The Analysis of Short Film Shooting and Editing Techniques
Based on the Original Short Film "Home"

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Abstract. Inspired by an original short film named "Home", the author wished to explore how different shooting and editing techniques can contribute to a short film. The aim of the research is to investigate and analyze the effects of different shooting and editing techniques that are applicable to short films. The author first explored this topic by doing research and reading related papers and books on the Internet. A hypothesis is then drawn, and next the author went back to relate to the research background and looked for further evidence in the original film named "Home". A detailed analysis is conducted on the short film "Home", including its shooting and editing techniques, its music, and its production process. The author concluded that various shooting, including different camera angles and lighting techniques, and editing techniques can have a momentous impact on the final product, helping capture the audience's attention and clarify and emphasize the main theme of the movie. This is especially true for short films like "Home" that only last for a few minutes, as these techniques really help convey a central theme and add diversity in this very limited time.

Keywords: short films · shooting · editing · theme · diversity

1 Introduction

"Even if all you do is to record what is in front of the camera, you are still making a definite decision of how the audience is going to perceive the scene" [1]. This shows how important shooting can be to a movie, even if it's simply recording. Using various shooting techniques and finding useful camera angles is thus necessary to producing a movie that captures the audience's eyes and having them perceive the scene in the right way a director wants them to. The same thing applies to editing, which is to put together and organize what is shot in the camera into a logical, attractive, and meaningful movie that the audience can comprehend. The goal of this paper is thus to investigate the influence of different shooting and editing techniques on films, especially on short films.

The themes of the short movie "Home" are based on two keywords – family and love. After creating the storyboard, finding the cast, and designing the setting, the production began. There were many trial shots during the shooting process, as seeing and comparing the diverse scenes created by using different camera angles, different lighting, and

different settings was a primary goal during shooting. After the shooting process, there were lots of clips and materials that could be used for later editing processes. But before editing, a hyphenate had to clear out the mind and become solely an editor during editing. So a week of the break was taken, and then began the editing process, which required choosing music and footage, editing clips, and employing the editing techniques that were learned during lectures and books. The short film "Home" was finished within a month.

After the short film was completed, the author was inspired to research into the effects of shooting and editing techniques that can be created on short films, which include but are not limited to clarifying and emphasizing themes and capturing the audience's attention. The research methods are the case study and the analysis of papers and documents. The first part of the research includes doing research on the Internet and reading books. Then further evidence was found in the short film "Home", which is mainly to recall and analyze the shooting and editing strategies, to support the hypothesis. One significant and central strategy that links the whole film together is the change of emotions throughout the film, which is also known as an emotional bridge. As Walter Murch once mentioned in his lectures on film editing, which were later written in the book "In the Blink of An Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing", what the audience finally remembers after watching a film is not the editing, but "how they feel" [2]. Emotion is regarded to be even more important than the story and the rhythm of the film. The idea of how shooting and editing strategies influence the conveying of emotion will also be discussed in the paper.

Short films need to do what normal films do in hours – presenting a complete and attractive story – in a few seconds. It is important for the production crew to use different strategies to add diversity and intriguing details to the film and make the story whole in a unique way. Thus, the goal and meaning of this paper is to inform the readers about how to use various shooting and editing techniques to present a whole and meaningful story in short films.

2   The Introduction of the Short Film "Home"

The three-minute short film depicts a story where a family experiences a change – one of the family members leaves. The change about that leaving a family member or who she is is not specified. But there are some hints and a subtext beneath the whole film suggesting that the leaving family member is their older daughter. For the rest of the family, their life continues without that person. But this change still greatly impacts the family emotionally. At the very end of the film, the family receives a package from the person who left. There are gifts and letters in that package. The family will feel the love and support and understand that the person is still with them and accompanying them in a different way.

There is an emotional bridge in the film that allows the audience to feel the change in emotions and atmosphere in this family, which is one of the key points that help prompt this film and move it along. What is being conveyed in this film is that a family will be unlikely to be together forever. People come and go, and things change within a family. But what really keeps a family bonded together is the unconditional support and love

among family members. Sometimes it is not about the actual people. It is about what they give, what they leave behind or represent that impacts and bonds a family together. Distance, time, or even death does not change the love among a family.

3   What is Within the Camera

What goes on in the camera is crucial to the whole film. Since the audience only sees what the film crew decides to show him or her, selectivity and strategy are the basis of all camera work [3]. The following section will discuss this selectivity from the aspects of lighting and shooting techniques.

3.1   Lighting Techniques

According to Alex Depew, if used properly, film lighting techniques can be essential in creating stylized and natural-looking film scenes [4]. The proper use of different lights, even at home, is sometimes even effective in indicating and building an emotional bridge that transitions from one stage of the film to another. The general use of lighting techniques used throughout the short film "Home" is that before receiving the package, little light is employed. It is either dark or hard light, suggesting a gloomy and depressing atmosphere in the house. But after receiving the package, the house lights up. There is a lot of use of warm and yellow light towards the end of the film, especially in the dinner scene, where everything brightens up. This suggests a harmonic, hopeful, and peaceful atmosphere, which greatly differs from the previous stage of the film, thus helping emphasize this emotional bridge.

