

# Making the Transition

The challenge we see is that both photography and cinematography have developed relatively independent of each other for so long. While the best practices of still or sequential image gathering can be shared across the fence, each group has its own specific language, conventions, and thought processes that need to be adopted.

We know this transition is possible, just as bicyclists and cars can share the road. We're not asking you to choose one method over another, just to realize that you'll need to operate a little differently depending upon which style of shooting you're using.

## What's common to still and sequential shooting?

As a photographer, you've already invested a great deal into honing your craft. Through training and practice you've learned that composition and framing matter. You use them to convey the message of your subject. Where you place your subject and what you surround them with conveys both information and an aesthetic sense.

You also know that lighting is a powerful tool. Much more than a technical need, lighting can convey emotional intentions. It can also serve as a character in the scene and truly express tone.

And of course... the subject is king. What you put in front of the lens has as much to do with a successful image as any of the photographic stuff. You need to choose subject and location wisely. Enhancing both with art direction and performance coaching helps as well. Other details like wardrobe, makeup, and color design matter—whether the image is moving or not!

## Movement as transformation

The first point where a departure becomes clear is when you add movement. This can be a moving subject, background movement, a moving camera, or all of the above. While a photo can capture movement and have a clear sense of direction and action, it's not the same.



▲ The camera is attached to a jib arm to give it fluid movement. The Director of Photography can literally “float” the camera through the scene.



### WATCH OUR CAMERAWORK

You'll find a folder of clips on the DVD-ROM named Through the Lens. Copy these clips to your local hard drive. When you see the clip icon placed over the images in the book, this means you can see the actual footage shot in a particular scene. Also check out the documentary and music video on the DVD-ROM to see more of the camerawork.





▲ Choosing video over still photography to record a live musical performance offers new challenges and rewards.

With movement comes new opportunities, but also new rules and best practices. While you may have considerable skills as a still photographer, sequential imaging requires you to expand your skills. You now have more than just a single moment in time and space to consider.

## Sequential challenges

Very often the beauty of photography is that ability to tell a story, evoke an emotion in a concise, powerful, single image. The economy of that process is attractive. There is no baggage or excess. It often allows you to exert more control and expend more resources to get the framing just right, the lighting just perfect.

As you move to videography, you can break free of the limitations of a single image. Everything can change within a shot or across a series of shots. Subjects move through a space. With changes in lighting you can signify the passage of time. You can also see changes in the internal and external characteristics of your subject, which can show an emotional journey.

Of course less constraint also means more work. You are now bound to contend with even more variables.

Some will choose to approach a scene strategically, using multiple shots to convey a sequence. Others may need to capture events as they happen in real time (sometimes using multiple cameras).

## Putting it all together

With video, you have a choice to make. Does the action for a scene happen in a single shot, or as a series of shots? The most common approach is to sequence multiple shots together to form a scene. Because a scene can run for several minutes at a time, you'll need to find pacing and rhythm that maintain the viewer's interest.

You'll likely work with a series of shots. These will typically vary in length and content. Shots are now extended to incorporate movement and depict a progression of change. A photo layout is a faint imitation of a motion picture sequence of images.

Your images must be in concert with one another to seamlessly edit together. This means that angles need to intercut well and that repeated action or coverage must be coherent. As you edit from shot to shot, the transitions must feel both natural and motivated.



# The Language of Cinema

If you've ever stuck around to watch the credits of a movie, you've probably seen a myriad of bizarre titles (just what exactly does the Best Boy do?). The language of film and video is steeped in history and tradition, and you'll quickly discover that movies have their own terminology.

This special language is not meant to exclude newcomers. Rather it serves two major purposes. First, it helps to define the relationship shots have to one another. This is important, as you need to know how shots fit together within a scene or in the bigger story. Secondly, the language helps precisely communicate important decisions with regards to camera

placement and camera movement. You need to be able to clearly identify and communicate options regarding lens choice, distance from subject, distance from the ground, and more.



## **DON'T JUST ZOOM**

It's important to remember to move the actual camera from time to time. If you merely zoom from a wide shot to a tight shot, the resulting edit will feel abrupt (which is often called a jump cut). For the smoothest editing, be sure to physically move the camera when changing composition.

▼ The fusion of still photography and video has led to an evolution in technology. To properly communicate with crew members, you must learn to speak the same language.

