



# DIRECTING THE CAMERA

How Professional Directors Use A Moving Camera To Energize Their Films

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***To David E. James***  
***great teacher and friend***

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# PREFACE

This book aims to teach an aspiring director what he will need to know about directing the camera in order to succeed as a contemporary filmmaker. In the first half of the book I instruct how to best tell a story using a moving camera, and in the second half of the book I address how to shoot action sequences. A complete understanding of all the lessons contained in this book will enable a first-time director to work as an equal with an experienced cinematographer in formulating the visual design of his first professional film. From that point on he can solidify his understanding of how to best direct the camera by repeatedly applying the theories taught in this book to the unique demands of each scene in each film.

The need for the book has become increasingly clear to me since the publication in 2003 of my first book, *First Time Director*. Since then, I have been asked to teach a seminar on directing the camera at twenty-two film schools in sixteen countries on every continent where film schools exist. My seminar is in demand because, historically, film schools, as well as books on directing, have focused on teaching directing students skills other than directing the camera, primarily script development and directing actors. And with good reason. A film can only be as good as the script and the performances. Never better. Hence the historic emphasis on script and actors in the instruction of directors.

But starting in about 1970, the way films looked started to change radically. The camera started to move more and more, until shooting with a moving camera became the norm. At the same time, increasingly powerful and sophisticated CGI graphics enabled filmmakers to use visual storytelling to transport their audiences more convincingly into other realms and other times. These trends were pushed further and faster by the big-budget Hollywood studio movies, and they changed the expectations of audiences worldwide. The film idiom morphed and began to require a more dynamic visual component. Today, if a director wants to command the complete respect of his audience he can no longer rely strictly on telling a great story through great performances. He also must

exhibit brilliance in the area of visual design. This is equally true of both art house films which aspire to become classics as well as Hollywood “tentpole” movies. To my mind, this necessitates the need for this book.

The good news is that the skill of visual design for motion pictures can be taught and learned. The beauty of directing the camera is that given a certain input, the camera always produces the same result. Almost the opposite is true when it comes to directing actors. Given a certain input, each actor will react differently, and the ability to gauge this unique reaction and make just the right modification to the input cannot be taught. It is intuited in the heat of the interpersonal exchange between director and actor. Similarly, a brilliant student can be taught and learn all the rules of screenwriting and never be able to write a truly great script. That takes God-given talent. But the camera is an instrument and so given the correct input it will always produce the correct result. The only gift that one needs in order to achieve great proficiency at directing the camera is the ability to picture in the mind’s eye how each camera position changes the way objects look in relation to each other in the frame. Using this gift, you can make the movie in your head before you make it on the set. If you were good at geometry in school, this will come easily to you. If not, not to worry. Directing the camera, for the most part, is a science with rules that describe how a given input will produce a given result. So, like math, it can be learned.

This gives me confidence in the effectiveness of the lessons in this book. The rules that govern visual design are quite simple. As I see it, all good camera movement is invisible and there are three kinds of camera movement that are always invisible. The visual design of the master shot dictates all camera movement in a scene shot with a moving camera, and every moving master tries to strike the perfect balance between the demands of five tasks. There are three things you have to do correctly when shooting action. And those are all the rules governing visual design.

The hard part comes in applying those rules to the unique demands of each scene. Because the drama of each scene unfolds differently, and because each scene is shot in a different location at a different time, the visual design of each scene requires a specific customization of the rules. What makes a great visual stylist great is that his application of the rules to the demands of each scene is not merely adequate or good; it is the best. This is how Cameron or Spielberg or Cuarón or Campion emerge a cut above the rest. The student director will need great talent to rise to that level. But even without great talent, the student can attain professional proficiency at visual design through repeated practice. The more times one applies the simple rules of visual design to the unique needs of each scene, the more proficient one becomes at this key component of a director's skill set.

This is why this book is half images and half text. The images provide an explication and analysis of how different directors have gone about applying these rules to the unique needs of selected scenes from their films. The images serve as case studies in how a skillful application of the rules can be used to produce the best visual design for a representative scene.

The scenes which I analyze in my explication of how to shoot with a moving camera were taken from the following three films: Robert Zemeckis' feature thriller, *What Lies Beneath*; Cameron Crowe's morality tale, *Jerry Maguire*; and a Showtime TV movie, *Conundrum*, written and directed by a successful movie-for-TV director, Doug Barr. Three action

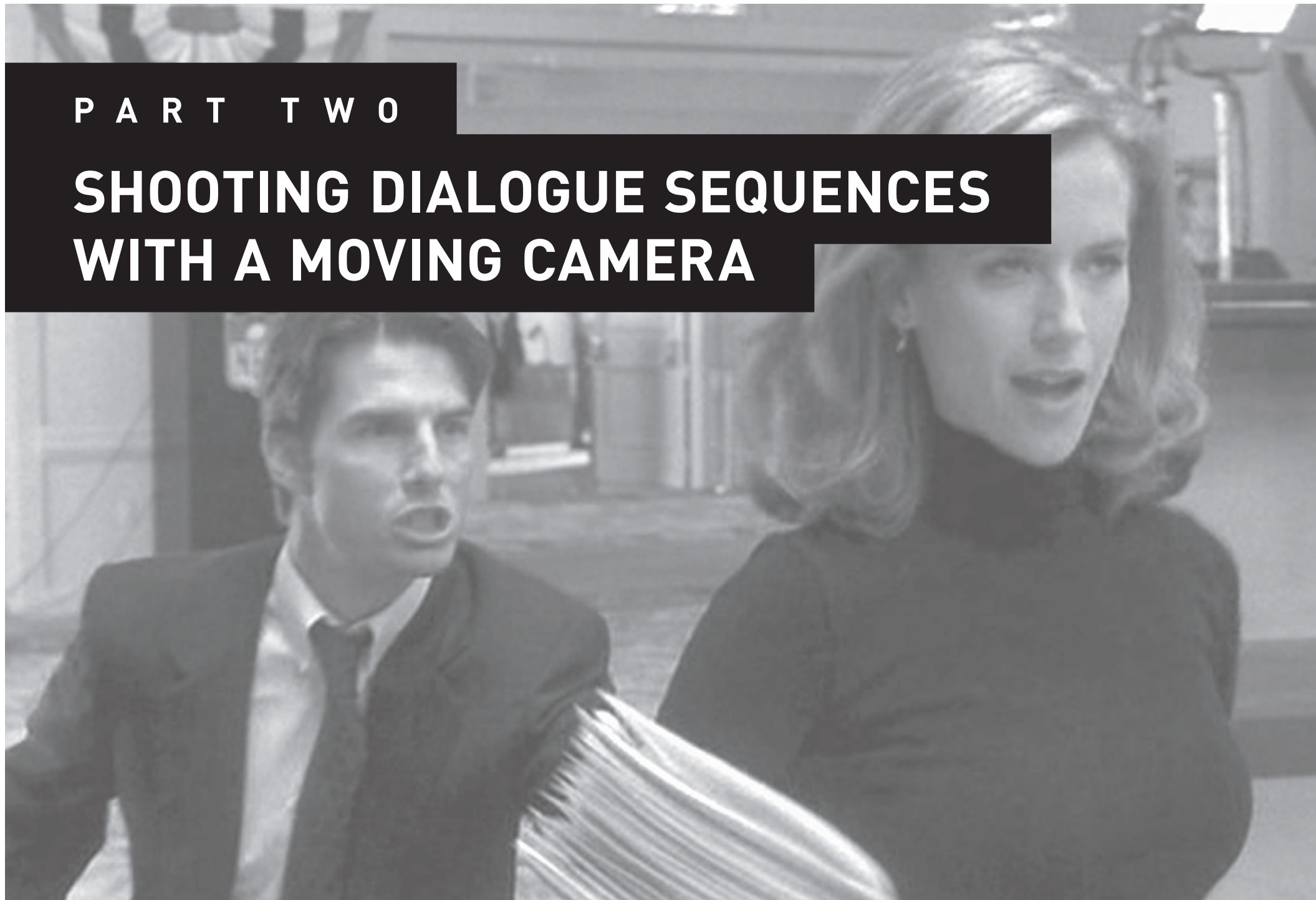
sequences are broken down and explicated: an ambush, a chase, and a fight. The ambush is from a low-budget feature I directed, *Never Too Young to Die*; the chase is from Kathryn Bigelow's theatrical feature, *Point Break*; and the fight is from an episode of the TV series *Las Vegas*, directed by veteran film and TV director, John Badham.

Taken together, these scenes provide an excellent representative cross-section of the different challenges in the realm of visual design that student directors will confront when they become working professionals. By studying and understanding my explanation of how each of these directors applied the basic rules governing visual design to the specific needs of each of these scenes, an aspiring director can begin the process by which he becomes a master of visual design. Armed with this initial understanding, he can go into the field and solidify his grasp of visual design by repeatedly applying the tenets of this book to the unique demands of each scene he directs.

It takes much practice (how much depends on each individual's talent) to become fully proficient at visual design for contemporary films. However, this book can jump-start the process. Coming up with the best moving master shot for a multipage dialogue scene involving four or more speaking parts is a complex and demanding task. The same is true of a fight with four or more participants or a high-speed car chase. The aspiring director must surmount a steep learning curve before he can take on any one of these tasks and produce a professional result. But the lessons in the book will help propel him up that curve.

PART TWO

# SHOOTING DIALOGUE SEQUENCES WITH A MOVING CAMERA





# WHY MOVE YOUR CAMERA?

## OVERVIEW

The short answer to the question, “Why move your camera?” is to get work. Shooting with a moving camera has become the worldwide global standard for professional directors. Yes, some directors shoot with a mostly static camera, but they are a dying breed. When mainstream audiences around the world pay good money to watch a movie in a darkened theater, they want it to be energized by a moving camera. Almost everything they have seen on YouTube, on TV, or on the big screen that they considered worth watching was shot with a moving camera. As a result, this visually dynamic style has come to be thought of as the norm. Anything less energetic will look slow, dated, and somehow substandard. Those who are putting money into films do not want a product that looks substandard. They are not going to hire you to direct their film if you cannot bring it up to this global standard. So, your director’s portfolio reel had best have some great moving shots on it if you want to launch your career.

On the other hand, if you aspire to succeed exclusively as an art-house film director, choosing *not* to shoot with a moving camera could actually lend some artistic cache to your film, because by opting for this visual style you will clearly be choosing *not* to compete for the mainstream audience. If your film succeeds artistically on most other levels, this might be considered a wise choice. If you want to appeal to film critics, there is something to be gained in standing outside the mainstream. As I made clear in the last chapter, even if you shoot with a static camera, you can still make a great movie, but not one that breaks new ground in the visual realm.

Right now, the trend is to move the camera as much as time and money allow. And there are numerous, big-name successful directors who seem

intent on continuing to push the edge of this envelope. The more money they have, the more they move the camera in ways that give more and more visual energy to each frame. James Cameron, David Fincher, Ridley Scott, Christopher Nolan, Sam Raimi, Peter Jackson, Michael Bay, and seemingly all the directors of the big-budget, tentpole, summer event movie lead this trend. As I argued in my last book, the huge box office success of Spielberg’s late ‘70s films, starting with *Jaws*, started the trend. But now, some of Spielberg’s most recent films, when compared to those of Michael Bay or some hot newcomer like Paul Greengrass or Alfonso Cuarón, seem almost a bit stodgy, or certainly not as self-consciously hyperkinetic. Suffice it to say that any young director trying to launch his career will enhance his chances of succeeding if he has some shots on his reel that prove that, just like Bay, Greengrass, Spielberg, et al, he knows how to make the camera fly around like Tinkerbell. This is recognized as the visual style of films that audiences most want to see.

## WHEN DO YOU MOVE YOUR CAMERA?

There is a good, simple rule for determining when to move your camera, which is to say, when your film is best served by a moving camera. I call this Bob’s Rule, because it was first articulated to me by Bob Zemeckis. Bob hardly invented it, or discovered it. It has been followed by almost every acclaimed filmmaker dating back to the Lumière brothers. And with good reason, because the rule is based on the universally recognized principle that the story is the most important component of a film, and so everything else in the film — be it acting, art direction, music, lighting, sound, editing, or camera movement — should serve the story. You should move the camera whenever possible to add visual energy to

the film, but only in a manner that enhances the story, or at least does not detract from it. Stated simply, *all good camera movement is invisible*.

Even those directors with the most energetic camera styles — the guys who ought to pay their cameraman by the yard — would be hard pressed to refute the underlying truth of this principle. Very few people would pay the current price of a movie ticket to sit in a theater for two hours and watch all the cool camera moves in the latest *Dark Knight*, *Transformers*, and *Spider-Man* cut together in a non-narrative fashion. The average individual goes to the movies to be transported in space and time into the lives of Bruce Wayne or Forrest Gump or Michael Corleone. They want to spend two hours in the dark experiencing everything that these mythic beings encounter in their fictional lives on screen — thrilling to all the impending dangers, tasting all the joys, enduring all the hardships served up in the course of those two hours. The story is the vehicle that transports viewers out of themselves, so I would argue that the extent to which this transportational effect takes hold of an audience is the extent to which a film succeeds.

If at some point in mid-film, the line of the story is trumped by a visual device and the audience finds itself watching a cool camera move — no matter how cool that camera move — the audience's overall enjoyment of the film will suffer because the spell has been broken. It is not as bad, but almost as bad, as if the microphone dipped down below the frame line and was visible in the shot. It reveals to the audience, sometimes blatantly, and sometimes on a subtle, subconscious, but still perceptible level, that what they are watching is *not real*, but rather actors saying lines in front of a *camera*. This must dissipate the strength of the fantasy that they are a Mafia don or a Jedi warrior or even a self-proclaimed "loser" trying to regain an ounce of self-respect, like Lester Burnham, the hero of *American Beauty*. It brings the audience back into their own heads and reminds them that they have bills to pay, a car that's double-parked, and a date who might be acting like a jerk. This is not what they came to the movies and paid good money for. So a wise objective for any first-time director would be to move his camera as much as possible to look as cutting edge as he can, right up to the point where the audience would actually take notice and say, "Look at that cool camera

move." In other words, this is why camera movement is essential, but should always be invisible.

## **BOB'S RULE: THE THREE KINDS OF CAMERA MOVEMENT THAT ARE INVISIBLE**

There are three kinds of camera movement that are always invisible: shots that are externally or internally generated by whatever is on the screen — preferably the person or thing which, at that point in the film, is driving the story — and moving, establishing shots.

### ***Externally Generated Camera Moves***

An externally generated camera move is when the camera moves to follow something that is moving inside the frame. Externally generated moves are by far the most common. They come in all sizes — everything from the shot from Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*, referred to below, which tracks alongside a speeding van for ten miles (**Figure 2.001 to 2.018a**), down to the shot from *Saving Private Ryan* of a canteen being lifted to a soldier's lips (**Figure 2.051 to 2.052**, p. 19). They can all be classified as externally generated. It's easy to understand why these moves never call attention to themselves and never detract from the story. The camera is moving quite literally to keep up with the story. If the camera did not move, the person or thing driving the story would slip off-screen.

To view a video clip of the scene from *War of the Worlds* and the scene from *Saving Private Ryan* referred to above go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

Film clips of all the frame grabs pictured in this book can be found on the Internet using this link.

Probably 95% of all camera moves in theatrical features are externally generated. And since, in the post-Spielbergian era, moving the camera has become de rigueur, externally generated camera moves probably make up half, if not all, of the shots used in feature films. At first glance, that may seem like a high percentage. Why is it that whatever is driving the story always seems to be about to move off camera, making it necessary for the camera to move in order to keep that something framed

up on screen? The answer to this contains one of the keys to successful camera blocking.

The camera has to keep moving to keep up with whatever is on screen, because, ever since Spielberg started doing it all the time, directors now almost always start a scene with the camera framed up tighter on the principal object in the scene than was the custom in the pre-Spielbergian days. After framing up tight on the principal object, these directors then have it take off moving. Since the camera is virtually on top of the principal object, it has to make a countermove to keep that object in frame.

This results in a moving shot at the beginning of the scene that establishes the new location by traveling far enough to reveal it in its entirety. In the pre-Spielbergian era this was generally achieved by putting a static camera far enough away from the new location to reveal it in its entirety. For more on why it is necessary to establish a new location see Chapter 3, page 35.

If the principal object in the story is the van in which Ray Ferrier (Tom Cruise) is trying to escape with his family from Bayonne, New Jersey, as the city is being blown to smithereens by attacking alien forces in *War of the Worlds*, then Spielberg puts the camera so close to Ray's speeding van, it would quickly drive out of frame, unless the camera kept moving alongside it as fast as the van is traveling. The van keeps on careening down the interstate, weaving in and out of blocked and abandoned vehicles (**Figure 2.001 to 2.007**), while Ray, in the driver's seat, and his son, Robbie, in the passenger seat, have an intense debate over who is trying to destroy planet Earth and why (**Figure 2.008 to 2.011**). Suddenly, Ray's daughter, Rachel, sitting in the backseat, has a panic attack, and Robbie then turns into the backseat and gets right in Rachel's face in order to calm her down (**Figure 2.012 to 2.015**). Once Rachel gets a grip, Robbie turns back and resumes the argument with his father (**Figure 2.016**) as the van continues to careen down the interstate (**Figure 2.017 to 2.018**). Amazingly, the camera (aided by the magic of CGI graphics) continues to fly down the road right next to the van and circles it once, in order to stay in the face of whichever one of the three

family members is driving the story at that particular moment (**Figure 2.008 to 2.016**). By staying framed up on the center of the drama, even as it flies down the road, and circling around so that he is shooting through the front windshield when Ray and Robbie talk, and through the back windshield as Robbie tries to comfort Rachel, Spielberg has given his camera an externally generated, story-based reason to move. This satisfies Bob's Rule, that the camera, whenever possible, should move, but the move should serve the story and so become invisible.

#### • EXTERNALLY GENERATED CAMERA MOVES — SEAMLESSNESS AND EYE CANDY

By habitually moving the central object in a scene in order to create externally generated camera moves, Spielberg, and those who have followed in his wake, are able to establish a new location using a moving camera. They would rather use a moving camera than a static camera because a moving camera changes the look of what is on the screen in two ways: it adds the esthetic of seamlessness and eye candy to the shot.

##### SEAMLESSNESS

The most amazing aspect of the shot of Ray Ferrier and his family escaping in their van is that it stays on the screen for almost three minutes without a cut. Spielberg, and the many directors who have followed him emulating his style, do not want to cut. They want a shot, particularly at the beginning of the scene, to go on for as long as possible *without* a cut. This adds the esthetic of *seamlessness* to the frame. The esthetic of seamlessness is the term I use to describe the look of a film when everything is shown in one continuous shot. This is one of two ways that moving shots look different from static shots. Moving shots can go on indefinitely without an edit. Most static shots only last three or four seconds because it becomes harder and harder to do a good job telling the story with the camera pointed in one direction.

Seamlessness is one of the key elements that make a film look the way contemporary audiences like. This is why most mainstream directors try to pump as much seamlessness into their shots as time and





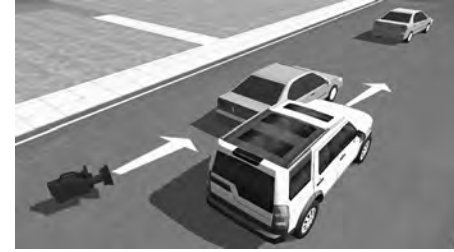
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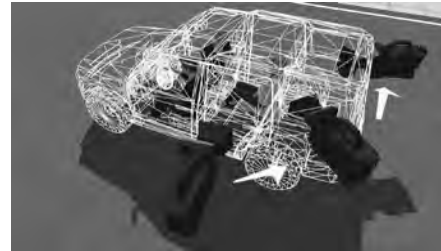
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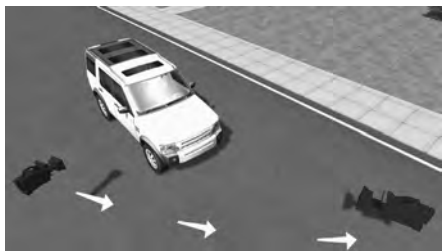
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money will allow. The shot of Ray and his family in the van took months of careful planning and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to execute. Yet clearly, in Spielberg's mind it was worth every penny. Why? Because it went on for so long without an edit and therefore was legendary in terms of how much seamlessness it generated.

