

ART OF MUSIC VIDEO: TEN YEARS AFTER



LONG BEACH MUSEUM OF ART

LONG BEACH MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS

ART OF MUSIC VIDEO: TEN YEARS AFTER

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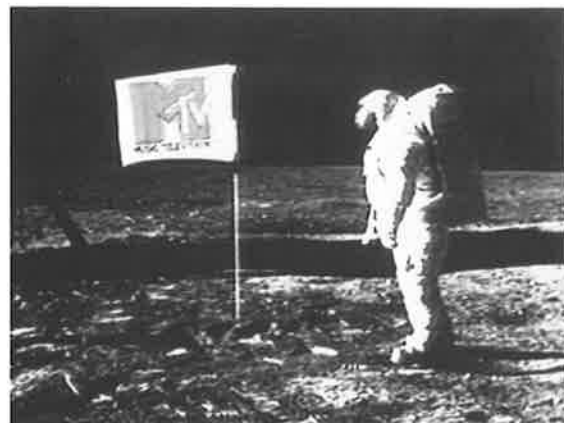
SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW FOR THE ART OF MUSIC VIDEO

MICHAEL NASH

MTV as The Museum of Post-modern Art?

Perhaps the most glaring error in The Museum of Modern Art's recent blockbuster exhibition, *High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*—Kirk Varnedoe's curatorial vision nearly blinds the spectator with the glare of error—was the blanket omission of the media arts. To focus exclusively on static art and print media while inquiring into the complex interrelationship of high art and low culture is so preposterously myopic as to render the entire enterprise laughably effete. The multiplex dialogs between the aesthetics and communities of film and video, and the industries and institutions of commercial cinema and television, are unarguably the most significant avenues of exchange between (modern or postmodern) art and (popular or unpopular) culture in this century.

Of course Varnedoe's intention was to show how all roads—particularly the primrose paths of cultural studies paved by Postmodernism, and other such shortcuts around true disciplinary scholarship—eventually and inevitably lead to the permanent collection of MOMA...not the power rotation of MTV. Rigorously following the crossed currents of art and culture to their often illogical conclusions could only have led to music video, penultimate paradigm for, and salacious symptom of, the intercourse of high and low.



MTV's original "Man on Moon" logo

Institutionalized by MTV's inception on August 1, 1981, music video has proven to be one of the most formally radical, and at the same time financially profitable, innovations in the history of television. Music video's emergence from a unique interplay of pop culture, art history and marketing economics is the very embodiment of the postmodern discourse on the death of the avant-garde, or at least a populist poltergeist version. Over the course of its first decade, "The Cutting Edge" and "Postmodern MTV" were adopted by the music channel as names for its programs, ambitious proclamations that manifest a certain self-consciousness about the discourses with which it was flirting. Incorporating elements of experimental film, video art and animation into a commercially viable short format, music video has easily done more to popularize and promote experiments with visualization and narra-

tive than all previous efforts by the media arts community combined.

With well over 1,500 clips produced for more than 100 local and national programs and networks every year, what can be dismissed as the token artistic exceptions that prove the advertisement rule still constitute hundreds of experimental works, many supporting and extending the careers of independent filmmakers and video artists. This production, and related music videos from the "art world"

proper, extend in a progressive continuum across a broad spectrum of art/culture intersections. The expanded boundaries of music video art can be drawn to include major label-funded projects for artists with enough clout to gain creative control and enough vision to know what to do with it, notably clips for David Bowie, Brian Eno, Peter Gabriel, New Order, R.E.M. and Talking Heads; subversion of funding for album ads by sophisticated makers with integrity and commitment, including music videos for Christmas, Public Enemy, The Replacements, Les Rita Mitsouko and Son of Bazerk; small-scale independent label productions that almost *have* to be innovative to rise above limited budgets, with The Residents, SST Records, Atavistic Video and H-Gun being the exemplary band, record label, video label and production house in this arena, respectively, and C-00's Jem Cohen and Jim McKay being

among the important independent directors; and, crossover ventures by visual and performance artists who embrace the music video construct as an opportunity to reach new audiences, including projects by Laurie Anderson, Robert Beck, Jonathan Borofsky, Robert Breer and William Wegman, Peter Callas, Derek Jarman, Robert Longo and Tony Oursler.

Incidents of artistic success notwithstanding, there is no avoiding the implications of MTV as an advertisement juggernaut. Allying and conflating the two "massest" media, television and radio, music video personifies the centralization of contemporary consumer culture. ("Radiovision," the obsolete term for television, no longer sounds archaically mis-compounded.) In its fusion of advertisement and programming—videos underwrite themselves through CD and audiotape sales—marketing strategies almost always produce and direct creative decisions and music video dishonors its artistic ancestry, becoming the very essence of commercial television. About as much like a pre-nuptial virgin as Madonna, MTV's wish-fulfillment formula combines something old, new, borrowed and blue: the oldest profession, the sex sale; the latest imaging techniques; a massive debt to the entire history of twentieth century art; and as much pouty adolescent wistfulness as can be assuaged by the next purchase. With apologies to Robert Longo and Megadeth, piece (of ass) sells, the youth demographic is buying, and this is not exactly the news.

MTV's infamy on these and other counts is reflected in a list of vitriolic opponents that has swelled over the course of "its" decade to include such strange bedfellows as feminist academic E. Ann Kaplan, media magnate Ted Turner, the Veterans of Foreign War and the operators of TCA Cable based



Queen of the House Scopitone

in Tyler, Texas. The network's socio-cultural profile can, then, at the very least, be described as interestingly confused. One doesn't want to dismiss anything that the VFW reviles too quickly.

What we can call music video's "aesthetic politics"—the implications and influence of its formal innovations and vision—are an extremely complex web of problematized terms that reveal deeply rooted paradoxes at the de-centered heart of postmodern American culture. Put another way, it's getting hard to say exactly what is high and what is low anymore. The exploration of these conflicted terms, and their unfolding within historical and ahistorical frameworks, is one of the most rewarding vantage points—that is, if you enjoy complication—from which to consider the various programs of *Art of Music Video: Ten Years After*.

Love, or Confusion The Experimental Ads

of Oskar Fischinger. Film critics often complain that the experimental films of

Luis Bunuel, Jean Cocteau, Maya Deren, Kenneth Anger, Bruce Conner and many others have "served as iceboxes raided at midnight" by hack music video directors. They're right. But this view ignores the circularity of the exchange between commercial and artistic interests throughout this century, evident, for example, in the pop cultural milieu of Anger's *Scorpio Rising* (1963), or Conner's appropriation of commercial media in works like *Mongoloid* (1977) or *America is Waiting* (1982) that are essentially music videos.

The most obvious example of this circularity is the cinema of Oskar Fischinger. Fischinger's vibrant abstract animation films constitute per-

haps the most important elaboration of the Visual Music movement's aesthetics. It is the only body of experimental film work that advanced this movement's premise—that animated abstractions could be composed through principles

coupling painting and music—beyond the twenties. Fischinger produced the



Megadeth and Robert Longo's
Peace Sells

first experimental films synchronized to music, and the first color film in Europe. The latter, *Circles* (1933) was also originally produced as an advertisement for a movie theater. *Muratti Marches On* (1934), one of Fischinger's most recognizable achievements, was a famous, often-imitated cigarette ad, and he later produced a television set commercial, *Muntz TV* (1953). These works not only supported Fischinger's non-commercial work, but are such an integral part of his oeuvre that they are distributed alongside his other films by...The Museum of Modern Art.

Scopitones Revisited, and the Hazards of Generational Discourse. "Generational discourse" is an academic way of describing what "Nick at Night," on MTV's cousin network, Nickelodeon, offers as its main attraction: experiencing the ironies inherent in viewing sixties' television from the distance of nineties' cultural norms. Scopitones, produced for a film jukebox technology circa 1964-67, provide the opportunity for an extremely lively generational discourse. They are a microcosm of pre-hippie pop culture in all its campiness, apolitical naivete, sexism and banality.

The Scopitones can be divided up into several groups: strong acts captured in proto-music videos like Procal Harum, The Exciters and Clark Terry; cult classics like Debbie Reynolds *If I Had a Hammer* and Nancy Sinatra's *Boots*; and some breathtakingly sleazy clips that make Madonna's *Justify My Love* or the Divinyls' *I Touch Myself* seem decorous by comparison. A prevision of MTV and the socio-economic dynamics of its sexual representations, Scopitones are a cultural analyst's treasure trove.

Herein also lies a cultural analyst's dilemma: how to avoid participating in what you oppose when entering into its terms in order to critique it. The generational discourse requires identification with the object of analysis first, before distance from it infers ironies. This is how audiences understand such mate-

rial as cultural artifact, as representative of an era. So the postmodernist strategy of kitsch quotation, of re-presenting or repeating the thing critiqued, cuts both ways in historical revisionism. "Nick at Night" does not so much critique sixties' television as expand the audience for re-runs. If the outrageousness of sexist Scopitones is "entertaining," can presentation and re-consideration of them, requiring re-visitation of sixties' sexual stereotypes, escape a similar fate?

