



A GUIDE TO INDIE FILMMAKING

TOOLS TO CREATE COMPELLING STORIES

BECOMING A FILMMAKER

FIRST 5 STEPS:

1. Don't just watch films - study them
2. Start to understand film and production
3. Begin to write down and execute your ideas
4. Work on a production crew
5. Start short - shoot a short

**NEW YORK
FILM
ACADEMY**

BONUS: CONSIDER GOING TO FILM SCHOOL

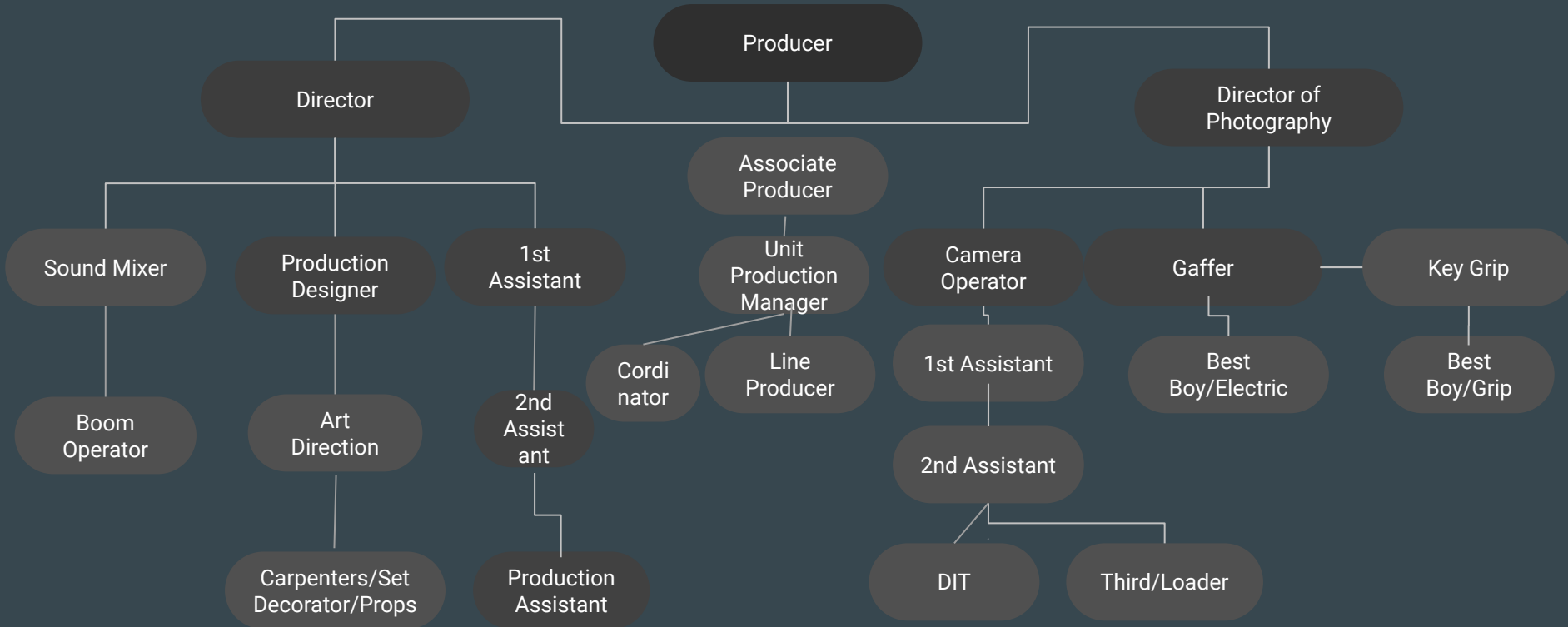
WHAT A FILMMAKER MUST KNOW

1. Screenwriting
2. Acting: Directing Actors
3. Cameras and Lenses
4. Lighting
5. Movement
6. Editing
7. Sound Design/ Scoring

