

Video Essentials, Part I:

**STORYTELLING,  
DOCUMENTING,  
& MOVIEMAKING**

Devin Curry

# INTRODUCTION



*Boogie Nights* (1997) - dir. Paul Thomas Anderson

# APPROACHING VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

- Video documentation is the process of creating a record of a project or idea you are working on.
- A good way to approach your documentation is to **tell a story** about your project.

# MOVIES ARE AWESOME!

- This medium has the ability to document life with a combination of images, motion, and sound.
- **Cinematography** and other crafts can make an emotional and aesthetic impact in a scene.
- **Editing** allows us to show the audience what they need to see, when they need to see it.

# THE LANGUAGE OF MOVING IMAGES

# COVERAGE

- **Coverage** refers to the shots/camera angles you need to capture (and subsequently edit) a scene.
- Commonly used shot types have names for easy logging and identification.

# ESTABLISHING SHOT



*Casablanca* (1942) - dir. Michael Curtiz

# MASTER SHOT



# OVER THE SHOULDER



# SINGLE (CLOSEUP)



# WHAT A SHOT LIST LOOKS LIKE



1



1A



1B



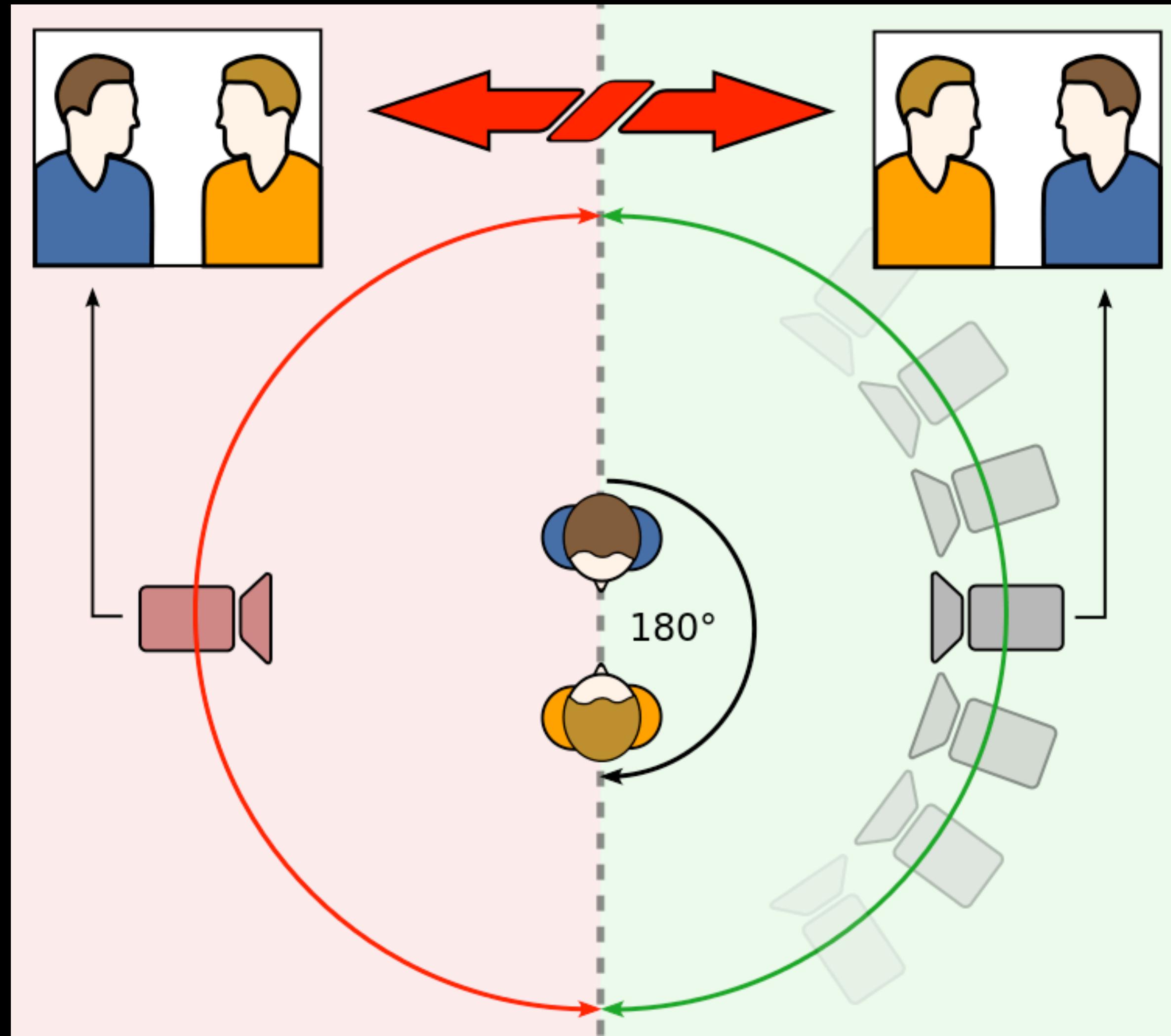
1C



1D

- 1** MASTER: 2 shot of Rick & Ilsa talking
- 1A** OVER: Medium on Rick talking to Ilsa
- 1B** MEDIUM CLOSEUP: Rick talking
- 1C** OVER: Medium on Ilsa talking to Rick
- 1D** CLOSEUP: Ilsa talking

# SCREEN DIRECTION



# THE POWER OF CAMERA ANGLES



*The Terminator* (1984)  
dir. James Cameron

- **Low angles** can make someone look powerful or dominant
- **Neutral angles** good for start of a scene and for interviews
- **High angles** can make someone look weak or submissive

# PLANNING YOUR SHOTS

- **Storyboards** are a valuable tool for figuring out how to tell your story visually.
