How To
Edit Dialog

for

"Keeping Notes"

Here are many of the secrets of editing a conversation for motion pictures and TV dramas

How to Edit Dialog for "Keeping Notes"
is written for the first scene on the CD-ROM entitled
"Thanksgiving Reunion"
which is available from a number of vendors on eBay

The Establishing Shot

The Mother's Close-Up Shot

The Son's Close-Up Shot

The Son's Second Close-Up Shot

This looks so simple!

The scene is much more challenging than you think!

Scene B15 Take 3   921

"Keeping Notes"
Scene #B15

The son and the mother are reunited after many years apart. In this scene, the mother and son learn much about each other. All the while, the son continues to write notes in his journal of everything he sees and learns.

This scene is an excellent introduction to editing a simple conversation from a motion picture or TV drama. The scene has only three camera setups – the establishing shot and the close-up shots of the actors. This is all that is necessary for a basic conversation.

Having only the three camera setups (camera positions) might seem limiting yet, as you will see, there are a tremendous number of choices that you must make to edit this scene.

3

B15-3

B15A-4

B15B-1

B15B-2

Scene B15 Take 3   1673
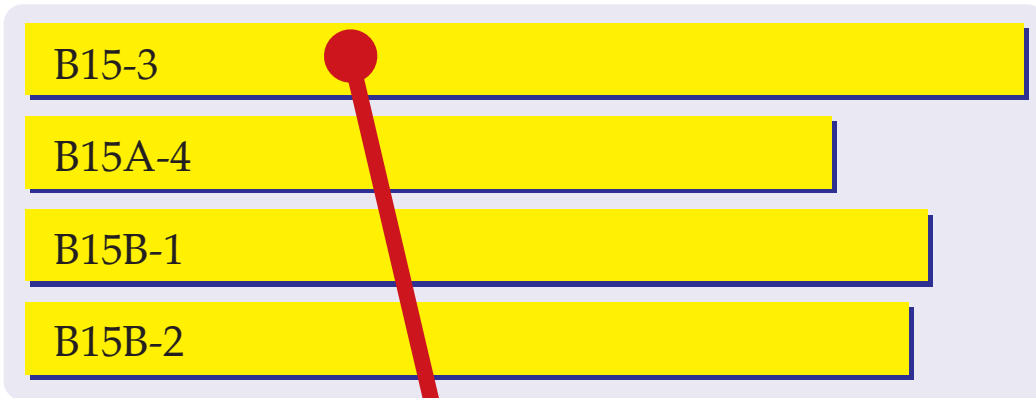
Scene B15, Take 3
"B15-3"

The first clip is an establishing shot which runs from beginning of the scene to the end of the scene.

This clip shows the physical location of the mother and the son as well as the position of everything in the room. This is why this movie clip is called the establishing shot. It establishes where everything is.

Notice that this is the only film clip which shows the beginning of the scene. The close-up shots start only after the mother and son are seated together.

4

B15-3

B15A-4

B15B-1

B15B-2

Scene B15A, Take 4
"B15B-4"

This film clip is the close-up shot of the mother. This clip does not start until after the mother says her first line so this clip does not even show all of her dialog.

This close-up shots is filmed with a telephoto lens which makes the mother appear warm and close as compared with the establishing shot which is filmed with a wide angle lens which makes the establishing shots seem cold and distant. This fact will be important when you edit this scene.

5

B15-3

B15A-4

B15B-1

B15B-2

Scene B15B Take 1   1878

Scene B15B, Take 1
"B15B-1"

This film clip is the first of two close-up shots of the son. I feel that the first take is more natural than the second take.

This is a good example of why you need a very experienced film crew when you begin making your own motion pictures. Your film crew should be ready to capture the first take of gifted actors and child actors because their first takes are almost always the best.

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B15-3

B15A-4

B15B-1

B15B-2

Scene B15B Take 2   1697

Scene B15B, Take 2
"B15B-2"

The last film clip is son's second close-up shot. Like the mother's close up shot, this is filmed with a strong telephoto lens to make the image feel warm and friendly.

In case you are wondering why the scene is called "B15" it is because this scene was added to the script after the script was approved for shooting. So when this scene was added after scene 15, it was given the name of B15.

7

Scene B15 Take 3   159

Scene B15 Take 3   921

Scene B15B Take 1   663

The real thing!

    If you want to become a film editor for motion pictures or television dramas, you must practice, practice, practice. That is why the scenes on this disk are so important. They give you a chance to practice editing wonderful scenes that are fun to edit.
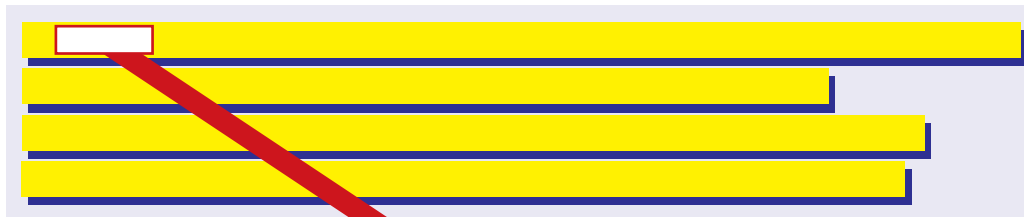
    Load these four movies into your computer and work along with me as I edit this scene. These are the same four film clips that were given to the editor in Hollywood to create this scene.

    You are editing an actual TV special filmed in Hollywood. This is the real thing.

So let's get started!

Scene B15A Take 4   1187

Scene B15A Take 4   2391

Scene B15 Take 3   2784

7

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   159

Scene B15 Take 3   921

In
Frame 159

Trim clip B15-3

Out
Frame 921

Obviously, I must use the establishing shot (B15-3) for the first clip of this scene because it is the only clip which shows the beginning of the scene.

I want to add a lot of music at the beginning of this scene so I want to watch the son writing in his journal for as long as possible. Unfortunately, I cannot use the first 150 frames of this clip because the microphone creates a shadow. Rather than immediately switch to the close up shots, I want to continue using the establishing shot until the son describes the noise of New York City. I feel that the son and mother have grown apart and I want to emphasize this by using a wide angle shot for the beginning of this scene.

Start this clip with frame 159 and end after frame 921.

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B15B-3

Scene B15 Take 3   159

Scene B15 Take 3   921
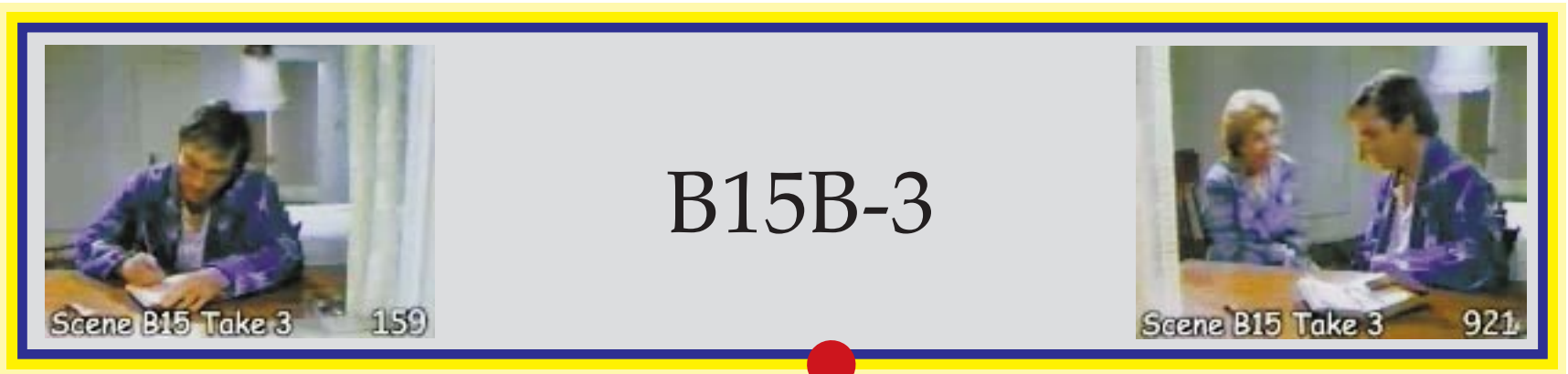
Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place the trimmed clip in the time line.

Also , I create a visual fade in for 6 frames at the beginning of this clip.

Next, I lower the volume of the audio to eliminate just the director's words. I will show you how.

Picture

Audio

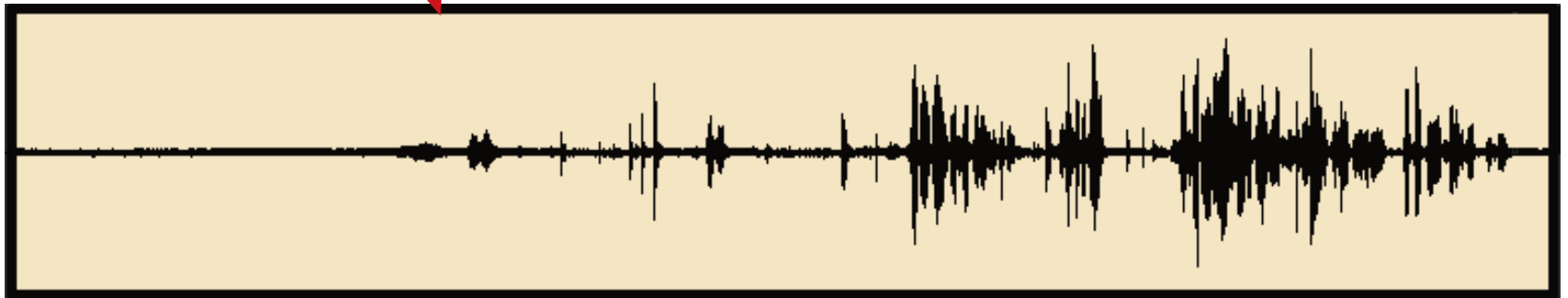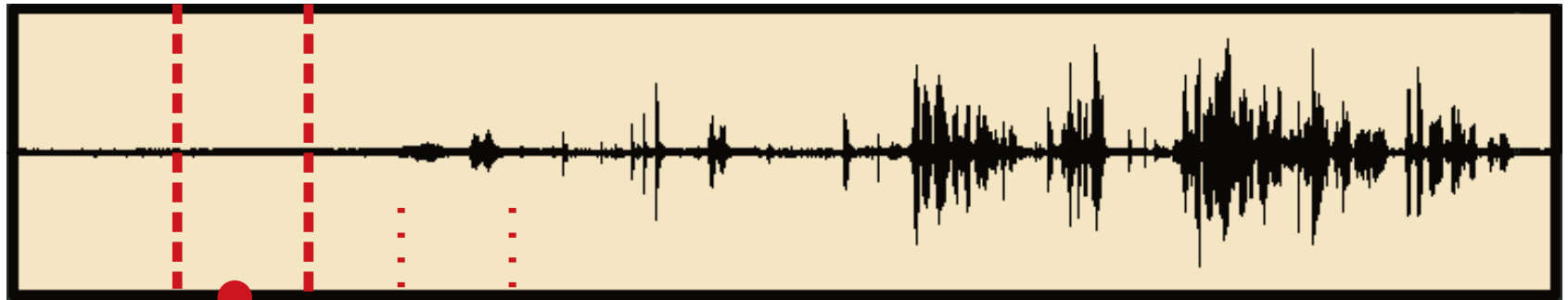| Picture	B15B-4	
Audio		

Fixing The Audio (1)

I use the rubberband tool to lower the volume of the audio to eliminate the director's words. The rubber band tool makes this very easy.

Unfortunately, this also leaves empty silence in the sound track in the middle of the scene. This silence must also be eliminated.

Volume

Fixing The Audio (2)

Fixing this problem might not be necessary if I use powerful music at the beginning of the scene which will hide the gap in the room noise. However, I think I will want to use very soft and gentle music. In that case, the gap might be noticed... so I need to fill the gap with room noise (also called "room tone".)

To fix this problem, I copy a tiny piece of audio which has only background noise (room noise) and use it to fill the missing gap.

Picture

B15B-4

Audio

Use a separate track

Most editing programs allow me to put audio on a second audio track. Using a separate track helps me keep things organized.

12
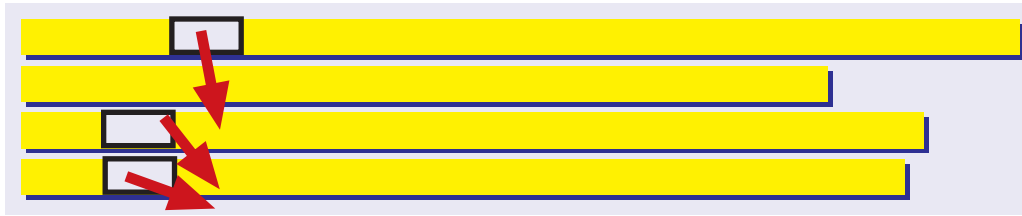
Select the next clip

Before I select the next clip, I must look at all the possible clips. I must study the picture and more importantly, I listen to the dialog of the clips. I must decide which has the best delivery, the best timing, and the best emotion for this scene.

Listening to those sirens wail and those trash trucks go banging up and down the street, I forget that there is a peaceful place left in the world.

Listening to the wail of the sirens and those trash trucks banging up and down the street, sometimes I forget that there is still a peaceful place left in the world.

Listening to those sirens wail and those trash trucks go banging up and down the street, I forget that there is a peaceful place left in the world.

Scene B15, Take 3

Scene B15B, Take 1

Scene B15B, Take 2

Which Is Better?

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Only one Microphone?

There is only one microphone on this movie set. The microphone is on a pole and is pointed at only one actor at a time.

For Scene B15A, Take 1, the microphone is pointed at the mother, not the son. That is why the audio of the son is not good in this clip.

Therefore, I do not even consider using this clip (Scene B15A, Take 1) for the son's dialog since the audio quality is so bad. I might use the picture for a reaction shot if I want. But the poor quality of the sound makes this clips useless for the audio... and right now, I am only editing based on audio. (That is one of the secrets of good film editing for a conversation.)

Ugh!!!   Not good.

Listening to the wail of the sirens and those trash trucks banging up and down the street, I forget that there is a peaceful place left in the world.

Scene B15A Take 4   502

Scene B15A, Take 1

14

Listen to the different clips

To evaluate the three clips, I make a copy of each clip and I carefully trim each clip so I can listen to just that dialog. It is extremely important that I listen to a perfectly trimmed movie clip without any extra sounds.

Which is better?

Scene B15, Take 3

B15-3

From frame 922 through frame 1088

Scene B15 Take 3   922

Scene B15 Take 3   1088

or

Scene B15B, Take 1

B15B-1

From frame 444 through frame 633

Scene B15B Take 1   444

Scene B15B Take 1   663

or

Scene B15B, Take 2

B15B-2

Best!

From frame 426 through frame 645
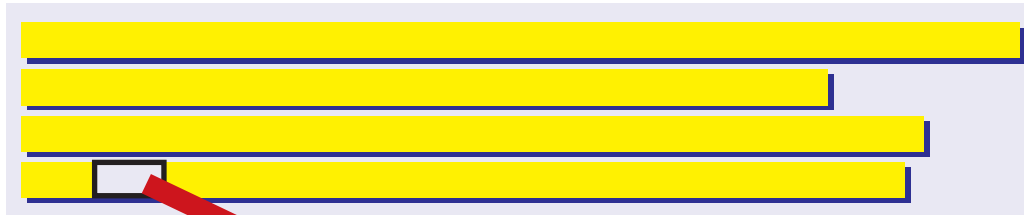
Scene B15B Take 2   426

Scene B15B Take 2   645

Listening to those sirens wail and those trash trucks go banging up and down the road, I forget there is a peaceful place left in the world.

