

Andrzej Weseliński

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# A DICTIONARY of Film Terms and Film Studies



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# Preface to the Second Edition

This dictionary has been designed to fulfil the needs of film studies courses and film/literature courses, but I hope that it will be also a comprehensive reference book in English for general readers interested in cinema. The present volume comprises about 500 terms used in film theory and criticism. The terms are up-to-date and include many illustrative examples as well as cross-references printed in SMALL CAPITAL letters. The arrangement is strictly alphabetical.

For this edition I have added many new entries expanding the dictionary's coverage of all aspects of film studies. A select bibliography offers some guidance to those readers who need extended information on various aspects of film theory and criticism, film movements and genres, film production and technology, and the relationship between film and literature.

A.W.



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# A

**abstract film** A film in which images are not representational but fall into visually interesting patterns, shapes, and geometrical constructions. Abstract film was a development of the French avant-garde cinema of the 1920s. Abstract filmmakers and the surrealists drew much of their imagery from the subconscious. The German painter Oskar Fischinger, who made a number of animated short films, experimented with choreographing abstract patterns to music and worked with Walt Disney on the Bach "Tocatta and Fugue" segment of *Fantasia* (1940), an animated film in which various abstract techniques were employed to interpret selected pieces of classical music. The 1950s saw a revitalization of this form of cinema with films such as *30 Years of Experiment* (1951), a remarkable anthology of the best work from Germany and the US. The arrival of computer technology has enhanced the artistic possibilities of abstract films.

**Academy Awards** Awards given annually since 1929 by the ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES for artistic achievement in two broad categories. The first category is for craft and includes: Best Actor / Actress in a leading / supporting role, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing, Best Writing (adapted screenplay and original feature), Best Original Sound, Best Original Score, Best Sound Mixing / Editing, Best Art Direction, Best Visual Effects, Best Costume Design, and Best Makeup. The second is for different types of film and includes: Best Picture, Best Animated Feature, Best Animated Short, Best Documentary Feature, Best Documentary Short, Best Foreign Language Film, and Best Live Action Short.

The award is in the form of a statuette known in the trade as OSCAR. The presentation of the Academy Awards, which is a great televised event, attracts a vast audience all over the world. The winning of, or the nomination for an award, usually leads to a significant marketing boost. In film criticism, Academy Awards are frequently used as a marker of artistic merit, even though they have sometimes aroused a lively controversy.

**Academy Frame** The standard film FRAME established by the ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES in 1932. A ratio of width to height of 4 to 3, or 1.33 to 1. See also WIDESCREEN.

**Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS)**

A non-profit organization established in 1927 to "improve the artistic quality of the film medium, provide a common forum for the various branches and crafts of the industry, foster cooperation in technical research and cultural progress". Its members are categorized according to several areas of film craftsmanship, including actors, directors, producers, writers, film editors, composers, executives, public relations people, and technicians.

**Academy of Television Arts and Sciences** Hollywood-based organization of professionals in the television industry, which presents EMMY awards for artistic achievement in many categories.

**Academy standards** A set of technical requirements established by the ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES to enforce standard practices throughout the film industry.

**accelerated montage** A film sequence in which progressively shorter shots of two or more different subjects are alternated to