DAVID BORDWELL | KRISTIN THOMPSON | JEFF SMITH

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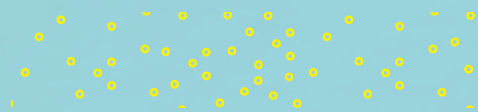
AN INTRODUCTION | TWELFTH EDITION

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University of Wisconsin—Madison
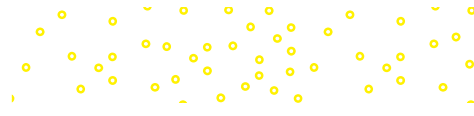
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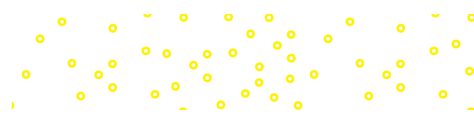
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

David Bordwell is Jacques Ledoux Emeritus Professor of Film Studies in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He also holds a Hilldale Professorship in the Humanities. He completed a master's degree and a doctorate in film at the University of Iowa. His books include *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer* (University of California Press, 1981), *Narration in the Fiction Film* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton University Press, 1988), *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1989), *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Harvard University Press, 1993), *On the History of Film Style* (Harvard University Press, 1997), *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Harvard University Press, 2000; 2nd ed., Irvington Way Institute Press, 2011), *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (University of California Press, 2005). *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (University of California Press, 2006), *Poetics of Cinema* (Routledge, 2007), *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Irvington Way Institute Press, 2012), *The Rhapsodes: How 1940s Critics Changed American Film Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), and *Reinventing Hollywood: How 1940s Filmmakers Changed Movie Storytelling* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Kristin Thompson is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She holds a master's degree in film from the University of Iowa and a doctorate in film from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She has published *Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible: A Neoformalist Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 1981), *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market 1907–1934* (British Film Institute, 1985), *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 1988), *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes, or, Le Mot Juste* (James H. Heineman, 1992), *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Harvard University Press, 1999), *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Harvard University Press, 2003), *Herr Lubitsch Goes to Hollywood: German and American Film After World War I* (Amsterdam University Press, 2005), and *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (University of California Press, 2007). She is also an amateur Egyptologist and since 2001 a member of an expedition to Egypt.

Bordwell and Thompson have previously collaborated on *Film History: An Introduction* (McGraw-Hill, 4th ed., 2018), *Minding Movies: Observations on the Art, Craft, and Business of Filmmaking* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), *Christopher Nolan: A Labyrinth of Linkages* (Irvington Way Institute Press, 2013), and, with Janet Staiger, on *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (Columbia University Press, 1985). For their blog and other online information, visit www.davidbordwell.net.

Jeff Smith is a professor in the Communication Arts Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He received his master's degree and doctorate in film at that same institution. He is the author of two books: *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music* (Columbia University Press, 1998) and *Film Criticism, the Cold War, and the Blacklist: Reading the Hollywood Reds* (University of California Press, 2014).

All three authors regularly contribute video introductions to films on the Criterion Channel of FilmStruck.

PREFACE

Film Art helps students master the skills of film appreciation by teaching them to analyze and appreciate classic and contemporary films. Enhanced by McGraw-Hill Education's Connect and SmartBook, *Film Art* delivers a learning and teaching experience tailored to the needs of each institution, instructor, and student.

DIGITAL SUITE FOR *FILM ART*

For nearly a generation, *Film Art* has helped students become informed viewers of classic and contemporary films by explaining key vocabulary and concepts of film forms, techniques, and history. With McGraw-Hill Education's Connect, students are better equipped to understand and retain these basic concepts. McGraw-Hill Connect for *Film Art* is a highly reliable, easy-to-use homework and learning management solution that utilizes award-winning adaptive tools to improve student results. Connect's assignments help students contextualize what they've learned through application, so they can better understand the material and think critically about it.

SmartBook is included in Connect for *Film Art* and provides an interactive reading experience that helps students study more efficiently through adaptive highlighting and review. As a student uses SmartBook, it creates a personalized learning path that highlights the most important concepts the student needs to grasp at that moment in time.

New to the twelfth edition of Connect for *Film Art* is the Connect eBook, which makes it easy for students to access their study material on smartphones and tablets. They can study on the go and don't need Internet access to use the eBook with full functionality.

CRITERION COLLECTION IN CONNECT

Studying film isn't just about learning the facts; it's also about the skills of watching and listening closely. Together with the Criterion Collection, we've developed a series of tutorials and Film Analysis Assignments to introduce students to the world of film and challenge them to develop the critical-analysis skills necessary to become informed viewers.