B15B-2

Scene B15B Take 2   426

Scene B15B Take 2   645
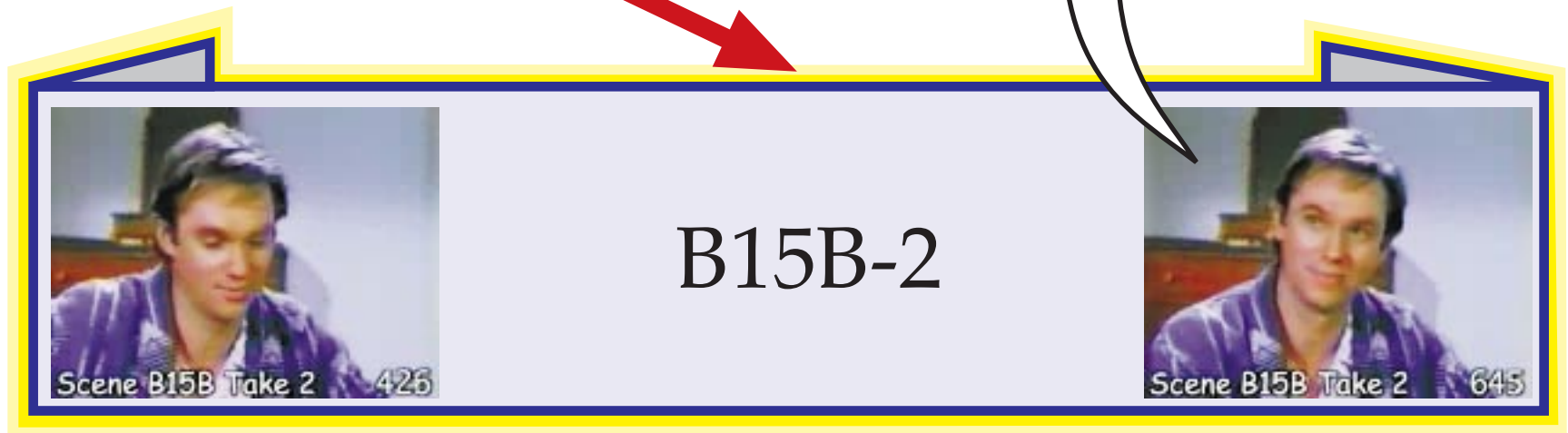
In

Frame 426
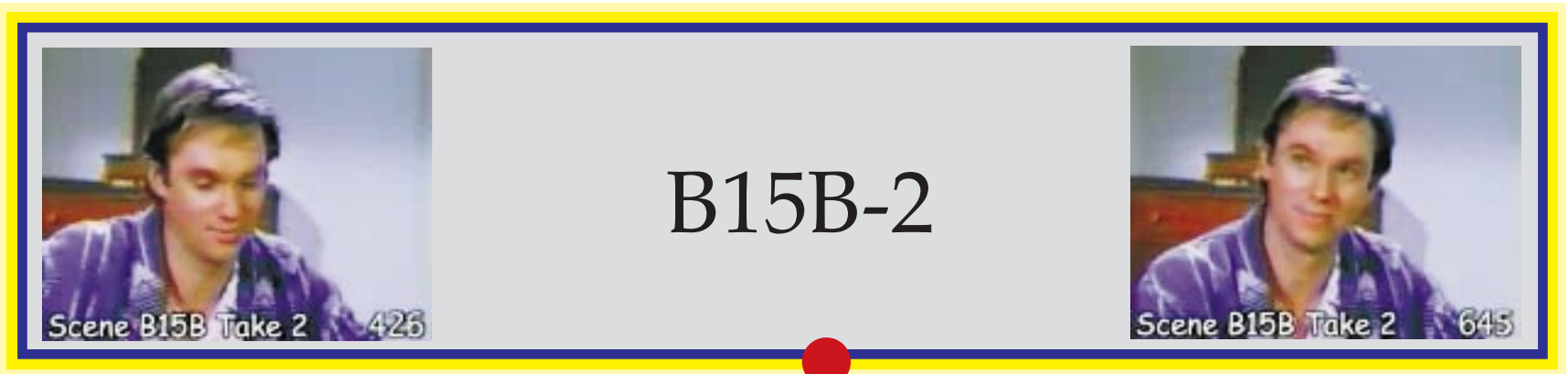
Out

Frame 645

Trim clip B15B-2

I prefer the second close-up shot of the son (B15B-2). It seems more relaxed and sincere than the first close-up shot (B15B-1).

The sound on the establishing shot (B15-3) is not as good and I don't like the way the son's head is turned away from the camera.

B15B-2

Scene B15B Take 2   426

Scene B15B Take 2   645

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I decide which clip has the best audio, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

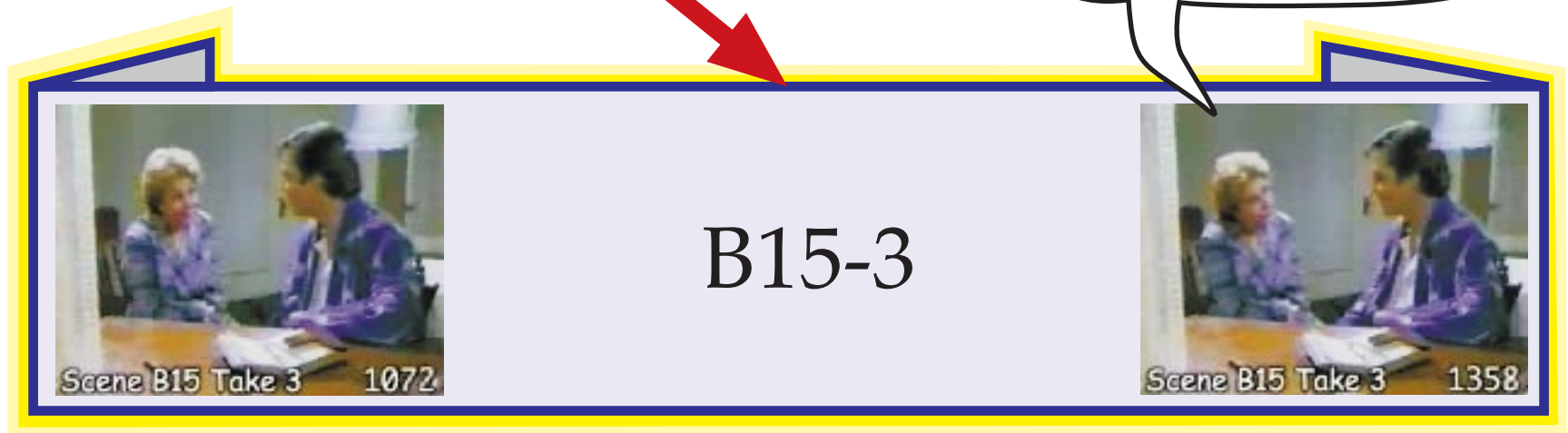## B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   1072

Scene B15 Take 3   1358

In
Frame 1072

Out
Frame 1358

Trim clip B15-3

I want to continue using the establishing shot rather than use a close-up shot. I want to emphasize the distance that has grown between the son and the mother. I want to emphasize how awkward they both feel at this moment.
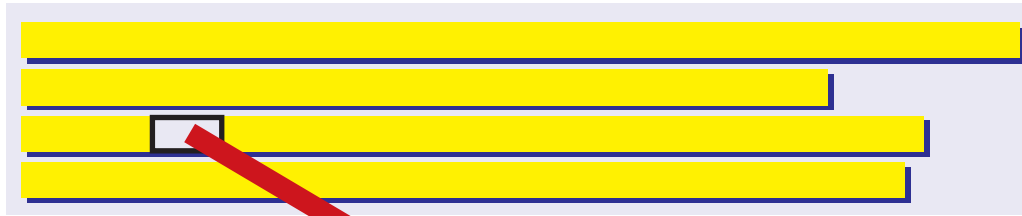
The wide angle lens of the establishing shot makes a scene seem cold. Some editors prefer to use close-up shots to keep the scene warm for the TV audience. You should try it both ways to see the difference the lens makes. This is a totally different feel!
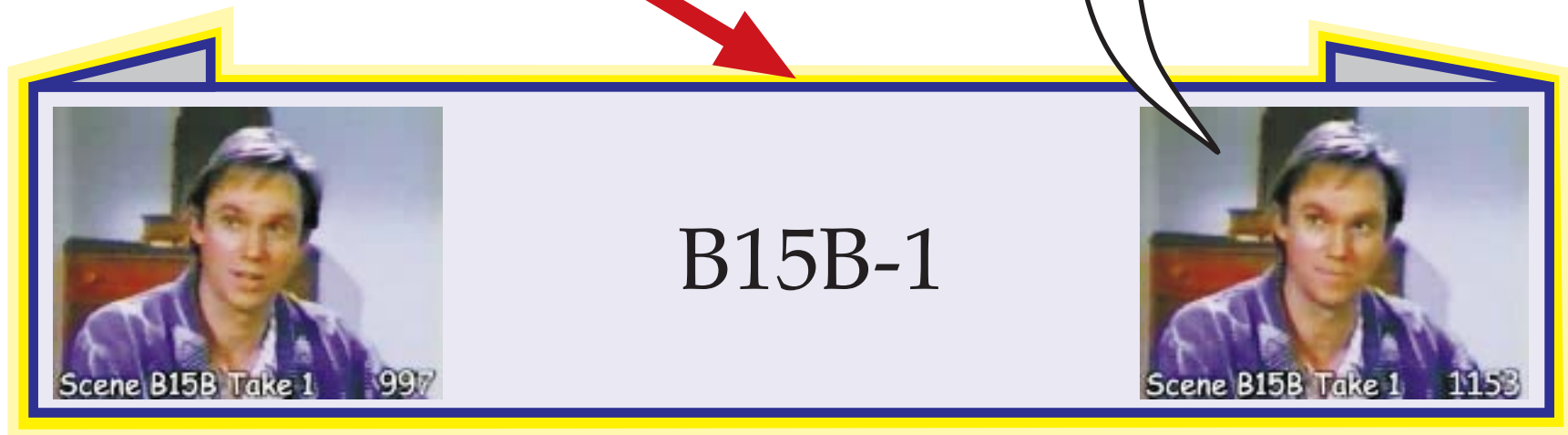
Start with frame 1072 and end after frame 1358.
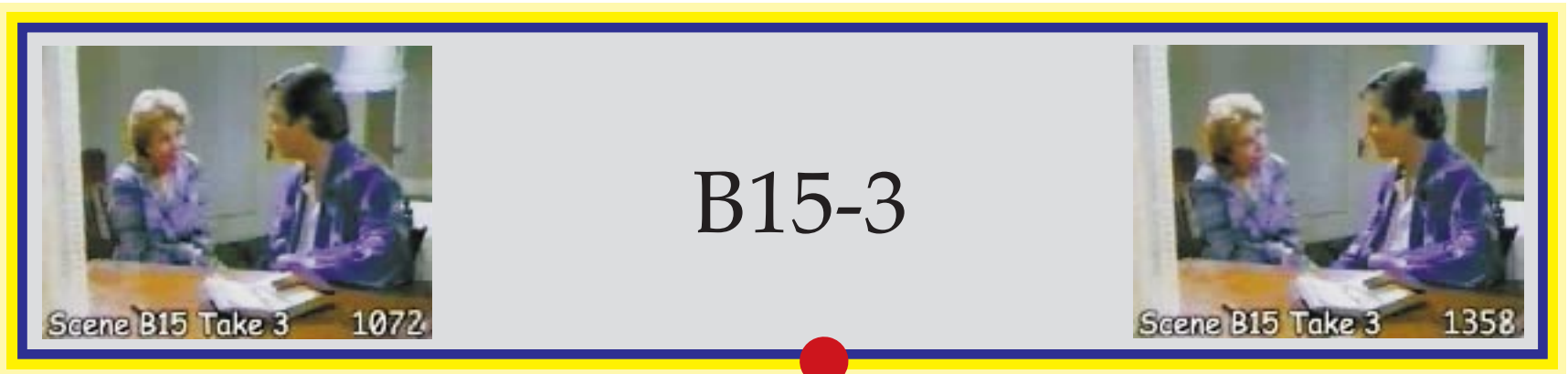
B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   1072

Scene B15 Take 3   1358

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

16

She's an editor at Harper's Bazaar. The first night I saw her I said to myself, That is the girl I am going to marry.

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   997

Scene B15B Take 1   1153

In
Frame 997

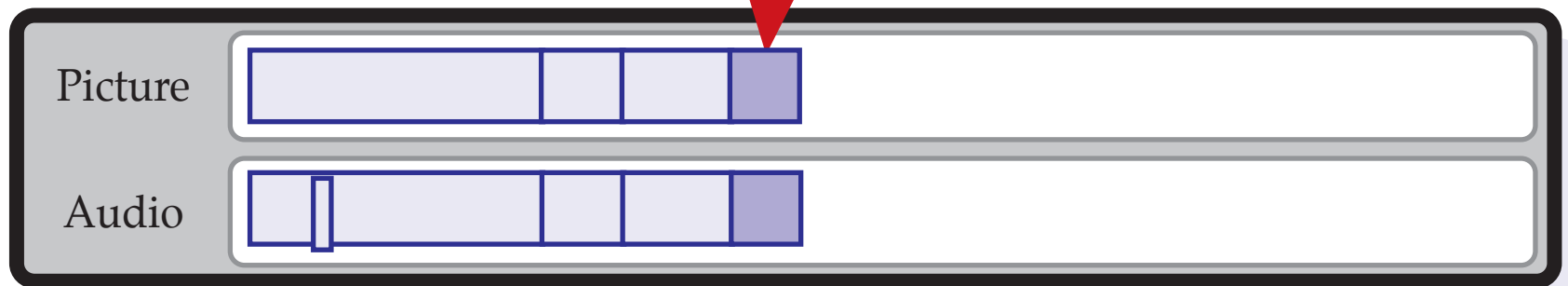## Out
Frame 1153

Trim clip B15B-1

Now I want to emphasize the son's enthusiasm so I select the close-up shot rather than continue with the establishing shot (B15-3). I want to bring the audience closer to the actor.
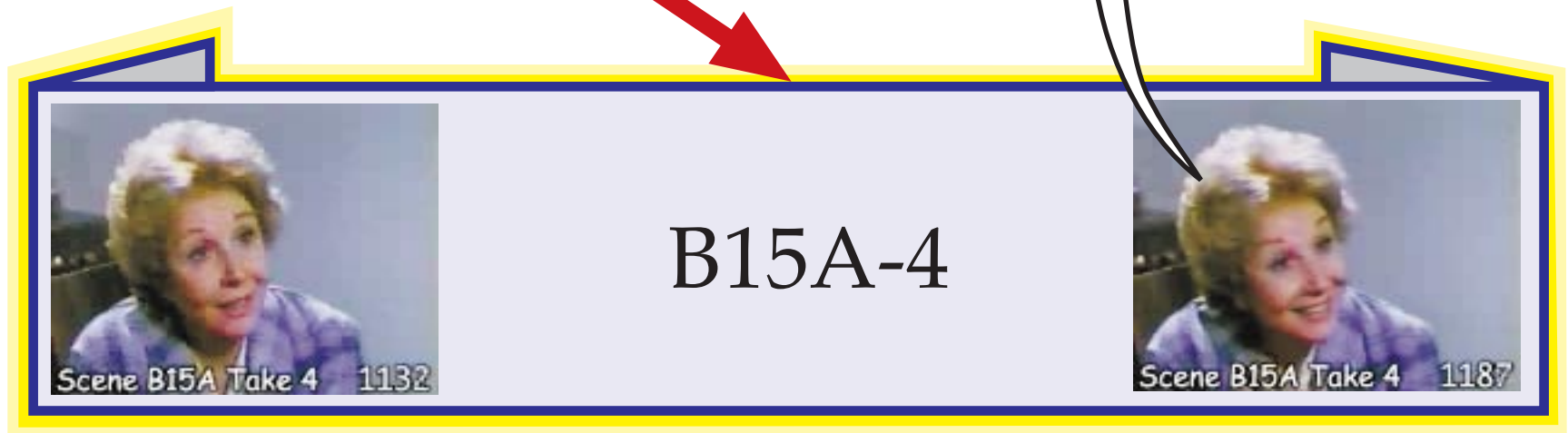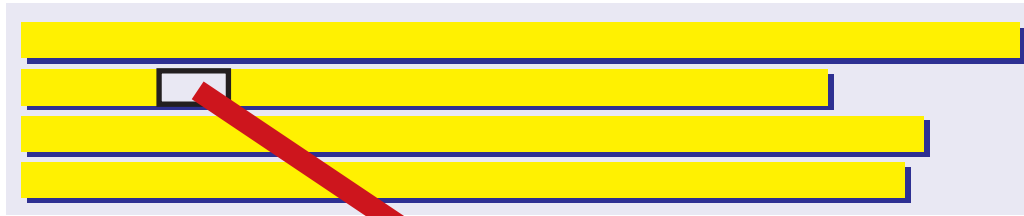
I feel that the first take (B15B-1) is more natural sounding than the second take (B15B-2).

Start this clip with frame 997 and end after frame 1153.
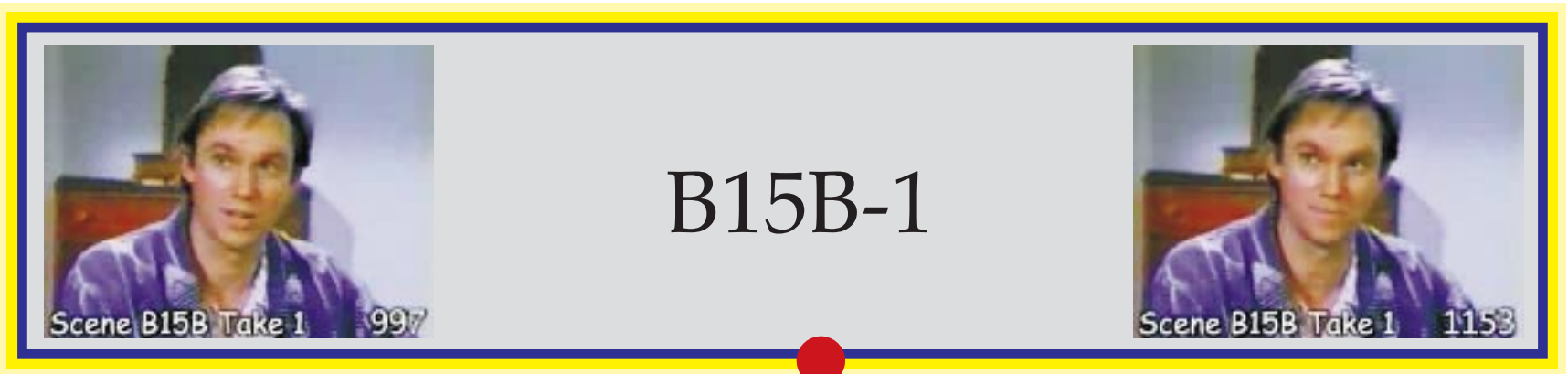
B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   997

Scene B15B Take 1   1153

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

21

Have you asked her?

