, or dance.





# Perceiving Movement

The perception of movement in film and video is the result of two optical illusions -

***Persistence of vision***

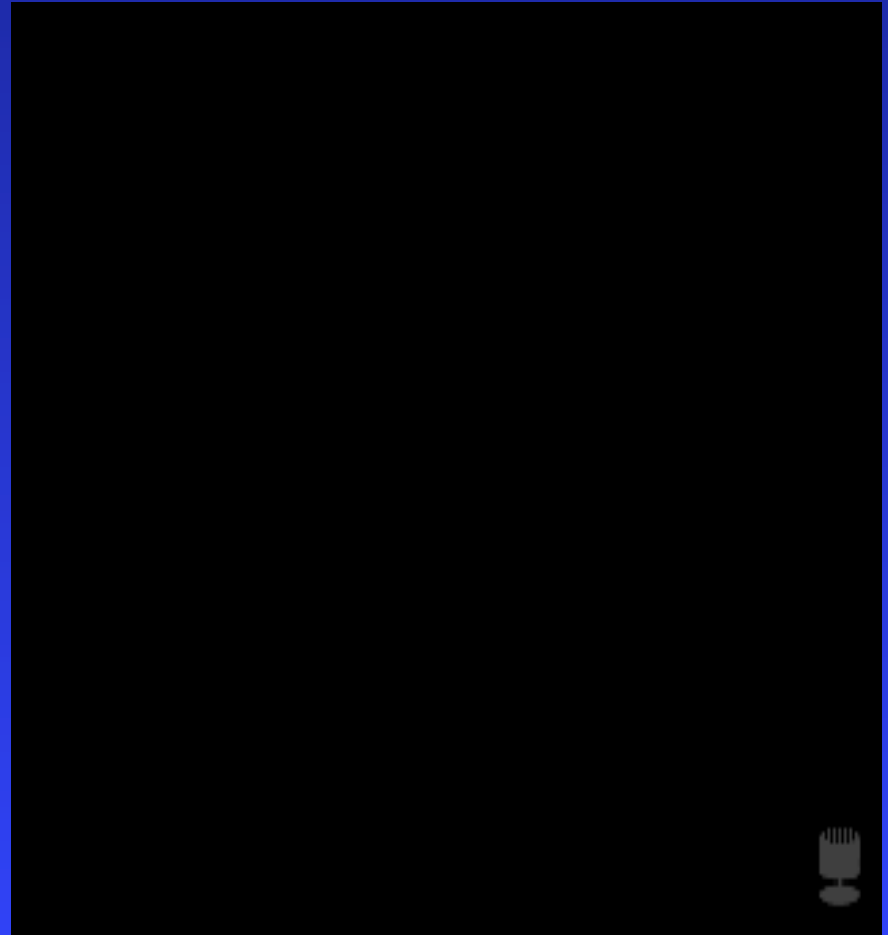
***Phi phenomenon***

Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, (1912)



# Persistence of Vision

The optical phenomenon called “**persistence of vision**”, allowed illusionists throughout history to create sophisticated entertainment devices that produced fantastic illusions of movement.



# Perceiving Moving Images



Each image  
displayed for  
one second

- **Persistence of vision**
  - Recording and projecting a series of still images gives appearance of continuous movement.
  - The brain holds an image for a short period of time after it has disappeared, so it's possible to project a series of still images quickly enough so that they merge psychologically and the illusion of movement is maintained.

# Perceiving Moving Images

- ***phi phenomenon***

- Occurs when we view two lights, in close proximity, flashing in quick succession. Instead of perceiving it as two separate lights, we see it as a light moving from the first position to the second.
- So when a frame of film is projected showing a subject in one position and the next frame of film shows the same subject at a slightly different position, we perceive that the subject has moved.

# The invention of cinema ...

1. By the end of the 19th century, in different parts of the world, this historical junction produced the invention of the motion picture camera.
  - In New Jersey, Thomas Edison develops the **Kinetograph**.
  - In Germany, Skladanowsky brothers invent a projector called the **Bioscop**.
  - In England, Robert Paul operated his own **Theatrograph**.
  - But in France, the invention of the Lumiere brothers proves to be the best. Their **Cinematograph** was not only the lightest camera but also the handiest, since it could easily be transformed into a projector and even a film-developing machine.

# EARLY CINEMA

1893 - 1903



# Lumiere Brothers Dominate the First Moments of Film History

1. Film history began on December 28, 1895 - the night two French photographers Auguste and Emile Lumiere presented a program of ten films to a small paying audience in the Grand Café in Paris.





# Lumiere Brothers Dominate the First Moments of Film History

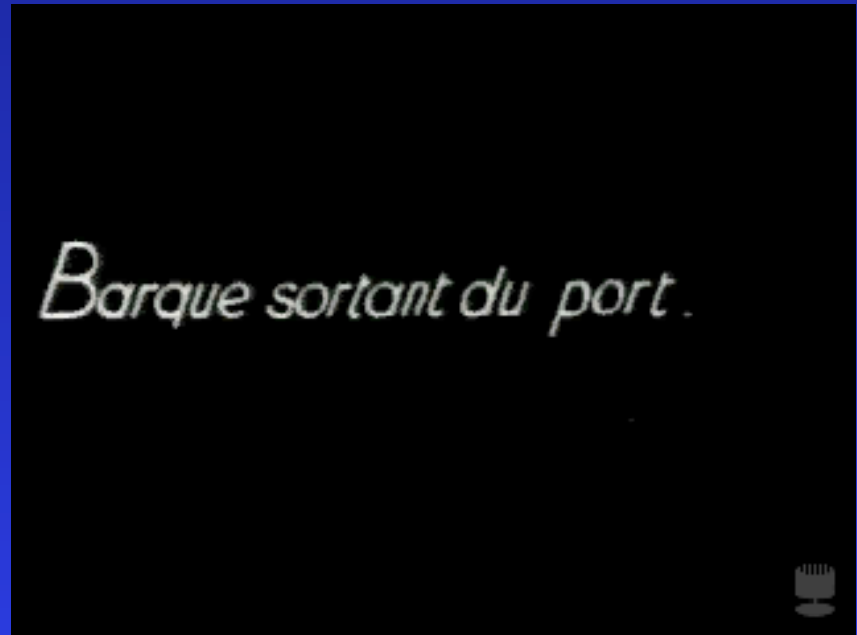
*Congrès des Sociétés  
photographiques de France  
Juillet 1895  
Excursion à Neuville sur Saône  
Débarquement des Congressistes*



They produced short films (half minute each) of moving people, trains, cars, animals, balloons, whatever.

