Creating a Successful Video Pitch

a 1 hour crash course in filmmaking fundamentals

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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, mix sound and animate

- Taught filmmaking courses at Pittsburgh Filmmakers for 14 years

- Design agency & corporate client experience

https://www.cmu.edu/swartz-center-for-entrepreneurship/events/mcginnis-venture-competition/

Pitch 101

- Problem

- Solution

- Market

- Competition

- Team

- Business Model

NEON

Automated thumbnail selection
for online videos

Key Takeaways

- Write something fresh. Avoid cliché or overdone concepts. Get to the point. Attempt to work the points of a pitch into a story.

- Stabilize your camera, any movement should flow and guide attention of the viewer

- Audio that is clear, well recorded and precisely delivered is **critical**

- Be creative with the tools you have and reflect a theme and style inspired by your product/service

- **Visualize** as much of the problem, solution & market as possible

Video Pitch Styles

McGinnis Competition Website: You should pretend you are pitching to real investors and include all pertinent information.

- Narrator + Team Interviews + B-roll

- Team leaders first person video + Explainer Animation

- Dramatization + Supporting Data

- *Not* only a screen captured slideset and disembodied voice

filmmaking is

creative/technical

writing
visual design
sketching
planning

film language

team mangement
task delegation

editing
transitions
screen direction

title design

composition
direction of camera
direction of subjects
control camera movement

audio recording
narration vs live
synchronizing audio
audio editing
audio mixing

graphic production
motion graphics
animation
compositing

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

image control
saturation
white balance
color temperature

video frame rates
video frame sizes
knowledge of codecs
rendering strategy

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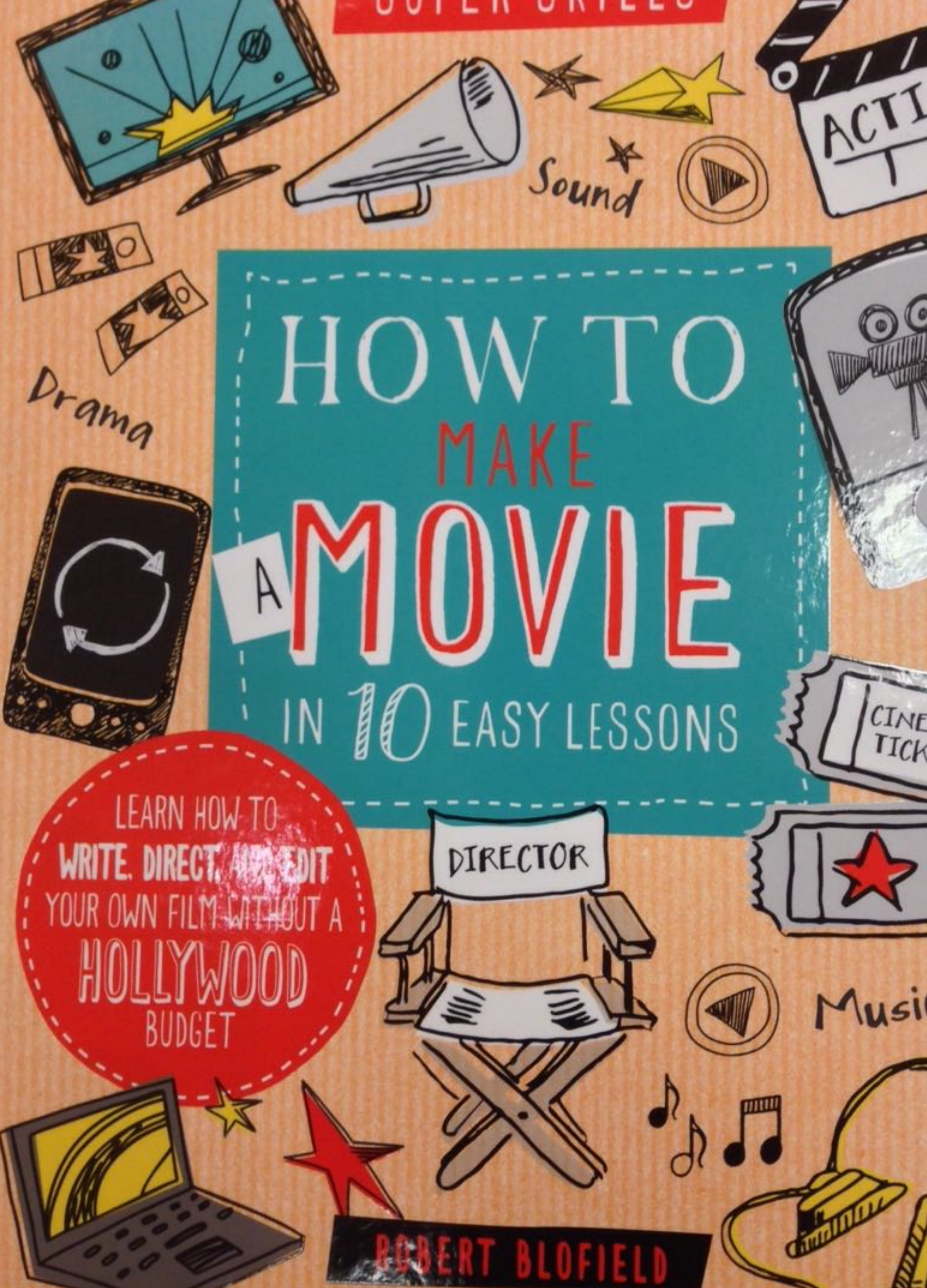graphic production
motion graphics
animation?
compositing

video frame rates
video frame sizes
knowledge of codecs
rendering strategy

HOW TO MAKE A MOVIE
IN 10 EASY LESSONS

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

DIRECTOR

Drama

Sound

ACTI

Musi

ROBERT BLOFIELD

CONTENTS

"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 Media
Edit and Mix the Media

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

- https://wistia.com/learn/production/wistias-scripting-tips

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		

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

Visuals and audio over time in text

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 problem, solution, market…?