B15A-4
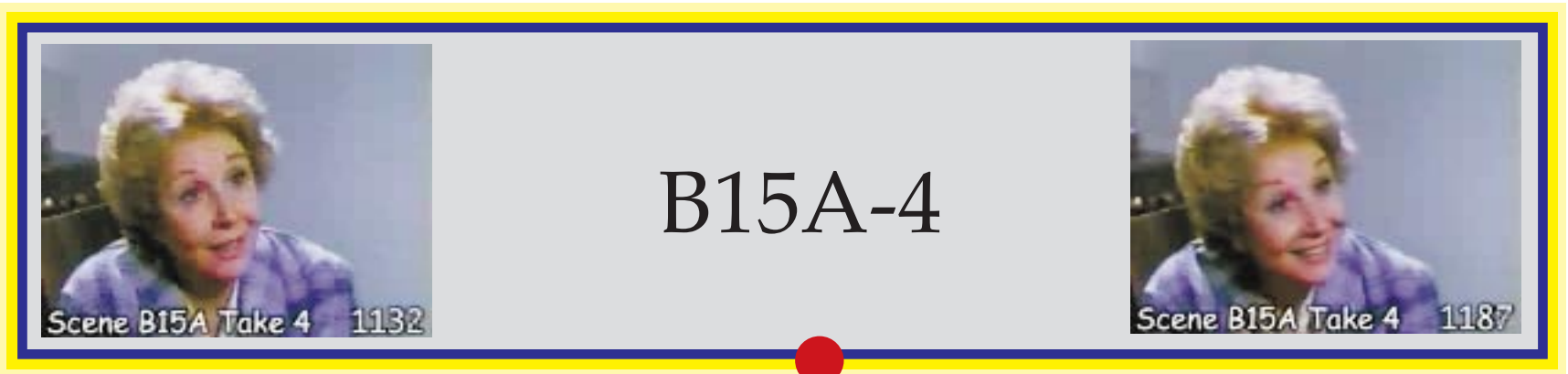
Scene B15A Take 4   1132

Scene B15A Take 4   1187

In
Frame 1132

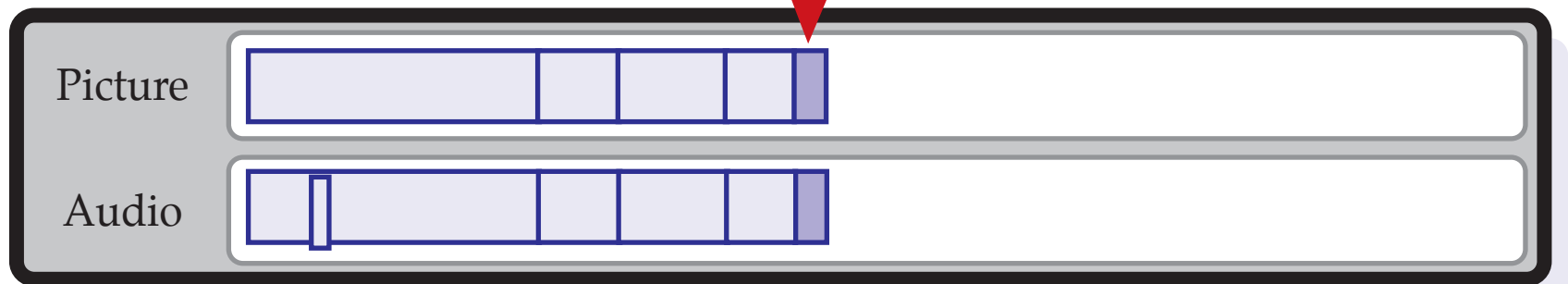## Out
Frame 1187

Trim clip B15A-4

I want to emphasize the mother's surprised reaction so this is why I waited until now to show her first close-up shot. Now the close up shot has a greater impact.

Start with frame 1132 and end after frame 1187.

B15A-4

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

I keep asking her. She keeps putting me off. She says I am driven and career minded.

B15B-1

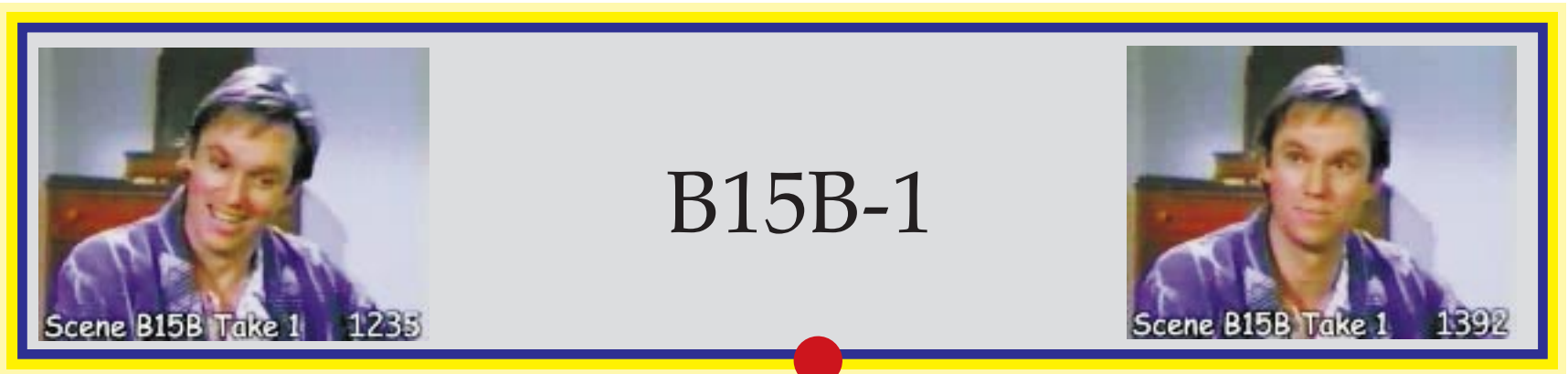Scene B15B Take 1   1235

Scene B15B Take 1   1392

In
Frame 1235

Out
Frame 1392

Trim clip B15B-1

From now on, I use close-up shots because I want to tell the audience that the son and mother are beginning to bond. I prefer the first take (B15B-1) rather than the second take (B15B-2). The first seems more natural.
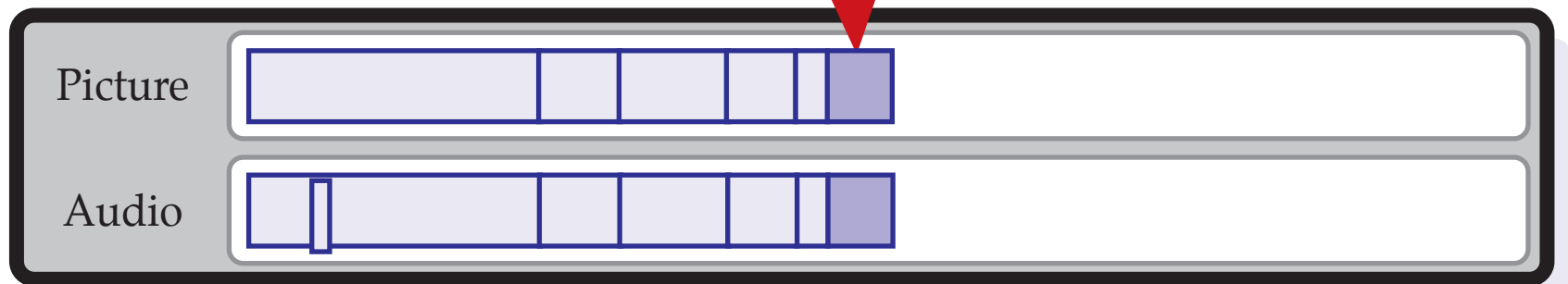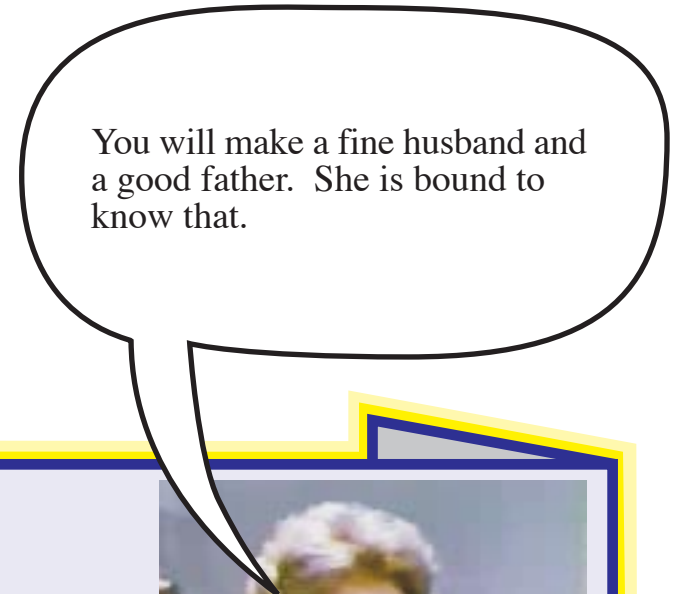
Start with frame 1235 and end after frame 1392.

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   1235

Scene B15B Take 1   1392

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

16

You will make a fine husband and a good father. She is bound to know that.

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   1357

Scene B15A Take 4   1492

In
Frame 1357

Out
Frame 1492

Trim clip B15A-4

I prefer the warmth from the close-up shot (B15A-4) rather than the establishing shot (B15-3).

Start with frame 1357 and end after frame 1492.
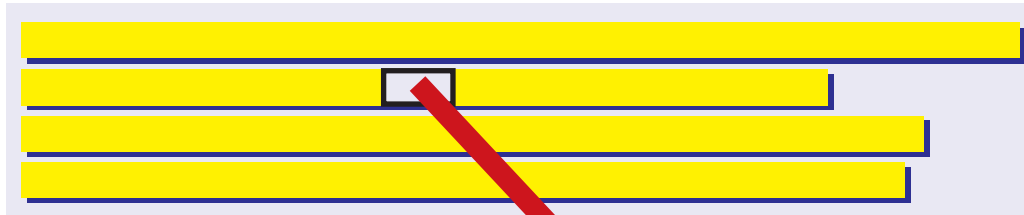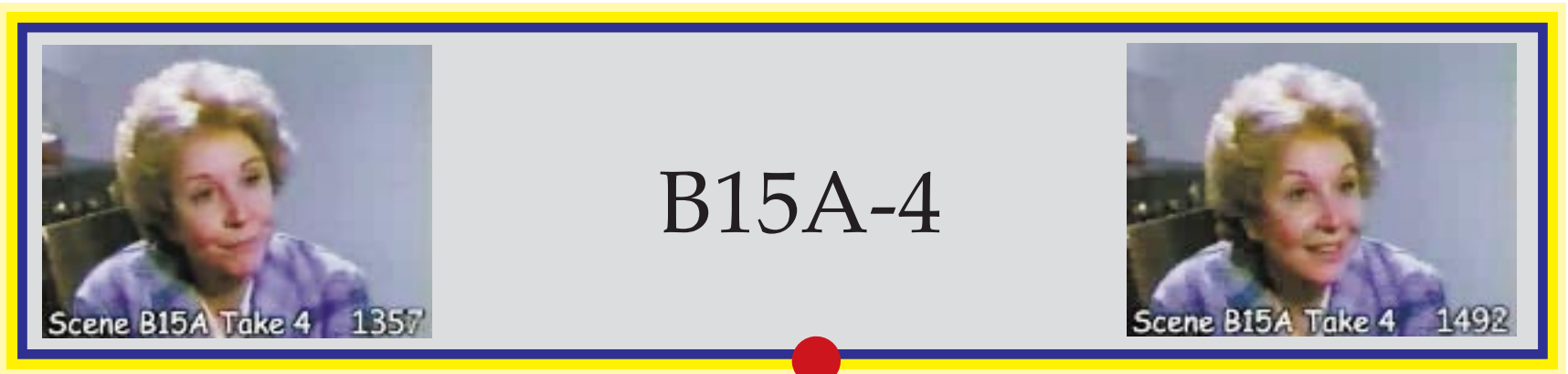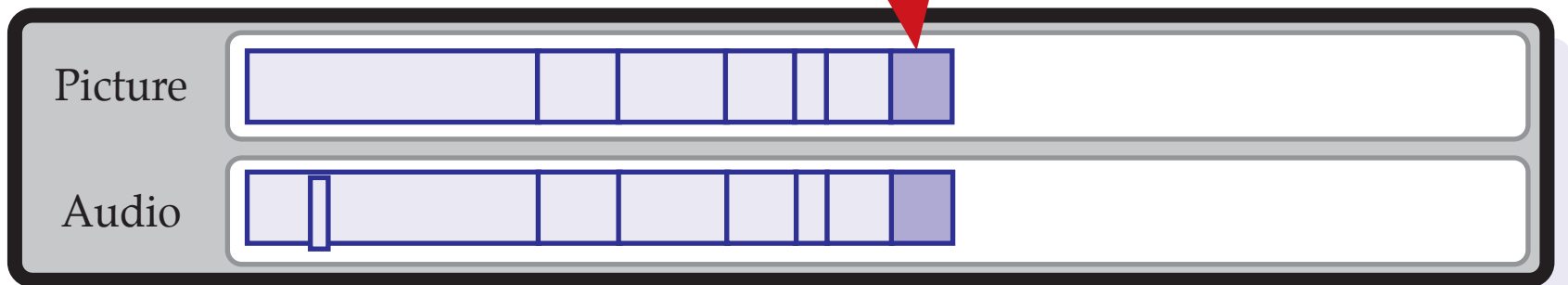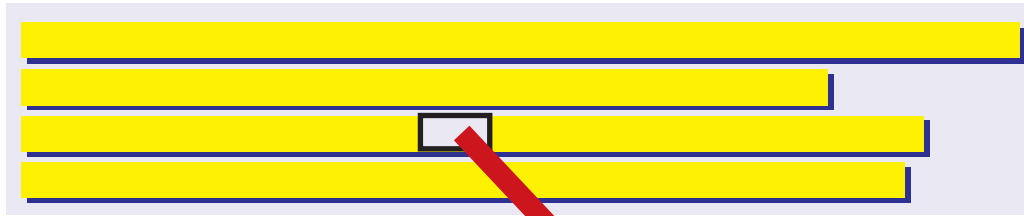
B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   1357

Scene B15A Take 4   1492

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

> We would bring the children up here every summer and you can sit out on the porch and read to them like you did with me.

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   1506

Scene B15B Take 1   1666

In
Frame 1506

Out
Frame 1666

Trim clip B15B-1

I continue to feel a strong warmth from the son so naturally, I want to continue using his close-up shots rather than the establishing shot.

Of the two close-up shots, I prefer the first take of the son's close up shot (B15B-1) rather than the second close-up shot (B15B-2).