# Lumiere Brothers Dominate the First Moments of Film History

The public soon lost interest in the novelty so the Lumiere Brothers sent their cameramen around the world to supply the French public with exotic landscapes.



“We tend to celebrate the birth of cinema at the moment money was involved and by doing so we emphasize its commercial aspect more than its artistic potential.”

Jean-Luc Godard

## George Melies

### Professional Magician Turned Filmmaker

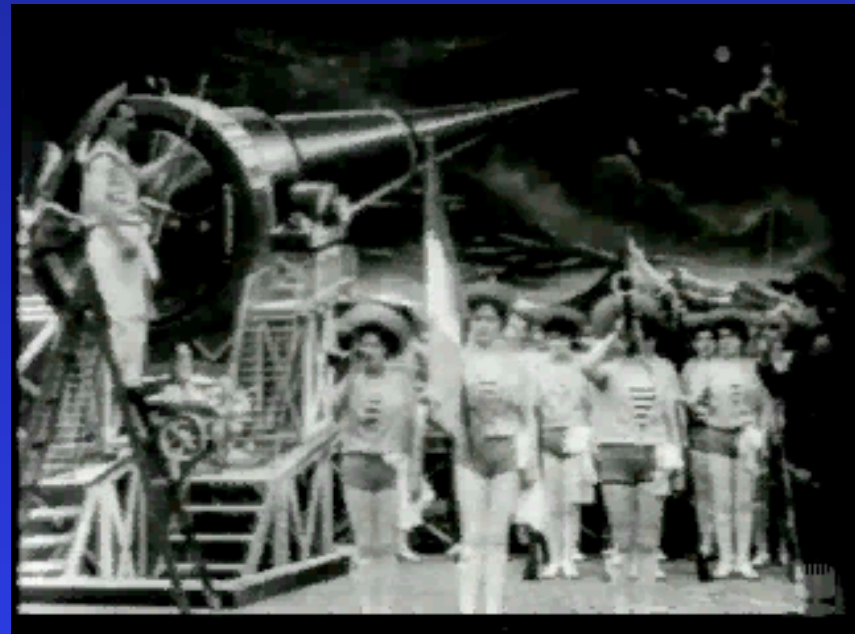
1. The Lumiere brothers were merely technicians, not really inclined towards art. Although they made some efforts to produce narrative films, they achieved little success in that direction.
2. Melies becomes fascinated by the Lumiere brothers short films. He begins experimenting with this new invention for telling stories through the manipulation of time and space.
3. He produces hundreds of narrative films using these effects.
4. However, Melies never moves his camera nor does he take any interest in what was soon to be called reconstruction or “editing”.

# George Melies

## Professional Magician Turned Filmmaker

After purchasing his own camera, Melies starts a series of trial-and-error attempts to film his own stage shows. In a short time, he masters a large range of film tricks (stop camera, reversing action, jump cuts, fades, superimposition, dissolves, tinted film, etc).

“A Trip To The Moon” 1896



## Back In Jersey...



By 1893 Thomas Edison develops a camera that made short 35mm films. Interested in exploiting these films as a novelty, he tries to combine them with his phonograph to show sound movies. He develops a machine called the Kinetoscope to display films to individual viewers. The public refers to it as a "peep-show".

# Vintage Peep-show's

THE KISS



COCKFIGHT





## Edwin S. Porter



The filmmaker, Edwin S. Porter, working for the Edison Company, makes another great leap towards the understanding of filmmaking. In his short action films (a couple of minutes long) he starts moving his camera to push the action forward.

## Film Moving Away From Stage...

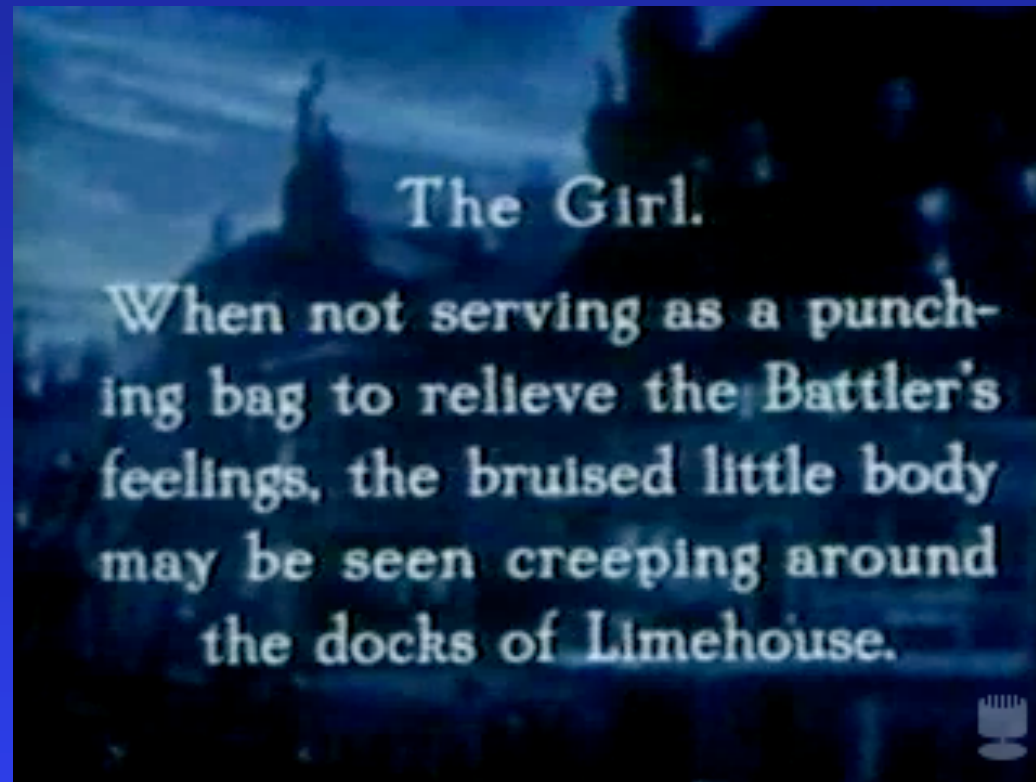
1. In order to create a realistic atmosphere in his film **THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN** (1903), he edited together a dramatized fire event with real galloping fireman carts that were shot in previous circumstances.
2. A year later, in his famous **THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY** (1904, the first western), he crosscut shots of separated locations into one coherent and fluid narrative. It's really hard to say how original Porter was in his innovations. In England, many of his colleagues were making similar achievements. Porter has become the more well known.

## THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (1904)



# CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

1908 - 1927



# D. W. Griffith

## “The First Total Film Director”



The man who took all these little steps in filmmaking up to now and transformed them into a march towards filmmaking as we know today it was, undoubtedly D. W. Griffith.

# D. W. Griffith

## “The First Total Film Director”

A former actor with Porter, Griffith started to direct his own films. After making hundreds of short films, from 1908 to 1915, he managed to master the language of narrative cinema and create his masterpiece epics **BIRTH OF A NATION** (1915) and **INTOLERANCE** (1916) that established cinema as the art of the 20th century.



# D. W. Griffith

## “The First Total Film Director”

1. Griffith's innovations in film language include..
  - Understanding the expressive power of close-ups.
  - Cutting between shots to suggest a metaphorical relationship.
  - The flashback.
  - Cross-editing to suggest parallel events.
  - Speeding the action by shortening the shots.
  - Refining action.
  - Realistic settings.
  - Changing lights to reflect the advancing day within narrative.
  - Expressive use of lighting.
  - The crane shot.
  - Exploiting camera angles.
  - Directing the scene in depth.
  - Creating historical films with thousands of extras.



# D. W. Griffith

## “The First Total Film Director”

1. Another contribution of D. W. to the history of cinema was the seriousness he brought upon filmmaking:
  - Subjects chosen for his films (well-known novels and historical events).
  - Use of his own biography as a source for his works.
  - Emphasis he put on casting his films.
  - The long rehearsals he made before shooting.
  - His efforts to supply his productions with big enough budgets that enabled him to avoid artistic compromise.
2. All these became the guidebook for every new director, in America and abroad, who wanted to be a film artist.

# Birth Of A Nation (1915)



# Musketeers of Pig Alley (1912)

- One of Griffith's early works.
- Introduces Lillian Gish, one of the worlds first great silent movie stars.
- Famous for it's documentary image of New York.
- One of his most popular films.
- Shot on location on West Twelfth Street and at the Biograph studios on East Fourteenth Street



## Post Griffith...

1. Following Griffith a number of new directors contribute to the growing industry that was expanding its base in Hollywood, California.
2. One of the most famous was a young immigrant from England called Charlie Chaplin, who, like Griffith, started as an actor and soon moved into directing. Chaplin's contribution to the development of film technique is of no importance, but his personality as an actor as well as a creator of films influenced the world of cinema around the world.

# Charlie Chaplin

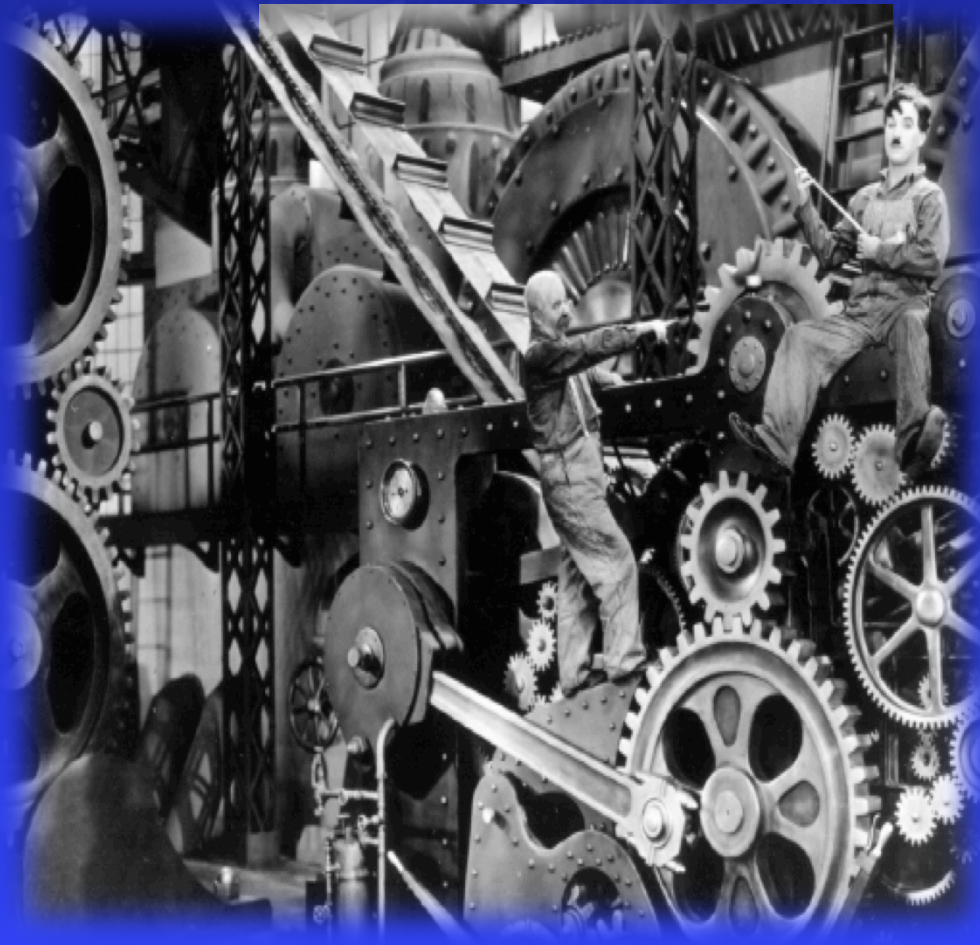
Producer, Writer, Director, Composer, and Star

Chaplin's Little Tramp character - always fighting against authority - became an anchor of identification for millions of audiences.



# Charlie Chaplin

Producer, Writer, Director, Composer, and Star



His comedy and satire proved perfect for the silent cinema. What's really fascinating is that while the greatest works of Griffith and others have lost their power through the years, Chaplin's films, such as **THE IMMIGRANT** (1917), **THE KID** (1921), and **THE GOLD RUSH** (1925) - to mention just the tip of the iceberg - are still fully fresh and capable of moving any public regardless of the cultural time gap.