### EYE CANDY

The second esthetic element that contemporary directors want to pump huge quantities of into every frame of their films is *eye candy*. Eye candy is the same as motion blur. When the camera moves to keep the central object, which is also moving, in the center of the frame, any other object which passes through the frame blurs or strobos slightly. The more pronounced the strobing or the blurring, the more energized the frame, the more eye candy. The shot of Ray and his family escaping in the van from *War of the Worlds* is as much about eye candy as it is about seamlessness. There are hundreds of vehicles on either side of the interstate. Every time Ray passes one, you get some eye candy. As can be seen in **Figure 2.001 to 2.006**, the blurry edges that create eye candy can be seen along the sides of most of the stationary or slowly moving vehicles that Ray passes.

Spielberg was hardly the first director to fall in love with the way shooting with a moving camera added seamlessness and eye candy to the look of your film. Most of the directors who were known as great visual stylists, who preceded Spielberg — Hitchcock, Wells, Kurosawa, and Kubrick, to name a few — all used the increasingly agile moving camera platforms available to them to put more eye candy and more seamlessness into their films than their predecessors. But Spielberg took the curve of this trend and shoved it straight up off the chart. And the huge, repeated success of his films made him the dream director for anybody who wanted to make a movie that made money. If they could not get Spielberg (most could not) then they got the next best thing. If you wanted to direct, the more your films looked like Spielberg's, the more work you got. Over time, this made the Spielbergian style the worldwide, professional standard.

The key to shooting in the Spielbergian style is to shoot an establishing shot which starts framed up close to whatever is driving the story and then have it take off moving and follow it using an externally generated camera move.

### Internally Generated Camera Moves

The externally generated camera move is the most common way of moving the camera while sticking to Bob's Rule. But there are other ways of doing it; probably the next most common is the internally generated camera move. A camera move is internally generated if the camera is moving to show the audience whatever is being seen or felt by someone or something on screen. These are essentially point of view (POV) shots. Because they only move to show us what the character who is driving the story is seeing or feeling, they remain invisible and never detract from the story. They are much less commonly used than externally generated camera moves.

The most common and easy to understand internally generated camera movement is a moving POV shot. A good example of a moving POV shot can be found in the thriller Bob Zemeckis made as an homage to Alfred Hitchcock: *What Lies Beneath*. Early on in the film, the female lead, Claire (Michelle Pfeiffer), comes up the stairs in her large (haunted) house and sees steam coming out from under the door to her bathroom. She walks up to the door and pushes it open. After that, Zemeckis alternates between tight shots on Claire's face, which reveal her searching eyes, and moving POV shots which dolly forward into the bathroom as she crosses the room and approaches the tub against the far wall (**Figure 2.019 to 2.033**). Unlike an externally generated camera move, in the moving POV shot pushing in on the tub there is no person or thing in the frame that the camera is following in order to keep that object in frame. All we see is a shot that moves closer and closer to the tub, which happens to be mysteriously filled to the brim with steaming water. This movement is central to the story because it is what Claire sees as she walks into the bathroom and approaches the tub. Claire did not fill the tub, nor did her husband, Norman, who is asleep in the adjacent bedroom. So the audience is asking itself along with Claire, "Who



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WHY MOVE YOUR CAMERA? ● 15

filled the tub?" When she gets to the tub, Claire gets her answer. In the water, along with her own reflection, Claire sees a reflection of the ghost of the young blond girl who is haunting her house (**Figure 2.032**).

To view a video of this film clip from *What Lies Beneath* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

Just as a physical POV shot is always invisible because it shows us what a character in the story sees, the kind of shot that I call an emotional POV shot is invisible because it shows us what a character in the story *feels*. Probably the most common emotional POV shot is when the camera pushes in from a medium close-up to a tight close-up on a character as he catches sight of someone or something off camera and experiences an intense realization. What he sees generates a surge of emotion inside him. That emotion could be surprise or joy or fear or wonder or recognition or whatever, but in all cases it is fast and intense. In this case, you could say the camera was tracking with the character's heart as it "rises in his throat." I call this little, fast push-in an "oh-my-God!" shot.

Another typical example of a camera movement which is internally generated, and which disappears because it is an emotional POV, showing us what the center of the story feels, is when the camera, on a crane, sweeps up in the air and away from a character who has just found himself to be alone in the world. The camera's movement makes him smaller and smaller in the frame and so can be said to be expressive of his internal emotions — his feelings of insignificance, weakness, and vulnerability. I call this the "all alone in the world" shot.

These two internally generated camera moves above are expressive of simple, common emotions. This explains why so many directors frequently use them. But internally generated camera moves are as various and complex as the emotions that generate them. Some of them are strange, one-of-a-kind moves. In the film *Shine*, director Scott Hicks uses such moves to show the audience what the main character, David Helfgott, is feeling as he suffers a nervous breakdown while playing Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 3 in concert. This shot — it is actually two hand-held close-ups on David (**Figure 2.034 to 2.045**) — could be

thought of as the antithesis of an externally generated camera move because, while the object in the frame, David, never moves, the camera never stops moving. David remains seated at the piano playing the concerto throughout. He rocks back and forth or sways from side to side as he plays, but otherwise never moves. As the piano piece rises in intensity, all the tight shots on David become more kinetic. Like a drunken bumblebee, the camera bobs and weaves around his head as he starts to have his breakdown.

To view a video of this film clip from *Shine* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

No doubt, as Scott Hicks intended, anyone watching this scene closely in a darkened theater quickly begins to experience vertigo. What the audience sees gives them an inkling of what the main character is feeling: disorientation, nausea, distress. Yet even though the camera is gyrating wildly, its movement is virtually unnoticeable, because it draws the audience even deeper into the story by showing them what a character is feeling.

This is virtuoso camera blocking according to Bob's Rule at its best. At this particular moment, you might say the camera is acting up a storm. The gyrations around the actor's head are as wild and crazy as the wildest and craziest moves to be seen in any music video or episode of *CSI*. And yet they are virtually invisible because they exist primarily as an expression of what is happening in the story at that moment and only incidentally as cool camera moves. They never stand out as something to be noticed in themselves, but blend in with all the threads which Hicks is weaving together — sound, editing, lighting — to create the whole cloth of his story about this troubled genius.

### **Moving Establishing Shots**

Occasionally, at the very beginning of a scene, a director may make a camera move which is neither externally nor internally generated, but which moves to reveal to the audience everything they need to see to understand what happens next. It establishes the new environment, and so it is moving to tell the story and therefore disappears. These are





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*moving establishing shots* and they do the same thing which classic, static establishing shots do, except they move.

Before Spielberg started moving the camera whenever possible, directors usually established a new location in a static shot. To do this, they backed the camera away from the central object and put it at the angle that would most effectively set the stage for the drama about to take place. Commonly, this was a high, wide three-quarter angle shot of the location because this shot shows the front, the side, and the top of any three-dimensional object, along with whatever sits on the same plane of the object and surrounds it. One of the most famous establishing shots in film history – Hitchcock’s shot of the *Psycho* house with Norman Bates silhouetted in the window – is actually a low, wide three-quarter angle shot. Hitchcock put the house up on the hill and the camera below it because the house looks more imposing and ominous when seen from a low angle looking up.

But directors in the post-Spielbergian era have increasingly opted for establishing a new location with a moving shot, rather than a static shot, because this generates more eye candy and seamlessness. There are basically two ways to do this. Either the camera starts out on an extreme close-up of some small but significant object in the scene – a framed photograph, two wineglasses tinkling, something being typed out on a computer screen – and then pulls back along a circuitous or straight path, revealing the other significant objects in the scene one by one as it retreats. Or it does just the opposite, starting out wide, for example, on a high shot of the whole huge expanse of a Las Vegas casino, and then descending and tightening past various players and objects (which generally prove key to the following scene) before arriving at the principal player seated at a poker table, and then finally pushing in on an extreme close-up which shows that he’s holding a royal flush.

The shot from Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan* that introduces Tom Hanks as Captain John Miller is a great example of a moving establishing shot. In one of the first scenes from the film we cut to a low angle, static shot of Omaha Beach on Normandy with the subtitle: June 6, 1944, Dog Green Sector, Omaha Beach (**Figure 2.046**). This shot is followed by

an externally generated traveling shot which follows a small flotilla of amphibious landing craft heading to the beach (**Figure 2.047 to 2.050**). Then we cut to a close-up on a G.I. canteen being opened and raised to the lips of Captain John Miller (Hanks). The camera is framed up so close that it has to make an externally generated move when Hanks raises the canteen to his lips (**Figure 2.051 to 2.052**). Then the camera starts to back up, passing between the two columns of soldiers lined up in front of Hanks, and revealing, one by one, the men whom he will lead into battle (**Figure 2.053 to 2.061**).

The camera is backing up as if it had a mind of its own. The men are all stationary so the camera is *not* following their motion, and therefore it is not externally generated. In addition, it is *not* showing us what any of these soldiers see or feel so it is not internally generated. But it does a brilliant job of establishing the scene by going from the specific to the general and revealing many important details along the way. At the beginning of the shot we are tight enough to clearly see the captain’s bars on Miller’s helmet and to reveal that his hands are trembling. When the camera starts to retreat, it first passes Sergeant Mike Horvath (Tom Sizemore) close enough to see the sergeant’s bars on his arm and just in time to see Horvath very nonchalantly wedge a big chew of tobacco into his cheek (**Figure 2.055 to Figure 2.056**). Then, as it passes between the rows of soldiers lined up in front of Hanks, first one soldier and then another doubles over and vomits onto the deck of the landing craft (**Figure 2.057 to Figure 2.060**).

To view a video of this film clip from *Saving Private Ryan* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

In this one shot, the audience is very efficiently told what it needs to know to understand what happens next. First we learn that Miller is in charge and that even though Miller is frightened he is doing a good job of keeping his feelings in check. Horvath is Miller’s reliable assistant; made more reliable by the miracle of being born fearless in the face of almost certain death. The other soldiers in the boat are each dealing with the horror of the situation in their own individual way – some



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clearly so terrified they are retching their guts out. At the end of the shot we are given the big picture — a boat full of soldiers led by an able captain and a cool sergeant, about to hit the beach at the start of the Normandy invasion.

As stated above, when the camera is backing up, the movement is neither externally nor internally generated. The camera is moving as if it had a mind of its own, and yet the audience remains transported into the fantasy world of the story, because it understands that the camera is backing up primarily to show them what they need to know in order to understand what happens next.

## THOSE WHO BREAK BOB'S RULE AND WHY THEY DO IT

### *The Rise of the Snoopy Cam*

Fans of the television cop shows *Homicide*, *24*, and *CSI* at this point might have realized that the camera style used on these shows consistently breaks Bob's Rule. I call this camera style the Snoopy Cam and with every year it gains more popularity. Initially it was used only on TV cop shows (*NYPD Blue* was the first long-running series to use it) but today it has become widely used on TV shows of all genres, and has made serious inroads into the realm of theatrical feature films. A substantial portion of the 2012 summer-hit film, *The Hunger Games*, was shot Snoopy Cam style.

I call it the Snoopy Cam because it is derived from the Shaky Cam style, which was popularized in the early 1980s by commercial director Joe Pytko. The Shaky Cam bounces around constantly as if it were always looking for the most important point on the screen. The Snoopy Cam generally is more focused or intelligent than the Shaky Cam because it always points right at what it wants to look at, as if it had a mind of its own. It often seems to be the POV of some easily distracted, invisible, mute member of the cast who is in the middle of every scene, or a big attentive dog that never barks. It pans much more often than it travels. Sometimes it pans dramatically and lands on a spot just in time

to see something dramatic happen, such as a person coming in a door, or someone raising a gun. Sometimes it pans dramatically and lands where nothing particularly dramatic is happening. Sometimes it acts like the Shaky Cam and jitters around obviously hunting for whatever is driving the story, but never quite finding it. It never follows Bob's Rule for camera movement, because its very purpose is to break Bob's Rule. It is a camera move that is intended to have nothing to do with the story, so the audience will inevitably see it. It is there to say, "Look at me!" "Look at this camera move!" So it is constantly distracting the viewer from an uninterrupted, seamless appreciation of the story.

I have used this style while directing music videos, television shows, and corporate profiles for companies like Time-Warner and Verizon (to show at their annual shareholders' meeting). The Snoopy Cam worked for these projects because, as is the case with *Homicide*, *CSI*, *24*, and for that matter, TV commercials and music videos in general, the style of the piece was as important as, if not more important than, its content. In all these formats it is of paramount importance to stand out by seeming to be the most cutting-edge.

Bob's Rule is geared toward and most effective at telling the story — at delivering content. For this reason, every great director in the history of cinema from Griffith through Cameron has followed it. James Cameron made *Avatar* strictly according to Bob's Rule. Capra, Hitchcock, and Welles all followed Bob's Rule, as did Renoir, De Sica, and Bergman. But this has tinged Bob's Rule with the aura of respectability.

The makers of *Homicide*, *CSI*, and *24* no doubt decided to use the Snoopy Cam style in an effort to convince the viewing public that, even though they were another knockoff of all the cop shows that have been on the air since the original *Dragnet*, they were more up-to-date than the competition. This hipness has to be immediately apparent — something that the audience can grasp instantaneously while surfing the channels or eating popcorn or changing diapers or all the other things that people do while watching TV.

In all fairness to the makers of *Homicide*, *CSI*, *24*, and most other prime-time shows that use the Snoopy Cam, it must be noted that their stories



and their characters must be very strong. If they were not, these shows could not maintain their popularity. Ironically, because the Snoopy Cam is constantly moving, after viewing an episode of *CSI* or *24* for five minutes, you start to take the moving camera for granted and ignore it. Instinctively, as viewers we seek out the substance and tune out the distractions. But still, something in the narrative is inevitably lost. And evidently, as important as story is to the makers of these programs, it is not of the same paramount importance as it is to a director who makes movies that will last, like Frank Capra or James Cameron, or a master of film as an art form, such as Jean Renoir or Ingmar Bergman.

### ***Dogma Picks Up the Snoopy Cam***

The contemporary Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier also uses the Snoopy Cam, and, to my mind, for the same reason as the producers of the above-mentioned American TV shows, to grab the audience's attention — to use a very in-your-face-style of filmmaking that elevates style above substance. Producers of American cop shows need, above all, to distinguish their shows from the myriad of cop shows which have preceded them. Similarly, when von Trier wrote the rules that established the Dogma Movement in 1995, he was a young, obscure filmmaker who needed, above all, to distinguish himself from all the other young filmmakers who aspired to win the Grand Prix at Cannes. The Snoopy Cam and the rules of the Dogma Movement enabled him to do just that. In *Breaking the Waves* and later Dogma films, Von Trier used a handheld camera (as the Dogma rules required) that waved around constantly like the POV of a big, curious dog.

Twenty minutes into *Breaking the Waves*, the main character, Bess (Emily Watson), sits in the middle of a church, flanked by her mother and a girlfriend, silently listening to one of her straitlaced fellow villagers accuse another of “living too much in this world.” Von Trier shot the entire scene from one camera position in the middle of the church in front of Bess.

The camera starts framed up on the man doing the accusing who is standing in the back of the church, surrounded by seated congregants (**Figure 2.062**). The camera pans left off of him and lands on Bess

(**Figure 2.063 to 2.065**). Since this is the very beginning of the scene, this pan shows the audience where Bess is sitting in relation to the accusing villager. Therefore it is a moving establishing shot. It tells the story and it remains invisible.

Then the camera suddenly pans off of Bess and lands for a fraction of a second on the villager (**Figure 2.066 to 2.069**). But it changes its mind in mid-pan and whips camera left back on Bess (**Figure 2.070 to 2.072**). This pan, as shown in **Figure 2.072a**, is a false camera move. It has nothing to do with the story. It does not move to follow an object moving in the frame, or to show what someone is seeing or feeling, or to establish.

A few seconds later, von Trier cuts away from Bess onto the accusing villager (**Figure 2.073**). The villager finishes talking and sits. As soon as he sits down, the camera whip pans camera left across the entire seated congregation and lands on the minister in the pulpit standing at the opposite end of the church (**Figure 2.074 to 2.082**). The minister calls on another congregant to speak. As soon as the minister has finished talking, the camera whip pans back camera right across the congregation and lands on the individual whom the minister has called upon (**Figure 2.082 to 2.089**).

Neither of the whip pans depicted in **Figure 2.089a** are externally generated, internally generated, or moving establishing shots. Somehow the camera knows exactly when each character in the scene will start talking and stop talking. This makes the presence of a cameraman operating a camera in the middle of the room more than palpable.

To view a video of this film clip from *Breaking the Waves* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

Why does von Trier persist in blatantly and constantly breaking Bob's Rule? I would argue he does this because, as I stated above, every director of note in the history of cinema has followed Bob's Rule. It is the most effective way to tell a story on film and so it has become the rule. But despite its effectiveness, von Trier chooses not to follow it simply



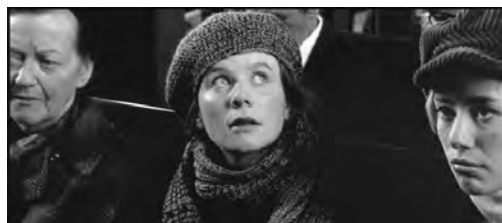
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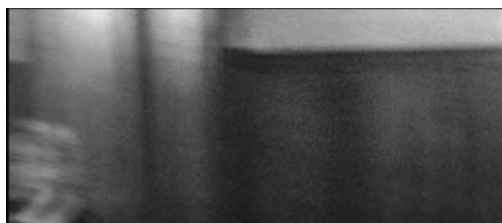
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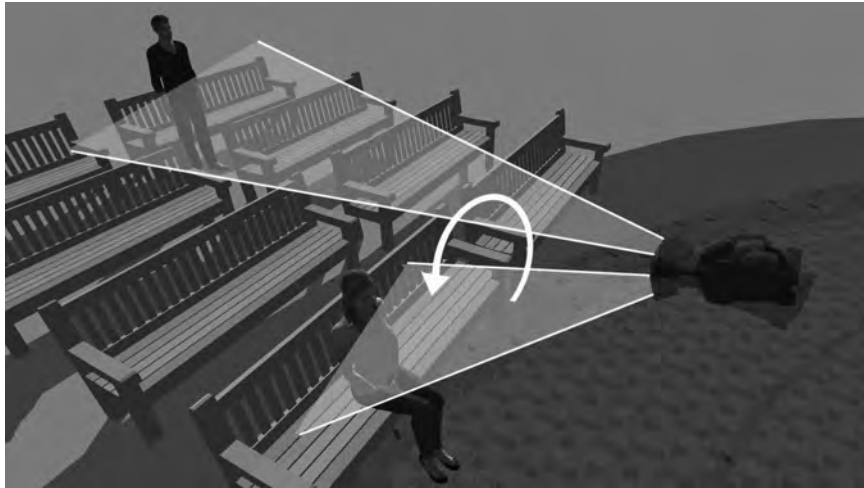




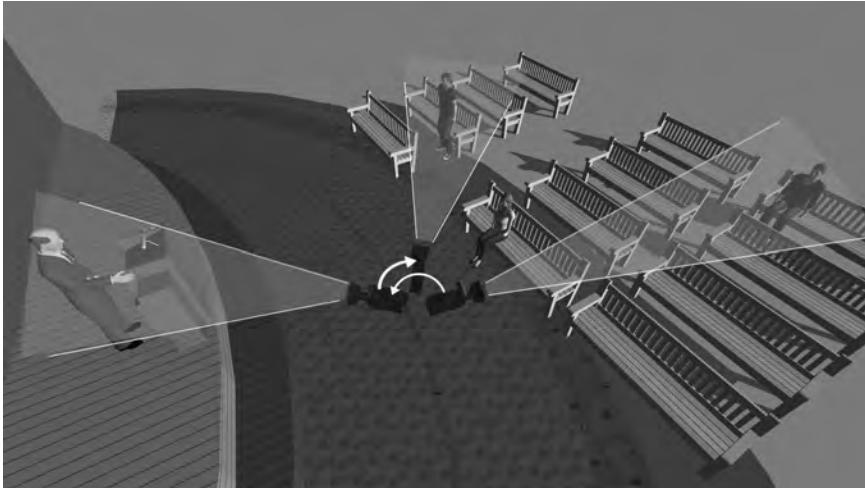
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because it has become the rule and this enables him to break the rule and to stand apart.