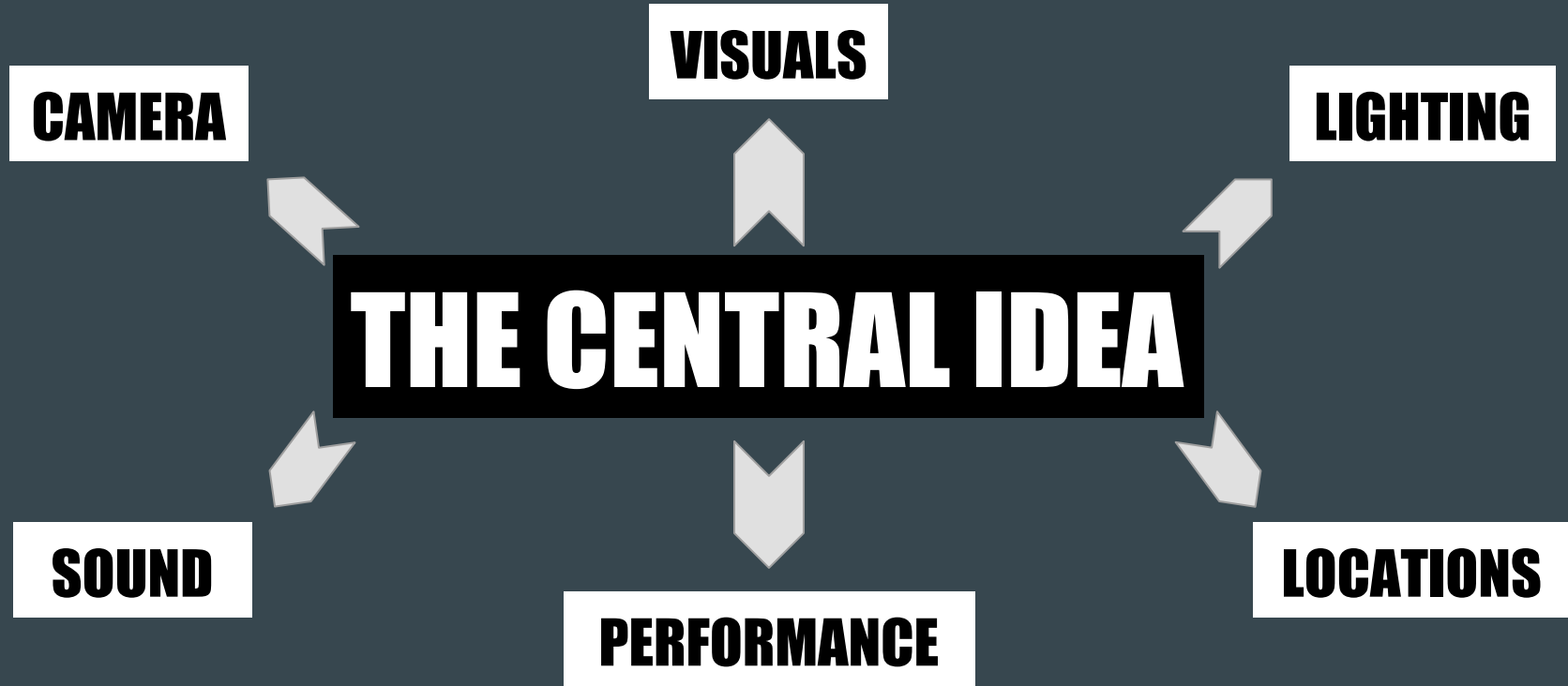


**FILMMAKING IS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND
COLLABORATIVE ART FORM**

BASIC SET HIERARCHY



WHERE TO BEGIN: ~~THE~~ A CREATIVE PROCESS



UNDERSTANDING STORY: QUESTIONS TO ASK

IS THE STORY VISUAL?

Film is a visual medium. Great films show they do not tell. If you pretend the characters can not speak and write a silent movie you will be on your way to writing great drama.

IS THERE DRAMA?

Drama is anticipation mixed with uncertainty. Drama is the quest of the hero to overcome those things that prevent him/her from achieving a specific goal. Drama needs tension. Your story must be about someone with something to lose - without stakes the audience has no reason to care.

WHAT IS THE CONFLICT?

Conflict is any obstacle that prevents the hero from achieving their goal. Without conflict you have no character, without character you have no action, without action you have no story, without story you have no screenplay.

3 ACT STRUCTURE:



THREE **ACT** STORY STRUCTURE

KNICK KNACK



STORY STRUCTURE:

BEGINNING - ACT 1 OR THE "SET-UP"

- Introduce the characters in the scene and each one's needs.
- Establish the setting: location and time
- Establish the tone
- Introduce the **CONFLICT**, the dramatic premise or what the scene is about.

1ST ACT TURNING/PLOT POINT

(Plot point is an incident that takes the scene in another, unforeseen direction).

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND:



BEGINNING

STORY STRUCTURE:

RISING ACTION - A CONTINUATION OF THE ACT ONE SET UP

- Happens Before Act 2
- Introduces and establishes relationships and objectives
- Helps audience care/empathize with protagonist.