## Note....

1. Hollywood in the 1920's is not only Griffith and Chaplin. Also check out...
  - Buster Keaton's comedies.
  - Erich Von Stroheim's carefully crafted melodramas.
  - Robert Flaherty's lyrical documentaries.
  - Cecil B. DeMille's spectacular use of *chiaroscuro* lighting (watch **THE CHEAT** - 1915). This film created the "Rembrandt" lighting style which greatly influenced the French Impressionistic filmmakers.
  - The film's of Douglas Fairbanks.



While American's were perfecting  
cinema as a popular art...

The European's were creating alternative film  
styles that would transform cinema from  
entertainment into art.

# FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM AND SURREALISM

1918 - 1930



# In France Two Major Film Movements Were Forming

## 1. French Impressionism

- An avant-garde style that operated very much within the film industry.

## 2. Surrealism

- A more radical avant-garde style that operated totally outside the film industry.

# FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM

## 1. Technological experiments:

- Abel Gance's, **NAPOLEAN** ((1927), experimented with new lenses creating a wide screen effect composed of three normal frames side by side. Gance sometimes used the effect to show a single huge expanse, or sometimes to put three distinct images side by side.

## 2. Subjective Camera Work

- Experimentation with frame mobility. They strapped the camera to anything that moved, even roller skates. If the camera was to represent a character's eyes, they wanted the camera to move with the ease of a person.

# FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM

- Abel Gance's, **NAPOLEAN** ((1927), experimented with new lenses creating a wide screen effect composed of three normal frames side by side. Gance sometimes used the effect to show a single huge expanse, or sometimes to put three distinct images side by side.



# FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM

1. Narrative Style:
  - Developed a psychological narrative representing the character's consciousness: inner action vs outer physical action.
2. Manipulation of plot and time:
  - The use of flashbacks to depict time; visualization of dreams, fantasies, and mental states.
3. Experimentation with a pronounced rhythmic editing to highlight violent or emotional turmoil.

French Impressionism greatly influenced the style of Hitchcock and American horror and film noir movies.

# SURREALISM

1. Created by a group of French artists and intellectuals exploring the possible links between cinema and the other arts.
2. The result was a series of films that created a dialogue with painting and music.
3. Surrealist cinema is overtly anti-narrative, eclectic, often influenced by Surrealist painting, and quite often shocking to the average viewer.



# SURREALISM

- Renee Clair and his Dadaist friends broke all narrative conventions in their slightly nonsensical but aggressive **ENTR'ACTE** (1924)
- Fernand Leger made **BALLET MECHANIQUE** (1924) in which he put together cinematic material as he would do in his cubist works of art.

# SURREALISM

- Louis Bunuel collaborated with Salvador Dali in their scandalous film **UN CHIEN ANDALOU** (1928). The film starts with the most shocking metaphor of film history, a razor cutting through a human eye followed by a series of disturbing images of sex and cultural decay. Later we see the hero dragging two pianos, stuffed with dead donkeys, across a parlor.
- In Bunuels's **L'Age d'Or** (1930) a women obsessively begins sucking the toes of a statue.
- Many Surrealist films tease us to find a narrative logic that just isn't there. Causality is as evasive as in a dream. Events are juxtaposed solely for their disturbing effect.

# SURREALISM

UN CHIEN ANDALOU (1928)



# GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

1919 - 1928



# GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

1. Greater attention given to sets and lighting.
2. Created films that are seen today as the prototype for such genres as horror and science fiction films.

# GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

- Fritz Lang's **METROPOLIS** (1926).
- A morality tale set in a future city fully erected in front of the camera - it's impression to be equaled only 55 years later in **BLADE RUNNER**.



# GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

- F. W. Murnau made use of the cinematic language to create his distorted world.
  - In his **NOSFERATU** (1922) he used negative stock, fast motion, fades and moving shadows to create a mystical world dominated by vampires. (70 yrs later Coppola used some of Murnau's devices in his **DRACULA**.)
- Murnau's **THE LAST LAUGH** is the story of an old but proud doorman who is forced to work in the hotel lavatories.
  - The entire film is told with no interstitials and the camera is constantly moving, creating amazing cinematic metaphors mirroring the inner state of mind of the main character.



# SOVIET MONTAGE

1924 - 1930



# Sergei Eisenstein

The grand father of modern editing

## MONTAGE THEORY

Created a whole style of directing that is just as important today as it was revolutionary back then

# SOVIET MONTAGE

- The Soviet Montage style began with Lev Kuleshov's experiments at the State School on Cinema Art in Lenin's Moscow.
- Kuleshov performed a series of experiments by editing footage from different sources into a whole that creates an impression of continuity.
- They believed the artistic instance of creating a film lies in the editing room.

# SOVIET MONTAGE

- Montage theory explained:
  - If shot A and shot B are shown juxtaposed to one another, they will form an entirely new idea in the viewers mind.
  - When shots A and B are edited together, you end up with  $A + B = C$ , where C is a completely new idea or emotion.

# SOVIET MONTAGE

## Sergei Eisenstein

1. Sergei Eisenstein perfected the montage style in the film **BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN** (1925), mainly in the Odessa steps sequence where he constructed the massacre of a huge crowd.
2. By editing dozens and dozens of fragmented shots together he created a shocking conglomerate of horror.



# SOVIET MONTAGE

## Sergei Eisenstein

1. Eisenstein suggested making a movie has nothing to do with following a protagonist around with a camera, (like most modern Hollywood movies), but rather a movie is a succession of images juxtaposed so that the contrast between these images moves the story forward in the mind of the audience.
2. Eisenstein's theory on montage editing is the key twentieth-century technology for creating fake realities. Montage theory can be still seen in today's TV commercials and music videos.
3. Montage is NOT a succession of quick edits, which has become the norm in the MTV age.

# Odessa Steps sequence

Battleship Potemkin (1925)





# Homage to Eisenstein



A simple theoretical overview:  
Film styles can be broken into two categories

- Directing Styles Relying on Editing to Tell the Story
  - Logic of the Interested Observer
  - Invisible Editing
  - Subjective Style
  - Montage
- Directing Styles Not Relying on Editing
  - Mis-En-Scene
  - Fluid Camera

# SOVIET MONTAGE

## Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye



In Vertov's hands montage becomes a key technology for ideological manipulation, through its use in propaganda films, documentaries, news, commercials etc.