By adopting the Snoopy Cam, von Trier made it immediately apparent to anyone watching his films that they looked very different from Spielberg's. All of the Dogma rules followed this same end. If Spielberg used it — a smooth, dolly-mounted camera that always follows Bob's Rule, complex lighting setups, fantastic visual special effects, groundbreaking CGI graphics, complex sound editing, spectacular wardrobe and set dressing, etc. — Dogma forbade it. Therefore, by inventing Dogma and following its rules (and using the Snoopy Cam), von Trier dramatically burst on the film scene as the anti-Spielberg, anti-Hollywood champion.

### ***The Snoopy Cam Today***

The Snoopy Cam style certainly seems as if it is here to stay, for a variety of reasons. For one, it is a very cheap way to pump a lot of eye candy and seamlessness into a film. All it requires is an operator strong enough to work all day with a handheld camera.

The moving camera platforms which Spielberg and those who emulate his style use to move the camera smoothly and steadily in the interest of making the motion disappear — the Technocrane, the Skycam, the Libra head, the Steadicam, and others still to come — are very expensive to rent. Furthermore, you need highly trained, very expensive technicians to operate them well. Even if a director were to limit himself to shooting moving shots off a dolly, you still need a large, well-trained crew of grips to level a floor, and/or lay out dolly track. This means eye candy and seamlessness do not come cheap. Yet the YouTube-weaned audience requires its fix of eye candy and seamlessness, or it will tune out. What to do?

This was the dilemma facing Fernando Meirelles before he made *City of God*. So he solved the problem by adopting the Snoopy Cam style. His explanation was that the Snoopy Cam style gave the final film a documentary look and that this was particularly appropriate, since the film was about something shocking and real, namely the syndrome by which pubescent and prepubescent children in the slums of Rio de Janeiro are

sucked into dealing drugs and killing each other in gangland shootouts. Most of the actors were nonprofessionals, plucked from the slums of Rio. Much of the dialogue was improvised. So the way that the Snoopy Cam swings around wildly looking for its subject, missing it, panning back, finding it, and then panning off to some other player in the scene made all the seemingly unrehearsed, real action look as if it was being captured by a seemingly unrehearsed, documentary cameraman, and so, theoretically, that much more real.

I remain unconvinced that the Snoopy Cam makes a film seem more real. It might make a film resemble a home movie or a poorly shot documentary whenever the camera is waving around, hunting for the person who is driving the story. But the idea that this somehow makes the film seem more real is just that — an idea — a conceit. Consciously *thinking* about specifically how the cameraman operated the camera must make a film seem less real. On the other hand, if an audience starts to participate vicariously in what is happening on screen then they must *believe* what they are watching is real. The only way to do that is by following Bob's Rule and making the camera movement invisible.

This is exactly what Fernando Meirelles did, as soon as he had the money in the budget for all the expensive toys needed to make camera moves disappear. There is not a hint of the Snoopy Cam style in *The Constant Gardener* — the film he made right after *City of God*. In *The Constant Gardener* he plays completely by Bob's Rule, which, to my mind, proves that he used the Snoopy Cam on *City of God* more out of necessity than any other reason.

With that said, the success and popularity of the TV shows like *CSI* and *24* have bestowed the Snoopy Cam style with a certain aura of hipness that makes it attractive to any young director who wants to break through and make a name for himself, as well as older, established directors who do not want to seem over the hill. Kathryn Bigelow burst on the scene in the early 1990s as a hot, young director and made a string of highly acclaimed thrillers and action films. Then her output dropped off dramatically. She made only two films between 1995 and 2007. In 2008, she directed *The Hurt Locker*, which won her the Oscar for best director

and reestablished her as a filmmaker of note. Her earlier films are all shot strictly following Bob's Rule. For *The Hurt Locker* she adopted the Snoopy Cam style. It could be argued that this helped her win the Oscar, and it probably did, for political or stylistic reasons, in the same way that it helped von Trier win the Grand Prix at Cannes. But I would counter that *The Hurt Locker* succeeds, *as a film*, on the strength of its script and performances, and in spite of her use of the Snoopy Cam.

No one in his right mind would ever accuse Quentin Tarantino of being unhip. And yet, to my knowledge, he never has broken Bob's Rule. Why? Probably because, above all else, he is a writer and a storyteller, and he does not want to distract the audience with cool camera moves when he could be sucking them into the story. Witness the shot of John Travolta (who is high on heroin) trailing Uma Thurman through Jack Rabbit Slims restaurant in *Pulp Fiction*. This shot has become legendary. It veritably screams of hipness. Here Tarantino uses the Steadicam to do a shot that ranks right up there with the best of Busby Berkeley for length and complexity. It probably covers close to 100 yards and features dozens of actors and extras. The camera gyrates around constantly, whipping up a glut of eye candy (**Figure 2.090 to 2.110**). For an overhead view of the entire shot see **Figure 2.111a**. (You can chart Travolta's path by following the gray arrows and the camera's path by following the white arrows.)

Every camera move in this shot is externally or internally generated. The Steadicam essentially tracks with Travolta as he makes a very circuitous tour of the restaurant on his way to his table. It behaves much like a

handheld news camera "covering" Travolta's entrance (**Figure 2.098 to 2.111**). Toward the beginning of the shot, Travolta pauses, turns his head, and points off to camera right (**Figure 2.090 to 2.091**). The camera glides off his look (and follows a waiter dressed as Zorro) into the right corner of the club (**Figure 2.092 to 2.094**) thereby becoming internally generated, because it is showing us what he is looking at. This pan to the right gives the director an excuse to then pan from right to left across the entire nightclub taking in the Ricky Nelson lookalike on stage and churning up a surfeit of eye candy (**Figure 2.093 to 2.097**). Travolta then reappears in the shot (**Figure 2.098**) at which point it becomes externally generated again. From here to the end of the shot it stays in a three-quarter back angle following him through the club, so that when one of the waiters or waitresses, who are all lookalikes of dead, '50s icons, such as Marilyn Monroe or James Dean, cruises by and turns his head, we can see his slightly tripped-out reaction (**Figure 2.098 to 2.111**).

To view a video of this film clip from *Pulp Fiction* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

This is virtuoso camera blocking at its best. Every pan, glide, and gyration enhances the story. It is cutting-edge style in the service of substance. With it, Tarantino both burnishes his image as a master of an overheated moviemaking style and sustains the momentum of his narrative. This is the style of shot making I would urge all aspiring directors to learn if their goal is to make films that last.



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WHY MOVE YOUR CAMERA? ● 27





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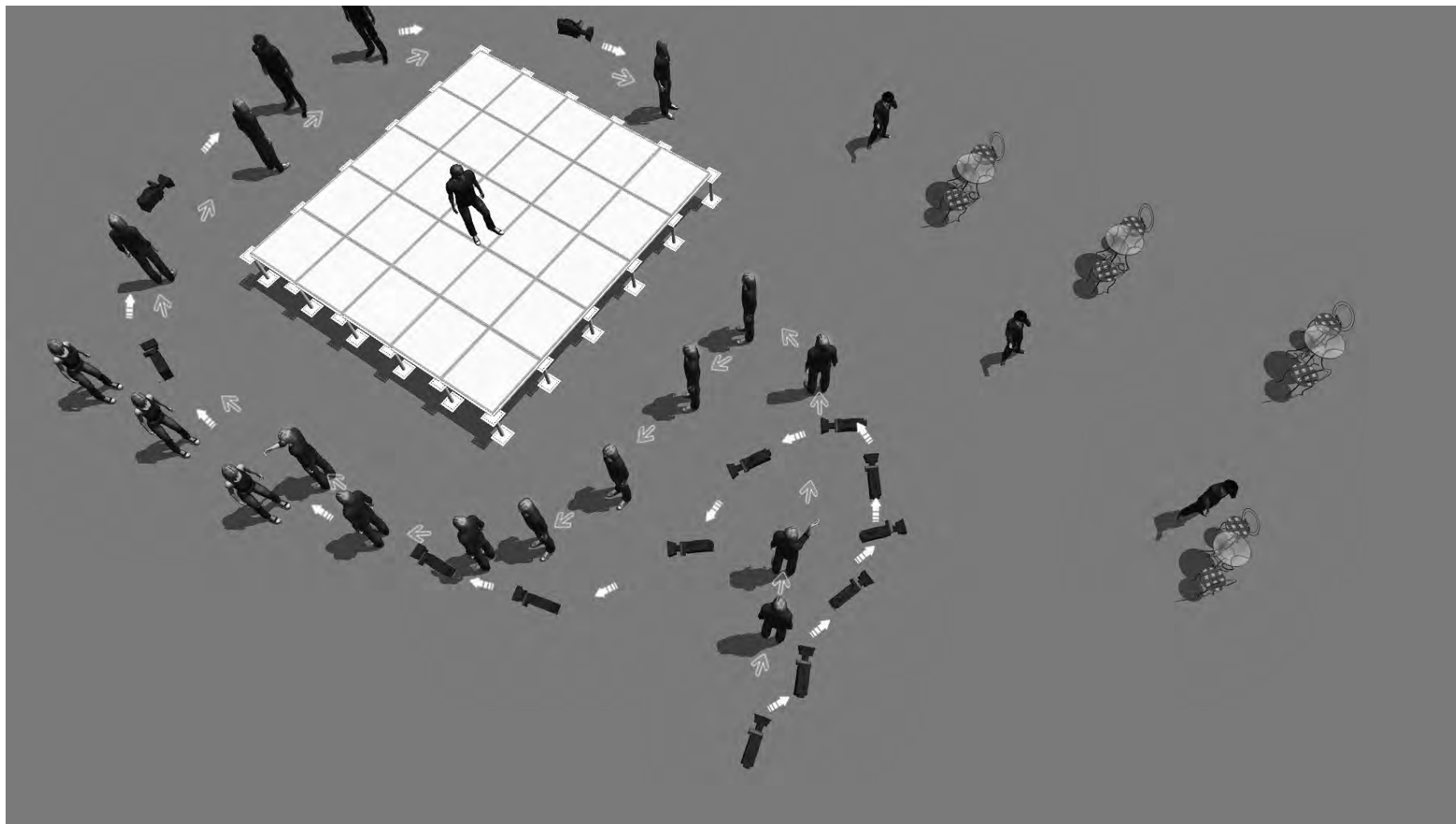


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## CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY POINTS

- The principle behind Bob's Rule is that the story is the most important component of a film, and so everything else in the film — be it acting, art direction, music, lighting, sound, editing, or camera movement — should serve the story.
- You should move the camera whenever possible to add visual energy to the film, but only in a manner which enhances the story or at least does not detract from it. Stated simply, all good camera movement is invisible.
- There are three kinds of camera movement that are always invisible: shots which are (1) externally or (2) internally generated by whatever is on the screen — preferably the person or thing which, at that point in the film, is driving the story; and (3) moving, establishing shots.
- An externally generated camera move is when the camera moves to follow something that is moving inside the frame.
- To say a camera move is internally generated is to say that the camera is moving to show the audience what the person who is the center of the story sees or feels.
- At the very beginning of a scene, a director may make a camera move that is not externally or internally generated, but if it is moving to establish the new location, it will remain invisible and not break Bob's Rule.
- The esthetic of seamlessness is added to the frame when everything in a film is shown in one continuous shot.
- When the camera moves to keep the central object, which is also moving, in the center of the frame, any other object in the scene that passes through the frame blurs or strobos slightly. The more pronounced the strobing or the blurring, the more energized the frame, the more eye candy.
- Moving shots look different from static shots in two key ways. Moving shots have seamlessness and eye candy. Static shots do not.
- Most mainstream directors try to pump as much seamlessness into their shots as time and money will allow because seamlessness gives a film the look that contemporary audiences like.
- The key to shooting in the Spielbergian style is to shoot a master or establishing shot that starts framed up close to whatever is driving the story and then have that person or thing start moving and follow it using an externally generated camera move. This will maximize the amount of seamlessness and eye candy generated in the shot and also keep the camera move invisible.
- A Snoopy Cam shot resembles the POV of an easily distracted, invisible, mute member of the cast, who is in the middle of every scene and looks at whatever it wants to look at, whenever it feels like it.
- The Snoopy Cam style of shooting never follows Bob's Rule for camera movement, because its very purpose is to break Bob's Rule. It is a camera move that is intended to have nothing to do with the story, so the audience will inevitably see it.
- The Snoopy Cam style is generally used by filmmakers who want to seem more cutting-edge and individualistic. Because Bob's Rule is the most effective for telling a story, it has been adopted by every great director from D. W. Griffith through James Cameron, and this has tinged it with the aura of respectability, which some filmmakers would prefer to eschew.
- The Dogma rules were invented to refute the validity of Spielberg's style of filmmaking. If Spielberg used it masterfully, Dogma forbade it.
- The Snoopy Cam style is here to stay because: (1) it is a very cheap way to pump a lot of eye candy and seamlessness into a film; and (2) the success and popularity of TV shows like *CSI* and *24* have bestowed it with an aura of hipness which makes it attractive to any young director who wants to break through and make a name for himself, as well as older, established directors who do not want to seem over the hill.

## ***FOR TEACHERS***

A good way to help students understand and remember the kinds of camera movement that follow Bob's Rule is to give them the following assignment. Ask them to get hold of the DVD of a film directed by their favorite director (or if they are cinematography students, a film shot by their favorite cinematographer) and to view the film and find an example of an internally generated camera move, and/or a moving establishing shot in the film. Externally generated camera moves are so simple to understand and so prevalent in today's films that there is not much value in asking a student to find one. *Avatar* is wall-to-wall externally generated camera moves. Internally generated camera moves and moving establishing shots are rare by comparison. Requiring a student to go hunting through a film by a director (or DP) he admires looking for such a camera move will force him to consciously examine every moving shot in the film, and in so doing, repeatedly test his understanding of the three different kinds of camera movement which are always invisible. Provided his understanding is correct, this should internalize his understanding of this key element of directorial craft.

The best way for the students to "hand in" the assignment is to rip their example of an internally generated camera move or a

moving establishing shot out of the DVD, post it on YouTube and send the teacher a link. The teacher can forward the links to the other students in the class and require them to review and correct their fellow students' assignments prior to class. This will make for the most productive class session intended to test the class's understanding of the lessons in this chapter.

If it is not feasible for the students to rip clips out of DVDs and post links on YouTube, then the students can simply bring the DVD to class and the teacher can then play the DVDs in class. If a student's understanding is correct and his choice accurate, playing the selected scene for the class will provide yet another example of how these three kinds of camera movement only tell the story. The great majority of the movies the students will go hunting through will be contemporary films made by today's top name directors and cinematographers. Watching additional examples of how these top name current filmmakers always move the camera according to the dictates of this chapter will reinforce the validity of these rules.

If a student gets it wrong and picks a shot that is not internally generated or a moving establishing shot, then the teacher can correct this misapprehension in class and in the process solidify all the students' grasp of the principles governing how good camera movement becomes invisible by telling the story.

# THE GOOD MOVING MASTER

## OVERVIEW

The master is the shot that logically lends itself to camera movement because it is almost always the shot with the biggest scope. You might shoot a piece of coverage, or a sub-master, which also moves, but it will not last as long or move as far as the master. In addition, the movement of all coverage and sub-masters is dictated by the master. All pieces of coverage must cut smoothly into the master, so the key to understanding how to move your camera is learning how to shoot a good moving master.

When it comes to shooting a good moving master, the good news is that, in theory, it's simple. In theory, the best moving master does five "tasks" and does them in a way that works best for the scene.

1. It shows the audience everything it needs to see in order to understand and believe what happens next.
2. It generates an esthetic of seamlessness by curtailing the need to cut.
3. It generates eye candy.
4. It concentrates the audience's attention on the center of the drama.
5. It picks up some coverage.

That's it. Now you know everything you need to know about shooting a good moving master. In that respect, it's easy. But when it comes to applying those five simple principles to the very specific and unique requirements of each scene in a film, it becomes tricky. Every scene in every film is unique. The way the drama unfolds is unique to that scene, and every scene is shot in a different place at a different time. What makes Spielberg, or Cameron or Iñárritu a great visual stylist is that their application of the Five Tasks to the unique demands of each scene yields the best moving master for that scene. This is the standard to which

all professional directors must rise — to create the very best moving shot. It takes talent and experience to always be able to come up to this standard.

The other reason it is a difficult skill to learn is because Task 4 — focusing the audience's attention on the center of the drama — is the most important Task and it is best achieved by *not* moving the camera. Every moving shot becomes a tricky balancing act between motion and drama.

The center of the drama in a scene is almost always in the eyes of the person who is talking. It has been scientifically proven that when we look at a movie screen, if a character is talking we instinctively look at that character's eyes. The shot that gives us the most information about what is going on in the story is the shot in which the eyes are the largest and we can see both eyes — the full, frontal close-up. The close-up has attained its status as the most effective way to convey drama because of this scientific fact.

Drama is conflict. Nothing is more boring than watching two people agree with each other. Human beings who are in conflict face each other. They get in each other's face. This also is instinctive. When two human beings are squared off, eyeball to eyeball, the most effective way to tell the story is to be framed up in a full, frontal close-up on the character who is talking, and when he stops talking to cut to the reverse close-up on the other character as he responds. This shot/reverse/shot visual design is the most effective way to focus the audience's attention on the center of the drama and to achieve Task 4. But the only way that two actors can be facing each other like this and moving is if one of them is walking backward. This is uncommon. (Although it happens extensively in the shot from *Jerry Maguire* discussed on the following pages.) So



generally the moments of peak drama in a film are shot in two matching *static* close-ups that are intercut with each other. Because people who are in conflict with each other square off face-to-face the best way to tell the story is usually with a *static* shot, *not* a moving shot.

Only when the conflict and the drama dissipates enough to allow the two characters to walk side-by-side and carry on their debate, or only when one character in frustration or out of disrespect or disinterest, or out of some other natural human impulse, turns his back on the person to whom he is talking, does it become possible to fulfill Task 4 – Drama – while shooting with a moving camera.

Then the actor who is talking can turn and walk toward the camera backing it up in front of him. The other actor can follow alongside, in which case it becomes a side-by-side moving two-shot. Or the other actor can trail along a step or two behind or stand his ground, in which case the shot becomes a split two-shot with the actor walking and talking in the foreground, and the actor not moving or not moving as quickly receding in the background. In any case, both actors can be facing the camera as it backs up so all the eyes of all the actors involved in the conflict are framed in the shot. The camera is moving but it is also doing an excellent job of telling the story by concentrating the audience's attention on the center of the drama – the eyes. *Therefore the key to designing the best moving master for a scene is to accurately identify these moments when the nose-to-nose, head-on nature of the conflict dissipates slightly. Because then the camera can both move and also do an excellent job of showing eyes and satisfying Task 4 by focusing on the drama.*

This is important because the camera *must move* to satisfy Tasks 1, 2, and 3. It can move in a wide arc and thereby show the audience everything they need to see to understand and believe what happens next: Task 1. Because all the actors who are involved in the conflict are facing the camera as it moves there is no need to cut. This generates the esthetic of seamlessness and thereby satisfies Task 2. And while the camera is moving any static object or any object moving in a different direction or at a different speed that passes through the frame will produce motion blur. This generates eye candy and satisfies Task 3.

In truth, Tasks 1, 2, and 3 fight Task 4. Tasks 1, 2, and 3 require camera movement and Task 4 – Drama – is actually best fulfilled in the shot/reverse/shot configuration of two static close-ups or two over-the-shoulder shots. There is a push-pull trade-off between the first three Tasks and the most important Task – Task 4. The more dynamic your camera movement, the weaker your drama, and vice versa. It is best to confront this head-on and understand that *the key to designing the best moving master for a scene is striking the perfect balance between motion and drama.*

In most scenes this balancing act is achieved by focusing on motion at the beginning of the scene and drama toward the end of the scene. This is facilitated by the fact that most scenes have a three-act structure with a beginning, a middle, and an end. What makes the end climactic is that the conflict intensifies throughout the scene and peaks toward the end. This is why the most important Task – Drama – is the fourth in number. So the needs of Task 1, 2, and 3 – Establishing, Seamlessness and Eye Candy – the three Tasks which require a moving camera – are usually satisfied first, at the beginning of the scene, when the conflict is less head-on so the actors can be turning their backs on each other and walking and talking. Then when the conflict intensifies at the end of the scene and the parties in the conflict stop and get in each other's face, the camera will draw to a stop in front of one of the parties in the conflict so it can frame up a tighter, static, over-the-shoulder or close-up.