Start with frame 1506 and end after frame 1666.
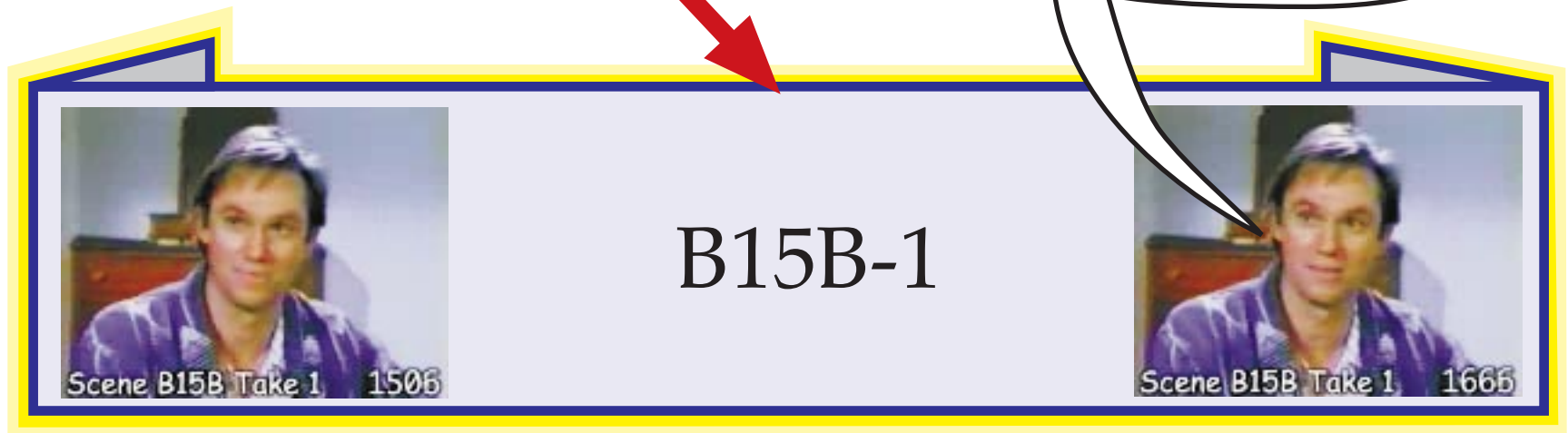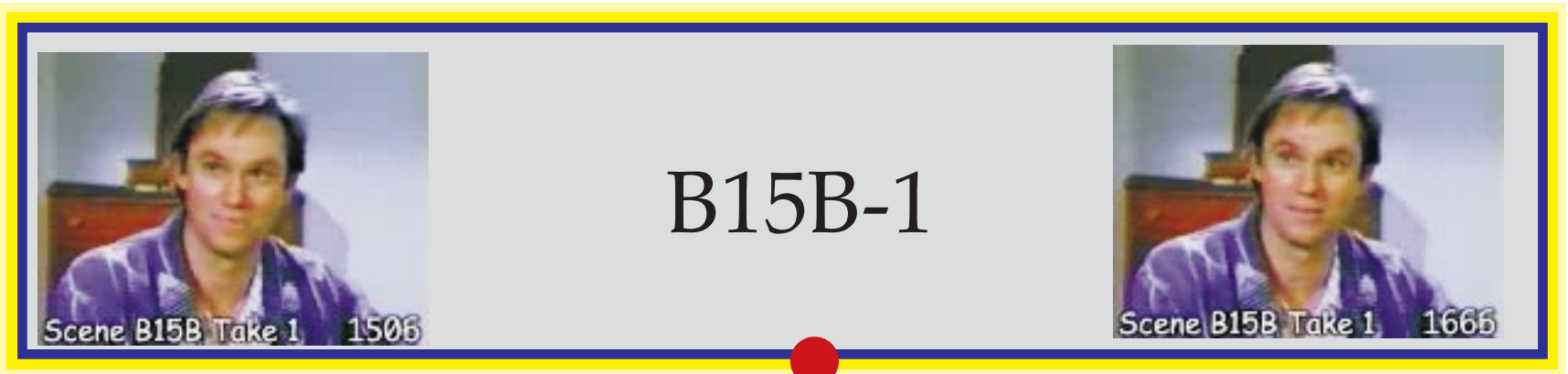
28

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   1506

Scene B15B Take 1   1666

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio
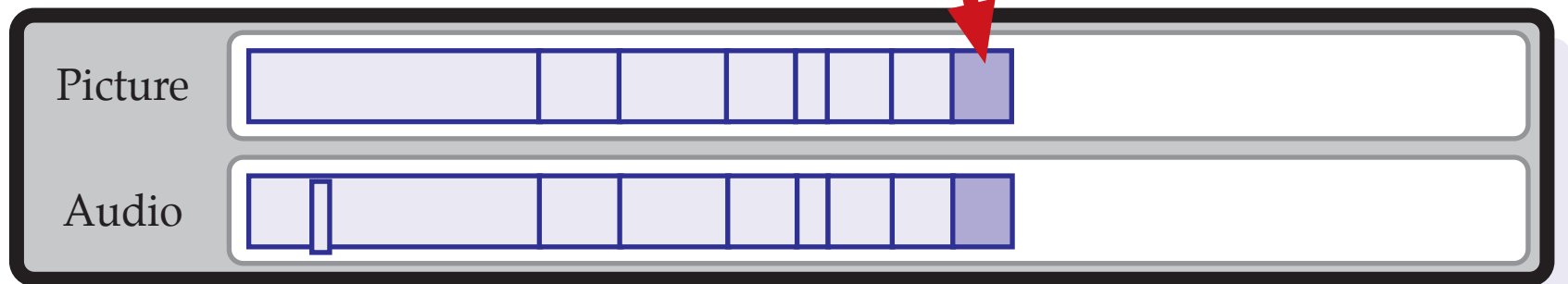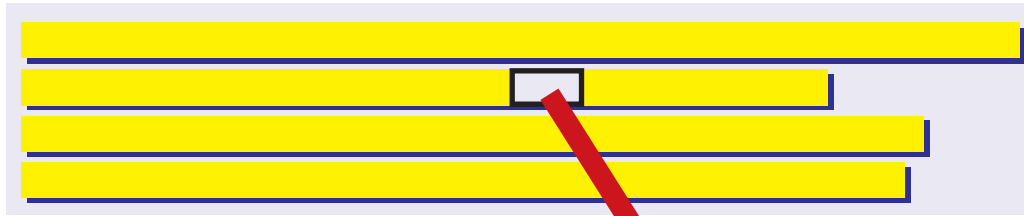
Daddy's talking about putting a deck all the way around the new house so we can look at the view.

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   1651

Scene B15A Take 4   1777

In

Out

Frame 1651

Frame 1777

Trim clip B15A-4

The mother is still very enthusiastic so I want to use her close up shot (B15A-4) rather than the establishing shot (B15-3).

Start with frame 1651 and end after frame 1177.
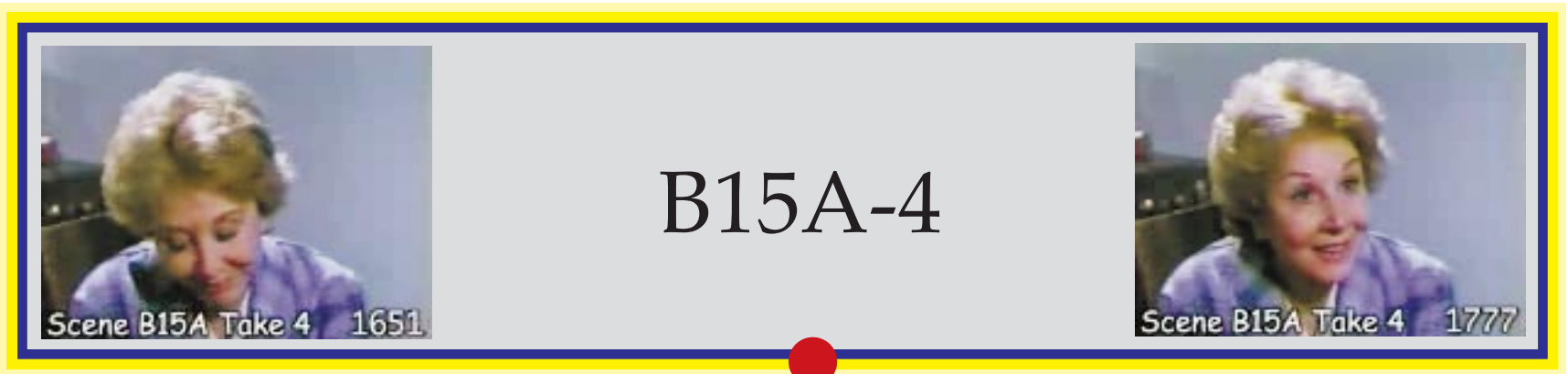
B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   1651

Scene B15A Take 4   1777

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

B15-3

I forgot about the new house.

In
Frame 2133

Out
Frame 2206
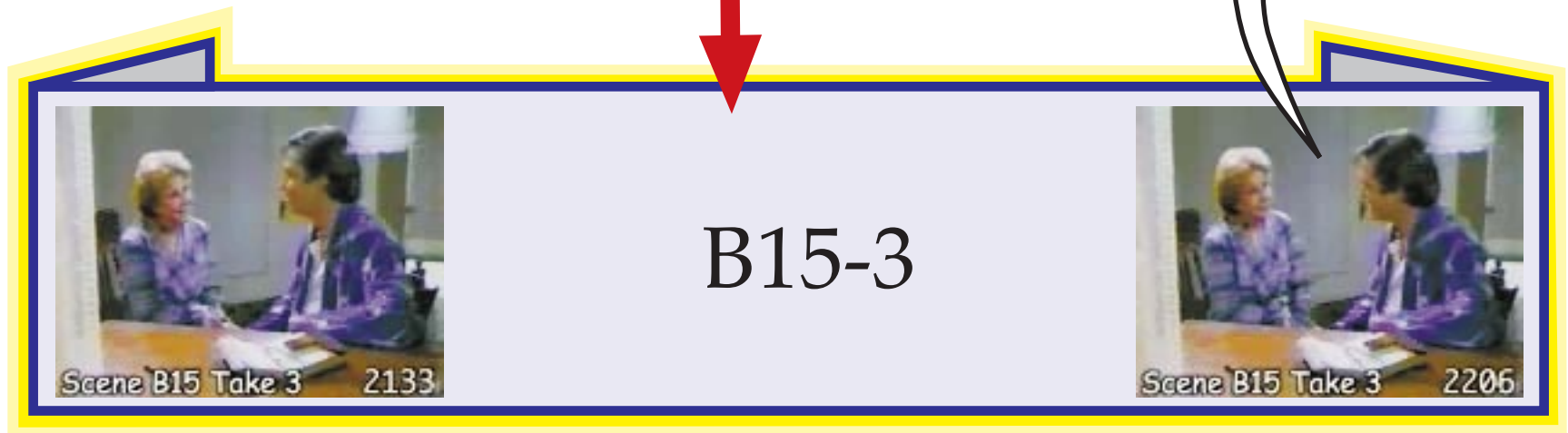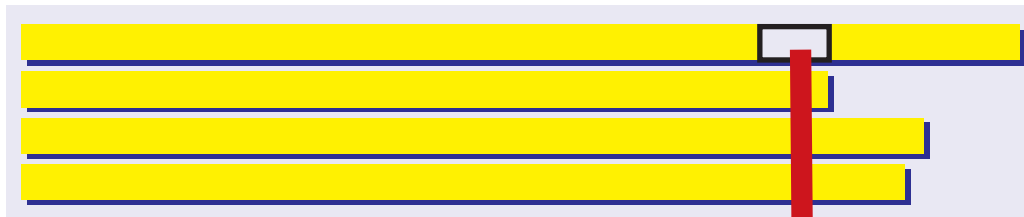
Trim clip B15-3

Now the son becomes upset so I want him to appear cold and distant even though he tries not to sound that way. This is why I do not want to use a close-up shot which will feel warm and close.

Therefore, I use the wide-angle establishing shot which seems rather cold. Also, in this shot, the son's face is pointed away from the camera which adds to the cold feeling.

Start with frame 2133 and end after frame 2206.

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   2133

Scene B15 Take 3   2206
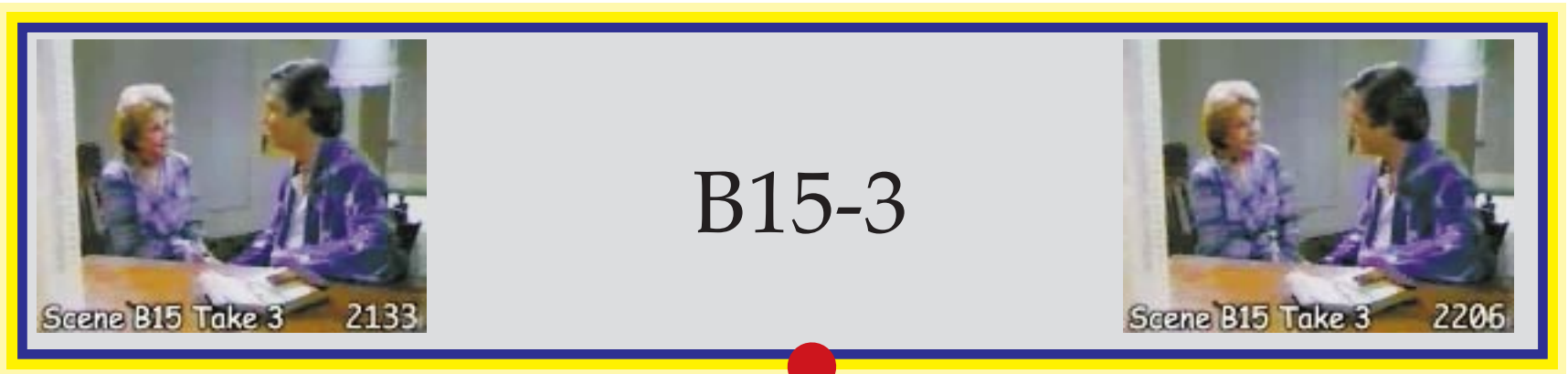
Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have marked the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

You aren't unhappy that we are moving, are you?
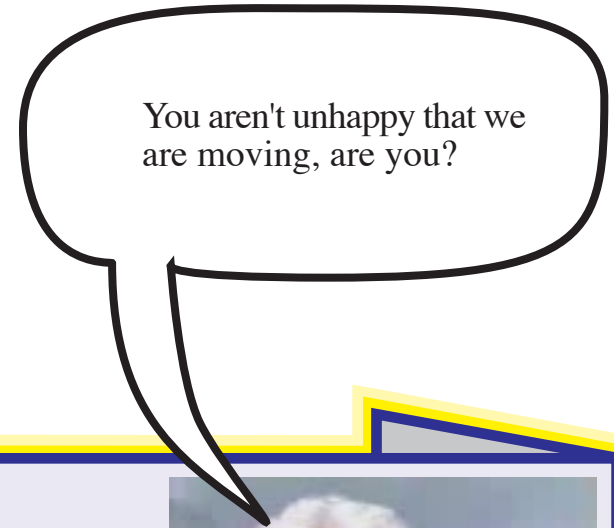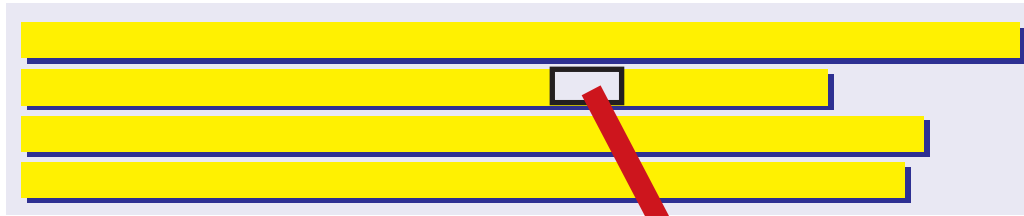
B15A-4

In

Frame 1847

Out

Frame 1931

Trim clip B15A-4

I want the mother to continue to feel warm and friendly in this shot (even though the son has turned cold) so I use the close-up shot rather than the establishing shot since the close-up shot is filmed with a telephoto angle lens while the establishing shot is filmed with a wide angle lens.

Start with frame 1847 and end after frame 1931.

34

Scene B15A Take 4   1847

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   1931

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   2274

Scene B15 Take 3   2392

> It will take me a little while to get use to the idea.

In
Frame 2274

Out
Frame 2392
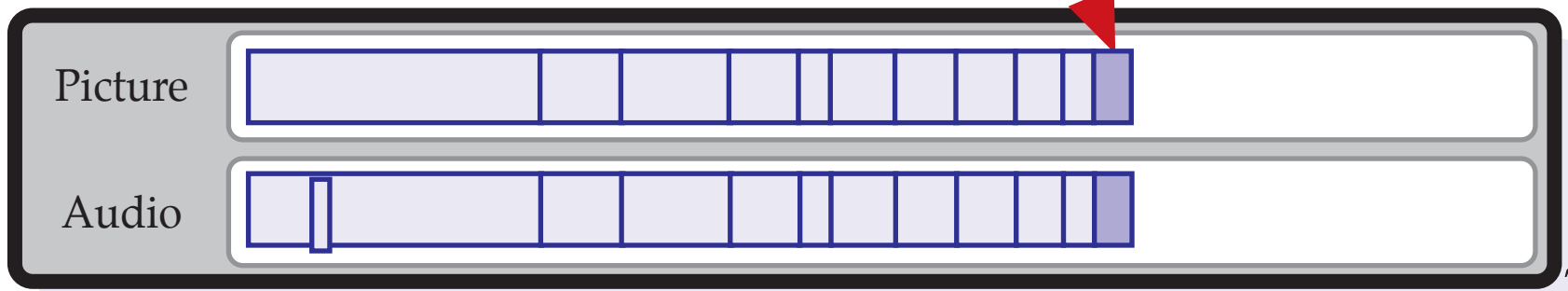
Trim clip B15-3

The son is still not happy. I want to emphasize his continued unhappiness by using a wide-angle shot rather than a close-up shot which would feel much warmer. Therefore, I use the establishing shot.