# SOVIET MONTAGE

## Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye

1. In his news program **KINO-PRAVDA**, (“Cinema-Truth”) Dziga gives an example of the power of montage editing. He called it “truth through perception...”
  - The bodies of the people's heroes are being lowered into the graves - (filmed in Astrakhan, 1918)
  - The graves are being covered with dirt - (Kronshtad, 1921)
  - Gun salute (Petrograd, 1920)
  - Eternal memory, people take off their hats - (Moscow, 1922)
2. Vertov believed film could overcome its indexical nature through montage, by presenting a viewer with objects that never existed in reality.

# CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD AFTER SOUND

Royal Wedding, Stanley Donan, 1951



# The Hollywood Factory...

1. During the 30's Hollywood studios grew bigger and bigger producing films as if they were industrial commodities. With the coming of sound, a new genre was born - the musical. **TOP HAT** (1935) and the Busby Berkley extravaganzas set the standard for all musicals to come.
2. The other dominate genre of the times was the gangster movie, **SCARFACE**, **LITTLE CAESAR**, and **THE PUBLIC ENEMY**.
3. Despite the dominance of the big studios and their stars the real work was done by the film directors.
4. What followed was three decades of the finest American films one can dream of. These are the years of **KING KONG** and Clark Gable, **IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT** and Marlene Dietrich - the list is endless.

## Hollywood...

- 1. Howard Hawks, John Ford, and Alfred Hitchcock made masterpieces that stood high above the average films of their time and yet appealed to a mass audience.**



# Hollywood...

**1. John Ford told his stories mainly through his much loved genre, “the western.”**

- Stagecoach (39)
- The Searchers ((56)
- Grapes of Wrath (40)
- How Green Was My Valley (41)
- The Quiet Man (52)



# Hollywood...

**1. Hawks perfected narrative structure in his films, which varied in their genres but always told stories of professionalism and friendship.**

- **Scarface (32)**
- **Bringing Up Baby (38)**
- **The Big Sleep (46)**
- **Red River (48)**
- **The Big Sky (52)**



# Hollywood...



- Frank Capra captured on film the myth of America, stressing such traditions of Americana as good neighborliness, faith in God, committed leadership and family values
- He championed middle-class ideals as hard-work, Christian values, frugality, generosity and wit.

*It's A Wonderful Life (1946)*

# Hollywood...

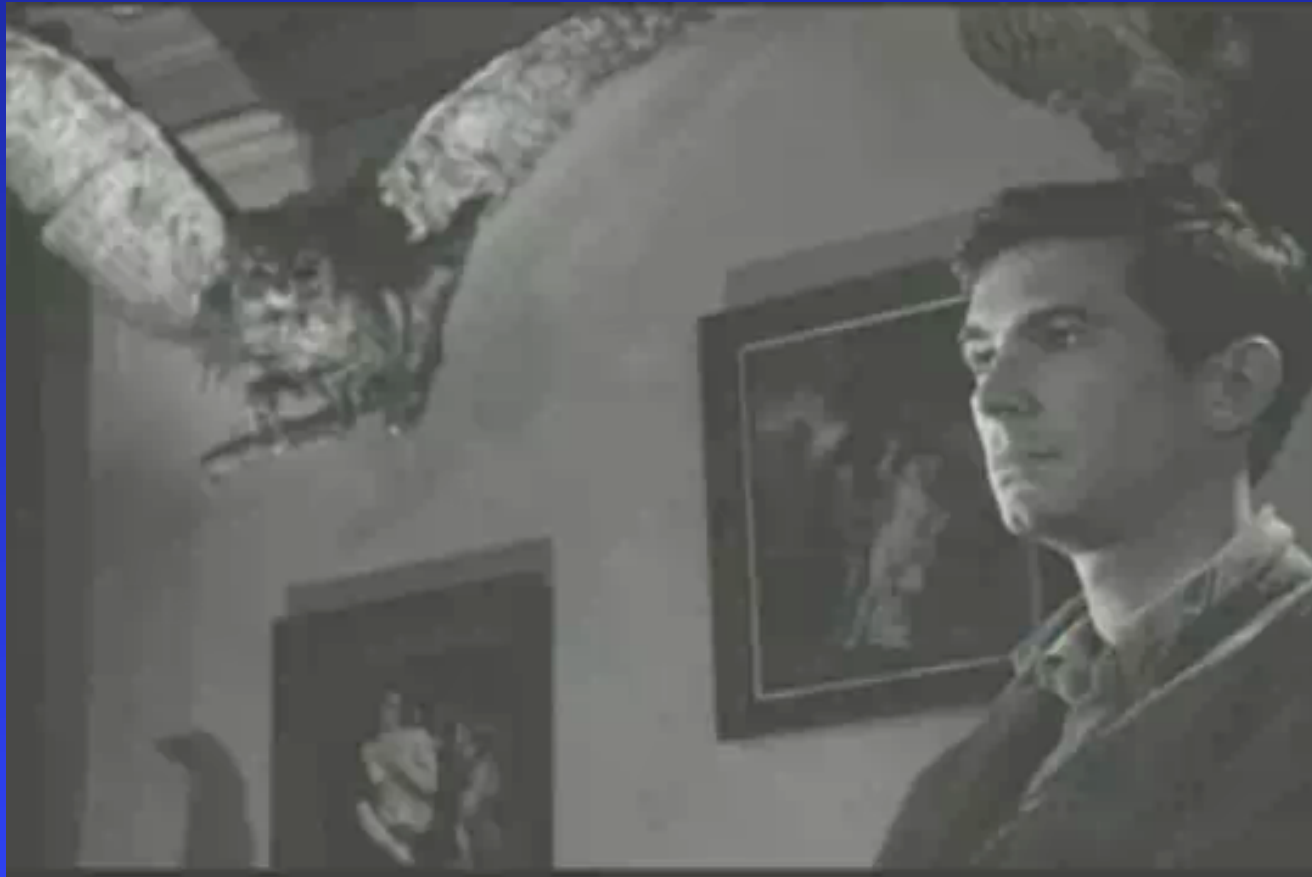
Hitchcock produced a long series of suspense and horror movies.

He combined ideas from the Soviet Montage editing style with German Expressionism, creating dark atmospheres.



**“If you want to learn how to make films only by watching them, see all of Hitchcock’s films - they’re an index to the whole film technique. Then watch all of Chaplin’s films and you’ll know all there is to know about content.”**

**Anonymous**



## Back In Europe...

- The Nazis in Germany were making propaganda movies as a preparatory brainwashing for future atrocities.
- They take Vertov's idea of "truth through perception"... and perfected it, albeit, for evil.
- If they could sell Hitler to the German public and the world as a benevolent ruler, a god descending from the skies, they could sell ice to Eskimos.
- Advertising agencies today use much the same form and technique to sell product - in fact, the ad agency mantra of today is "perception is reality".

