Chapter 5: PEOPLE AND MOVEMENTS

Films are made by people working under a set of circumstances. The first section below identifies the major participants in making a movie, primarily in the Hollywood system, and the next section looks at a few movements and styles influencing cinema.

People Who Produce Films

Although **production** is the whole process of shooting a film, it refers primarily to the period of **principal photography** (shooting the principal actors and scenes). Most of this work is done by the **first unit** (those who work with the director and the principal actors). The **second unit** focus on a film's action sequences, special location work, background shots, stunt work, and so on. At the beginnings and endings of films, **credits** list all those responsible for making a film.

The **producer** sees that a film gets made. The producer provides the money (personal or studio funds) and makes major decisions about the production, such as who will star and for how much money. The role is both creative and financial, and involves hiring those who will make the film and under what terms. The **executive producer** often does the early work on a film: secure rights to a script, option the services of a star, or make a deal with a studio for the film. The **line producer** keeps track of costs, keeps the movie on schedule, and approves expenses. **Producers** primarily work between the source of money and those with the creative talent who make the film.

The process of **development** usually begins with a writer who has an idea for a film, but the "concept" comes at times from a producer or a director. When a "property" is approved for production, development ends. The **script** (a written description of the action and dialogue) goes through a number of steps. First is a **treatment**, a short version with characters and events which often reads like a short story with some dialogue. Then comes a full screenplay, leading to various versions until a **final screenplay** is approved. (The final screenplay is often changed, though, and the last version is called the **revised final**.)

Scripts work as guides for the director, and description

tends to be minimal. It is not meant for the reading of anyone besides those working on the film. Dialogue also remains brief because films are primarily visual stories. While dialogue is important, it is only one part of the communication.

The **director** has primary responsibility for choosing what will be filmed in each take (and the number of takes), for directing the action, for determining camera placements, and for selecting which takes to use. If production can be visualized as a wheel with many spokes, the director is the hub. The director's work is both creative and practical. The director has an artistic vision for the film but also deals with the problems of both production and budget. The director often participates in writing the script and hiring actors and also works closely with the production designer and the cinematographer.

A series of people work directly for the director. The **first assistant director** (or **first A.D.**) helps the director do whatever might be needed. Among the first A.D.'s chores are estimating times for specific shots, doing initial blocking of the actors and camera during rehearsals, working with the extras, breaking down the script (to determine production requirements for a day's shooting), and getting people to the right place at the right time. The first A.D. also supervises the **second assistant director**, who helps out the first A.D. The second A.D. often works with crowds (both those hired for a film and those which show up to watch location shooting).

The **cinematographer** (**director of photography** or **D.P.**) decides on lighting, chooses the camera, lenses, film stock, and filters, and works with the director to line up the placement, movement, and angles of the camera. The actual operation of the camera is usually done by the **camera operator** (or "second cameraman"--with the D.P. serving as "first cameraman"). The **first assistant cameraman** sets and readjusts the focus when the camera moves, and the **second assistant cameraman** (also called the **loader**) holds the clapboard to coordinate the start of shots and also takes care of both raw and exposed film stock.

The **script supervisor** (formerly "script girl") keeps careful notes of what happens during the production. These notes, often used by the editors later, include all details of what was shot (versus what was intended in the script). The notes cover the kinds of things easy to forget from one day's shooting to the

next: camera set-ups, lenses and apertures used, and the dress of actors (including marks on the face or other visible features that need to remain consistent). The script supervisor also times rehearsals precisely and helps with many of the details of the filming.

A **production designer** works closely with the director and cinematographer to develop the "look" for a film, coordinating the costumes, sets, and props. The **art director** designs the sets and works with the set decorator and scenic artists. Most production designers are art directors, but not all art directors have the extensive creative control of a production designer.

The **costume designer** chooses or designs the clothing the actors will wear. Clothing helps reveal character, so clothing gets selected in terms of both the overall production and the specific qualities of the character.

The **editor** assembles the various visual and audial components into a coherent and effective whole. A number of people usually do this job. The **supervising editor** coordinates and supervises the process. The **film editor** edits the workprint and voice tracks, and the **negative cutter** edits the negative so that it precisely matches the final workprint. (The release prints--which you see in the theater--are made from the negative.) The **sound editor** coordinates the music and effects tracks.

