

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION
of
MONTAGE IN MOTION PICTURES

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by
George E. Rollins
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Man's striving to transmit thought and knowledge has led him to try many different modes of communication. This paper is concerned with one phase of the motion picture as a means of communication--the montage.

Research in the area of interpretation shows that the human mind has the ability, or quality, of creating new meanings from material presented to it. Controlling the order of the presentation will help to control the new meanings which are created in the mind of the receiver.

The creation of new meanings beyond the strictly literal aspects of the film form may be said to be due to the "montage effect." Because the film gains meaning from the assembling of various shots in a certain order, the creation of meaning through montage is the function of the film-maker responsible for that order, whether he is the producer, director, or editor of the film.

The history of the film medium has been relatively short but much thought and experimentation in the area of montage have built the theories and techniques of montage to the point where direct statement, visually, aurally, or combined, is unnecessary to convey meaning. Manipulation of shots, and the camera in making the shots, allows the editor to emphasize or neglect phases of an idea so that the viewer gets an "editor's-eye" view of the presentation.

The film is no longer restricted to being viewed in an especially-built theater but may be seen in countless homes through the medium of television which employs techniques similar to the cinema with the exception of the transmission techniques. Its potential ability to reach a much larger audience through both the theater and television, makes the film an important medium of communication.

The ability to detect implication and ideological propaganda can be developed by learning how the effects are achieved. Knowledge of what to look for will enable the viewer to observe the film critically rather than to judge it merely on the basis of whether or not it has pleased him. A more critical objectivity will also help the viewer to understand the effects created by the montage processes and will allow him to react in a manner better suited to his best interests.

An awareness of implication and propaganda in the film form should be developed, and methods of analysis and evaluation taught, in order for the individual to be able to resist the effects and attitude changes made possible through the use of this medium. As has been shown in other areas, critical evaluation and appreciation do not necessarily destroy the appeal of the subject but, rather, can reinforce an appreciation by highlighting real values and quality while exposing that which is false or substandard in any way.