*The Cutting Edge – the Magic of Movie Editing*

At first there were no editors – men filmed until bored or the film ran out.

Edwin Porter, an Edison worker, realized that cutting shots together could make a story (fire story – 1903). People understood that two scenes were connected. Porter’s 11 minutes short The Great Train Robbery helped film take off as entertainment.

EDITING CAN:

1. Connect time periods
2. Slow down or speed up time’s passage
3. Startle or amuse
4. Shape the audience’s response

(Wouldn’t we like to edit our own lives? –cut out the bad and linger on the best?)

1900-1990 linear editing – cutting and pasting actual rolls of photographic film stock

1990’s Digital editing – using computers to grab images.

One frame counts as 1/24 of a second) 24 frames per second. (Terminator experiment by James cameron)

200 hours of film shot on average for a 2 hour completed film.

Editors cut out LOTS of shot footage

D.W. Griffith – Birth of a Nation (1915) director – knew the psychological importance of editing. Used closeups, flashbacks and masked some of the cuts (seamless editing)

Editing called “the invisible art” because it is often unnoticed.

Editors work very closely with directors – they have to know what the director wants in the film, what the vision is.

Editing is the final part of a very long process – Financing, scripting, casting, rehearsing, shooting, editing.

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The Russians – using film to sway the illiterate masses to political views.

Eisenstein reveled in his cuts – made audience aware they were viewing film.

The Battleship Potemkin - propaganda – manipulated audience by editing

Actor looking – Hunger (soup) sorrow (widow at casket) tenderness ( girl with toy) by juxtaposing images.

Compare “Odessa Steps” technique to editing in The Untouchables

ACTION

Editing can build suspense or create a rhythm of peaks and valleys of action- use a variety of shots & timing.

“successful editors are sly politicians” – they can change a film to promote their own ideas and values.

Editing can cause OR fix continuity problems in a film.

SUSPENSE

“Suspense is an expression of fear” editing can build suspense by *withholding* information.

People hate to NOT know where they are going—Silence of the Lambs - infra-red.

Editing takes time & time is precious -- “I don’t want it good, I want it yesterday” Producer Jack Warner

First editors were women – cutting & pasting was like sewing or knitting.

Margaret Booth- Head editor at MGM for 30 years- feared & powerful – “gut with your gut” = cut with your emotions

When sound was introduced, editing became more “technical” & more men became editors.

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**Editing Performances**

Editors control a performance – can take the best part of various takes to give the finest overall scenes.

Editors almost never let performers in the cutting room. Many don’t even want to know the actors, see them during rehearsals or shooting, or socialize with them until after the film is finished. This is so they will not be affected by anything put the acting caught on film.

**Editing Formula – following the “rules”**

Establishing shot

Long shot

Two shot

Single shot

Closeup

Use dissolves to change scenes

**Breaking the Rules** – Europe-“New Wave Cinema” Breathless (1959) France challenged invisible editing

Broke the rules of continuity, screen direction, length of shot

Hollywood begins to break the rules – Bonnie & Clyde 1967

Easy Rider 1969 –flash forward & flash back – Young crew -“You can’t edit

when you are stoned – it was garbage”

New Wave too “hip for some” –

Martin Scorsese - He likes tradition- take time to see images, use pauses

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*Sex Scenes –*

Editing varies by taste, mood, ratings

Eroticism – what you imagine vs Pornography – what you actually see

Out of Sight (Clooney & Lopez) stops a few frames, builds sexual tension

**TV influences** –audiences process information & images faster

Editors need to know when NOT to cut – when to let the scene roll

George Lucas- “editors are always bumping up against new technology”

(new colors of blue, new types of paint, new SFX) He edits in 3-D

Editors can come upon cool transitions accidentally –

Helicopter to ceiling fan in Apocalypse Now

“Editors have emerged from the back room to be more respected & powerful.”

What was once a simple 3 or 4 cuts can now be 200 split-seconds cuts (Gladiator fight)

BUT REMEMBER- “It’s all about the ***story***, not the tools.”