Notice that I create the mood for this scene, not the actors. As the editor, I determine the emotional impact of the scene. This is the magic of Hollywood and I am king!
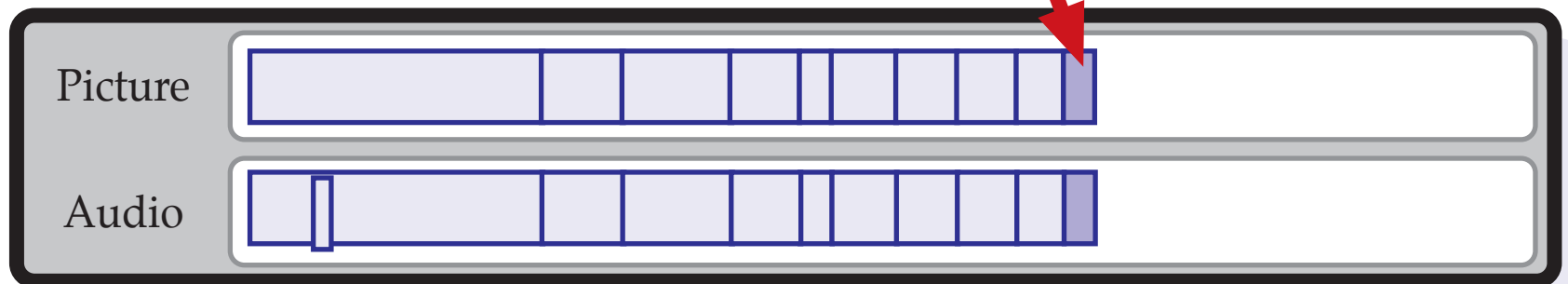
Start with frame 2274 and end after frame 2392.
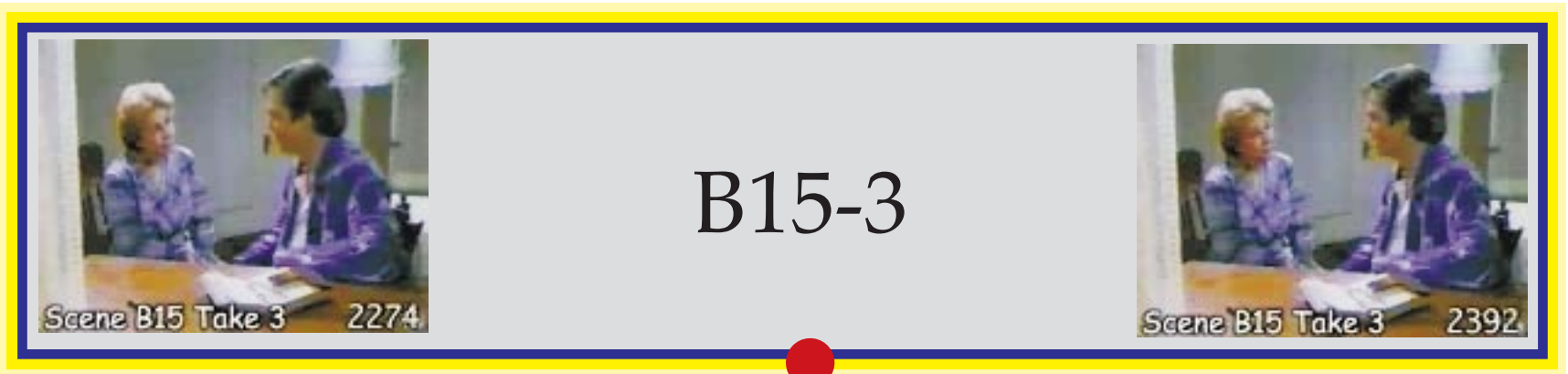
B15-3

Place this clip in the timeline

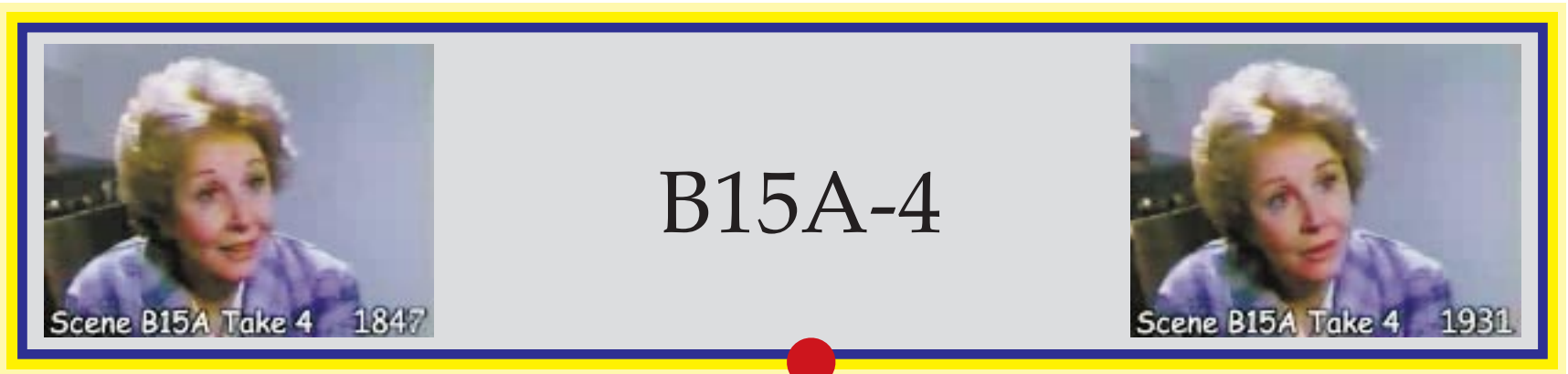Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

You go back to your writing. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   2029

Scene B15A Take 4   2166
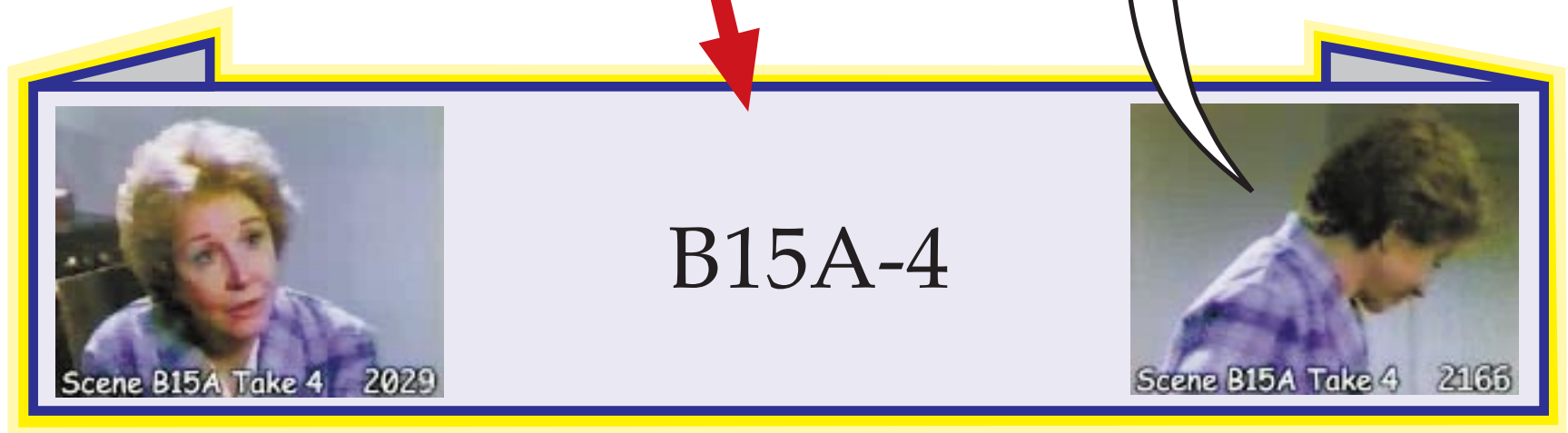
In
Frame 2029

Out
Frame 2166

Trim clip B15A-4

Even though the mother feels rejected, I still want her to be warm and sympathetic. Therefore, I want to use her close-up shot rather than the establishing shot which would seem cold.

Start with frame 2029 and end after frame 2166.
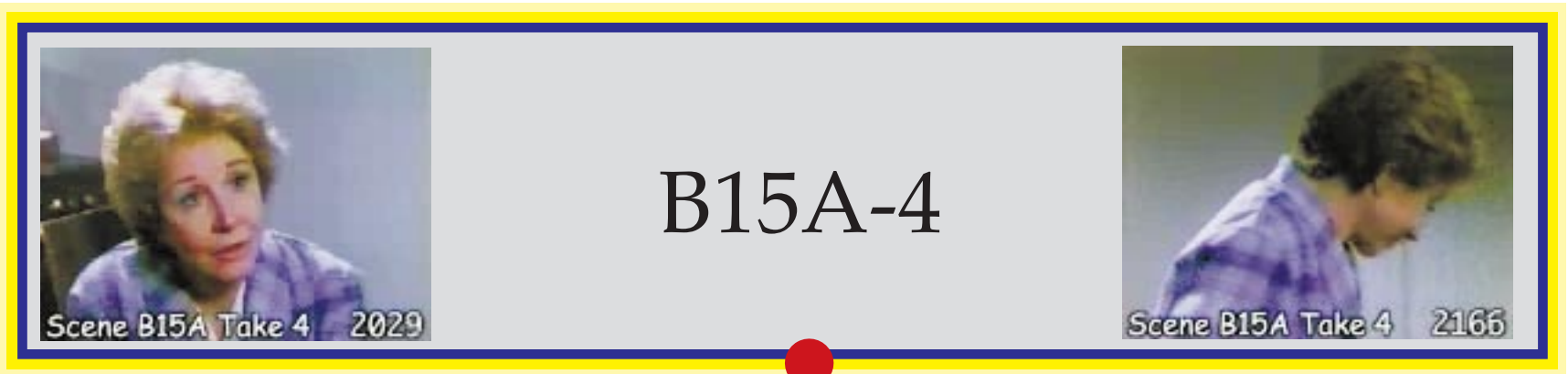
38

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   2029

Scene B15A Take 4   2166

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

Mama. I sure hope I make as good a choice in picking a wife as my daddy did.

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   2261

Scene B15B Take 1   2496
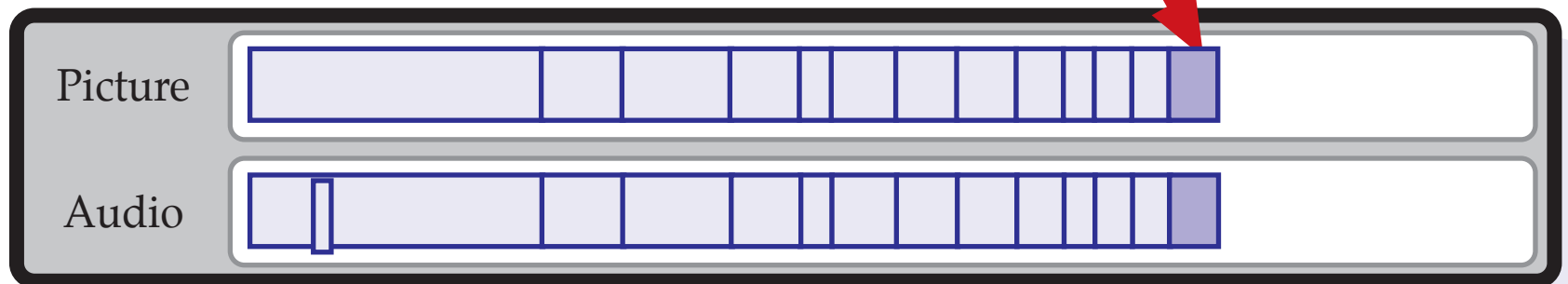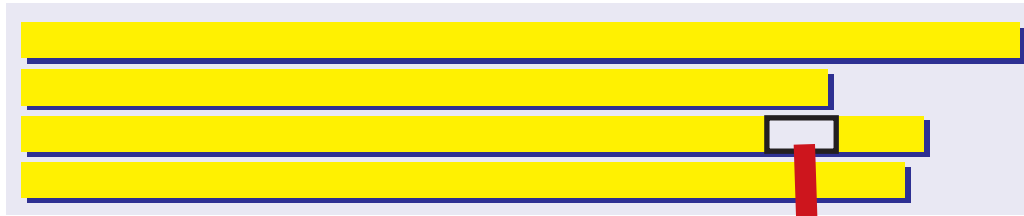
In
Frame 2261

Trim clip B15B-1

The son tries to reestablish a warm bond between him and his mother. I want to show that the son's feelings are still very warm and friendly. Therefore I use one of the close-up shots rather than the establishing show which would feel cold.

I prefer the first take of the son's close-up shots (B15B-1) rather than the second take (B15B-2).

Note that the first frame of this clip does not match the position of the mother's hand in the previous shot. However, for now, I am only worried about the audio. Nothing else is important!

Start with frame 2261 and end after frame 2496.

Out
Frame 2496

40

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   2261

Scene B15B Take 1   2496

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

B15A-4

In
Frame 2391

Out
Frame 2456

Trim clip B15A-4

I want to use the close-up shot for the mother. I don't want to use the establishing shot because, as the mother moves away, she become very small and distant in the picture. Also the close-up shot (which uses a telephoto lens) has more impact that the establishing shot (which uses a wide angle lens.)

Start with frame 2391 and end after frame 2456.
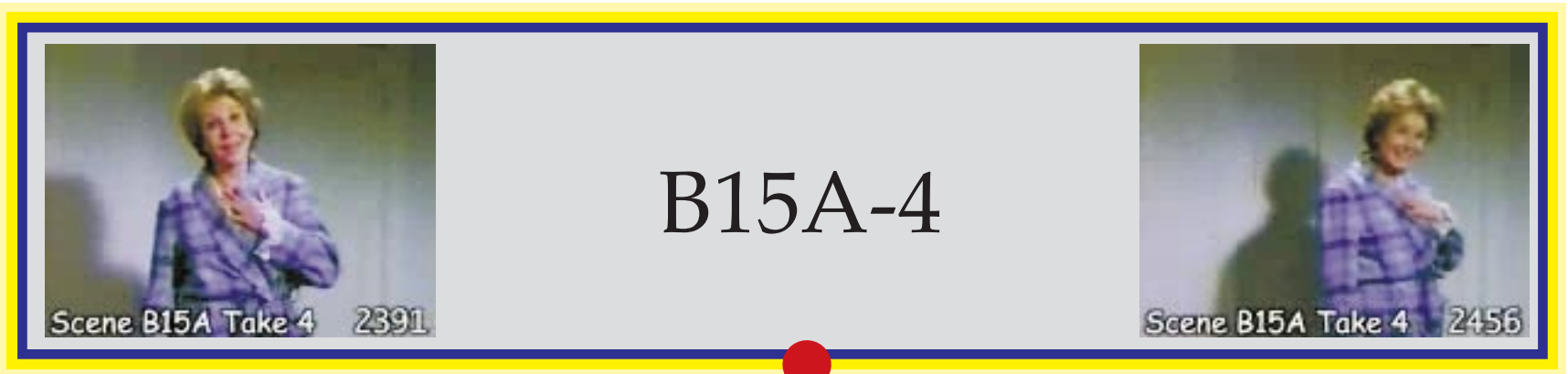
B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4 2391

Scene B15A Take 4 2456

Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

Picture

Audio

The End

B15-3

In

Frame 2784

Out
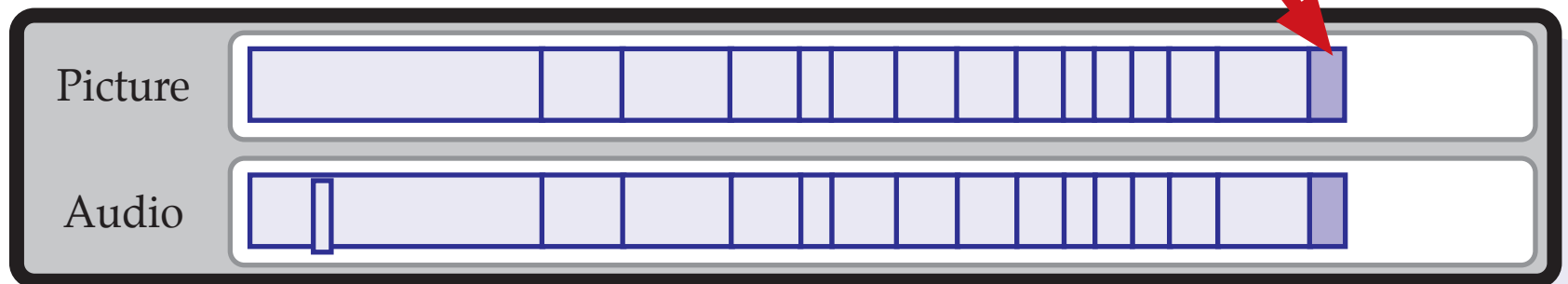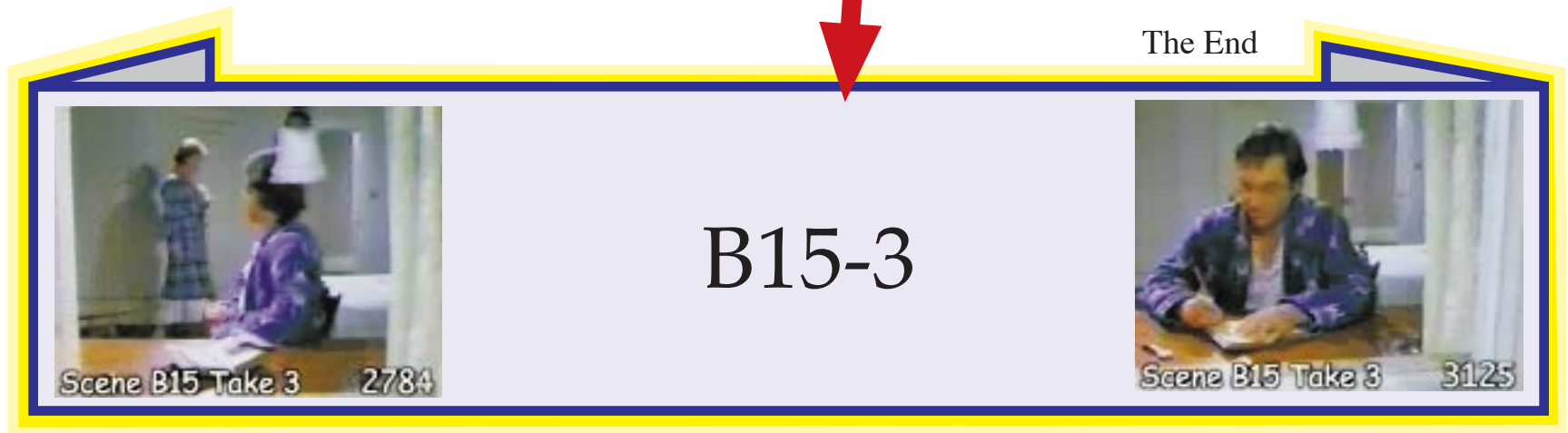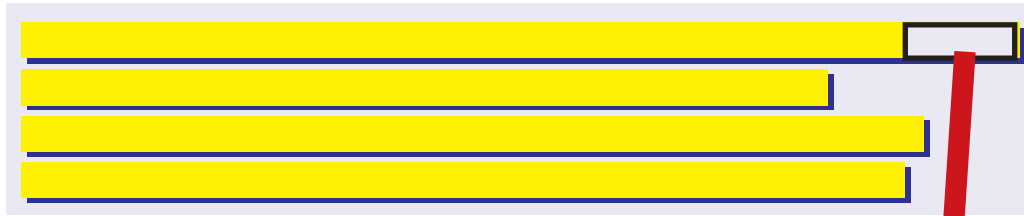
Frame 3125

Trim clip B15-3

For the end of the scene, I prefer use the establishing shot rather then either of the son's close-up shots. Now that the scene is over, I want the audience feel separated from the scene. This establishing shot gives me distance between the audience and the actors.

