

# The Influence of the New Wave on the Development of Cinema: A Case Study of French Genre Cinema

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## Abstract:

The New Wave movement has received extensive attention, but its influence on the film industry is still insufficient. This paper analyzes the influences and differences between French films before and after the New Wave movement. This paper also analyzes that the New Wave movement has a profound impact and far-reaching significance on the film industry and has important research and analysis value. It includes the New Wave as a turning point in the history of Western cinema, Under its influence, the young directors of the time, French cinema formed a unique artistic character and filmed representative works of art. Particularly point out the characteristics of the New Wave movement, such as the increase in the freedom of filmmaking and the innovation of the lens language. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following suggestions: focus on the analysis of the influence of French cinema in the context of the New Wave movement and give examples of changes and advantages of specific shooting techniques.

**Keywords:** New Wave; France; modernism; directorial individuality

## 1. Introduction

Influenced by the spiritual crisis of post-war Western society, anarchism, and modernism represented by Sartre's existentialist philosophy, the New Wave movement arose in France. As an important form of entertainment in people's daily lives, movies can provide visual and auditory enjoyment for the audience and help people relax and unwind. After the Second World War, people often felt depressed and hesitant in their hearts, so they needed new filming techniques to support their spirits, so many new wave films reflecting on World War II and promoting modernist

philosophical ideas were born at that stage [1].

The New Wave was an important turning point in the development of cinema, which was manifested in the fact that the directors of the films after the New Wave were young, and their works presented an abrupt editing and splicing style, which also reflected the characteristics of the shooting technology at that time. French cinema is one of the most representative and distinctive genres of European cinema, which flourished after the New Wave, and showed the temperament and characteristics of the unique modernist trend of "eternal youth", based on a resistance to tradition and questioning authority [2]. The films of the

'New Wave', from the theme to the plot, from the style to the expression, bear the imprint of this era.

After the New Wave, the style of French cinema showed documentary characteristics such as "auteur film" and "long shot" and was widely used, which provided a spiritual pillar for the youth of the time and their descendants, and made people have a strong interest in this film genre, and also allowed more young people to learn this shooting technique, which provided talents for the French film market at that time [3]. This article explains how the New Wave influenced French cinema and examines the important characteristics and applications of the film.

## 2. The New Wave Movement and Its Impact

The scope of the New Wave movement mainly refers to a cinema-wide movement that emerged in France between 1958 and 1962, which not only changed the face of world cinema but also became the third large-scale film movement in the history of world cinema.

### 2.1 Characteristics of the New Wave Movement

One of the core features of the New Wave movement is the individuality of the director. It aims to insist on the director's personality, personal style, and creativity, emphasizing the director as the ideological core of his film, adhering to the authorship theory and having the characteristics of spontaneity and individualism, as well as the characteristics of realism and anti-narrative. Second, after the New Wave movement, the film wanted to get rid of the old-fashioned mode of industrial production and pay more attention to individuality and creativity, which did not blindly pursue sensory and visual stimulation but expressed the inner world and subjective feelings of modern people. Third, these films use innovative techniques such as moving photography, simultaneous recording, voice-over, nature sound, long-shot jump cuts and stop-motion zooms, and stream-of-consciousness storytelling.

#### 2.1.1 A unique film value system

As a movement with a new scope of cinema, the French New Wave had no fixed organization and rules, and several of its major directors greatly promoted the vigorous development of the New Wave movement through their own personal efforts and video creation. In the process of creation and directing, they emphasize the uniqueness and independence of individual creation, pursue freedom and express the true color of the film, and strive to get rid of the technical and conceptual constraints of traditional commercial ideas on film creation. The authorship theory established by the New Wave movement fundamentally

shook the psychological model of filmmaking and movie-watching in France and many countries around the world, aiming to emphasize the expression of personal style and art form in film creation [4].