RISING ACTION

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND:



RISEING ACTION

STORY STRUCTURE:

MIDDLE - ACT 2 OR THE “CONFRONTATION”

- All about dramatic need (what your character wants to get, win, gain or achieve).
- Introduce further complications (obstacles)
- Raise the stakes.

2ND ACT PLOT POINT (EXTREME CRISIS OR DARKEST HOUR BEFORE DAWN).

TYPES OF CONFLICT:

- Inner (Intra-Personal): Ego conflict.
- Relational (Inter-Personal): Conflicts with others, usually just one person: Protagonist versus Antagonist.
- Social (Extra-Personal): Conflicts with society. Individual against the system, bureaucracy, gangs, agencies, families, corporations, etc.
- Situational (Extra-Personal): life and death situations, disaster films *Armageddon*
- Cosmic: Conflicts with the Universe, God and Nature.

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND:



MIDDLE

STORY STRUCTURE:

END - ACT 3 OR THE “RESOLUTION”

- Protagonist makes decision to solve the ultimate crisis
- Main Fulcrum the point upon which all is balanced.
- Resolution how the crisis is solved or not solved.

DOES YOUR CHARACTER SUCCEED OR FAIL?

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND:



END

SIMPLE SHOOTING: WHAT YOU'LL NEED

BASIC GEAR:

1. Camera
2. Tripod
3. Lights
4. Sound Recorder
5. Editing Software

BASIC CREW:

1. Producer/Writer
2. Director
3. DP
4. Sound Recorder
5. Actor(s)/Subject



LET'S SHOOT

The basic building block of every scene is the shot. Shots are how we take the written word and break it down into cinematic units.

Every scene is comprised of a multitude of shots.