- Visual metaphor or theme to tap into?

- Record *scratch track*, aka *animatic (basically an quickly made video that uses rough sketches over time to prove the script works to the ear but also flows well - see next slide)*
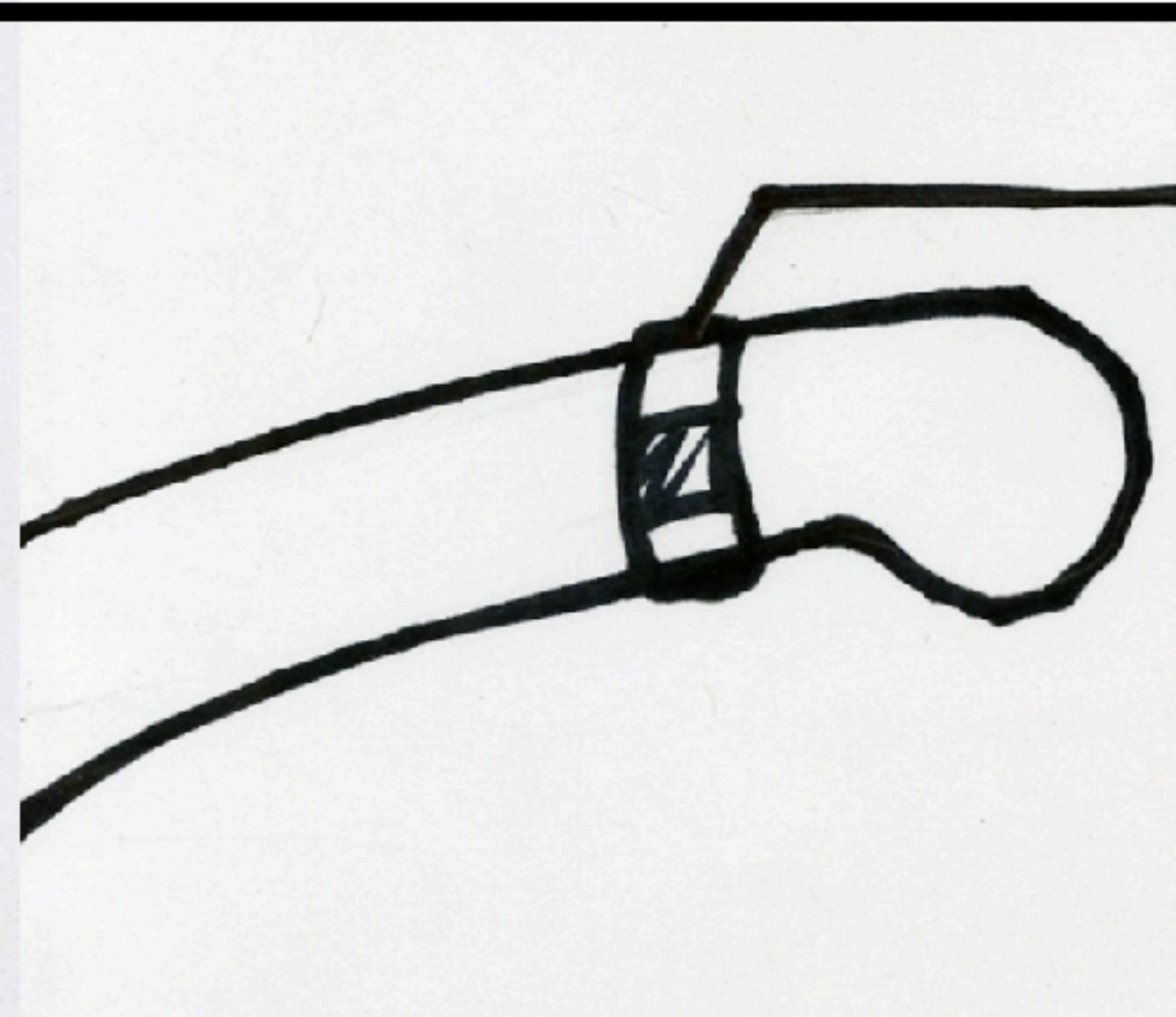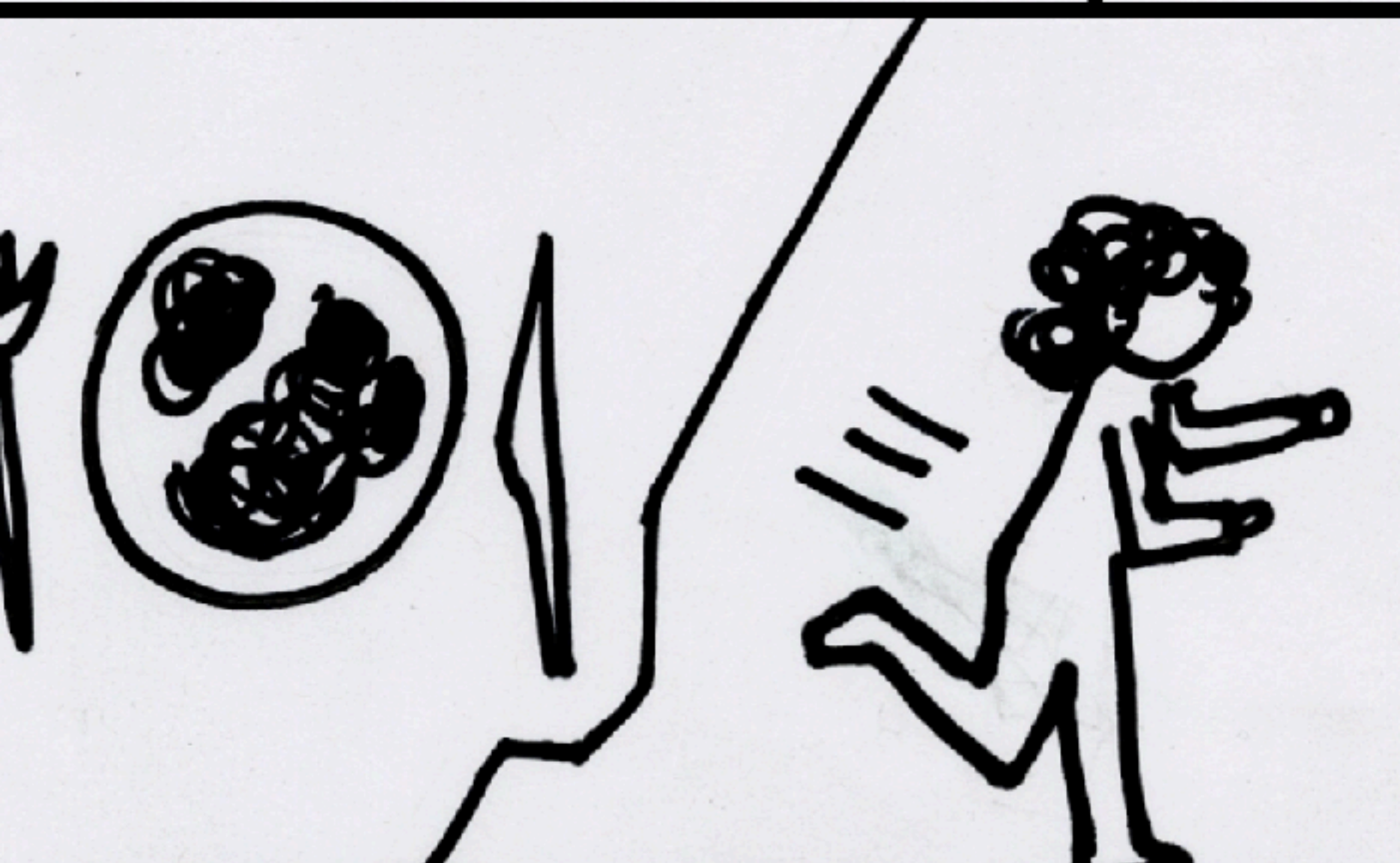