The authors have partnered with the Criterion Collection to create brief video tutorials, available exclusively in Connect. The tutorials use film clips to clarify and reinforce key concepts and model the critical skills necessary to become informed viewers. They can be shown in class or assigned for students to view outside class, with brief optional follow-up quizzes. Exclusive to Connect for *Film Art,* these videos can be accessed and used in a few different ways:

- Assign to students to watch outside of class. Optional assessment questions are available to test students' understanding of the concepts.

- Assign chapters in SmartBook or the Connect eBook, and students will encounter videos that are relevant to the content they are reading.

- Access the collection in the Connect Media Bank. Instructors and students alike can access any of these videos at any time during the semester.

Following is a list of Criterion Collection tutorial selections available in Connect for *Film Art:*

Light Sources: *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958)

Available Lighting: *Breathless* (1960)

Staging in Depth: *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* (1953)

Color Motifs: *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973)

Tracking Shots Structure a Scene: *Ugetsu* (1953)

Tracking Shot to Reveal: *The 400 Blows* (1959)

Style Creates Parallelism: *Day of Wrath* (1943)

Staging and Camera Movement in a Long Take: *The Rules of the Game* (1939)

Editing with Graphic Matches: *Seven Samurai* (1954)

Shifting the Axis of Action: *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)

Crossing the Axis of Action: *Early Summer* (1951)

Crosscutting: *M* (1931)

Elliptical Editing: *Vagabond* (1985)

Jump Cuts: *Breathless* (1960)

Sound Mixing: *Seven Samurai* (1954)

Contrasting Rhythms of Sound and Image: *Mr. Hulot's Holiday* (1953)

Offscreen Sound: *M* (1931)

Contrasting Style for Objective and Subjective Narration: *Journey to Italy* (1954)

Diegetic Narration by an Unidentified Character: *I Vitelloni* (1953)

Setting and Costume Play an Active Role: *Ivan the Terrible, Part II* (1958)

Two Ways of Staging for Humor: *The Gold Rush* (1925)

The Long Lens and Zooming: *Close-up* (1990)

Playing with Unrealistic Sound: *Daisies* (1966)

Staging with the Main Characters' Backs Toward the Camera: *L'Avventura* (1960)

Authenticity in Documentaries: *Nanook of the North* (1922)

Surrealism in Experimental Film: *Un Chien andalou* (1929)

What Comes Out Must Go In: 2D Computer Animation

Lens and Camera Movement

Film Lighting

Post Production Sound

In addition, Connect features Film Analysis Assignments with additional clips, film stills, and links to movie clips to help students practice analyzing aspects of each film and prepare them for their longer written assignments. These include clips from the following films:

Battleship Potemkin (1925)

D.O.A. (1950)

The General (1926)

His Girl Friday (1940)

The Lady Vanishes (1938)

M (1931)

Man with a Movie Camera (1929)

Meet John Doe (1941)

Night of the Living Dead (1968)

Nosferatu (1922)

Scarlet Street (1945)

Sita Sings the Blues (2008)

Wackiki Wabbit (1943)

APPRECIATING FILM

Film Art provides the respected scholarship and analytic tools students need to understand key vocabulary and concepts of film forms, techniques, and history; appreciate a wide variety of classic and contemporary films and the creative choices made by filmmakers to shape the experience of viewers; and analyze films critically and systematically to enrich their understanding and appreciation of any film, in any genre.

"Creative Decision" sections provide in-depth examples to deepen students' appreciation for how creative choices by filmmakers affect how viewers respond. Discussions include, for example, performance and camera positioning in *The Social Network,* editing in *The Birds,* and overlapping dialogue cuts in *The Hunt for Red October.*

"Closer Look" features examine important issues in contemporary cinema and provide detailed looks at such topics as computer-generated imagery (CGI) in *The Lord of the Rings,* editing in *L. A. Confidential,* and motifs in *The Shining.*

Authors' blog, "Observations on Film Art." In what Roger Ebert called "the most knowledgeable film blog on the web," David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson share their ideas and experiences with instructors and students (http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog). Throughout the text, "Connect to the Blog" references point to blog entries with relevant ideas, terms, and film examples, connecting ideas in *Film Art* to the current film scene in an accessible way.

PERSONALIZING FILM TEACHING

Through McGraw-Hill Education's Create, a chapter on film adaptations, written by Jeff Smith of the University of Wisconsin, is available for instructors to better customize and personalize their film appreciation course. In addition, an appendix, "Writing a Critical Analysis of a Film," is available for instructors who require written film critiques, and "DVD Recommendations" provide particularly effective resources related to key topics.

McGraw-Hill Create allows you to create a customized print book or eBook tailored to your course and syllabus. You can search through thousands of McGraw-Hill Education texts, rearrange chapters, combine material from other content sources, and include your own content or teaching notes. Create even allows you to personalize your book's appearance by selecting the cover and adding your name, school, and course information. To register and to get more information, go to http://create.mheducation.com.

