

THE TECHNIQUES OF CREATIVE FILM EDITING

(Part 2)

The mechanics of editing both picture and sound films and how they are conformed to produce the end result—the final release print.

IN THE INTRODUCTORY article on this subject, which appeared in the February issue, we discussed the matter of good judgment in creative film editing. We now come to the important phase of the procedure—the actual mechanics of editing.

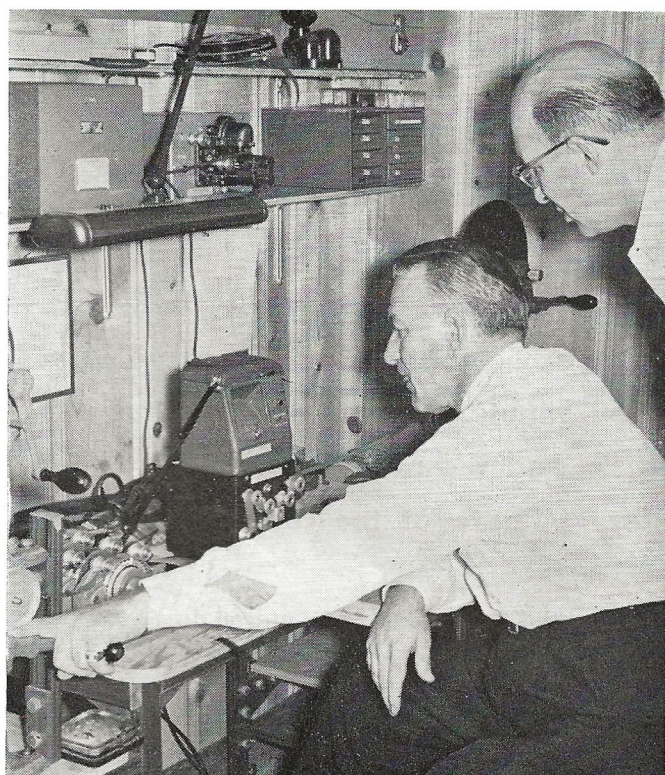
A salient point made in one of the original articles on this subject published in a recent issue of Calvin Productions' workshop publication, *The Aperture*, is that once the photography of a production has been processed, and the best takes combined, work-printed and edge-numbered, the all-important original film should be carefully labeled and stored—and not touched again until the entire film is ready for conforming.

The workprint is then broken down by scenes and rearranged in sequence with the script. Now, the real work starts with the rough assembly of the film. This involves:—trimming,

- reading against,
- trimming,
- reading against,
- trimming,
- etc., until you are satisfied

that the show is ready for narration. The optical effects are then marked on the workprint, the narration script cue-marked and the narration recorded.

The narration track is transferred to sprocketed 16mm magnetic film, rough-matched to the workprint, and interlocked. The show is now ready for final polishing, which usually involves sliding nar-



AFTER THE WORK PRINT is broken down by scenes and arranged in sequence according to the script, the next step is rough assembly of the film. One method of selecting the best takes is to run them through a viewer at the same time the sound track film is running through a reader.

ration to some extent and trimming the workprint. The workprint is now interlocked again, for approval, and if there are no additional changes, music is recorded—then the music, narration, and sound effects are mixed and transferred.

At this point the original film is taken from the vault for conforming with the workprint; the printing sound track and the optical effects traveling mattes are synced, cleaned, printed, processed and projected.

Now we are looking at the “answer print.”

Methods of Selecting Best Takes

The most satisfactory method of selecting the best takes is to have a script girl on location during production. Here the script girl keeps track of the decisions made by the director and cameraman at the time of shooting. From the selections she has indicated on the take sheet the editor will be better able to pull the best scenes for workprinting.


Another method, although much more time consuming, is for the director to look at the original on a viewer (*one certain not to scratch!*). He must also listen to the sound takes and make selections.

A third alternative—less satisfactory and certainly more expensive—is to have all of the original film work-printed. In this instance the director would again have to view the workprint and select the takes to be used.