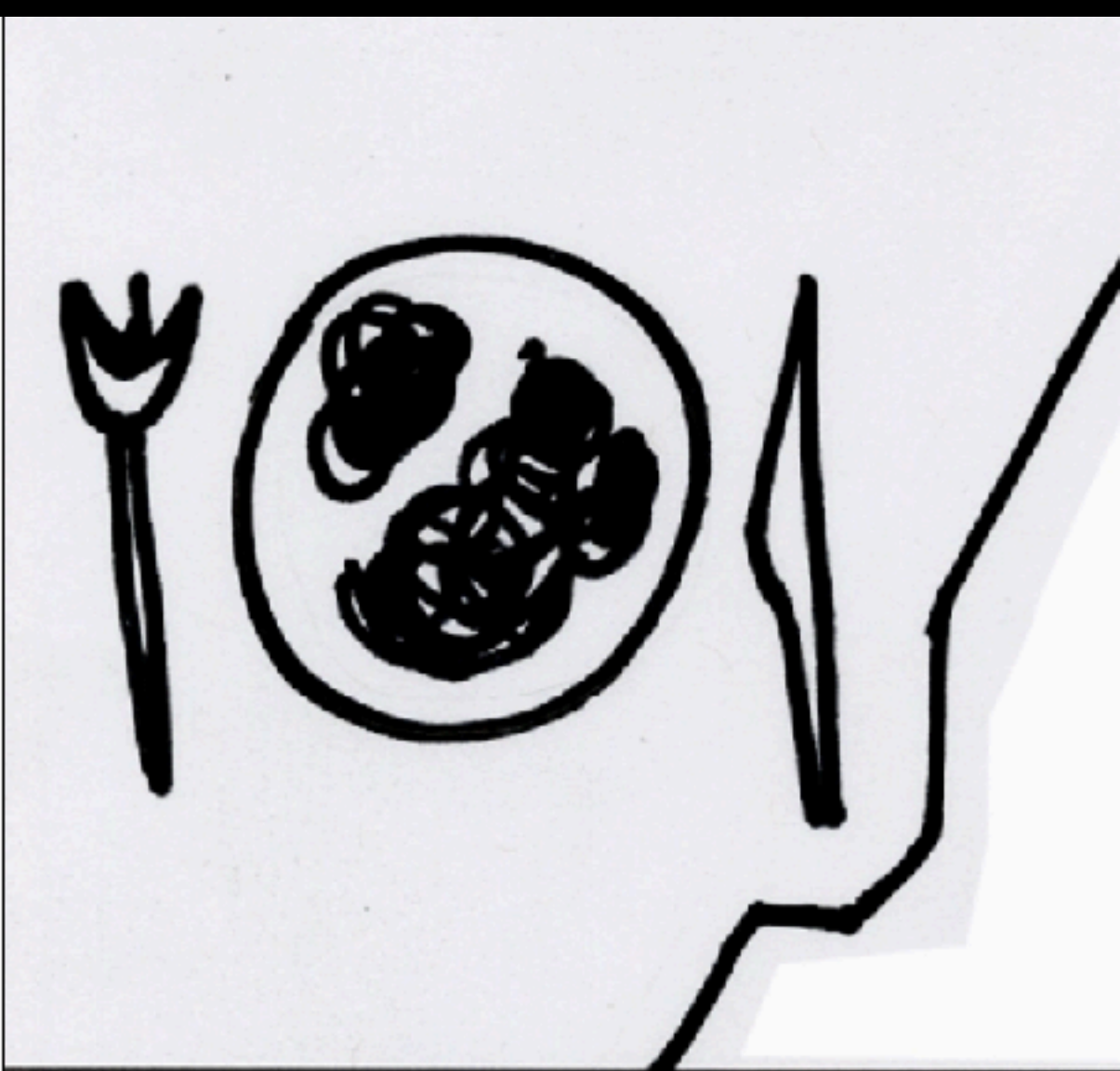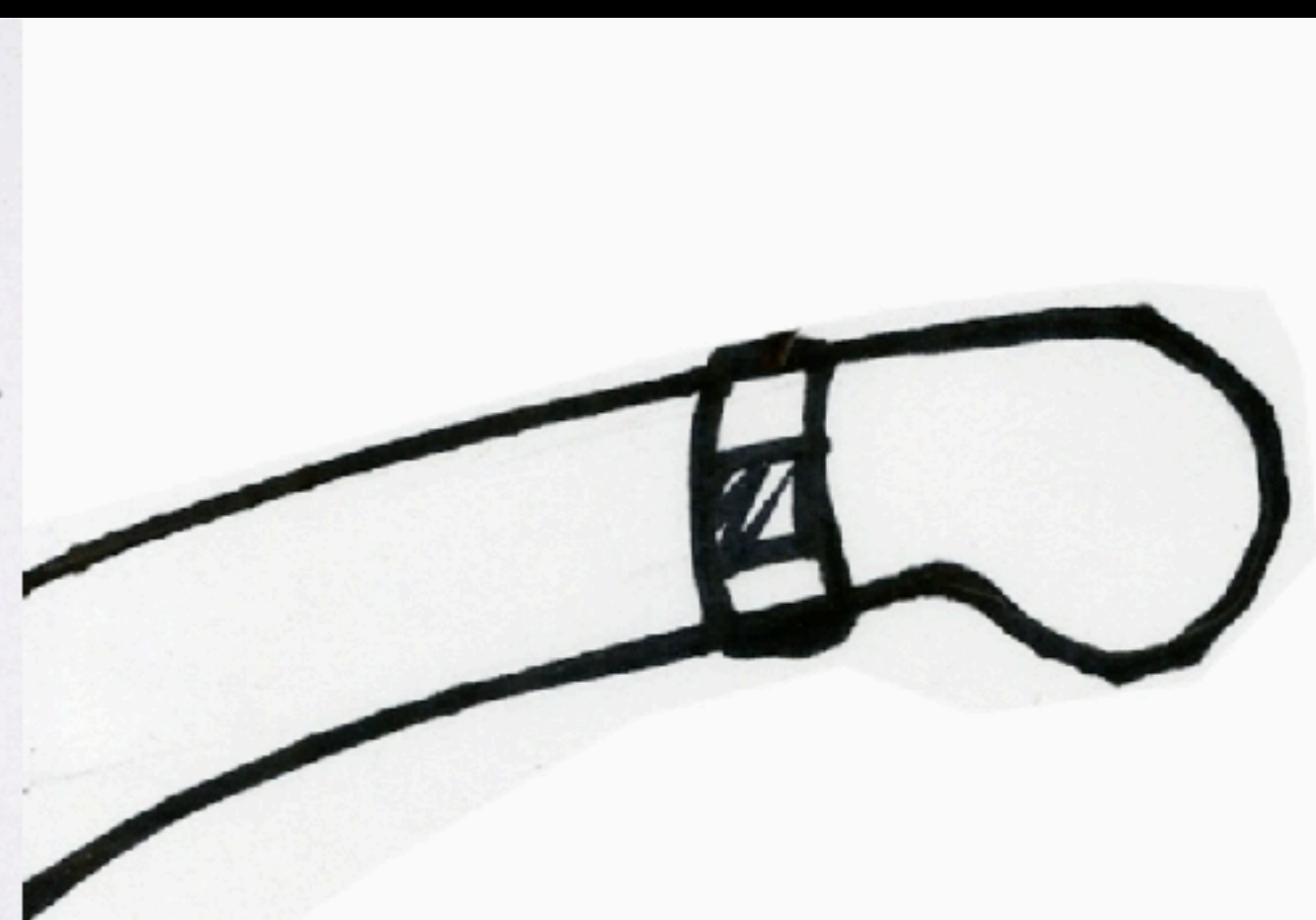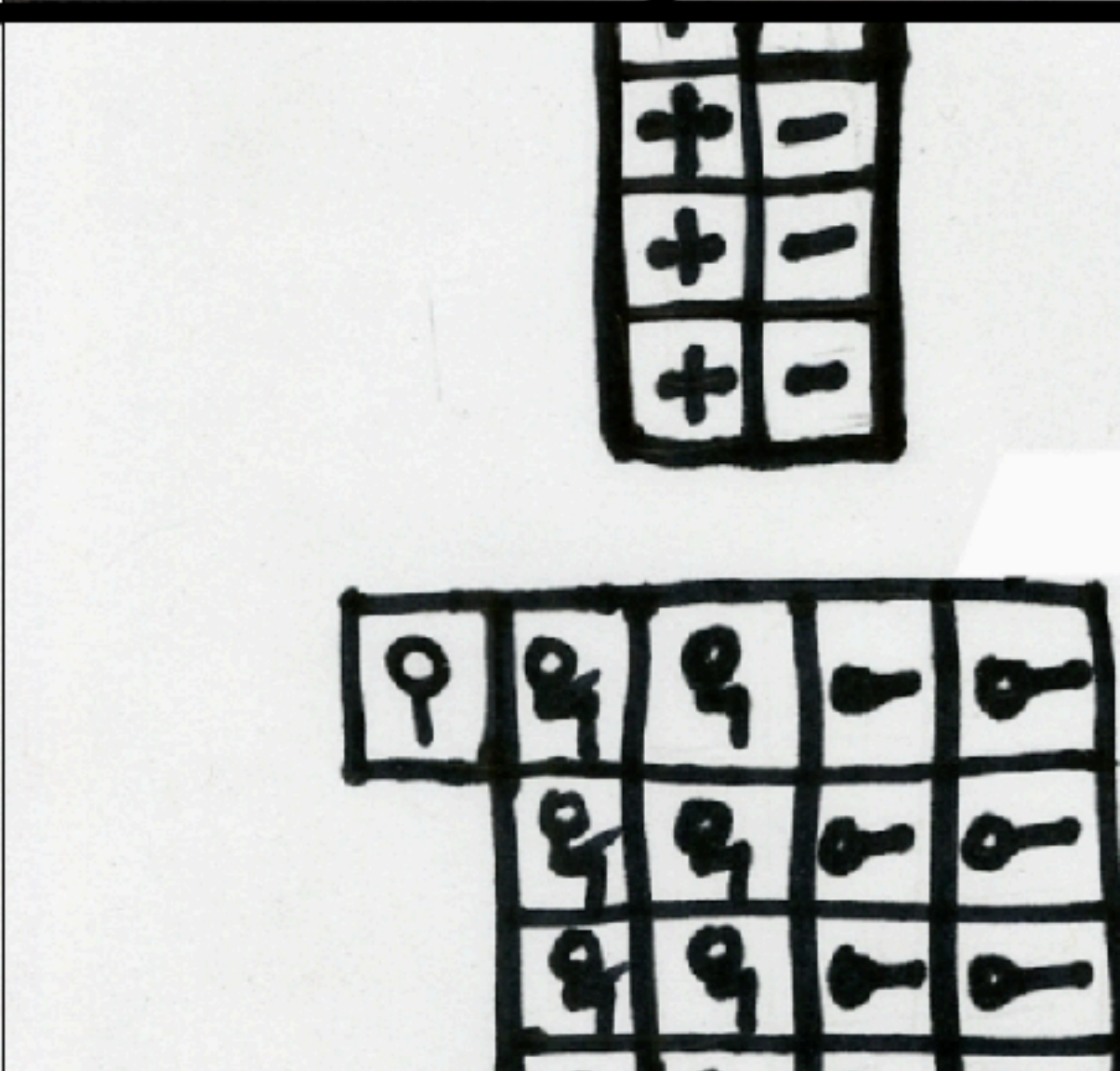
Record a version of your script and synchronize sketches from your storyboard before shooting the real material. This upfront pre-vis planning can bring the project into focus.

