

Creating a Successful Video Pitch

a crash course workshop in filmmaking, lighting and audio fundamentals

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November 9, 2017

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My background

- Currently the Multimedia Designer & Video Director for the Robotics Institute @ Carnegie Mellon University
- Currently teaching “Intro to Multimedia Design” at CMU
Students write, create graphics, record sound and animate
- Taught filmmaking, lighting, animation courses at Pittsburgh Filmmakers
- Design agency & corporate client experience

Key Takeaways

- Write something fresh. Avoid cliché or overdone concepts.
- Stabilize your camera, movement should flow nicely (not distract)
- Audio that is clear, well recorded and precisely delivered is **critical**
- Vary shot sizes, use interesting angles, create graphic visual breaks
- Be creative with the tools (camera, smart phones, natural light) and reflect a theme and style inspired by your product/service

Sample Video Styles

- Interview + B-roll: Project Birdhouse / Ballbot
- Explainer Animation: How reCaptcha Works
- Dramatization: Lighting Fundamentals samples
- Or a combination of all three.

filmmaking is

creative/technical

writing
visual design
sketching
planning

composition
direction of camera
direction of subjects
control camera movement

cinematography
knowledge of camera lenses
control depth of field
creative use of natural light
technical control of artificial light

film language

team mangement
task delegation

audio recording
narration vs live
synchronizing audio
audio editing
audio mixing

image control
saturation
white balance
color temperature

editing

transitions
screen direction

title design
graphic production
motion graphics
animation
compositing
keyframe animation

video frame rates
video frame sizes
knowledge of codecs
rendering strategy

- That's a lot of things to consider: Writing, planning, storyboard sketches, producing (scheduling, logistics, coordination), camera work, sound recording during shooting, sound mixing after shooting, design of titles or supporting graphics, editing, directing people in front of the camera, dealing with technical language, microphone settings and video codec export...
- But, don't worry, there is even a book for kids to dive into this stuff:

SUPER SKILLS



Sound



Drama



HOW TO MAKE A MOVIE

IN 10 EASY LESSONS



LEARN HOW TO
WRITE, DIRECT, AND EDIT
YOUR OWN FILM WITHOUT A
HOLLYWOOD
BUDGET



Music



ROBERT BLOFIELD

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“Does the team
demonstrate **confident,**
effective storytelling?”

Confident, Effective Storytelling

- clear, vivid communication to appropriate audience
- high production value, consistent style
- appropriate design, visual flow
- clean audio, sharp camera work
- original, creative
- fascinating to watch, connects with audience

Vision

- Style? What style fits the personality of your team? Your idea?
- Stand out: Be creative, unique and honest.
- Be careful of being too gimmicky.
- Your video shouldn't look and sound too much like someone else's.
- Avoid the echo chamber or straight up templates. A template is great... until a VC sees it for the second time or worse - a third.
- To stock or not to stock?

Conceptualize, Sketch
Pre-Production
Production
Post-Production

Brainstorm, Clarify Message

Write, Plan & Schedule

Make & Gather Materials

Edit and Mix the Materials

Script

- Write, read out loud, record it, listen to it, rewrite, repeat
- Write a multi-column audiovisual script
- Precise, efficient, clear message
- Appeal to the mind and heart of audience
- The pace, rhythm and other information will dictate word cap
- 150 words per minute is a good starting point

3 column script + storyboard

Script

Title: Project Title
Client: Client name(s)

Time	Visual	Audio
0:00 0:02	Descriptions of imagery, image/camera movement, style of animated of type over time.	Narrator: Music: SoundFX:
0:05	Includes type that is seen, but not spoken.	
0:10		
0:20		
0:30		