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Impossible location. Dark office, smooth walls, no stands, 10 min. to light. Taped 1st light on wood panel for key; 2nd on plaster beam for top light; set 3rd on shelf for back light; hung 4th on door hinge for background light; clamped 5th on tripod for fill. Time: 9½ minutes! Used Lowel-Light Kit — of course.

HOW TO SHOOT A V.I.P.



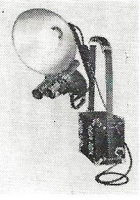
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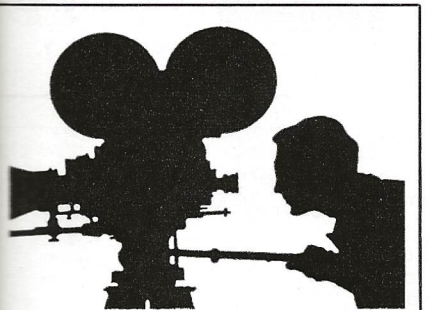
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FILM EDITING

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Workprinting

The film laboratory, when making workprints, always gives them the standard printing exposure so the cameraman and director can judge whether the original film was normally exposed in the camera. Thus, dark scenes in the workprint will indicate underexposure, and vice-versa.

While it is cheaper to order a black-and-white workprint on a show, "hot" frames, edge-flare, and slight color or exposure shifts are hard to detect in a black-and-white workprint, and this often makes it inadvisable. A color workprint also enables the director to determine color balance in the various scenes of original.

Ink printed edge numbers afford the most rapid means of conforming originals to the edited workprint. With this method the original and workprint both have the same consecutive numbers printed at one-foot intervals—in exact sync—for easy identification and conformation. Of course, the original and workprint must be edge-numbered before any cutting is done on the workprint.

Manufacturer's print-through numbers on original film are difficult and sometimes impossible to read. In addition, these print-through numbers jump from roll to roll.

Rough Cut

Through the assembly of the workprint scenes in the order they are to be used, the editor begins to get a hint of the problems ahead in editing, a preview of the finished product, a suggestion of the weak areas, and an indication of the show's length. At this point continuity problems ahead in editing become obvious and extra footage and repetitious scenes may be duly noted and discarded. Major shifts in the subject matter will point to a need for optical effects.

After the tangible alterations have been made, the narration should be read while the rough cut is projected; this will enable the director to determine if there is enough appropriate photography to cover each narrative thought.

At this point some directors prefer to record the narration to the rough cut workprint and then trim both the

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picture and sound track together. This method gives the narrator some flexibility in his rate of delivery. If the narration is extremely tight (continuous), this is considered to be the best method.

If there is considerably more picture than narration, the best remedy is to trim the workprint, then re-read the script during projection. This cycle is repeated until the director is satisfied that all superfluous picture material has been removed. Where narration reads too long for a given sequence, cut or rewrite the copy.

During each projection of the workprint the director or editor should keep in mind the places where optical effects are needed. The desired effects should be marked on the workprint. This brings up a vital point: *For overlapping effects such as dissolves and wipes—throw away 24 frames or more of both incoming and outgoing scenes.*

In other words, cut 24 frames, at least, from the head and tail of each scene in your workprint before cutting the workprint scenes together. *This is the only way to be absolutely certain there is enough overlap footage on the original to accomplish the desired optical effect in final printing.*

This last point cannot be emphasized too strongly. It often happens that an editor will have to change carefully thought-out dissolves and wipe effects because he failed to allow for overlap when editing the workprint.

Finally, it is advisable to carefully mark the location of all superimposures, double-print titles and special-length optical effects—along with all other effects; this helps the director to better visualize how the film will appear in answer print form.

(To be continued.)

American Cinematographer is indebted to Calvin Productions, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri, for permission to reprint this condensation of the series of informative articles on Film Editing, which have appeared in recent issues of "The Aperture," the company's monthly workshop publication for 16mm film producers—Editors.