#### 2.1.2 Strong modern culture and art trends and concepts

The French New Wave was a movement that demanded a radical transformation of film art in the spirit of modernism, and this movement was the third artistic movement with global influence after European avant-garde and Italian neorealism. The films created after the French New Wave aim to emphasize the observation and presentation of realism, especially the living conditions and lifestyles of the underprivileged and young people. Influenced by existentialism, the films of this period created many images of teenagers who were infected with the "disease of the century".

### 2.2 Influence of the New Wave Movement

The French New Wave not only revolutionized the art of cinema but also had a profound impact on the field of painting and art. Its representative figure, Jean-Luc Godard, was a painter by training, and his filmography was deeply inspired by elements of painting. In the contemporary French art world, the interplay between painting and film is particularly pronounced, with artists such as Christian Poltansky and Danielle Bourren having hesitated in choosing their artistic path. Since the 60s, the development of French art has been like a mirror image of the history of cinema, from plastic photography to video art to the field of digital images, each "new wave" has witnessed the innovation and integration of art forms [5]. In France, there is a close connection between the creators of film and visual arts, and this interaction not only enriches artistic expression but also becomes a key driving force for the development of contemporary art. In China, this phenomenon is also revelatory. Many artists who originally specialized in painting, such as Lou Ye, Wang Xiaoshuai, Yang Fudong, and Zhou Hongxiang, turned to the field of film, and their creations combined painting techniques with film language to form a unique artistic perspective. Scholars like Chen Danqing, who is engaged in "a comparative study of contemporary easel painting and image culture" at the Tsinghua Academy of Fine Arts, also reveal the possibility of this kind of artistic crossover. The French New Wave movement is not only a milestone in the history of cinema but also a model of artistic innovation and cross-border cooperation, which has had a profound impact on the Chinese art world. It demonstrates the diversity of art forms and the possibility of cross-border integration and provides a new direction for the development of art in China. The New Wave movement

had a profound and profound impact on world cinema and culture. The French New Wave movement marked the establishment of modern cinematic art and aesthetics, influenced generations of youth film movements in many countries, and set off a wave of new cinema around the world [6]. Specifically, the French New Wave movement was initiated by more than 50 filmmakers who were deeply influenced by Sartre's existentialism represented by André Bazin and others, who proposed to completely reinvent the new film in the spirit of structuralism and modernism, and published the manifesto and complete artistic program of the New Wave film in the "Film Handbook". This movement demanded a subjective realist slogan to resist traditional objective realism, thus promoting the innovation of film art. In addition, the New Wave movement also had an important impact on later generations of film creation, not only encouraging youth film movements in countries such as Britain, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, and even Japan but also promoting the wave of new cinema on a global scale. This movement, which emphasized personal and autobiographical expression, opposed the traditional way of making films and promoted the diversity and flourishing of the film arts. The establishment of the concept of documentary aesthetics is no longer to provide entertainment, but more to emancipate the mind and methods. Most of the post-French New Wave films have abandoned the logic and structure of traditional narratives and paid more attention to the transmission and expression of feelings and emotions, highlighting the audience's personal perceptual experience and emotional resonance through fragmented narratives and mechanical scene design. This kind of film has an obvious documentary style, but they do not stop at the documentary but combine documentary and ideology. The development of the symbolic narrative system in the film broke the deadlock of the narrative mode of the feature film at that time. The directors reject the traditional linear narrative method and break the limitations of time and space through cropping, interlacing, and other techniques, showing different perspectives and plots. This experimental narrative mode often confuses, puzzles, and disorients audiences, but it also provides more freedom and creative space for filmmakers [7].

