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Chapter 9 – Cinematography:

Sight & Sound – Quiz

1. Describe the basic duties of a DP. Explain the difference between a director of photography and a cinematographer.

The DP (Director of Photography) is in charge of getting the right picture at its highest quality. A cinematographer does all the camera work. This person operates the cameras and gets guidance from the DP on the image/quality of the picture.

1. What jobs comprise the director of photography’s crew? What are the duties of each member of his team?

There is a camera operator, 1st assistant camera operator (focus puller) and 2nd camera assistant (clapper/loader) that make up a DP’s crew. The camera operator is the main person who works the camera filming the subject, while the 1st assistant keeps a close eye on the monitor to make sure the subject does not get out of focus, and the 2nd assistant helps prep everything and sets up the next shot with the clapper.

1. Why is depth perception important when lighting an actor?

Depth perception is important because it gives the audience the ability to see other things around the subject. They do not only see one thing on the screen and/or the subject blending in with everything around it. With depth perception, the filmmakers have to create that foreground and background distinguishable for their audience, and they do so through lighting.

1. What are the three main lights used in cinematography? How are they used together to create “the visual image”?

The three main lights used in cinematography are the key, fill and backlights. Starting off with getting the key light, this is what lights up the subject’s face taking away all the shadows and giving it a flat look. The fill lights give back that shadow back onto the subject’s nose or brow. By using the backlights, it helps separate the subject from the background allowing the eye to see that kind of separation on screen. With all these elements, it helps create that visual image, and an important tip about lighting up a subject is to make sure you see those dots from the light in their eyes to bring out a more human look to the 2D face onscreen.

1. What is the difference between tungsten incandescents and HMIs? What is the purpose of each?

Tungsten incandescents give a more yellow light and are used more with inside filming whereas with the HMIs, they give a blue light and are mainly used outside. Both lights are used to set the mood and theme of the picture.

1. What are some of the other tools a director of photography will use to create lighting effects?

Some other tools the DP may use to manipulate the lighting are gels which change or give a more distinctive color to the background and/or subject, or scrims that are mainly made out of fabric which help diffuse a light making it less bright. They can pattern a light (cucolorises) with different scrims which are usually sheets of wood, plastic or fabric that will pattern the light to give that look of branches in the window, blinds, or any kind of other design.

Another tool to help with the lighting is to use a bounce to which bounces the light in another direction. Bounces are big pieces of reflective foam, a shiny piece of plastic or mirrors. These are mainly used outside to reflect away the sunlight.

1. What are the different parts of a camera?

There are many different parts to a camera. One would be the lens which is a piece of metal or plastic that encases a series of glass discs. Lens sizes can range from 10mm (fisheye lens) to 50mm (human eye) and as big as 200 mm which would be able to distinguish a nostril with great detail.

Filters can also be used that are placed in front of the lens to change the setting or color. Some have used a darker lens to shoot in the day time to create that night time look when shooting during the day.

With so many cameras out there, it is merely impossible to learn every aspect of each camera. There are basic settings that each camera has that have been standardized such as lenses, filters, and the aspect ratios.

1. Why is “vetting” your DP so important? When vetting him, what characteristics are you looking for? What do you want to avoid?

Vetting your DP is important because you need to make sure your DP will follow your image of what you want in your picture. You want to find a DP that is smart, creative, experienced and competent it what he/she does. You should check out their previous work and go through a couple references to see how they worked and to get an idea about their working styles.

You should avoid working with DPs who will not listen to your idea, those who have their own image of what they want to portray in the picture. There will be arguments made because of the difference of opinions you will have with your DP, but they must realize that it is your picture that is being created and not theirs.

1. What is the most important quality of a camera?

The most important quality of a camera is knowing how to use it. This piece of equipment allows you to place an image onscreen, and when done so, you want it to look its best.

1. What is a lens and what is its primary purpose?

The primary purpose of the lens is to create a sharp image of the subject being filmed onto the focal plane. Each lens has a focusing ring that helps the photographer choose what to focus on.

1. What is focal length and what does it affect?

Focal length is the distance between the lens to the film. This affects which lens should be placed in front of the camera to get the best picture.

1. What is controlled by the iris?

Light is controlled by the iris (diaphragm). It determines whether the picture will look brighter or darker in the film.

1. What does the shutter control?

The shutter controls the amount of time light is exposed to the film.

1. In your own words, why is well executed sound important?

Well executed sound is important because it coincides with your image. If you have bad sound but a good image, the film will not work and you will have to go back and reshoot the scenes. Another option is to try and make the sound better by using certain pieces of software, but sometimes the sound is so forgone that there will be no other option but to reshoot.

1. Who generally comprises a sound crew?

A sound crew will consist of a mixer, boom operator and one or two assistants. The audio crew usually has the least amount of people.

1. Why does the mixer need to make sure levels are kept within a proper range?

If the level is too high, the sound may get distorted and difficult to fix in post-production. It is better to have the sound a little lower than usual than having it too high, because it is easier to fix a low level sound in post-production versus sound that is too high to adjust.

1. What are the tasks of a sound assistant?

A sound assistant has various jobs. One is being in charge of placing the mic onto the actor and making sure they get it back after the shoot is finished.

1. What is time code used for?

A time code is used for showing the director which shots were taken at that certain time along with the sound. It is also used by the editor to sync the video and sound.