

Splicers.

This book is full of them. Hardly anyone needs them anymore. Small-format film is nearly passé! The entire world uses video. And when video is edited, it's done electronically. Nothing is done by hand anymore. It is different with film. One experiences the evolution of the story physically as the individual scenes, dangling from the film rack, are joined together into a hopefully ingenious whole.

Out of focus. Wrong exposure. Blurry. Too long. Too short. Not interesting enough. All these problems have to be cut from the filmstrip. The cutting room floor is littered with all that failed. Now the splicer makes its entrance. A precision cut is made at both ends; the film is joined securely and invisibly. That is its job. While watching the film, the viewer should not be able to see where the film was cut. Unfortunately, in reality the results are somewhat different.

Before this book gets a bit more technical, the reader should be reassured: This is not a reference book! It is a picture book about a period in design history: splicers invented between 1925 and 1981. They all serve the same purpose but look quite different from one another. Wood, Bakelite, plastic, metal — more than 200 models are known to exist. You will find exceptionally odd ducks and unflappable workhorses. And beyond function, thought was always given to their design, although splicers were never meant to decorate living rooms and are certainly not for exhibition. But the aesthetic eye drives consumption, and good design follows function. Therefore, take a decadent, gratuitous look at the fascinating, varied world of splicers before they vanish forever into the closet of history.



Naß.



Unterschieden werden zwei Verfahren: Naßklebepressen, die mit Kitt arbeiten und Trockenklebepressen, die Klebeband verwenden. Erstmal die nassen Kandidaten, die allesamt nur bei Acetatfilm benutzt werden können: besonders simpel sind „Einfachkeilschliffpressen“. Mittels einer kleinen Feile wird ein Filmende angeraut und mit dem anderen leicht überlappend verklebt. Das bringt eine hübsche Stolperstufe zustande, die deutlich hörbar durch den Projektor rasselt. Ein Grauen für jeden Filmer.

„Doppelkeilschliffklebepressen“ machen sich an beiden Filmenden zu schaffen, der Klebstoff verbindet die Keile zu einem Strang, der an der bearbeiteten Stelle im besten Falle unmerklich dicker als der Film an sich ist. Das flutscht nur so durch den Projektor.

Besonders in Amerika sind sogenannte Hot Splicer beliebt. Um den Kitt schneller trocknen zu lassen, erwärmen sie die Klebestelle elektrisch. Auf dem europäischen Markt ist diese Methode nur selten zu finden.

In Deutschland hat die Firma Hähnel Mitte der sechziger Jahre die Motorkeilschliff-Klebepresse aus der Taufe gehoben. Was vorher mühevoll per Hand weggeraspelt werden mußte, läßt sich nun mittels motorisch betriebemem Saphir-Schleifkopf abtragen.



Um 1968 machten die Österreicher mit dem Eumig Chemo-Splicer Furore. Hier werden beide Filmenden mit einem Zackenschnitt versehen, verzahnt ineinandergeschoben und mittels Spezialkitt verschweißt. Da das Zickzack-Muster mitten übers Bild läuft, ist jede Klebestelle für den Zuschauer prima zu entdecken. Wahrscheinlich hat sich deshalb kein anderer Hersteller für das Chemo-Splicing erwärmen können. Diese phallisch geratene Klebepresse ist eher ein Augenschmaus als ein nützliches Werkzeug.

Besonders nobel gehts per Hobel. Die deutschen Firmen Hammann und Geyer haben seit den vierziger Jahren aufwendige Filmhobel vermarktet, die die Feile durch einen scharfen Metallspalt ersetzen. Zeiss Ikon und Braun lieferten ein ähnliches System. Mit einer Bewegung der Schneidschwinge wird ein Spaltschnitt ohne Staub und Späne an beiden Filmenden gleichzeitig gefertigt. Ein solcher Hobel ist teuer herzustellen, schwer justierbar, aber ein echtes Renommierobjekt auf dem Arbeitstisch des Filmamateurs - wie diesem Buch unschwer zu entnehmen ist.

Wet.

Two procedures are to be distinguished: Wet splicers, which utilize cement, and dry splicers, which utilize tape. First the wet candidates, all of which are used only for acetate film. Especially simple is the single-wedge, or simple-wedge, splicer. One end of the film strip is roughened and tapered into a wedge with a small scraper; the other end is not. The two ends are then glued together overlapping each other. The result is a fairly bumpy juncture, which rattles audibly through the projector. A horror for every filmmaker.

Double-wedge splicers trim both ends of the film into a wedge. The two ends are then overlapped and joined by cement, which at its thickest is only imperceptibly thicker than the film material itself. The resulting splice glides smoothly through the projector.

In America so-called hot splicers are especially popular. These allow the cement to dry faster by heating the splice electrically. Hot splicers are very rare in the European market.

In Germany the Hähnel company introduced motor-driven film splicers in the mid-sixties. What previously had to be scraped laboriously by hand could now be pared down with a motor-driven sapphire grinding head.

Around 1968, the Austrians caused a sensation with their Eumig Chemo Splicer. With this model, both ends of the filmstrip are given a jagged cut, interlinked with each other, and glued together with a special cement. The zig-zag pattern runs right through the image, and each splice can be easily discerned by the viewer. This is probably the reason that no other manufacturer picked up on the concept of chemo splicers. This phallic-shaped splicer is more a feast for the eyes than a useful tool.

Expensive planes for higher ends. The German companies Hammann and Geyer began marketing costly film planes in the forties, which replaced the scraper with a sharp metal cutting blade. Zeiss Ikon and Braun produced a similar system. By pressing the cutting lever, a precise cut without dust or chips is simultaneously produced at both ends of the filmstrip. A plane such as this is expensive to produce and hard to adjust but a real showpiece on the workbench of the amateur filmmaker — to which this book attests.