Chapter-by-Chapter Changes

Chapter 1 New discussion of "Creative Decisions in Filmmaking" using examples from *La La Land.* These include choices made about the film's use of color, camera mobility, editing, and music composition. The chapter also includes updated discussions of digital cinematography, digital projection, screenplay development, digital postproduction technologies, and digital distribution platforms. (The latter features a new quote from noted cinematographer Ed Lachman.) There is also a thoroughly revised discussion of ancillary markets and updated data about the global film market. New references to *Singin' in the Rain, Carol, Jackie, The Hateful Eight, Dunkirk, Tangerine, Shadow of a Doubt, The Land of Silence, Suicide Squad, Thor: Ragnarok, Wind River,* and *mother!* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 2 New references to motifs in *Guardians of the Galaxy* and *Where Is the Friend's Home?* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 3 Expanded discussion of the role of protagonists and antagonists in narrative form. New references to *Julie & Julia, Nashville, The Avengers, Tiny Furniture, Where Is the Friend's Home?, Atomic Blonde,* and *M. Hulot's Holiday.* New discussion of hidden causes and character change in *Moonlight.* Revised discussion of flashforwards using *Inside Man.* Updated discussion of complex time schemes in film adding *Wonderstruck* and *Dunkirk* as examples. New quote from Aaron Sorkin on the role of intention and obstacle as structuring elements of narrative. Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 4 Revised discussion of digital manipulation of mise-en-scene elements. New references to *Fences* and *Manchester by the Sea.* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 5 New example of 3D emergence in *Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension.* New example of camera height in *Late Autumn.* New example of mobile framing and machinery from *Dunkirk.* New quotes from cinematographers Dan Laustsen and Sean Bobbitt. Updated discussion of aerial cinematography. Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 6 Updated discussion of constructive editing in *The Birds.* New references to parallel editing in *Julie &*

Julia and *Wonderstruck.* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 7 New reference to rhythmic coordination of music, sound effects, and visuals in *Baby Driver.* New reference to panned sounds in *Splice.* Expanded discussion of *The Conversation* that considers sound's role in the range and depth of information in the film's narration. Enhanced references to blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 8 New discussion of framing in *Son of Saul.* New references to *La La Land* and *Moonlight.* New reference to sound mixing choices in *Gravity.* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 9 Extended discussion of genre reflectionism in *Get Out.* New references to *Home Alone* and *The Big Sick* as examples of different subgenres of comedy. New reference to *Manchester by the Sea* as a melodrama. New reference to *Hell or High Water* as a crime film that engenders conflicted feelings toward its heroes. New reference to *Hostiles* and its racist Western hero. New reference to *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* as a global horror film. New reference to use of playback techniques in *La La Land.* New references to *Just Wright, Mr. 3000, Whip It, The Blind Side, Million Dollar Baby, Battle of the Sexes,* and *I, Tonya* as sports films. Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 10 New references to *Darkest Hour, L'Opéra Mouffe, My Life as a Zucchini,* and *Kubo and the Two Strings.* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 11 New detailed analysis of *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul.* Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

Chapter 12 New quote from *Wonder Woman* director Patty Jenkins. Updated discussion of Hollywood and American independents after 2000. New references to *The Blair Witch Project, Crash, The Hurt Locker, Winter's Bone, Room, Moonlight,* and *Lady Bird.* New references to *Avatar* and *Life of Pi* in discussion of new exhibition technologies. New references to *Birdman, Love and Mercy, A Ghost Story,* and *Tully.* Updated list of formally adventurous television shows. Enhanced references to the blog "Observations on Film Art."

If you're in your late teens or early twenties, we have something in common with you. That was the age when we became curious about—some would say, obsessed with—film, cinema, movies.

What fueled our enthusiasm was a simple love of this medium and the great films we saw. For us, films that are classics today, from *Alphaville, 2001,* and *The Godfather* through *Jaws* and *Nashville* to *Chungking Express* and *The Big Lebowski,* were new movies. Over the years, we've watched film history unfold, and our excitement at new developments hasn't flagged.

Of course, we loved particular films and admired particular filmmakers. At the same time, we were entranced by the artistic possibilities of film as an art form. As teachers and writers, we roamed widely, trying to understand films from very different traditions—from silent avant-garde cinema to Cold War Hollywood to modern Hong Kong film, from Los Angeles to Paris to Tokyo. We've written about modern Hollywood, including *The Lord of the Rings,* and filmmakers working outside Hollywood—for example, Carl Dreyer, Sergei Eisenstein, and Yasujiro Ozu. We've also considered the specific contributions of craft workers, such as production designers, cinematographers, composers, and sound designers. In the past ten years, we've extended our explorations to the Web, where we blog regularly about the many things that interest us in film.