film language 101
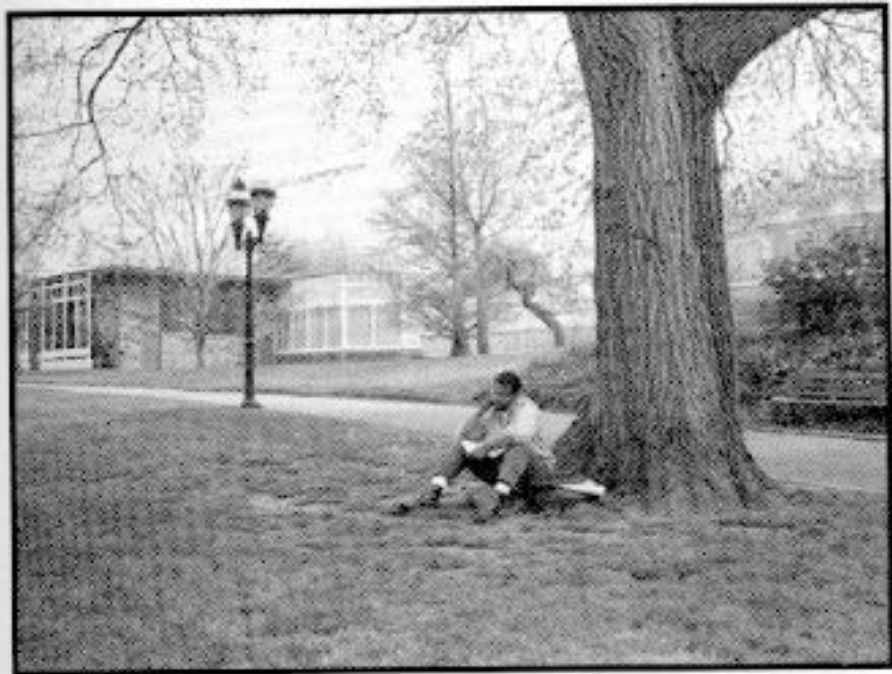
if you plan to dramatize