- Create a **shot list** so you know which camera angles you will need to shoot.
- In this stage, you have to think like an editor and envision how the pieces will fit together.

OVER BLACK:

1 INT. WAREHOUSE, HOLDING CELL - DAY 1

Everything is black, but HEAVY BREATHING can be heard nearby.

P.O.V. through a dark hood. Suddenly, the hood is lifted, revealing a chain link cage in a dark corner of a vast warehouse. The man who removed the hood is BUTCH, the tough, grizzled leader of the rescue team. He wears dark, tactical clothes.

BUTCH

I'm getting you outta here. Can  
you walk?

REVEAL the prisoner, FRANKLIN, a dorky-looking Asian twentysomething. He sits on a chair in the center of the room, his hands bound by zip ties. Franklin is a tangle of emotions - fear, surprise, and relief.

FRANKLIN

(disoriented)  
What...?

BUTCH

(impatient)  
Can you walk?

Butch uses a clipper tool to cut Franklin free.

FRANKLIN

Y-Yeah. I think so...

INTERCUT: Butch speaks into a small headset.

BUTCH

(into headset)  
Package secure.

CUT TO:

2 INT. VAN - DAY 2

DUCK is the team's computer expert and spotter. Oddly neurotic, Duck prefers to observe the action from a safe distance. His laptop and other surveillance equipment is set up in the rear cargo area of the van. Duck sits on a folding chair, staring at the glowing computer screen showing a SURVEILLANCE FEED of BAD GUYS in the warehouse.

# RESCUE TEAM

Name: Devin Curry

Date: 2-7-11



Sc. 1A

Pov - FRANKLIN

Butch removes the hood and the room slowly comes into focus  
"I'm getting you outta here...  
Can you walk?"



Sc. 1B

OVER ON FRANKLIN

"what?"



Sc. 1C

OVER ON BUTCH

Butch pulls out a knife.  
"Can you walk?"



Sc. 1D

WIDE on FRANKLIN

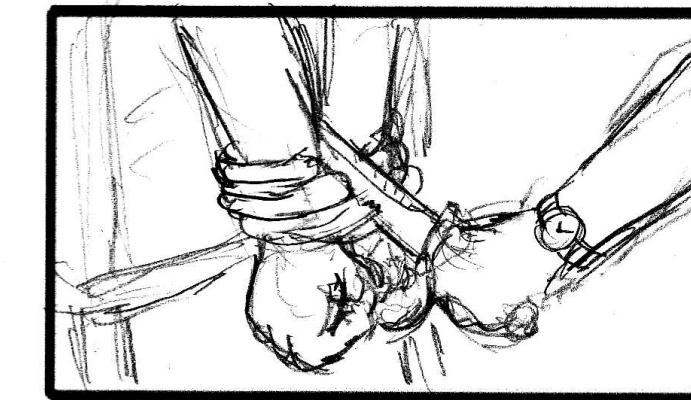
Butch moves behind Franklin  
to cut the ropes.  
"Y-yeah, I think so..."

