Review of Film Directing: Shot by Shot—25th Anniversary Edition: Visualizing from Concept to Screen

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Abstract

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Keywords

Videography, Directing, Storyboard

Katz, S. D. (2019). *Film directing: Shot by shot—25th anniversary edition: Visualizing from concept to screen.* Michael Wiese Productions.

This book overviews the basics and key concepts of film directing and planning. While it informs through a Hollywood perspective, the book highlights key filming elements any communicator can use. These include composing shots, staging dialogue sequences, utilizing camera angles, and using camera tools, such as cranes or drones, to create moving shots. The book is well structured, with clear and concise organization of each topic, lending itself to structuring videography lessons or as a guidebook through videography projects. Additionally, Irlbeck and Akers (2009) noted that employers highly ranked television production as a communication skill. While the book describes the history of these concepts within the film industry, these elements are also relevant to general video production.

Instructors would likely find this book helpful in preparing videography lessons in communications and videography classes, providing clear information that is usable for both communications and non-communications students. In fact, several universities, including the University of Southern California, American University, and Williams College, use this book in various video production courses. It is important to note that the book is designed as more of a reference material than a typical textbook. The book does not include chapter questions or materials, which instructors might have used to supplement course instruction. Industry professionals may also find the book useful in creating videos for social media, television broadcasts, educational videos, or documentaries.

Updated from the original work, published in 1991, the 25th anniversary edition has an updated introduction, highlighting the differences in technology since the first edition. Additionally, a new shortcuts section was added, with a brief overview of directing in a day. This section describes quick filming with a limited storyboard and script. A supplemental website is also included with consistently updated technology, in consideration of the rapidly progressing industry. Designed for detailed reference, *Film Directing: Shot by Shot* consists of 25 chapters broken into four parts with parts two, three, and four providing the most useful information for general video production. The last three parts cover key aspects of filming and editing videos.

The first part covers visualizing a project, emphasizing the history of this process within the film industry. This process includes continuity, production design, storyboards, and visualization tools and techniques. Katz uses this part to describe aspects of video planning, though its focus is centered on Hollywood and the history of these practices utilizing references to recognizable directors and their use of storyboarding and set design techniques. These chapters extensively discuss the film industry art department, which may not be relevant in a typical communications setting whether education or industry driven. However, Chapter 5 highlights and describes key production steps including scriptwriting, research, and scene description. While some video projects will not follow a detailed script, having a video plan will allow for efficiency during the production process. Research is also an important step to ensuring accuracy and credibility in the finished project. Scene description is also a useful step to create video content efficiently, requiring the production team to determine what is the purpose of the scene, what should the audience learn, and what does the creator want the audience to feel.

Part two explores the elements of continuity style, covered within Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 details composing shots. Both communication professionals and students would find this chapter useful as it describes and illustrates shot composition. These descriptions explain the benefits and uses of each shot composition. Throughout this part, reference figures are used to

suggest camera setups to create point of view closeups, over-the-shoulder, and profile shots. Chapter 7 discusses how editing shapes the audience's understanding of a video or film. The chapter also includes examples of shot organization and how a story unfolds.

The third part covers topics including shot flow, establishing a location, pairing dialogue with shot composition, staging dialogue with multiple subjects, and determining camera angles. Chapter 8 describes using camera angles and editing to establish a video location visually. Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12 detail staging dialogue sequences with photo examples depicting subject and camera placement. Chapter 12 also includes lens suggestions for shooting dialogue scenes with larger crowds. Each chapter contains figures and photos outlining the planning process.

Part four is all about the moving camera, focusing on the technical aspects of moving camera shots. These include pan, crane, and tracking shots. This section also describes transitions, formatting, and the basic steps in a day of filming. Chapter 17 focuses on the panoramic shot and describes the types of panoramic shots. The chapter also explains how drones can be used to achieve panoramic shots. Chapter 19 outlines various aspects of a tracking shot including planning, tracking at different speeds, and moving to or from a subject. Seven common shot transitions are explained in Chapter 21, with descriptions of how they are used and what the output will look like. Chapter 22 provides a brief history of video formats and a visual example of digital formats and their sizing.

Overall, *Film Directing: Shot by Shot* provides strong reference materials for both communicators within the industry and students in the classroom. The book is broken down into clearly defined parts with concise, topic driven chapters. While the book does focus on the stereotypical Hollywood form of filming, with the first 150 pages containing the bulk of history and directorial references, the majority, 236 pages, highlights technical video directing and producing skills. Key concepts are supported with clear visual examples allowing for replication and understanding. Each example contains helpful notes, allowing for quick reference without needing to reread the entire section or chapter. Because of these tools, *Film Directing: Shot by Shot* would be a strong reference tool for students and communications professionals alike.

References

Irlbeck, E. G. & Akers, C. (2009). Employers' perceptions of recent agricultural communications graduates' workplace habits and communication skills. *Journal of Agricultural Education 50*(4), 63-71. http://dx.doi.org/10.5032/jae.2009.04063