The Anonymous Authorship of The Residents. Despite post-structuralism's pronouncement of the "death of the author," auteurism theory is one of the primary strategies being used by academics and critics to reclaim commercial media production as art. Scholars like the Annenberg School's David Marc are developing such theory to articulate creative credit for television's past, embracing the notion that assigning individual responsibility to a body of work allows it to be appreciated as personal vision and extracts it from corporate anonymity. MTV doesn't typically identify music video directors, so establishing such credit is generally the first and primary step taken in defining certain works as art.

The Residents are heralded as being among the "inventors" of music video—the *Vileness Fats* project, started in 1972, was the first audio/visual concept project shot in video for non-theatrical distribution—and have created what is clearly one of the most important bodies of work in the art music video arena. Their distinctive vision defines them as farsighted auteurs.

What complicates things nicely is the fact that the eyeball-headed group members have maintained complete anonymity through their twenty-year career. This technically disqualifies them from "authorship" per se. Does this make them the first anti-auteurs in the media arts field? Collective dreamers of de-personified personal visions? The Residents' Co-manager Homer Flynn

calls this strategy "pre-postmodern." Considering music video's myriad complications of high and low, it's only fitting that the career of its seminal artists constitutes a brilliant critique of authorship.

MTV's Redefinition of Network Identity. MTV's billion-dollar success story stems from its amazing ability to target the lucrative youth demographic, while getting less than one-percent of the total audience most of the time, and then exposing that audience to an incredible concentration of advertisements. With the possible exception of the Home Shopping Club, MTV is the most commercial network in existence. Almost everything on the channel is an advertisement: the music video album ads, the conventional commercials between the album ads, and the self-promos between commercials and album ads. Before MTV began cablecasting, no one believed that a network could exist without slavishly calibrating its program schedule to the clock, with half-hour, one-hour and two-hour shows. MTV's response to this challenge was to undertake the most ambitious self-promotion effort in the history of commercial television. With its free-form non-linear structure, interstitial ID logos and promotional campaign spots are the key to establishing its identity as a network.

Paradoxically, these IDs and commercials are among the most artistically successful experiments on television, consistently more engaging and innovative than almost all the music videos they wrap around. Masterminded by MTV's in-house Creative division (in particular, Abby Terkuhle, division Vice-President for the last five years), the amalgam of animated logos, political and social issues awareness spots, self-critique campaigns, "Art Breaks" (aka "From the Collection of MTV") and other on-air promotions have redefined how networks establish their identities, and the critical relationships between format and programming. The

key to these self-promotion campaigns is employing the talents of leading animators, visual artists and media artists, including Dara Birnbaum, Jonathan Borofsky, Julia Heyward, Jenny Holzer, Mark Pellington, the Quay Brothers, and many others. In sum, this effort constitutes one of the biggest sources of production support for experimental television "programming."

One of the most dramatic indications of this success in redefining television is the fact that new relationships between format and programming enable independently produced experimental shorts like *Slow Bob* to exist as separate programs in the master mix—this is a key step in advancing the prospects of getting video art and experimental film on television. Among the most depressing manifestations of MTV's enormous impact on the promulgation of network identities is the way that the recent Gulf War coverage emphasized new graphics ID packages and theme music rather than substantive commentary or even the identities of news personnel. On the Museum of Postmodern Art, where context defines meaning, aesthetic achievement and formal innovation are apolitical, at best.

Music Video and the Politics of Dancing

Clearly the conventional terms of aesthetic and cultural critique are insufficient to the task of analyzing postmodern permutations of high and low. But, to define art and culture even in terms of the intermingling of such categories, alone, offers little understanding about how such relationships can be reordered towards meaningful change, because the emphasis remains with the form expressions take, not with what they say. Defining the cultural conditions in these latently formalistic terms does, however, offer fairly solid ground

for the entrenchment of powerful institutions invested in these categories such as The Museum of Modern Art and MTV. What then must we do?

One thing is apparent: pure aesthetics is an increasingly ridiculous notion



The Residents' *Freak Show* video

in a world where the black plague of AIDS is decimating the creative community. An illness that has exposed a parallel political plague of homophobic hatred and indifference, AIDS joins with other double-bound political crises—censorship and arts funding, media control and militarism, racism and economic deprivation, capitalism and environmental degradation—in demanding that every available voice and vision oppose monolithic corporate media and offer alternative models. The *Red, Hot + Blue* music video AIDS benefit project, Gran Fury's *Kissing Doesn't Kill* spots, MTV's AIDS and Earth Day spots, the *Rock the Vote* campaign, *Direct Effects* PSAs, Dean Lance's *Hard Reign's Gonna Fall* for Diva TV and Robert Beck's *The Feeling of Power: #6769* are all valiant and important efforts in this struggle.

It is frighteningly clear that centralization of media power is the most important problem faced by whatever is left of the counterculture. From this vantage point, the most pressing issues in the media arts field become issues of audience and context, and all members

of the arts community, therefore, have to function as cultural workers with broad responsibilities. Without massive audience development efforts stemming from visionary thinking about the mutual modifications of art and culture, and linked to agendas of political change and spiritual transformation, there will be no media arts field in the future—the collapse of public funding in the current climate is eminent.

What is most significant about artists' music video is that it has the greatest cultural reach of any manifestation of what was once thought of as the avant-garde. It thereby provides one of the best available opportunities to reach audiences and connect them with the existing media arts community, and its traditions of resistance. Music

video is the leading avenue of access into the consciousness of the next generation—the most influential component of cultural persuasion still marginally open to new ideas. Every committed statement or alternative perspective advanced by artists and engaged by serious critical response is important. Changing MTV is impossible and not the point—changing people is the point, through music video as a basis for far-reaching cultural dialog. This is where high and low meaningfully converge, where the articulation of an art of music video becomes a political aesthetic capable of not just reflecting, but altering, contemporary culture.

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THE ANTECEDENTS OF MTV:

SOUNDIES, SCOPITONES AND SNADERS, AND THE HISTORY OF AN AHISTORICAL FORM

GREGORY LUKOW

Pre-MTV: (A)history

The televised rock video represents a significant new stage in the circulation and consolidation of the entertainment media in the last half-century. MTV, in particular, has captured the attention and pocketbooks of its targeted audience, as well as the curiosity and fascination of cultural critics and historians. The latter cannot help but be drawn to a new moving image format that is not only the most popular expression of the postmodern aesthetic, but also highly refined evidence of the inseparable bond between consumer culture and the image media.

When such a new cultural form makes its appearance, the search for its historical antecedents—the desire to give it a “history”—cannot be far behind. MTV anticipated a reading of its own history by airing the Buggles’ “Video Killed the Radio Star” as its first tape on August 1, 1981, and its revival of *The Monkees* a few years ago served as homage to one of its spiritual ancestors. Yet despite these token remembrances, MTV remains remarkably ahistorical about its own roots and the roots of rock music in general. In its continual fashioning and merchandising of *the new*, this “ahistoricity” is one of its defining characteristics.

Attempts by cultural commentators to locate the roots of the music video are often equally ahistorical. The phenomenon is typically defined simply in terms of a textual format—i.e., short, stylized visualizations of popular songs. If this approach is taken, then the antecedents are legion, scattered throughout the histories of film, radio, television, and the



Louis Armstrong in the Soundie *Shine*

recording industry, and ending with the appearance of the first rock promo films in the sixties. These featured such groups as the Rolling Stones, the Kinks, and the Who, and culminated with the famous film versions of the Beatles’ “Penny Lane” and “Strawberry Fields.”¹

Prior to this, the more distant ancestors of the music video are usually categorized generically by media. Thus, in the history of feature-length films, influences cited range from *The Jazz Singer* and *Fantasia* to *Jailhouse Rock* and *A Hard Day’s Night*. Oft-cited reference points for short films include Hollywood cartoons (*Silly Symphonies*, *Happy Harmonies*, etc.) and band shorts, while experimental film influences include the aesthetics of Oscar Fischinger, Luis Bunuel, Kenneth Anger and Bruce Conner. In radio, the key antecedent is *Your Hit Parade*, which made the transition to television in 1950. It joins *American Bandstand*, *Shindig*, *Hullabaloo* and, in Great Britain, *Ready Steady Go*, as televised ancestors of MTV.

In this history of media genres, the importance of three formats—the Panoram Soundie, the Scopitone and the Snader TELEscription—is very precise. Soundies were shown on coin-operated film jukeboxes in the early forties, and represented the first systematic attempt to produce conceptual, short-form visualizations of recorded songs not intended for theatrical exhibition. With more grandiose production values, the Scopitone momentarily revived the film jukebox in the mid-sixties, but ultimately revealed, as we shall, see, the limits of its viability. Snader TELEscriptions, on the other hand, were the first short-form music-image combinations produced directly for television.