①

# RESCUE TEAM

Name: Devin Curry

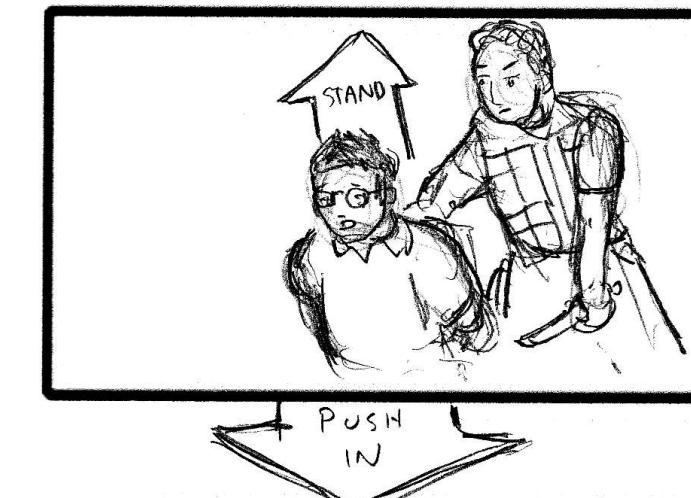
Date: 2-7-11



Sc. 1E

INSERT

Butch cuts Franklin's bonds



Sc. 1F

MED

Franklin is free and stands up

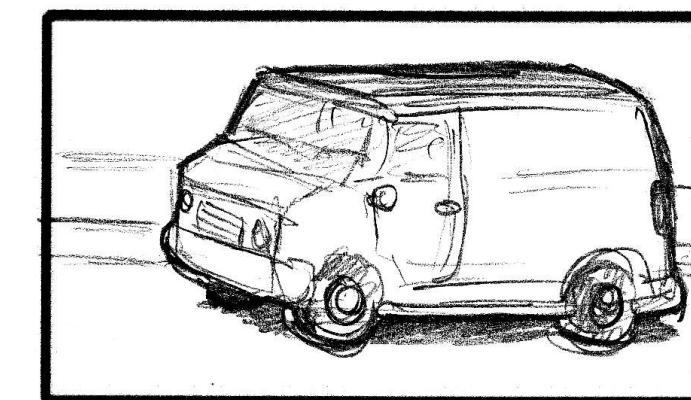


Sc. 1F

CLOSE

Push in on Butch and Franklin,  
who step closer.

"I've got the package"



Sc. 2

②



# RESCUE TEAM

Name: Devin Curry

Date: 2-7-11



Sc. 1A

POV - FRANKLIN

Butch removes the hood and the room slowly comes into focus  
"I'm getting you outta here...  
Can you walk?"



Sc. 1B

OVER on FRANKLIN

"What?"



Sc. 1C

OVER on BUTCH

Butch pulls out a knife.  
"Can you walk?"



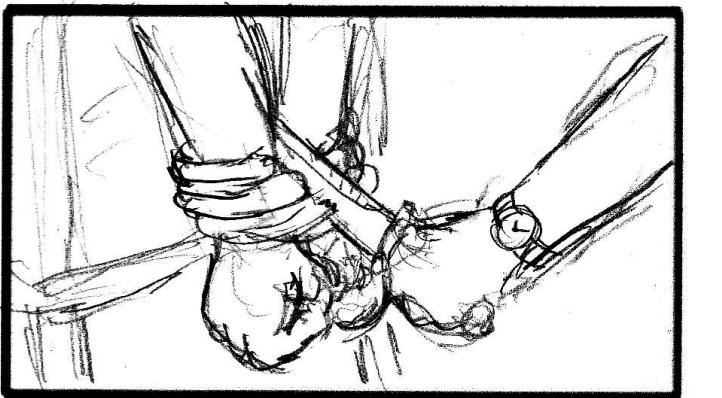
Sc. 1D

WIDE on FRANKLIN

Butch moves behind Franklin  
to cut the ropes.  
"Y-yeah, I think so..."