## **A MODEL MOVING MASTER AND COVERAGE: JERRY MAGUIRE**

Director Cameron Crowe's visual design for the scene at the beginning of *Jerry Maguire* in which Jerry (Tom Cruise) breaks up with his heartless girlfriend, Avery (Kelly Preston) provides a number of very good examples of how the key to shooting the best moving master for a scene comes down to identifying the moments when the drama is sufficiently dissipated to allow one actor to turn his back and walk away from another actor.

It should be noted that even though in most respects the visual design for this scene is exemplary and typical, it is unusual in one respect. Cameron Crowe actually shot *two* moving masters for this scene. The first master serves the very first beat of the scene and a second one works for the remainder. He made this choice because in this initial beat of the scene — in striking the perfect balance between motion and drama — he wanted to come down very heavily on the side of motion. As to why, read on. (To view a video of this scene from *Jerry Maguire* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>)

Right before this scene Jerry has been fired as a top agent at a huge, profit-driven sports agency. He goes to Avery looking for advice and consolation. But Avery just berates him for “screwing up both our lives” by getting fired. Clearly, what made Jerry attractive to Avery was the size of his paycheck and his office. As the scene moves toward its climax, this reality comes into focus for Jerry, and he shocks his fiancée by announcing, “It’s over.”

The scene takes place in the huge main ballroom of a convention center where the NFL is about to stage its annual draft of college players. Avery works as a PR consultant for the NFL. Jerry tracks her down just as she is walking into the ballroom to distribute press kits, and tells her he has been fired. He pleads, “How do I spin this?” Avery furiously replies, “Oh honey it’s spun.” And then she turns her back on Jerry and charges into the ballroom.

At the start of the first moving master for this scene Crowe puts the camera in front of both of them so they are framed up in a side-by-side two-shot with Avery just a little bit in front of Jerry. (**Figure 3.001**) As Avery marches into the ballroom the camera pulls back in front of them. Jerry, stung by her harsh reaction, asks, “What did I do to you?” (**Figure 3.002 to 3.004**) The camera then slows and lets them go by the camera in a wide arc moving left-to-right (**Figure 3.003 to 3.013**), as Avery indignantly replies, “It’s all about you, isn’t it? Soothe me! Save me! Love me!” She says these lines back over her shoulder at Jerry who reaches out and tries to stop her by tugging on her sweater. Because the

camera has pivoted and let them go past it, they are now framed in a side angle, so when Avery turns back to Jerry she faces into the lens. This ends the first moving master for this scene. An overhead 3D animated depiction of how the actors move in relation to the camera can be seen in **Figure 3.013a**.

This shot does a superior job of satisfying the three Tasks that require a moving camera — Tasks 1, 2, and 3. At the same time it does a respectable job of capturing drama and satisfying Task 4 because Crowe has designed the shot so that, for the most part, Jerry and Avery are facing the camera.

Here is how he does this, Task by Task.

### **Task 1 — Establishing**

When the camera slows and lets them go past it in a wide arc, the huge expanse of the ballroom is revealed behind them. In this, the shot does an excellent job of satisfying Task 1 — Establishing. It shows the audience everything they need to see to understand what happens next. In this it *establishes* the new location.

The “everything” which needs to be shown can be broken down into three parts:

1. geography
2. money
3. believability

Geography is what every master must establish. It must show where everything that is going to play a role in the scene is located in relation to everything else. This is needed to establish eyelines. In this first moving master Jerry is established screen left and Avery screen right (**Figure 3.001 to 3.013**). So in the shot Crowe cuts to next — the second moving master for this scene — he maintains the same geography and eyelines by putting Jerry on the left side of the frame and Avery on the right (**Figure 3.014**). The rule is that once geography has been established in the master of a scene, all the other shots for that scene must maintain that same geography, unless it is reestablished in a different way in a



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3.013



3.013a



subsequent master. (And in fact, Crowe used the second moving master to re-establish geography and eyelines, repeatedly. This is described in detail on page 54 below.)

It goes by quickly, but a great deal of money was pumped into making this wide panning shot of Jerry and Avery entering the ballroom look the way it does. Money boils down to everything the producer paid for to mount the scene, specifically: all of the tables and chairs on the floor of the ballroom and all of the NFL banners, red, white, and blue bunting and banks of TV monitors on the walls (**Figure 3.001 to 3.013**) as well as the many hours of manpower needed to put them in place. Also contributing extensively to the expense of mounting the scene were the salaries of the twenty or more extras who can be seen behind Jerry and Avery, in particular in **Figure 3.001 and 3.008**. These are Screen Extras Guild extras who, according to strict union rules, each get paid about \$200 a day, not counting overtime and fringes. An established director like Cameron Crowe does not have to show absolutely everything the producer paid for in every master he shoots. But a director at the beginning of his career had best take this precaution if he wants to work for that producer or studio again in the future. Putting the money on the screen is the mark of a professional director.

Believability comes down to the pieces of physical evidence that must be revealed at the beginning of the scene to make what transpires in the scene completely plausible. If someone is going to get shot in a scene it should be revealed in the master that the victim is in range of the shooter. I go into this in more detail below on page 57 of this chapter under The Master With Warren Feur — How Seamless to the Max Helps Reveal “Everything”.

### **Task 2 — Seamlessness**

Even though people who are in conflict usually face each other, the dramatic context of this scene — the fact that Avery is ashamed of Jerry — makes it perfectly natural for her to turn her back on Jerry, even as he is talking to her, and walk away from him into the ballroom.

Because they are both facing in the same direction the camera can back up in front of them and see both Jerry and Avery’s eyes (**Figure 3.001 to 3.004**). As the camera slows and pivots and lets them go by the camera into a side shot, Jerry goes into profile, but Avery talks over her shoulder at Jerry so both of her eyes remain in the frame (**Figure 3.006 to 3.011**). This way the camera sees three of the four eyes of the principals. By designing the shot in this way, Crowe is able to do an excellent job of telling the story in one continuous shot without a cut, thereby generating the esthetic of seamlessness.

As I explained in the previous chapter, seamlessness distinguishes a moving shot from a static shot. Moving shots can last for two or three minutes without a cut (like the shots from *War of the Worlds* and *Pulp Fiction* referred to in the previous chapter). Static shots usually run out of information and stop doing a good job of telling the story after three or four seconds. In the post-Spielbergian era the standard for professional directors of all stripes, mainstream, indie and art house, has been to pump as much seamlessness as possible into every shot. Audiences have become accustomed to high levels of seamlessness in everything they see on a screen. If your film lacks seamlessness it will seem dated.

Again, the only way to generate seamlessness and eye candy and satisfy Tasks 2 and 3 is to move the camera. Moving shots are more difficult and time-consuming to do than static shots. Therefore if you take the time and spend the money to set up a moving shot, pump it full of as much seamlessness and eye candy as possible. This is how at the start of your career you can establish yourself as a great visual stylist, like Cameron, or Fincher or Cuarón.

Because the camera slowed down, pivoted, and let Jerry and Avery go by the camera it eventually ended up on their backs (**Figure 3.013**). At this point it stops doing a good job of telling the story because it cannot see their eyes. This requires that Crowe cut out of this first moving master and into a second moving master shot. This second moving master shot is back out in front of Jerry and Avery so the camera can see both of their eyes as it retreats in front of them (**Figure 3.014**). If Crowe had just kept the camera backing up in front of them from the minute they come

in through the double doors to the ballroom (**Figure 3.001**) until the start of this second moving master (**Figure 3.014**) he could have done their entire walk into the ballroom in one continuous shot. This would have generated more seamlessness but less eye candy. Crowe opted for the eye candy. In most scenes, in order to conserve time and money one master is made to suffice. But Crowe deemed it worth the extra time and money to get the extra eye candy.

### **Task 3 — Eye Candy**

As I explained in the last chapter, eye candy is essentially motion blur. If the camera is in motion any static object or object moving in a different direction or at a different speed that passes by the lens will have a slightly blurry edge to it. These blurry edges make a succession of static images rapidly viewed one after the other to look like a continuously moving image. If the science of this is unclear to you ask a cinematographer to explain it in more detail. The bottom line is: the more motion blur the more eye candy.

The cheapest and the easiest way to generate the most motion blur is to move the camera as dynamically as possible horizontally along the X-axis of the frame in front of as many bright, prominent *vertical* objects as possible. Dynamic vertical motion along the Y-axis in front of bright prominent *horizontal* objects generates an equal amount of motion blur, but it requires the use of a crane or CGI so it is dramatically more expensive.

The X-axis runs from side to side across the frame, either left-to-right or right-to-left. The Y-axis is from the top of the frame to the bottom, moving either up or down. The Z-axis runs from the vanishing point in the frame up to and past the vantage point, again moving in both directions: either deeper into the background or out into the foreground. Movement on the X-axis across the frame generates more motion blur and eye candy than movement on the Z-axis to the camera or away from the camera.

By letting Jerry and Avery walk by the camera and pivoting with them Crowe was able to pack as much eye candy as possible into this first

moving master. Pivoting and panning this way generates the most dynamic horizontal movement along the X-axis of the frame. It insures that every object in the frame that Jerry and Avery walk in front of will strobe through the frame more rapidly and be feathered with the maximum amount of motion blur (**Figure 3.004 to 3.013**).

It is worth noting that as long as the camera is retreating in a straight line in front of two actors who are walking and talking, most of the movement in the frame is on the Z-axis. This generates much less eye candy. If a director wants to generate the maximum amount of eye candy he will try to block the actors and the camera so the actors move more on the X-axis than the Z-axis.

Crowe also made certain that every object and every person that Jerry and Avery walked in front of was as large and bright and vertical as possible. This accentuates its motion through the frame.

There are three ways a director can fill his frame with verticals:

1. He must identify everything that is large and bright and vertical in his location and then block his actors so they walk in front of it. This is why Crowe blocked Jerry and Avery so at the start of this shot they walk through a large white double doorway and immediately in front of a large white wall which divides the inner expanse of the ballroom from an outer foyer (**Figure 3.001 to 3.006**).
2. He must work with his production designer to pack as many large bright vertical objects into the frame as the budget will allow. *Jerry Maguire* was a big-budget film so Crowe and his production designer knocked themselves out filling this ballroom to the rafters with large bright objects with strong vertical lines. A big white dais sits in the middle of room (**Figure 3.011**) and the floor is a sea of long tables covered with bright red tablecloths (**3.020**). Bleachers stacked with red chairs ring the room. The walls are festooned with banks of bright TV monitors, as well as a huge multicolored mosaic of every NFL team logo and lots of red, white, and blue bunting and NFL banners (**Figure 3.007 to 3.013**).
3. He must work with his First AD so that he routes his moving extras and stations the static extras so they break and move through the

frame in the most dynamic way possible. To this end, right in the middle of shot, Crowe's First AD sent an extra in a bright blue shirt through the frame in the opposite direction of Jerry and Avery (**Figure 3.009 to 3.011**).

Of all the Five Tasks, generating eye candy seems the most beside the point. That is why I call it eye candy. In a sense it is trivial. It takes place in the background of the shot while the camera is moving from A to B to C to fulfill the other Tasks.

But it is also of great consequence because, even more than seamless, it makes a moving shot look like a moving shot. When a shot continues at length without a cut this lends an almost subliminal element of unity to the esthetic of the shot. But there is nothing subliminal about eye candy. It is the source of the dynamic visual energy of a moving shot. More than seamless it distinguishes a moving shot from a static shot.

All the directors who have achieved status as great visual stylists have done so largely through a preternatural ability to cram eye candy into their shots. Spielberg designed the amazing shot from *War of the Worlds* of Ray Ferrier flying down the interstate in his van, discussed in the previous chapter, by making sure that the shot could continue without a cut by staying on the eyes of whichever member of Ray's family is talking (**Figure 2.009 to 2.011**, pp. 12–13). But when the drama dissipated slightly he worked to pack this shot with the maximum amount of eye candy by having the camera fly away from the van and frame it up in a straight side shot moving as dynamically as possible across the X-axis of the frame. And then, just as Cameron Crowe did in his moving master of Jerry and Avery walking into the ballroom, Spielberg teamed up with his production designer to strategically place the maximum amount of large bright objects with strong vertical lines — other cars — between the camera and the van and behind the van so they break the frame as dynamically as possible and generate the maximum amount of motion blur as they strobe through the frame (**Figure 2.001 to 2.006**, p. 12).

Most of Quentin Tarantino's long moving master of Vinnie walking into Jack Rabbit Slim's from *Pulp Fiction* (cited in the previous chapter)

follows Vinnie by pushing in behind him on the Z-axis as he walks deeper into the club. The shot starts this way (**Figure 2.090**, p. 27) and it ends this way (**Figure 2.101 to 2.111**, pp. 27–28). This does not generate the maximum amount of eye candy.

To jack up the eye candy in the frame, in the middle of the shot, Tarantino interrupts this motion on the Z-axis by very deliberately making Vinnie almost slow to a stop, then point and look intently at a waiter dressed as Zorro, as the waiter crosses into the far right corner of the nightclub (**Figure 2.092 to 2.094**, p. 27). This cocks the camera as far to camera right as possible and then allows Tarantino to generate the maximum amount of eye candy by having the camera pan back across the entire X-axis of the frame to extreme camera left. This internally generated camera move shows us what Vinnie see as his eyes move off of Zorro and sweep across the entire expanse of the nightclub (**Figure 2.094 to 2.099**, p. 27). Like Crowe and Spielberg, Tarantino works with his production designer to accentuate this movement across the X-axis by filling the frame with as many large, bright vertical objects as the budget will allow — most noticeably, large white pillars and brightly lit movie posters, six feet tall (**Figure 2.095 to 2.096**, p. 27)

More than any of the other Five Tasks, generating eye candy visually energizes the frame and helps bring the film to life. This is why Crowe, Spielberg, Tarantino, and all directors known as great visual stylists work diligently to fill their moving master shots with eye candy.

### Task 4 — Drama

At the start of this second moving master shot of this scene from *Jerry Maguire*, Jerry complains, "Everything is on the fucking run with us! Everything!" (**Figure 3.014 to 3.018**). Avery stops and turns and gets in Jerry's face, confronting him head on with the truth that, "Jerry, you and I are salespeople. We sell." (**Figure 3.018 to 3.024**). Crowe rightly distinguishes this as a moment in the scene when the conflict and the drama have now risen to a more confrontational level. It is only natural that Avery would stop walking away from Jerry, and turn and face him so they are in the position in which human beings normally confront each other: nose-to-nose.





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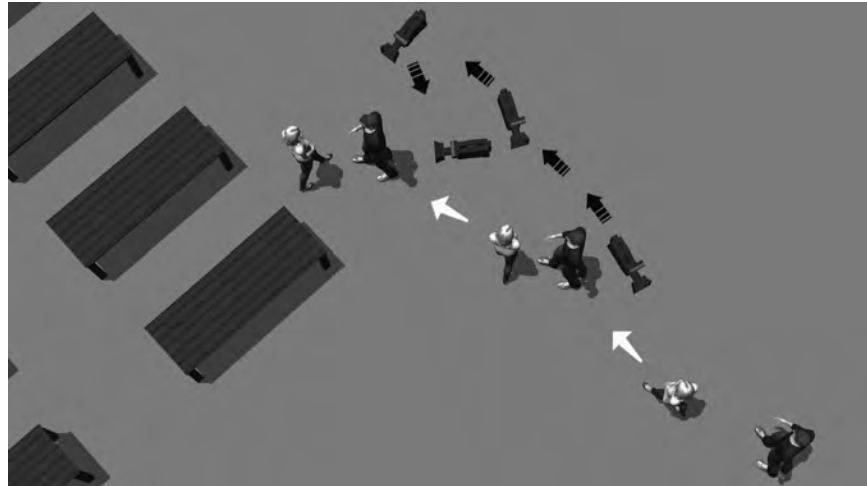


As explained above, the best way to tell the story and convey the drama when it peaks like this in a shot/reverse/shot configuration, cutting between two static matching close-ups or over-the-shoulder shots. Accordingly, Crowe slows his camera down and brings it around behind Jerry as Avery turns to face him. She says one-half of her line into the camera over Jerry's right shoulder (**Figure 3.021**) and then the camera keeps moving behind Jerry (reversing the eyelines) so she says the second half of the line into the camera over his left shoulder (**Figure 3.021 to 3.024**). (**Figure 3.024a** provides an overhead 3D animated depiction of the movement of the actors and the camera.)

Jerry throws his hand up and tries to respond, but she cuts him off. To show Jerry trying to stand up to Avery, Crowe cuts to a reverse shot over Avery's right shoulder on Jerry (**Figure 3.025 to 3.027**).

This follows the pattern described above which is common to the visual design of most scenes. At the beginning of the scene the conflict is still brewing. As the scene progresses, the conflict becomes more confrontational. This tends to shift the balance of the scene from motion to drama. The master slows down and comes around into a frontal position on one of the parties in the conflict to see both of their eyes as they say a more confrontational line. And then, when that actor stops talking and the other actor responds, this is captured in a separate reverse shot, which requires a cut. Once the visual design of the scene has shifted into this shot/reverse/shot pattern, there will be less seamlessness and there will be much less panning and movement along the X-axis of the frame, which will diminish eye candy. Therefore, Tasks 1, 2, and 3 – Establishing, Seamlessness and Eye Candy – will be eclipsed by Task 4 – Drama.

But the balance has not *permanently* shifted away from motion. As is often the case in longer scenes that lend themselves to being shot with a moving camera, this moment of peak confrontation from *Jerry Maguire* is *momentary*. After getting in Jerry's face, Avery turns her back on him *again* and marches away, slapping press kits down on the rows of tables. This shifts the balance back toward motion. Crowe has already got the camera(s) in a shot/reverse/shot configuration – the best place to capture *drama*: the master shot which brought them up to the table



**3.024a**

where she slaps down her first press kit has become an OTS on Avery (**Figure 3.014 to 3.024**), and the matching reverse shot is an OTS on Jerry (**Figure 3.025 to 3.027**). So now that the conflict has dissipated slightly (momentarily) and the actors are back in *motion*, he can continue to strike the perfect balance between motion and drama by simply moving *both* the master and the reverse.

To do this, Crowe continues with the moving master until the very end of the scene, and turns the reverse over-the-shoulder shot on Jerry (**Figure 3.027**) into a *moving, matching reverse-master*. This matching reverse-master is essentially the mirror image of the moving master.

Because the confrontation was momentary and the actors are back in motion, Crowe now has an opportunity to generate more seamlessness and eye candy, while at the same time, keeping the audience focused on the drama. He does it all by having Avery and Jerry continue to argue as they walk into the ballroom and at the same time cross back and forth in front of each other along the X-axis of the frame. Avery keeps slapping the press kits down on the tables and simultaneously berating Jerry, telling him "It's not love me it's not trust my handshake. It's make



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3.031

the deal. Get it signed. There should not be any confusion about that.” (**Figure 3.028 to 3.036**). But because Avery is, rather unusually, talking while walking backwards, she is facing right into the camera and it can see both her eyes to capture the drama. Crowe has correctly determined that this is one of those extremely rare moments when it is natural for two actors to be confronting each other nose-to-nose while still in motion because one of them is walking backwards. This enables him to have his cake and eat it too. He can equally strengthen motion and drama at the same time. He makes that which by definition is difficult to do look easy and natural. And like all great visual stylists he crams one more prominent vertical object into the frame by having a big extra in a white shirt (portraying one of the workers setting up the ballroom) appear on the left side of the frame and then exit left (**Figure 3.028 to 3.031**). This increases movement on the X-axis and adds an extra dollop of eye candy to the scene.

In protest, Jerry stops chasing after Avery and quips, “Jump right into my nightmare. The water is warm.” By implying that she is heartless and by stopping and holding his ground for a beat, Jerry has made the drama a hint more confrontational. Crowe captures this by bringing the reverse over-the-shoulder shot on him to a stop as Jerry delivers the line, and allowing Avery to slide out of the shot frame left (**Figure 3.037 to 3.039**). So the balance between motion and drama has slipped slightly toward drama and Crowe is able to capture it by reverting to the shot/reverse/shot configuration.