These lists of predecessors are useful, but do not adequately explain the evolution of the music video in its larger economic and industrial context. They are limited to a simple sequencing of titles which combine music and images in ways that bear some resemblance to contemporary video formats. Such lists are also teleological, viewing today’s music videos as the perfected end-product toward which all precursors aspired. A more accurate archaeology of the form must acknowledge that music videos are also marketing strategies within a larger consumer economy. They have a reciprocal relation to *other* texts. More than any previous moving image artifacts, their status as both *program* and *commercial*, *product* and *promotion*, points to the endless circulation and commodification of moving images in contemporary media culture.

Such qualifications allow us to examine more accurately both the similarities and differences between today’s music videos and Soundies, Scopitones and Snaders. These three forerunners are formally distinctive precursors that provide illuminating paradigms for a discussion of music video’s alternately historical and ahistorical emergence.

Soundies

“Panoram Soundie” is a combination of two brand names. The “Panoram” was a seven-foot tall film jukebox with an eighteen by twenty-four-inch screen manufactured by the Mills Novelty Company, makers of such other coin-operated devices as chewing-gum dispensers and slot machines. “Soundies” were the approximately 2000 three-minute film versions of popular song, dance and novelty numbers produced during the forties by a company formed by Mills Novelty and James Roosevelt (FDR’s son). Each Panoram machine contained eight 16mm Soundies placed on a continuous film loop. Soundies could not be selected individually; for the cost of a dime, a customer would receive the next available film. The films were assembled into groupings called “Soundies Miniature Revues” and leased on a weekly basis to individual vendors, who purchased the Panoram machines outright.

Interest in commercial film jukeboxes accelerated after the exhibition of automatic continuous-loop projectors at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Potential markets were bars, restaurants, cocktail lounges, hotels, dance halls, drug stores, bowling alleys, bus depots and train stations. Although the Panoram was the only system to survive beyond the first year of the fad (1940), it was but one of a dozen such ventures. By 1941, undercapitalization forced these companies to fold. Many were absorbed by the Mills Novelty Company. “Soundies” eventually became the accepted brand name for all these products, which at one time or another were referred to in slang as “briefies,” “slotties,” “mini-musies,” and “automatic movies.”

Despite a number of Soundies with big-name performers—including Duke Ellington, Hoagy Carmichael, Gene Krupa, Cab Calloway and Fats Waller—most featured lesser-known talents in films that emphasized the novelty of the form rather than the popularity of current hit songs and artists. For example, the first eight soundies produced in 1940 included “Parade of the Wooden Soldiers” and “Song of the Island” (both performed by the Music Maids), “Havana



Debbie Reynolds in the Scopitone *If I Had a Hammer*

is Calling Me” (“featuring that extremely talented Bernice Parks”), “Hold That Tiger” (“with six Jitterbugs ‘going to town’”), and the infamous “Jungle Drums” (featuring “Carmen D’Antonio’s weird dance”).²

Reasons for the passing of Soundies are various. World War II siphoned off financial and material resources following the peak production years of 1941-1942. In addition, the Soundies were seldom thought of as promotional items for records. Indeed, unlike contemporary music videos, the production of Soundies was viewed as a venture more closely related to filmmaking than to the recording industry. Mills Novelty, before it teamed with James Roosevelt’s production company, had approached Warner Bros. in the hope that Mills would be allowed to re-edit the studio’s early Vitaphone band shorts for use on Panorams. Even though Warner rejected this request, many of the production units that eventually began turning out jukebox films were run by executives previously associated with the short-subject divisions of the major studios.

Despite these connections, some sectors of the motion picture industry were suspicious of the Panoram. Exhibitors feared it would hurt movie attendance. Studio chiefs did not want Soundies using big-name stars. Accordingly, Soundies were produced without benefit of the economic and promotional support that ties today’s music videos so closely to the structure of the film and record industries.

By 1947, the novelty had run its course. The films were re-packaged and sold to home movie distributors and to televi-

sion. As a foreshadowing of things to come, in 1948 a new jukebox, marketed by the Videograph Corporation, made a brief appearance. Unlike the Panoram, the Videograph combined phonograph records with television. For a nickel, customers could either play one record...or watch three minutes of TV.

Scopitones

Originally developed in France with films featuring mostly European performers, the Scopitone was the last gasp of the film jukebox. Rights to manufacture and distribute the machine in the U.S. were obtained in 1964 by Tel-A-Sign (makers of plastic signs for gas stations and supermarkets). Scopitone Inc. was formed, and in late 1964 the new company contracted Debbie Reynolds' Harmanee Films to produce American-made Scopitones at the rate of forty-eight per year (Reynolds herself is featured in at least two selections).

Like Panoram Soundies, Scopitones were shot without sound, lip-synced to recorded popular songs. Unlike their forties' precursors, Scopitones were not on a continuous loop and could be individually selected. American-made Scopitones were shot in Technicolor, featured elaborate choreography and location shooting, and had higher production budgets (\$6,000-\$12,000 per film, as compared to \$2,000-\$4,000 for a Soundie). The Scopitone machine held up to thirty-six films on a revolving drum. The cost was twenty-five cents a play.

Performers included traditional vocalists and lounge singers—Vic Damone, Billy Eckstine, the Greenwood Country Singers, Jane Morgan, Della Reese, Kay Starr—as well as younger pop stars—Paul Anka, Frankie Avalon, Connie Francis, the Righteous Brothers, Nancy Sinatra. In the words of Irving Briskin, in charge of producing the American-made Scopitones: "Initially, Scopitone films were geared to adult audiences, but now we're interested in the youth market, too. We have some artists doing the 'new' music (rock 'n' roll) who never tried it before—and they're great. Femme performers who have been appearing professionally fully clothed come over sensationally on Scopitone in bikinis" (*Los Angeles Times*, 8/23/65).

It is clear that the Scopitone's concept of "rock" music was a conservative one. Hard rock singers or groups were almost never filmed, even as late as 1966-67 (Procal Harum is one exception). According to Briskin, Scopitones did not present such "long hair" material because "installations are largely bars and lounges where under-age juves aren't legally permitted" (*Daily Variety*, 2/23/66).

These quotations suggest reasons for the Scopitone's

failure to revitalize the film jukebox: its limited awareness of the youth market and lack of adequate distribution outlets in an era of mass media consolidation. By 1966 the format was in decline. Many of the machines were used for peep shows in porno theaters and stores. In 1967, Scopitone, Inc. changed its name to Theater 16, eliminated the coin-operated device, and shifted its marketing approach from urban locations to small-town and rural communities, where it was hoped it might "fill the entertainment gap."

In 1982, Video Music International introduced its Startime and Video Muzzikboxx Communicator. Bars, restaurants, clubs, military installations and day camps were seen as the potential markets. However, in this most recent incarnation of the motion picture jukebox, programming consisted of record company promotional clips on videotape, and was intended from the outset to include advertisements. According to a VMI spokesperson, "the true power of this machine is as a service to the advertising world. Until this machine, there was no connection between Madison Avenue and the coin-operator world. When a machine is not in use due to coin use, a tape of commercials can run continuously" (*Billboard*, 5/15/82). For a portable version of MTV, the logic is inescapable.

Snaders

Snader TELEdescriptions were the brainchild of one Louis Snader, who saw the growing field of local television stations as a new market for a library of short musical films in 1950. For a two-year period (1950-52), Snaders were produced at the rate of 400 per year.³ They featured such prominent artists as Teresa Brewer, Cab Calloway, Nat King Cole, The Ink Spots, Peggy Lee, Patti Page and Gale Storm, as well as a host of long-forgotten performers. Snaders reflected a general shift in popularity—away from big bands and toward individual vocalists—that had been occurring in the recording industry since the end of the war.

Musically, TELEdescriptions were extremely conservative. They seldom took chances on new, potentially hit-making songs, instead utilizing old favorites and public domain material. The films featured direct on-camera performances with little attempt to capitalize, as the Soundies had done, on novelty concepts. Most had simple, uncomplicated sets, often in casual, homey situations (around fireplaces, tables, pianos, etc.) that conveyed a sense of relaxed domesticity. Tunes were often slow, melodic ballads of love songs, with limited special effects and almost none of the jump 'n' jive, comedy and cooch of the Soundies.

