

## Suspense Editing

“There is not terror of the bang, but in the anticipation of it” - Alfred Hitchcock

“When you tell a story in cinema, we should resort to dialogue only when it is impossible to do otherwise.” - Alfred Hitchcock

### **Alfred Hitchcock: The Difference Between Mystery & Suspense**

mystery - intellectual process

suspense - an emotion process - give the audience information

### **Tips for Creating Suspense (Summary)**

- develop empathy for the protagonist, make them likeable: the audience will identify with the character more if he or she is threatened
- imply or show the threat to the audience, but have the protagonist oblivious to the threat
- shoot close for emotion, shoot closer as the mood intensifies, therefore, as the mood intensifies, cut to closer shots as the scene progresses
- employ the “Shot - POV - Reaction Shot” sequence frequently: do it many times - you can always take it out in your editing if it doesn’t work
- the effect of the sequence is more powerful than the acting itself
- when shooting MCU or closer - capture the eyes!
- acting should err towards the subtle as opposed to the exaggerated
- when an actor is acting reaction shot for the first time, it may feel like the shot is happening forever, but really, it will end up being a short amount of time on the screen
- use montage if a physical struggle ensues

### **Shot - Countershot (POV) - Reaction Shot - This is the money sequence!**

The shot-countershot-reaction editing technique is a form of point of view shooting. In simplest form, it consists of a series of three shots:

- First we see a person looking;
- Then we see what the person is seeing (this is a pov shot);
- finally we see the person reacting to what he or she has seen.  
<http://faculty.cua.edu/johnsong/hitchcock/pages/editing.html>
- The effect of this sequence will be more powerful than the acting itself.

### **Control the release of information**

Avoid showing the scary thing, especially in the beginning of the scene. It will make the tension rise dramatically, but only temporarily, so if you present it too early, you've lost your momentum. It is OK to show it just barely visibly to get the audience's attention. - wikihow

Have the scary thing visible, but not easy to see. It will make the viewer's minds think. Example: The Strangers. The girl is in the kitchen looking around, and in the background, you see the stranger walk into the entryway building suspense of what he will do next.

Or, show the audience the threat. There's a bomb underneath the dining table which is set to go off during dinner. The guests arrive and sit at the table.

### **Music and sound**

- the audience has no control over this
- if you are witnessing a scary moment in a movie, try covering your ears and not your eyes
  - a carefully interjected loud sound at the right moment can
- music, like a long sustained note, can augment a shot and sustain it on the screen longer than when it is not used

### **Be careful with your acting**

It is too easy to become overly dramatic. The closer you get with the camera composition, the more you need to concentrate on the subtleties.

Remember the power of editing: Shot - Countershot - Reaction can augment the acting that is not overly expressive.

### **Use Montage For Impact**

Use montage if a physical struggle ensues.

A western fight has no impact because it is shot with one wide angle shot

Break up your shots: Use many close ups

Compress time to intensify the effect of the struggle.