In the next exchange:

AVERY

Oh, so honesty is outlawed here? I can’t be honest?

JERRY

I’ll tell you what. I would prefer loyalty.

Crowe is again able to shift the balance back and forth between motion and drama just as he did in the previous exchange. Avery says her line in motion while continuing to talk while walking backwards. The master

can push in on her as she backs up and Crowe can energize the frame and add a little eye candy by blocking Jerry to cross in front of Avery on the X-axis (**Figure 3.040 to 3.045**). Then the balance can shift back to drama when Jerry comes to a stop and gets off his line impugning Avery’s loyalty. Crowe captures this in the reverse-master (**Figure 3.045 to 3.047**), again bringing the camera to a halt and reverting to the shot/reverse/shot configuration.

Jerry’s last jab gets a bigger rise out of Avery. She finally stops running away and gets right in his face, reminding him, “What was our deal when we got together? Brutal truth.” She is looking a little off-axis into the lens. Crowe brings the camera to a stop and emphasizes the confrontational nature of the moment by cutting to a tighter version of the master which was shot as a piece of coverage after the master was completed (**Figure 3.048 to 3.050**). (See Task 5 – Coverage, p. 49)

By shooting a wide, moving master in one direction and a matching, moving reverse-shot in the opposite direction (probably on the following day because it requires reversing the entire lighting setup) Crowe is able to keep shifting the balance between motion and drama as it ebbs and flows in the course of this running argument. A 3D animated depiction of the movement of the actors and the camera in the master can be seen in **Figure 3.044a**. **Figure 3.047a** provides the same overhead view of the reverse-master.

Whenever the drama dissipates and Avery turns her back and walks away from Jerry, shifting the balance on the side of motion, Crowe is ready to move and continue to add seamlessness and eye candy to the shot. And whenever Avery stops moving and comes in nose-to-nose with Jerry to give more weight to what she is saying (**Figure 3.048 to 3.055**), Crowe draws the two moving, reverse shots momentarily to a halt and beams the full force of both the actor’s eyes to the audience in two matching, full-frontal, static close-ups – the ideal shots for conveying drama and telling story.

This strategy to shoot a moving master and, after the first confrontational moment in the scene, intercut it with a moving reverse-master is a good general plan of attack for shooting longer scenes with a moving camera.





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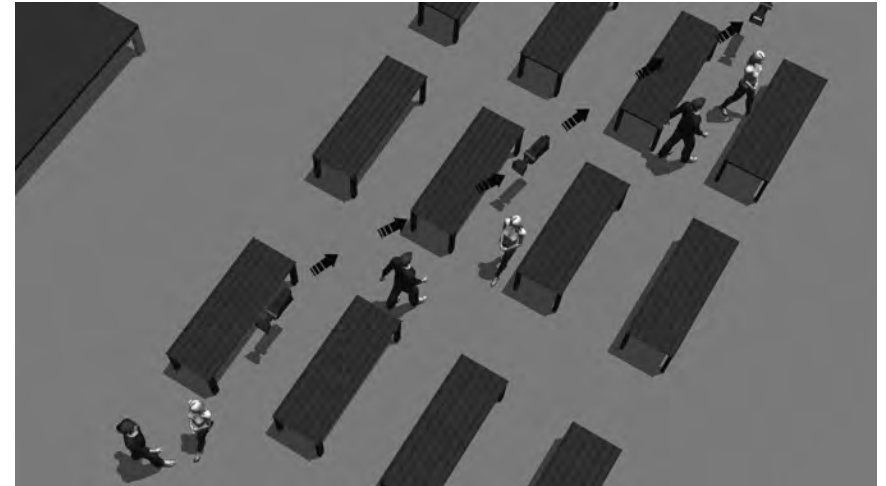
3.048



3.049



3.044a



3.047a



3.044b



3.047b



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3.055

Like in this scene from *Jerry Maguire*, the confrontational moments come and go. By shooting using this strategy, the director can stay flexible and know that between the master and the reverse-master he will be able to strike the right balance and get the right shot.

In the scene from *Jerry Maguire*, Avery keeps running away from Jerry throughout the entire scene. For this reason the master and reverse-master move in one direction — from the door to the ballroom toward the opposite wall. This blocking is appropriate given the dramatic context of the scene.

But in many longer scenes like this, which lend themselves to being shot with a moving camera, the blocking can flow in two or more directions. The actor who is chasing — in this case Jerry — can turn the tables, and, out of indignation, or spite, or some other appropriate emotion, walk away from his opponent(s). If this were to happen in this scene from *Jerry Maguire*, then Crowe could have easily reversed the direction of the master and reverse-master and picked up all the shots he would need to cover Jerry leading Avery back toward the door to the ballroom through which they had previously entered. Before they reached the

door, they could have veered off at a 45-degree angle to the right or the left. The master could have led and the reverse-master could have followed them as they made this 45-degree turn. In all these instances the strategy of shooting a moving master and a matching, moving reverse-master would have allowed Crowe to favor Task 4 — Drama — at the more confrontational moments, and tip the balance on the side of Tasks 1, 2, and 3 — Establishing, Seamlessness, and Eye Candy — when the actors were in motion.

This strategy also makes it easier for a director to allow his actors the freedom to determine their blocking organically. Almost all actors are trained in The Method and therefore want to be able to spontaneously decide exactly when, in the course of a running argument, they will get in the other actor's face and when they will turn and walk away. If a director knows he is going to shoot a moving master and a moving reverse he can wait and decide during rehearsal exactly when the actors and the cameras will move and when the actors will go nose-to-nose and the cameras will draw to a stop.

### **Task 5 — Coverage**

Task 5, which requires that a good moving master pick up some coverage, is a natural by-product of Task 4 — Drama. This is because, as was explained above, the best way to convey drama on screen is in the shot/reverse/shot configuration. Therefore, whenever the balance in a scene shifts from motion to drama, in order to do a better job of satisfying Task 4, the master will tighten up and swing on-axis (on-axis means the actors are looking almost directly into the camera). The more the master swings on-axis, the more it tightens up on the eyes of one of the parties in the conflict, the better a job it will do of becoming one of the tighter shots which will be used in editorial to give a dramatic build to the scene. After the master and sub-masters are shot, these tighter coverage pieces comprise the work that must be completed before the crew can move on and shoot the next scene.

By designing his moving masters so they become coverage the director is able to complete the day's work doing fewer setups. This saves time and money. If a director can shoot a moving reverse-master (or a series

of moving reverse sub-masters) which also become coverage he will save even more time and money. This is yet another reason why it is a good general plan of attack to shoot a moving master and a moving reverse-master that starts after the first moment of peak confrontation.

So in the breakup scene from *Jerry Maguire* the moving master, which favors Avery, and the moving reverse-master, which favors Jerry, comprise at least 80% of all the work required to shoot this scene. This is because every piece of coverage is simply a tighter version of these two, matching, on-axis over-the-shoulder shots.

For example, the second time Avery stops running away from Jerry, she gets into his face reminding him, "What was our deal when we first got together? Brutal truth." Crowe knows that in the final edit he will want her to say this in a tighter shot than the master (**Figure 3.048 to 3.050**). This tighter shot is a valuable piece of coverage. Because Crowe designed the master with an eye for becoming coverage, by the time the camera has moved into the OTS on Avery in **Figure 3.044** it is in the right spot to pick up this piece of coverage. All Crowe has to do is put a tighter lens on the camera and repeat the same camera move as he used for the master.

Crowe designed this master so it would continue to satisfy Task 5 and pick up coverage in this same way again and again until the end of the scene. So when Avery gets in Jerry's face for the third time during the next exchange:

JERRY

I think you added the brutal.

AVERY

Jerry there is a sensitivity thing some people have. I don't have it. I don't cry at movies. I don't gush over babies, and I don't tell the man who just screwed up both our lives, "Oh poor baby."

Crowe can cover this more confrontational moment in the perfect shot/reverse/shot configuration (**Figure 3.048 to 3.055**) without



doing additional setups. Again, all he has to do is redo the master after the image in **Figure 3.044** and the reverse-master after the image in **Figure 3.047** with a tighter lens on the camera. **Figure 3.044b** represents how the over-the-shoulder shot on Avery seen in **Figure 3.044**, which is part of the master, can easily be redone as the close-up piece of coverage on Avery seen in **Figure 3.048 to 3.050**. In **Figure 3.044b** the camera position in the OTS, which is part of the master, is labeled #1 and the camera position in the close-up, which is a piece of coverage, is labeled #2. Similarly, in **Figure 3.047b** the OTS on Jerry seen in **Figure 3.047** which is part of the reverse-master is labeled #1 and the close-up seen in **Figure 3.051**, which is a piece of coverage, is labeled #2.

The key to fulfilling Task 5 — Coverage — is to accurately distinguish the moments of peak confrontation in the scene and bring the moving master into a tighter, more on-axis position so it can see both eyes of one of the parties in the conflict. This way one of two things will happen. Either the master will actually metamorphose into one of the needed pieces of coverage. (See pages 64-67 below for a description of a master which metamorphoses into coverage). Or, as in the scene from *Jerry Maguire*, the lighting setup and/or camera setup used to shoot the master can immediately be reused to shoot the coverage. This will save a significant amount of time and money.

This very practical concern is the basis for Task 5 — Coverage. Tasks 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all about motion and drama. They enable a director to energize the frame and simultaneously tell the story. Task 5 is all about time and money. It enables a director to make the film for the money in the budget and thereby insure that he will get hired again. At the start of every director's career, time and money will be in short supply. Spielberg had fourteen days to complete his first feature film, *Duel*. James Cameron made his first feature, *Terminator*, for under a million dollars. As it was for them, it will be for every director on their first feature. Making a great film will be a necessary but not sufficient condition for continued success. On top of that, it must be made for a price. The bean counters will demand satisfaction.

## THE DEFAULT PATTERN FOR DESIGNING THE BEST MOVING MASTER

Tasks 1 through 5 are numbered in that order because this is the order in which they are usually fulfilled. Therefore, there is a default pattern for designing the best moving master for a scene. Because in most scenes the conflict and drama peak toward the end of the scene — the climax — a director is usually able to favor motion over drama at the beginning of the scene in order to satisfy those Tasks which are best fulfilled using a moving camera — Tasks 1, 2, and 3 — Establishing, Seamlessness, and Eye Candy. Then, as the drama becomes more confrontational and head-on, as the scene drives toward a climax, the master can slow down or come to a stop and draw up into a tighter more on-axis shot, which sees both of the eyes of one of the parties in the conflict and therefore does the best job possible of focusing the audience on the center of the drama and fulfilling Task 4 — Drama. The better a job the master does of satisfying Task 4 — Drama — the better a job it will do at satisfying Task 5 — Coverage.

The moving master that Cameron Crowe designed for the breakup scene from *Jerry Maguire* fulfills the Five Tasks in sequential order according to the default pattern. Similarly the default pattern works well for most scenes that lend themselves to being shot with a moving camera. But every scene in every film is unique and the default pattern must be altered slightly or a great deal to conform to these unique characteristics. Every location is unique. There is one superior way to establish each location and each location contains a unique array of opportunities and obstacles for generating seamlessness and eye candy. More important, the way the conflict and drama unfold in every scene is unique. The moments when the conflict becomes more confrontational or dissipates will determine the optimum position of the camera in relation to the actors and how much it should be moving. These moments occur at different junctures in every scene and the exact nature of the conflict is unique to that scene.

In order to design the best moving master for a scene, the director must tailor the way he applies the Five Tasks so the resulting shot best meets

the unique needs of the scene. The ability to do this is not easily learned. It requires a great deal of raw talent honed through years of experience. It is what makes a great visual stylist great. This ability to meet the unique stylistic needs of each scene is what makes a film by Hitchcock or Kurosawa or Kubrick or P. T. Anderson a joy to watch.

The default pattern for designing the best moving master by fulfilling the Five Tasks worked almost perfectly when Cameron Crowe applied it to the unique needs of the breakup scene from *Jerry Maguire*. Essentially this was because the ballroom where the scene took place was a big box and Crowe and his production designer had complete control over everything that went into the box. Not all locations are equally uniform or obstacle free. If the location contains stairways, hallways, counters or takes place outside on a sidewalk, a road, or a path, the camera cannot go anywhere, as Crowe's camera could. And the director will not have complete control over what passes in front of the camera, as Crowe did. These restrictions on motion and what passes in front of the camera will require a specialized application of Tasks 1, 2, and 3 to generate seamlessness and eye candy and establish the location. Furthermore the confrontational nature of the drama in the breakup scene from *Jerry Maguire* mounted steadily from the beginning of the scene until the end. This enabled Crowe to wait until toward the end of the scene to focus on satisfying the needs of Task 4 — Drama — and Task 5 — Coverage.

To give the first-time director a better understanding of how to alter the default pattern to meet the unique needs of an individual scene, I will now analyze the visual design of the master shot for three additional scenes. The first of these scenes was taken from a movie made for Showtime by a friend of mine, Doug Barr. It required a specialized application of Tasks 1 and 5 — Establishing and Coverage. The other two scenes were taken from the feature film, *What Lies Beneath*, directed by Bob Zemeckis. To formulate the best moving master for one of these scenes Zemeckis went about satisfying Tasks 2 and 4 — Seamless and Drama — in an unusual way. In the other scene, he altered the default pattern a great deal in the way he went about using Tasks 1, 3, and 4 — Establishing, Eye Candy, and Drama — to meet the specific needs of that scene.

## THE MASTER FOR THE MAHJONG PARLOR FROM *CONUNDRUM* — FOLLOWING THE DEFAULT PATTERN

This moving master which veteran TV director Doug Barr crafted for his Showtime movie, *Conundrum*, conforms to the default pattern until the first, and final, confrontational moment in the scene.

To view a video of this master shot from *Conundrum* go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

*Conundrum* tells the story of Rose Ekberg, a female detective, played by Marg Helgenberger. Early on in the film, Rose and her detective partner, Stash Horak (Michael Biehn) go to a mahjong parlor to question a Vietnamese gangster, Tony Tam, about the whereabouts of a gunsel named Joey. At the beginning of the scene, the master favors Task 1 — Establishing — above all others. Accordingly, the shot starts on a medium wide shot of Tam seated at a table in the back of a mahjong parlor (**Figure 3.056**). A waiter leaves Tam's table and walks toward the front of the parlor (**Figure 3.057 to 3.058**). The camera goes with the waiter, and in so doing, pivots 180 degrees on the X-axis and lands at the front door of the parlor just as Stash saunters in, with Rose a step behind him (**Figure 3.057 to 3.060**). So, in the opening seconds of the master, the audience has seen three-and-a-half walls of the four-wall mahjong parlor as well as all the actors and extras in the scene. In addition, the 180-degree pivot of the master whipped the lens horizontally on the X-axis through every vertical object in the room, exploiting almost every opportunity for eye candy. The master also captured all elements of the story in one continuous shot and eliminated the need to cut. This follows the pattern perfectly. Tasks 1, 2, and 3 — Establishing, Seamlessness, and Eye Candy — are fulfilled in just that order.

As soon as Stash comes through the door and moves aggressively up to Tam's table the conflict in the scene starts to mount. To show the audience the maximum number of eyes of one of the parties in the conflict, the camera pulls back as Stash walks up to Tam's table, but it doesn't travel as far as Stash does, so it actually tightens into a good shot on Stash



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3.067

in the foreground and Rose behind him, both seen over Tam's shoulder (**Figure 3.060 to 3.063**). The camera now comes to a permanent stop.

Stash asks, "Where's Joey? We have a warrant for his arrest." To which Tam replies, defiantly, "I'm in the middle of a game." To show Tam who is boss, Stash sweeps his forearm across the table, knocking all the porcelain mahjong tiles onto the floor (**Figure 3.064**). Tam and Stash trade insults. Then Stash drops his business card on the table and tells Tam to call him if he sees Joey, turns, and stalks out the door. Rose follows on his heels. (**Figure 3.065 to 3.067**)

Figure **3.067a** depicts a 3D animated image of the entire moving master.

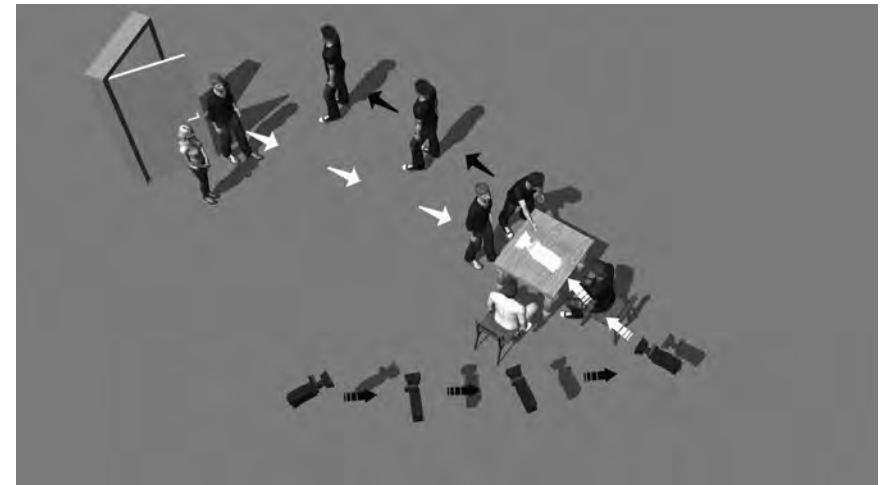
As soon as Stash draws to a halt and confronts Tam nose-to-nose the balance in the scene shifts from motion to drama. Doug Barr continues to follow the default pattern by turning his moving master into one of the best shots for exposing the audience to the confrontational nature of the drama: a static over-the-shoulder shot on one of the participants in the conflict. In this he does an excellent job of fulfilling Tasks 4 and 5 — Drama and Coverage — and at the same time abandons Tasks 2 and 3 — Seamlessness and Eye Candy. Because the moving master has come to stop there will be no more eye candy. And because the shot is an on-axis shot looking at Stash and Rose over Tam's shoulder, as soon as Tam speaks back to Stash the center of the drama will shift off-camera and the editor, accordingly, will cut to the reverse over-the-shoulder shot on Tam (**Figure 3.068**).



**3.068**



**3.067a**



**3.067b**



What this master from *Conundrum* does not do which it should do if it were to stick *strictly* to the logic and dictates of the default pattern is push into a tighter shot on Stash after he knocks the mahjong tiles off the table (**Figure 3.064**) and the confrontational nature of the drama peaks. The camera would push in and land where the white camera is shown in the 3D animated image seen in **Figure 3.067b**.

In scenes that have multiple successive climaxes, such as the scene from *Jerry Maguire*, or in a scene in which an exit has dramatic consequences, such as the scene in the mahjong parlor (after Stash trashed the gangsters mahjong tiles, he and Rose were lucky to make it out of the mahjong parlor unscathed), the needs of Task 1 — Establishing — come back into play at the end of the scene. The master stays wider in order to show the audience everything they need to see to understand and believe how the actors shifted position in the location or how they exited. If the geography and the eyelines change this has to be re-established in the master.

In the scene from *Jerry Maguire* in the course of their long-running argument, Jerry and Avery keep walking across the X-axis in front of each other. Cameron Crowe did this deliberately because for most of the scene Avery is walking in a straight line deeper and deeper into the ballroom with Jerry on her heels. This keeps all the motion on the Z-axis and does not generate much eye candy. But every time they cross in front of each other on the X-axis they are verticals moving horizontally so this energizes the frame with a jolt of eye candy.

It also reverses the eyelines. This shift in geography must be established and then re-established in the master. Therefore, Crowe shot the entire master and reverse-master wide enough to make sure he could always show both Jerry and Avery in the same shot whenever they crossed in front of each other and reversed their eyelines (**Figure 3.020 to 3.023**, **Figure 3.028 to 3.029**, and **Figure 3.041 to 3.044**) He stayed back with the camera rather than push in for all the moments of peak confrontation because he knew that the next thing he had to do with the camera was show this reversal of eyelines. (He also knew he could pick up all the tighter confrontational moments simply by putting a tighter lens on

the camera and re-shooting the master and reverse-master in the same lighting setup with a tighter lens.)

It runs slightly counter to the sequential logic of the Five Tasks and the default pattern, but in some scenes, Task 1 — Establishing — must be addressed not just at the beginning of the scene, but also in the middle and sometimes at the end.