Visuals and audio over time in text

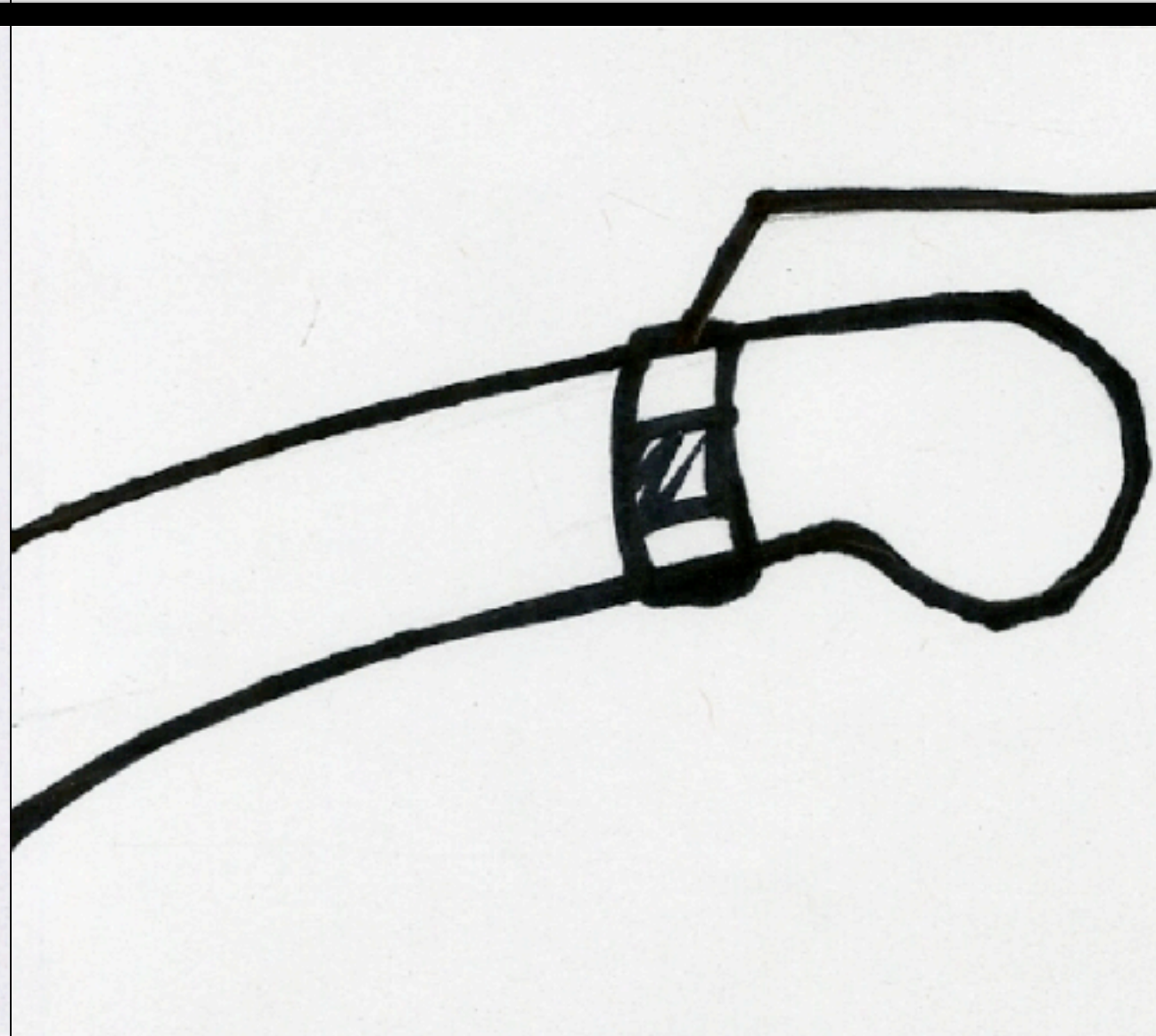
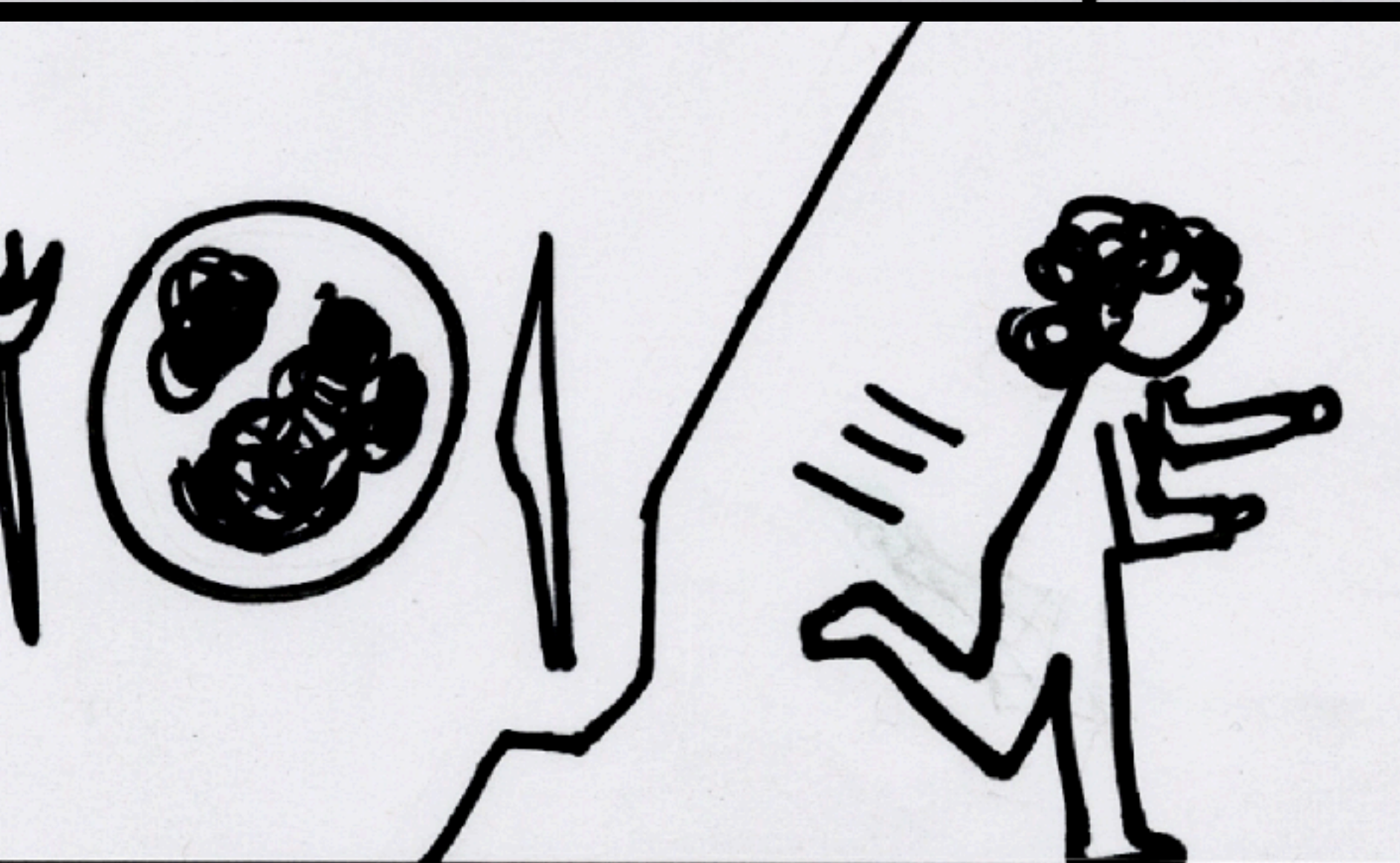