Other film editors disagree. They prefer to use the establishing shot followed by a close up shot. Which do you prefer?

Start with frame 2784 and end after frame 3125.
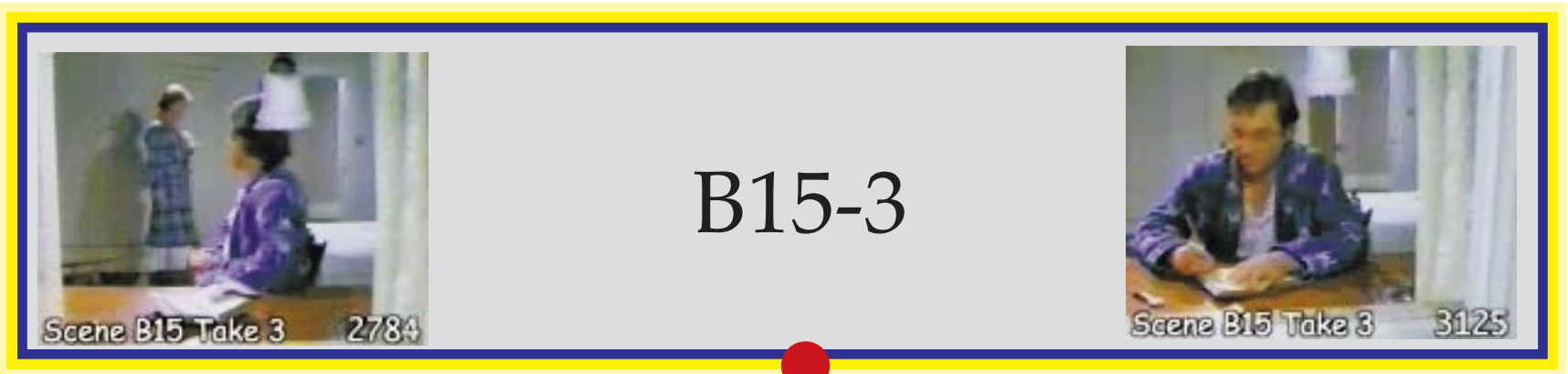
B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   2784

Scene B15 Take 3   3125
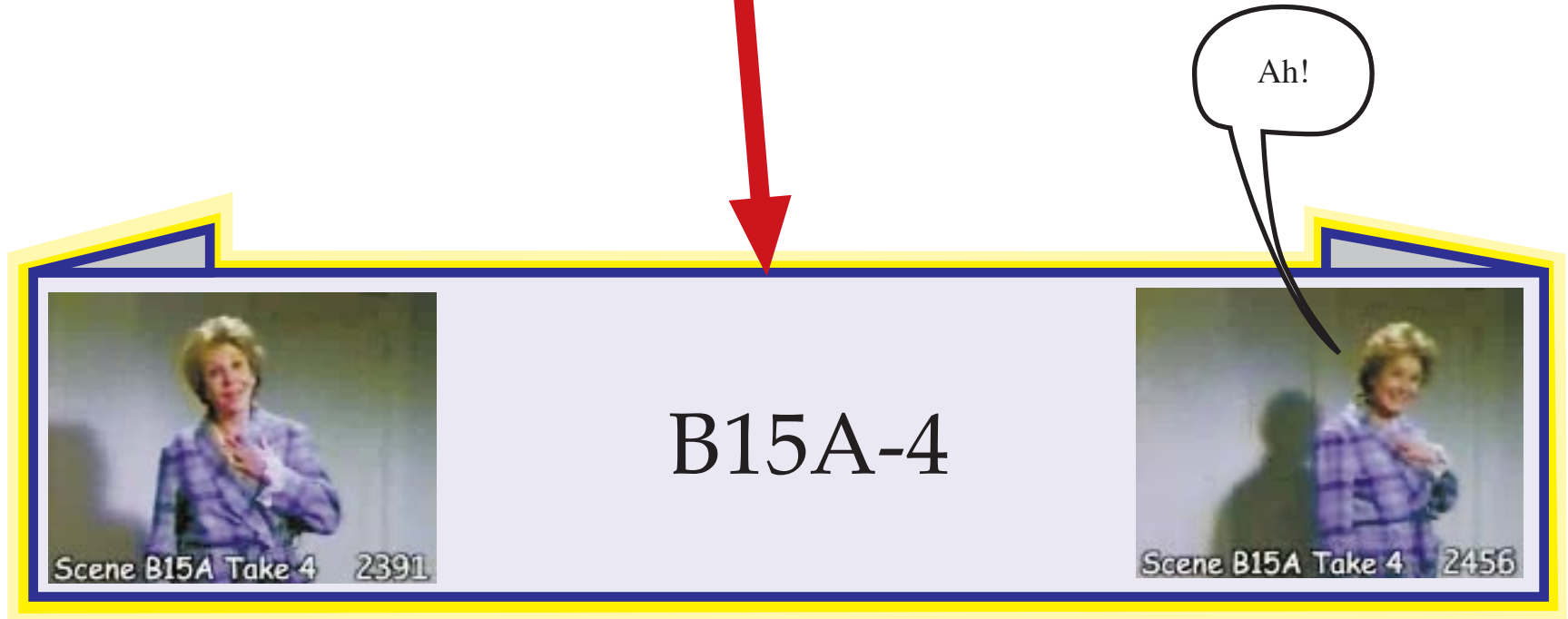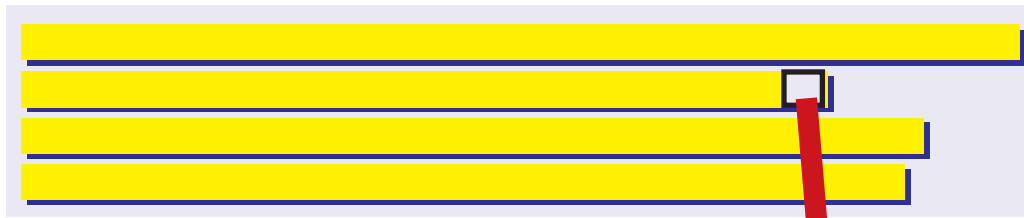
Place this clip in the timeline

Once I have set the "in" and "out" points, I place this clip in the time line.

I turn the volume down for just the words of the director at the end of the clip. I will put strong and loud music over the end of this scene so I do not bother filling in the gap in the room noise.

I create a six frame fade out at the end of this scene.

Picture

Audio

The Editing of the Audio is Done.

I am finished editing the audio. Play the scene. Listen to the audio. The audio should sound perfect... even if the picture does not look so good. The dialog must flow naturally. It should have a realistic rhythm. If not, now is the time to adjust it.

Also, at this time, I adjust the gain on any of the clips which seems too hot or too soft. Sometimes the microphone is further away from the actors and sometimes the actors speak softer, specially for their close-up shots. I am careful that when I adjust the volume, I adjust only the gain for the entire clip so no one will notice.

Also I remove any noise in the audio. I use the rubberband tool to eliminate any bad noises. (Be sure you are listening to the audio at its maximum quality before you make any adjustments.)

Now, lock the audio!

From now on, the audio for the dialog does not change. The dialog is finished. It is permanently fixed. Lock it!

Some editing programs can lock all the audio with just a single command. Other editing programs require you to go through and unlink the picture from the audio. Both methods are fast and easy.

If you have done this correctly, you will be able to roll the edits of the picture back and forth without affecting the audio in any way.

Picture

Audio **Locked and/or Unlinked**
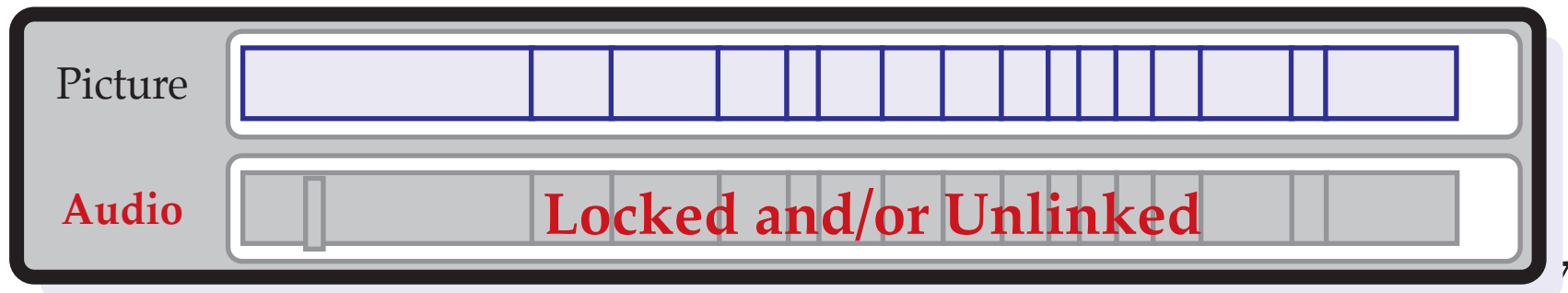
Film Theory
How To Edit Two Clips Together

When I edit two clips together, I must decide where and how to trim the two clips.

This is easy for a TV drama. The actors are so experienced, their timing in usually perfect. Therefore, when I begin editing a scene, I use their timing, pace and rhythm to cut the dialog apart.

Perfect Alinement?

To make this easier for editing, I want the dialog to line up perfectly on both clips.

Ops!

To see this, I extend the first clip so I can see the second piece of dialog. I add marks exactly at the start of the dialog on both clips.

Next, I check if they line up. In this example, they are not lined up.

2

My Goal

My goal is to separate the clips exactly half way between the two pieces of dialog.

Rough Cut

First, I make a rough cut for both clips. If my editing program will allow me, I first put the two clips on separate tracks to make editing easier. This way, I can work with the individual clips without the first clip bumping into the second clip.
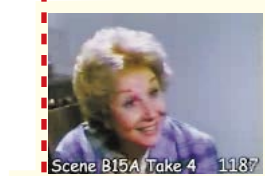
4

To fix this, I move the second clip so that both marks line up perfectly.

Then adjust the end point of the first clip and the start of the second clip so that the edit is exactly half way between words.

Now if I need to roll the picture, the audio will always be in perfect sync yet still sound natural.

Adjusting the Picture

Now I play the entire scene. The picture will look horribly awkward. That is because the best place to edit the audio is often not the best place to edit the video.

Therefore, I now want to adjust the edits of the picture... without making any changes to the audio.

To do this, I use a roll edit for the picture alone. This allows me to roll the edit of the picture forward or backward in time without effecting the length of the scene or the sync with the audio. This sounds complicate but it is extremely easy.

Scene B15B Take 1   1392   Scene B15A Take 4   1357

Now, I must look at every edit!

Picture

Audio

Not like New York City, I bet.

Listening to those sirens wail and those trash trucks go banging up and down the road, I forget there is a peaceful place left in the world.

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   921

B15B-2

Scene B15B Take 2   426

Out   In

Roll The Picture

With the audio locked, I roll just the picture edit forward and backward until I find a good transition point for the picture. I look for pauses between sentences, phrase or words which seem like a good time to cut from one view to the other.

Start with the First Edit

| Picture |
| Audio |

Locked and/or Unlinked

49

Frame 926 ⟷ Frame 426
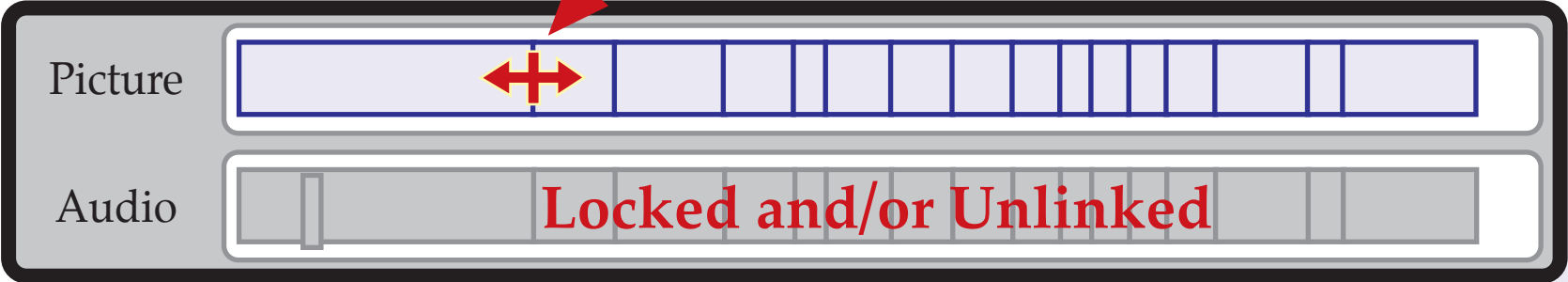
Scene B15 Take 3 921 Scene B15B Take 2 426

Roll Backward?

← ⟶

Should I roll the edit backward? There are at least three possible places to roll the edit backward which are natural pauses in the action.

Frame 884

Scene B15 Take 3 884

Frame 389

Scene B15B Take 2 389

Frame 843

Scene B15 Take 3 872

Frame 377

Scene B15B Take 2 377

Frame 843

Scene B15 Take 3 843

Frame 348

Scene B15B Take 2 348

Frame 426   Scene B15 Take 3   921   ◄═╪═►   Scene B15B Take 2   426   Frame 426

Roll Forward?

Or should I roll the edit forward? Here are three possible
places to roll the edit forward to natural breaks in his words.

Best!   Frame 968   Scene B15 Take 3   968   Scene B15B Take 2   473   Frame 473

Frame 997   Scene B15 Take 3   997   Scene B15B Take 2   502   Frame 502

Frame 1026   Scene B15 Take 3   1028   Scene B15B Take 2   533   Frame 533

51

B15-3

B15B-2

Rolling The Edit

So for the first edit of the scene, I roll the picture edit forward until clip B15-3 ends after frame 968 and clip B15B-2 starts at frame 473.

B15-3

B15B-2
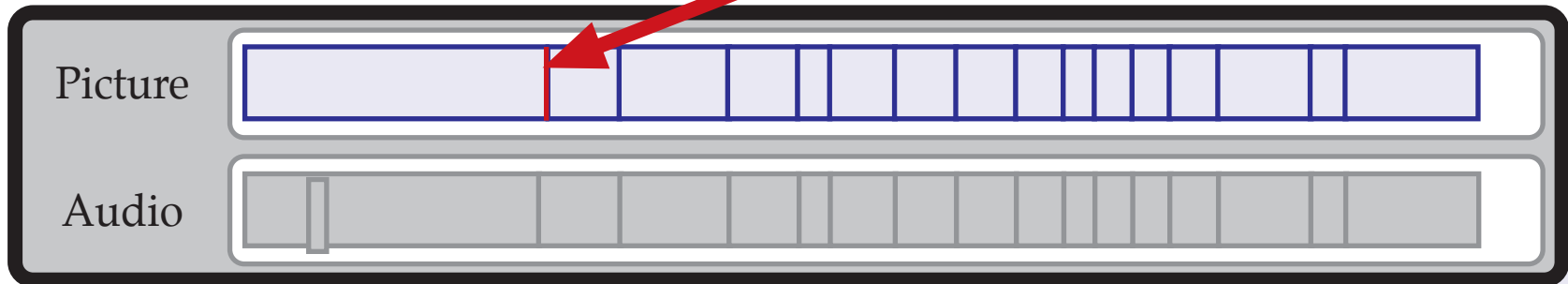
Picture

Audio

I forget that there is a peaceful place left in the world.

Jennet still asleep?

B15B-2

B15-3

Scene B15B Take 2   645

Scene B15 Take 3   1072

Out   In

Roll The Next Edit

The next edit is almost perfect. However, I think the scene will look better is the picture transitions a few frames before the audio.

Picture

Audio
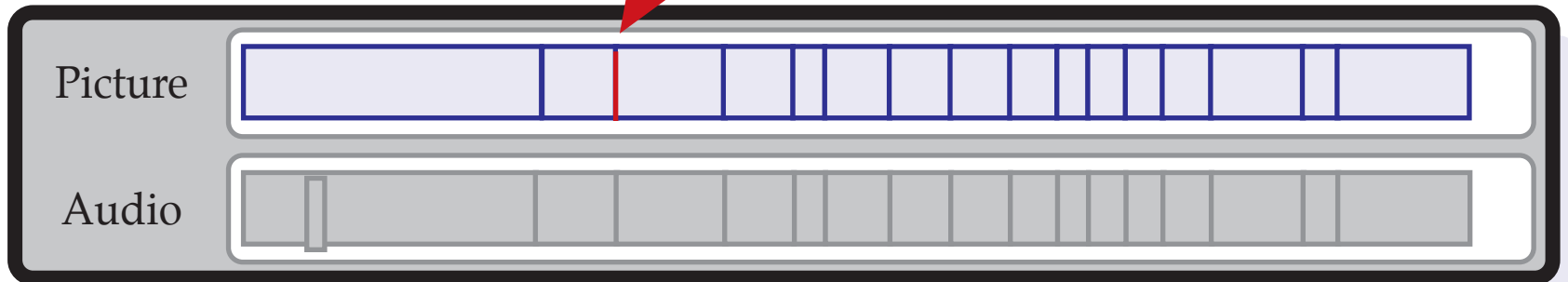
B15B-2

B15-3

Rolling The Edit

So I roll the picture edit backward until clip B15B-2 ends after frame 636 and clip B15-3 starts at frame 1063.

