

Historical Analysis of the Movie, Citizen Kane Essay

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Historical Analysis, Citizen Kane:

Camera Movement

Citizen Kane, directed by Orson Welles, was an exemplary and ground-breaking work. In narrative structure and film style, Welles challenged classical Hollywood conventions and opened a path for experimentation in the later 1940s. Gregg Toland's deep-focus cinematography and Welles' use of low-key lighting are often discussed aspects of the movie. True, these were areas of innovation, but when watching the movie in class I was particularly struck by the use of camera movement, or "mobile framing" as described in Film Art. In this historical analysis, I will take a detailed look at how Welles and Toland use camera movement to develop and challenge the Hollywood style. By referring to other movies viewed in Professor Keating's class, including *The Cheat*, *Wings*, *Applause*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Last Laugh* and *Bicycle Thief*, this paper traces one aspect of innovation and diffusion in the movie many call the greatest film ever, [Citizen Kane](#).

The idea of moving the camera as a spectacular embellishment probably began in the Lumiere Films like *Leaving A Station by Rail* in which the cameraman set up his equipment

on the train rather than by the side of the tracks. Audiences were amazed by the feeling of motion that this provided (a technique that returned in early CinemaScope films like Viva Las Vegas). But with the rise of the feature, camera movement took on storytelling functions. In a film like DeMille's *The Cheat*, the camera remains static until it needs to reveal something important to the plot, like when it tracks past the jurors in the courtroom scene. This is not spectacular but informational. By the end of the 1920s, under the influence of German Expressionism, ornate c...

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...ox office. The public wasn't ready for such an experimental approach to film form. But time has shown that Welles did something more important than just pleasing an audience. He changed the face of filmmaking in Hollywood by pushing the techniques in new directions and challenging the rule of "invisibility." "What is remarkable when considering the cinematography of *Kane*, is that instead of it being a result of years of practice and study, it feels so fresh because Welles had no previous experience and was forced to invent his technique on the set"

(<http://steadicam.lunarfilm.co.uk/Mike%20Marriage%20-%20Camera%20Movement.html>). Maybe it took someone from outside of the studio system to discover its true potential. Later filmmakers, like Film Noir directors, now had new tools in their boxes to tell stories and move audiences.

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