3.2   Shooting Techniques

One key shooting technique is to employ various camera shots effectively throughout the film, which helps to add diversity and clarify the theme. To begin with, various and proper camera shots can help capture the audience's attention and lead to what happens next. For example, in the very first scene of the short movie "Home", the camera focuses on the rusty chair in the front instead of the car that is parked behind. This is a very interesting camera shot because it intriguingly indicates a sense of abandonment with that rusty chair in the front but still captures what's mainly going on in the scene—a car is parked. This captures the audience's attention by giving them enough hints to become curious about the story but not too much to reveal everything. Another example of this is the scene in which the green leaves are dripping water. That scene is intriguing because it transits well from the last scene of the girl smashing all the blocks. It also leads to what happens next—the mother is watering the plant—as it makes the audience wonder why there is water dripping down the leaves of a plant.

Furthermore, different camera shots also help emphasize certain details or aspects that the director wants the audience to notice, thus helping to clarify the theme of the whole film. For example, there is a close-up shot of the content of the letter and who wrote the letter, thus helping explain why the family is happy to receive the package and

giving a nice subtext of the film – perhaps the person who is shooting and editing the film is the one missing in the family.

What's more, various camera shots also help convey different emotions during different parts of the film, thus moving its plot and giving a smooth transition to the story. One example of a camera shot used effectively to convey emotions is the scene after the title "Home" appears, where the camera is put inside the fridge, and as the mother opens the doors of the fridge, the story goes on. It helps convey a sense of tiredness and sadness as the audience can directly interpret these emotions from her facial expression, her signs, and her slow movement as the mother opens and closes the fridge. Another effective camera shot that helps convey emotions is a point-of-view shot of the father after he turns on the light. The audience sees the empty room from the perspective of the father, thus emphasizing the loneliness and sadness the father feels when he turns on the light and sees nobody but an empty room. This is an especially strong camera shot that helps convey emotions because it pulls the audience directly into the movie as one of the characters. Another effective show of emotions through various camera shots is the following wide shot where the camera shows the view of the father sitting alone beside the bed inside the dark room, staring into the dark hollow sky, and then slowly moving upwards to the ceiling. Loneliness, hollowness, and frustrations are conveyed through the single figure of the father in the middle of the dark room. It also helps lead to what happens next by moving the camera up to the ceiling, indicating that this is about to end and something new is happening. It effectively sets up for the climax of that emotional bridge throughout the film. Then there is a low angle shot, where the camera is put inside the box when the family is opening the package, which helps convey how the family is surprised and happy to see everything inside the package. It helps indicate and signify an emotional change that greatly differs from the loneliness and depressing feeling in the scene before. It adds intensity to this part of the film and leads the film to its climax. And the wide shot of the whole family having dinner together at the very end helps finish the emotional bridge by emphasizing a harmonic atmosphere and the positive emotional change of the family after receiving the letter and the presents. These little threads of emotions conveyed by different camera angles help set up and finish the emotional bridge throughout the film, making the film more whole and unveiling the central theme.

4   What is Outside the Camera

According to Valerie Orpen, editing includes three stages – "the selection of takes and their lengths; the arrangement and timing of shots, scenes, and sequences; and their combination with soundtrack" [5]. In this paper, editing will be discussed from both three stages, especially the second and third stages.

4.1   What was Done Before Editing the Short Film "Home"

When it comes to editing, Edward Dymtryk once wrote that in order to produce a true masterpiece, it is important for the whole crew – "from the camera assistant to the producer and the director" – to understand film editing and everything about the film

they are working on [6]. But for a team that is composed of only one person, knowing too much about everything in the film might not be that helpful.

"Less is More". This is the perfect motto for hyphenate, someone who works as a team by oneself. Usually, an editor does not participate in the composition and shooting of the films. They receive materials, select clips and their lengths, and edit them. But oftentimes for a hyphenate, he or she probably does the job of a producer, a writer, a director, a cinematographer, a camera operator, and an editor. Doing multiple jobs during the whole production, a hyphenate knows perfectly well what happens and what is expected to happen in the film to convey the theme. In other words, it is tough for a hyphenate to edit the film solely through the eyes of an editor. One's prior experience of directing and shooting the film would directly influence editing choices that one makes, sometimes without even noticing. The final product may be produced with bias and personal expectation and experience by the hyphenate, thus producing a final piece that might make perfect sense for the editor oneself but confusing for the audience.