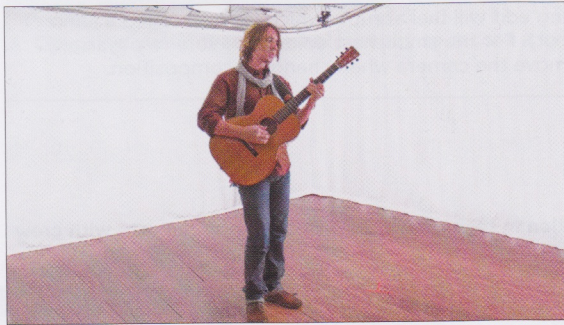




## Shot Types

When shooting a scene, you'll typically favor getting multiple shots. This process is referred to as getting coverage. Just as a single photo can say so much, combining multiple angles together can tell the story better (letting you show interesting details or emotions). This process is important because it allows

for more flexibility in editing. You can choose to condense action, cover mistakes, or even direct the viewer's attention with a variety of shot types. These shots have a language of their own. Knowing the most common shot types lets crew members talk to each other.



**Wide Shot (WS):** A wide shot (also called an establishing shot) is useful to show the entire subject. With a person, this usually means seeing from the top of their heads to the bottom of their feet.

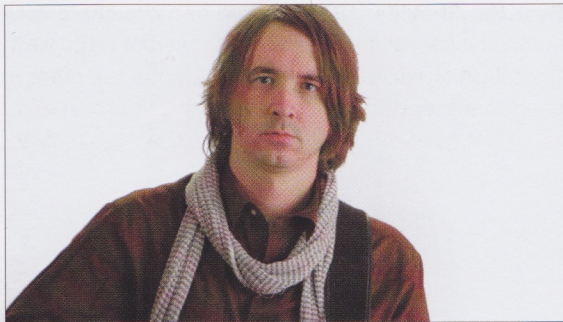


**Medium Wide Shot (MWS):** This type of shot is usually used with a standing subject. The lower frame generally cuts the subject off at the hips or just above their knees.

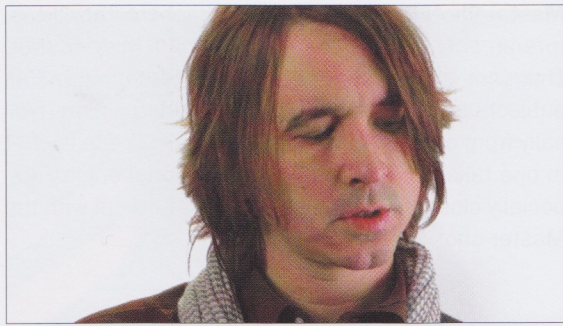


**Medium Shot (MS):** A medium shot typically frames the subject from the waist up. With this type of shot, the subject and the location are given equal weight. There is typically enough room in the shot to see hand gestures and arm movement. If multiple subjects are in the frame, then it can be classified as a two-shot or three-shot.





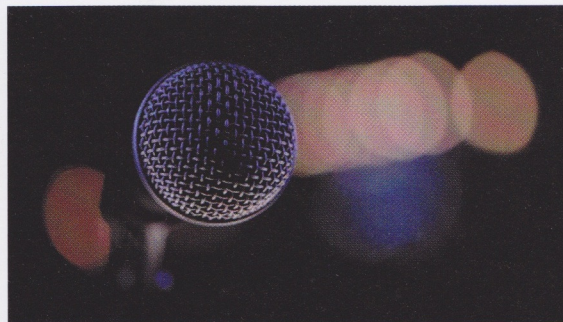
**Medium Close-Up (MCU):** In this composition, the bottom of the frame passes through the midpoint of the chest. You can still see the setting, but the shot is more intimate. This shot is also called a bust shot, as it matches the composition of classic bust sculptures from the art world.



**Close-Up (CU):** You'll use close-up shots to capture things like facial expressions. A close-up can also be used for things like a subject's hands or interaction with an object in the scene. The goal is to isolate the subject and minimize (or even remove) the background.



**Extreme Close-Up (XCU):** An extreme close-up is generally reserved for dramatic action. It can be a tight shot of your subject's eyes or lips, for example, to add emphasis. You can of course use the same designation of CU or XCU for an inanimate object, such as a key going into a lock or a doorknob turning.



**Point of View (POV):** In this shot type, you are trying to let the audience see a scene through the character's eyes. The goal is to position the camera at eye level and match framing as to what the character would see. These shots are powerful, but should be used sparingly as they can be cliché.