Shot Considerations

1. Shot Size
2. Camera Angle
3. Camera Height
4. Camera Movement
5. Blocking Actors
6. Lighting and Lenses

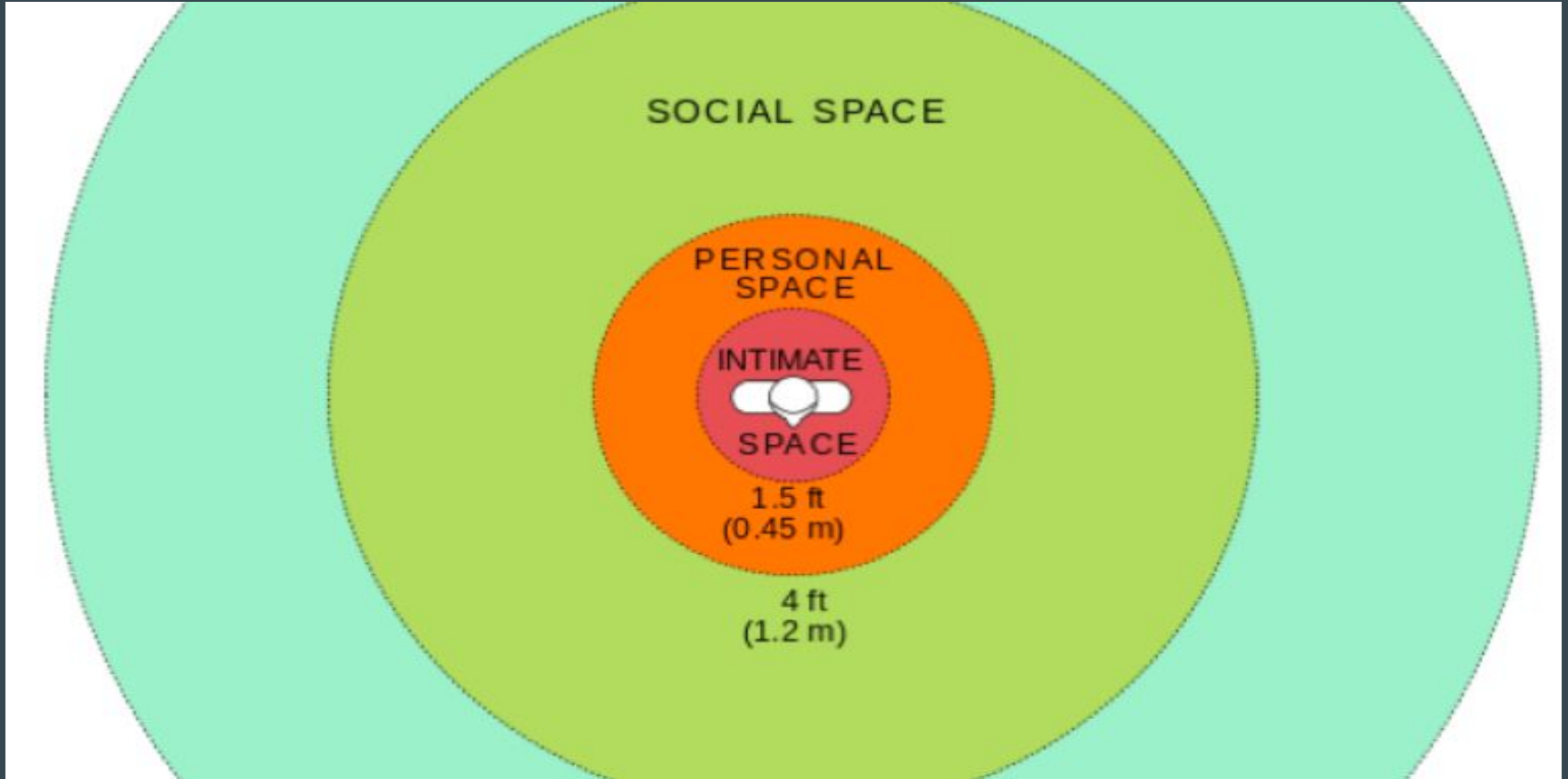


PROXEMICS

Proxemics is the interrelated observations and theories of a person's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture.

IT IS USED IN EVERY SHOT OF A FILM

PROXEMICS



SHOT SIZES:

- Extreme Wide Shot (EWS)
- Wide/Full Shot (WS/FS)
- Medium Shot (MS)
- Medium Close Up (MCU)
- Close Up (CU)
- Extreme Close-Up (ECU)



EXTREME WIDE SHOT (EWS):



EXTREME WIDE SHOT (EWS):

- An Establishing Shot
- Provides a panorama of all the elements of the scene
- Establishes the relationship between parts and the whole
- Creates impact through the use of wide open spaces/frames

REMOTE DISTANCE



WIDE OR FULL SHOT (WS/FS):



WIDE OR FULL SHOT (WS/FS):

- Also an establishing shot
- Full length figure or more
- As an image it reads as: Landscape with figure, showing the figure in relation to the environment.

PUBLIC DISTANCE



MEDIUM SHOT (MS):



MEDIUM SHOT (MS):

- Cut the figure off at the midsection.
- At this distance we read the body language of the character fully. How does the character hold him/herself, and what are their overt attitudes
- Traditionally, headroom is allowed the subject

SOCIAL DISTANCE



MEDIUM CLOSE UP (MCU):



MEDIUM CLOSE UP (MCU):

- A slightly stronger impact of facial expression, seeing enough to appreciate feeling and thought in the face
- One of the most frequently used shots in TV
- It consists of head and shoulders, usually cut off at the chest or waist

PERSONAL DISTANCE

CLOSE UP (CU):



CLOSE UP (MCU):

- A descriptive shot with extreme impact
- Head and shoulders only
- The most effect shot for detail in facial expression, excluding much of the body language of the torso and arms
- This shot should be used sparingly
- Effective for a moment of decision or reaction



INTIMATE DISTANCE

EXTREME CLOSE UP (ECU):



EXTREME CLOSE UP (ECU):

- The tightest shot possible for your subject
- Usually focuses on the eyes or mouth
- Used for emphasis on minute detail



INTIMATE DISTANCE

SINGLE (CLEAN)



SINGLE (DIRTY)



TWO SHOT



GROUP SHOT (3 OR MORE)



