First Cut then Lens

Digital transformation of film production with the first cut approach.

Visual iterations of stories early in pre-production aids sharpening the narrative, precision in production design and time & cost savings of 25-30%.

NApe.di

"You are more productive by doing

fifteen minutes of visualisation than from sixteen hours of hard labor." Abraham Hicks



Directors need something to visualize what they have in their head before they can determine if they like it or not, if they think it is good or they can share to convey an exact picture of what they have in their mind.



In the past, they have relied on tools like sketches, references from other films, audio and visuals picked up from the internet, but none of them truly represent the ideas inside their own head.



Every film is created with a unique ensemble of cast and crew and most of the time they all are working together for the first time.

With little working history and evolving chemistry amongst the team, it becomes complex for the directors to create perfect synchronicity to a point where everyone fully understands each other.



Filmmaking is a linear process. A story gets converted to a screenplay which then enters pre-production where the director's imagination gets translated to assumptions for

their cast and crew.

Based on these assumptions of 'what the director may want' production begins and the cast and crew go about physically lensing the director's vision.



Only once the pieces of the lensed material come together in editorial is when the filmmakers really get to see the larger picture for the first time. They have to live with what they have got. It's not possible to go back into production.

By this time most of the cast and crew has moved on and the directors are left with a small team of co-creators to finish the job at hand. If they don't like something, heavy digital correction is the only way out.



Productions tend to shoot more than what they may actually need as there are a lot of assumptions at play. First edits of the films are notoriously long, many times over twice the length of the targeted film.

This essentially creates a lot of excess material that will not end up in the final film but costs equally the same in production. It is a waste of production resources which can be substantially reduced if all the filmmakers, cast and crew knew exactly what the director wanted.



Visual effects production on the other hand works in a completely different manner. Putting together a scene where several elements from live action and computer generated imagery have to come together cohesively is a complex task that needs granular level planning.

Visual effects heavy scene production has traditionally relied on previsualising everything before shooting.



The unique scene along with all the action, lighting, camera angles, camera lenses is created as a roughly staged digital replica so that each of the elements can be individually shot or

generated during production.

There is little waste and everything that is on the plan gets lensed and sees the light of the day in the final film.





We have come to a point that using computer and Al generation,

<u>the whole film can be</u> <u>crafted visually with</u> <u>soundtrack and dialogue</u> <u>before actually shooting it.</u>





An exact reference of everything that the director has in mind is available as a bible for every member of the cast and crew.

Production design becomes precise, production becomes efficient and the director's vision gets translated into production requirements without any assumptions.





With the first cut of everything available early in the game, directors get to prototype their ideas and test them to see if they like them and are good to go in the film.

These early audio-visuals charge their imaginations with each iteration opening up paths to better realizations of the final product.





They end up confidently shooting exactly what they need saving over 25-30 percent of production time and the cost.

Developed elements such as sound design, looks and styles, location and environmental matte paintings and several other digital assets get directly passed to postproduction to be incorporated into finals saving further cost.





Using our extensive background and knowledge of digital processes involved in computer and AI generated imagery, visual effects and soundtrack productions nApe.ai brings artificial intelligence led first cut then lens approach in the hands of all directors and filmmakers.





We have built a five step approach

with a progressive learning curve that helps directors effectively utilize AI to add show to their telling.





Step 1: Concept and Look Development

As a first step the working assets for the rest of the production are created such as...





Character development

All characters are developed at a photo level detail with visualizations from multiple angles including their principal look, behavior and action.

Elements like costumes, makeup and hair styles are detailed for each character. Should the cast be already in place, character development is done using digital generated replicas of real actors.





Scene staging

The requirements for locations and environments for staging the film are created at this stage.

Digital replicas of real locations or reference environments can be built complete with all the setting and props that acts as a reference for production designers and art directors.





Look development

Keyframes of each scene act as a reference for lighting and camera

departments providing the cinematographers a clear path to plan the technical aspects of achieving the targeted look so that it can be achieved seamlessly in grading and postproduction.





Typical deliverables for step 1 are

- Character development.

- Makeup and hair styling.

- Costume design.

Look development for each of the scenes

- Keyframes of principal action.





Step 2: Audio Development

The script / screenplay is converted to a fully composed audio prototype complete with dialogue, sound

design, foley and fx to generate the first cut of the film.

Again should the cast be already in place, dialogue development is done using digital replicas of real actor voices.





Multilingual dialogue development allows the film to be experimented and tested in markets which are traditionally not accessible.

Repeated interactions with a complete

soundtrack help the directors to refine ideas and ignite their imaginations.

The elements of sound design are studio grade allowing them to be used as assets for audio postproduction and incorporated into the final film.





Typical deliverables for step 2 are

- Sound moodboarding.

Complete first cut edit of the soundtrack with dialogue and director's notes.

- First cut of foley and fx.





Step 3: The First Cut

Photoreal digital representations of the shot breakdown complete with environments, locations, props, lighting designs and camera angles are generated and pieced together along

with the soundtrack produced in step 2.

With rapid prototyping of their ideas at hand, directors start visually playing with them, iterating with them and testing them before they decide to make them. Questions on the whats and hows of the production get answers.





Typical deliverables for step 3 are

 Complete photo narration of the film synced to the soundtrack. The First Cut.

- Guide for location scouting along with times of day planning.

- Exhaustive reference for production

design and art direction.

- Prop requirement list.

- Visual bible for lighting design and cinematography.

- Complete photo board as a storybook which can also be released as a separate coffee table book.





Step 4: The Final Pre-product

Using digital animation tools, action development is undertaken creating motion shots from the visuals developed in step 3 and are pieced

together with refined audio track to literally see the complete film before actually making it.

Title sequences, text and logo animations and all graphic elements of motion design are created.





Lip-sync dialogue is added to all characters.

Facial and full body action of the

identified actors is incorporated into the digital scenes using motion capture technology.

Audio and sfx fine tuning.





Typical deliverables for step 4 are

- Complete motion film synced to the soundtrack.

- Action reference for actors.

- Digitally generated teasers and trailers for social media, marketing and PR.

- A new digital form of the film as a finished product which has independent commercial value.





Step 5: Advanced Use Cases

The omnipresent AD chat bot. All details of the director's vision hashed out in stages 1-4 are downloaded into a chatbot who then acts as an assistant director

for the whole production.

Imagine a WhatsApp group for the production where one of the participants is the digital AD who answers each and every question with specific details pertaining to the project 24X7.





Release territories can be expanded by mastering the final film in different languages, replacing dialogue complete with lipsync in any number of languages.

Transcribing and subtitling the film in any number of languages.

Full body replacement of actors can be done for release with stars in different markets.





In conclusion

Creating a film before lensing has several advantages.

Co-creators, cast and crew know exactly what is there in the director's

head and a comprehensive bible is available for the production's ready reference at all times.

Directors prototype and deploy ideas that have impact taking the mediocrity out of the equation and pushing their boundaries of creative imagination.





The effect

It takes the guesswork out of

the creation process, helps in better budgeting and scheduling and saving 25-30% of production time and cost.





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