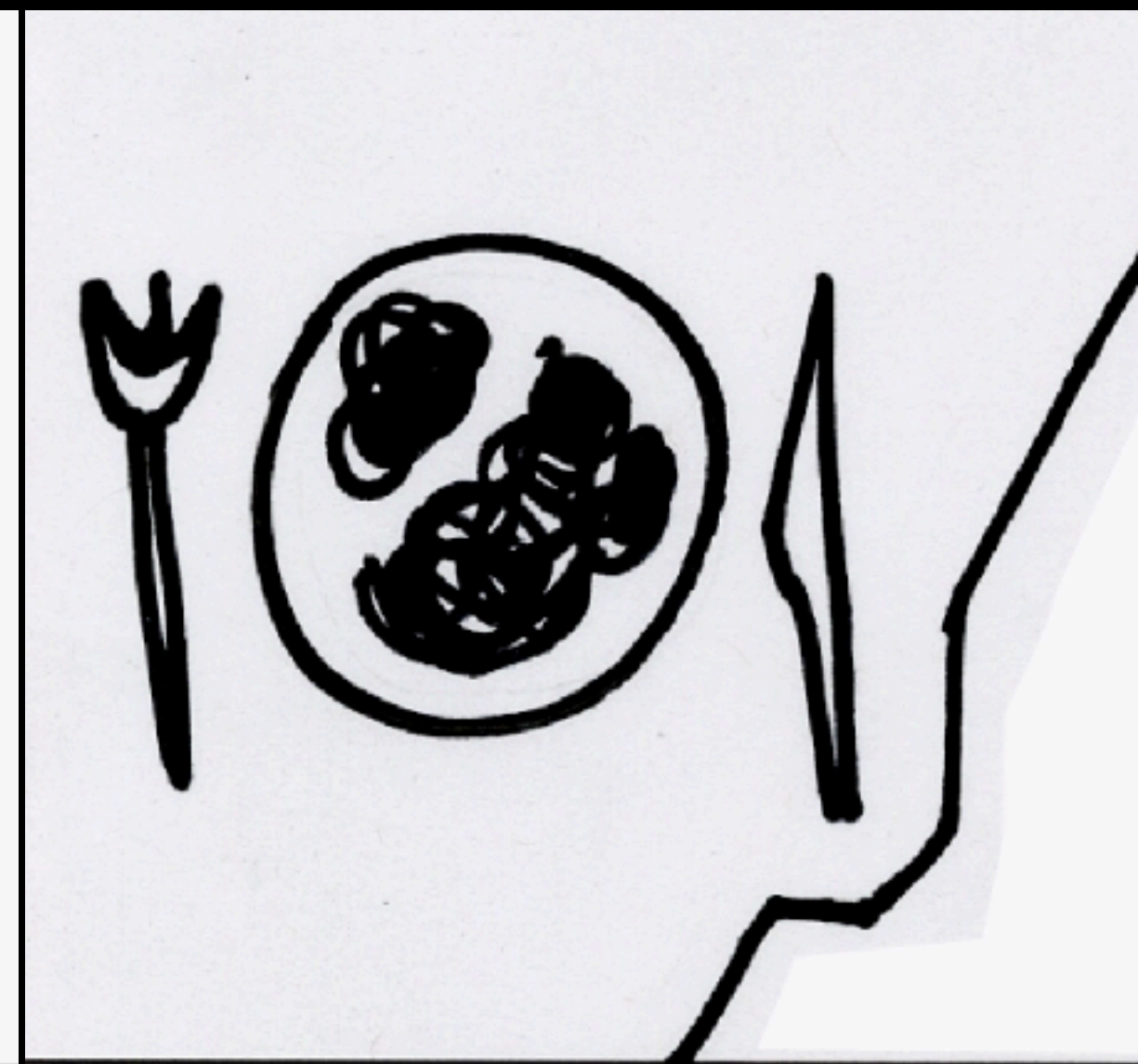
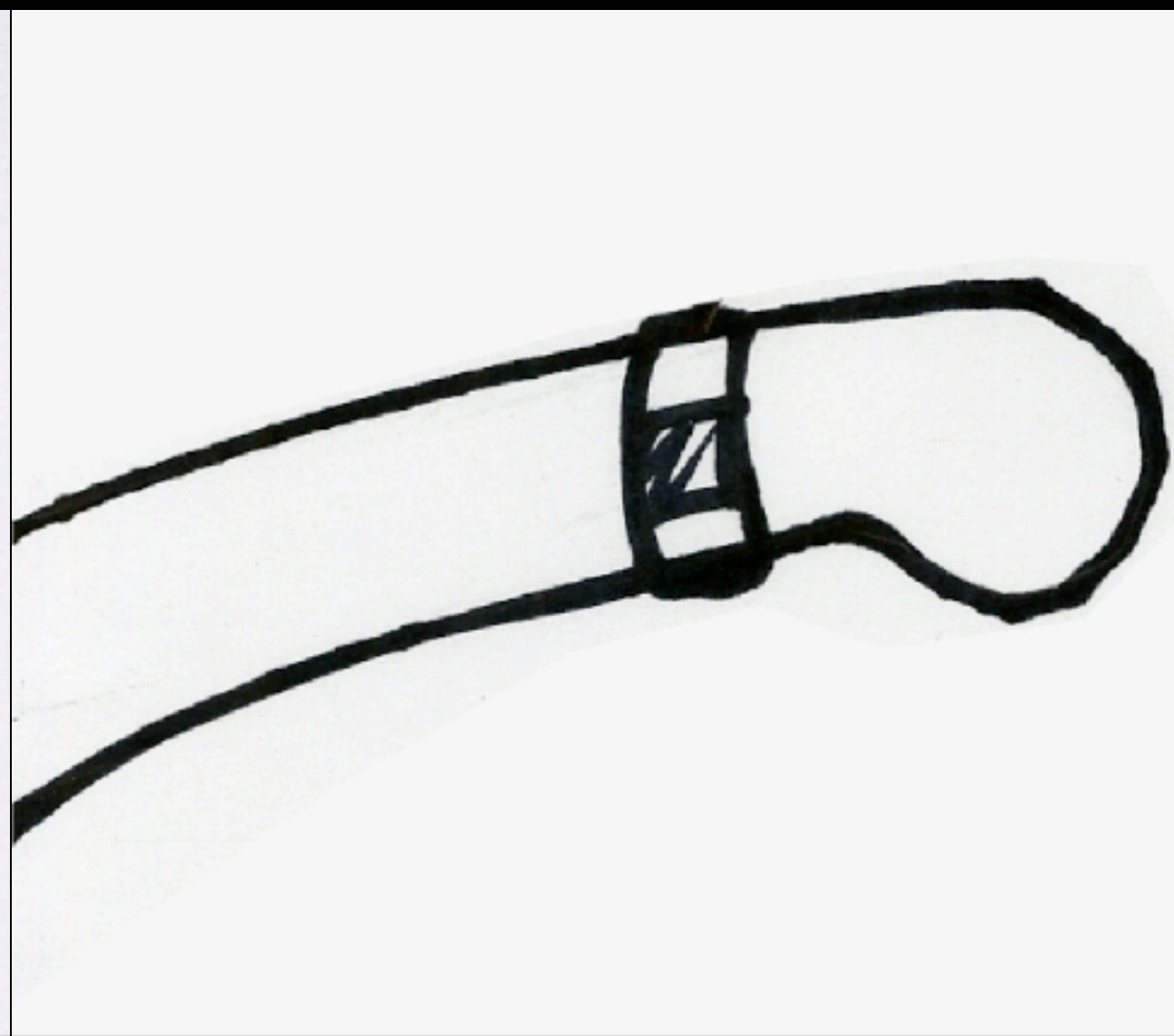
TITLE.....
DATE.....
PAGE.....OF.....