In this way, shooting a good moving master is like shooting pool. The camera is like the cue ball. You must make sure that whatever path it takes, it ends up in the best place for what it has to do next. Sometimes this means staying wide, even at a moment of peak confrontation, such as when Stash knocks all the mahjong tiles off the table (**Figure 3.064**).

### **THE MASTER WITH WARREN FEUR FROM *WHAT LIES BENEATH* — SEAMLESSNESS TO THE MAX**

Bob Zemeckis made *What Lies Beneath* as an homage to Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock loved the way a moving camera could eliminate edits. (He made a feature-length film, *Rope*, in which there is not one visible edit.) To a large extent, he pioneered the use of seamlessness in modern cinema. Accordingly, in *What Lies Beneath*, Zemeckis tried to eliminate as many edits as he could in each of his moving masters. This turned many of the masters into one'ers. A one'er is a shot that conveys the entire scene in one continuous piece, without an edit.

The trick to shooting a one'er and generating the maximum amount of seamlessness is to keep the camera in motion and resist shifting the balance in the design of the shot to drama, even as the scene becomes more and more confrontational. According to the default pattern, when people get in each other's face, the camera swings more on-axis, tightens and slows, or comes to a stop. But when you are trying to shoot a one'er, you keep the camera moving so it can keep on telling the story in one shot. You fight the shift to drama. Ultimately this means you favor Tasks 1, 2, and 3 over Task 4 — Drama.

To view a video of the one'er from *What Lies Beneath* discussed below, go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html>

Early in the story of *What Lies Beneath* the main character, Claire (Michelle Pfeiffer), goes a little nuts. She obsessively spies on her next-door neighbor, Warren Feur (James Remar) and becomes absolutely certain that he has murdered his wife. Claire hunts Feur down to a theater where he has just attended a play. With her husband, Norman (Harrison Ford), hot on her heels, she rushes up to where Feur is standing in the lobby of the theater and hits him on the shoulder, turning him around (**Figure 3.069 to 3.076**). By pulling straight back in front of Claire as she crosses the lobby and revealing Feur in a three-shot with Norman (**Figure 3.076**), the visual design satisfies Tasks 1, 2, and 3 in order and follows the dictates of the default pattern. It shows everything. It does not cut, and it generates eye candy. Claire immediately calls Feur out, declaring in a loud voice, "You! You think you're pretty smart! You think you got away with it. But I know you killed her you murdering son-of-a-bitch!" The camera continues to follow the dictates of the default pattern pushing in from an over-the-shoulder shot and into a good, on-axis two-shot of Claire and Norman (**Figure 3.076 to 3.077**). Because the confrontational nature of the drama has become more intense, the shot has stayed on-axis and tightened to do the best job possible of satisfying Task 4 – Drama.

In response to this accusation, Feur asks incredulously, "Who?" When Feur speaks the center of the drama shifts 180 degrees onto his eyes. The best way to show this and continue to do the best job of satisfying Task 4 – Drama – would have been to cut to a reverse shot on Feur – to shift to the shot/reverse/shot configuration. But Zemeckis never shot a reverse on Feur. He had no intention of cutting out of this master. His overriding priority was to not cut. So he resists this shift to drama and keeps on moving his camera so he can continue to tell the story in one shot. To do this he pushes in from a good on-axis shot on Claire into a distinctly off-axis profile shot on her as she all but screams, "Don't give me that shit! Your wife!" (**Figure 3.077 to 3.079**)

As she hurls this accusation the center of the drama is in her eyes. The best way to convey her crazy rage to the audience would have been in an on-axis shot which sees both of her eyes such as the image in **Figure 3.073** shot with a tighter lens. If Zemeckis had been interested in doing

the best job possible of satisfying Task 4 – Drama – as the confrontation peaks he would have pushed into a tighter on-axis frame on Claire and Norman. Not the off-axis shot in **Figure 3.079**. But he has brought the camera around into this profile shot so it is cocked and ready to swing around on the X-axis, camera right, into a reverse shot by following Norman as he apologetically mutters, "I am sorry she is very upset" and takes a big step camera right, landing in a side-by-side two-shot with Feur (**Figure 3.079 to 3.081**). Just then, Feur's wife, Mary, exits the women's restroom, where she has been closeted until this moment, and rushes up to Feur's side (**Figure 3.081 to 3.083**). With a look of concern etched on her face she says, "Honey?" Her husband wraps his arm around her, turns to Claire, and states, definitively, "I did not kill my wife." (**Figure 3.083**) For an overhead 3D view of how the camera swings almost 180 degrees from an on-axis over-the-shoulder shot on Claire and Norman to an off-axis three-shot of Norman, Mary Feur, and Warren Feur see **Figure 3.082a**.

By continuing to move his camera, dolly and panning from Claire over to Feur, Zemeckis has managed to tell the story in one shot without a cut. He has done the best job possible of satisfying Task 2 and keeping the shot seamless, but at the expense of drama and Task 4. The shot on Norman as he speaks is in profile (**Figure 3.080**). When Mary Feur arrives at her husband's side and says her one line she is in profile (**Figure 3.083**). And when Feur confronts Claire with the truth, he is in profile (**Figure 3.083**). All of these shots are off-axis and do not convey the full power of what these characters are feeling by allowing the audience to see *both* of their eyes. To do that Zemeckis would have had to *stop moving* the master when it was framed up in a good on-axis two-shot on Claire and Norman – essentially a slightly tighter, slightly more on-axis version of the shot in **Figure 3.077**. He should have let them say all of their lines in this two-shot. And then he should have shot a matching, reverse, on-axis two-shot on Mary and Warren Feur. This would have given him the shot/reverse/shot configuration with which he could have conveyed the full power of the drama to audience. The simple formula which he has not adhered to is that the center of the drama in every



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3.072



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3.081



scene is in the eyes of the person who is talking, and the more eyes the audience can see, the better, with the maximum being two per person.

In the visual design of this scene there is proof positive of the validity of the fact that Tasks 1, 2, and 3 fight Task 4. Tasks 1, 2, and 3 — Establishing, Seamlessness, and Eye Candy — are enhanced by camera movement and Task 4 — Drama — is actually best fulfilled in the shot/reverse/shot configuration of two *static* close-ups or two over-the-shoulder shots. The push-pull trade-off between the first three Tasks and the most important Task — Task 4 — means that if you err on the side of making your camera movement as dynamic as possible, as Zemeckis has done in this one'er, you often weaken the drama. But this was the trade-off Zemeckis was willing to make in order to fashion a film that was a more perfect homage to Hitchcock. The point being that every scene in every movie is unique and calls for a unique application of the Five Tasks. The default pattern provides a starting point. But a great visual stylist crafts a one-of-a-kind application of the Five Tasks to each scene.

### ***The Master with Warren Fear — How Seamlessness to the Max Adds Eye Candy***

In the design of this shot Zemeckis was primarily intent on not cutting. But it is worth noting that by pulling out all the stops to fulfill Task 2 and make the shot completely seamless, he was able to do an even better job at generating eye candy and showing the audience everything in this theater lobby. To avoid having to shoot a reverse shot (which he would then have to cut to) Zemeckis must pan and dolly dramatically across the X-axis from a profile two-shot on Claire and Norman to a profile two-shot on Norman and Fear (**Figure 3.079 to 3.081**). Up until this moment the camera has been moving on the Z-axis, first pulling back in front of Claire as she charges into the lobby and then pushing in on her as she blasts Fear. The dramatic pan and dolly on the X-axis sweeps the camera horizontally across most of the architectural facets of the lobby, which are vertical. Zemeckis' cinematographer, Don Burgess, uses contrasts in light and shadow to define all these vertical planes. This enables Zemeckis to pack more eye candy into the frame with this dolly/pan than at any other point in his one'er.

### ***The Master With Warren Fear — How Seamlessness to the Max Helps Reveal "Everything"***

When Fear first responds incredulously to Claire's accusation that he murdered his wife, and she screams, "Don't give me that shit! Your wife!" every theatergoer in the lobby turns his head in alarm (**Figure 3.077 to 3.078**). This is part of the "everything" that Zemeckis must show the audience in order to fulfill Task 1 — Establishing. The dramatic dolly/pan on the X-axis that Zemeckis must make in time to see Mary Fear exit the women's restroom (**Figure 3.079 to 3.081**) enables him to linger for an instant on the head of each theatergoer as it turns. After Fear wraps his arm around his wife and confronts Claire with the truth, declaring, "I didn't kill my wife," he leans in and inquires, "Are you all right?" The camera keys off his right-to-left motion and executes a reverse dolly/pan back in the opposite direction across the X-axis (**Figure 3.083 to 3.085**). Norman then retreats behind Claire muttering apologies. The camera follows him back along the X-axis and frames up a reverse two-shot on Norman and Claire in time to see Claire blanch and gag at the sight of a hale and hearty Mary Fear (**Figure 3.085 to 3.088**). By reversing the dolly/pan from one side of the lobby to the opposite side Zemeckis is able to again linger momentarily on the face of each strategically placed extra just as their alarm melts away and they turn and go about their business. For an overhead 3D view of this reverse dolly/pan back onto Claire and Norman see **Figure 3.088a**.

This dramatic dolly/pan off of Claire to the opposite side of the lobby enables Zemeckis to show the audience yet another part of the "everything" that must be revealed in the master to satisfy Task 1 — Establishing. Again, if there is some particular aspect of the physical characteristics of a location that makes the drama taking place in that location more plausible, this must be revealed in the master. This is the "believability" part of the "everything" that must be displayed in order to satisfy Task 1 — Establishing. Mary Fear must not be present at the beginning of the scene when Claire loudly proclaims that Mary has been murdered and then she must suddenly reappear at the end. Where is it most logical for a man's spouse to disappear to after coming out of the theater? The women's restroom. No other physical object in this lobby is





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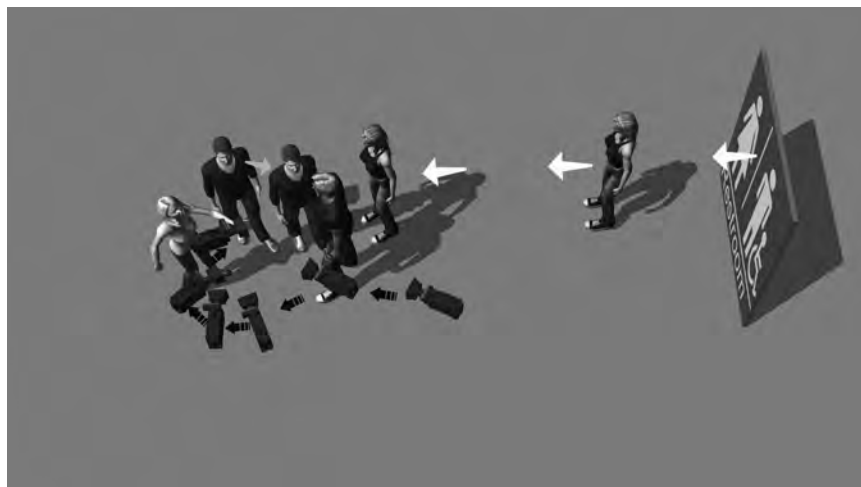
3.086



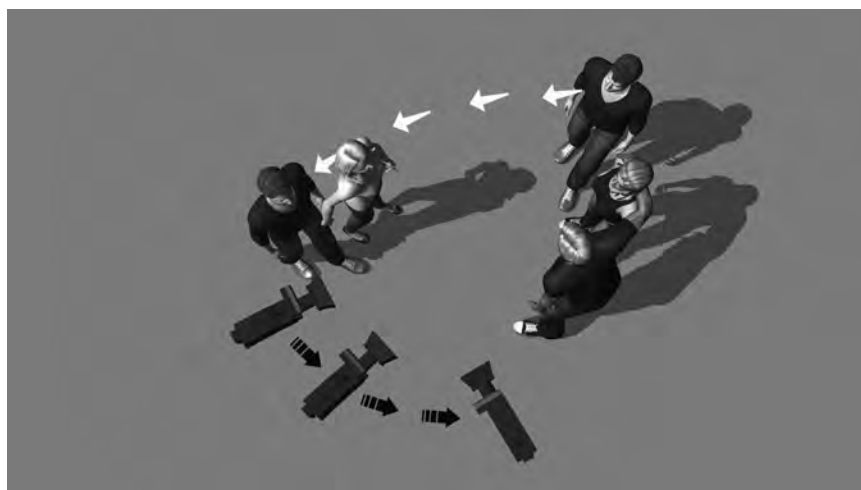
3.087



3.088



3.082a



3.088a

as important to the believability of this scene than the icon of a figure in a skirt on the door of the women's restroom. And so Zemeckis is careful to light it and center it in the frame behind Mary Feur's head as she rushes up to her husband's side (**Figure 3.081 to 3.082**).

This completes the one'er, the purpose of which was to pay homage to Hitchcock, and along the way prove for the ages that Zemeckis is in the same league as Hitchcock and all the masters of visual design who have preceded him. Seamlessness lends elegance and an aura of mastery to a shot. This is why, as cameras have become more nimble, directors have increasingly made a practice of putting more seamless-ness into their shots. This requires tipping the balance between motion and drama in favor of motion. But if this is done masterfully, as in this one'er from *What Lies Beneath*, only a minimal amount of drama is sacrificed. In addition, a talented director and DP, like Zemeckis and Burgess, can exploit the more dynamic camera movement to the max and do an exceedingly impressive job at satisfying the needs of Tasks 1, 2, and 3.

### THE MASTER OF NORMAN'S CONFESSION — A UNIQUE MASTER FOR A UNIQUE SCENE

Again, the factors that determine the uniqueness of the scene are (1) the location where it takes place; (2) the way the drama unfolds in the scene; and (3) the point at which it takes place in the film. These three factors combined to determine how Zemeckis forged a very unique application of the Five Tasks to the needs of a scene that occurs toward the end of *What Lies Beneath*. (To view a video clip of this scene from *What Lies Beneath*, go to this link on the Internet: <http://hollywoodfilm-directing.com/directing-the-camera.html>)

The visual design of the master shot for this scene diverges significantly from the default pattern, because the default pattern is simply a starting point. A great visual stylist crafts a one-of-a-kind application of the Five Tasks to each scene.

The shot starts framed up in a medium wide shot, head on Norman (Harrison Ford) as he comes down the stairs into the living room of his

house and catches sight of his wife, Claire (Michelle Pfeiffer), walking into the room (**Figure 3.089**). As he delivers the opening lines of the scene, telling Claire:

NORMAN  
I called you last night and left a  
message on Jody's machine.

The camera backs up in front of Norman until he comes to a stop facing Claire, who is waiting for him at the base of the stairs (**Figure 3.090 to 3.093**). It holds there in an on-axis shot over Claire's shoulder while she intones:

CLAIRE  
I want you to answer one question.  
Did you have anything to do with her  
disappearance?

While Claire is talking the camera makes a little push into a tight close-up on Norman and then again comes to a stop (**Figure 3.093 to 3.094**). This little push turns this portion of the master into an "Oh my God" shot. We see Norman stiffen with anxiety as he realizes the secret of his infidelity has been discovered. This extra bit of motion reinforces the drama, because drama is what this moment is all about. For an overhead 3D view of the pull-back and then push-in on Norman at the start of this master see **Figure 3.094a**.

### ***Norman's Confession — Opening Beat — Why Zemeckis Departs from the Default Pattern***

By starting the master this way, Zemeckis has departed radically from the dictates of the default pattern. This shot reveals almost none of the space in which the scene is going to take place. It therefore completely ignores the demands of Task 1, which prescribe that a good moving master immediately establishes geography in an all-encompassing shot. But there is no real need to do this because this scene takes place about three-quarters of the way through the film. The audience has been in this same living room many times before and already has a very good picture, in their mind's eye, of everything in relation to everything else in

the room. This master establishes where Norman ends up in relation to Claire, and that is sufficient.

Zemeckis' master also does what most masters do *not* do until the middle or the end of the scene. It almost immediately comes to a stop in a shot/reverse/shot configuration (**Figure 3.093**). As soon as he finishes saying his opening line (above), and Claire starts to ask her question (above), the center of the drama will switch to her eyes, requiring the editor to cut out of the master into the reverse, over-the-shoulder single on Claire (**Figure 3.095**). So, contrary to the dictates of Task 2, there is no seamlessness at the head of this master.

This is because, uncharacteristically, there is a confrontational moment of the first magnitude right at the beginning of this scene. You could say that the scene climaxes as soon as Claire asks Norman, "Did you have anything to do with her disappearance?" because the "her" Claire is referring to is the girl, Madison, who Norman murdered, and who has returned as a ghost to haunt their house. As Claire has now guessed correctly the trouble began when Norman had an affair with Madison. There are few moments of drama in any scene in any movie as fraught with conflict as when a wife asks a husband to tell her the truth about an affair he had. Because this climax comes right at the beginning of this scene, Zemeckis responds appropriately and tips the balance from motion to drama.

### ***Norman's Confession — Middle Beat — Why Zemeckis Departs from the Default Pattern***

Up to this point in this scene the way the drama unfolds is fairly unique. But now the intensity of the confrontation suddenly dissipates to a level more typical to the opening beats of scenes that lend themselves to being shot with a moving camera. Just as Avery turned away from Jerry after initially confronting him face-to-face in the opening beats of the scene from *Jerry Maguire*, Norman now turns away from Claire and confesses to this, his infidelity, while walking away from her. Avery walked away from Jerry because she was ashamed of him. Norman is walking away from Claire because he is ashamed of himself. He cannot bear to look Claire in the eye as he recounts the story of his infidelity and the role he played in Madison's disappearance (**Figure 3.096 to 3.106**).



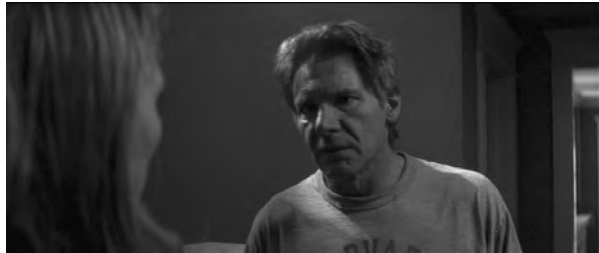
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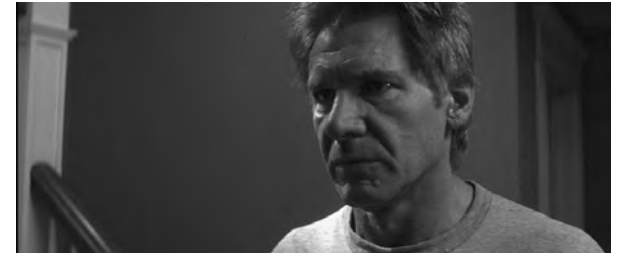
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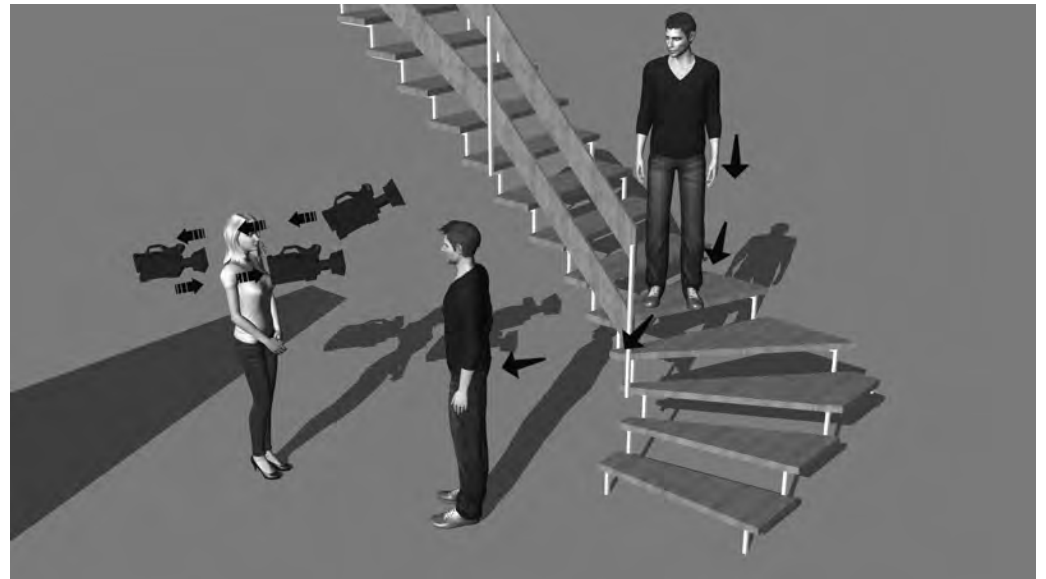
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3.094



3.095



3.094a



NORMAN

I had an affair with her, and when I tried to break it off she became unstable. She came out here to the house and threatened to kill herself... or you.