The **actors** are the most recognizable element of movies. The actors blend their own dimensions (of face and body as well as personality) with the qualities of the fictional character they will play. Two primary approaches describe actors, although both approaches depend upon careful observation of people: method acting and technique acting. **Technique actors** study how a person behaves--and appears--in various situations and then imitate that behavior on camera. Often this approach is considered British, and Sir Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh are good examples. **Method actors** try to "become" the character they play, tapping deep feelings from within. These actors *feel* their way through their roles, while technique actors *think* their way through their roles. The method actor knows the feeling that accompanies a behavior, while the technique actor shows how a behavior looks. Method actors will often try to live and eat like the character they play in order to immerse themselves in the role. Dustin Hoffman and Robert De Niro are good examples of method actors.

On the set, the **principals** have the primary speaking roles, with the **lead** (leading) roles played by those with the most significant parts. A **bit player** has a small speaking part, and **extras** play characters without names and only rarely with lines. A **character actor**, who rarely plays a lead, is an actor with distinctive features or manners, and who seems to fit a popular conception of a certain kind of person such as a grandparent, a teacher, a boss, or a secretary. The **star**, who is always a lead, has widespread public recognition, which draws people to see any movie in which the star appears.

Many other people contribute to a film, but here are a few of the titles you might not recognize by what they are called in the credits:

Grips do just what you might guess: pick things up. They move the equipment (such as dollies or cranes), backdrops, cables for moving cameras, or set walls, as well as put up and take down sets. They are supervised by the **key grip**, who is assisted by the **best boy grip** (also called first assistant grip).

The **gaffer** (or **key electrician**) is in charge of electrical work on a set, setting up and getting power to lights, and checking the color temperature of lamps. The **best boy gaffer** (any age or sex) helps the gaffer. **Electricians** are also part of this team, as are the **riggers** who work on setting up cable and big lights before shooting. **Operators** work on the set as electricians during a shoot.

The **Foley artist** produces customized sounds for the sound editor to mix.

Major Movements and Styles

Several important film movements and styles have influenced later films and filmmakers. Here are a few:

Cinéma vérité is a candid-camera style of filmmaking using hand-held cameras, natural sound, grainy high-contrast black-and-white film, and the appearance of no rehearsal and only basic editing. Cinéma vérité (which means "camera truth") began in the 1950s as a movement of documentary filmmakers who wanted

their films to be more authentic in the way they captured reality and to allow subjects to expose themselves with spontaneous speech and behavior not caused by directorial intervention. Films made in this style looked something like the old candid-camera record of people's actions. Hand-held cameras, natural sound (with little attempt at controlling volume and a great deal of obtruding noise and static), grainy, high-contrast black-and-white film, and the appearance of no rehearsal and only basic editing are the chief techniques. The hand-held camera weaves and bobs with the cameraperson's movement, creating the effect of being on the spot with a reporter. The impetus for the style came partially from television news coverage. Fiction films occasionally experiment with the style, although it is chiefly the province of the documentary. The prime goal of cinéma vérité is veracity; the filmmaker wants to convey the illusion that the viewer is seeing the unvarnished truth.

Film noir (French for "dark film") describes a kind of film made in Hollywood in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It presents an urban environment of corruption and crime that is brutal and violent. The settings are bleak with heavy shadows and sharp black-and-white contrasts. Much of the imagery is nocturnal, with light reflecting from rain-slicked streets. **Film noir** grew from the detective novels of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, taking on the techniques of the **German Expressionists** and influenced by American gangster and horror films. It also grew from the mental state of the country at a time when McCarthyism and the fear of Communism created a climate of fear and repression. The films do not have common characters, plots, or themes but rather share a cynical attitude about human nature and a visual style. They deal with the underside of human behavior: deception, brutality, betrayal, neurosis. Some key directors and films: Billy Wilder (*Double Indemnity*), Otto Preminger (*Laura*), Robert Siodmak (*The Killers*), Howard Hawks (*The Big Sleep*), Raoul Walsh (*White Heat*), and John Huston (*The Maltese Falcon*). Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* is often considered the first film to use many of the techniques of film noir.

