UNIT 2 – Special Effects in Movies

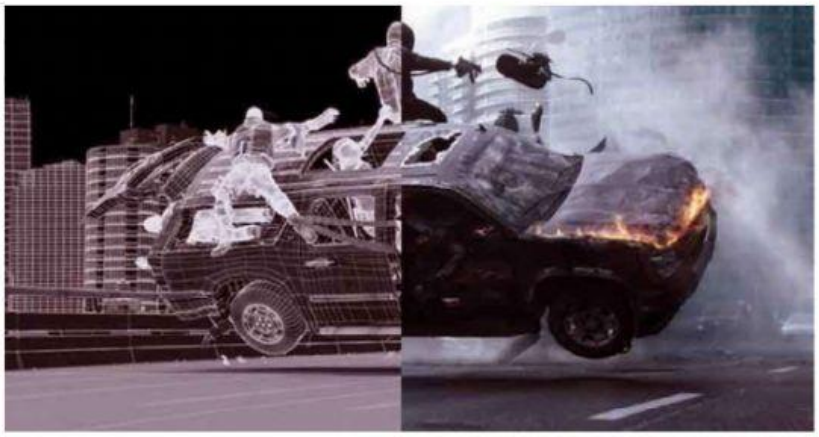
Reading 1

Skills:

- Details
- Make inferences
- Understand function
- Understand synonyms
- Understand negative facts
- Insert sentences into a passage

Getting started: Do you prefer realistic or fantastic movies?

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPECIAL EFFECTS AND VFX, IS THERE A SUPERIOR CHOICE?



There is often a lot of confusion about the terms special effects and visual effects, which might appear to be the same thing. But despite what people think, the two terms are far from interchangeable. Each one refers to a variety of aspects of modern-day film and television production.

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The difference lies in the part they play during the production process. Special Effects (SFX) refers to on-set visual effects techniques. On-set special effects might include adding various elements that the story requires into scenes such as fire, water and snow. Before the **advent** of digital technologies, the only way to add elements to scenes was by using Special Effects filmed on-set practically. SFX also includes skills like animatronics, like Yoda from Star Wars, for example. SFX also includes prosthetic make-up and the building and filming of miniatures. Again, the earlier Star Wars films used lots of miniature models to film spaceships and planets.

VFX is an abbreviation of Video Effects. Video Effects enable filmmakers to achieve the same effects as on-set SFX during post-production. They can integrate elements such as explosions into their scenes. VFX can digitally re-create anything SFX are able to do on-set. VFX refers to all forms of digital enhancement of shots such as adding in backgrounds using green screens or integrating **CGI** models and creatures.

Both SFX and VFX are methods of enabling directors to enhance the narrative of their story. Most likely, a production will need one or both of the above solutions. **[5A]** Special effects have their origin at a simpler time in film and TV production. SFX were and are still used to enhance a scene or set piece. **[5B]** An explosion or a crash, a rainy moment in a love story, situations that might happen spontaneously in life but require actual planning on set. **[5C]** Common examples of on-set SFX might be snowmaking, rainmaking, or the adding of smoke to create atmosphere. **[5D]** While you can accomplish all of these effects using VFX, it is usually preferable to capture things on camera if you can as the on-set SFX will look more real. If you can create these on set and film them, they are **likely** to work more effectively than creating the digitally visual effects during post-production.

So, if SFX captured on camera are so effective, when do you need to create snow, fire, rain, or other effects digitally as VFX? One situation might be if you have a bigger canvas to cover and more shots to capture. If you want to create a snowy landscape with wide shots, it will be easier and cheaper to do this using VFX. The same applies to rain. Another common situation is when fantastic or unusual worlds are created. Designing an environment not likely to be found easily could imply so much more money if the director pretends to use SFX. Then you have to take into account on-set conditions. If you are adding smoke to help enhance a sequence, for example in a battle sequence in a period drama, the

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wind may blow away your smoke or it may not behave as you wish. This is when you will need VFX smoke. SFX created on-set can't be directed to behave as the director and production team want.

Using SFX or VFX might also be linked to health and safety considerations. If you are adding fire or explosions that involve using actors or stunt people, it may be possible to create more dangerous types of explosions or even set people on fire using VFX. Another issue is actors sometimes don't react well to the smell or texture of on-set smoke and artificial snow not to mention the fact that snow machines can also be quite noisy, so they aren't always appropriate for every scene.

In conclusion, VFX elements can accomplish much of the same effect as real SFX without the same health and safety risk, and they can be a cheaper option. VFX elements allow you to be more creative in your direction and afford you more flexibility in your production. Much of the work can be done elsewhere by another studio which takes the pressure off of you. **Though**, as said above, some see VFX as less real and prefer the tactile nature of practical effects, which can be achieved by using SFX.

**Adapted from https://www.realtimeuk.com/blog/special-effects-vs-visual-effects/*

Glossary:

- **CGI**: Computer-generated imagery (CGI) is the application of computer graphics to create or contribute to images in art, printed media, video games, films, television programs, shorts, commercials, videos, and simulators.

Answer the following questions:

1. What is stated about SFX and VFX in paragraph 1?
    a. SFX are confusing.
    b. VFX are less modern.
    c. SFX and VFX refer to the same concept.
    d. SFX and VFX have to do with different aspects.

2. What is NOT true about SFX? **Choose two answers**
    a. They add elements that aren't present in the scene.
    b. They are used at the moment of filming.
    c. They started with the movie Star Wars.
    d. They are used after a scene has been shot.

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3. Which is NOT a synonym for **advent** in paragraph 2?
    a. Appearance
    b. Benefit
    c. Arrival
    d. Beginning

4. What is stated about VFX in paragraph 3?
    a. They reproduce aspects that are not available during a scene.
    b. They are also called green screens.
    c. They are not as good as SFX.
    d. They incorporate explosions during an action scene.

5. Look at the boxes in paragraph 4. Where can you insert this sentence: **So, the question is what is the right solution for a project?**
    a. 5A
    b. 5B
    c. 5C
    d. 5D

6. What is the function of the word **likely** in paragraph 4?
    a. Express similarity
    b. Express probability
    c. Express comparison
    d. Express hobbies

7. According to paragraph 5, which of the following descriptions represents a scene where VFX are more necessary than SFX?
    a. A scene where some cowboys are shooting a sheriff and his officers in the desert.
    b. A scene where a wedding takes place inside a very big room with plenty of people.
    c. A scene where a boy inside a house notices some snow starts falling from the sky.
    d. A scene where a knight is fighting a wizard and his dragons at a magical mountain.

8. What is the main topic developed in paragraph 6?
    a. Synchronizing stunts and effects
    b. Actors feeling sick while filming a scene
    c. Creating a safe environment when using effects
    d. The textures that can be created if SFX are incorporated

9. What is the function of the word **though** in the last paragraph?
    a. Express reason
    b. Express contrast
    c. Express purpose
    d. Express addition

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