

Journalism 101
Professor T. Jackson
Chapter 8
Due: November 15

Assignment 1 - Short Videos

Video 1- Eadweard Muybridge – horse in motion

The very basic idea of capturing motion on film has proven to be the basis for multiple huge industries. This short clip has, at its core, the very basic idea of moving pictures - record something so that it can be replayed later. It was a pivotal piece in the development of motion pictures, and one of the very first examples of this developing technology.

Video 2 - Thomas Edison – blacksmith scene

When I first viewed this short film, I was under the impression that it was merely a clip of some blacksmiths working. I was shocked to find out that it was actually scripted and acted, and was in fact filmed with the intent of being shown publicly. To me, this means the idea of producing films for entertainment purposes happened extremely early during the development of motion pictures, and that continues even today - that film is primarily a vehicle for entertainment.

Video 3 - Exiting the Factory

This clip was not as interesting. I suppose that the argument could be made that it is one of the earliest ideas of a documentary type of film - showing real people in their lives, doing what they would normally do, and I suppose that early on, the technology took precedence over the content. In addition, online there are multiple claims that this is the first ‘film’, perhaps alluding to the technology used, as opposed to the first ever ‘moving picture’, which clearly had happened earlier.

Video 4 - Lumiere Brothers Early Movies

These movies were interesting on several accounts - the quality of some of the films seems a great deal higher than the very first movies, there is the addition of music, and the content stands out. In one of the films, there is gambling, smoking and drinking. Some of the films (such as the boy standing on the hose) are clearly played off for humor, and were likely scripted - leading to the continuing development of fiction on film.

Video 5 - George Melies – A Trip to the Moon

This film is a masterpiece and hugely epic. Science Fiction was hugely popular then as it is today, with such well known authors as Jules Verne and HG Wells at their peak. It makes perfect sense that filmmakers of the time would venture into making science fiction films. The production values for this film are clearly higher than some of the previous films, with special effects, multiple sets, costumes and other things that we consider to be standard today. This film sets a very high bar for filmmaking of the era, raising the standards as well as being a fascinating foray into the Science Fiction genre of the era. In addition, I like the subtle humor of the “man in the moon” being poked in the eye.

Video 6 - The Great Train Robbery

Here we see the continuing idea of movies being made for entertainment, and in addition, the branching out into a different genre - Westerns. The idea that murders were shown on screen, despite their comedic acting shows that the boundaries of what to show have not been entirely defined yet. In addition, there are several special effects that are shown here that I find interesting - most notably the moving background outside the train car.

Video 7 - Jaws 1975 Trailer

In only 3 minutes, this trailer manages to instill in me a sense of dread and fear. It blends together implied violence, scary music and a terrifying voiceover at the beginning, and then only gets worse. In addition to being a horror/suspense movie, this trailer evokes lots of emotion, and, despite the fear, draws people to the interest of the film. It brings up questions: What happens? Who gets eaten? Does the shark get killed? Today, many trailers follow the same pattern.

Video 8 - Star Wars: Episode II

Note: I was unable to view this video on Youtube, but did listen to the mp3, and have seen the movie.

Star Wars, the entire trilogy, but especially the first installment in 1977, made huge advances in special effects and the use of post-production effects for films. In addition to being an epic milestone in science-fiction, we see again (just as in 'A Trip To The Moon') that the bar is being raised. Star Wars, even to this day is praised as a classic and has effected most science fiction movies since - forcing a raising of production values and spawned a massive dedicated industry for special effects (lead by LucasArts for many years, directly as a result of the Star Wars films).

Video 9 - It Happened One Night – lack of undershirt

Here we can see an obvious pushing of boundaries. Since this movie was released in 1934, it was one of the last movies that was not subject to the “Hays Code”, or as it was later referred to: the “Production Code” - a ‘suggested’ moral code for the production of movies. Although the code was strict, it was self-imposed by the film studios, and was not enacted by any authority. The idea of showing a man with a bare top, especially in the state of undressing would have been absolutely prohibited in the later part of the 1930’s.

Video 10 - Rhett and Scarlett push the limits of code

Just as in 'It Happened One Night', we see a huge epic film that pushes the very edge of the Production Code. In fact, we see that this has more insidious meanings than it would appear - at the time, we find that the word “damn” would have been disallowed, especially in such a harsh, raw way. However, because it was such a high budget film and there was so much money behind it, there was an exception passed to the Hays Code in 1939 such that it would be allowed in this specific context.¹ Sadly, this has been the case going forward: with enough money, most rules can be bent.

¹ <http://books.google.com/books?id=bkU7CKBubgMC&pg=PA108#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Assignment 2 - Product Placement Movie - You've Got Mail (1998)

AOL - Shown during, Logging on, email multiple times, and even the title is a reference to AOL's catchphrase: "You've Got Mail".

Apple - Meg Ryan's character uses an Apple Laptop

Random House books (mentioned prominently in conversation).

Starbucks Coffee (recurring multiple times, stores are shown, frequently seen in characters hands, slow pans across the logo, part of a diatribe by Tom Hanks' character.)

3M Scotch Tape - shown being used and Meg Ryan's character comments on the smell.

L'Occitane Store - prominently displayed next to book shop

Stolichnaya Vodka, Tanqueray Gin, Heineken - shown in a bar.

Lincoln - A Town Car is displayed as Dabney Coleman's car.

Evian Water - displayed in Meg Ryan's apartment

Home Shopping Network - mentioned in discussion, Meg Ryan's character is watching it.