Snaders were used in a variety of ways: within variety or

talk programs, as filler between other shows, and, in a few instances, as radio-influenced programs with on-air disc jockeys. The original incarnation of *American Bandstand*, for example, was a Snaders show. In 1952, prior to Dick Clark's arrival, *Bandstand* was Philadelphia-based radio program that made the transition to television. The show was structured initially around an on-camera deejay, who introduced TELEdescriptions. This version did poorly, and within a few weeks was changed to the teenagers-in-the-studio format that has lasted over thirty years. The experience revealed the limitations of a conceptual framework that saw radio as the primary model for using Snaders. It also provides an ironic comment on any attempt to view TELEdescriptions as the true ancestors of music videos fostered by MTV simply because they were the first short musical films made for television.

The demise of the Snader TELEdescriptions was largely due to inadequate marketing and spotty distribution at a national level. Snaders were primarily marketed regionally to local television stations and sponsors. The expansion of network hookups in the early fifties took away many of these local programming opportunities. In addition, Snaders never took advantage of dealing with the record industry or song publishers, choosing instead to negotiate directly with performers and their agents. This stands in sharp contrast to MTV.

Cross-Promotion and MTV

The self-promoting reciprocity between music and moving images—and, ultimately, consumer goods—is hardly unique to the eighties. It, too, has an archaeology within the histories of the mass entertainment industries. Toni Basil's "Mickey" is sometimes cited as the first hit song to owe its success to MTV exposure. But since early in the century, the same kinds of distinctions have been made about songs that owed their popularity to close relationships to other media. "Mary" (1919) was the first song transformed into a hit by virtue of its appearance on record; "Charmaine," from the film *What Price Glory* (1926), the first popularized by its appearance as a movie theme; and Milton Berle's theme "Near You," from the *Texaco Star Theater* (1948), one of the first popularized by television.

Another "media genre"—advertising—also belongs in this history. In the sixties, the relationship between specific TV commercials and Top 40 music provided a blatant example of the promotional roots of the music video. Commercials featuring catchy jingles inspired several hit songs, including Pepsi's "Music to Watch Girls By," Alka Seltzer's "No Matter What Shape (Your Stomach's In)," (#3 on the *Billboard* charts in 1966), and Nabisco's "Sippin 'N' Chippin." At least one

feature film, *For Those Who Think Young* (1964), was spun off a TV commercial jingle.

This history of cross-media promotion can be viewed not only in terms of individual songs, but also in terms of an evolving economic *structure* in which each mass medium plays the role of a marketing apparatus for another medium. Indeed, the history of mechanically reproducible entertainment in the twentieth century can be written in terms of these mutually supportive relations. Sheet music publishing was aided by the first boom in record sales in the twenties. Records sales, in turn, were boosted, following the early years of the Depression, by the growth of radio and the proliferation of jukeboxes in the late thirties and forties. In a similar fashion, MTV helped rescue a recording industry mired in recession during the late seventies.

But once the evolution of music television is placed in this larger context, we are also forced to account for the combination of factors that make contemporary videos *without* precedent. They are, of course, primarily rock videos, set off from most of their ancestors as surely as rock music itself broke with other traditions of popular music in the mid fifties. However, in terms of its "promotional considerations," MTV is not aimed at broad-based mass audiences, but rather targets one particular audience—the youth market—which in the postwar era has become the American economy's most influential consumer group, providing fashionable leverage into other sectors of consumer culture. Other music video networks such as VH-1 and Country Music Television are similarly, and less lucratively, targeted at other specific audience demographics. Such "narrowcasting" became possible because of the new channels opened by cable and satellite technologies since the mid seventies. Finally, MTV, more than any of its precursors, is a symptom of the intensified cross-capitalization of the media since the mid sixties.

The circulation of promotional discourses that MTV and its spin-offs embody reflects the obliteration of traditionally clear distinctions between the music, moving image, advertising and consumer-goods industries.

NOTES

¹ The best account of the variety of these earlier texts remains Michael Shore's *The Rolling Stone Book of Rock Video* (New York: Rolling Stone Press, 1984). The first two chapters of this book provide a shopping list of precursors of every possible influence dating back to Edison.

² Descriptions are from an original *Soundies Parade of Hits* catalog.

³ E. Jonny Graff: "Videofile: Already Got My MTV," *American Film* (November, 1984).

Note: This essay is a revised version of an essay published in the 1986 American Film Institute National Video Festival catalog, and is reprinted with the author's permission.

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TRANSGRESSIVE FEMINISM VS. THE VIDEO SLUT:

A CONVERSATION WITH ANN MAGNUSON

KIM HARLAN TASSIE

Commercial television, in all of its forms and functions, clearly constitutes a major effort to engineer behavior and attitudes within our culture, and throughout the past decade, MTV has become a dominant source of influence, particularly in the youth demographic. Even in an alternative observance of MTV's ten-year anniversary, the relative paucity of work offering positive portrayals of women cannot be ignored; more scarce still are music videos directed by women.

Of course, MTV is a twenty-four-hour advertising channel, and there is certainly nothing new about the notion that sex sells. But, what does it say about our culture when videos featuring white males still account for the majority of MTV's programming, and when many of the most "successful" commercial mere body parts and inanimate objects as vehicles population on the basis of gender is precisely what petuates. That this is virtually taken for granted is I recently queried artist Ann Magnuson concerning her thoughts on sexism and the representation of women in music video. Magnuson is a feature performance artist, songwriter, and member of the underground band Bongwater. In the latter capacity, she has participated in the creation of Bongwater's several alternative music videos, works fundamentally concerned with artistic expression and progressive sexual politics, which generally places them outside the realm of MTV's acceptance. This, in opposition to a "postmodern culture (that) builds on and satisfies already dominant masculine qualities, such as violence, destruction, consumption, phallic sexuality, and appropriation of the feminine in the non-male image."¹



Kim Harlan Tassie: Much of your work as an artist has, through humor, focused on the representation, or perhaps more precisely the *mis*representation, of women in the media. How is it that this concern has become a focus for you?

Ann Magnuson: I suppose it's because I have little, if any, patience anymore with all the propaganda. I grew up with television, which, over the years, has refined its techniques of manipulation so well that we don't even challenge them anymore. We're too weary. If you have any working brain cells whatsoever, you can't grow up female and American and not feel thoroughly pistol-whipped by advertising. Also, I've always been fascinated by the notion of identity—wondering why and how an individual chooses the role he or she ultimately plays through the course of his or her life. I guess that's why I wanted to be an actress, to sample different points of view in hopes of answering the big question of why? why? why?

Just a few days before I was born, my grandmother

received a letter from my great aunt. My great aunt, who proudly called herself a radical conservative, Daughters of the Revolution and all, wrote to my grandmother: "If your grandchild has not arrived, I hope it will be soon, and that you are very happy, whichever (sex) it is. I think it should always be a boy in this man's world."

KHT: In your Bongwater music video *Psychedelic Sewing Room*, the three ages of woman, as personified by Marsha Brady, Samantha Stevens and Aunt Bea, are portrayed. To what degree do you feel women are shaped and molded as they pass through life by their television experiences?

AM: The *Psychedelic Sewing Room* was an actual place in the house I grew up in back in West Virginia where I made halter tops and sewed paisley patches on my friends' Land-lubber jeans. This was during the early seventies, about the same time the Brady Bunch was on. Later, I began to realize I could really identify with Marcia Brady, and I began to think

about what Marcia would be like if she were real, like me. I started to invent secret lives that other TV characters might lead after the credits rolled, too—lives more reflective of reality. So Marcia, like me at fourteen, is painfully confused and yearns for her "niche," her place in the sun. Marcia then grows up to be Samantha Sevens, whose sun has just stopped shining because she has to learn how to take care of herself after Darrin dies of colon cancer, like so many of the mothers in my old neighborhood who had husbands who ditched them for a younger, "lower maintenance" model. But these women didn't have witchcraft to teach them how to balance their own check-books or suddenly learn how to make a living. Then, of course, the final phase is Aunt Bea who is left all alone, left to die like most of the elderly in this country, with-

out a pot to pee in, utterly dejected and completely disinterested in appearing on the Mayberry reunion show. I suppose it's all very pessimistic, isn't it? Sort of a sitcom-goes-Bergman scenario: "kind of desperate, kind of cute."

KHT: How does another Bongwater video, *Jimmy/Lesbians of Russia*, deal with women's identities?

AM: It's a video with two discrete parts, which my Bongwater collaborator, Cramer, decided to put together. *Jimmy* is about a Southern California housewife who's had it with her responsibilities and her abuses, which are non-specified. So she starts flying. "Don't think I'm insane/Please stop comparing me to Shirley MacLaine/I can fly." It's inspired by the suburban housewives, sitting around their pools in Malibu, who read Shirley MacLaine's *Out On A Limb*, getting little doses of buddhism. It's about the contemporary housewife transcending the drudgery of her existence.

Lesbians of Russia originally came from a dream I had. In fact, most of Bongwater's songs come directly from the subconscious. In *Lesbians of Russia*, I sing in syllables about the wailing lesbians of Russia in their closeted ecstasy.

