

The postproduction process

This is the sequence of events for a factual programme. It is very similar for a drama.

- 1 View rushes.
- 2 Log rushes. For any programme, or even a short insert item, it is worth making a record on paper of everything that you have filmed. Logging means writing down the 'in' timecode and 'out' timecode of all useable material, and briefly commenting on the shot. e.g. WS river. Speedboat comes in left. 22" (22 secs).
- 3 Send cassette/CD of audio of long interviews to be transcribed. This will give you the interviews in a written form. Most people find it easier and more accurate to edit long interviews on paper than directly on the screen. Short interviews are straightforward to edit on the screen.
- 4 The paper edit. The paper edit is the cutting order for your programme. This is the sequence of shots and the edited extracts from the interviews in the order that you think will make most sense, and give a shape and structure to your programme. This will not be the final order for all the sequences. The paper edit is a structured starting point that can be cut together for the first assembly. It should be too long. This is normal.
- 5 Mark up the transcripts. This is where you will be very pleased that you have written transcripts of all those long interviews that were done months ago. Mark in highlighter pen, and with an identifying number, each block of words that you want to use from each interview. You can cut and paste them into the paper edit, but make sure you retain a copy of the full transcript. It is impossible to find short extracts without referring to the full transcript.

- 6 First assembly. Follow the cutting order created at the paper edit and assemble all the shots and sound together. At this stage do not worry about jump cuts, poor sound or anything technical - just get the story together with a beginning, middle and end.
- 7 Rough cut. If the assembly shows a clear structure, and contains all the relevant material, it is now time to make a rough cut. This should be within a few minutes of the final duration, have a definite structure and include the cutaways. Irrelevant material should all go at the rough cut stage. Be ruthless and only keep what is essential to drive forward the story.
- 8 Write an early version of the commentary. Most factual programmes need commentary of some sort. There will be sections of the programme where interesting and hopefully relevant shots need an explanation, or an introduction to a new contributor. The rule of thumb is that three words of commentary equal one second of programme time – 30 words needs 10 seconds of pictures – quite a lot.
- 9 Second rough cut or first fine cut. Add the commentary. Select and add the music. Trim the programme to be within 30 seconds of the final duration. Check the sound overlaps, cutaways and any tight edits. Add archive material and rough version of graphics.
- 10 Fine cut. Trim to exact programme duration. Add final graphics, mixes, effects and opening titles, and credits. Track lay sound for the sound dub. If necessary and the budget allows, take your fine cut to a facilities house for finishing.
- 11 Enjoy the BAFTA.

Postproduction postscript

Postproduction is a major cost in time and resources for any production. The major resource is the time required to edit the programme and then finish it. The editing process is time-consuming. It takes thinking time, and editing skill, to get the most expressive combination of pictures and sound to tell the story in a way that will satisfy an audience. You will need to show a rough cut of the programme to a senior person such as an executive producer. Changes will be suggested. After the fine cut has been agreed then the programme has to be finished. This will involve a sound dub to smooth out the sound and add music if required. The final process is to create a master tape for transmission. This can include adding graphics, a title sequence and channel logos and copyright as required by the broadcaster. A short sequence of evocative images that could work as a trailer can be put onto another tape for publicity. But here is a health warning – postproduction always takes longer and costs more than you expect. Always allow twice as much time as you first think you will need. Allow time for other people to make changes. Broadcasting companies are apt to make last-minute changes in schedule and programme duration. Leave plenty of time before your delivery date. Above all, start post production as early as you possibly can. With a laptop it is possible to rough edit the rushes as soon as you have shot them – what a good idea!

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