Student notes 089 – Editing and transitions

Film and television has been the leading means of mass communication in Western countries for at least fifty years, and many conventions have been developed that allow directors to use shortcuts to advance character and plot development rapidly. Some of these are editing devices such as jump cuts (speeding up the passage of time by showing short non sequential parts of a long take) and fading to black and then back up (implying an undefined passage of time).

Blender’s Video Sequence Editor and Photoshop Timeline animation mode can be used to make all these cuts and transitions.

Examples
One of the best set of examples of different transitions I’ve found is Cuts and Transitions 101 at RocketJump Film School on YouTube. It’s about twelve minutes long and is at https://youtu.be/OAH0MoAv2CI (warning: a couple of short sequences starting at 3:40 and 5:02 are slightly NSFW or disturbing).

The cuts and transitions listed in this video are useful; here they are:

Cuts:
- **Cut** – simply going from one shot to another to advance the story
- **Cutting on Action** – cutting from one shot to another while the subject is still in motion
- **Cut Away** – cutting to an insert shot of something and then back. The insert shot can be in the same space and time as the character, or sometime else to get inside the character’s thoughts
- **Cross Cut** – intercutting back and forth between locations; common for phone conversations and for increasing the tension of a sequence; also used to convey a character’s thoughts and emotional state
- **Jump Cut** – often used to show the passage of time or to add urgency to a scene. Note: this doesn’t work like speeding up the video; that adds a comic effect.
- **Match Cut** – cuts from one shot to another by matching an element in the action or the composition; match cuts are often used for well designed scene transitions

Transitions:
- **Fade in/Fade out** – dissolving to or from black, used to represent the passing of time
- **Dissolve** – can also represent the passing of time; these are often used in montages, which are self-contained sequences that rapidly develop a character or plot element
- **Smash cut** – abrupt transitions such as waking up from a nightmare, or quiet to intense
Iris – an old fashioned stylistic choice that concentrates on a particular element in a scene
Wipe – there are many wipe styles; the 1975 movie Rocky Horror Picture Show and most Star Wars movies include frequent, varied, and often deliberately jarring wipes
Invisible cut – used to give the impression of a single take, but the cut is hidden in blackness or a whip pan or an object crossing the frame
L-cut – an audio based transition where the audio from the current shot carries over into the next shot; this is used all the time to move smoothly between scenes
J-cut – where the audio from the next scene starts before the video; often used to reveal a new element in the scene

L and J cuts come from the shapes of cutting in traditional film editing:

L and J cuts
visualize the image track above the audio track

in an L cut, the sound of the previous scene persists after the scene change

in a J cut, the sound of the next scene starts before the scene change

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