**Evaluating Film Productions**

Most members of an audience can recognize production quality when they see it mainly because they "knew it when he saw it." However, we're going to break down a production into several categories and list questions you can use to evaluate production quality. Some of the categories, such as acting and casting, will not be appropriate for all video productions.

**Script/Narrative/Story**
a. Does the film develop a clear story around a character that moves from 3 Acts: the setup, maze and feeling?
b. Does the film create an impression or statement about a given idea, issue or theme?
c. Do you feel that the actions and lines are consistently "in character" and appropriate to the background, motivations and personality of the characters portrayed?

d. Has dialogue been made as concise as possible, adhering to the axiom "never say it if you can show it."
e. Is the climax unique and effective?

**Casting**
a. Are the actors that have been selected appropriate for the personalities and physical attributes of the characters they are portraying?
b. Will the actors be able to portray their roles in a totally believable manner?
c. Do the actors have distinct personalities that give each character a clear and distinct identity?
d. Are there physical and personality contrasts between the characters. For example, are there two blond females of similar age and hairstyle that can easily be confused on a TV screen?

**Acting**
a. Are the characters capable of involving the audience emotionally? Do we care what happens to them?
b. Are actors able to loose themselves in their character and "be" the character, or do you feel that they are simply "acting out roles?"
c. Are talent gestures meaningful, motivated and appropriate to the closeup medium of television?
d. Does the dialogue remain intelligible at all times, especially when reproduced through less-than-perfect (i.e., average) home receivers. This has become more of a problem in recent years, with actors that are not skilled at delivering intelligible, in-character dialogue.
e. Is the overall talent pacing and energy level maintained from scene-to-scene (set-up-to-setup) to facilitate smooth editing?
f. Are costumes and makeup appropriate to the characterization, historic period of the story, and the program content?
g. Do wardrobe/costumes provide adequate visual separation between scene elements and fall within limitations of the medium's brightness range.
h. Does makeup hold up equally well in closeups and long shots?

**Music and Effects**
a. Do sound effects consistently have "proximity" and loudness appropriate to the visual distances represented?
b. Does background music ever inappropriately call attention to itself?
c. Is the amplitude, mood, pace, and style of the music fully appropriate to the production's content and intent?
d. Does the music ever interfere with the intelligibility of the dialogue (either in the mono, stereo or surround-sound mixes)?

**Staging and Props**
a. Are set designs appropriate to the tone, mood, period, and character of the production?
b. In multi-camera production are the sets designed to accommodate talent movements, as well as the lighting and sound requirements?
c. Does the set support the actors rather than compete with them for attention?
d. Is the set properly toned to allow visual separation between talent, wardrobe, and set elements?
e. Are the props appropriate to the time period. (In doing the life of President Harry Truman would you see a ballpoint pen sitting on a table?)

**Lighting**
a. In multi-camera production does lighting remain even and appropriate for all on-camera talent angles, and especially for the closeup camera angles?
b. Is there sufficient key, fill and back illumination in all performance areas to render needed visual separation, depth, and detail?
c. In multi-camera productions are unwanted shadows from mikes, cameras and props controlled?
d. Is the quality, angle, color, and intensity of light appropriate to time of day, the apparent sources of light within the set, and the character and mood of the production?

**Titles and Credits**
a. Are type styles appropriate to the nature of the production?
b. Do credits and titles remain legible on low-resolution home TV receivers, and remain legible in both the 4:3 and 16:9 ratios?
c. Do titles or subtitles interfere with important visual content?
d. Do titles or credits remain on the screen long enough to be read? (In many cases, of course, the intent is to fulfill contractual obligations and not to worry about actually giving an audience time to read them.)

**Camera Operation**
a. Does the framing of each shot demonstrate knowledge of the rules of composition?
b. Are dollying, trucking, panning, tilting, zooms smooth and motivated, as well as being appropriate to the pace of the production?
c. Do any camera movements draw attention to themselves?
d. In a multi-camera production has the director planned camera work so that unnecessary and awkward camera moves, zooms or focus adjustments are minimized?

**Sound**
a. Does microphone placement provide for a consistent sound perspective
b. Are there noticeable differences between background sound levels, proximity effects, or audio levels between successive shots?
c. Is all audio clear and distinct?
d. In multi-camera productions are equipment, prop, and scenery movements controlled so that unnecessary studio noises are avoided?
e. Do looped segments go by unnoticed?

**Editing**
a. Are all cuts and transitions motivated and in harmony with the pace and nature of the subject matter?
b. Are consistent visual perspectives maintained so as not to confuse the audience?
c. Has effort been made to eliminate major scene-to-scene shifts in the center of interest when edits/cuts are made?
d. Except for dramatic effect, does the shot selection follow what the audience expects, wants, or needs to see at each moment?
e. Do shots constitute logical visual statements.
f. Are the edit decisions most effective for story development and variety in pacing?
g. Have both technical and general continuity jump cuts been avoided?
h. Is editing smooth and fluid to the point that it becomes virtually transparent?
i. Have all scenes that are not essential to the goals of the production been removed?
j. Is the length of each scene limited to the time it takes for the average view to grasp the essential information?