# Back In Europe...



- In France a new style developed called “Poetic Realism” - a combination of a direct approach to life with a need for lyricism and beauty. Jean Renoir developed a technique for keeping his characters in focus along the depth of his shots. He preferred the in-frame action to the editing, his takes were long and the camera followed action. His *LA GRANDE ILLUSION* (1937) and *THE RULES OF THE GAME* (1939) are among the finest works of wit, elegance and humanism.



# Viva Italia...

## NEO-REALISM



Out of the ruins of World War II emerged an Italian film movement called Neo-Realism. Directors like Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica rejected the studio method of shooting film. They embraced the light hand-held camera, low budgets, non-professional actors, open narratives, stories of workers, farmers and partisans.

*Rome Open City (Rossellini)*

# Viva Italia...

## NEO-REALISM



Neo-Realism influenced filmmakers around the world. The French filmmakers of the 60's adopted many techniques from their style. The great Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray shot all his films in the Neo-Realistic manner. Many American directors started shooting their films out in the streets of the big cities for realistic purposes and for rougher political impact.

# FILM NOIR

Film Noir was a label given by French critics to the dominant American film style of the era.

Combined German Expressionism's dark stories and disturbing compositions, with pulp fiction detective stories.

A renewed interest in street life created by the Neo-Realists, and a general pessimistic and cynical mood which had crept into American society after the war.



# FILM NOIR



1. Characteristics of Film Noir style:
  - Contrasty lighting.
  - Oblique camera angles.
  - Claustrophobic framing.
  - A repeating use of mirrors and water.
  - A nonchronological narrative and the use of voiceover narration.

# FILM NOIR

1. Orson Welles, at the the age of 25, makes his monumental film **CITIZEN KANE** (1941), in which he develops several f the future characteristics of the Noir style. Welles is always remembered more for his multiple innovations of film language than for establishing the Noir style.

# CITIZEN KANE (1941)



Welles's cinematic innovations include:

- His investigation into the depth of focus.
- His striking visual metaphors created through the placement of characters within meticulously studied sets and compositions.
- His creation of overlapping dialogue.
- The low angle shooting and presence of ceilings in frames.
- And of course, his seemingly effortless acting style best presented by his own appearances in his films.

# French New Wave

- Characteristics of this film movement include:
  - Low budget productions
  - The use of light hand-held cameras.
  - Shooting in the busy streets of Paris.
  - Improvising dialogue.
  - Breaking all of the editing rules that had been established to date.
    - Breathless, Godard uses the 'jump-cut' to truncate and dissect linear time. In other films he uses excessively long tracking shots to stretch time.
- Content for NewWave films varies between artists but they all carried a fresh vibration of youth and were soaked with love for cinema heritage.



# French New Wave

The New Wave directors included Truffaut, Godard, Alain Resnais, Claude Chabrol, Louis Malle, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette.

## Breathless



# French New Wave Influences

- The influence of the French New Wave was carried all over Europe and took a different shape in each country.
  - In England it was the angry “New Cinema”.
  - In Poland the Lodz film school produced several generations of new filmmakers who would dare to touch new subjects and new forms of filmmaking (Roman Polanski’s **KNIFE IN THE WATER**).
  - Czech filmmakers created a whole series of successful films dealing with ordinary life in comical ways.
  - Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union were producing cutting edge movies exploring social and political issues within new narrative structures.

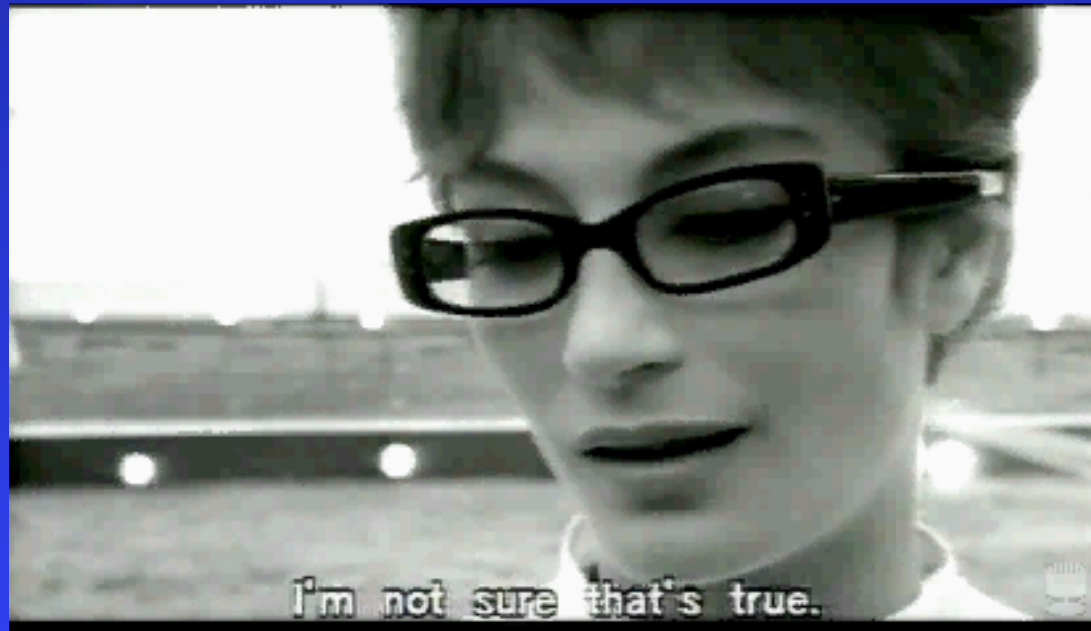
# Cinema Italiano

- The leading country of the 60's was Italy. Led by Federico Fellini, Italian filmmakers were reinventing cinema.
  - They experimented with narrative structures.



# Cinema Italiano

In 8-1/2 (1962) Fellini constantly moves from one level of consciousness to another without alerting the viewer.



# Cinema Italiano

- They tried to understand and explore the neuroses of their urban modern heroes. Michelangelo Antonioni's **RED DESERT** (1964) is a work of art in the psychology of color.