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
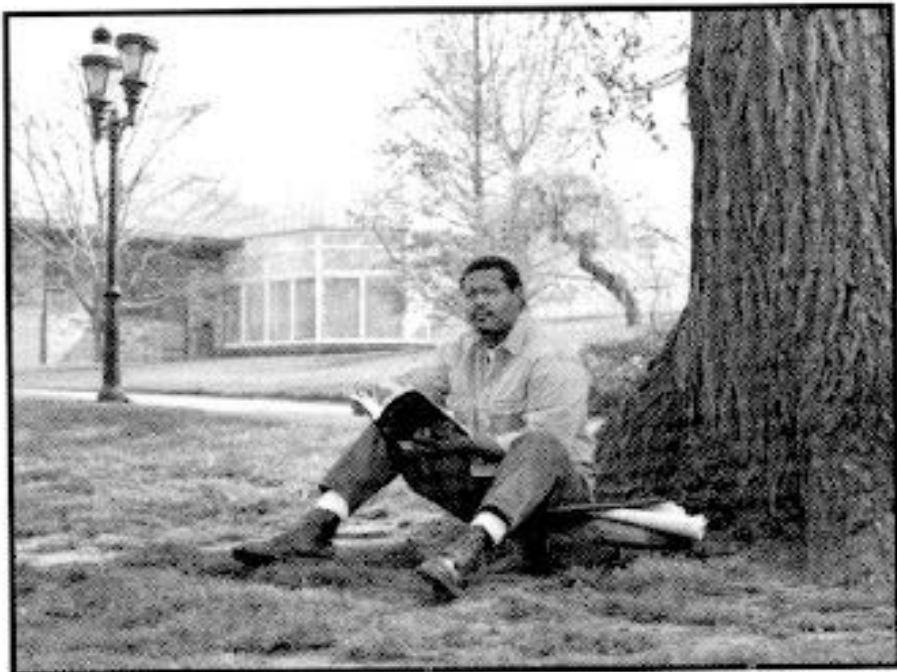
- Language of shot sizes: ECU, CU, MS, LS, ELS