B15B-2

B15-3

Picture

Audio

54
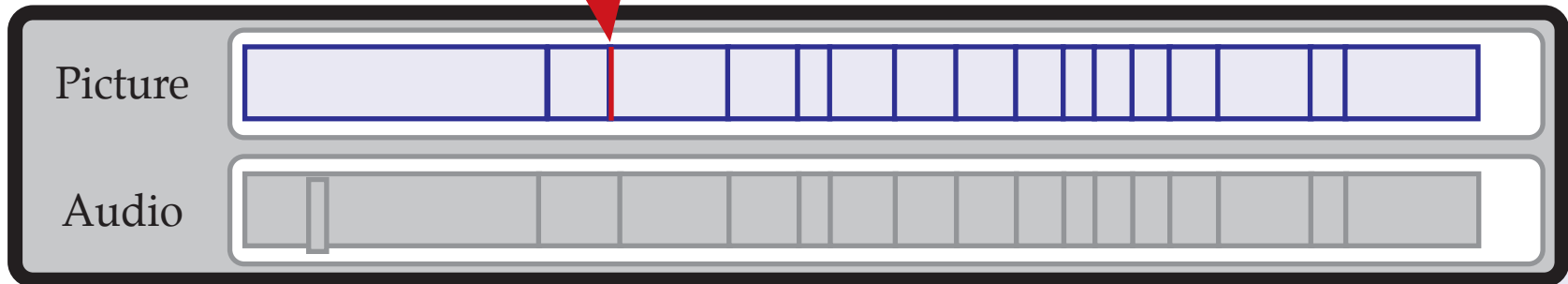
What does she do up there in New York?

She's an editor at Harper's Bazaar. The first night I saw her I said to myself, That is the girl I am going to marry.

B15B-2

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   1358

Scene B15B Take 1   997

Out   In   No Change Needed

I carefully look at the next edit by rolling the picture forward and rolling the picture backward and then seeing the resulting movie. For this edit, I think the picture looks good just the way it is.

Picture

Audio

She's an editor at Harper's Bazaar. The first night I saw her I said to myself, That is the girl I am going to marry.

Have you asked her?

B15B-1

B15-3

Scene B15B Take 1   1153

Scene B15A Take 4   1132

Out   In

Rolling The Next Edit

The next edit is almost perfect. However, I think the scene will look better is the picture transitions a few frames forward.
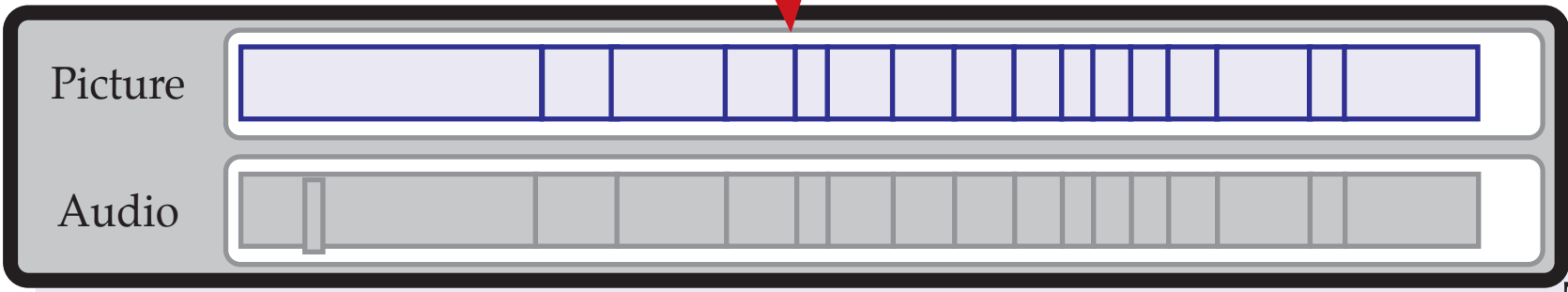
Picture

Audio

B15B-1

B15A-4

Scene B15B Take 1   1153

Scene B15A Take 4   1132

Rolling The Edit

So for the first edit of the scene, I roll the picture edit forward until clip B15B-1 ends after frame 1164 and clip B15A-4 starts at frame 1143.

B15B-1

B15A-4

Scene B15B Take 1   1164

Scene B15A Take 4   1143

Picture

Audio
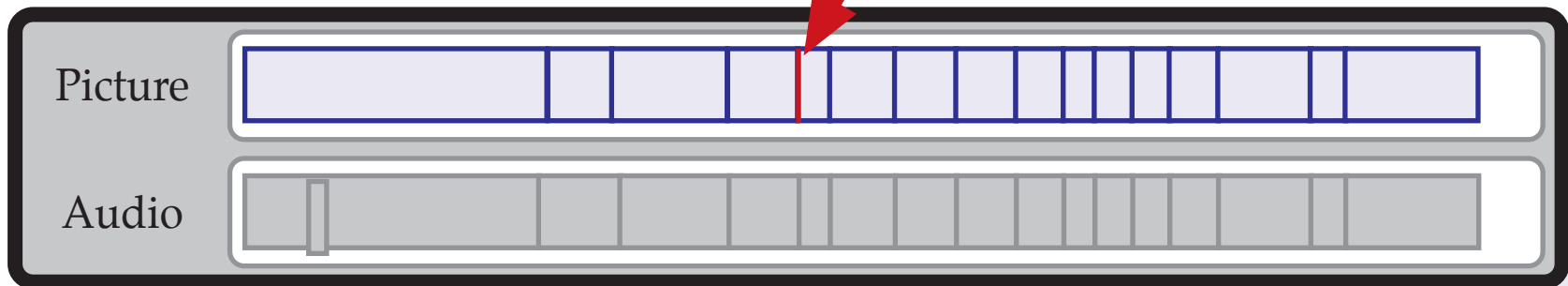
No Changes Needed

Looking a the next eight edits, I see no reason to roll the picture edits either forward or backward. However, the only way I will know is if I try them all.

Again, all I am doing is rolling just the picture edit without making any change to the audio. I look to see if I can find a better point to cut from one clip to the next.

They all look fine!

Picture

Audio
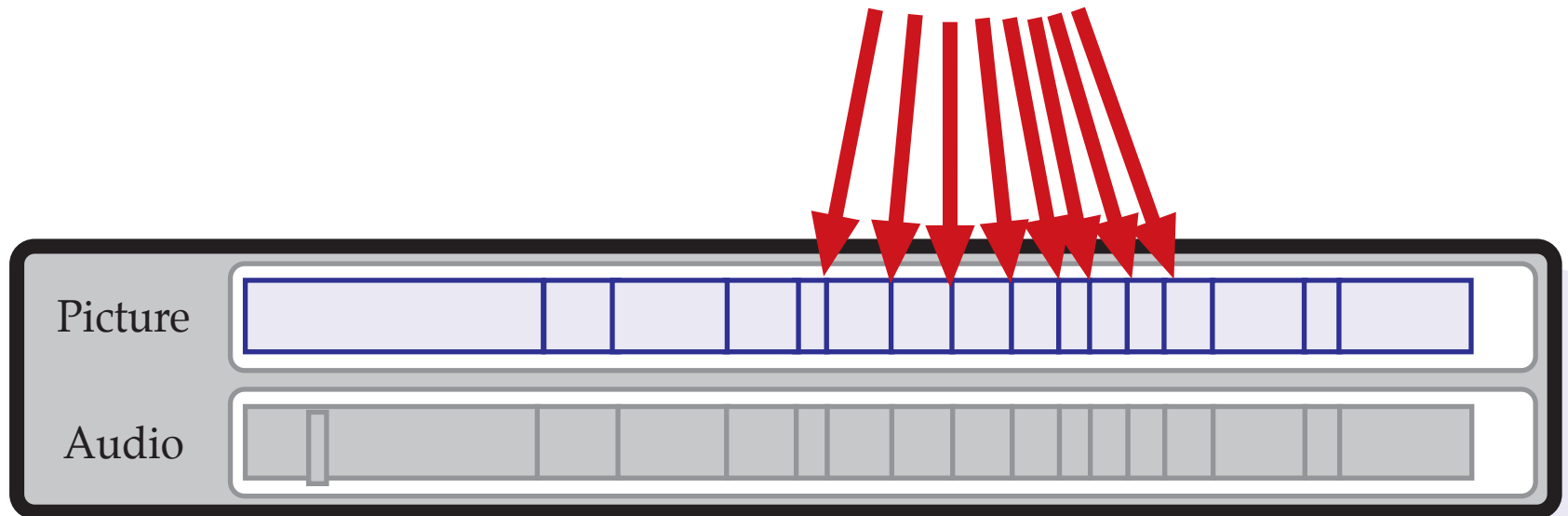
You go back to your writing. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Mama. I sure hope I make as good a choice in picking a wife as my daddy did.

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   2166

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   2261

Continuity Problem

Now I have a serious problem. It is a problem in the continuity of the picture. At the end of the first clip, the mother has turned away completely. But at the start of the second clip, the mother's hand is still on her son's shoulder. Therefore, I need to roll the picture until things look right.

Picture

Audio

59

B15A-4

B15B-1

Scene B15A Take 4   2166
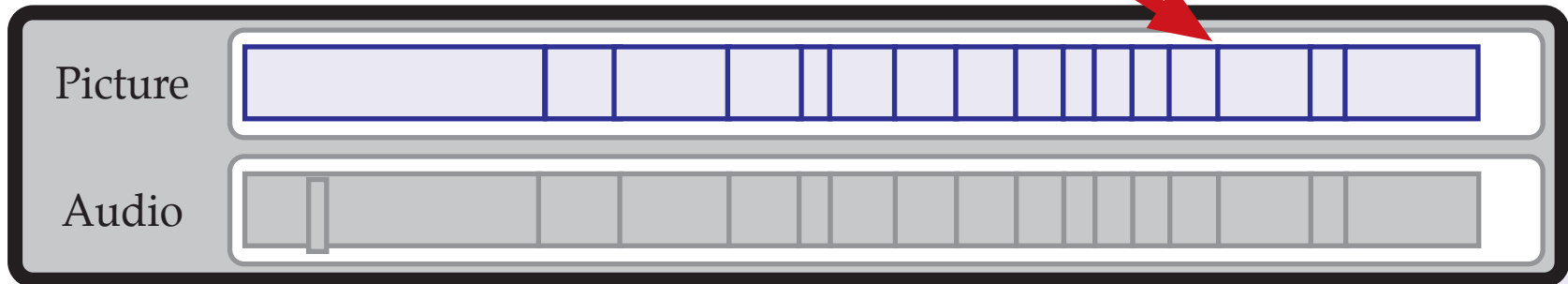
Scene B15B Take 1   2261

Rolling The Edit

I roll the picture edit backward until clip B15A-4 ends after frame 2136 and clip B15-3 starts at frame 2231. Continuity problem gone!

B15A-4

B15B-1

Scene B15A Take 4   2136

Scene B15B Take 1   2231

Picture

Audio
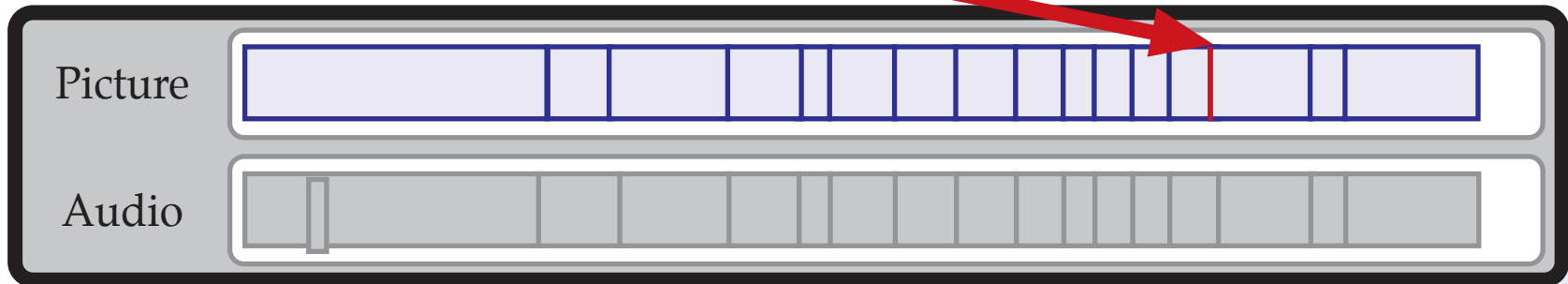
Cut Away Shot

Mama. I sure hope I make as good a choice in picking a wife as my daddy did.

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   2231

Scene B15B Take 1   2496

In   Out
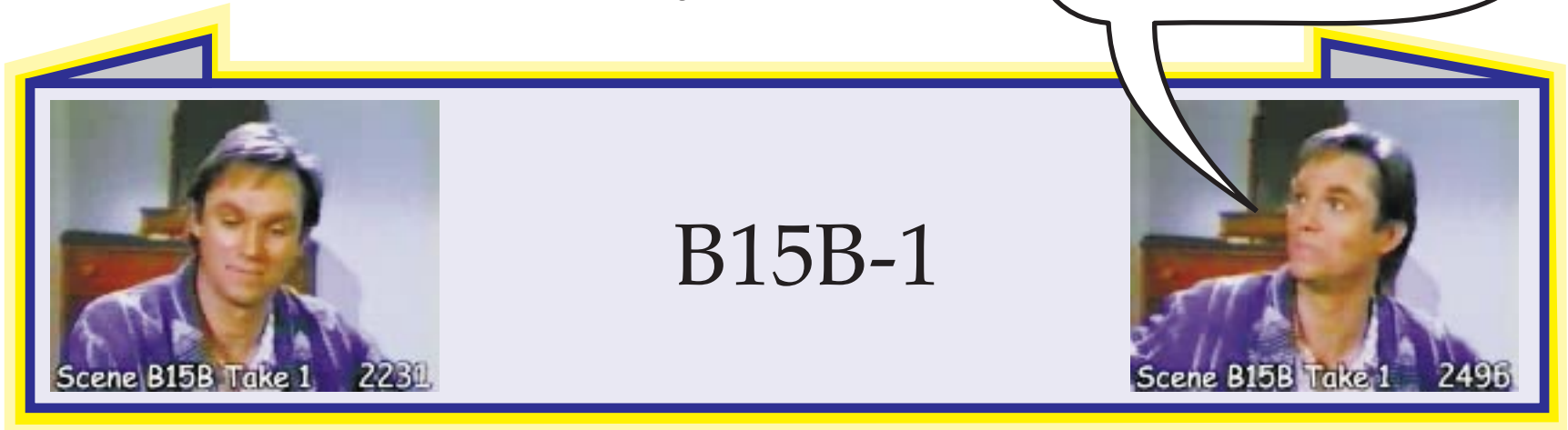
Something is Missing

I want to see the mother and the son yet I still like the original clip. Therefore, I need to add a cut away shot.

To do this, I find a few frames of a shot of the mother and put it on top of this clip. The fit must be seamless so it can be difficult to decide how long to make the cut away shot and exactly where to use it.   Trial and error!

Picture

Audio

61
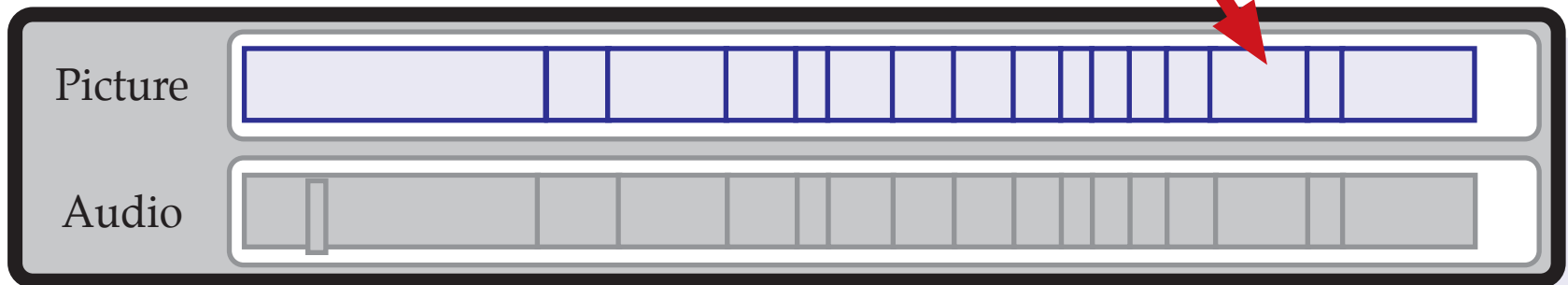
Possible Cut Away Shots

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   2558

Scene B15 Take 3   2602

Or

B15A-4

Scene B15A Take 4   2203

Scene B15A Take 4   2247

Which One?
I have two choices for a cut away shot.
Which should I use? Where should I put it?

