



Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen

Steven D. Katz

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This international best-seller is filled with visual techniques for filmmakers and screenwriters who want to expand their stylistic knowledge.

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Author : Steven D. Katz

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From Reader Review Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen for online ebook

Jeffrey Moll says

This filmmaking book informs the reader how important the first step in production is, the pre-production period. Most of the book describes how to maintain a certain movement within a frame and how important simple pans are when using character movement. Steven writes about how the director must give the actor space to move within the frame and close-ups, though important, must be used sparingly because of the space it takes away. Though the art of storyboarding has faded with increasing technology, this book informs the reader about how important it is to visually understand what is about to be shot. Pre-production, especially the writing portion, is the cheapest part of making a film so this step needs to be fleshed-out and exhausted in order to push forward. In the later chapters Steven uses the art of compiling moving shots with static to create a mood of its own, separate from the actors in front of the screen. This is the best pre-production film book I have ever read because of his ability to cut the fat and provide visuals to match his explanations. His straight-forward approach makes it a kind of dictionary for filmmaking.

Kiron says

This is a book about all the types of shots, but it has a serious problem. The writer does not explain how the directors use and combine these shots with a narrative and emotional meaning. If you read this book, you will know the positions of and angles that a cameraman uses; but you won't know anything about when, and why, they use them. Katz doesn't talk about the art of direction and the connection between the script and the camera shots.

If you want to learn the complicated art of the direction you must read other more interesting books, like "Film Directing Fundamentals" by Nicholas Proferes. Also you can analyze an Hitchcock's movie "shot by shot". Any movie of Hitch is a master class.

Xing Chen says

Read this as a novice film maker while directing/ producing my first short film. I really appreciated the technical depth- had picked up several volumes intended for beginning film makers, and this one was most useful as it went beyond the basics.

Certain aspects of directing are fairly intuitive, or are arrived at after some experience and trial and error. It's extremely instructive to discover techniques, independently of indirectly-acquired book knowledge, while working on a project. At this early stage in my film making ventures, I want to experiment and be as creative as realistically possible, and I was concerned that reading a book like this might solidify and limit my notions of what I could do.

However, as it turned out, I was glad to have this book at hand to accelerate my process of insight formation. It's filled with descriptions of techniques that have been arrived at throughout the history of film making, and acquaints the reader with formal terminology and definitions. It's true that in many cases, one is limited

by equipment and physical and budgetary constraints, and the book discussed ways of working within such boundaries, based on knowledge distilled from a wealth of experience accumulated by others who've trodden the path.

The approach taken was simultaneously very practical and theoretical- each sub-section presented the reader with challenges or objectives (e.g. create a certain mood for a scene, portray the characters a certain way), and listed the principle ways in which this could be accomplished. When planning how to direct a shoot, I start with an intuitive idea of how I could achieve my objectives, and pursue the most likely strategy. That's a natural and acceptable way of going about it. However, having a manual like this to consult allows me to explore possibilities that I might not have considered or imagined otherwise.

Content covered included the sequence and composition of shots, choreography of actors and the camera, and transitions, and chapters were generously illustrated with excerpts from real screenplays, annotated diagrams, photos, and stills, which made concepts clear and immediately graspable. I particularly enjoyed the aesthetically-pleasing quality of the visuals, with gorgeous set sketches and storyboards from productions like Citizen Kane and Empire of the Sun- inspiring as well as informative.

The concepts and terms are pretty detailed (from my perspective)- at points, I was tempted to just skim the pages, so it took some concentration and dedication to read through the examples thoroughly, study the diagrams, and digest the tips properly. In every case though, the effort was worth it.

Engrossing historical information about the use and development of techniques and technology- set design, art direction, conventions in framing, perspective, focus, camera movement, and so on- was provided in just the right quantity and level of detail- not too involved and distracting, but enough to gain deeper understanding of how the field came to be the way it is today. Influential personalities- pioneers in departments such as illustration, direction and sound- are mentioned for their valuable contributions.