- 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)

Long Shot (LS)

Shot Sizes

Medium Shot (MS)

ELS, LS

MS

Medium Close-Up (MCU)

CU, ECU

Close-Up (CU)

Extreme Close-Up (ECU)

Extreme Long Shot (ELS)

Long Shot (LS)

Medium Shot (MS)
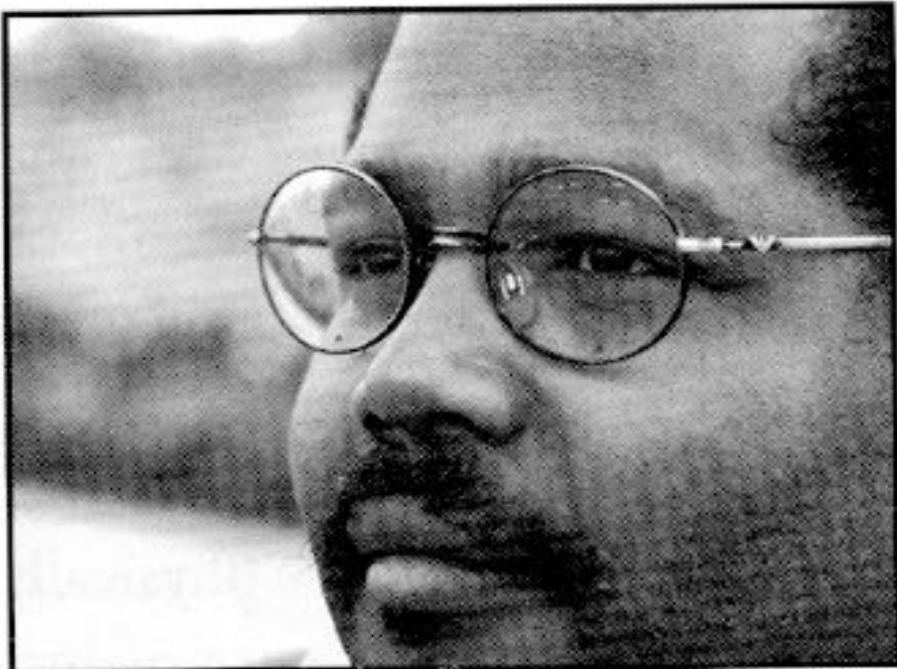
Close-Up (CU)