German Expressionism grew from efforts in Germany to bring to cinema the principles of Expressionist art (realized in the works of artists like Edvard Munch, Oskar Kokoschka, Max Beckmann, Emil Nolde, George Grosz, and Kathe Kollwitz). In film, **expressionism** relies on mise-en-scène to suggest internal psychological states. Expressionists thought that internal states could be manifested in

the image rather than simply by an actor's portrayal. As Edvard Munch once said, "For realism, it was the facade that counted; for impressionism, the character. Now it is shadows and movements." Filmmakers tried to realize the shadows and movements with lighting tied to sets that were often bizarre, angular, and distorted. Expressionists are not especially concerned that an environment look realistic but instead work for mood and atmosphere. Other techniques used by filmmakers include use of curved or non-parallel lines, subjective (usually moving) camera, bizarre costuming and make-up, and stylized acting. These films often created dreamlike--even nightmarish--worlds. The first Expressionist film was Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Other directors and films include F.W. Murnau (*Nosferatu*) and Fritz Lang (*M* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*). The primary importance of Expressionism today is its influence on horror films and on film noir. Its influence can also been seen in the films of Orson Welles and Ingmar Bergman.

Neorealism began in Italy immediately after the Second World War. It used authentic settings, showed the lives of ordinary people (played often by nonprofessional actors), portrayed realistic social problems in ways that emphasized the patterns of daily life, and relied on simple episodic plots revealed by unobtrusive camera and editing techniques. Although acted, the films looked like documentaries. Directors like Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni were strongly influenced by the movement, although they have gone on to other approaches. Some key directors and films: Roberto Rossellini (*Open City*--considered the first Neorealist film--and *Paisan*); Vittorio De Sica (*Shoeshine*, *Bicycle Thief*, *Umberto D*, and *Miracle in Milan*), Luchino Visconti (*Ossessione* and *La Terra Trema*).

The New Wave (**Nouvelle Vague**) began in the late 1950s in France with the efforts of a group of young filmmakers to try new techniques and subjects. Most of these filmmakers wrote for the French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*. They rejected the ideas of the French film establishment and were both deeply knowledgeable about and devoted to American films and film directors. They saw a new vision for the director of films as the **auteur** or "author" in the sense of the director being the controlling force of a film. (Previously, directors had been relatively unnoticed, especially by filmgoers, in favor of actors. The French changed American attitudes and awareness of directors.) Although the various directors in this movement had individual approaches, they share

certain qualities: plots that are loose and innovative, primarily location or exterior shooting, an irreverent and somewhat unsentimental treatment of character, use of lightweight cameras and equipment allowing spontaneous and sometimes improvised shooting, unusual editing and use of film space and time, and often extensive camera movement, including hand-held camera, with long takes. While these directors often inserted allusions to other films, they also displayed a good deal of humor and playfulness. Some key directors and films: François Truffaut (*Shoot the Piano Player*, *The 400 Blows*, and *Jules and Jim*), Alain Resnais (*Last Year at Marienbad* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour*), and Jean-Luc Godard (*Breathless* and *My Life to Live*).

Surrealism began in France in the mid-1920s in literature, painting, and film. Drawing on the ideas of Freud, especially related to the powers of dreams and the unconscious, Surrealists tried to produce an art not directly tied to reason and logic. The goal was an expression of the mind without the strictures of judgment, morality, or preconceived ideas about art. Dreams and the unconscious were considered to be what is ultimately real. The distinctions between inner and outer reality were collapsed, disrupting normal notions of cause and effect (especially in the absence of conventional plots). The goal of Surrealist art was to record the perceptions of the unconscious, bypassing narrative. Surrealist filmmakers used whatever techniques might show the mind in unconscious motion, from jump-cutting to match editing. The most famous example is *Un Chien Andalou* by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. Most surrealist efforts are now confined to films trying briefly to display mental states, but some films like Jean Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast* or Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* rely on the basic tenets of surrealism.

More Film Terms—Read and Learn These as Part of Chapter 5

Gauge: the width of a piece of film, measured in millimeters. Standard film **gauges** are 8mm (including super-8), 16mm, 35mm, and 70mm, with most theatrical films released in 35mm.

