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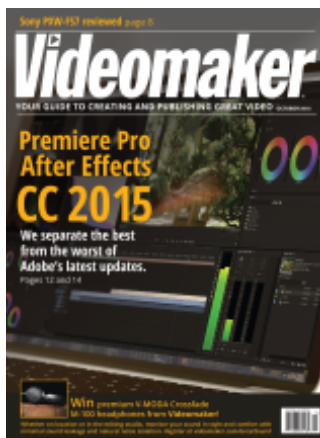
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Why Story is the Most Important Aspect of Video



Storytelling has been around since humans were able to communicate with each other. What evolves are the

mediums in which we tell these stories. It's easy to get caught up in the flashy toys, the lights, cameras, the action. It's easy to get wrapped up in the lifestyle or the attention that being a creator entails. But, at the core of most great pieces of art or entertainment is a really good story.

The legendary filmmaker James Cameron, during a TED talk, admitted that he chose a story involving the Titanic partially as an excuse to use his love for deep sea diving and explore the wreckage of the Titanic itself! But, he also did this under the umbrella of one of the greatest love stories of all time. Numerous times, Cameron admitted that he pitched "Titanic" as "Romeo and Juliet on a boat." You see, at the time it was made, Titanic was one of the biggest feats in cinema history and included never before used CGI. He also went tremendously over budget. The success of "Titanic" can't be pinpointed to one specific thing, but a large part of it must be contributed to the retelling of one of the most successful love stories of all time, originally written by William Shakespeare.

Another classic story is "The Dick Van Dyke" show, originally aired from 1961-1966. The show's creator and writer, Carl Reiner, wanted the show to be timeless. In Dick Van Dyke's memoir, "My Lucky Life In and Out of Showbusiness," Reiner described how he made it a rule for himself and other writers to not include any political references or slang at the time. He wanted it to be about the story — the working family man. Without the allure of making it trendy, it was able to stand the test of time and still resonates with viewers generations later — including a major syndication on Nick-at-Night in the 90s, 30 years after its original airdate.

Remember, stories are ever present; it's the medium in which these stories are told that changes. With music, melodies and instrumentation draw people in, but hidden inside of a lot of popular songs are great stories. One that comes to mind is the song "Little Talks" by Of Monsters and Men. At first listen, it sounds like a cliché happy tune, but if you listen to the lyrics, you slowly start to realize this song is about a widow speaking to her deceased husband and getting over that pain.

Evolving Media

This art of storytelling is not just limited to the film and video world. This is the essence of all art. The thing with film and video is that it is a fairly new medium with the invention of the film camera being only 125 years old. In fact, around 100 years ago, the Warner Brothers, who at the time owned theaters and were making majority of their profits playing other peoples movies, began setting out to create films that had sound synced to the picture. There was hesitation because the general consensus at the time was that people do not want to hear people talking during these movies. The piano player playing in the theater was enough. Eventually, although it was a slow transition, the films began having dialogue, and the audience responded well. These early sound films illustrate how technology pushes the medium.

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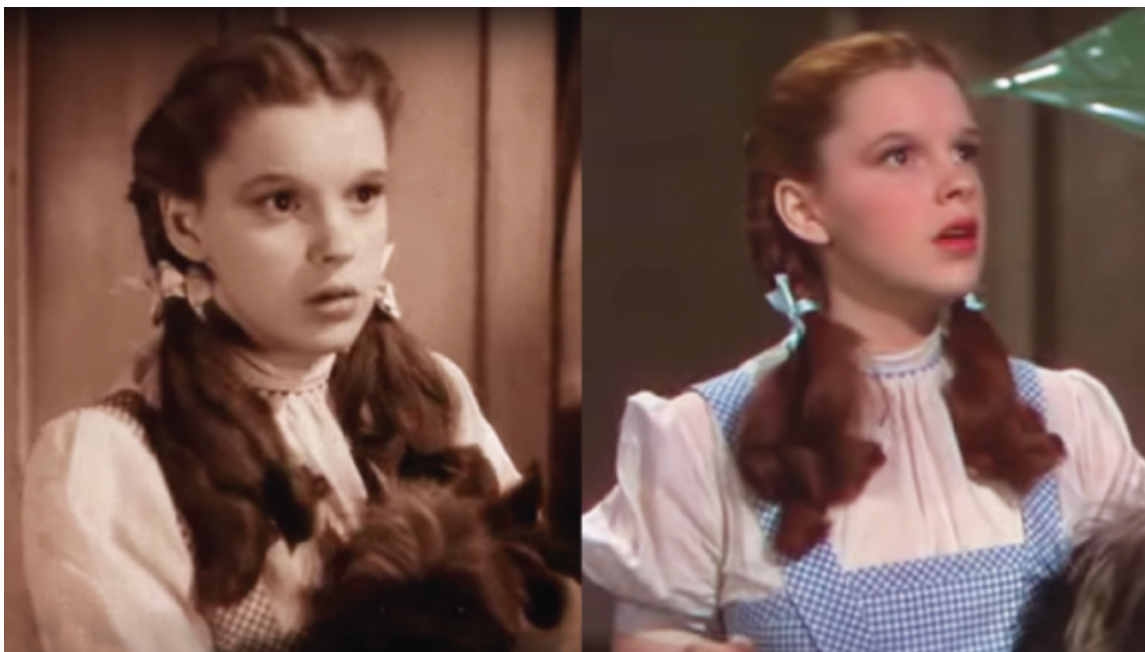
With new technology comes the ability to tell stories that were not able to be told before. A 1929 article written by Rene Clair entitled "The Art of Sound" gives us insight to fears her generation had with the new "talking films" also known as "talkies."