Sketches: Shot size, visual details

Visualize

- Simple storyboard sketches can be great planning tools
- Take advantage of the moving, visual medium
- Will you shoot video? Use photos creatively? Hand drawn or vector drawings? Stop motion?
- Animation? Motion graphics? Dynamic typography? A composite of all of these elements?
- Where will viewer see person speaking and when will they see supporting imagery and video (aka b roll)?

- How to visualize the key points of your business plan?
- Visual metaphor or theme to tap into?
- Will audience hear voice-over narration or see on-screen talent?
- Record *scratch track*, make super rough *animatic*



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> 30 active
minutes
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rate...
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Record a version of your script and synchronize sketches from your storyboard before shooting the real material. This upfront pre-vis planning can bring the project into focus.

**film language**

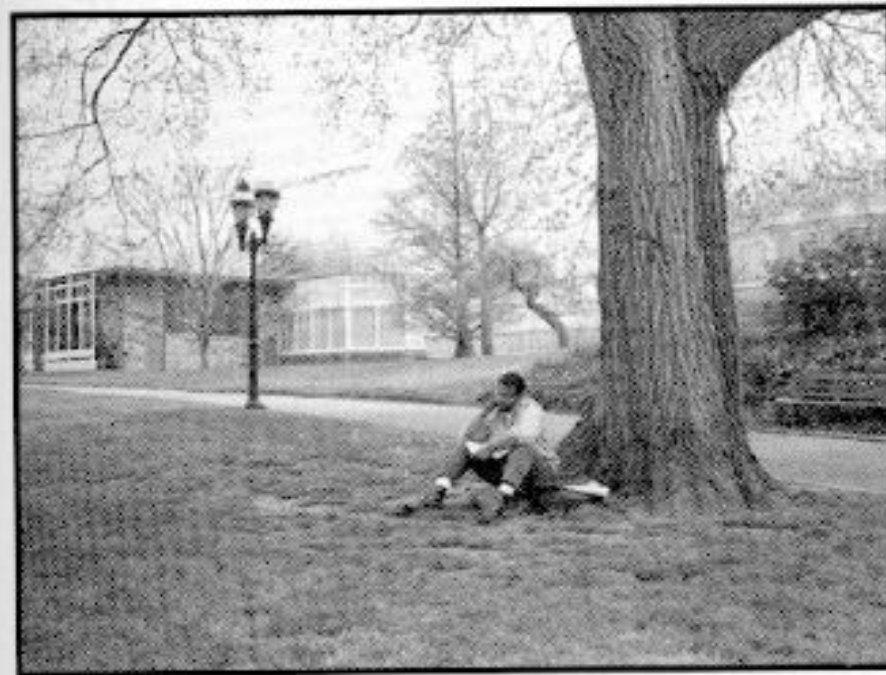
# It's all about control.