### 3. The Evolution of French Genre Cinema and the Influence of Its Cinema in the Context of the New Wave

#### 3.1 The Evolution of French Genre Cinema

The genre evolution of French cinema has gone through several important stages, from early impressionism, and

avant-garde to poetic realism, to the New Wave and Left Bank. Each stage has its unique artistic characteristics and representative works. The birth of early French cinema dates back to 1895 when the Lumière brothers premiered their film at the Grand Café in Paris, which is recognized as the day of the birth of cinema. The Lumière brothers focus on short films that capture everyday life scenes, such as "The Factory Gate", "Baby's Lunch" and "The Train Arrives", which realistically capture and document real-life scenes. Impressionism and the avant-garde: After the First World War, the status of French cinema declined, and to revive French cinema, De Luc and others initiated the movement of organizing film clubs and founded Impressionist cinema. Impressionist films focused on creating atmosphere, not on storyline, emphasizing poetic images and strong expressiveness. Representative works include Dulac's "The Spanish Program" and Lepierre's "People at Sea". The avant-garde films that followed were a radical break with commercial cinema and borrowed from modernist literary techniques, including pure cinema, Dadaist cinema, and surrealist cinema, which aimed to subvert traditional artistic norms and pursue bizarre and grotesque visual effects.

In the 50s of the 20th century, French cinema entered the stage of poetic realism, and the representative works of this period include Renais's "Love in Hiroshima" and Truffaut's "Four Hundred Times". Poetic realist cinema emphasizes the concern for social reality and the profound exploration of human nature. Then, in the early 60s, with the rise of the French New Wave film movement, a group of young filmmakers such as Truffaut and Godard began to challenge the traditional narrative mode and focus on personal expression and experimental techniques. Representative works include Truffaut's 400 Blows and Godard's Breathless.

Entering the 70s, French cinema continued to evolve, with more styles and genres emerging. Left bank cinema arose during this period, emphasizing the exploration of the inner world and the passage of time. Representative works include "Last Year in Marienbad" by Alain Resnais. In addition, French cinema has gained wide international recognition and has become an important part of world cinema.

#### 3.2 Influence on the Characteristics of the Filming of French Genre Films

##### 3.2.1 Arbitrariness and freedom

The New Wave movement abandoned traditional editing rules and introduced casual and fast editing. This editing method is very prominent in expressing the inner experience and emotional changes of the characters, enhancing the drama and viewing experience of the film. For exam-

ple, the director walked out of the studio during the filming of “Breathless” and used a lot of handheld photography to follow the actors’ movements, very nimble through the streets of Paris, capturing the atmosphere of the real scene, and the scene where the heroine sells newspapers on a busy street is a very classic shot. The script for this film was given to the actors on the day of filming, so the performance was full of improvisation. Affected by the actual conditions, the director switched to a wheelchair and personally pushed the photographer to shoot, creating a very vivid follow-up shot. Later, when he realized that the film was too long, he decided to edit it in a jump-cut way, cutting the essence of different scenes together, and breaking the coherence of the traditional narrative. There is an indoor dialogue scene of more than 20 minutes in the film, where the hero and heroine engage in existential dialogue in a small room, and there is often a separation of sound and picture, which extends the imagination space of the film. At the end of the film, the male protagonist is shot down on the street, the police and the female protagonist come up to watch, and the female protagonist’s gesture is an open-ended ending.

Breathless uses a variety of innovative cuts, such as jump cuts, crosscuts, visual contrasts, etc., to create sharp contrasts and smooth connections between different scenes in the film, while also enhancing the drama and viewing experience of the film. The bumps, shaking, and unstable picture effects brought by the handheld camera make the audience more immersive, enhancing the realism of the film, allowing the audience to feel the emotions and real-world environment experienced by the characters, connect with the characters, and become more engaged in the story of the film. The film uses frequent and rapid editing to show the advancement of the plot and the change of emotions, which makes the picture jump, and the rhythm is tight, which enhances the tension and suspenseful atmosphere of the film. It allows the audience to better immerse themselves in the storyline and feel the inner experiences and emotional changes of the characters, while the sharp visual contrast and dramatic effect brought by the fast editing make the viewing experience of “Breathless” more impactful and unique [8]. The New Wave movement abandoned traditional editing rules and introduced casual and fast editing. This editing method is very prominent in expressing the inner experience and emotional changes of the characters, enhancing the drama and viewing experience of the film.