KHT: In 1986, you created a character named "Fallopia" for the TV series, *Nightflight*. Through this character, you parody the representation of women in music video by portraying a glittery, lingerie-clad, self-pronounced "new wave video slut." Do you feel this style of parody is a successful means of criticism?



Ann Magnuson in *The Power of Pussy*

AM: I had heard that Prince had originally wanted to name Vanity, his protege, Vagina. As crazy as that sounds, I do not doubt for a moment that it was true. I was dumfounded, and out of that moment of dismayed astonishment, "Fallopia" was born. Prince's pimping was really bugging me, I guess. All of "his women" really took the notion of bimbohood to new depths. Perhaps he's a musical genius, but I've just never been able to get beyond his pink-Champale-on-ice aesthetic.

The piece on *Nightflight* is a classroom lesson in how to become a "new wave video slut," employing the eight basic steps known as "The Fallopian Principle." These included nurturing your narcissism, exposing as much flesh as possible, subjecting yourself to a maximum amount of humiliation, and festooning yourself in exotic accessories such as

monkey fur, rhinestones and Ortho-Gynol cream. I then illustrated these principles via clips from the more horrifying videos from 1986, the biggest jawdropper being Vanity's *Pretty Mess*.

The problem with parody is that you're never going to beat the real thing. But it's always good for a few cheap laughs. Ultimately, "Fallopia" was pretty infantile. Anyone with half a brain is well aware of the absurdity behind Mötley Crüe corraling a bevy of prehistoric looking babes into a metal cage for lord knows what kind of metallic pleasures. The problem is that a vast majority of people don't have half a brain, so perhaps the Fallopia as VJ/slut shtick was radical to some of the *Nightflight* demographic. Who knows? If people got a laugh out of it, that's fine, too. Parody can be an effective means of criticism, but, unfortunately, you usually find yourself preaching to the converted. Personally, I feel like I've since progressed beyond that approach.

KHT: What is the most sexist music video you've ever seen?

AM: *Cherry Pie* by Warrant springs to mind as the most amazing video I've ever seen. Wow! What can I say? When that slice of cherry pie falls into the model's lap...and those goonhead guys playing with the firehose....It's hilariously stupid.

KHT: What videos are you aware of that present positive portrayals of women, that work against the sexist norm?

AM: I suppose works that just let the talent shine through,



Ann Magnuson as "Fallopia"

without the fancy editing that's generally used to mask the inadequacies of the "artist," often present positive portrayals of women in music videos. Sinead O'Connor's *Nothing Compares 2 U* springs to mind. But music video channels don't play too many videos involving truly interesting female bands. I'd

love to see strong bands like Babes in Toyland, and women like Phranc, better represented. Phranc recently told me that MTV wouldn't play her video (I think it's called "Whitewash") because it was "too political." Nuff said.

KHT: Madonna has been described as "the female star who perhaps more than any other embodies the new postmodern feminist heroine in her odd combination of seductiveness and a gutsy sort of independence."² What is your opinion of Madonna, and the manner in which she markets herself?

AM: I admire and almost envy the woman's energy, but her need for attention is downright pathological. Madonna is much more a publicist than a feminist. "Issues" seem to be just another tool in the hands of this master propagandist. People seem to want to extrapolate some far-reaching feminist message from her power-mongering, but to me, only one message rings loud and clear, and that's the old Reagan battle cry: "Me, Myself and I!" I guess I'd take her over Marilyn Quayle, but really, couldn't we find a happy medium?

KHT: Do you feel that if more women were directing music videos, there

would be less reduction of female performers to inanimate sex objects, or does the "sex sells" mentality pervade our culture with no regard for gender?

AM: Sex certainly seems to be the most effective way to sell something. It works over and over again. As long as tits, ass or phallic-looking camel heads sell cigarettes, records and beer, we'll be embroiled in sexploitation. And just because a woman directs something, it doesn't mean it's going to be instantly "politically correct." Hell, I prefer the politics of Russ Meyer to that of some gun-toting woman trying to prove she has bigger balls than Oliver Stone. Plus, there are plenty of men directing interesting work out there, but until the people who are controlling the flow of money and resources are interested in something more than getting laid, we're in for more of the same.

I have to say, though, that sometimes it's fun to be an inanimate sex object, on a non-exclusive basis, of course. I mean, you're never going to have trouble finding a zillion headbanger girls on Sunset Strip who love strutting their stuff in tight leather, and who am I to argue with 'em?

KHT: In commercial videos—MTV videos—women are almost always por-

trayed as clamoring for (usually the male band members') sex/phallus/attention/money/sex. In Bongwater's most recent music video, *The Power of Pussy*, you deal with sexual dissatisfaction from a very female perspective.

AM: Basically, the idea is that we're all controlled by the undeniable "power" of sex, and it behooves each and every one of us to move from the back of the bus into the driver's seat. "I don't have to do until I want...I want to now!" We can't deny our sexuality and we should get to become better friends with it. The monologues, which voice total dissatisfaction, have come from personal experience. Not just mine, but from plenty of other women I've talked with, too, who are trying to come to terms with the pressures of having sex and not enjoying it, but desperately wanting to. Some women are never able to experience orgasm and I think that's tragic. "I could never find anyone who would take the time to care, to care, to find out what I wanted, what I needed, what I had to have," says the song's protagonist. Then she reaches her sexual prime at thirty, and finds true happiness "with one of my students, one of my more gifted students" for the first time in her life, but can't "do it" because it's against her religious beliefs. Anyway, the song's also about getting fucked and liking it, but making sure you get some quality time on top!!!

NOTES

¹ E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 150.
² Kaplan, p. 117.

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MTV AND THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION: VIDEO FOR CHAMELEONS

BILL HORRIGAN

Boy (Go)

Having just obligingly defined itself promo-interstitially as "an obedient tongue licking the shiny leather boot of rock and roll," MTV plays itself in the background here, as, formerly, always. Here's the sound of now: *Freedom* by George Michael. And a novel clip it is, visually featuring (this is a relief) neither the star's top nor signature bottom, pushing instead a succession of the moment's models (Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, also some boys) mouthing GM's lyrics and miming his sound while lolling in lingerie, and this complete visual withholding of the ex-Whamster's bodily presence brings him to my eye a degree of credit he never had, to the extent that the common wisdom on music video production holds that the nominal performer/star put in at least (or sometimes at most: Milli Vanilli) a token recognizable appearance (because music is partially sold/negotiated via personality power), and to the extent (this is a different issue) that having his voice/lyrics/sentiments embodied by pretty girls rather than his own pretty boyness allows those who know or care to then read the clip as commenting on (or at least *not denying*) what's reckoned but seldom spoken relative to this star's sexual caste. Of course the clip "proves" nothing; music video offers demonstrations and suggestions over proofs, but what's interesting here is that an unnecessary (but useful, speculatively) decision was made to allude to the zone of off-screen musical space (where the permanent psychodrama of the lives of performers is enacted) and the fact that this decision was carried out in riskless fashion (i.e., if you don't get the point, you still get to gawk at live mannequins; if you do get the point, it just inspires you to relocate George Michael to a cooler rather than hotter circle of that hell known as the music industry) is no cause for contempt, *relatively speaking*.

Why go on about George Michael at all? Well, mainly because that's what MTV was playing ten minutes ago. But also there's this, which is that MTV furnishes the condition for speaking about music video. Without orienting reference to

MTV as the cultural/industrial template any discussion of music video as an artistic and discursive form would be fatally compromised, insofar as the substitute/alternate path to comprehension would detour blindingly into mere "textual analysis" and total anecdote. Hence we all convene here today to praise and (O bright promise...) to mourn MTV on its tenth anniversary even if it has not, in its decade, been responsible (unlike rock 'n' roll) for saving anyone's life (*pace* the recent video by Nelson, true children of the damned, in which a troubled teen living in a trailer is recalled to life smiling after dreaming he was



George Michael

in a Nelson video). Again, however: why George Michael and not, say, such rival if not superior narcissists as Madonna or Prince? Truthfully, the sincere answer is the dumb-sounding one: because George Michael is what MTV was just now hawking as I sat down to write this, and any given clip, encountered randomly, contains and can unfold the total amplitude of MTV, like a scrap of Japanese paper blooming into a flotilla when it's dropped in water. Everyone knows this is one of MTV's attractions: the fact that, shark-like, it keeps moving and feeding by swinging all over the map, certainly not on an arc of development or enlightenment (too much repetition and circularity for that to emerge; too much regressive self-referencing for deep purchase on the solid world to be made) but all the time rushing to completion of the four- or five-minute unit comprising the temporal duration of a typical clip, which is then displaced by the next one, or by a functionally indistinguishable commercial or self-advertisement. Which in turn is why we watch it, or don't, or reject it most symbolically by turning instead to C-Span, the Anti-MTV in its abhorrence of spectacle and fascination, its hypnotically distended durations, its zen-like shunning of commerce and all its vehicles.