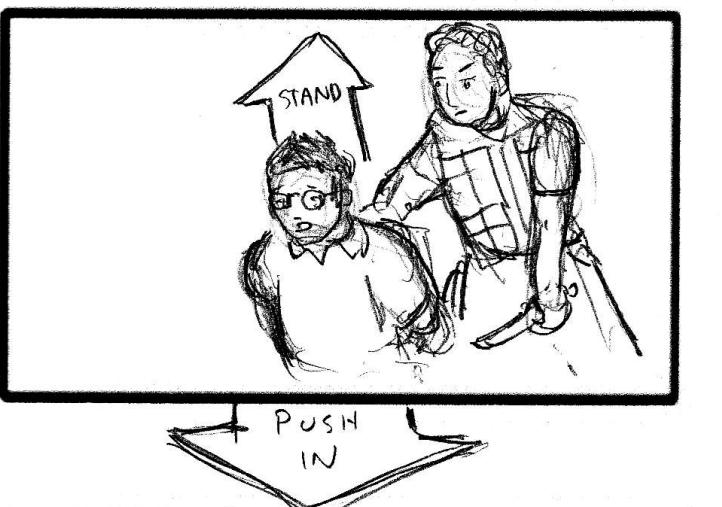
# RESCUE TEAM

Name: Devin Curry Date: 2-7-11

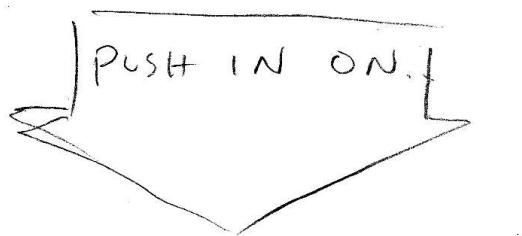


Sc. 1E  
INSERT

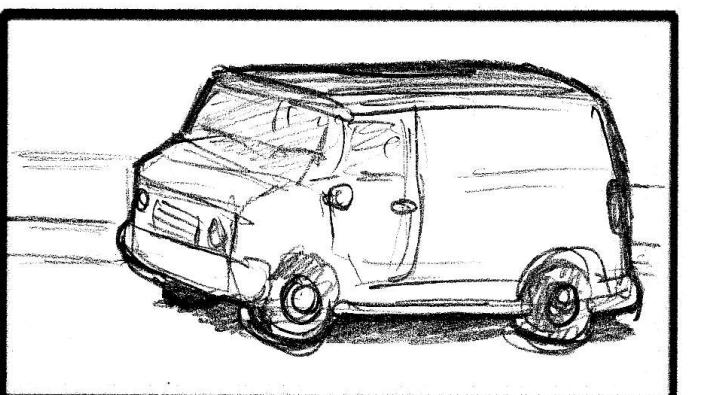
Butch cuts Franklin's bonds



Sc. 1F  
MED  
Franklin is free and stands up



Sc. 1F  
CLOSE  
Push in on Butch and Franklin,  
who step closer.  
"I've got the package"



Sc. 2

(2)

**OK, REALLY, HOW DO  
I STORYBOARD?**

# YOUR BOARDS SHOULD CONVEY...

- **Shot type** (master, over, single, etc.) - who/what are you showing?
- **Composition** - where are your subjects in the frame, and how much space do they take up (i.e. how close are they to the lens)?
- **Camera angle/height** - from where are you shooting your subjects?
- **Screen direction** - which way are people facing?

# TRY IT!

- **Scenario:** let's document someone interacting with a cool physical project and show how it works.