Although the talkies are still in their first, experimental stage, they have already, surprisingly enough, produced stereotyped patterns. We have barely "heard" about two dozen of these films, and yet we already feel that the sound effects are hackneyed and that it is high time to find new ones...

We must draw a distinction here between those sound effects which are amusing only by virtue of their novelty (which soon wears off), and those that help one to understand the action, and which excite emotions which could not have been roused by the sight of the pictures alone.

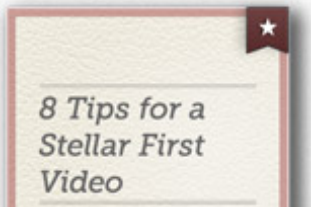
The medium tends to be most effective when used with a purpose. The same with color. "The Wizard of Oz" starts off in black and white. As soon as Dorothy gets swept away into the World of Oz, (Spoiler Alert) we switch to color. The use of black and white changing to color, emphasizes the fact that we are in a whole new world.

The technology was used to enhance the story.



New Possibilities

In the mid 80s, and early 90s, Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) seemed to crack the code with visual effects. In the documentary “ILM: Creating The Impossible” former President of ILM Jim Morris explains how stories that “needed” the technology, were finally able to be available after ILM successfully did the work on James Cameron’s “The Abyss.” The next major project was Cameron’s “Terminator 2: Judgment Day”. This wave included the amazing work on Spielberg’s “Jurassic Park”. At first, “Jurassic Park” was set to use stop motion for the dinosaurs, but ILM proved this could be done with CG. This wave of evolutionary CGI continued on through “Forest Gump”.



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Morris described how “Jurassic Park” was in your face, grand effects, while “Forrest Gump,” directed by Robert Zemeckis, had a lot of invisible effects, such as changing what lips were saying or adding sky replacement. The story called for it, and the artist and technical masterminds found a way to get it done. These effects helped drive the story.

Effects aren’t Everything

In an interview with the Director’s Guild, Zemeckis, who also directed “Back to the Future,” remarks, “There are 30 effects shots in ‘Back to the Future’, and most of them are lightning. But it’s a science fiction story, so everyone thinks it’s filled with special effects.” He credits the success to the movie having the bare bones of a

good story rather than spectacular visual effects. “Bob [Gale] and I knew our screenplay was really, really good, even though everybody rejected it, numerous times. It was just so tight, the kind of thing that I love. Everything is set up, everything is paid off. There’s only one scene you could argue isn’t propelling either plot or character, which is when the movie stops for Michael to play ‘Johnny B. Goode.’ But every line of dialogue, every beat, every cut, every shot is doing what movies are supposed to do, which is propelling the plot or establishing character. There’s not a single extraneous frame.”



The beautiful thing about stories, is, once again, they transcend the medium. Everything seems to better through the prism of a story. Take for instance a wedding video. Editing can propel the events. A groom getting ready for his big day, intercut with a bride. The general story can be how the two different parties prepare. We can match cut. Close-up of the grooms hands standing at the altar. Cut to the brides hands as she gets ready. All of these, albeit sort of abstract, still tell a story.



Or, how about a storyline on the bride and groom being nervous before the wedding with how relieved and happy they are at the ceremony, creating an arc of tension and joyful nerves and ending with relaxation and fun at the party. Everything can be told in story form and we receive it better!

A Science to Story

This is not just an abstract theory. The affective power of story has been proven scientifically as well! Professor Paul J. Zak describes this.

“Oxytocin is a neurochemical produced when we are trusted or shown a kindness, and it motivates cooperation with others....we tested if narratives shot on video, rather than face-to-face interactions, would cause the brain to make oxytocin. By taking blood draws before and after the narrative, we found that character-driven stories do consistently cause oxytocin synthesis. Further, the amount of oxytocin released by the brain predicted how much people were willing to help others; for example, donating money to a charity associated with the narrative.”