Studying the arts isn't just about learning facts. That's why in *Film Art* we have always emphasized the skills of watching and listening closely. With the tenth edition we partnered with the prestigious Criterion Collection of DVDs and Blu-ray discs in our Connect Film digital program (see pp. vi–vii). The Criterion Collection has long been dedicated to making hundreds of important films available on high-quality DVD and Blu-ray discs. These editions are packed with informative supplements. It was natural for us to partner with Criterion in providing Connect clips modeling essential viewing skills. More recently, we have created a monthly series of short video pieces that apply the ideas from *Film Art* to major classics. This series, "Observations on Film Art," appears on the Criterion Channel of FilmStruck (https://www.filmstruck.com). As a subscription service, FilmStruck is available for both classroom and personal use. This twelfth edition, then, is enhanced by both Connect clips and streaming video from Criterion. We're grateful for the cooperation of the Criterion Collection, and we hope that these supplements will help our readers become critical, informed viewers.

Filmmaking has undergone a continuous change since we launched this book in 1979. Digital technology has given many people access to filmmaking tools, and it has changed film distribution and exhibition. You can watch movies on your laptop or mobile phone, and films now arrive at theaters on hard drives rather than film reels. Because we focus on concepts, and because the techniques we study remain central to all sorts of moving-image media, much of what we studied in earlier editions remains valid. Still, we've expanded our discussion to include the creative choices opened up by digital cinema.

Apart from learning concepts and developing skills, the arts broaden our tastes. Across 12 editions of *Film Art,* we've made reference to many well-known films but also to many that you've probably never heard of. This is part of our plan. We want to show that the world of cinema teems with a great many unexpected pleasures, and we hope to get you curious.

In surveying film art through such concepts as form, style, and genre, we aren't trying to wrap movies in abstractions. We're trying to show that there are principles that can shed light on a variety of films. We'd be happy if our ideas can help you to understand the films that you enjoy. And we hope that you'll seek out films that will stimulate your mind, your feelings, and your imagination in unpredictable ways. For us, this is what education is all about.

Acknowledgments

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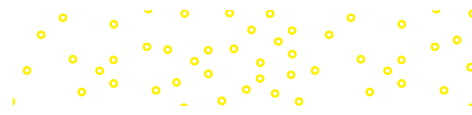
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create™ **FILM ADAPTATIONS**
create™ **WRITING A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF A FILM**
create™ **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *FILM ART***

Film is a young medium. Painting, literature, dance, and theater have existed for thousands of years, but cinema was invented only a little more than a century ago. Yet in its comparatively short span, the newcomer has established itself as an energetic and powerful art.

It's this art that we explore in this book. The chapters that follow show how creative people have used moving pictures to give us experiences that we value. We examine the principles and techniques that give film its power to tell stories, express emotions, and convey ideas.

But this art has some unusual features we should note from the start. More than most arts, film depends on complex technology. Without machines, movies wouldn't move. In addition, film art usually requires collaboration among many participants, people who follow well-proven work routines. Films are not only created but produced. Just as important, they are firmly tied to their social and economic context. Films are distributed and exhibited for audiences, and money matters at every step.

Film Art and Filmmaking

Chapter 1 surveys all these aspects of the filmmaking process. We examine the technology, the work practices, and the business side of cinema. All these components shape and sustain film as an art.

1

Film as Art: Creativity, Technology, and Business

Motion pictures are so much a part of our lives that it's hard to imagine a world without them. We enjoy them in theaters, at home, in offices, in cars and buses, and on airplanes. We carry films with us in our laptops, tablets, and cellphones. Press a button, and a machine conjures up movies for your pleasure.

Films communicate information and ideas, and they show us places and ways of life we might not otherwise know. Important as these benefits are, though, something more is at stake. Films offer us ways of seeing and feeling that we find deeply gratifying. They take us through experiences. The experiences are often driven by stories centering on characters we come to care about, but a film might also develop an idea or explore visual qualities or sound textures.

Such things don't happen by accident. Films are *designed* to create experiences for viewers. To gain an understanding of film as an art, we should ask why a film is designed the way it is. When a scene frightens or excites us, when an ending makes us laugh or cry, we can ask how the filmmakers have achieved those effects.

It helps to imagine that we're filmmakers, too. Throughout this book, we'll be asking you to put yourself in the filmmaker's shoes.

This shouldn't be a great stretch. You've taken still photos with a camera or a mobile phone. Very likely you've made some videos, perhaps just to record a moment in your life—a party, a wedding, your cat creeping into a paper bag. And central to filmmaking is the act of choice. You may not have realized it at the moment, but every time you framed a shot, shifted your position, told people not to blink, or tried to keep up with a dog chasing a Frisbee, you were making choices.

