

A Bi-Monthly Periodical Exclusively Devoted to New York Filmmakers and Filmmaking Services

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...The Film Editor

AFTER fifty years of motion picture production it seems superfluous to offer up a judgment on the meaning and the place of the film editor in the filmmaking process. He has been universally recognized as one of the major cogs in the filmmaking machine and his handiwork has marked every film classic produced here and elsewhere in the world.

The writer spent twenty years in Hollywood close to all the major studios and the important independent producers in the years when American filmmakers and films were in their finest period. Not only were great films made in the fourth and fifth decades of this century but never before or since was the film art and industry so glamorous and so crammed with intellect and creativity bent on marrying art to business—and succeeding.

Filmmaking then as now ends up as the product of teams of people, each one contributing his special gifts and know-how and working to form an homogeneous harmony of words, visual images, movement, and story. Nothing can ever be said to minimize the contributions of the screenwriter, the actor, the creative producer, the musician, and all the other gifted people assembled to project a story upon the screen. But three people bear the greatest responsibility in meeting the challenge: the director, the cameraman and the film editor.

The director guides the projection of action and words upon the film, the cameraman exerts his art and competence to light and compose each scene for beauty and effectiveness. But after many thousands of feet of film have been photographed, it is all turned over to the film editor to view, cut, and edit down to a few thousand feet, a small residue of the amorphous whole. On his basic judgment rests the fate of millions of production dollars, ambition, hope and months of effort

filming tiny bits of mosaics to complete the story pattern. What does the editor do?

What makes a great film editor whether he works on a feature film or a 60-second TV commercial? What are his special gifts?

The gifted film editor frequently saves a poor or faltering film. He can make a good film better. He can speed the work of our best directors and cameramen to greatness by imparting to their work elements that cannot be filmed by the camera but comes out of his own intuitive judgment for dramatic rightness. It is a gift that cannot always be acquired and its practice is not written down in text or rule books. New York has such men in great abundance.

The viewer sitting attentive or enthralled in the theatre does not literally see or sense the work of the film editor. But the continuous, uninterrupted flow of the story, its rhythm, its balance, its dramatic surges, its total harmony reveal the film editor at his best. His work is not a cutting continuity but a creative continuity, calling for as much imagination as is given good films by all the other gifted people on the team.

This is clearly visible in the short film and the TV commercial, where time, space and yes, money, are the mythic swords hanging over the filmmakers. There can be no mistakes here. Every fleeting second must tell and sell and tell and sell—it's all over in a flash—and it's the film editor, again, who sharpens and dramatizes the impact made by the director and cameraman upon but a few feet of film.

In this issue various people engaged in the theatrical, non-theatrical and television production of films, have seriously and humorously assessed the role of the film editor. His judgment is crucial creative.

B.M.

MAKING FILMS IN NEW YORK is published bi-monthly (six times a year) to promote the professional filmmakers and filmmaking facilities and services in New York city. It expounds the creative functions of producers, writers, directors, cameramen, film editors and film technicians in all branches of film production and film processing. It is distributed to all filmmaking personnel among New York advertising agencies and throughout the nation (also in Canada) to Advertising Agencies, Film Sponsors and Producers. Its purpose is to promote the New York skills and creativity and facilities in all places where films are planned and budgeted and to bring more production dollars into Manhattan. Subscription is \$3. per year domestic; single copies, 50¢. Foreign, \$4.00 per year plus postage; single copies 75¢ plus postage. Controlled circulation postage paid at New York. Editorial and Business Offices at 120 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. Tel. (212) 355-5252 and 777-9573.