

Christen Iversen's Happy Editing Guide

These notes will apply some logic to the chaos that is editing...

There is a different edit for every frame of film shot. This is a daunting prospect in every sense. We need to create "filters" to apply order to the chaos.

Editing is a marriage between the technical and the creative, the technical nature of editing is the first consideration, creativity, the second.

Never underestimate people skills. Your mood and attitude affect the entire process.

The notes:

1. Understand the script and treatment. Ask as many questions as you feel you need to, even ones that may seem silly.
2. Understand what the final product's delivery is in technical terms. Is it TV only, cinema, web or DVD, each delivery has different technical considerations - if you don't understand them, find out before you commit to a style or visual treatment.
3. Find the limitations in script and treatment. This action will apply a conceptual "filter" to the task of cutting the film.
4. Use the "filter" you created above to understand your footage. It's a good idea to try and imagine a sound treatment as you watch your footage for the first time.
5. If you don't have a set duration, apply one either to the whole film or to the scenes you're working on.
6. Decide what you want to achieve with the scene or film in terms of emotion and ultimately the conceptual execution.
7. Commit to an editing style as soon as possible, perhaps over-playing the style slightly as it's often easier to "pull it back" than to "play it up".
8. Apply instinct and understand the power of sound, it can be more important than the picture for conveying emotion.
9. Listen to all criticism objectively, apply the filters and move forward making changes quickly as the moment of clarity is only a moment. Notes rarely convey the same emotion or freshness.
10. Defer to the director (or producer, if he or she isn't available) on changes to the edit. Conceptual changes must be quickly identified and re-worked according to the treatment. These changes can adversely affect the product, so careful attention must be paid to the re-write.
11. Close the job meticulously and in a timely fashion before you leave and hand the backup to the producer. The backup should include any media you used that didn't come off a tape. (I set up a project resources folder inside which I keep all sound effects and music clips as well as artwork, titles and graphic sequences, at the very beginning of the job)

The fastest and most accurate offline edit suite is the one in your head and your

greatest ally is your imagination. The suite itself is a window through which your audience can see your mind and understand your ideas. The audience is your public and their opinion must inform your work.

If these filters and notes are diligently applied, your editing career will be fun and exciting. There is a lot of truth to the phrase "the freedom of a tight brief", so tightens your brief and be free.

Good cutting!

Christen Iversen, 12 Sept 2007