B15B-1

Scene B15B Take 1   2231

Scene B15B Take 1   2302

Scene B15B Take 1   2348

Scene B15B Take 1   2496

B15-3

Scene B15 Take 3   2558

Scene B15 Take 3   2602
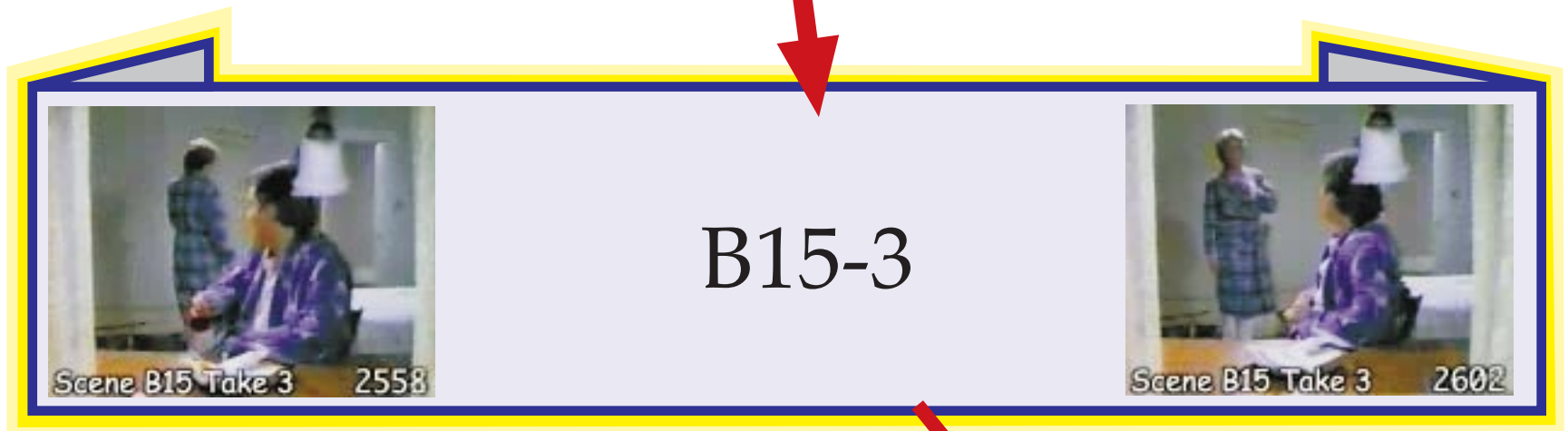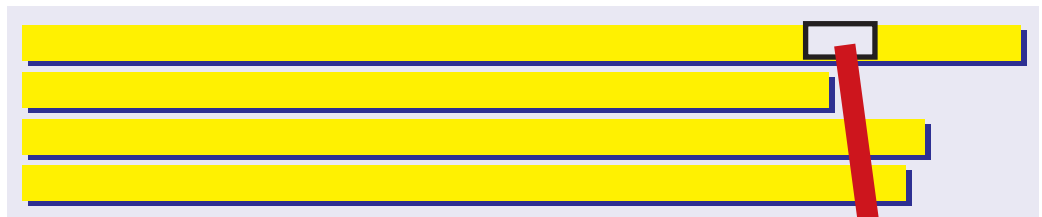
In   Out

Trim and Overlay

I decide to use the establishing shot for the cut away shot. Therefore, I trim a copy of B15-3 so it starts with frame 2558 and ends after frame 2602 and I use it to block out frames 2303 through 2347 on clip B15B-1.

Picture

Audio
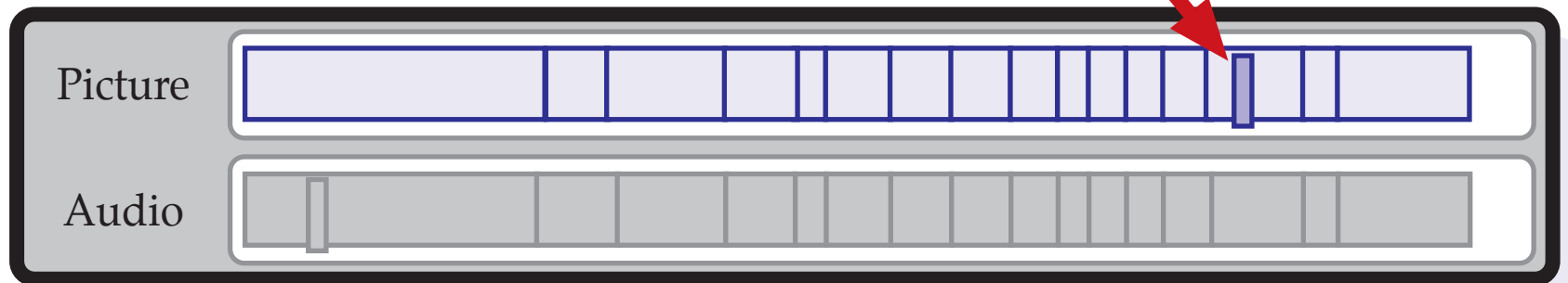
Theory

Remember this It will be on the final exam.

- Sound Effects: Sound makes the scene seem real.
- Music: Music creates the emotion for the scene.

The Picture and Dialog Are Done

Now when you play the movie, you will see that the dialog sounds and the picture are perfect.

However, the sound effects and music are missing. That is what I must do next.

Sound Effects

Adding sound effects to a scene is fun. You can add layer after layer of sound. You are never finished adding sound effects to a scene. You can always find one more sound effect which needs to be added.

For this scene, the only sound effect which is absolutely required is at the beginning and end of this scene. This scene is in the night and the window is open. Therefore, you need the sound of crickets chirping in the distance on a dark, warm night. (See the next page for how to do this.)

Anything More?

Once you have added the crickets, what should you do?

In this scene, the son talks about the quiet of the countryside. To emphasize this, you can make every sound in the room seem louder than normal. Therefore, if you want, you can replace every sound in this scene with an enhanced version of this sound.

When the son writes in his journal, the microphone barely picks up this sounds. So you can start by replacing the faint sound of the fountain pen on paper with a much stronger sound.

When the mother walks, we barely hear her footsteps. Therefore, you can replace these sounds with the sounds of fuzzy bedroom slippers that go flop, flop, flop.

When the son turns in his chair, you should add these sounds of someone turning in a chair.

Even the sound of the clothing of the actors can be replaced with more exaggerated sounds.

Then you can start to think about the other sounds in the house that should be heard in the distance. There are hundreds of sounds that you can add. Each sound brings the scene more to life. Try it. You will be amazed.

Add cricket sounds to the time line.

When I need a sound effect, I first look though my sound effects CD libraries to find the sound of crickets chirping. Even the most inexpensive CD sound effects library seems to have the sound of crickets chirping. It is a popular sound effect so it is easy to find.

I need to put this audio file at both the beginning of the scene and at the end of the scene. Once I put it in the timeline, I trim it to the proper length for this scene. Then I turn the audio gain down very low so I only hear the sound faintly in the distance.

Note: If the cricket sound is monaural, I put one copy of the sound file on the left speaker and another copy on the right speaker. I offset the two files in time so they sound like two totally different files. This way, I get a stereo sound... even if it is not real stereo.

For the first sound clip of crickets, I gently fade the audio out when the dialog starts. For the second sound clip of crickets, I fade in the cricket sounds when the dialog ends.

Picture

Audio

What is missing?

Something is still missing. What is it?

Watching this scene, I still do not know if the son is a good writer or not. And I do not know what will become of his writing. Will it be published?

The dialog does not explain this. The actor's words tell me only a little about the future. The visual images do not tell me much either. Even the excellent acting in the scene does not solve this riddle.

If there was a narration, that would solve the problem... but I was not given a voice-over audio file with the actor's narration.

So what can I do? How can I explain the future to the audience?

The only solution is music.

Music can be a very powerful tool for telling stories. With music, I can give a tremendous amount of information to the audience... if I use the music correctly.

For this scene, I must use music which tells the audience that the son will someday be a very famous writer and the words he is writing will eventually be read by millions of appreciative people.

If I was working as a film editor in Hollywood, I would simply yell at the producer of the show, "It's not my job! Hire a film composer." But I am not in Hollywood and I don't have that luxury.

Therefore, I must solve the problem myself. I must write the film score for this scene myself. Oh, dear me!

Hey, I am not a Musician!

I am not a musician. I cannot perform on any musical instrument. I don't sing well. I can barely pick out a tune on a piano. So what can I do?

Fortunately, I can hum a tune. (Don't laugh. This is serious business.) Humming is all I need to get started.

To design a film score, I need a professional-quality microphone connected to my computer and I need a program which can play a movie while I record audio from the microphone. The easiest way to connect a professional microphone to a computer is through a small mixing board which accepts XLR connectors of a low impedance microphone (such as the K1000s which I use). I select the mixing board which fits my computer (such the tiny mixers made by Behringer.) Or I can select a pre-amplifier which connect via USB or FireWire into my computer.

Now I create a humming score. Getting started is easy. I watch the finished scene on my computer's screen and I hum into the microphone. That I can do!

For the opening of the scene, I need an old and popular tune which feels very warm to indicate that the scene is very important and the son's writing is very good.

I decide to use the old Shaker tune "Simple Gifts" which goes, "Tis a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free, tis a gift..." Everyone know this song (or a variation of it) and I certainly can hum this tune into the microphone as I watch the opening of the scene.

Also to be a good film composer, I must be able to improvise while I hum my tune. That means I must be able to modify the tune (or butcher the tune) to add emotion as I hum the melody and still have it sound good.

I calculate that I need 14 seconds of music at the beginning of this scene.

As the scene opens, I start humming the tune slowly and steadily. I hum the music for, "This a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free". Then I hum, "Tis a gift" like I am slowly thinking about those words. Then I repeat, "Tis a gift" as if I am writing down these words. This tells the audience that the son is thinking and writing these words.

Once I have finished recording my humming, I export this to an audio file. This is my "humming score". This is not the final film score but rather my guide for creating the actual film score.

I listen to my recorded tune (humming score) over and over while I learn to play this tune with one finger on a MIDI keyboard (such as the MIDI keyboard sold by Apple) using a MIDI sequencing program (such as GarageBand.)

If I use GarageBand, I import the audio file (my humming score) and play this audio file in GarageBand as I practice playing these notes on my MIDI keyboard.

When I have finished learning how to play this simple, one-fingered tune, I select a musical instrument (such as a piano) and record the tune.

When this is done, I listen to the tune I have recorded. I want to keep the music very simple... but this is too simple! Therefore, I decide to add a second instrument to the music. The simplest way to do this is to play a cord on the words "simple", "free", gift" using a different musical instrument (such as a violin). So in GarageBand, I create another track and add the notes for just the cords. (I know only one cord on the piano so that is the cord that I use for all three cords. Hey, it works! That is all I need.)

Finally I throw away the humming score track and save my music. I export the finished music and import it into my editing program.

For the music at the end of the scene, I use the exact same tune but I play the first seven notes very slowly like a symphony orchestra. That means I hum the tune as if the melody is being played by a huge orchestra very slowly with great emotion.

Then I use the same method to turn my humming score into a real film score and put it into the timeline.
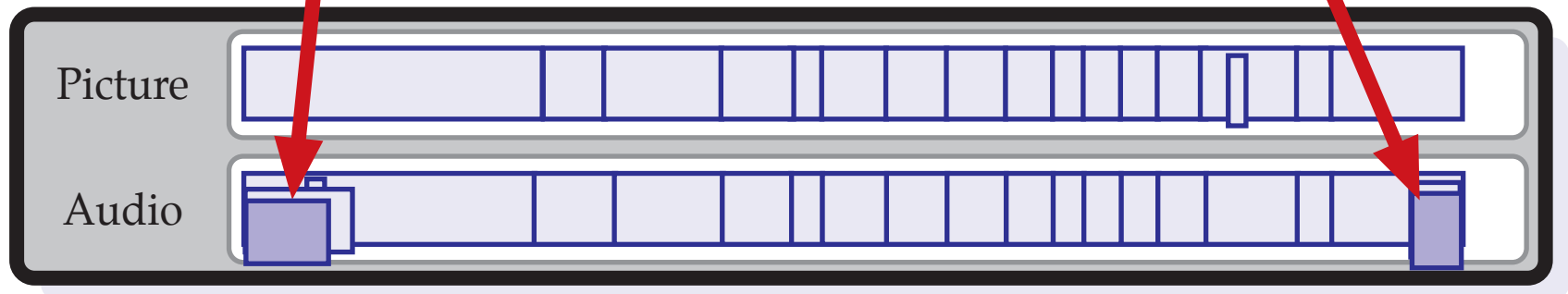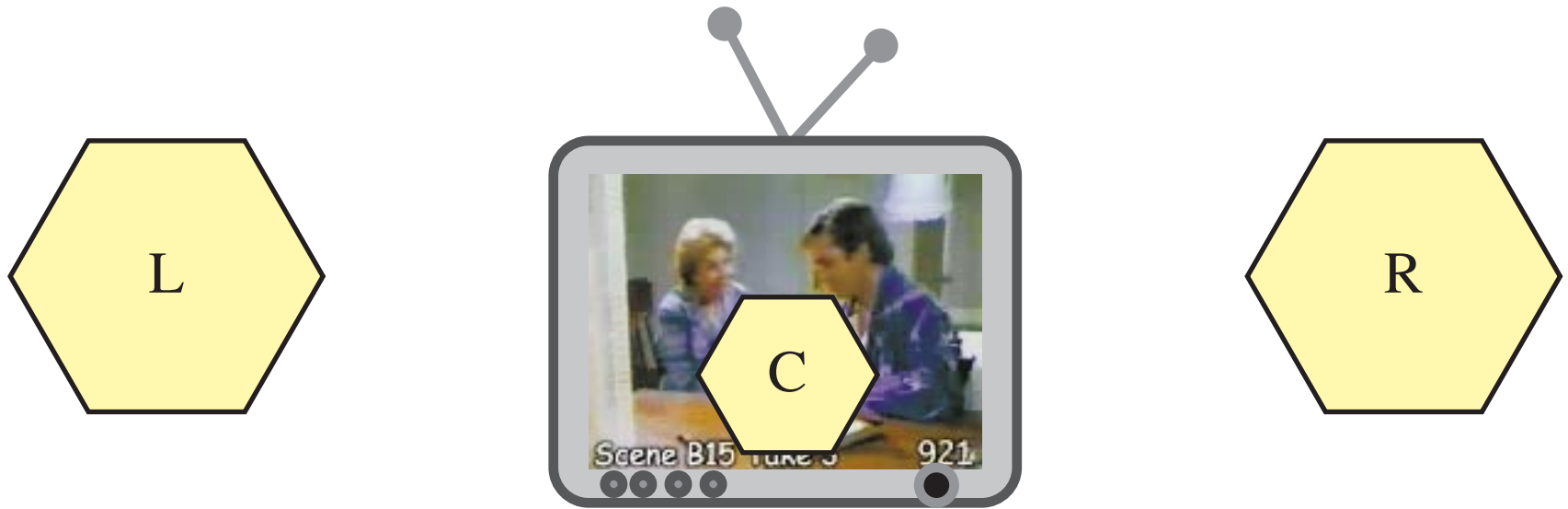
Done!

Opening Music

Ending Music

Add the music to the time line.

Once I have create the humming score and converted it into a film score, I export my music as an audio file and I import the music file into my editing program and drop it into the timeline at the appropriate spot.

Picture

Audio

L

R

C

Scene B15 ~~Take~~ 921

Panning The Audio

Because this is a TV drama, I pan all the dialog to the center of the screen. With a motion picture, I have more options... but not with a TV drama which will be viewed on a tiny TV screen

If I use 5.1 surround sound, that means all the dialog goes to the center speaker. If I use stereo audio, I put the dialog on both the left and right speaker at equal volumes. This creates the same effect.

Panning the music is just the opposite. I pan each musical instrument to either the left or to the right of the center of the screen. That is I pan each of the musical instruments in any direction except the center of the screen so that I keep the music complete separate from the dialog.

Similarly, I pan the sound effects in the direction of the source of the sound effect... but never directly center on the screen while the actors are talking.

Note: When I have finished, I check to see if my stereo mix will sound good if played on a monaural TV set. If not, I redo it. I cannot afford to ignore the fact that most people still use monaural TV sets.

Film Editor's Demo Reel

"Keeping Notes"

Scene B15 Take 3   1088

Edited by
Your name goes here!

Add this scene to my demo reel

When I am finished, I put the edited scene on a DVD-Video disk (along with my other edited scenes) to send to film producers in Hollywood.

Someday, I want all the famous filmmakers in Hollywood to hire me to edit their motion pictures. But before I can get hired, I have to show them just how good I am.

This is why I select my best edits of these practice scenes and I burn them onto a DVD-Video disk.

I letterbox the scene so the image looks good. (Magnified, half sized clips look very ragged but letterboxed, they look OK.) Letterboxing the images also gives me room to add titles and credits on the screen. This is very important since I really want that job!

Finally, at the end of the scene, I also add closing credits. Naturally, I list myself as editor , the sound effects person, and the musical composer for the scene. I do not plan to write film scores professionally but I want the producer to know that I understand what film scoring is all about.