You might take the next step and make a more ambitious, more controlled film. You might compile clips into a YouTube video or document your friend's musical performance. Again, at every stage you make design decisions based on how you think this image or that sound will affect your viewers' experience. What if you start your music video with a black screen that gradually brightens as the music fades in? That will have a different effect than starting it with a sudden cut to a bright screen and a blast of music.

At each instant, the filmmaker can't avoid making creative decisions about how viewers will respond. Every moviemaker is also a movie viewer, and the choices are considered from the standpoint of the end user. Filmmakers constantly ask themselves: *If I do this, as opposed to that, how will viewers react?*

The menu of filmmaking choices has developed over time. Late in the 19th century, moving pictures emerged as a public amusement. They succeeded because they spoke to the imaginative needs of a broad-based audience. All the

traditions that emerged—telling fictional stories, recording actual events, animating objects or drawings, experimenting with pure form—aimed to give viewers experiences they couldn't get from other media. Men and women discovered that they could use cinema to shape those experiences in various ways. Suppose we center the actors so they command the frame space? Suppose we cut up a scene into shots taken from several angles? Suppose we move the camera to follow the actors? Learning from one another, testing and refining new choices, filmmakers developed skills that became the basis of the art form we have today.

Thinking like a filmmaker is all very well, you might say, if you want a career in the business. What if you just want to enjoy movies? We think that you can appreciate films more fully if you're aware of how creative choices shape your experience. You've probably looked at some making-of bonuses on DVD versions of films you love, and some of those supplements have increased your enjoyment. We enhance our appreciation of *Inception* or *Moana* when we know something of the filmmakers' behind-the-scenes discussion of character motivation and specific line readings. We can always get more out of the films we see, and thinking about the filmmakers' choices helps us to understand why we respond as we do.

This is why we start our survey of film art by looking at the process of film production. Here we can see, in very tangible ways, the sorts of options available to people working in this medium. In every chapter that follows, we invoke what film artists have said about the ways they've chosen to solve creative problems.

Throughout this book, we focus on the two basic areas of choice and control in the art of film: form and style. **Form** is the overall patterning of a film, the ways its parts work together to create specific effects (Chapters 2 and 3). **Style** involves the film's use of cinematic techniques. Those techniques fall into four categories: mise-en-scene, or the arrangement of people, places, and objects to be filmed (Chapter 4); cinematography, the use of cameras and other machines to record images and sounds (Chapter 5); editing, the piecing together of individual shots (Chapter 6); and sound, the voices, sound effects, and music that blend on a film's audio track (Chapter 7). After examining the various techniques, Chapter 8 integrates them in an overview of film style.

In later chapters, we discuss how form and style differ among genres and other types of films (Chapters 9–10). We consider how we can analyze films critically (Chapter 11) and how film form and style have changed across history, offering filmmakers different sets of creative choices (Chapter 12). In all, we'll see how through choice and control, film artists create movies that entertain us, inform us, and engage our imaginations.

Art vs. Entertainment? Art vs. Business?

The term *art* might put some readers off. If cinema originated as a mass medium, should we even use the word? Are Hollywood directors "artists"? Some people would say that the blockbusters playing at the multiplex are merely "entertainment," but films for a narrower public—perhaps independent films, or foreign-language fare, or experimental works—are true art.

Usually the art/entertainment split rests on a value judgment: Art is serious and worthy; entertainment is superficial. Yet things aren't that simple. Many of the artistic resources of cinema were discovered by filmmakers working for the general public. During the 1910s and 1920s, for instance, many filmmakers who simply aimed to be entertaining pioneered new possibilities for film editing.

As for the matter of value, it's clear that popular traditions can foster art of high quality. Shakespeare and Dickens wrote for broad audiences. Much of the greatest 20th-century music, including jazz and the blues, was rooted in popular traditions. Cinema is an art because it offers filmmakers ways to design experiences

for viewers, and those experiences can be valuable regardless of their pedigree. Films for audiences both small and large belong to that very inclusive art we call film or cinema.

Sometimes, too, people consider film *art* to be opposed to film as a *business.* This split is related to the issue of entertainment because entertainment generally is sold to a mass audience. In most modern societies, however, no art floats free from economic ties. Novels good, bad, and indifferent are published because publishers and authors expect to sell them. Painters hope that collectors and museums will acquire their work. True, some artworks are funded through subsidy or private donations, but that process, too, involves the artists in financial transactions.

Films are no different. Some movies are made in the hope that consumers will pay to see them. Others are funded by patronage (an investor or organization wants to see the film made) or public money. (France, for instance, generously subsidizes film projects.) Crowdfunding sites such as Kickstarter offer another alternative. You might make short videos for YouTube or Vimeo at little cost, but if you hope to make a feature-length digital movie, you face the problem of paying for it. If you can't profit from your film, you may still hope that the project will lead to a job.