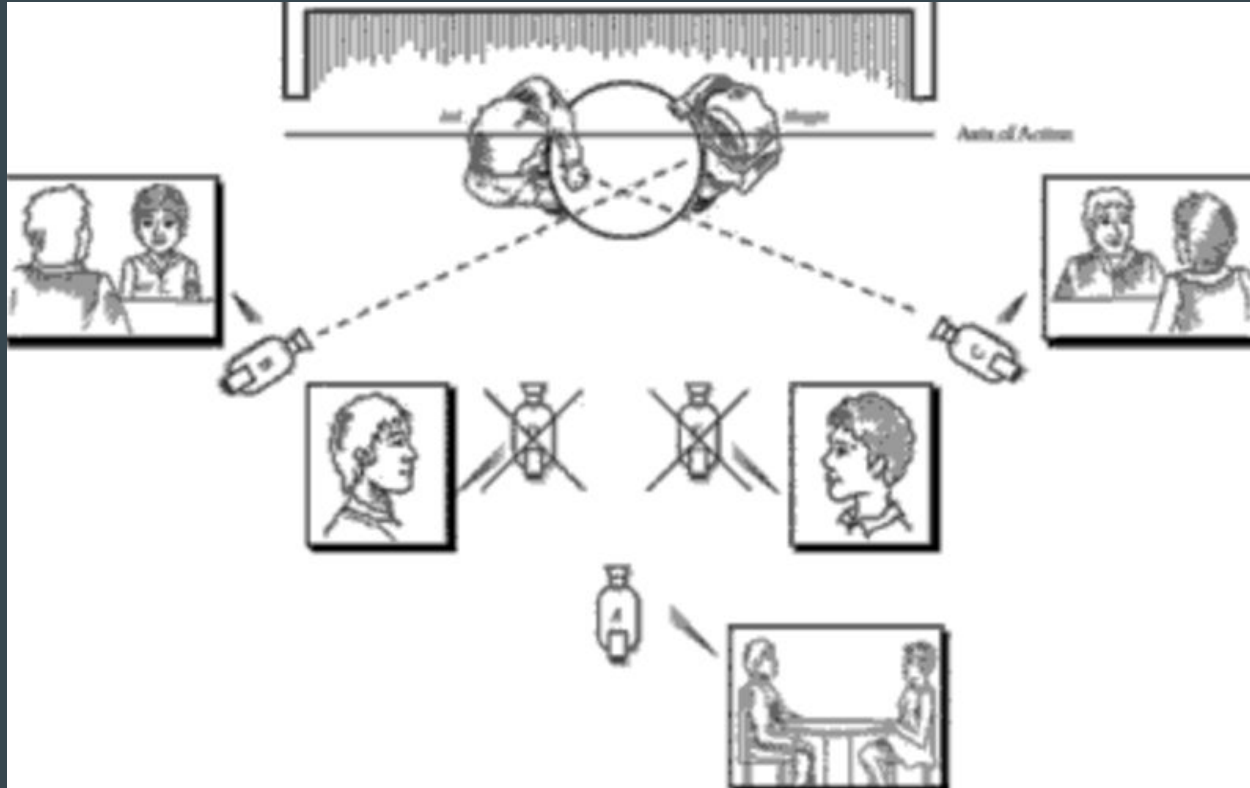
OVER THE SHOULDER (OTS)



OTS (REVERSE MATCHING- SAME LENS SAME FRAME)



SHOT REVERSE SHOT SET UP/ 180 DEGREE RULE



EYE LINE

- Eye-line is a measure of our empathy with a character. The more frontal the camera angle, the greater sense of subjective involvement.
- When the eye-line is very close to the camera, tension is at its maximum
- It is a common practice as a scene builds in dramatic tension to use eye-lines closer to the camera (building the tension)

90 DEGREE/ COMPLETE PROFILE

IF THE AUDIENCE CAN ONLY SEE ONE EYE THE SHOT BECOMES MUCH MORE IMPERSONAL. THE CAMERA FEELS LIKE AN ONLOOKER AND WE MAY OR MAY NOT FEEL EMPATHY, BUT WE ARE LIKELY TO FEEL A DEGREE OF OBJECTIVITY, A DISTANCE.



3/4 VIEW

EYE-LINE IS WIDER, THE IMPRESSION OF EMPATHY IS NOT SO STRONG BUT WE STILL SEE THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS AND, DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT, WILL IDENTIFY WITH THE SUBJECT.



FRONT VIEW

EYE-LINE IS NARROW TO THE LENS. IN A CLOSE UP THIS IS COMMONLY THE IMAGE THAT THE DIRECTOR USES FOR THE FULL IMPACT OF PERSONALITY. OUR SENSE OF EMPATHY OF THE CHARACTER IS STRONG.



HEIGHT OF THE CAMERA

- The Height of the Camera in relation to the subject also changes the way the audience feels towards your character while also giving information about how the character feels about themselves in the scene
- Unless you are trying to make a specific point you want to place the camera at eye level

EYE LEVEL

CAMERA IS PLACED AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SUBJECT'S EYE



LOW ANGLE

CAMERA IS PLACED BELOW THE HEIGHT OF THE SUBJECT'S EYES



HIGH ANGLE

CAMERA IS PLACED ABOVE SUBJECT'S EYES



EMPATHY FOR OUR CHARACTERS

The three main ways we as directors create empathy for a character are:

1. Screen time or how many shots in which we feature a character
2. Shot Size, how close we feel towards the character (proxemics theory)
3. Angle of the shot in relation to the character's eye-line

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN



MY FILM



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