## Shot Types

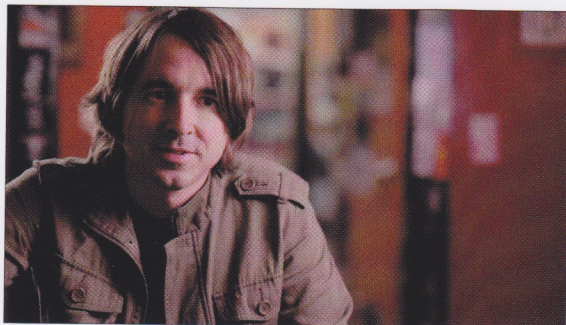


**Over the Shoulder (OTS):** If two or more characters are in a scene, a shot can be composed to show both. Typically one character is the focus while the other is used to frame the shot.

**Master Shot:** For many cinematographers, they'll capture an entire scene by first shooting a master shot. This shot is wide enough to see the location and all subjects and is shot for all dialogue and action (typically from a locked position). The entire scene is shot in one take from this position. Additional angles (especially close-ups) are then shot and intercut with the Master shot during editing.

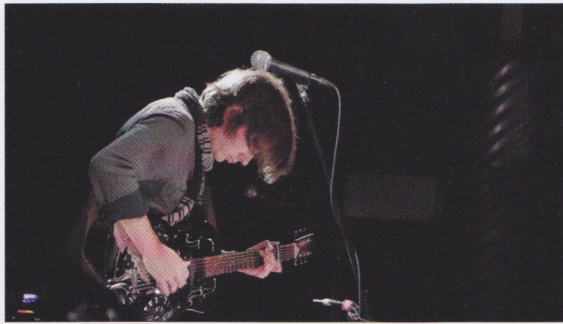
## Shot Angles

Besides composition, you may choose to adjust the angle of the shot for narrative purposes. The direction the camera is pointing as well as the camera's height can change how the viewer sees the scene.

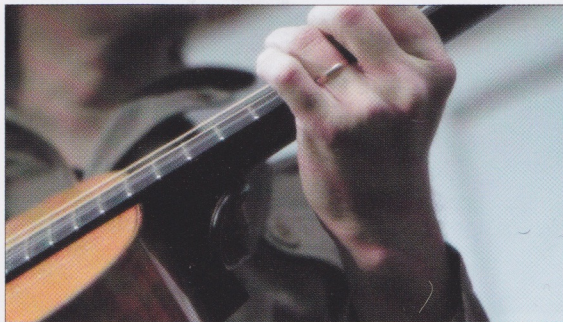


**Eye Level:** For most documentary or "factual" coverage, eye-level recording is seen as standard. This is how most people see the world, and it is the most comfortable angle for viewers to watch from.

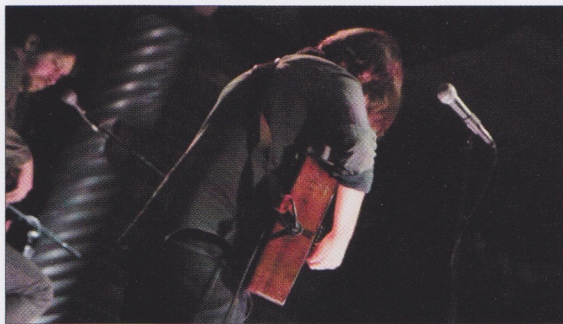




**High Angle or Overhead:** If you place the camera above the subject, it will have to look down on the action. This often creates a sense that the audience is more powerful than the subject and can lead to a sense of detachment.



**Low Angle:** A low angle shot places the camera below the subject. This can make the subject look more important or add more drama to a scene.



**Dutch Angle:** Sometimes the camera is canted at an angle. Typically this is between 25 and 45 degrees (enough that it seems intentional, but not so much that it's dizzying). This effect causes horizontal lines to be seen at an angle. Dutch angles are meant to convey tension or psychological uneasiness. Some styles of production (such as music videos) use them often, while documentary and instructional videos use them much less frequently.

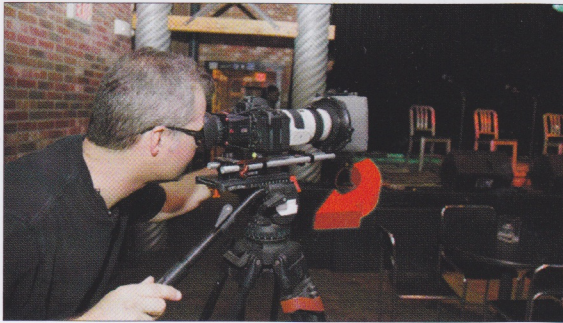
## Movement Types

Once you have the shots defined in relation to each other you need to think of movement within a shot. Both the camera and your subject can go virtually anywhere (just keep safety in mind).