There are some tips for a hyphenate to edit solely through the eyes of an editor. Firstly, it is helpful to be the audience. In order to be the audience, the editor needs to be completely (of course, in the context of a hyphenate, this is impossible) or almost, unfamiliar with the editing materials that he or she is about to work with. After all the shooting is done, the hyphenate can try to take a break, to take one's mind off the production of the film and to forget about one's prior experience as the camera person and the director. It might be helpful to travel, to try new things, or to occupy oneself with another difficult task. Then after the long break, the hyphenate should come back as solely the editor and to work with the materials as if they were new to him. Another tip that helps to edit solely as the editor is to take trials and advice. Indeed, it is very difficult for a hyphenate to edit without any personal judgment, expectation, or bias resulting from previous experience in production. But it is always possible to have some new audience, people who are completely new to this film and are thus capable of viewing the film with neutrality. The new audience can be one's family, one's teachers, or one's friends, anyone that is unfamiliar with the editing materials and the script. Let them watch the first rough cut and see what they think about it. Does it make sense to them? Consider their advice when improving the second rough cut, and then show it to another group of new audience. The process goes on and on until one is perfectly satisfied with the final production that is unaffected by the editor's personal experience and judgment.

4.2 Editing Techniques

Editing techniques include timing, pace, and rhythm, continuity, and sound editing [7]. Employing different editing techniques effectively can help bring various camera shots together into a whole story that both has a smooth-moving plot and a clear theme. For example, the use of parallel action – cutting different actions of different people – is an intriguing editing technique that can sometimes help relate camera shots based on their common characteristics and reveal a growing relationship. In the short film "Home", the use of parallel action helps convey the message that the three family members are busy with their own life but at the same time, all miss the person who left.

But when to decide whether an editing technique is needed and effective? The key is to incorporate different shots into a whole without losing its key elements. In other words,

the key is to determine where to "cut". Very smooth cuts and shots transition effects, such as dissolves and wipes, are key to the wholeness of a story and the experience of the audience watching the movie [8]. In most cases, it is best to avoid jump cuts – unnecessary cuts that distort the film and interrupt the experience of the audience. An effective cut must give a smooth transition from shots to shots. The audience should feel that they are watching a whole film instead of watching separate clips of footage that are poorly put together. It would also help if the cut can match the emotional change or the varying intensity throughout the film. What's more, effective cuts can help to shorten the time of the film, losing the unnecessary or repeated images that are taking too much time. In this case, time eclipses is an effective technique that helps to convey a whole story that is both short and interesting to watch. For example, in the short film "Home", the scene of the family opening the package is cut right behind the scene of the mother answering the door and discovering the package. This helps lose the unnecessary images between these two scenes that the audience can infer from these two scenes, such as carrying the package back home and closing the door.

4.3 The Power of Music

It is always powerful when the visual and auditory senses are combined together. The "emotional appraisal" of the movie is emphasized by the musical background [9]. The film is improved when different cuts of the short film can match the rhythm of the background music. In the short film "Home", for example, a cut is always matched with the sound of plucking a guitar string.

Moreover, music and film are additives [10]. The transition of different music can also imply a change of character or emotion and thus help reinforce the emotional bridge built in the story. Before the family receives the package and the letters, the song "Walk Over You" by Piers Faccini is employed. This is a slow and quiet song that suggests a person coming towards the one he or she loves so that they are no longer apart. This song matches the loneliness and sadness of losing one's loved one in the first part of the film. For the second stage of the film, which is after the family receives that package and experiences an emotional uplift, the song "Anew (Acoustic)" by Hollow Coves is employed. This is a lighter and brighter song that indicates hopes for coming home, which perfectly matches the theme of the whole film, especially the second part. By choosing two different songs that offer different contexts and emotions, the emotional bridge and central theme of the film is clarified and emphasized.

5 Conclusion

Overall, the short film "Home" is completed using various shooting and editing techniques, leading to the research, hypothesis, and conclusion regarding the effects of different shooting and editing techniques on films, especially short films. Based on the case study and the analysis of papers and documents by previous scholars, it is found that employing various shooting and editing techniques helps capture the audience's attention, clarify and emphasize the overall theme of the film, and finally build a meaningful emotional bridge.

What needs to be mentioned is that improvements can still be made regarding the short film "Home". For example, the movie only lasts for 2 min and 51 s. Despite that various shooting and editing decisions make it whole and meaningful on some level, the film can be more intriguing if more shooting materials were edited into the film in a suitable way. It's never a bad thing to have more details, as they only diversify and add flavor to the previous film. Some of the cuts could be made smoother during editing. Natural and even invisible cuts can really improve the film and give the audience the feeling that they are not watching the film, but inside of it, experiencing and living everything.

The goal of this paper is to help people understand how various shooting and editing strategies can help better a film by emphasizing its theme and effectively conveying emotions. There are still many other shooting and editing techniques that are not mentioned in this paper and waiting to be further employed and explored. There is a whole world inside of a camera, but also outside of it in the eyes of an editor.

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