Soviet Montage

Lindsey Eveleth

The primary author is the individual who drafted the first version of the material which could have been different than the currently published version.

The idea of montage triggers memories of family reunions, summer camp, fond times looked back upon with wistfulness. A typical person would consider montage and then recall the videos often created to summarize a specific time spent, such as a great summer filled with fun activities, or embarrassing family photos brought out each holiday season. However, montage is a serious tool of filmmakers and has been for many years. One of the most interesting and different theories of montage is known as Soviet montage.

Soviet montage is the editing of clips or photos together in order to get a certain point across. The goal of soviet montage is to create an idea which is clearer when all the images are viewed together than when they are viewed separately (Johnson). Although only around 30 films have ever been made in this style, it is considered to be a very important and influential theory of film (Trischak). Soviet montage was first pioneered in Russia post revolution, but before Stalin took power (Barrance).

The Soviet montage movement began around 1924 and lasted until 1930 (Trischak). After the Russian revolution took place in 1917, filmmakers found themselves short on supplies. They felt that the only option was to use found pieces of film from previous projects and present them together in a different way with a vastly different meaning. This theory of filmmaking was first pioneered by Lev Kuleshov who conducted an experiment which proved that viewers reacted differently to the same image, depending on the images which were shown before or after it (Barrance). One of the most notable characteristics of Russian montage filmmaking it the insignificance of the individual. Typically, one character does not represent one person, but a group of people, such as an economic class or ethnic group (Trischak).

Sergei Eisenstein is considered to be the most famous filmmaker associated with Soviet montage, Eisenstein's main goal was to take propaganda and present it in a different way in order to harness the emotion of the Russian people and lead them towards a new revolutionized society. Eisenstein was the first to use what are now considered to be the defining characteristics of soviet montage. He would take images and alter how long they would stay on the screen, specific movement and change of scenery, and would associate certain images with particular emotions. (Barrance)

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Photo Credit: Screen capture from the Odessa Steps scene in Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925)
All of the most famous instances of this theory take place in Eisenstein's films. One of the most interesting takes place in the film *October* (1927). In this film Eisenstein is expressing his views on religion and world culture. Various scenes of religious memorabilia are portrayed one after the other, making the assertion that all religion is the same, perpetuating the idea of acceptance (Barrance).

Soviet montage can not only be used to illustrate a philosophical point, but can also manipulate how a viewer perceives a certain event. In another of Eisenstein's films *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), there is a sequence known as "Odessa Steps." In this scene Eisenstein uses scenes from an incident which would in real time only take several minutes, and stretches it to last seven minutes, therefore manipulating the viewers perception of time (Johnson). This film is so highly respected that in 1958 it was voted to be the best film ever made by a group of critics from around the world (Sergei Eisenstein: The Art and Science of Cinema).

Soviet montage is an intellectual form of filmmaking which can be used in order to make meaningful and poignant commentary on society and its values. Pioneers such as Eisenstein created a theory of film which is world renowned and is still respected to this day.

**Works Consulted**


This article was very helpful, it contains information about the concept of montage, about Eisenstein, and also about instances of Soviet montage being used in film.


This article contains a lot of information in regards to the basic concept of Soviet montage and also contained a lot of images which helped me to define Soviet montage.


This article was a biography of Sergei Eisenstein but also contains some basic information on Soviet montage.


This article provided a lot of historical context for Soviet montage as well as had a lot of information about defining characteristics of the theory.