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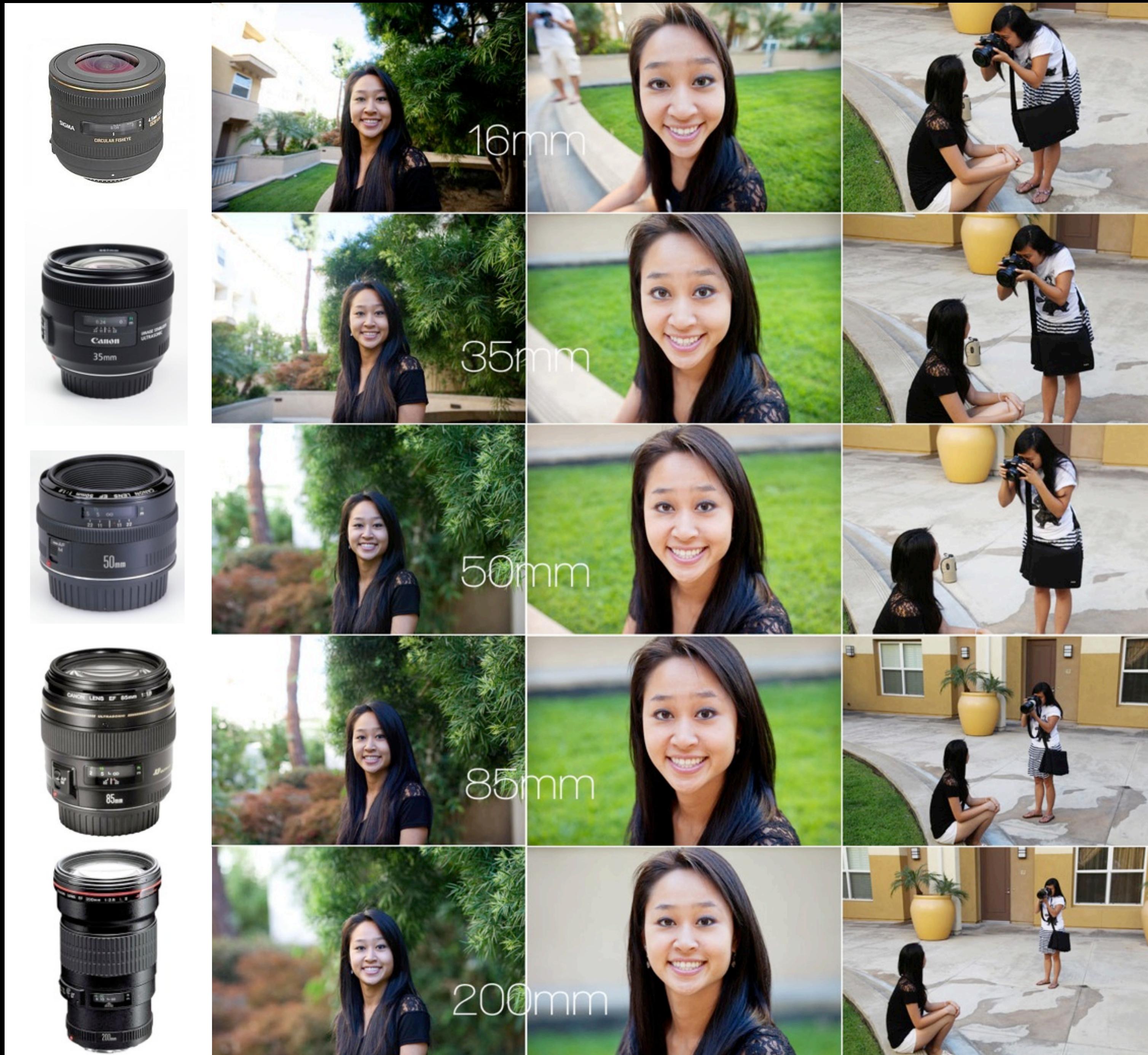
# STORYBOARDING TIPS & TRICKS

- Your storyboard drawings don't have to look like beautifully illustrated comic books; they just have to convey your shot choices clearly!
- Think about which shots you need to have versus which shots you'd like to have. This will help you prioritize when you go shoot.
- You don't have to follow your storyboards exactly! They are just a guide to help you.