# Cinema Italiano

- They blended the style of Neo-Realism with lyricism and religion (Pier Paolo Pasolini's, **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW** (1964).
- They adapted the New Wave technique to create a political cinema. Bernardo Bertolucci's, **THE CONFORMIST** (1970) & Francesco Rossi's **CHRIST STOPPED AT EBOLI** (1979)
- They even invented a new style of Western (Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Western Trilogy starring Clint Eastwood).

# IN SWEDEN...



- In Ingmar Bergman's cinema, (THE SEVENTH SEAL, PERSONA, FANNY AND ALEXANDER, storytelling focuses on the search for meaning in life, the spirit and the human condition. This search takes many forms, but the common thread is the reflective presentation of emotional angst and human suffering



# *Persona*, Bergman





## IN JAPAN...

- Akira Kurosawa's films gained remarkable success and attention from Hollywood directors. Many directors working in the Western genre in the sixties borrowed from Kurosawa's extensively. The Hollywood Western, **THE MAGNIFICANT SEVEN** (1960), was a direct rip-off of Kurosawa's **SEVEN SAMURAI** (1954).
- American filmmakers treated films like **RASHOMON** (1951) and **SEVEN SAMURAI** (1954) like a bible for structure, presentation, editing and story content. Long shots, grand landscapes and snappy direction of action sequences were particularly important.
- **RASHOMON** (1951) is a remarkable exploration of memory and time. If you think **MEMENTO** (2001) was good, watch this one.

## IN JAPAN...

- Yasujiro Ozu - Another remarkable Japanese filmmaker with a very different style then Kurosawa



# The New Wave's Impact on American Cinema

- In the late 60's and into the 70's a number of filmmakers went back to the old genres and revised them according to the New Wave spirit.
  - **BONNIE AND CLYDE** (1997), directed by Arthur Penn was much more than a regular gangster film. It was a sophisticated study of violence and romance in American society and the two characters became revolutionary cult figures.
  - Stanley Kubrick's **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** pushed the science fiction genre into the realm of philosophy.
  - Other filmmakers revising old genres were **Robert Altman**, **Frances Ford Coppola**, **Sam Peckinpah**, **Scorsese**, et al.

# The Economic Factor

## The Hollywood Blockbuster....

- In the 70's and into the 80's another kind of film genre dominates world cinema - The Blockbuster.
- The success of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg changes every studio's idea of what a movie should do in terms of **investment vs return**.
  - It ruined the modest expectations of the movie business. Now every studio film is designed to be a blockbuster.
- The search for the next mega blockbuster becomes the new Hollywood religion and the “formula movie” the way to salvation.

# The Blockbuster

- Up until the 1960's studio movies were put together from the inside out. A producer, (Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B Mayer, David O. Selznick), would select a script first or have one written, then hand-pick the director, actors, cinematographer, etc.
- Blockbusters are assembled from the outside in.
  - They may originate because of a studios need, e.g., a big movie for Christmas or Fourth of July or based on genre trends Romantic Comedy, Horror, (Remakes).
  - This followed by prepackaging - lumping together actors, directors, writers, musicians - recognizable, big names that can be counted on to attract audiences in a global marketing campaign.
  - Not just for the screen but for brand placement from toys at McDonalds, paraphernalia in retail stores to clothing and food endorsements.

# The Blockbuster

- Sometimes the Blockbuster script is the last thing Hollywood focuses on.
- Everything is based on personality, what genre/theme/type of action, cutting style or SFX is currently popular with the audience right now.
- Often results in “high concept” scripts, super heroes, cardboard characters, nonstop ultra-fast paced action, and a sound track of current Top Ten music.
- In it's most commercial form, it's purpose is not only to make a film but to generate a short-lived but omnipresent brand name whose contents can be exploited in as many venues as possible.

# Hollywood Trivia

- .“While Tom Cruise, Christian Bale, Kidman, etc., are paid millions for their participation in a film, only 12% of the actors registered in Hollywood find work in any given year and barely 10% of the lucky ones earn more than \$5,000 a year.” (Frank & Cook, *The Winner Take All Society*)
- For Hollywood, the model of huge stars, the big script, state-of-the-art technology, the 100+ million dollar budget, and the ubiquitous advertising campaign makes very good economic business sense.
- For true ‘independents’ at home and abroad this Hollywood model has been devastating. They can’t compete with the huge marketing muscle of Hollywood and the spectacle of extravaganza blockbusters. Smaller films with personal integrity/story have a harder time reaching an audience....hence making money.

# The Blockbuster

- On the one hand..... when real talent meets the Hollywood formula, the public gains such masterpieces as **BLADE RUNNER, TERMINATOR, ALIENS, STAR WARS, BATMAN, LORD OF THE RINGS, etc..**
- However... the formula for many blockbusters is:
  - Great spectacular special effects.
  - One-dimensional characters.
  - Story is weak, confusing or non-existing.
  - Lots of 'eye-candy' with about as much substance as a TV commercial selling a product.



# CURRENTLY...

- Within this current phase of commercial noisy filmmaking there are some innovative filmmakers:
  - Woody Allen, Spike Lee, John Sayles!!, Quentin Tarantino?, David Lynch!!, Wim Wenders!!, Tim Burton??, Jim Jarmusch!!, Martin Scorsese!?, Mike Leigh!! (SECRETS AND LIES), Ken Loach (RIFF RAFF), Danny Boyle (TRAINSPOTTING), Peter Jackson!!, Warchoski Brothers!??, Atom Egoyan!!, Todd Haynes!!, Coen Brothers!?, Kevin Smith??, Oliver Stone!?! , etc...

## A Hollywood producer's advice to a young writer

Producer

This film business is a winner-take-all jungle. The competition will kill you dead if you let them. You wanna succeed in this business you gotta make films that excite people. Always, I mean always aim for the senses. That's the most important thing.

Writer

...and story, of course.

Producer

Yea, stories are OK when you need them.

Writer

.... and intellect.

Producer

Intellect? (*incredulously*) Intellect-Schmintellect

Who needs it?

We're talkin' movies here... not books!