Because it works in the context of the drama for Norman to walk away from Claire, Zemeckis is now presented with a golden opportunity to fulfill the three Tasks which are enhanced by motion – Tasks 1, 2, and 3 – to the max and at the same time do an excellent job at the most important Task – 4 – which ordinarily fights the first three Tasks. Norman has all the lines in this middle portion of the scene. So the center of the drama stays in his eyes. The perfect balance between motion and drama is easily achieved by simply keeping the camera, for the most part, pointed into Norman's face as he walks away from Claire, and then designing the path of his walk and talk and the accompanying path of the camera in a way that (1) maintains geography; while (2) eliminating the need for edits; and (3) (most importantly) pumps the maximum amount of eye candy into the shot.

One of the three factors that make each scene unique and determine the design of the best moving master for that scene is the exact physical characteristics of the location in which the scene takes place. All of the interiors in Norman and Claire's house in *What Lies Beneath* were part of a large set built on a soundstage at 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox Studios. Zemeckis and his production designer intentionally packed every one of these interiors with as many white, vertical, architectural facets, such as railings, bookcases, doors, and doorframes, as possible. To best exploit the presence of these bright verticals in the living room set of this scene, Zemeckis now makes every effort to move the camera as much as possible on the X-axis in front of these verticals and thereby generate the maximum amount of eye candy.

This is why Norman starts his walk and talk by admitting "I had an affair with her," and then steps in front of Claire and moves straight across the X-axis from camera right to camera left (**Figure 3.096 to 3.100**). The camera retreats in front of him and this sweeps the brightest, whitest

objects in the room – the rails supporting the banister up the stairs – through the frame behind his head. Because Zemeckis has reversed the eyelines in the shot, he can now walk Norman down the camera left side of the living room in front of everything white and vertical built into that side of the set: the doorframe, the bookcase, the lighting sconces, and the mantel to the fireplace (**Figure 3.099 to 3.106**). Norman continues his confession walking to the far side of the room while telling Claire:

NORMAN

...She came out here to the house and threatened to kill herself...

Both Norman and the camera come to a halt, and then he throws his eyes dramatically across the frame back at where Claire is standing off-camera right, and ominously intones, "Or you." (**Figure 3.104 to 3.106**)

At this point, Zemeckis could have had Norman finish his confession by walking and talking back to where Claire is still standing at the base of the stairs. This would have been perfectly natural. A less imaginative director might have done this. But then both Norman and the camera would have been mostly moving on the Z-axis. This is not the best way to generate eye candy. Rather than do this, Zemeckis parks Norman on the opposite side of the living room from Claire and has him say his final line with his back turned to her (**Figure 3.106 to 3.112**).

At first glance this may seem like an unusual choice. But there are a number of superb reasons to block the actors and the camera in this way. Norman completes his confession by telling Claire, "I never thought she would go through with any of it. But then, she disappeared." While saying these lines, he shifts his gaze and his shoulders back from camera right to camera left. In order to catch up with his eyes the camera must pivot 90 degrees in a dramatic arc back across the X-axis of the frame. This pivot sweeps everything bright and white and vertical built into the left wall of the set back through the frame behind Norman's head for a second time (**Figure 3.106 to 3.112**). In this way Zemeckis most fully exploits the unique characteristics of this set in order to generate the maximum amount of eye candy. This enables him to craft the best moving master for this portion of this scene. For an overhead 3D



3.096



3.097



3.098



3.099



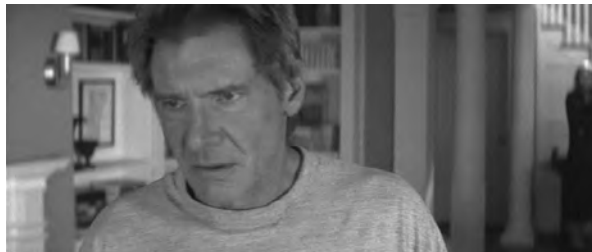
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3.101



3.102



3.103



3.104



3.105



3.106



3.107

depiction of this middle portion of this master which keys off Norman's walking and talking across the living room see **Figure 3.112a**.

He also does his cinematographer, Don Burgess, a big favor because this second move across the X-axis also sweeps Claire through the background from camera right to camera left. This realigns the geography and the eyelines to where they were at the beginning of the scene with Claire on the left side of the frame and Norman on the right (**Figure 3.091 to 3.096**). And this makes it easier for Burgess to light the set by keeping the key light coming from one direction.

It also makes perfect sense in a dramatic context for Norman to tell Claire while remaining on the opposite side of the room with his back to her, "I never thought she would go through with any of it. But then she disappeared." Norman is lying. He murdered Madison. The dramatic subtext of this moment is eloquently conveyed by this unusual blocking of actors and camera.

And, finally Zemeckis has put the camera in the perfect position for the final beat of the scene.

### ***Norman's Confession — Final Beat — Why Zemeckis Departs from the Default Pattern***

Claire has most of the lines from here until the end of the scene. First she tells Norman:

CLAIRE  
It was her, Norman, she tried to kill  
you. You said it yourself, she wanted you  
dead!

As Claire says this, the camera racks focus back to her face (**Figure 3.112 to 3.113**). But the center of the drama is now in her eyes. And since she is on the other side of the room her face and eyes are very small. So it seems counterintuitive that this is the best place for the camera to be at this moment. But in fact, Zemeckis is ultimately able to do a better job of telling the story by keeping the camera on the opposite side of the room from Claire.



**3.112a**

Norman protests, "What are you saying? That I was attacked by a ghost!?" (Norman's line was covered later in a static reverse, shot from Claire's POV: **Figure 3.116**. Claire now walks halfway across the room while delivering her interpretation of why Madison's ghost is haunting their house.

CLAIRE  
You had an affair with a girl who  
threatened to kill herself, and now there  
is a presence in our house... a young,  
blond girl.

This walk and talk brings her from a head-to-toe shot into a shot from the knees up — a "cowboy" close-up, enabling the audience to see more of her eyes (**Figure 3.113 to 3.115**). She correctly analyzes the facts, emphatically asserting, "Don't you get it? She did it, Norman. She's dead, and now she's trying to hurt you, or both of us." Trying to steer her away from the truth, Norman counters, "We don't know she's dead." (Norman's line was covered later in a second, tighter, static reverse shot: **Figure 3.117**. Claire argues back, insisting, "Of course we do! It's the



3.108



3.109



3.110



3.111



3.112



3.113



3.114



3.115



3.116



3.117



3.118



3.119





3.120



3.121



3.122



3.123



3.124



3.125



3.126



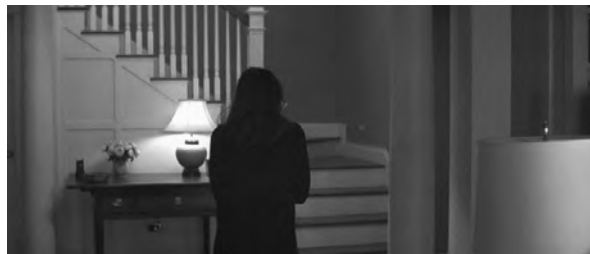
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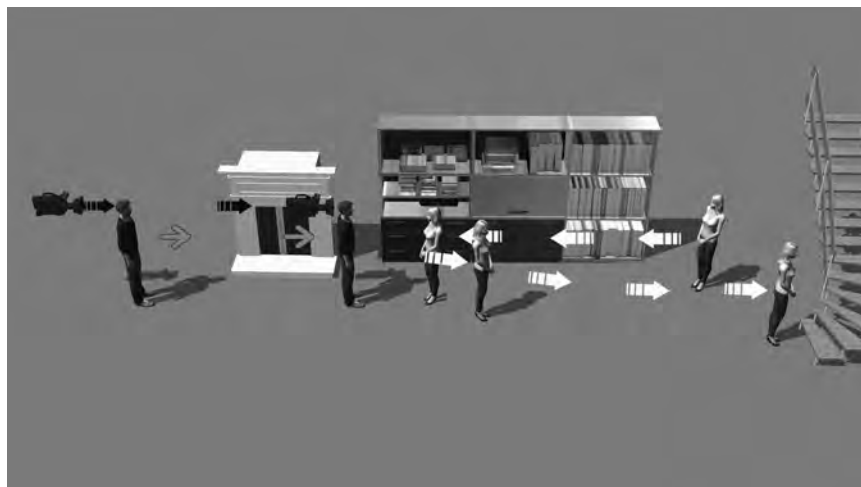
3.129



3.130



1.131



3.131a

only thing that makes any sense." Now, she has an epiphany and discovers for herself (and the audience) the true cause of the ghost's entrance into their house and their lives.

CLAIRE

Oh, God! It's... it's my fault. I opened  
a door. I stole a braid of her hair.  
Madison's. And it... it gave her power.

As she is flooded with this realization of the truth, the camera pushes in from the "cowboy" close-up to a full screen, over-the-shoulder shot on Claire (**Figure 3.118 to 3.123**). In this way, by staying back in two wider framings on Claire, Zemeckis was able to apply great visual emphasis to the final climactic moment of the scene by buttoning it with a wonderfully appropriate "Oh my God!" shot (explained in detail in Chapter 2, page 16 above). By keeping the camera on the opposite side of the room from Claire, even though she is doing the talking and carrying the scene, Zemeckis is guiding his camera so that it behaves like a cue ball and ends up in the perfect spot to do this dramatic push-in.

From here to the end of the master, Zemeckis follows the dictates of the default pattern and does what probably any director would have done. Having landed in this OTS on Claire at this highly confrontational moment, Zemeckis simply keeps it there for the balance of the scene. He is in a perfect shot/reverse/shot configuration. By staying in this OTS on Claire he is doing the best job possible of capturing the drama and picking up one-half of the coverage he will need to complete the final cut. Claire almost never speaks. Norman stays in her face backing her up in this OTS while trying to convince her that, "There are no ghosts. I had an accident. I am fine." (**Figure 3.125 to 3.126**) But Norman is lying. She knows it and is barely listening to him (**Figure 3.124**). She gives him a blank stare (**Figure 3.127**) and brushes him off, telling him, "I want to be alone for awhile." (**Figure 3.128**) Then she turns and exits back up the stairs (**Figure 3.129 to 3.131**). For an overhead 3D view of the actor and camera blocking which concludes this master see **Figure 3.131a**.

This highly confrontational moment at the end of the scene and the equally confrontational beat at the beginning of the scene when Claire demands the truth from Norman (like the moments of peak conflict in the scene from *Jerry Maguire* discussed above) both cry out for being covered in the shot/reverse/shot configuration of two matching over-the-shoulder shots. Most astute directors would have put the camera where Zemeckis put it.

It is what Zemeckis does with the moving master to capture what comes between these moments that is most unconventional and where his brilliance as a visual stylist is most conspicuously on display. The way he jacks up the eye candy to the max by having Norman cross the line as he starts his confession (**Figure 3.096 to 3.106**) and then pivoting the camera 90 degrees around Norman to reset the eyelines at the conclusion of the confession (**Figure 3.106 to 3.112**) was brave and highly counterintuitive. As was his decision to have Norman and Claire argue with each other from opposite sides of this large room, while keeping the camera back wide, so he could push in on Claire's epiphany and give a full-throated visual emphasis to the climax. For most of us, this elaborate choreography of actors and camera is not what would have come to mind first. It required a highly tuned sensitivity to all possibilities for

visual dynamism inherent in the space as well as a deep and accurate understanding of the text and subtext of the drama. It is easy to look at such a well-choreographed shot after it has been done, and done very well, and assume that one would have done the same. Zemeckis makes it look easy. It is anything but.

## WHERE TO DESIGN THE BEST MOVING MASTER

The very best moving master for a scene can only be formulated in one place: the actual location where the scene will be shot. Therefore, the first-time director on his breakthrough job must go to the actual location where each scene will be shot in advance of the shoot day and decide exactly what he is going to do with his camera. He has to carefully read the scene and determine how the drama unfolds. Then he has to walk around the location, seeing with his own eyes everything that the camera will see as it follows the path that he determines it must follow to strike the perfect balance between the demands of the Five Tasks. These decisions cannot be made with the requisite accuracy anywhere but at the actual location. This is an ironclad rule for first-time directors.

If you do not lay out each moving master at the actual location, the chances are good that your masters will not strike the perfect balance between motion and drama. If you detect a shortcoming on the set the day of the shoot when you are talking the cinematographer through the shot, and then try to correct the problem on the fly, in all likelihood your last-minute solution will not solve the problem. Do not even go there. Your chances of breaking into the ranks of working directors are slim. Do not diminish them further out of laziness. Go to each location before the shoot day and do your homework. You will be glad you did.

## NEVER SETTLE — THE KEY TO DESIGNING THE BEST MOVING MASTER

My bottom-line advice on how to become a brilliant visual stylist, such as Zemeckis, is the following: never settle. Be relentless in your pursuit of the perfect solution. Read the scene very carefully several times over

and make sure you understand exactly what the audience must take away from the scene, such as the premonition that Norman is probably not telling Claire the complete truth about Madison. Determine how the scene must be staged to make it most believable, such as by having Mrs. Feur in the ladies' room when Claire accuses her husband of murdering her. And home in on all that is bright and predominantly vertical in the location and figure out how to block the actors and the camera so that the camera moves on the X-axis as much as possible across these vertical objects. Then take the default pattern for the Five Tasks and apply it to the scene and see how far it takes you.

Sometimes, as in the case of the scene from *Jerry Maguire*, following the default pattern will provide the perfect balance between motion and drama and yield the best master. More frequently, as in the case of all the other masters described in this chapter, it will be necessary to craft a one-of-a-kind master to the specific needs of the scene.

In any case, test your results. Go back and ask yourself if, at any particular point in the scene, the master could be doing a better job of satisfying any one of the Five Tasks. If the answer is yes, then rework your plan in order to achieve that (seemingly) superior end. Then compare the modified master with the initial plan and ask yourself if, taken overall, your modification made the master better or worse. Then, obsessively repeat the process over and over again, until you are absolutely sure you have come up with the very best moving master for the scene. In any case, never settle. Remain dissatisfied and try to tease out every seemingly preferable solution to the problem of how to strike the perfect balance between the Five Tasks.

In the end, you have to rely on your own judgment and your judgment may be off. But even if you are as gifted as Zemeckis, your work will not reflect your superior abilities unless you reexamine it repeatedly with an eye for improvement. Never settle.

## CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY POINTS

- The master shot is the template that determines the visual design of a scene. So the key to understanding how to move your camera is learning how to shoot a good moving master.
- The best moving master does five “Tasks” and does them in a way that works best for the scene.
  1. It shows the audience everything it needs to see in order to understand and believe what happens next.
  2. It generates an esthetic of seamlessness by curtailing the need to cut.
  3. It generates eye candy.
  4. It concentrates the audience’s attention on the center of the drama.
  5. It picks up some coverage.
- Every scene in every film is unique. The way the drama unfolds is unique to that scene, and every scene is shot in a different location at a different time. What makes Spielberg, Cameron, and Iñárritu great visual stylists is that their application of the Five Tasks to the unique demands of each scene yields the best moving master for that scene.
- If somebody on screen is talking, everybody in the audience is looking at that character’s eyes. This is a scientific fact. For this reason, the shot in which the eyes are the biggest — the close-up — has attained its status as the most effective way to convey drama on film.
- Drama is conflict. Human beings who are in conflict face each other. When two human beings are eyeball to eyeball the most effective way to tell the story is by cutting between two, matching, over-the-shoulder shots or close-ups. Therefore, the best way to tell the story is usually with two *static* shots, *not* one moving shot.
- Only when the conflict and the drama dissipates enough to allow one of the combatants to turn his back on the other(s) and walk away from or alongside him (them) does it become possible to keep the audience focused on the center of drama — the eyes — while shooting with a moving camera.
- The more dynamic your camera movement, the weaker your drama and vice versa. The key to designing the best moving master for a scene is striking the perfect balance between motion and drama, given the unique characteristics of that scene.
- In most scenes this balancing act is achieved by focusing on motion at the beginning of the scene and drama toward the end of the scene. This is facilitated by the fact that, in most scenes, drama and conflict intensify as a scene progresses.
- The “everything” that must be fully on display in a moving master in order to satisfy Task 1 can be broken down into three parts:
  1. geography
  2. money
  3. believability
- Audiences have become accustomed to high levels of seamlessness in everything they see on a screen. If your film lacks seamlessness it will seem dated.
- If the camera is in motion any static object or object moving in a different direction or at a different speed that passes by the lens will have a slightly blurry edge to it. This is motion blur. The bottom line is: the more motion blur the more eye candy.
- The cheapest and the easiest way to generate the most motion blur is to move the camera as dynamically as possible horizontally along the X-axis of the frame in front of as many bright, prominent *vertical* objects as possible.
- Eye candy is of great consequence, because, even more than seamlessness, it makes a moving shot look like a moving shot.
- To do a good job of satisfying Task 4 a director only must do two things well. First, he has to keep the camera framed up on the eyes of the person who is carrying the scene, and second, when the conflict



in the scene builds toward a climax, he has to move the camera into a more frontal position on one of the parties in the conflict.

- The strategy of shooting a moving master and, after the first confrontational moment in the scene, intercutting it with a moving reverse-master is a good general plan of attack for shooting longer scenes with a moving camera.
- If a director knows he is going to shoot a moving master and a moving reverse he can wait and decide during rehearsal exactly when the actors and the cameras will move. This makes it easier to work with Method actors who want to be able to determine their blocking spontaneously when they are in character.
- Whenever the balance in a scene shifts from motion to drama, in order to do a better job of satisfying Task 4, the master will tighten up and swing on-axis. The more it does this, the better a job it will do of becoming a piece of coverage. In this way Task 5 — Coverage — is a natural by-product of Task 4 — Drama.
- By designing his moving masters so they become coverage the director is able to complete the day's work doing fewer setups. This saves time and money.
- The first-time director should bear in mind when designing the best moving master for a scene that the master should always stay in the widest size needed to keep the audience oriented and to tell the story.
- Before he devises a good moving master for a scene, the director must go to the location, read the entire scene while standing where he is going to shoot it, and set his priorities in terms of the Five Tasks.

## ***FOR TEACHERS***

The best way to learn how to shoot a good moving master is to repeatedly apply the Five Tasks to the unique demands of many different scenes shot in many different locations over the course of a professional career. In truth, it takes years of practice, as well as a generous amount of natural ability, to become a great visual stylist.

The teacher can initiate this process by asking each student to design the best moving master for a scene from a contemporary film that lends itself to being shot with a moving camera. I have selected a body of fifteen such scenes below under: "15 Walk and Talk Scenes." Here the student can find a description of the action in the film that leads up to each scene, as well as links to sites on the Internet where all the script pages for the scene can be located. In some cases, one of the links leads to a website where the entire screenplay can be found.

What all of these scenes share in common is that the conflict in the scene can most effectively be conveyed by having the actors on the move at various points in the scene. There are only two characters in each scene because this makes the design of the moving master easier to formulate, and more appropriate to the skill level of a student director.

The student can shoot the moving master himself outside of class on his own time using any point-and-shoot digital camera. There is no need for expensive camera or dolly equipment because a good handheld shot made with a home movie camera can reveal the extent to which the visual design of the shot makes it the best moving master for that scene. This is what this chapter teaches and so the assignment will display how fully the student has grasped the material taught.

The actors in the scenes only need to say the right lines as they hit the marks that the student director has laid out for them. They can be completely untrained, and they can even do the scene with the script in hand. If the actors do the scene with the script in hand, they only need to make sure that, if they look down at the script to get a line, they must look up again, before they deliver the line, so the camera can see their eyes. This way it can be determined to what extent the

moving master succeeds in keeping the audience focused on the center of the drama.