- framing of shot, movement of camera
- proximity of microphone, placement of camera
- lighting, placement of subject
- camera: focus, exposure, white balance, depth of field
- level of microphone to record audio
- location cleanup, arrangement, clothing and prop color

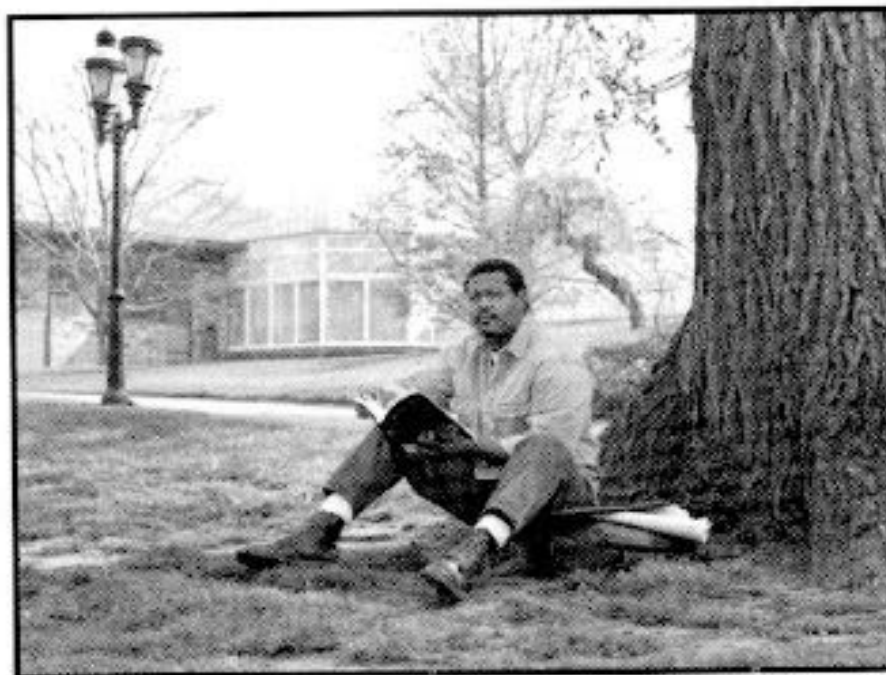
# Shot Sizes and Continuity

- Language of shot sizes: ECU, CU, MS, LS, ELS
- Maintaining screen direction is important
- The “eye-line” of a character, camera placement, composition and common sense ideas like left=west and right=east all establish screen direction
- 180° Degree Rule - See following slides
- Upcoming images courtesy of “Shot by Shot: A Practical Guide to Filmmaking” by Cantine, Lewis and Howard

Extreme Long Shot (ELS)



*Extreme Long Shot (ELS)*

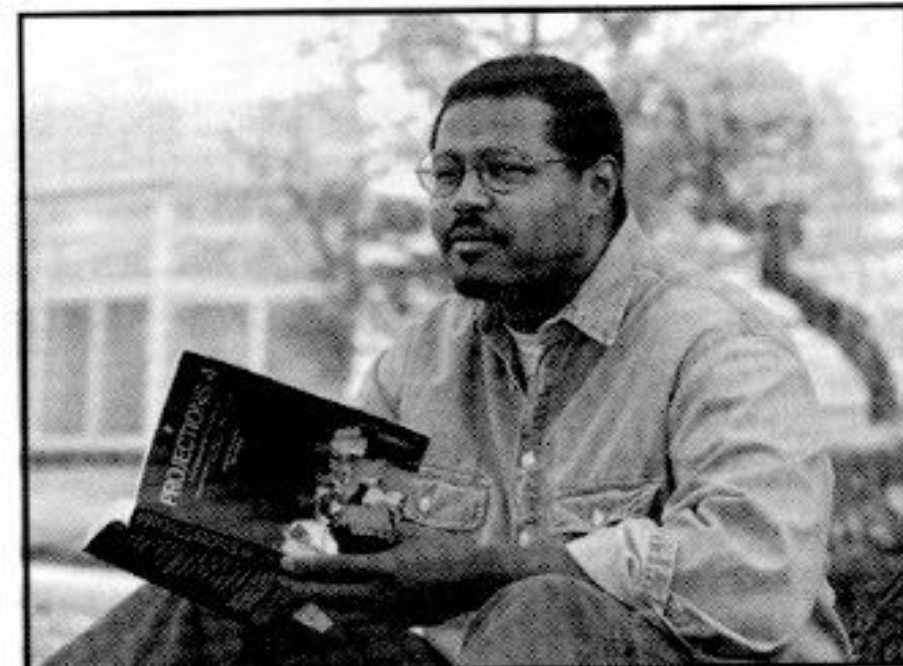


*Long Shot (LS)*

Long Shot (LS)

# Shot Sizes

Medium Shot (MS)