The crucial point is that considerations of business don't necessarily make the artist less creative or the project less worthwhile. Money can corrupt any activity, but it doesn't have to. In Renaissance Italy, painters were commissioned by the Catholic Church to illustrate events from the Bible. Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci worked for hire, but we revere their artistry.

In this book we won't assume that film art precludes entertainment. We won't take the opposite position either, claiming that only Hollywood mass-market movies are worth our attention. Similarly, we don't think that film art rises above commercial demands, but we also won't assume that money rules everything. Any art form offers a vast range of creative possibilities.

As an art, film offers experiences that viewers find worthwhile—diverting, provocative, puzzling, or rapturous. But how do films do that? To answer that question, let's go back a step and ask: Where do movies come from?

They come from three places. They come from the imagination and hard work of the filmmakers who create them. They come from a complex set of machines that capture and transform images and sounds. And they come from companies or individuals who pay for the filmmakers and the technology. This chapter examines the artistic, technological, and business sides of how films come into being.

Creative Decisions in Filmmaking

In *Day for Night,* French filmmaker François Truffaut plays a director making a movie called *Meet Pamela.* Crew members bring set designs, wigs, cars, and prop pistols to him, and we hear his voice telling us his thoughts: "What is a director? A director is someone who is asked questions about everything."

Making a film can be seen as a long process of decision making, not just by the director but by all the specialists who work on the production team. Screenwriters, producers, directors, performers, and technicians are constantly solving problems and making choices. A great many of those decisions affect what we see and hear on the screen. There are business choices about the budget, marketing, distribution, and payments. Connected to those choices are the artistic ones. What lighting will enhance the atmosphere of a love scene? Given the kind of story being told, would it be better to let the audience know what the central character is thinking or to keep her enigmatic? When a scene opens, what is the most economical way of letting the audience identify the time and place? We can see how decisions shape the process by looking in more detail at a single production.

CREATIVE DECISIONS

A Modern, Old-Fashioned Musical: *La La Land*

Damien Chazelle's *La La Land* was released in 2016, a time when movie musicals were out of fashion. The few that got made were usually adaptations of successful Broadway shows, sometimes cynical (*Chicago,* 2002), sometimes tragic (*Les Miserables,* 2012). The golden age of original musicals, from the 1940s to the 1960s, had brought forth cheerful Hollywood films like *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and *The Band Wagon* (1953), as well as those of French director Jacques Demy, especially the poignant *Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964).

This was the era that inspired Chazelle in his project. "That tradition of musicals composed directly for the screen—where there's interplay among music, image, story, character and dance—was magical. *La La Land* started with this idea of taking that style of storytelling and applying it to a modern setting." That decision to make an original modern story in an older style guided many aspects of the production.

La La Land centers on two young people trying to achieve their artistic dreams: Mia, an aspiring actress, and Sebastian, who yearns to open his own jazz club. They fall in love but are gradually tugged in opposite directions by their career successes.

Chazelle and his team made thousands of decisions during the production of *La La Land.* Here we look at four decisions about film techniques, one for each of our four categories: mise-en-scene (Chapter 4), cinematography (Chapter 5), editing (Chapter 6), and sound (Chapter 7).

Saturated Color   The classic musicals were typically shot in Technicolor and had vivid color schemes **(1.1).** The Technicolor process is no longer used, but the filmmaking team did their best to imitate it. Each design aspect of the mise-en-scene—costume, sets, and lighting—reflects this decision, and the set designer, costume designer, and cinematographer worked closely together to get an overall combination of colors **(1.2).**

Most shots are not as crammed with colors as this one, but during the first half of the film, most have some bright accent that stands out among the more muted colors. In the second half, the colors become less vivid as the couple's future is in question. The saturation returns, however, for the final fantasy musical number, which revives the tradition of dream numbers **(1.3).**

1.1

1.2

1.1–1.2 Bold color design. In the "Broadway Melody" number from *Singin' in the Rain* (1.1), Technicolor creates bright, vivid colors in the setting and costumes. In *La La Land*, the scene in Mia's room (1.2) mixes the solid colors of the dresses, the cushions at the left, and the orange of the giant poster, along with the smaller shapes in the wallpaper and the accessories. Colored light turns the small recess at the rear pink.

1.3 Stylized sets. The dancers move through sets recalling classic MGM musicals, here going from an orange grove into a city. (*La La Land*)

The Camera Dances   A number of important decisions involved cinematography. Chazelle shot the film in a very widescreen ratio, in imitation of the older musicals. Another decision was to capture the images on 35mm film rather than the common digital formats. This choice enhanced the bright, saturated colors of the sets, costumes, and lighting.