In my June 1991 print version of the book, my main criticism was with the layout of some sections- figures were placed several pages after the corresponding text, such that figures that appeared next to the text on a given page were meant to illustrate concepts mentioned some pages before. In most cases, I saw little reason for this displeasing arrangement- except lack of care from the page layout artists.

Michael Kareev says

Just classics of the genre

Amr Khaled says

asas

Morgan McGuire says

The most practical and comprehensive of many film production books I read for my Cinematography course. I selected this one to cover continuity editing, storyboarding and preproduction in general, camera work, and

shot framing.

I combined it with Mamet's On Film Directing for more preproduction (ironically, that book is not useful for directing actors), and the latest edition of Brown's classic Motion Picture Lighting text (Katz doesn't discuss lighting).

Katz could use a new edition...the love affair with 1985's emerging storyboarding PC programs is a little embarrassing today, and a chapter on nonlinear digital editing would be great new content. In fact, if he just added a chapter on scriptwriting and one on basic three-point lighting, this would be a standalone text.

Andrew says

I bought this book back in film school, where we were assigned a couple chapters from it. But I kept it around with the intention of one day coming back and reading it cover to cover, and I'm glad I did. The book is an exceptional primer on preproduction and cinematography. I noticed some reviewers complained about it being too technical, and I think they make a good point. The book may be better suited to a reader with some experience in the field as opposed to an absolute beginner. Also, the edition of the book I read is beginning to show its age (copyright 1991). The digital filmmaking revolution was just beginning at the time of that release, and an update is definitely in order to bring the book in line with modern technique. But that being said, the large majority of the information included is timeless (composition, staging, storyboarding, etc.), regardless of whether your shooting with a Bolex or a Digital SLR. Even as someone who has been practicing the techniques Katz describes for many years now, I still found the book to be a welcome refresher. Highly recommended to all filmmakers and animators.

Mike says

clearest description of pre-production i've read. good intro to types of shots. cool to see the different styles of storyboards.

the breakdown of a scene from Empire of the Sun going from the description in the book to the final film is worth the price of admission.

Mike says

This looks like a great book, full of helpful material for someone wanting to work as a director. I got a copy out of the Library to check it out and have skimmed through it, but it's not the sort of book I'll actually read.

Rebecca says

i used this heavily in a literature review i did for my Design Planning, Analysis, and Evaluation class called "Storyboarding: a tool for visualization." this book is so cool, the best source i found due to writing style and knowlege, and the art included. Another source written by a storyboard artist (listed below) was informative,

but cheesier, breaking-into-the-business type book rather than discussing the storyboarding process.

here's the beginning of the lit review:

"Storyboarding is a tool for visualization created and used by the film industry to map camera shots sequentially, conveying the action and mood and creating a shared vision between the director and those involved in production. Developed for use in animation, its applications have grown. Storyboarding has evolved for use in interactive design, as well as sports, business, counseling, large-scale multimedia event planning, exhibition and other design, and other applications.

In his book on film directing, Katz discusses in detail storyboarding techniques, as does Mark Simon in his manual on storyboarding, Storyboarding: Motion in Art."

...and so forth...

Ignacio Peña says

Essential reading for anyone looking to understand the visual language of filmmaking. A lot of what's in here are things I have actively put into practice over the last decade of work I've done in previs and animation, and have learned on the job. It was really neat to read where a lot of it has come from historically. A lot of the work I do now has evolved beyond what the book illustrates, and it was fascinating to see how much of how Katz predicted visualization to evolve has come to pass.

Natalie says

Informative, but dated.
This was required reading when I was in grad school.

Steve Casner says

Cinematographers and still photographers unite. This is best book I've seen on the topic of shot composition. Complete with pictures. As a still photographer, it was interesting to cross over to the other side and look at the problem of setting up a shot for moving pictures. For me it was a new way to think about photographing people in conversation or people who are communicating without words. Amazing book.

Ben says

An excellent first book on cinematography. Contains plenty of step-by-step instructions with drawings and diagrams for storyboards, camera movements, and editing techniques. Indispensable for a first-time film director. Easy to read.

Andrii Pushkarov says

Very helpful book for novice filmmakers.