As a venture dedicated to teenagers and to those who haven't elected to kick all the consuming and "life-style"

practices of teenagers (our ranks replenish daily), MTV offers a literally unceasing glimpse at the pastoral happiness of pop music's perpetual present, of having energy forever, of having a world of consumables produced to banish tears. No one gets old except the Rolling Stones and no one dies except on anti-drug spots. Sometimes (America still not being drug-free) bad things do happen to good people, but not to worry—pop music's collective *caritas* extends balm to the soul, and if all Paula Abdul or Little Richard can offer by way of solace, really, is to tell you to get yourself down to Taco Bell and have a Coke just for the sake of it, well, please not to forget that *they're doing the best they can with the gifts God gave them*.

Like A Girl, I Want To Keep You Coming

Granted, MTV is not at present the maddeningly inane monolith of 1981. In a frenzy of affirmative action, it has thrown over the primogeniture of white boy rule and now heavily features young African-American artists (while not, however, fully sacrificing white boy privilege, as the endless parade of heavy metal posturing continues). Its twenty-four-hour viewing day has been substantially recalibrated to accommodate a variety of more or less mindless longer programs—the constant jewel in the domestically cheesy crown being Kurt Loder's news reporting, which sometimes, miraculously, speaks *unpopular ideas*. And, Abby Terkuhle's "Art Breaks" would have to be acknowledged as being as successful an intervention into national TV programming as was anywhere made in the past craven decade.

Despite these and other gestures waved like a hanky in the direction of "responsibility," MTV remains a com-



MTV logo

merce-driven enterprise structurally and ideologically spliced, like the man with two heads, to the record industry and in no way fully subservient to it (or subservient only as long as consumers prefer to purchase their music in aural—audiotapes, compact discs, DATs, vinyl, whatever—form, rather than in visual—music video cassettes, laserdiscs—form). In fact, having taken the upper hand, it's true that MTV has been credited with having created or "enabled" (odd how descriptive the language of dependency can be) various pop stars, the case of Madonna being simply the most convulsively epochal and that of Michael Jackson being simply the most enigmatically tragic.

For all that, the practice of MTV is still not an exact science, unless you want to dignify marketing by calling it a scientific skill; but as its hit-to-miss ratio is approximately that of a Ouija board I just say no. And the number of musically competent, videogenically suggestive and officially tressed girls and boys whose clips never make it past, if they ever make it to, minimum rotation is astronomical. Which then

raises this question: if you don't see a music video on MTV, where will you see it? Will you ever see it *at all*? There is, of course, MTV's spin-off, VH-1, which conducts itself as elder statesman to MTV's self-image as *enfant terrible*, as what MTV would look like after maintaining a 12-Step Program. While VH-1's play list does embrace styles of music less panic-stricken than MTV's, its right to self-determination seems held in check by MTV's corporate logic. Other attempts on a national scale (the execrable *Friday Night Videos*; the valiantly revived *Night Flight*, various shows on BET) tend to mimic, in their own way, MTV's assumptions, though always staking out some space for unique maneuvering. A number of locally produced programs, usually on cable and/or in a marginal time-slot, sometimes make laudable attempts to feature regional as well as national clips (it's on these programs that the public service announcements produced by music video director Jim McKay under the Direct Effect rubric were first aired). And though revenues are small relative to audiotapes and CDs, the market for music video compi-



MTV Art Break by Church of the SubGenius

lations is feverishly bullish, if the trade papers can be believed. The mid-eighties phenomenon of the "video bar" came and went without much of a legacy (other than in the shape of hazy memories, including my own of sitting in one such brief-lived venture in downtown Minneapolis drinking zombies while staring with unfathomable absorption at Phil Collins splayed across six monitors). Bars still sometimes have a perched monitor or two, but the notion of going to one of these venues expressly to watch music video has now been mostly filed away for use by the next generation's novelists of manners.

Video bars, retail purchase, alternate broadcast and cable programs...or MTV: that appears to be the range of access, and it ought to be as big a problem for the music video fan as for the music video scholar. What the comparison of music video to the tradition of independent film and video production (which, within limits, can in fact be a productive comparison: it's perhaps true, for instance, that the stylistic adventurousness formerly found only in avant-garde film/video seems

to be now outdistanced by the level of invention on view in music video) can't explain is that the latter practices, however perpetually marginalized, at least do participate in a fragile but relatively resilient and resourceful network of exhibition, commentary and support—it's a cultural practice whose histories can be traced. The case of music video provides a distorted parallel development; its history and precursors can be constructed (as some of the programs in *Art of Music Video: Ten Years After* endeavor to do), but its present perpetually vaporizes. Assuming one wanted to construct a history of the last decade's music video, one would want to consult MTV's rotation protocols, but is that where evidence would be found of the evolution of the art? It's an odd situation, really: MTV is universally acknowledged as the source, the home, the *ursprung*, for music video, yet of all the contemporary clips in *Art of Music Video*, the overwhelming majority of them have been utterly unwelcome on MTV, except for the few occasionally picked up for the Sunday late-night "alternative" show, *120 Minutes*, which is relatively less driven

by major label deference and in that respect functions as MTV's most consistent safety valve for releasing some of the oppressive tension generated by the tyranny of the Top Twenty Countdown.

The problem with MTV is...well, no: there is no problem. MTV is doing what it's supposed to do, which is construct and deliver consumers. The problem arises once one lapses into believing that MTV has a privileged relation to the art of music video. It has no such relation, and it's our fault, not MTV's, for thinking it might. The art of music video flourishes elsewhere, and fans and scholars have to find their own way there.

Bent Out of Shape

In 1988, my friend Geoffrey Stier and I put together two two-hour programs titled *This Is the Picture: A Recent Tendency in Music Video*, drawn from the vault of, and exhibited in, a bar in West Hollywood called Revolver. The premise was pretty basic: as in the culture at large, representations of gay men and lesbians in music video were elusive and fragmented, to the point of virtual absence. Consequently, as a form of redressing, one had to gather those clips in which such images did appear, however fugitively (in the most unexpected places—for instance, the presence of same-sex couples in *Victim of Love*, a Nan Goldin-like panorama by, of all people, Bryan Adams) or flagrantly (almost nowhere, except for the likes of Pete Burns of Dead or Alive; it didn't count, necessarily, in the case of people like Elton John, unless the clip added something beyond his simple presence). As a further consequence, one also had to gather those clips that invited, so to speak, an against-the-grain reading productive to the

agenda at hand—clips which, when placed into a gay reading context (or at least pulled out of the MTV context-of-no-context), all of a sudden seemed decidedly “different” (the master example here being that of Bruce Springsteen, whose video *oeuvre*, for reasons known certainly not to us, adds up to the most homo-erotic one of any major star—even Madonna hasn’t used a close-up of a crotch as an *establishing shot*, as Springsteen’s *Dancing in the Dark* serenely does).

kd lang in *So in Love*

As a third and final consequence, one had to pursue research on various fronts to locate pertinent clips that had been produced but virtually never seen (the vault at Revolver had hundreds of tapes, most of which never got shown there, like the ones we found by the Mekons and Scritti Politti).

This Is the Picture was a project that was done because of an enchantment we had with music video, and because we were impatient over not seeing what we knew was there to be seen. Three years since then it’s not a radically changed situation, despite the bracing ambivalence of tapes like R.E.M.’s *Orange Crush*, *Finest Worksong* and *Losing My Religion*, and the recent faddish fetishizing of over-muscled young men (the Herb Ritts’ touch in videos for Janet Jackson and Chris Isaak; but see also Freedom Williams in C+C Music Fac-

tory clips and ancillary Coke commercials, various Madonna provocations—didn’t everyone buy their own clip of *Justify My Love* to see Tony Ward?—and the irrepressibly unctuous Gerardo). The picture has been adjusted slightly, as well, by music video’s acknowledgement of AIDS—an acknowledgement made not in the routinely exhibited music videos of a single major artist (except, incoherently and under duress, in the prologue of George Michael’s 1987 *I Want Your Sex*) but at least in the industry’s “response” to the epidemic with *Red, Hot + Blue*, which yielded a milestone clip in Percy Adlon and kd lang’s stunning *So in Love*.