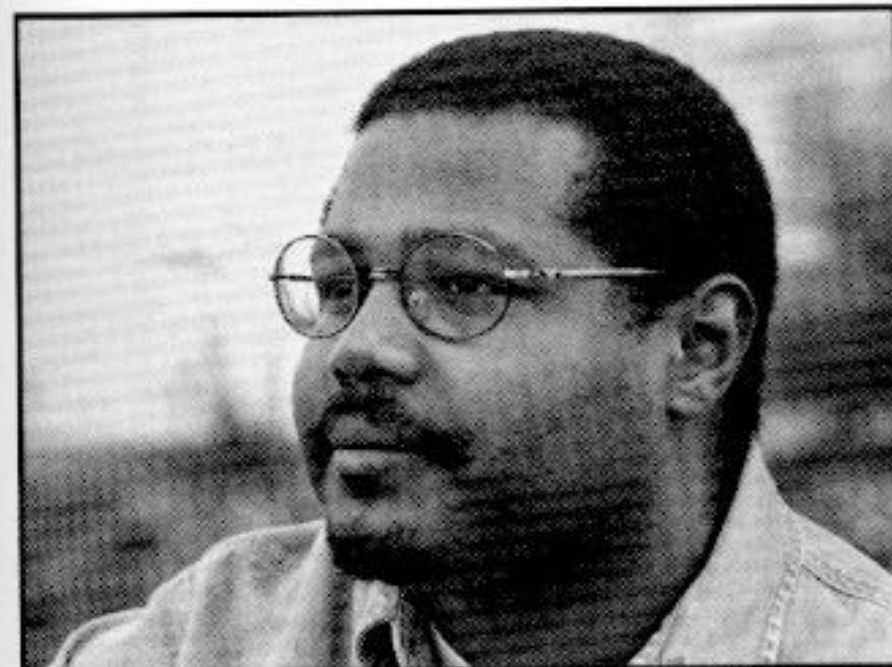


*Medium Shot (MS)*

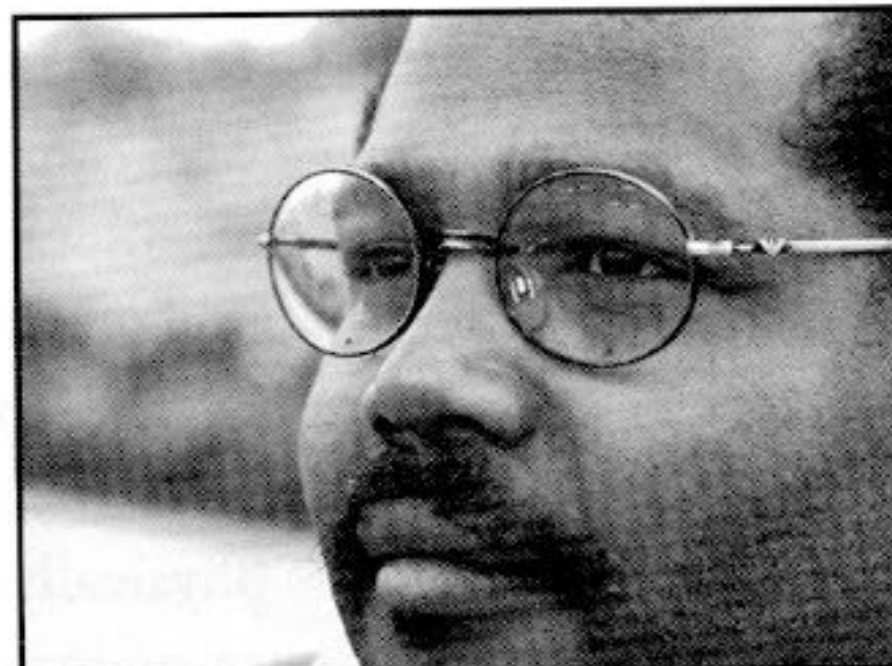
ELS, LS

MS

Medium Close-Up (MCU)