However, working with non-actors who do not know their lines is the least preferable alternative when it comes to staging the drama that should motivate the camera movement. I only provide it as an alternative because it is the easiest for the student director to accomplish. And it keeps the emphasis on the purpose of the assignment, which is to provide the student with an opportunity to display his understanding of the principles governing good visual design. On the other hand, talented actors who have memorized the lines and embodied the characters will make the scene come to life. If the students want to try to produce such a more professional, finished piece, I never stop them. They will learn more if they attempt to attain perfection both in what they do with the camera and what they put in front of the camera.

The student should also shoot the right coverage to fit into the moving master and complete the scene. A well-designed master provides a good template into which the coverage must fit. In addition, a well-designed master will contain one or more of the pieces of coverage needed to complete the scene. So the shortest of the scenes I have provided below, such as the scene from *Kramer vs. Kramer*, can be completed by shooting four or five pieces of coverage, in addition to the master. The longer scenes, such as the scene from *LA Confidential* or *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, may require twice, or three times as much coverage. In any case, the more pieces of coverage contained in the master, the fewer the number of setups needed to complete the scene, the more viable the master. Digital is cheap, and student crews are free, but the student director should learn to work like a professional, who must shoot fast, because time is money, and money will be in short supply when the student begins his professional career.

The student should edit the scene and hand in the edited version of the scene in addition to the best take of the moving master, and any moving sub-masters. The completed scene along with the master and sub-master(s) should be screened for the entire class and critiqued. Whichever format can be most easily screened in the classroom, be it

DVD, mini-DVD, USB drive, etc., should be the one the students use to give the teacher the completed assignment.

In these critiques I have found that it is best to focus on whether the camera is in the right place at the right time, and to not be overly concerned with correct composition and focal length. This is because, since the student probably lacks expertise as a camera operator, the execution of the shot will be flawed throughout. But, what is important is the thought behind the shot. The teacher should ask himself if this shot would do the best job possible of fulfilling the Five Tasks for this scene in this location if it was executed by a professional crew.

During the in-class critique, the teacher should call attention to all those areas where the design of the master could be improved. He should point out these areas in class and ask the class to identify the problem and devise a solution. In all likelihood, the students, since they are still just learning this element of craft, will not be able to pinpoint the problem. But by challenging them and asking them to improve the visual design, the teacher is taking them through the process by which they will learn this element of craft. This drill should give them valuable problem-solving skills.

In addition, such a critique is a lengthy process. It can take an hour or more. If the teacher directs his inquiry exclusively at the student who prepared the assignment, most of the other students will soon tune out. The student whose assignment is being critiqued will be eager to correct his mistakes. But the teacher will teach more of the students more about shooting with a moving camera if he directs the majority of the questions to the class as a whole.

At Chapman, all my students post all their work on YouTube, or similar file-sharing sites, and send links to their friends. I take advantage of this and tell them to put up their assignment on YouTube forty-eight hours before it is due in class, and post the link on the online information-sharing site for the class. Each student is then required to prepare a written critique of each moving master identifying all areas that could be improved and providing suggestions for improvements. I collect these after class and grade them. This makes the in-class critique of the work

much more lively and productive. When a grade is hanging in the balance the students are motivated to focus, root out all the problems, and come up with many of the best solutions.

This assignment takes a substantial amount of time to plan and execute successfully, so at the first class meeting I pinpoint the date on which each student must turn in the assignment. To do this I divide the number of class sessions I intend to devote to teaching how to shoot a good moving master by the number of students in the class. This tells me how many assignments will be due and how many critiques will be undertaken in each class. I have found that it takes me at least forty-five minutes to fully critique an assignment. I usually have fifteen or sixteen students in a class. So, ideally, three or four assignments are due in each three-hour class, spread out over four dates. In the first class I hold a lottery and raffle off the dates. This way the student discovers on the first day of class when his moving master assignment will be due. I also tell them that there are no excuses for late assignments. No matter what disaster strikes, including a real illness, they must have contingency plans to complete the assignment on time, because that is what is expected of professional directors. And then I tell them how if Francis Coppola gets sick during production, he directs from his sickbed in his trailer by looking at a video monitor and talking to the crew and actors over an intercom.

Below are the fifteen scenes that I have selected for this assignment.

## FIFTEEN WALK AND TALK SCENES

### *Warrior*

by Gavin O'Connor, Anthony Tambakis and Cliff Dorfman

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

[http://www.lionsgateawards.com/script\\_warrior.pdf](http://www.lionsgateawards.com/script_warrior.pdf) — entire script

This scene is on page 55.

**Brendan accidentally runs into his long-estranged brother, Tommy, on the beach just before they are about to compete against each other in the Sparta Mixed Martial Arts Tournament. Brendan attempts a reconciliation, but Tommy is locked in his rage against Brendan and the world. All the bad blood in their past comes out. After this scene they are both determined to kill each other in the cage.**

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Brendan walks on the beach as the waves of the Atlantic Ocean lap at the shoreline. Boats bob on the water. Stray bottle rockets trace through the night sky.

Brendan continues walking, then spots Tommy coming toward him. The brothers make eye contact. Stop. Then approach each other warily.

BRENDAN

Been looking all over for you. How's it going?

TOMMY

It's going.

### ***Good Will Hunting***

by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://screenplayexplorer.com/wp-content/scripts/Good-Will-Hunting.pdf> — entire script

This scene is on page 80.

**This is the scene that ends, famously, with Will telling Skylar “I don’t love you.” They are in the midst of an intense romance, and at the start of the scene, she lovingly asks him, “Come to California with me.” Essentially this is an invitation on her part to take their romance to the next stage and make it long-lasting. Will is a work in progress. He has not yet discovered that he associates love with pain. So when she suggests making their love permanent, he freaks out and sabotages the relationship.**

INT. SKYLAR’S ROOM - NIGHT

Will and Skylar lie in bed. Skylar watches Will sleep.

SKYLAR  
Will? Are you awake?

WILL  
No.

### ***Sex, Lies and Videotape***

by Steven Soderbergh

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Sex,-Lies-and-Videotape.html> — entire script

This scene is Scene #24.

**This is a great mutual seduction scene. Cynthia has found out that her half-sister, Anne, is doing “something sexual” with Graham. Cynthia is locked in an intense sibling rivalry with Anne. To her mind, she is the hot sister, while Anne is the prude. So Cynthia goes to Graham’s apartment and introduces herself, with the intention of doing whatever it is**

**that Anne has been doing with Graham involving sex. Cynthia is thinking along the lines of whips or chains, but, in this scene, she finds out that Graham is kinky in a way she never dreamed of.**

24 INT. GRAHAM’S APARTMENT - DAY

Graham sits smoking a cigarette. There is a knock at his door.

GRAHAM  
It’s open.

Cynthia enters. Graham looks up at her.

GRAHAM  
Who are you?

### ***Basic Instinct***

by Joe Ezterhas

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://screenplayexplorer.com/wp-content/scripts/Basic-Instinct.pdf> — entire script

This scene is on page 42.

**Nick is a brilliant homicide detective who has done a lot of bad things in his life. In this scene he meets his match in equally bad, equally brilliant Catherine. Nick has just uncovered some evidence that he is certain implicates Catherine in a ruthless ice-pick murder. Armed with this evidence he goes to interrogate her, thinking he can get her to crack. But it is Catherine who almost cracks Nick.**

EXT. THE STINSON BEACH HOUSE - NEXT DAY

He pulls up to the house, gets out of his unmarked police car. He stands there a beat, thinking. He walks down to the beach entrance of the house. He hears a Rolling Stones SONG playing inside. He stands there.



The door suddenly opens.

Catherine stands there, smiles. She wears very tight-fitting spandex leotards.

CATHERINE

Hi.

He looks at her a beat, then -

NICK

Am I... disturbing you?

CATHERINE

No. Come in.

They have their eyes on each other. A beat, and she turns to go in.

### ***Jerry Maguire***

by Cameron Crowe

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Jerry-Maguire.html> — entire script

This scene is on page 109.

This is the scene which ends, famously, with Cuba Gooding shouting the final line, “I’m all heart, motherfucker!” Gooding plays NFL star-in-the-making Rod Tidwell. Jerry (Tom Cruise) is Rod’s sports agent. They have bonded as friends, but that bond is now strained to the breaking point, because Jerry has failed to get Rod the rich contract that he promised him in the previous “Show me the money!” scene. They meet after Rod has had a disappointing game. Rod gives Jerry some friendly advice about Jerry’s troubled marriage, which deeply hurts Jerry. Jerry retaliates and tells Rod he is a “paycheck player” who plays with no heart.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Finally, here comes Tidwell, moving very slowly with garment bag.

JERRY

How’s your head? Bubblicious.

TIDWELL

The quarterback sucks, man. He’s gonna get me killed.

### ***Almost Famous***

by Cameron Crowe

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

[http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/almost\\_famous.html](http://www.dailyscript.com/scripts/almost_famous.html) — entire script

Scene 118.

It is 1972. Rock music is at its zenith. William, a precocious sixteen-year-old, who aspires to become a rock ‘n’ roll journalist, befriends the up-and-coming rock band Stillwater and gets invited to follow them on tour. Also on the bus are the groupies following Stillwater, led by the enchanting Penny Lane. In the weeks that follow William becomes everyone’s pet. Most important, the rock god, lead guitarist Russell Hammond, takes him under his wing. *Rolling Stone* promises William that they will publish William’s profile of Stillwater if William can land an interview with reclusive Russell. So William must stay in Russell’s good graces, but this becomes increasingly difficult as William falls in love with Penny while Penny falls in love with Russell. The tour is about to arrive in New York, where, in any case, Penny and the groupies will have to disappear because Russell’s wife is going to join him. Russell solves the problem by selling Penny and the other groupies to another band for \$50 and a case of Heineken. William knows this, but Penny doesn’t, and William is dying to set her straight and tell her.

118 EXT. CONCORD PAVILLION BACKSTAGE - EARLY MORNING

William exits a backstage Portosan. Penny catches

him by the grilling area where catering is preparing for the outdoor event. Their laminated passes swing from around their necks. Thudding in the distance, Stillwater plays for a cheering outdoor crowd. The sound of summer insects in the air.

PENNY

So it wasn't a birthday party, it was a farewell.

William doesn't answer. He looks at her, blowing some hair out of her face.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You think you can fool me. I read you. I know what you're thinking.

WILLIAM

What's that?

PENNY

(touched)

You're worried about me and Russell.

### **Seven**

by Andrew Kevin Walker

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://sfy.ru/?script=se7en> — entire script

There are no page or scene numbers in the file above. This is the *last scene in the script*.

Throughout this film, Detectives Mills and Somerset have been tracking down psycho-killer John Doe. They have finally caught Doe and are on the verge of bringing him to justice. But Doe intends to derail the process by baiting Mills into shooting him. This would ruin Mills' life as a police detective. Doe has a piece of news, which, in the course of the scene, he reveals bit by bit to Mills, certain that once Mills knows

**this horrible truth he will blow Doe's brains out. Somerset struggles to intervene.**

EXT. MARSHLANDS - EARLY EVENING

Mills sees Somerset coming and pulls Doe so that Doe stands.

JOHN DOE

(quietly, watching)

Here he comes.

MILLS

(shouts to Somerset)

What the fuck is going on?

### **LA Confidential**

by Brian Koppelman

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/L.A.-Confidential.html> — entire script

No page or scene numbers. The scene comes a little before halfway through the script.

**Bud White is a homicide detective in Los Angeles in the 1930s. He has the ideals of Sir Galahad. But he does not hesitate to use Dirty Harry methods to enforce them. Bud is investigating the murder of Sue Lefferts, a high-class call girl who, like the other prostitutes managed by Pierce Patchett, has been altered by plastic surgery to look like a specific movie star. The trail leads Bud to the house of Lynn Bracken, one of Pierce's other call girls. Bud enters the scene assuming that Lynn is a dumb broad who will reveal incriminating evidence if he merely growls at her. But when Bud growls, Lynn just laughs and brilliantly calls him out on his Sir Galahad complex. Bud leaves in love with her and hating himself for it.**

INT. 1736 NOTTINGHAM (LYNN BRACKEN'S) - DAY

A nice breezy feel. The perfect place to shack up.

LYNN

I've been expecting you. Pierce called. Told me what happened to Sue.

(beat)

It's Officer White, isn't it?

Bud nods, eyeballs the place.

### ***Carlito's Way***

by David Koepp

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://www.bhplayhouse.com/62-Drama-Man-Woman-Acting-Scenes/933-Carlito-s-Way/View-details> — scene only

Go to website above and click on "Carlito's Way 2.doc" in the middle of the page. Scene 64 will pop up.

Carlito and Gail have become live-in lovers since Carlito's release from jail. Carlito has been a gangster all his life, but he is trying to go straight. It is a struggle. Carlito owes his mob lawyer, Dave, a favor, and Dave is calling it in by pressuring Carlito to help spring a gangster client out of jail. Gail loves Carlito and wants the best for him, but she is afraid his old mob connections will drag him down. Gail has just gotten wind of Dave's scheme and she intends to put an end to it.

64. INTERIOR. GAIL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

GAIL steams in the door to her apartment, furious. CARLITO, right behind her, closes the front door and follows her.

GAIL

I don't like him. I didn't like him the minute I met him.

CARLITO

Well, you're not listening to me.

GAIL

All right - so what is the boat thing? What is that asshole manipulating you into? *Tell me!*

CARLITO

I'm just helping him out with something, that's all. I owe him.

### ***The Bridges of Madison County***

by Richard LaGravenese

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

[http://sfy.ru/?script=bridges\\_madison\\_county](http://sfy.ru/?script=bridges_madison_county) — entire script

No pages or scene numbers. This scene is 7/8th through the script. It is one of the last between Francesca and Robert.

Francesca is a passionate, intelligent, middle-aged woman who would love to bust out of her secure, humdrum life in rural Iowa. She gets her chance when her husband and children are away at the Illinois State Fair in the summer of 1965. By chance, she meets Robert, a globe-trotting photographer who has come to this Iowa backwater to photograph the famous covered bridges. They have a torrid, four-day affair, and almost elope, but in the end, she pulls back to save her family. This scene takes place the day before her husband and children are due to return.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Francesca is serving Robert breakfast, then sits down beside him. Silence. We can sense some tension between them - this being their last day together. Francesca seems ingeniously friendly. Robert is suspicious.

FRANCESCA

Sleep all right?

ROBERT

Yes, thanks.

### ***Kramer vs. Kramer***

by Robert Benton

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

<http://www.awesomefilm.com/script/kramerVsKramer.txt> — entire script

Scenes 13 & 14

**This is the first real dialogue scene in the film. Before it all we have seen is Joanna Kramer, a stylish, young, Manhattan mother, lovingly tuck her five-year-old son into bed and then pack a suitcase. This is intercut with scenes of her husband Ted, at the Madison Avenue ad agency where he works. Ted has just landed a lucrative new account with Revlon Cosmetics. His boss is showering him with praise. Ted announces, “This is one of the five best days of my life.” But that all is going to change when he finds out what Joanna has planned.**

13 INT. FOYER - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT — Joanna carries in the suitcase, sets it by the front door, then she crosses to the living room and sits down at the dining table.

CLOSER IN ON HER — She takes out a list made on the back of an old envelope. As she begins to review it, checking off some items:

CUT TO:

HER P.O.V.: as the door swings open to reveal Ted Kramer, an enormous grin on his face, a bottle of champagne in his hand. He is so full of himself that he doesn't notice there is anything wrong.

Note: Throughout the entire scene he carries the bottle of champagne, never putting it down.

TED

I thought you might just like to know  
that at five-fifteen this afternoon we

were officially handed the Fire and Ice  
account by Revlon.

JOANNA

(she takes a deep breath, then:)  
Ted, I'm leaving you.

### ***The Stepford Wives (1975 Version)***

by William Goldman

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

**Joanna Eberhart is on the verge of a terrifying discovery. The men of her town, Stepford, Connecticut, have banded together and used their talents as scientists to turn their wives into robots who slavishly fulfill their every need. Feminist Joanna appeals to her husband for help, only to discover that he is in on the plot and has abducted their two children. In this scene she bursts in on her friend Bobbie, who up until recently, was the only other woman in Stepford who suspected that the other wives in town had become horribly transformed. But in this scene she discovers that Bobbie too has fallen victim to this conspiracy.**

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Bobbie drying off dishes. Joanna enters scene.  
She is drenched in water from the rain.

BOBBIE

(concerned)

Why look at you, for heaven sake.

JOANNA

Bobbie, Bobbie listen.

BOBBIE

You need a fresh perked cup of coffee.  
(She grabs a kettle.)

JOANNA

I don't want any coffee! I just want my  
children!



## ***Back to the Future***

by Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

**Marty MacFly has a big problem. He has accidentally traveled through time from 1985 to 1955 in a time machine, which has run out of fuel. He needs to get the time machine working again so he can get back to the future. The only person who can help him figure out how to do that is the man who will invent the time machine in 1985 — Marty's best friend, mad scientist Dr. Emmett Brown. But in 1955 Marty has not been born yet; he and Doc Brown have not become friends. So at the start of this scene, when Marty knocks on Doc Brown's door in 1955 and begs Doc to help him, Brown suspects he is just a kid from the neighborhood playing a practical joke. Marty has to prove to Doc that he came from the future in a time machine that Brown invented.**

61 EXT. BROWN'S FRONT DOOR - CLOSER ANGLE

Marty runs up and pounds on the door knocker.

We hear a barking dog from within; then YOUNG DOCTOR BROWN opens the door. He's wearing an OUTRAGEOUS CONTRAPTION on his head, a bizarre conglomeration of vacuum tubes, rheostats, gauges, wiring, and antennas; but there can be no doubt that it's the same Dr. Brown, some 30 years younger. Beside him is another DOG.

Marty stares at Brown's weird headgear. Brown yanks him inside.

61-A INT. BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BROWN

Don't say a word!

(to the barking dog)

Quiet, Copernicus! Down, boy!

Brown attaches a suction cup to Marty's forehead, which is connected to a wire into Brown's

contraption.

MARTY

Doctor Brown, I really---

BROWN

No, don't tell me anything. I'm going to read your thoughts.

## ***Batman Forever***

by Akiva Goldsman

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

**This scene is the first meeting of Bruce Wayne and his love-interest-to-be, beautiful, brainy psychiatrist, Chase Meridian. Bruce has been receiving creepy messages from a disturbed employee, and comes to Chase's office seeking her professional opinion of the motive behind these messages. Chase, in sweats and boxing gloves, is working out in her office, hitting a heavy bag. Bruce approaches her door and mistakes her high-pitched exertions for sounds of distress. He breaks down the door.**

INT. CHASE'S OFFICE - DAY

as Bruce, fearing Chase under attack, crashes through the door, always saving the world. Quickly valor slips into embarrassment as he scans the room.

CHASE, startled yet the consummate cool cookie, stops her daily workout, sizing up her unexpected intruder. A tilt of the head and scrunched face sends an inquisitive signal.

Quite embarrassed, Bruce's impish grin subjugates a usually self-confident man to schoolboy status. Partially from current circumstances, mostly the stunning presence of Chase.

BRUCE  
I, I guess I am early. I have an  
appointment. I'm Bruce Wayne.

Chase wiping the sheen from her self-confident  
brow.

CHASE  
Good! Then you can afford to buy me a new  
door.

SETH  
I wasn't born in Canada.

MAGGIE  
What are your parents' names?  
Seth unconsciously runs the knife right over his  
thumb. It passes through his flesh without making  
a mark. Maggie notices, taken aback.

### ***City of Angels***

by Dana Stevens

<http://hollywoodfilmdirecting.com/directing-the-camera.html> — scene only

**Seth is an angel who watches over the dying and then guides them to the next life. He falls in love with Maggie, a beautiful heart surgeon, after watching her struggle heroically to save a patient's life. Seth makes himself visible to Maggie and they strike up a friendship. She invites him to her house for dinner, but then thinks better of it when she discovers that Seth is not exactly what he appears to be.**

INT. MAGGIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maggie takes a head of lettuce and a couple of  
tomatoes out of the refrigerator and crosses to  
the island counter where Seth waits. She hands  
him the lettuce.

MAGGIE  
Here, can you cut this up?  
Seth grabs a knife and uncertainly starts slicing  
through the lettuce.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
So what province is it in Canada where  
you were born?