**CAMERA & LIGHTING**

# CHOOSING YOUR LENS

- **Medium lenses** (i.e. 50mm) are versatile and most closely resemble what the human eye sees.
- **Long lenses** are good for shooting closeups
- **Wide angle lenses** provide better depth of field but can distort appearance of people in closeup



Source: Anna Wu Photography  
(annawu.com)

# ACCESSIBLE LIGHTING YOU CAN USE



# KILLER LIGHTING ACCESSORIES

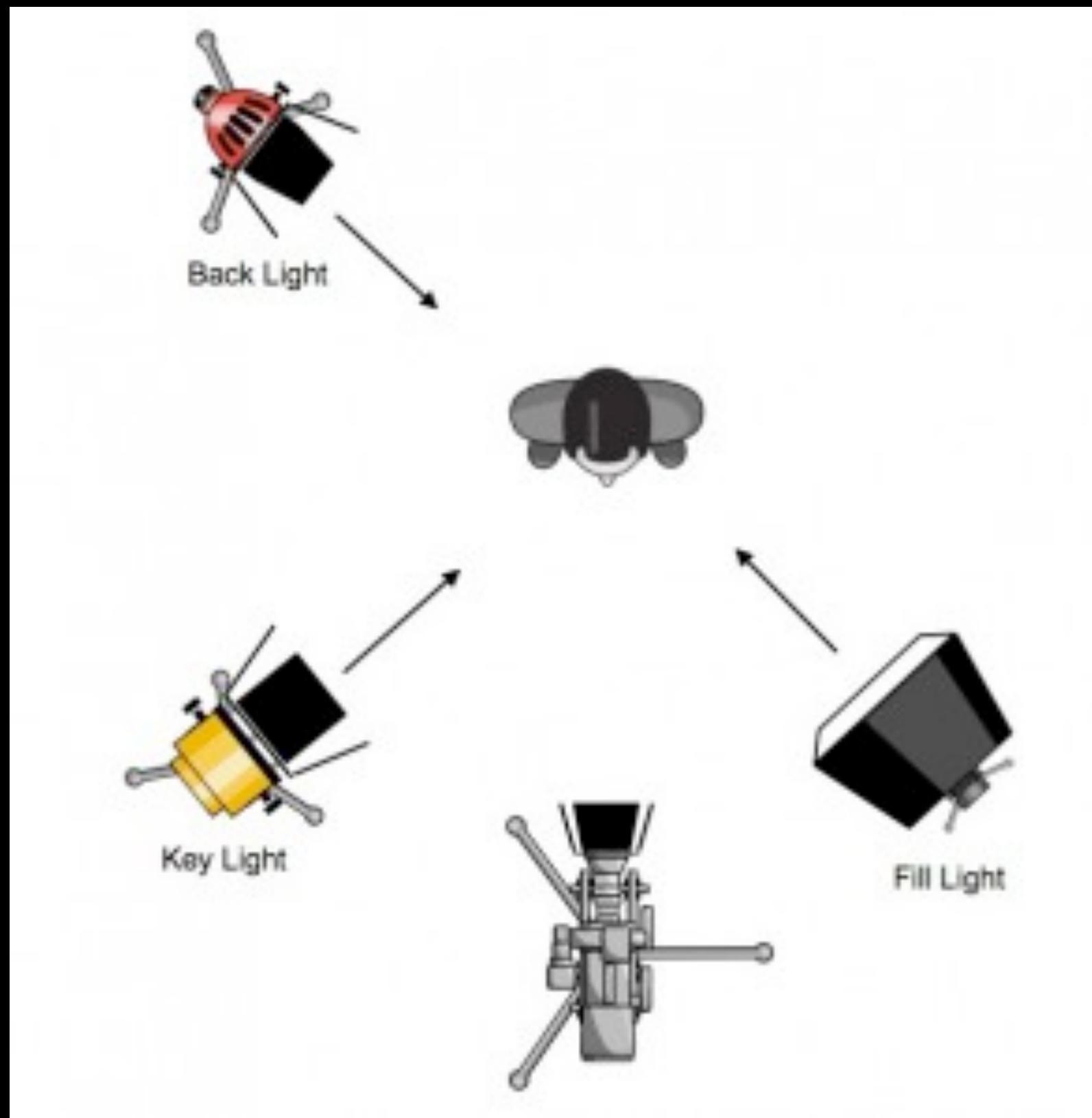


# CHECKING YOUR EQUIPMENT

- Does your tripod have the camera plate attached?
- Is the camera battery fully charged?
- Does the camera turn on?
- Is there a memory card in the camera? How many gigs of memory will you need for your shoot?
- Do all your lights turn on and have the right cables?
- What other accessories will you need?