Extreme Close-Up (ECU)

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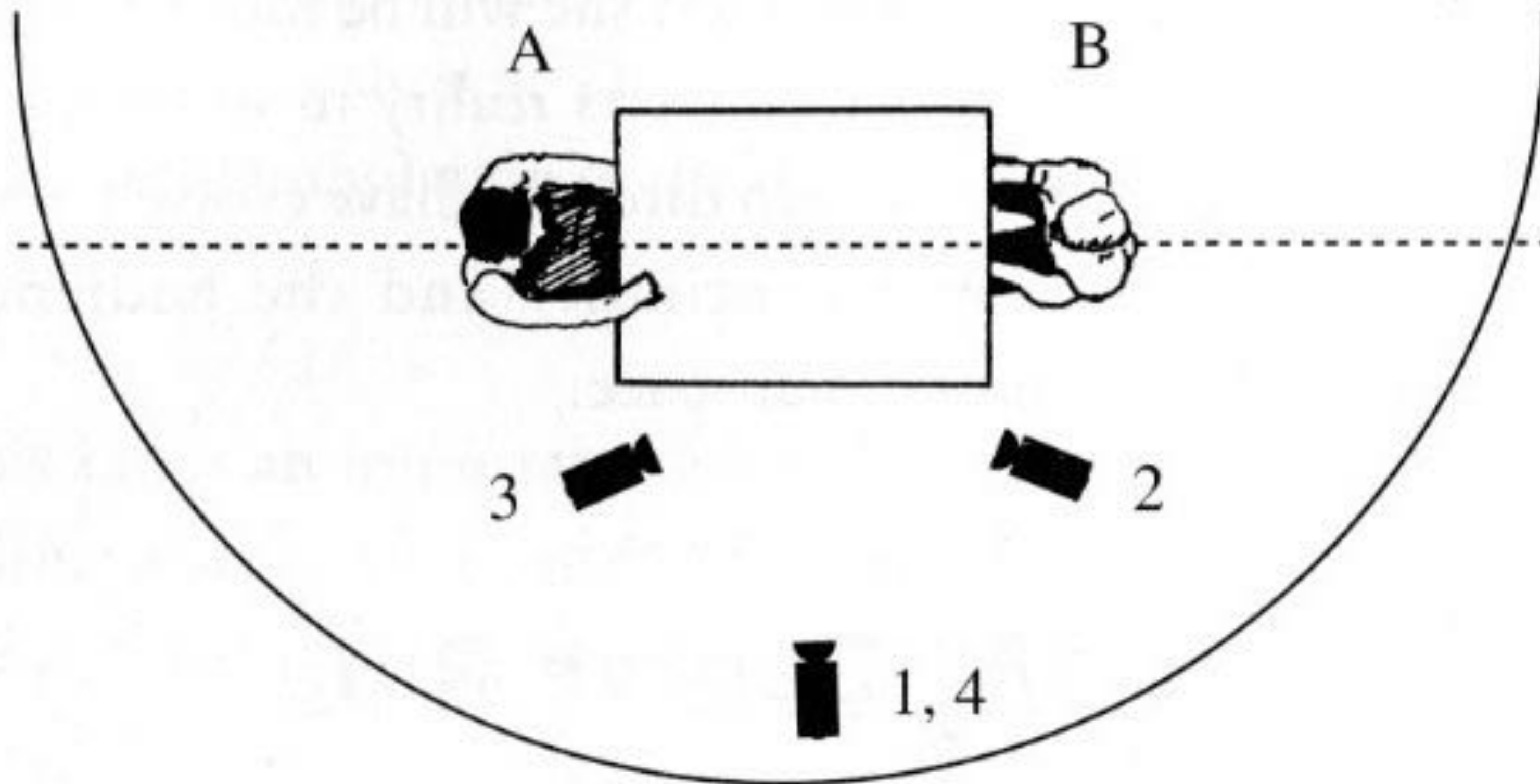
An overhead view showing the 180-degree line and three camera positions for a sequence of four shots. The numbers indicate the order of the shots in the edited sequence.

Talking to camera vs. being interviewed

- Consider when person speaks directly to camera vs. slightly off axis from the camera during an interview.