Private Joy

Obviously, the limits on what music video can do are pretty clear. Watching it probably won’t make you rich or smart or crazy, and it won’t ease you into

heaven or dash you off to hell. More locally, a temperate person wouldn’t expect music video or MTV to “solve” the AIDS epidemic; popular music is merely a Gay Science, hence an intimate ally of philosophy, not medicine. A temperate person might, however, demand that music video, considered as visual enactment of popular music, acknowledge the contradictory, messy sprawl of contemporary affirmation, practice and denial that

music itself draws upon and re-presents. This demand or challenge is to an extent met by music video, as some of the clips in *Art of Music Video: Ten Years After* demonstrate. Where this demand is not met becomes clear, however, with the realization that most of these clips will only ever be widely seen in the context of this exhibition. Barring the unlikely abolition of the major labels and their parasitical partners (and thus MTV’s license for being), hope resides in performers being able to issue video compilations as routinely as they do albums so that this become a primary unit of purchase. That development would in turn bring it all back home—back to the fan watching the music most carefully chosen on the basis of how piercingly it conforms to the doubts and urgings of orphic inner speech. Which, naturally, was one of the whole ideas, originally.

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PROGRAM GUIDE

ART OF MUSIC VIDEO: TEN YEARS AFTER

INTRODUCTION

Art of Music Video: Ten Years After takes as its point of departure the ten-year anniversary of MTV’s inception—the breakthrough music video network began cablecasting on August 1, 1981. MTV must be acknowledged as the economic and cultural context for music video as a recognized category of creative expression. But the exhibition positions itself as an alternative celebration of the MTV decade, moving beyond MTV’s amalgamation of album advertisements to propose a vision of music video as art within the much broader history of music-based media forms throughout the twentieth century.

This vision gains focus through five strongly interconnected programs. The first encompasses an assessment of creative trends in the decades before and after MTV’s inception that define aesthetic activity within commercial production, as well as MTV’s dramatic effect on televisual language and network identity. The exhibition moves in the second



program to a concern with the role music video plays in the communication of progressive politics, and shifting sexual and cultural terms. The broader historical context is elaborated upon in a program that highlights significant antecedents in the art world and in popular culture. In the fourth program, the anti-aesthetics of resistance embraced by the alternative music video scene are showcased as the dark soul of

music video counterculture. The final program of the exhibition projects music video’s future as art through the recent production of experimental artists working almost entirely outside the music industry.

Taken as a composite view, this constellation of programs attempts to not only reflect and analyse what the manifestations of music video as art have been, but is also an effort to editorialize about how the form must be approached and considered in order to maximize both its aesthetic possibilities and crucial position as a vehicle for cultural change.

MICHAEL NASH

PROGRAM 1

The MTV Decade

MTV began cablecasting on August 1, 1981. Since that time its predominant role has been to target young consumers, but the amalgamation of less noticed exceptions to the rule of advertisement have yielded a not-quite-hidden history of aesthetic achievement. This program opens with visionary work that made the music channel possible, surveys artistic trends in the decade that followed, and assesses MTV's profound influence on the structure and language of television through its on-air promotions. In so doing, the program provides an alternative reading of the breakthrough network's history.

Pre(MTV)visions

Offering various visions of music video's unique potential as a performance medium, these seminal clips by influential recording artists helped establish the basis for the form.

Eloise (excerpt from *Whatever Happened to Vileness Fats*), music and direction by The Residents, 1972, 2:05, courtesy of Cryptic Corporation

Secret Agent Man, music by DEVO, directed by Chuck Statler, 1976, 4:50, courtesy of Chuck Statler

Boys Keep Swinging, music by David Bowie, directed by David Bowie and David Mallet, 1979, 3:18, courtesy of Isolar Enterprises

Telegram Sam, music by Bauhaus, directed by Mick Calvert, 1980, 2:13, courtesy of Beggars Banquet Records



1981

This survey features the major artists who shaped music video's aesthetics during MTV's inaugural year.



Ashes to Ashes, music by David Bowie, directed by David Bowie and David Mallet, 1981, 3:38, courtesy of Isolar Enterprises

Beautiful World, music by DEVO, directed by Gerald V. Casale and Chuck Statler, 1981, 3:30, courtesy of Chuck Statler

Once in a Lifetime, music by Talking Heads, directed by David Byrne and Toni Basil, 1981, 4:20, courtesy of Todo Mundo

O Superman, music and direction by Laurie Anderson, 1981, 8:25, courtesy of The Kitchen

MTV: The Art of Self-Promotion

Many argue that the best work on MTV is in-between the videos: MTV's on-air promotions have revolutionized how networks identify themselves. This overview features a diverse range of animated IDs, PSAs and other self-promos (supplemented by MTV's Video Analysis Campaign in Program #2 and Art Breaks in #5) that demonstrate its dramatic effect on the language of television.

Animated Logos Historical Survey, 1981-91

"Words," 1989

AIDS Spots #1 and #2, 1990

Earth Day PSAs: "Running Water," "Emissions," "Paper Towels" and "Foam Cup," 1990

Read Campaign: "Delta of Venus," "Metamorphosis" and "Forty Stories," 1991
"Blah, Blah, Blah," 1990

Total Running Time, 15:30 courtesy of MTV: Music Television



Music Video as Art: A Chronology of Trend-encies

These music videos demonstrate the development of artistic tendencies and trends in a rough chronology that covers MTV's first decade. This collection surveys the influence of experimental film, the role of major directors, resistance of advertisement imperatives through anti-aesthetics and new approaches to performance on television.

Re-Experimental Film

Hello Skinny, music by The Residents, directed by The Residents and Graeme Whifler, 1980, 4:00, courtesy of Cryptic Corporation

Shock the Monkey, music by Peter Gabriel, directed by Brian Grant, 1982, 4:00, courtesy of Geffen Records

Acid, Bitter and Sad, music by This Mortal Coil, directed by Nigel Grierson, 1987, 4:45, courtesy of 4AD Records

Ad Auteurs

The Queen is Dead, music by The Smiths, directed by Derek Jarman, 1986, 4:30, courtesy of Sire Records

Bizarre Love Triangle, music by New Order, directed by Robert Longo, 1987, 3:50, courtesy of Cascando Studio

Imagine, music by John Lennon, directed by Zbigniew Rybczynski, 1987, 4:20, courtesy of Rebo High Definition Studios

Anti-Videos

Hold My Life, music by The Replacements, directed by Bill Pope and Randy Skinner, 1986, 4:36, courtesy of Sire Records

The Perfect Kiss, music by New Order, directed by Jonathan Demme, 1986, 10:15, courtesy of Cascando Studio

Stupid Kids (version 2), music by Christmas, directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Farris, 1989, 3:00, courtesy of I.R.S. Records

Tele-Visual Performance

C'est Comme Ca, music by Les Rita Mitsouko, directed by Jean Baptiste Mondino, 1987, 6:24, courtesy of Virgin Records

Change the Style, music by Son of Bazerk, directed by Ben Stokes and Eric Zimmerman, 1990, 3:10, courtesy of Soul/MCA Records

This is How It Feels, music by Inspiral Carpets, directed by John Kline, 1991, 3:09, courtesy of Elektra Entertainment



Photo credits: *Secret Agent Man*, *Boys Keep Swinging*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *MTV Earth Day logo*, *Stupid Kids*, *C'est Comme Ca*, *This is How It Feels*

PROGRAM 2

Music Video and the Politics of Dancing

A confluence of the two "massest" media, radio and television, music video's cultural reach lends it significant potential as a form of political address. While commercial music video as a whole often reinforces retrograde social consciousness, this program examines some of the best examples of "agit pop"—music videos based in political and social commentary—and explores the most significant issues linked to the form. It is an alternately sad and hopeful comment on the early nineties that some of the most forceful assertions of progressive politics on commercial television are to be found in advertisements for teenagers.

This is the News

Embracing and extending the connection to social activism first established by pop music in the sixties, this survey of politically motivated music videos indicates how effective the form can be as a tool of progressive political persuasion.

Riddle of the '80s, music by Firehose, directed by Tom Mignone, 1989, 2:01, courtesy of SST Records

I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts (from the film *The Unheard Music*), music by X, directed by W.T. Morgan, 1985, 4:07, courtesy of Skouras Pictures

Talk About the Passion, music by R.E.M., directed by Jem Cohen, 1988, 4:00, courtesy of C-00 Film Corporation

Government Figures, music by Steve Fisk, directed by Guy Guillet and Peter Randlette, 1989, 2:15, courtesy of SST Records

National Holiday, music by Timbuk 3, directed by Carlos Grasso, 1989, 4:03, courtesy of I.R.S. Records

Free Society, music by Elliott Sharp, directed by Paul Garrin, 1988, 3:22, courtesy of Video Data Bank

Peace Sells, music by Megadeth, directed by Robert Longo, 1986, 4:09, courtesy of Capitol/EMI Records

Rap: Fashioning Resistance

One of the most important developments on MTV over the past three years has been the emergence of rap video as a dominant sub-genre. Rap clips offer some of the most subversive, politically charged communication in all of commercial media, as evidenced by this survey.