*Close-Up (CU)*



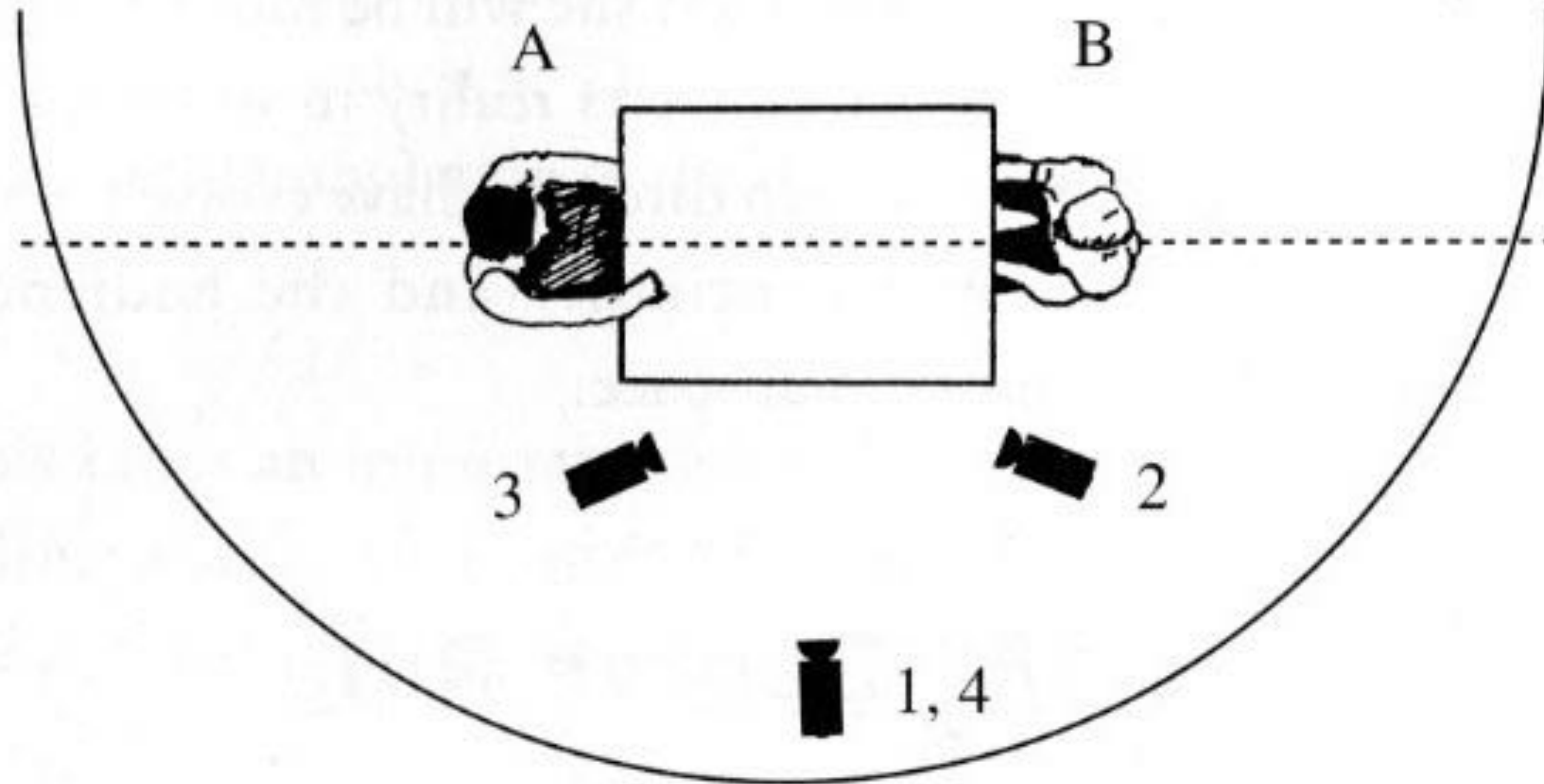
*Extreme Close-Up (ECU)*

CU, ECU

Close-Up (CU)

Extreme Close-Up (ECU)

## 180 degree rule



*An overhead view showing the 180-degree line and three camera positions for a sequence of four shots. The numbers indicate the order of the shots in the edited sequence.*



# FilmicPro and other iPhone Tricks

- iPhone video camera app that gives more **control** to lock white balance, focus and exposure
- Wistia : <http://wistia.com/library/shooting-video-with-an-iphone>
- All of these videos on this page are great, especially the “Behind the Scenes” midway down:  
<http://www.appsumo.com/wistia-iphone/>

# Composition

- Composing within a 16:9 aspect ratio is the norm. Landscape not portrait!
- Typical HD video frame sizes: 1920x1080 or 1280x720 (These will increase over time, but good for years to come.)
- Consider when person speaks directly to camera vs. slightly off axis from the camera during an interview. Be consistent. Possible for team members to address the camera directly, but others featured people might be speaking to a person off camera instead.



**Jean Nolte**  
Acura Product Specialist



# Rule of Thirds

a basic composition guide

# Rule of Thirds vs. Symmetry

- Rule of Thirds : <https://vimeo.com/1461280>
- Centered/Symmetrical : Wes Anderson  
<https://vimeo.com/89302848>

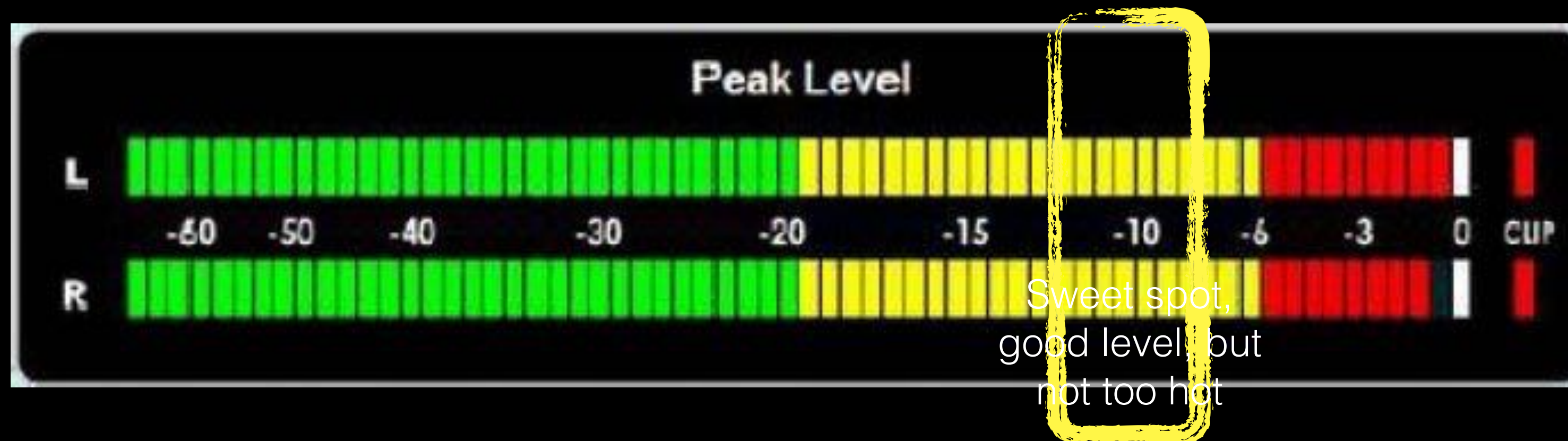
**clean, clear audio**

# Recording Audio

- The goal is to record clean audio with proper volume level
- Use a boom or mic attached to a stand above person speaking
- Record in a quiet environment
- Avoid echo and noise
- Use carpet or rugs to reduce echo if necessary