**NOW WHAT?**

# THREE POINT LIGHTING



# LIGHTING TIPS & TRICKS

- If you think you're done lighting, try turning off one light. Sometimes, less is more.
- Flat, soft lighting is often good for interviews.
- When shooting outside, be wary of the sun's position and movement.

# FILMING HUMAN SUBJECTS

- The key for your actors is **matching action**. If they do things the same way in every take and every angle, it will make editing much easier.
- **Eyelines** are important for maintaining screen direction.
- Place **marks** on the ground to help your actors move to the right spot.
- If you can, always try to have your subject **enter** and **exit** the frame at the beginning and end of the shot. This helps IMMENSELY in editing.

# SLATING



- **Slating** will help you keep track of your footage during production and editing.
- Use this system: scene number, shot letter, take number. *Just like your shot list!*
- Use the “roll number” if you upload footage from multiple cards.



# RECORDING SOUND

# MICROPHONES



The **shotgun microphone** is great for most video production situations. They are also handy for recording voiceover later.



**Lavalier microphones** are usually wireless and can be clipped to a person if there is no other way to get close to them.

# RECORDING DEVICES



**Hardware recorders** are portable and can take microphone inputs or use their onboard microphones.



**Audio interfaces** allow you to plug microphones into your laptop for recording in software, making things easier for indoor shoots.



**Direct recording into your camera** is easier, but the sound quality is usually inferior to using external recorders.

# PRODUCTION SOUND TIPS & TRICKS

- Bad sound can make a good picture look bad.
- Position your shotgun mic overhead at the edge of frame, 45 degrees above the subject, with the mic pointing at the person's mouth. Check the edge of frame before shooting.
- It's always safer to record too softly than too loudly. Listen on headphones while you shoot to make sure there are no peaks.
- If you are not recording sound in camera, make sure to slate for sound: this means stating the shot name and clapping so you can sync the sound during editing.

# OUTDOOR SHOOTING TIPS & TRICKS

- If you're shooting a lot of material, it is hard to maintain visual continuity when the sun is moving from shot to shot.
- If you need more light on a subject, try a white bounce card. You don't need a fancy stand; just have someone hold it!
- Noise from cars, people, and especially aircraft can ruin your sound, even indoors. If something's noisy, wait until it passes.

