

The Essentials of Multi-Channel Virtual Reality

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1. Exploration

Being able to look around the room is a limited experience. It is akin to sitting in a friend's living room for half an hour, you get tired and want to move on.

We offer the ability to go other places with relating content and storylines, and find out what's happening there. This gives you actual control on what you you're seeing. In essence, the closest thing yet to having legs and walking around in a virtual reality movie. A much higher degree of presence.

2. P.O.V.

As a result, you are the camera of the movie. You get to decide what to watch now.

You are creating the movie as you go. Who do you see at what point? Up to you.

In this, a Multi-Channel VR Movie creates an entirely new experience as well:

3. Customized Viewing

While one channel shows a psychiatrist's appointment, and the other shows the previous day in which the patient was taking drugs, the question of who to follow is entirely up to the viewer. Which moments will be caught, not just in one scene's setting, but which STORY moments will be caught, is entirely determined by the viewer.

This requires some filmmaking restraints.

4. Directly Related Threads

If one channel contains an old woman in her chair speaking of her lost loved one, and another contains an entirely different story of two people talking about the movies: Then we have multiple threads that clash. Because each thread seems to be saying something, has a voice of its of its own. Continuing with this example, the viewer will either try to follow both and miss critical points, or settle on one, but perhaps later miss its conclusion as he switches back to the first, unrelated, channel.

In contrast, if the second channel shows a war, which relates directly to what the old woman is saying about how she lost her love (and we may even hear her voice in channel 2), then the channels are working together to tell one story.

5. Editing

There is basically no room for editing or fading in a VR film. This takes the person out of the experience and would be akin to the screen going blank and the lights going on in a movie theater. This fact poses the greatest obstacle to creating a VR movie of any kind, including a

Multi-Channel one: How do you tell a story with no jumps in time and little or no jumps in space (except the channel jumps)?

First, it is worth mentioning the possibility of chapters – treating each sequence of the movie as a chapter, and filming that chapter in real time. Each chapter is a mini movie in itself, it fades into the next and may have a title present to emphasize that this is a deliberate new beginning. Still, any jump is a jump and it robs the viewer of his/her power.

If no editing is used whatsoever, then the story's development is dependent completely on its set channels. The number of locations involved in the story is precisely the number of channels. And no jump in time at all can be made unless it is also made with a channel (a certain channel showing the future, for example).

This invites one of the following:

- A. Short, real time experiences such as 'The Other Day'
- B. A longer film, where the channels change over time, and include time travel. In this movie, the device of the channels would have to be part of the plot in order for the channel changes to make sense to the viewer (in order to explain without explaining), their 'device' nature would have to be rendered nonexistent in that it would be completely in the service of story. The viewer would have to be a traveler of sorts with the main characters, who open up to these travel options as he does.
- C. A longer film which makes 5-10 channels available instead of 3.

6. Timed Introduction/Plot Points

Since it is the viewer, not a director, who decides how and when to uncover the movie's plot and characters, the timing of all points must be artfully executed.

For example, when introducing a villain, an edited movie might suddenly cut arbitrarily to the villain's world and introduce him. But in a Multi-Channel movie, it is the viewer who would have to make the decision of watching this introduction, and therefore this decision must be given to him at the right time, e.g., when the content of a character introduction relates to the current content of the parallel channels.

This stems from the same principal of directly related threads (4).

7. Constant Meaning

In a linear movie, all meaning is gained over time. A moment's significance is understood the next moment, when its meaning is revealed. A hamburger gains meaning when the hungry man is shown. But in a Multi-Channel film, since channels are constantly showing *multiple* sets of content, meaning is happening *all at once*. It is a 'God' view, a perspective into all aspects of the story, which the viewer then explores one-at-a time. From the filmmaker's standpoint however, each moment holds within it a fully-formed meaning as soon as it begins, thanks to multiple channels.

Notes on using the chapter system:

In this case, each scene or chapter would have to be treated as a mini movie in itself, in order to justify a cut. If the scene is to end, there must be a reason for it, a closure, then a pause giving the viewer a moment to breathe in between chapters before beginning another.

Another option (which is problematic so far) is using CGI to create the illusion of continuity: Instead of fading out, the film could be kept in real time, while the viewer is sometimes moved along with the characters as one of them. In order to execute this, CGI may be applied to create continuity between two scenes shot separately - as when the heroes run out of one room and into the next. Transitioning frames will be added to create continuity between the two. But the unsolved problem remains: there are only as many locations as there are channels. And if the VR channel changes, it loses its effect as a reliable place the viewer can return to. If the VR camera dollys from one place to the next, it again creates an unreliable and confusing channel system. The viewer isn't present and discoveries occur by random chance (essentially the same effect as an edited movie presented to the viewer).

However, one possible solution, would be to include many channels in a movie. 5 to 10, for example, and having those channels gradually unfold and become relevant as the story progresses.

If they're only made available over time, then there is the problem of not giving the viewer the freedom – since the intention of the filmmaker is clear as is his presence, as he 'gives' them to the viewer. Therefore they would have to be made from the start, but only made relevant over time.