

THE SEQUENCE

IMPORTANCE

A sequence is a major building block of the screenplay, allowing Cinematic Expression in a limitless manner, all tied together by the Dramatic Storyline.

FUNCTION

Key sequences hold the entire story together, allowing for rest periods between them where we (the audience) can breathe and learn more about the characters.

Then we're back in it (The Paradigm). It all comes down to a golden axiom for films - Action and Character, joined together, sharpen the focus of the film. The success of a sequence is defined by its ability to sharply focus narrative in a meaningful way for the audience.

THE SCENE EVOLVED

A sequence is a series (a unit/block) of scenes connected and unified by a singular idea with a definitive beginning, middle and end.

THE CONTEXT (THE WHY)

A singular idea usually expressed in a word or two:

A wedding, a funeral, a chase, a race, an election, a reunion, an arrival, a departure, a coronation, a bank holdup, a battle, a revelation, a flashback.

By first establishing the context, there exists the meaning behind the building of the Content.

THE CONTENT (THE HOW)

The specific details or ingredients needed to create the sequence.

When held together by Dramatic Purpose, the details layer meaning and tension upon each other, allowing for cinematic exhilaration and/or revelation.

WHAT FOLLOWS

What follows your scene and even the very beats in your scene are ALWAYS make or break for your film.

Plot happens either by chance or because of **consequences**.

The former is arbitrary whereas the latter builds on what came before it, enriching the story with consequence.

Always remember that plot contrivance (things happening just because they need to, irrespective of purpose of consistency) are FATAL for a film.

"And then"

Johnny ran to catch the bus. He was late for class and worried his professor would be angry. Then a clown car hurtled across the street and ran him over. (Chance = ineffective)

"But, Because, Therefore"

Johnny ran to catch the bus. Thinking only of his professor's anger when he arrived late to class, he didn't see the clown car hurtling at him until it was too late. (Consequences = effective)

CINEMATIC IN NATURE

They can often define the rhythm and feeling of the overall narrative with ebbs and flows, allowing for the film to play out as a unified story rather than the fits and starts of a series of unconnected scenes plagued by staccato.

Design and Choreograph them from the beginning, through the middle, and onto the end with dramatic purpose. The narrative line woven can even illuminate character, with a character achieving or failing to achieve the singular Context of the sequence, allowing for shades of the character (their strengths and flaws) to play out in a key sequence.

Films can often be thought of in terms of key sequences, especially if they're genre-focused (action and adventure) or built like thrillers.

They can allow for great expressions of Character and Dramatic Irony to play out, especially when expectations are subverted - when unexpected things play upon and affect the central core of the action.

The key to any action film lies in writing the action sequence. The electricity of the key sequences drive these films, especially when joined with meaningful character work that elevates the stakes above the function of plot and drama.