Most amateur filmmakers used 8mm and Super-8 until the development of camcorders. (Super-8 used smaller perforations to allow a 50% larger image and a better soundtrack.) Although 16mm was initially used by affluent amateurs, it became the gauge of choice for documentary, educational, experimental, independent, and television films. The use of 16mm seriously declined in the

1980s and 1990s with the rise of various formats of videotape. Both television and feature films still rely on 35mm film, but occasionally a film is released or re-released on 70mm (such as *Lawrence of Arabia*). Over time, 35mm has proven the most durable format because of the high quality of the image; the larger 70mm format offers a higher quality than 35mm, but the increased production cost and difficulty have kept 35mm the dominant gauge.

Trucking shot: any moving shot taken from a moving vehicle rather than from a dolly.

Hand-held camera: a shot taken with a portable camera held by the operator.

A shot taken with **hand-held camera** lacks the steadiness provided by a tripod and suggests the on-the-spot effect of news cameras (which were, by necessity, hand-held). In a movie, these shots can add to the sense of realism in action scenes or convey a sense of subjective camera.

The development of the Steadicam (a trade name for a mechanism using gyroscopes to keep a camera steady during hand-held shots) allows many of the dynamic effects of hand-held camera without the distracting jiggles.

Objective camera: a way of making the camera seem to be a detached recorder of the events taking place in front of it.

With **objective camera**, the point of view appears neutral and the camera reveals events in ways not calling attention to itself. Hence, the camera will not move or will move minimally, nor will it appear to share any character's perspective of a scene. The camera remains an unconnected observer, rather than a participant, in whatever action occurs.

Oblique-angle shot: a shot in which the camera is tilted to the left or right.

If you were to hold a camera firmly in front of your face and then cock your head to one side, the tilted image you see would be an **oblique-angle shot**. When seen on the screen, this shot skews the scene's objects and characters, often causing viewers to feel disoriented or confused.

Oblique-angle shots are often used in scenes of drunkenness or hallucination to capture a character's state of mind, or in fight scenes to evoke tension in the viewer. An oblique angle can also intensify a scene. For example, a camera angled to make a hill look steeper makes the efforts of a man climbing the hill seem that much more impressive. Emphasizing the steepness of someone moving downhill intensifies the feeling of danger.

Available light: light coming from normal sources of illumination.

Available light can be either natural (the sun) or artificial (the lamps in a living room). Shots taken out-of-doors are usually shot with available light, as are the night scenes of a city.

Kicker light: light placed behind or to the side of a subject.

A **kicker light** hits the subject at an angle opposite the key light. It "rims" (outlines) the subject, pulling it away from the background and providing a sense of depth and definition.

Out-take: a take that is not included in the final version of a film.

Library (stock) shot: Any shot not taken for a particular film but used in it.

The large libraries of stock shots provide footage that is used so often that there would be no reason to shoot it each time (e.g., shots of jets taking off). Also, libraries contain footage of historical events than can be added to a film.

Process shot: A shot joining one foreground action with a separately filmed background.

A **process shot** can be created by placing an action in front of a scene projected from the rear onto a translucent screen, or by shooting an action against a single-colored background (usually blue) and then adding the background later.

Rear projection: The process of projecting an image onto a translucent screen from the back side.

Filmmakers use rear projection to film an action against a

projected background, thus recording on film both the stage action and the rear-projected image. (See process shot.)

Trailer: A short segment of film that theaters use to advertise a feature film.

Usually, trailers last from one to three minutes and include shots from the film being advertised. At one point in film history, these short films came after ("trailed") the feature.

Storyboard (continuity sketches): A series of sketches (resembling a cartoon strip) showing potential ways various shots might be filmed. Storyboards help filmmakers visualize and plan a film, and save time by clarifying the setups and movements of the camera(s) which will be needed during shooting.

Auteur: Some critics regard the director as the closest thing to an "author" of a film because he or she has primary creative control and responsibility for the final product. A director who uses a distinctive cinematic style and who develops related themes over a range of films is called an **auteur** (French for "author"). The auteur theory insists that a film be considered in terms of the entire canon of a director and that each auteur earns that title by displaying a unique cinematic approach.