A third decision was to make the camera move as freely as possible, following the dancers effortlessly. Director of Photography Linus Sandgren explained: "We wanted the camera to participate as a dancer and a musical instrument, inspired by Justin [Hurwitz's] music and Mandy [Moore's] choreography in the musical numbers."

To achieve maximum mobility, two pieces of equipment were chosen: the Steadicam and the Oculus remote camera mount. Only two cameras were used throughout the production, usually mounted on these devices. A Steadicam is a harness and support that allows the camera operator to walk or run with the characters. The Steadicam was used both for musical numbers and for many other scenes of characters moving around, both indoors and out **(1.4, 1.5).**

The operator could also step smoothly onto a crane platform to allow a shot to continue, moving above the action **(1.6, 1.7).**

For quick lateral movements, the camera needed to be on the end of a large crane and operated remotely. The solution was the Oculus mount, controlled from a console, which can rapidly pivot the camera in any direction **(1.8).** The camera rested inside a circular frame, and this was attached to a crane arm that could swing it rapidly.

Besides allowing flexible camera movement, the Oculus mount allowed for lengthy scenes to consist of a single shot. The "A Lovely Night" number is a vivid example. Through Mia and Sebastian's walk up the hill, their talk around the bench overlooking

1.4

1.5

1.4–1.5 Camera mobility in sets in *La La Land*. During the "Someone in the Crowd" number, the Steadicam operator followed the four characters through several rooms. At one point, one of the roommates stops in a doorway (1.4), then moves aside as the camera plunges through the kitchen to pick up Mia and another roommate in the dining room (1.5).

1.6–1.7 **Camera mobility upward.** In the "Another Day of Sun" opening number, the Steadicam operator ran among the dancers and stepped backward onto a crane platform that lifted him into the air. This enabled him to frame the distant dancers behind the woman in the foreground. (*La La Land*)

1.8 **Eye in the sky.** The Oculus mount on a crane extended the camera above the dancers and moved quickly with them via remote control. (*La La Land*)

the sunset, and their entire dance, the camera was continually running. It had to reach 27 separate points in space to synchronize with the dancers' movements.

Editing: No Extra Shots   Sandgren describes another important decision that was made before shooting. "When Damien talked about the photography on the film, he said that he didn't want the film to feel like it was just shot with coverage." As we discuss in the next section, "coverage" means shooting every scene several times from different angles, often using several cameras for each take (pp. 22–23).

The coverage approach generates a great deal of footage and many editing options. The result is a string of brief shots and a style that "feels like it was just shot with coverage." To avoid this choppiness, filmmakers must map out in advance the specific effect each shot will achieve. As Sandgren puts it, "Every single shot has to have a purpose in the film."

The decision to use single takes in many scenes required careful preparation and rehearsals. The opening "Another Day of Sun" number was planned as a single lengthy shot, but during rehearsal the crane sometimes cast its shadow into the frame. The solution was to shoot three parts of the number as single shots at different times of day. They were blended by using **whip pans,** rapid, blurry movements of the camera that give the impression of a continuous shot.

Even *La La Land*'s nonmusical scenes often play out in **long takes** shot with a single camera. The scene in which Sebastian argues with Bill, owner of the

1.9

1.10

1.9–1.10 Shot/reverse-shot for a turning point. Having two cameras recording the conversation allowed for close matching of the characters' positions and a smooth flow of conversation (1.9, 1.10). As a romantic dinner turns into a quarrel, the alternating framings emphasize each character's changing reactions. (*La La Land*)

nightclub where he works, begins with a slow movement forward from a distant view to a closer one. A conventional film would have employed shot/reverse shot, with a shot of one character alternating with one of the other.

There are occasional scenes with more cutting. A flurry of shots shows items in Sebastian's apartment before the single-take scene with his sister, and another burst of brief images introduces the scene in which Sebastian takes Mia to a jazz club. These were all shot with a single camera. In contrast, a shot/reverse-shot situation of Mia and Sebastian sitting opposite each other at a table having a romantic meal that deteriorates into an argument was shot with two cameras aimed at the two characters **(1.9, 1.10).**

Shooting with multiple cameras yields adequate coverage because the filmmakers have the option to cut at any point in the flow of the conversation. This simple approach doesn't yield a variety of angles on the couple but a consistent alternation of repeated framings. This pattern of editing, common in most films, gains a new force in a film with so many single-shot scenes. Using the traditional technique here allows the viewer to concentrate on the couple's growing tension as they realize their careers are taking them in different directions.