# The Rise of the Cinema of Experience

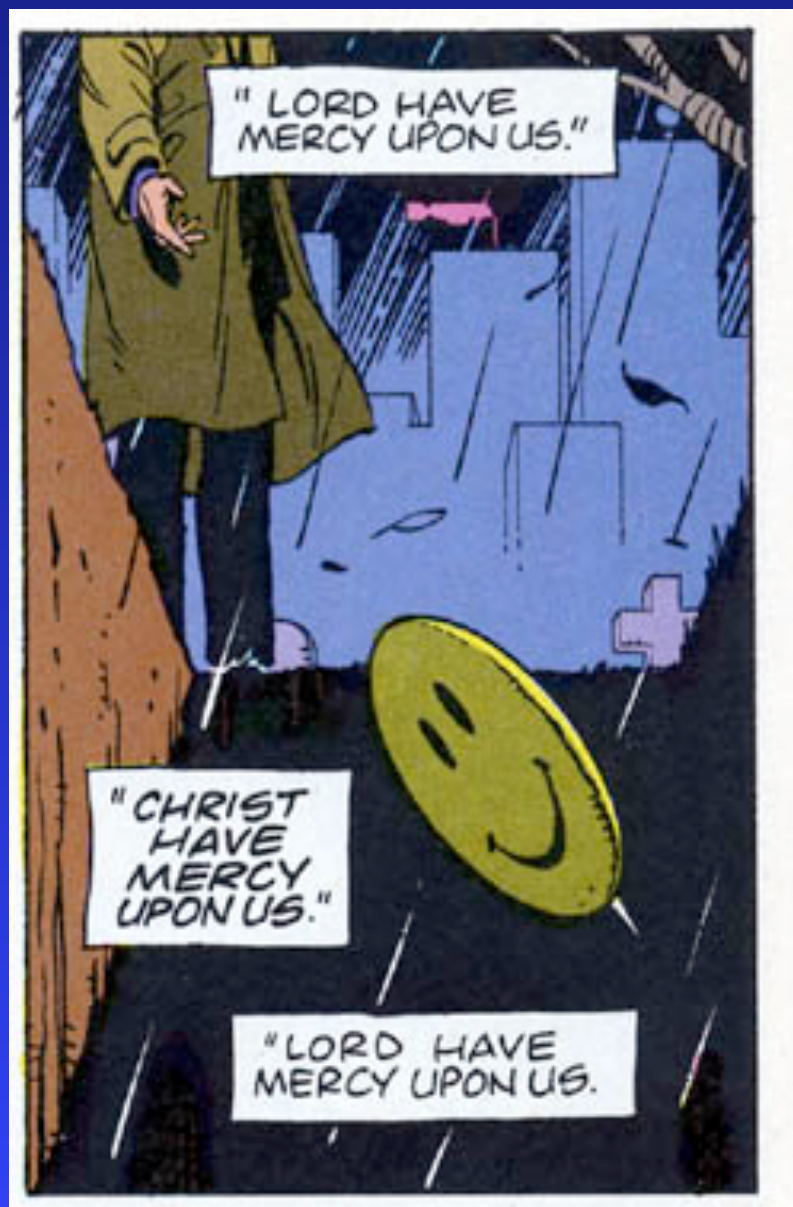
- How was this achieved?
  - **Action!**
- Basic film techniques that give the visual jolt needed to grab your attention;
  - *motion within the frame*
  - *camera movement*
  - *rapid editing*

# Too much is never enough!

- Since 1980's mass-audience pictures gravitated toward ever more exaggerated presentations of momentary effects.
  - Comedy ex: If a car's about to crash, everyone stares at the camera and shriek in concert.
  - Action movies shift from slo-mo to reverse-mo, all stitched together by ramping.
  - Extreme high/low angles, used in 1940's noir films, were picked up in comics influencing movies.
  - Action movies love to fly things at us, and thanks to surround sound we can hear them after they pass.
  - It's not enough to see a bullet or an arrow simply fired - the camera has to ride the projectile to its destination.

What do images such as this remind us of?





# This is your brain on movies....

- The emotional investment
  - First, there is the interest in the diegetic action: what is happening to the protagonist, how much danger is involved, how will everything turn out.
- The physiological response
  - For the eye, a series of quick responses to multiple stimuli triggers a physiological reaction.
  - A flurry of visual activity punches the optic nerves all the way to the cortex.
  - Our heartbeat quickens, eyes strain and stretch, eyebrows raise, blood pressure goes up, muscles jump and shiver -
  - End result is a physiological thrill/rush.

## Optic Nerve Punch

- As a result of this twin maneuvering, the physiological identification with the character in danger is intensified by a **visceral** reaction based on the quickening of the stimuli.
- But, whereas the first response benefits from careful character conditioning and narrative buildup, and is thus dependent on the craft of the filmmakers, the payoff of the second is fully automatic in nature: **one has no choice but to react.**



# Cinema's hijacking of the eyes

- In classical cinema, camera movement and action scenes were used as visual punctuation between more sedate, but longer, narrative segments.
- In film today motion of one type or another is added at any time to spice up a shot. (*BOUND* example)



# Cinema's hijacking of the eyes

- Viewers are taken on a totally arbitrary but irresistible ride through space.
  - The faster the motion, the quicker the reaction by the eyes.
  - The eyes have no choice but to respond to the visual changes.
  - They are engaged independently from the mind which reacts by storing story and characters on the back burner.
  - The more rapid visual activity, the less time the mind has for ordinary mental activity.

# Accomplices > witnesses = ENGAGEMENT

- The key factor is that spectators are made to participate and become accomplices of the action rather than witnesses...

ONE YEAR LATER

# Result

- Aesthetic distance has been eliminated.
- For directors, this means being in charge of a roller coaster, and their talent is now gauged in terms of their ability to produce as many thrills as possible.
- For audiences today, different kinds of filmmaking, say *Secret and Lies*, Mike Leigh, 1996; *There Will Be Blood*, P.T. Anderson, 2007; *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick, 1968, seem slow, dull, uneventful.

# Cinema Today

- Many movies today are entirely driven by visual stimuli which mesmerizes and keeps audiences coming back for more.
- Rock videos rely on these same techniques... capturing the attention of a younger audience and redefining visual style for the rest of the industry in the process.

# MTV - The New Cinema

- That the superb imagery of rock videos fails to question reality in the way its prime movers, surrealism or expressionism did, remains unimportant for an audience with no memory or knowledge of these original movements.
- Rock videos have preempted the need for a real avant-garde.
- A dose of MTV fills up whatever urge one may have for a different sort of visual exploration.



A hundred years after cinema's birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, of structuring time, of narrating a story, of linking one experience to the next, have become the basic means by which we communicate in any form of media.



# The Next New Movement????

Cinema is Dead...  
Long Live Cinema!