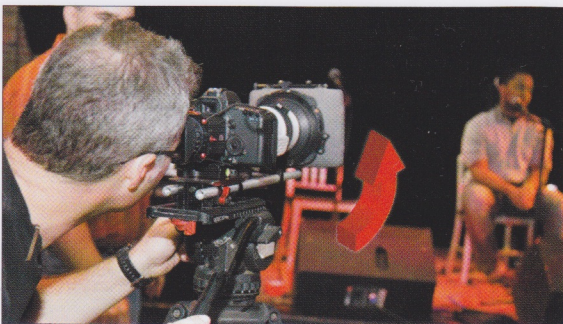
You can choose to record camera motion with constant speed or vary the speed of movement to your

liking. There are variations in the quality of the movement, and the length of the movement, as well as its motivation. Be sure to use these descriptive terms and their associated techniques in telling the story. We'll explore the hardware behind these moves in Chapters 11 and 12.





**Pan:** A pan is a horizontal camera movement in which the camera turns from left to right (or vice versa) along a central axis. Typically, pans are executed by attaching a camera to a fluid head tripod (more on this in Chapter 11), but they can also be executed by turning at the waist. The point of a pan is to show more of an area or to follow a subject without moving the camera from its current position.



**Tilt:** A tilt is similar to a pan in that the camera revolves around a stationary axis. The motion differs though, as it is a vertical movement. The camera moves from looking up to pointing down (or vice versa).



**Truck:** A truck shot generally refers to side-to-side camera movement caused by actually moving the physical camera. This type of movement is also called tracking or crabbing. To create smoother motion the camera is often mounted to special devices like a dolly or camera-stabilizing device.

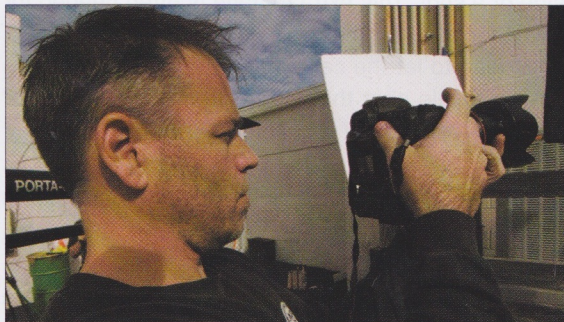


**Dolly:** A dolly is both a device and a movement type. The camera is mounted on a wheeled cart or platform. It then can move in and out (essentially closer or further) to the subject. The use of a dolly can create a very dramatic shot that engages the viewer. The use of a dolly generally requires an operator (called a dolly grip) to physically push the cart and control the speed of movement.

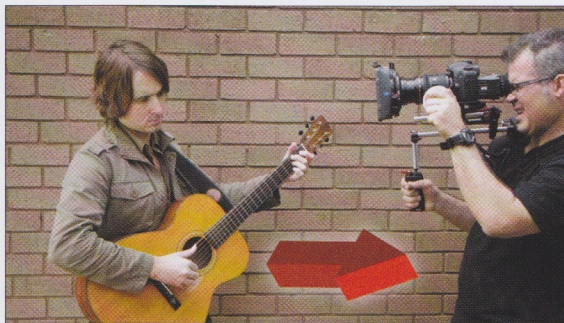




**Pedestal (Boom):** A pedestal move describes moving a camera up and down in physical space. It is different from a tilt in that the camera's physical axis is changing. Pedestal moves typically require advanced camera support like a boom or crane to lift the camera. Pedestal shots are often combined with other moves like pans and tilts to add drama to a shot.



**Zoom:** A zoom is typically executed by adjusting the lens attached to a camera. With most lenses, many feel that the zoom shouldn't be used while recording. Instead it's meant to offer flexibility in changing the focal length of the lens without having to swap lenses. Recording the zoom movement can be difficult to get right and usually comes off as a visual cliché. Be sure to rehearse zooms and get a smooth movement.



**Follow:** The goal when following is to keep a constant distance between camera and subject. These shots are useful as transitions to move the subject from one scene to the next. The most practical option is to use a Steadicam (or equivalent) rig to smoothly walk the camera next to the subject. These hardware devices help you balance a camera by attaching it to your body on a rig that is counterbalanced with weights. You can also hold the camera or use a shoulder rig.



### SMOOTH PANNING

To create the smoothest pan, be sure to rehearse the movement a few times. You will likely find a need to move or stretch your body to create the motion. For smoothest motion start with your body extended, then settle into a natural position at the completion of the move. You can also hide the start or end of a pan with editing, just be sure to extend your pan longer.



### VIDEO #2: MOVEMENT TYPES

In this video, you'll learn about common camera movement types and will view footage illustrating different styles of shooting,