Sound: Music Before Lyrics   For most films, the musical scores are written in postproduction. But the musicals of the classic era relied on existing songs or created them while the screenplay was being prepared. This is because the numbers were filmed with music played back on the set, so songs had to be written and recorded before shooting started.

Playback offers filmmakers a couple of key advantages. By recording the music in advance, audio engineers are able to get a clean sound mix with strong vocal projection. Moreover, because the performers lip synch to the song, playback also allows them to concentrate on the number's blocking and dance choreography.

Again, *La La Land* respected Hollywood tradition. The songs were written during script development, and most of the numbers were filmed with playback. A notable exception was Mia's song "Audition (The Fools Who Dream)." This piece was recorded live, following a trend seen in *Les Miserables* and other contemporary musicals.

Composer Justin Hurwitz's early involvement in *La La Land*'s production echoed classical Hollywood practice. Yet he also took an unusual step. Most songwriting teams compose the music and words simultaneously, but Hurwitz wrote the melodies for *La La Land* separately, long before the lyrics were written. This way he could test their ability to function both as performed numbers and as themes in his dramatic score. Hurwitz wanted to be sure that "all the songs would feel like they belong to the same body of work, the same musical. Melodically, orchestrationally, emotionally." By writing the music before the lyrics, Hurwitz borrowed a technique commonly used for songs featured in dramatic films of the 1950s and 1960s.

> " There is simply no other art form that is as emotionally direct, that just cuts through the muck right to your heart, as music."
> —Damien Chazelle, director, *La La Land*

> " I didn't—and still don't—think of myself as a songwriter. Most of the songs in my career have been written as instrumental themes for scores and had lyrics added later. I write themes that can be used in different ways, and developed in the course of the scores."
> —Henry Mancini, composer, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

Hurwitz's decision to integrate the songs into the film's score reflects a further commitment to use melody as a storytelling tool. Many of today's film scores create "beds of sound," emphasizing rhythm, harmony, and texture over melody. Examples include Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross's score for *The Social Network* and Hans Zimmer's score for *Dunkirk*. But classic Hollywood composers created big, memorable themes that gave scenes emotional sweep. In a musical, these dramatic melodies could furnish powerful songs, such as "Somewhere over the Rainbow" in *The Wizard of Oz*. Similarly, in *La La Land,* melodies such as "Someone in the Crowd" and "City of Stars" elevate the dramatic development in a manner that you couldn't get from a beds-of-sound approach.

By carefully blending the songs and the orchestral score, Hurwitz endows *La La Land* with an unusual degree of unity. The big payoff of Hurwitz and Chazelle's decision comes at the film's conclusion in the dream ballet. With little dialogue and sound effects, music amplifies the emotions evoked by the sequence's stylized imagery. "That was a really fun process for me," said Hurwitz, "composing that fantasy sequence, creating the whole epilogue out of melodies that were previously in the movie and finding different meanings for those melodies." As melodies flow seamlessly together, Hurwitz's cue acts as an orchestral suite, fusing the couple's earlier joys with the bittersweet melancholy of what might have been.

All these decisions, along with many others, shape our experience of *La La Land*. By re-creating the look and feel of a classic musical within the modern world, the film suggests that people today still harbor feelings that can be expressed only in song and dance. Los Angeles is often dismissed as a fantasy realm, a "la la land" of snobs and airheads, and at times the film mocks the phonies who are only in it for the ego or the money. It counters this image by suggesting that the fantasy side of the city comes from "the fools who dream," who share a genuine urge to express themselves in performance. Yet the film acknowledges that career success will take an emotional toll. As a result, the "la la" of the title can refer not only to LA but to the hidden music that drives idealistic young people to create art that will move others.

Mechanics of the Movies

Filmmaking relies on technology and financing. First, filmmakers need fairly complicated machines. Anyone with a pen and paper can write a novel, and a talented kid with a guitar can become a musician. Movies demand much more. Even the simplest home video camera is based on fiendishly complex technology. A major film involves elaborate cameras, lighting equipment, multitrack sound-mixing studios, sophisticated laboratories, and computer-generated special effects.

Partly because of the technology, making a movie also involves businesses. Companies manufacture the equipment, other companies provide funding for the film, still others distribute it, and finally theaters and other venues present the result to an audience. In the rest of this chapter, we consider how these two sides of making movies—technology and business—shape film as an art.

Illusion Machines

Moving-image media such as film and video couldn't exist if human vision were perfect. Our eyes are very sensitive, but they can be tricked. As anyone who has paused a video knows, a film consists of a series of *frames,* or still pictures. Yet we don't perceive the separate frames. Instead, we see continuous light and movement. What creates this impression?

For a long time people thought that the effect results from "persistence of vision," the tendency of an image to linger briefly on our retina. Yet if this were the cause, we'd see a bewildering blur of superimposed stills instead of smooth