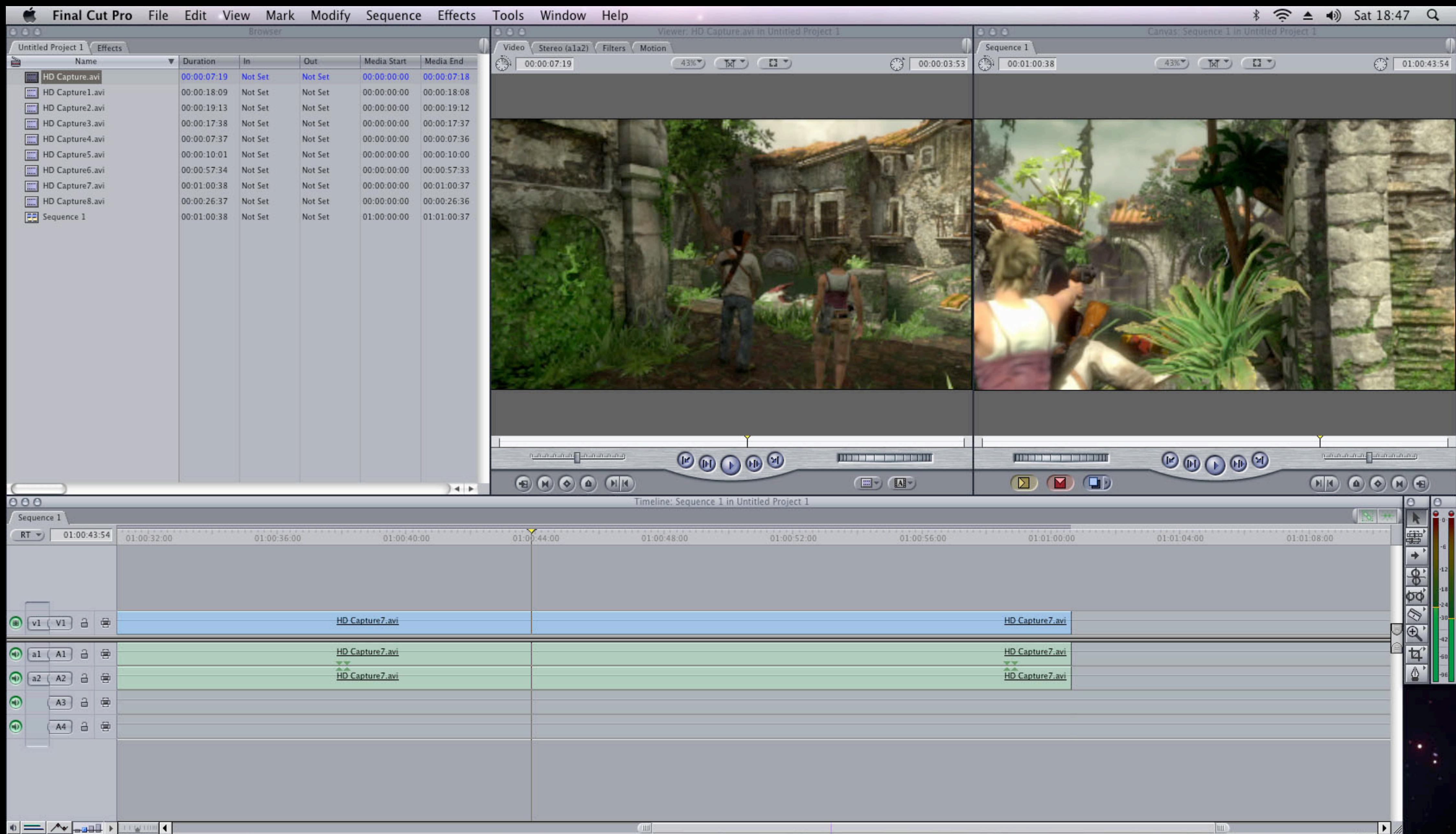
# SET SAFETY

- Safety is the most important thing.
- No shot is worth getting hurt over. There is always another way to get what you want without putting yourself, your collaborators, or your equipment at risk.
- Wear gloves when handling hot lights.
- Put sandbags on all your light stands so they don't tip over.
- Warn people when you're turning lights on or crossing in front of the lens.

# HOW TO STAY SANE DURING POST PRODUCTION

# HANDLING YOUR FOOTAGE

- Post production is a pretty challenging process, and it will make you miserable if you don't keep your files organized and safe.
- You'll need two hard drives: one to work off of, and (at least) one as a backup.
- Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere are popular editing softwares for consumers.





# **EDITING RULE #1:**

**BACK UP YOUR SHIT.**

Then back it up again.

## **EDITING RULE #2:**

**SAVE EARLY, SAVE OFTEN.**

Did you hit save yet? Good.

## **EDITING RULE #3:**

**PROTECT YOUR FOOTAGE. DON'T RENAME YOUR VIDEO FILES.**

You can log the clips safely in your editing software.  
After copying all the video files into a new folder, of course.

## **EDITING RULE #4:**

**CREATE A NEW SEQUENCE WHEN YOU MAKE CHANGES.**

Starting your day? Make a new sequence.

Trying a new idea? Make a new sequence.

Taking a break? Make a new sequence.

And timestamp your sequence names!

You will be glad you can refer back to previous versions.

# **EDITING RULE #5:**

**HIT SAVE. THEN BACK UP YOUR SHIT.**

# EDITING TIPS & TRICKS

- You don't have to be focused on the person speaking all the time.
- Pacing is everything. Keep it moving.
- What's the last moment you can come into a shot, and what is the earliest moment you can cut away?

# CONCLUSION

# SURVIVAL TIPS & TRICKS



- Shooting always takes longer than you expect it will.
- The more time you spend preparing, the less time you waste on set.
- Feed the people who are helping you and feed them well. This means snacks AND hot meals.
- Stay calm and be nice. You're not curing cancer.

*First Blood* (1982)  
dir. Ted Kotcheff

# MURPHY'S LAW

*Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong.*

# **THANK YOU!**

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