Digital filming and special effects

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Author
CUBITT, SEAN

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University of Melbourne Author/s
Cubitt, Sean

Affiliation
Faculty of Arts, Culture and Communication

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With the proliferation of computer-based discoveries, tech solutions, and digital platforms in the fields of filming and special effects, the innovations that await us in the future are no less exciting than those of the last one hundred plus years. These are the top 10 types of movie technology that changed the industry forever (we have omitted obvious ones like sound and color).

1. Filming the Future – 2012. Originally, the industry standard for shooting a movie was 24 frames per second. Thanks to significant progress in filming technologies, movies such as The Hobbit boast a breathtaking 48 frames per second. Thanks to significant progress in filming technologies, movies such as The Hobbit boast a breathtaking 48

It is curious that digital photography should have spawned a respectable critical literature, while digital cinematography has, as yet, generated very little theoretical work that deals specifically with film. Two possible reasons come to mind. First, digital cinema approaches more closely the culture of animation than lens-based cinematography. And second, the darkroom has always been a key factor in photographic practice, whereas in cinema, postproduction has traditionally been understood as the editing process, rather than the developing and printing of the film strip. I raise this curiosity, which in all likelihood will be a brief and passing phase, only because it raises another conundrum. Traditionally, studies of cinema history have always devoted a chapter to pre-cinematic devices (phenakistoscopes, thaumatropes and so on) and especially to the chronophotography of Eadweard Muybridge, Etienne-Jules Marey and their contemporaries (the most influential, although now controversial, account is Ceram, 1965). Like other contemporary scholars, I rather distrust this continuity model of cinematic development. The quickest way to describe the difference between chronophotography and cinematography is to point out that the unit of chronophotography is the still frame, but that of cinema is three frames: the one just past, the current one and the one coming up. Crudely put, chronophotography was an analytical medium; cinema is synthetic. This is why chronophotography rather than cinema became the tool of choice for Taylorism and 'scientific management'.

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