The Five Elements of Documentaries



The Five elements of Documentaries

- Interviews
- Cutaways
- "Cinema Verite" Live Action
- Process Footage
- Archive

Interviews

- Frame the person using negative space, have them fill roughly 1/3 of the screen, on the left or right side. Make sure their "Gaze" is into the Negative space.
- The Background influences the way the person is perceived.
 - look for a background that will reveal something about the subject.



Interviews

- Leave room behind the subject, never interview someone right in front of a wall.
- Leave 4-15 feet between the subject and the wall, you will notice the person's shadow disappear from the wall.
- Watch out for reflections in people's glasses, turn them away from facing the window to solve the problem.





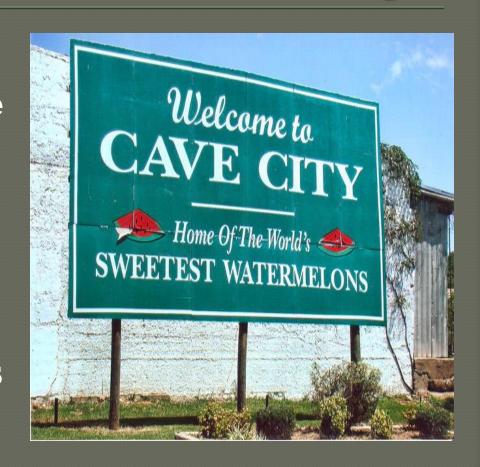
Cutaways

- Cutaways: These are "Stand-alone" shots, similar to still photography.
 - Cutaways can be store signs, close ups of ashtrays, a clock on the wall, people's faces, a candle, a shot of a highway.
 - Treat cutaways like still photographs.
 - squeeze the visual poetry of the shot .



Cutaways

- "shots" that evoke something about the truth of the situation you are filming. Hold your shots still...
- Record 8-12 seconds for each shot.



Three basic types of Cutaways

- Story Telling Cutaways
- Emotional Cutaways
- General Coverage Cutaways

Story Telling - Cutaways

- Images of "Welcome to " signs, exterior shots of houses where interviews were filmed,
- Images of main character entering and leaving a building, Wide shots of Cities or towns from on top of a hill or large building.



Story Telling - Cutaways



These cutaways allow the telling of the story without always having to use a narrator..

Emotional Cutaways

- Film shots that have emotional content built into them.
 - For example a solitary man sitting on a park bench...two people walking hand in hand...
 - A close up of a hand while they are praying...
 - shot of a candleincense burning...people hugging...



Emotional Cutaways



General Coverage Cutaways

Fillers

- very important...
 - For example if you are filming a race car contest...
 - * shots of people watching the race...cheering...the hot dog stand...people lined up to get in...Ushers tearing ticket stubs at the entrance (close-ups)...people cooking out in the middle of the raceway...a close up of flags, loudspeakers and race track signage.



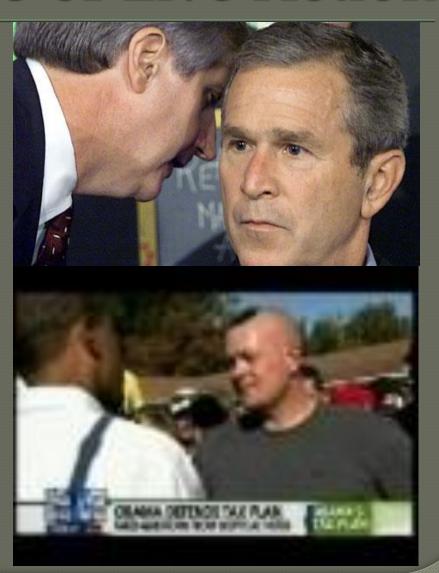
CLOSE UPS

- The theory of film editing includes the definition of what makes a good visual
 - Theory is that you can not edit together two wide shots filmed from the same angle, same for medium shots...you need to insert a couple of Close ups between these shots



Cinema Verite or Live Action

- filming what ever is going on with the subjects.
 - No talking or interaction with subjects ...
 - the moment will come when the character reveals him or herself on film, and the camera is rolling when it occurs.



Cinema Verite or Live Action



Process Footage

- Process Footage –
- Filming the making of the documentary.
 - Behind The Scenes footage film of the Documentary itself.
 - ...perhaps we just hear your offscreen voice, with a glimpse of the director thru- out the film.
 - If shots of the film maker are needed on location, give the camera to a "civilian" for a few minutes.



Archive

photographs and/or old videos of subject

- Scanning is the best way to import them into a digital editing system, but you can get a shot with your DV and HDV camera that can later be made into a still frame, and panned and zoomed through (aka Ken Burns style).
- ... footage from local news stations or photographs from newspapers