### **3.2.2 Lens language**

In the film “400 Blows”, long shots are used in many places, which is also one of the characteristics of the French New Wave. During the French New Wave, directors admired Italian neorealist cinema and Italian neore-

alist live-action shooting and the use of long shots was also borrowed by New Wave directors. For example, in the film “400 Blows”, long shots are used in many places, which is also one of the characteristics of the French New Wave.

At the beginning of the film, a set of eight long shots is used, and this long shot conveys some information. The Eiffel Tower in the distance indicates that the film takes place on the streets of Paris, and the bare tree trunks indicate that the story takes place in winter. The close-up of the Eiffel Tower’s panoramic view also resembles a person fading away. Empty streets, narrow buildings, and a slow pace of progress in the footage set the tone of the film as cold, dark, and oppressive. It starts with the scene where Antoine is punished. The camera follows the boy to provide the photo. Seven shots were used to complete a long shot, starting with a close-up of the boy writing and ending with the teacher getting up and stepping off the podium and switching to the backdrop. This long shot lasts a long time and depicts the entire plot of the boy being punished. This long lens has many variations, using push, pull, pan, shift, fixed, and other shooting methods to complete the space scheduling. The boys in the camera quickly pass the image, and the camera follows it quickly, suggesting that they may not like the image, but are pursuing the thrill of rebellion [9]. It was Antoine’s first penalty and showed Antoine’s rebellion. The boys’ rebellion and the sternness of the teachers set the stage for subsequent films. In addition, in the case of the boys writing poems with their teachers, long shots of more than 40 seconds were used. The camera is always fixed, with a long perspective of the teacher and the students in the classroom: from the teacher criticizing the student by name to the end of yelling at the student, all in the same shot. In this shot, the boy and the teacher are two opposed subjects. At the same time, the position of the camera is not fixed in the center of the classroom, but on the left side, placing the teacher and Antoine in the corners on either side of the symmetrical central axis, suggesting the antagonistic relationship between Antoine and the teacher. After Antoine ran away from home, Antoine stole the milk delivered from the street and used a long shot of more than fifty seconds to show Antoine drinking the stolen milk. The footage starts with a long shot, shooting a street corner, and ends with the camera panning slightly up and down when Antoine opens the bottle and looks up to drink milk. The action of the camera is consistent with Antoine’s, and the action of drinking milk is also more clearly expressed, further setting off this tense atmosphere.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the shooting techniques of these two films, it can be concluded that most of the French films used long shots during the New Wave,

and the directors were free individualized, and more creative, with the characteristics of anti-narration and modernism.

### 3.3 The Influence of French Cinema in the Context of the New Wave

The background of the birth of French New Wave cinema is closely related to the Second World War and post-war social changes. After the war, young French intellectuals felt a lack of faith and disillusionment, and they wanted to replace the falsehoods and routines of Hollywood films with more 'deviant' films. This spiritual shift led to the rise of the New Wave movement in French cinema [10]. The technical aspects of the New Wave cinema's technological and content innovations were mainly reflected in the following aspects: the use of naturalistic cinematography and long shots, and the creation of jump-cut rapid editing techniques, which were very different from the Hollywood films of the time. Content level: Influenced by existentialism, the content of the film often explores individualism and gender relations, with ordinary people or marginalized people as the protagonists, reflecting a strong humanitarian spirit.

## 4. Conclusion

The influence of the New Wave on subsequent generations in France was profound, inspiring filmmakers around the world and revolutionizing the language of cinema. Inspired by the French New Wave, many new French directors experimented with new forms of expression, even though these explorations were often met with resistance in their home film industry. Therefore, based on the narrative in this article, people in the new century should shake off the shackles of traditional thinking and strive to explore more far-reaching and meaningful cultural and

artistic works for the public to appreciate and appreciate, which is the embodiment and significance of the ideological revolution and ideological emancipation.

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