

Direct cinema assignment

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In this case, those people would be the filmmakers themselves. A direct cinema film proceeds without any formal script and is pieced together in its entirety in the editing studio. That is, the cameraman keeps the camera rolling silently in the background without intervening or imposing on the scenes themselves.

It is no wonder then that one might assume cinema verity?? to be a strictly neutral form of art with its makers having no particular story to tell.

However, the absence of an agenda does not necessarily result in an objective documentary. A direct cinema filmmaker can fiddle with camera techniques such as close-ups and make various editing choices such as the placing of cuts and juxtapositions to add a certain tone and mood to his film, as demonstrated in documentaries such as Richard Leaseback's Happy Mothers Day. All filmmakers face the decision of which scenes to include and which to leave out of their film.

But a filmmaker also makes conscious choices to cut scenes at some parts and leave in long takes at others. This can lead to a dramatic effect, placing emphasis on the subject matter in longer takes. Subjects in these scenes are given the viewers' attention for a significant amount of time. In Happy Mother's Day, Locked leaves in long takes at what he believes to be important parts in the film. He makes use of long take when he pans through the Aberdeen hospital where the quintuplets were born. He carries his camera equipment and captures the hospital room in great detail, along with the quintuplets themselves.

He applies this throughout the film, leaving in another long take when shooting the Fischer family hanging out casually in their barn. Differentiating short cuts from long takes forces viewers to pay attention to what the filmmaker wants them to pay attention to. Direct cinema filmmakers can also weave together a story by manipulating the chronological order of certain scenes and juxtaposing contrasting scenes for a more vivid effect. For example, in *Happy Mother's Day*, *Locked* makes a table choice to start off with a scene in which the mother is completely engulfed by a sea of reporters.

The framing of the scene is such that the mother is in the center of the screen with a sea of reporters shoving their microphones into her face. By no means did he need to make this the first scene in the documentary, but this choice makes a bold statement. More importantly, it confronts viewers with a disconcerting image that will stay with them throughout the rest of the film. *Locked* then continues to juxtapose scenes of the Fischer's private lives with scenes of their public facade. As he does so, he implies that the sudden public interest is a burden and their public appearances an unwelcome responsibility for the Fischer.

The placement of certain scenes and their respective order are both manifestations of the filmmakers personal preferences and goals. Another notable aspect of direct cinema is the lack of sound manipulation, but this can actually aid a film in getting its message across. Non-diegetic sound, such as special sound effects and music, are often used to distort or add a certain feeling to a scene. For example, substitution of narrative into a scene

forces the viewer to see and feel what the narrator sees and feels, at least in that moment.

Dietetic or synchronized sound gives the viewer another sort of gift, however. One can focus on the scene and be engrossed in it without any distractions. It gives us a sense of familiarity and intimacy with what is taking place on the screen in front of us. The monotonous drone of the incubators and the slow breathing of the quintuplets in the aforementioned hospital scene allow a degree of intimacy that would not have been possible had music or dialogue been substituted in, as in *Abs's erosion*, *The Squints*. Along with it comes a sense of invasion of privacy.

Viewers cannot help but feel slightly out of place, maybe noting that this intimacy should not have been possible in the first place. In this manner, dietetic sound can often set the right mood in a film and bring a desired response from viewers. Close-ups?? of subjects' faces especially?? serve to highlight certain emotions and add a distinct flavor to documentaries. In *Happy Mothers Day*, *Locked* uses close-ups to accurately capture his subjects' emotions and foster a sense of intimacy on our part and limitability on theirs. During the Aberdeen town celebration, the camera zooms in on Mrs..

Fisher's face during an opera singer's performance. Her discomfort is undeniable and the momentary focus on each Fisher's discontent face is enough to make a silent statement about their negative sentiments towards the public exposure, and the filmmakers as well. During yet another instance in the same hospital scene mentioned before, the camera zooms in on the

quintuplets' napping faces in their incubators. Their small, resting heads show viewers their vulnerability and make a case for their being humans, not idols nor celebrities.

Pictures are indeed worth a thousand words, and close-ups at appropriate times can aid a filmmaker in expressing different attitudes in an indirect manner. Cinema verity?? is indeed misleading in its reputation of representing the cold truth and nothing but the truth. While ideally, direct cinema filmmakers are mere observers, in practice, they inject some of their own voices into their films. The lack of narration or any specific guidance for the viewer is not too much of a hindrance, as stylistic and editing choices result in a far less objective film than might be expected.

This is not to say that direct cinema is a biased practice, certainly not as biased as other sorts of documentaries. However, in no way must they lack feelings nor convictions. In this aspect, the lack of scene preparation in terms of supplementary audio and the like is an asset. The value of direct cinema lies in its ability to relate a story and the filmmakers attitude towards it naturally, without obvious artificial coloring. The direct cinema approach, while subtle, can leave just as much of an impact on viewers.