We're drawn to stories. We love them, literally. From a parent using the story of the grasshopper and the ant to teach their kids valuable lessons to a major motion picture studio using love, drama, and passion to draw audiences in, storytelling is key and should be at the forefront!

SIDEBAR

Stories help us understand events. Even home videos or documentaries can follow storylines. The difference is that the storylines are usually found afterward. These two mediums tend to shoot more coverage than a narrative as to not miss anything. There's usually a general idea, but for the most part, the stories constructed in the edit.

Sports can also have storylines. Players and announcers often refer to the game inside the game. This is the little story arc in a competition that goes beyond just who's winning and who's losing. It's the player who missed every shot before hitting the game winner. It's the surfer that has wiped out a million times before finally getting it. It's the underdog vs the dynasty.

A recent example is the Floyd Mayweather vs Manny Pacquiao fight. Even if you were not heavy into boxing, it was hard not to see the build up. Mayweather was built as the undefeated, very confident, all about money boxer, while Pacquiao was built as the underdog, more humble, religious opponent. It was bigger than boxing, and a lot of people rooted for the one who represented what they wanted to believe in, even if they didn't necessarily think that person would win. They tuned in. They watched. And perpetuating these storylines paid off, ending with shattering the record for the most money ever made by two boxers in a boxing match. The two were reported to split a purse of \$300 million dollars with the winner Mayweather reportedly taking home 2/3 of that!

It doesn't matter if it's an event millions are watching or tender precious family moments; we love stories. When you find these storylines, don't be afraid to play to it. It's what we respond to!

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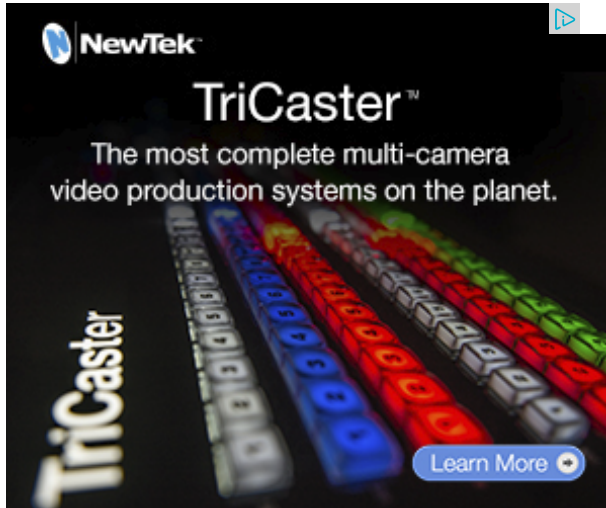
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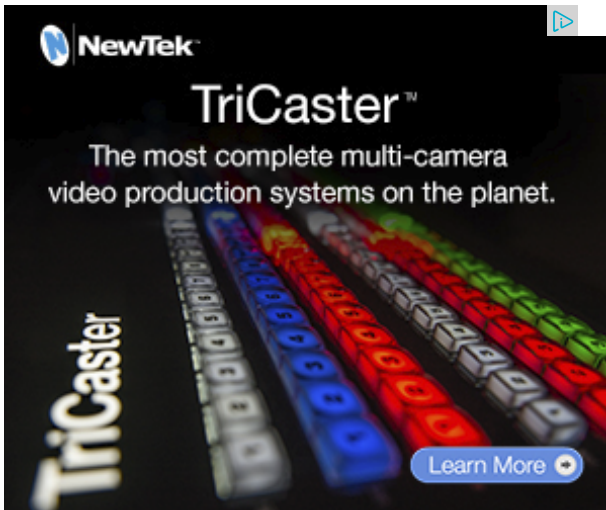
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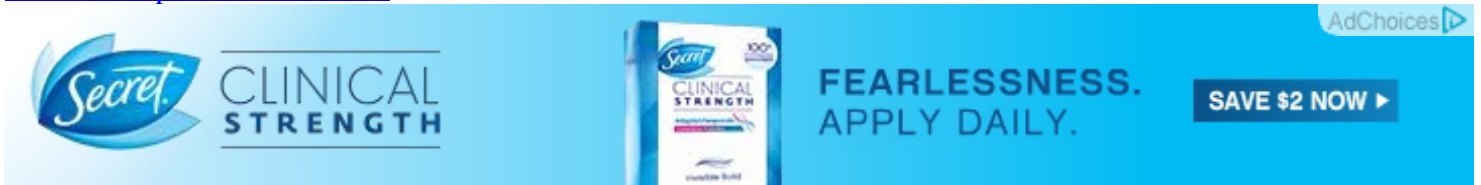


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