- Team should likely address the camera directly

- Other testimonials might be speaking to a person off camera

Jean Nolte
Acura Product Specialist

2:54 / 14:32

Rule of Thirds
a basic composition guide

Rule of Thirds vs. Symmetry: Composition

- Rule of Thirds / Grid Guide : https://vimeo.com/1461280

- Centered/Symmetrical : Wes Anderson https://vimeo.com/89302848

- You gotta know the rules before you can break them properly

clean, clear audio

Recording Audio

- The goal is to record clean audio with proper volume level
- Use a mic close to the person speaking
- Record in a quiet environment without echo
- Use carpet or rugs to reduce echo

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"

- This idea of audio level is possibly more helpful to grasp when mixing audio in your video editor to smooth out and make all sound a consistent volume

Peak Level

Sweet spot, good level, but not too hot
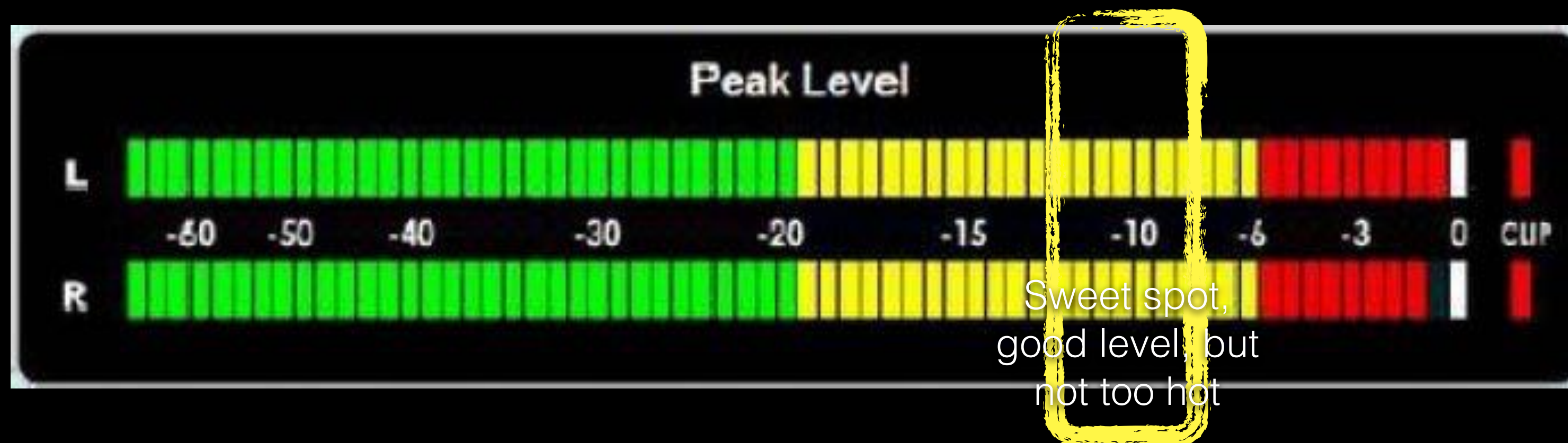
Smart Phone Tricks

- 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. Or sit a Zoom recorder just out of frame.

- Wistia: http://wistia.com/library/shooting-video-with-an-iphone

- Sorry for the iPhone bias in this slide set. I know there are good resources on getting the most from your Samsung Galaxy, etc.

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?

- Some room walls reflect light to soften it and fill in shadows

- Use common sense approach to natural light: **face** window, not backlit in front of it.

- What natural backgrounds can you with?

- What are your brightest rooms?

- Wistia: http://wistia.com/library/choosing-a-background

Assemble

Control Audience Focus with Editing

- editing: visual flow and rhythm

- transitions: keep it simple! Cuts are the most common for a reason.

- 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)

Transitions mean something

Cuts are powerful.
Dissolves show the passage of time.
Starwipes are bad. Unless ironic.

Music

- Choose carefully. Does music support tone and message?

- Don't choose distracting music!

- Music should be dropped in volume in your editing software as to not be too loud or drown out narration or other information

- In techincal terms, I typically reduce audio by -8 dB while often boosting spoken audio by +1 or +2dB

Screen capture and graphics

- ScreenFlow is my preferred screen capture software

- Consider using your slide graphics in the video editor as title cards or as animated moments

Output Video for Upload

- Outputting your final video using H.264 or H.265 codec set to high bitrate such as 10Mbps and AAC audio or MP3 audio set to 128kbps or higher are great options. Depends heavily on what video editing software you are using. Does the output look and sound good?

- 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.

- It is possible for 1 minute of rendered video to be anywhere between 50MB and 200MB depending on settings. Be cautious of any compressed file that seems too small or too large.

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Resources

- iMovie on the Mac still sets the bar for a quality tool at a low price.
  - even an old Mac will have more than enough power to make a 1080p video

- https://www.lynda.com/iMovie-tutorials/iMovie-10-1-8-Essential-Training/618709-2.html

- 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 Learning Center (tagged "DIY"):
  https://wistia.com/learn?page=1&tag=diy-video

SUPER SKILL 1: FIND INSPIRATION

SUPER SKILL 2: TURN YOUR IDEA INTO A SCRIPT

SUPER SKILL 3: VISUALIZE EVERY SHOT

SUPER SKILL 4: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!

SUPER SKILL 5: CAMERA WORK

SUPER SKILL 6: LIGHTING AND SOUND

SUPER SKILL 7: BE A CONFIDENT DIRECTOR

SUPER SKILL 8: EDITING YOUR FILM

SUPER SKILL 9: SHOW OFF YOUR FILM