# Watch your levels...

- Use the VU meter to ensure the audio being recorded is not too quiet or too loud
- Digital audio VU meters use -12 dB as a “sweet spot”
- Digital audio “clips” when the recorder is overwhelmed by signal Avoid clipping at all costs! Team member should **wear earbuds and monitor** audio being recorded.



# Smart Phone Tricks

- How to get best narration track from an iPhone
- Using a double system with 2 iPhones, or iPhone as boom mic see the Wistia video below
- Wistia: <http://wistia.com/library/shooting-video-with-an-iphone>



**lighting**

# Lighting Properties to Control

- Intensity    Dark ----- **Bright**
- Hard        ----- **Soft**
- Contrast    High ----- **Low**
- Shadows and Highlights
- Directions and Angles, Number of Sources
- Color (use the same bulb type, white balance)
- Low Key    ----- **High Key**



1:1



2:1



4:1



8:1



1.5:1



High Key, exterior with bounce fill

**Jean Nolte**  
Acura Product Specialist



Low Key, interior with less  
fill for dramatization





But, as you saw from Wistia demos, only balanced frontal illumination with a background light behind subject works for *their* style.

**Standard 3-point lighting set up.**  
**Lights from left to right:**  
**Background light with projection lens and gobo.**  
**Fill light with mini soft box.**  
**Back light (against back wall).**  
**Key light with soft box.**

# What if I don't have a light kit?

- Be creative with other inexpensive light sources (work light + diffusion material or bounce light off of white wall)
- Use bounce white cardboard to fill in shadows, decrease contrast
- Use common sense approach to natural light: face window, not backlit. Turn off overhead sources that hurt more than help!
- Wistia: <http://wistia.com/library/down-and-dirty-lighting-kit>
- Wistia: <http://wistia.com/library/choosing-a-background>

**Assemble**



# Control Audience Focus with Editing

- editing: visual flow and rhythm
- transitions
- audio mixing/editing: audio tracks, music
- Good visual editing & audio mixing removes or avoids distractions
- Audience is hearing, seeing, reading, thinking... all at once.  
Guide that experience.

# Video Editing Software Universal Interface Guide

- Import video, photo and audio files : Media Bin
- Cut, expand, contract media clips: Timeline Window
- Synchronize voice, sound effects, mix : Timeline Window
- Virtual razor blade, tape, overlap : Transition Panel
- Choose “in” and “out” points : Source Player (near Media Bin)

# Music

- Choose carefully. Does music support tone and message?
- Music should be dropped in volume in your editing software as to not be too loud or drown out narration or other information
- In technical terms, I typically reduce audio by -12 dB while often boosting spoken audio by +1 or +2dB

# Animation & Compositing

- Workflow is similar to video production. Pre/Prod/Post
- Graphic Production (create or manipulate graphics)
- Graphics can be pixels (photo) or vector art (illustration)
- Elements are layered and moved via keyframed properties
- Adobe After Effects vs. ScreenFlow
- Using Keynote or PowerPoint to build animated parts  
<http://blog.salsify.com/ultimate-toolkit-creating-animated-marketing-video-100-less>

# Output Video for Sharing

- In 2016 (and probably for a few years to come) outputting your final video using H.264 codec set to high bitrate such as 10Mbps and AAC audio or MP3 audio set to 128kbps or higher are great options.
- If members of your team are submitting videos to be compiled, these same settings for intermediate clips is good, but consider 20Mbps for video and 256kbps for audio source before then recompressing down to the settings in first bullet.
- H.265 (HEVC) is here and will replace H.264, but H.264 support is still strong and the quality is excellent if compressed/exported correctly
- megabits per second vs. kilobits per second data rates =  
1mbps = 1000kbps

# Resources

- iMovie on the Mac still sets the bar for a quality tool at a low price.
  - even an “old” (2012) Mac will have more than enough power to make a 1080p video
- <http://wistia.com/library> (DIY lighting, DSLR workshop, direction tips)
- ScreenFlow (Mac) <\$100 video editing software  
<http://www.telestream.net/screenflow/overview.htm>
- Camtasia (Windows & Mac) <\$100 video editing software  
<https://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html>
- Adobe Premiere Elements (Windows & Mac) <\$100 video editing software  
<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere-elements.html>
- Wistia Editing Basics:  
<https://wistia.com/library/editing-your-business-video>

# Resources

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_s\\_rose\\_on\\_pitching\\_to\\_vcs#t-160889](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_s_rose_on_pitching_to_vcs#t-160889)

He speaks more of a 15 minute in-person presentation, but offers insight into the importance of genuinely presenting the team and overall guidance for the script. Rose emphasizes the emotional connection you need to make in the first 30 seconds and how the script needs to build and build positively step-by-step without staggering or taking steps backward.