Straight Outta Compton, music by N.W.A, directed by Rupert Wainwright, 1989, 4:21, courtesy of Ruthless Records

Arrest the President, music by Intelligent Hoodlum, directed by Charles S. Stone III, 1991, 4:18, courtesy of A&M Records

Night of the Living Baseheads, music by Public Enemy, directed by Lionel C. Martin, 1988, 5:55, courtesy of Columbia Records

Music Video and World Order, Old and New

The most significant global political shift of the MTV decade, the end of the Cold War via collapse of Communism, is seen before, during and after in this survey of music videos from both sides of the iron curtain.

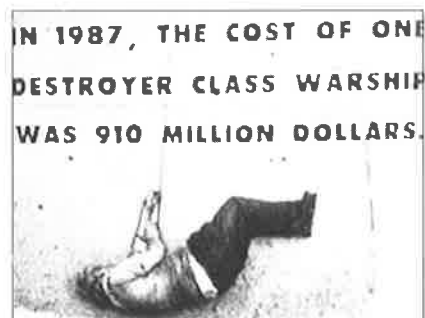


Photo credits: *Riddle of the '80s*, *Talk About the Passion*, *Night of the Living Baseheads*

This Ain't No Picnic, music by Minutemen, directed by Randall Johnson, 1985, 2:06, courtesy of SST Records

World Destruction, music by Time Zone, directed by Hartley and Fontaine, 1985, 4:00, courtesy of Celluloid Records

Life is Life, music by Laibach directed and Daniel Landin, 1987, 4:30, courtesy of Wax Trax Records

Hush, music by Antis, directed by Ken Thurlbeck, 1989, 3:30, courtesy of Thurlbeck Studio

133, music by Borghesia, directed by Neven Korda, 1990, 4:00, courtesy of Caroline Records

Sex Sales and Gender Politics

Commercial music video's sexist representation of women and heterosexuality is scrutinized, satirized and opposed through affirmation of female sexuality in this skewed survey.

Daddy's Little Girl, music by Nikki D, directed by Scott Kennedy, 1991, 4:00, courtesy of Columbia Records

Gender Rolls, music by The Roches, directed by Connie Coleman and Alan Powell, 1987, 3:00, courtesy of Coleman/Powell

We're Talking Vulva, music by Shawna Dempsey and Bad Tribe, directed by Tracy Traeger and Shawna Dempsey, 1990, 5:00, courtesy of Zeitgeist Films

The Power of Pussy, music by Bongwater, directed by Alan Henderson and Richard Metzger, 1991, 4:10, courtesy of Broadcast Arts and Shimmy Disc

Creature from the Black Leather Lagoon, music by The Cramps, directed by Rocky Schenck, 1990, 3:17, courtesy of Rocky Schenck

Video Analysis Campaign Spots, featuring Cher, Warrant and the Divinyls, MTV, 1990-91, courtesy of MTV: Music Television

Music Video and AIDS Awareness: Red, Hot + Blue

This section showcases one of the most important and artistically successful of all the various music video benefit projects, Arista Record's *Red, Hot + Blue* home video compilation. These clips exemplify the project's combination of heart-felt commitment, timely commentary and artistic integrity.

I Get a Kick Out of You, music by The Jungle Brothers, directed by Mark Pellington, 1990, 2:52, courtesy of 6 West Home Video

Too Darn Hot, music by Erasure, directed by Adelle Lutz and Sandy McLeod, 1990, 3:40, courtesy of 6 West Home Video

So in Love, music by kd lang and directed by Percy Adlon, 1990, 4:41, courtesy of 6 West Home Video

Rock the Vote PSAs, Various Artists, 1990-91, courtesy of Rock the Vote and Virgin Records

Interspersed throughout the program are public service announcements designed to activate and politicize the youth vote featuring, Madonna, Deee Light, Lenny Kravitz, Iggy Pop, Anthony Kiedis, Ozzy Osborne, Megadeth, Donny Osmond, Queen Latifah, KRS-1 and Kid Frost.



Photo credits: *The Power of Pussy*, *Creature from the Black Leather Lagoon*, *Too Darn Hot*

PROGRAM 3

20th Century Musical Visions

Music video's historical antecedents and tributaries are traced in this broad-ranging program that places MTV's ten-year history within the larger contexts of related historical developments in popular culture and media art of the twentieth century. Featuring experimental films, Soundies, Snader TELEcriptions and Scopitones, this program foregoes the tedious and potentially unhelpful strategy of tracing all related cultural production. Focusing instead on short-form music films, the program's showcase of significant precursors moves from the common ground of structural characteristics to an analysis of tendencies dictated by prevailing cultural norms.

Oskar Fischinger Tribute

Oskar Fischinger's abstract films constitute perhaps the most important elaboration of the Visual Music movement's aesthetic premise—that animations could be composed through principles coupling painting and music. Beginning in the twenties, Fischinger produced a variety of experimental films synchronized to music, including a number of works financed as advertisements—*Circles*, *Muratti Marches On* and *Muntz TV*. The unique conjunction of experimental visualizations of musical composition, actual synchronization to music, and underwriting through advertising in this work reveal Fischinger to be the progenitor of music video.

- Study No. 5*, music by Johnson and Frazier, 1930, 3:00
- Circles*, music by Richard Wagner, 1933, 1:45
- Muratti Marches On*, music by Josef Bayer, 1934, 2:35
- Allegretto*, music by Ralph Rainger, 1936, 2:35
- Radio Dynamics*, silent, 1943, 4:15
- Muntz TV*, 1953, 1:00



Soundies: The Original Film Jukebox

Approximately 2,000 three-minute music films were produced for coin-operated film jukeboxes during the forties by a company formed by FDR's son. This selection of Soundies provides a moving time capsule of American cultural consciousness—its naivete, racism and jingoism, and desire for diversion—during World War II.

- Shine*, music by Louis Armstrong, directed by Josef Berne, 1942, 2:45, courtesy of Petrified Films
- Brandin' Time*, music by Red River Dave, directed by William F. Crouch, 1943, 2:42, courtesy of Petrified Films
- Sailboat in the Sky*, music by Hal Borne and His Orchestra with Johnnie Johnston and Anne Carmichael, directed by George Cunningham, 1942, 2:49, courtesy of Petrified Films
- Yankee Doodler*, music by William Frawley, directed by Herbert Moulton, 1942, 3:00, courtesy of Streamline Film Archives

Snader TELEcriptions: The First Televised Music Shorts

From 1950 until 1952, over 1,000 short musical films were produced for television broadcast in an effort to capitalize on programming demand created by the growing number of local stations. Snaders featured rather routine bits by relatively well-known performers, as witnessed in these three selections. Without cross-promotional relationships with record companies, or inspired productions, their demise was swift and their significance is largely as a footnote to MTV.

- The Sweetheart of Somebody Else*, music by The Ink Spots, 3:55
- I Don't Know Enough About You*, music by Peggy Lee, 3:06
- Minnie the Moocher*, music by Cab Calloway, 2:45

all directors are uncredited, production dates are 1950-52, courtesy of Chertok Associates

Scopitones: A Stylistic Survey

In an effort to revive the film jukebox, hardware manufacturers contracted with Debbie Reynolds's film company to produce over 150 short music films during the sixties. This survey of Scopitones indexes the range of musical and visual styles within this body of work, the "music videos" of the previous generation.

- If I Had a Hammer*, music by Debbie Reynolds, 2:20
- Boots*, music by Nancy Sinatra, 3:00
- In the Web of Love*, music by Joi Lansing, 2:15
- Tell Him*, music by The Exciters, 2:45
- A Whiter Shade of Pale*, music by Procal Harum, 4:00
- Title Unknown*, music by Clark Terry, 2:45

all directors are uncredited, production dates are 1964-67, courtesy of Private Collection

Scopitones and Sexual Representation

In their effort to distill purely pop elements of music and film into an integrated format, Scopitones provide a paradigm for pre-hippie sixties kitsch Americana. Using this form to attempt to create a pay-per-view financial empire, Scopitones gravitated towards risqué and downright offensive depictions of women; this selection comments on the sexism that arguably is inherent in adapting music media to the dynamics of capitalism.

- Queen of the House*, Jody Miller, 2:30
- The Mighty Mississippi*, Back Porch Majority, 2:45
- The Silencer*, Joi Lansing, 2:15
- Ebb Tide*, Artist Unknown, 2:30

all directors are uncredited, production dates are 1964-67, courtesy of Private Collection

Experimental Film Visionaries

Experimental film is one of the primary tributaries of music video, providing the aesthetic bearings and image bank for the commercial production industry. This selection showcases films whose structures parallel contemporary "concept" music videos, demonstrating the degree to which such films provided prototypes. Among the works included from the sixties is *Cosmic Ray*, the first collage film cut to a popular song, and as such, a watershed work in music video's pre-history.

- Cosmic Ray*, music by Ray Charles, directed by Bruce Conner, 1961, 4:00, courtesy of Canyon Cinema
- All My Life*, music by Ella Fitzgerald, directed by Bruce Baillie, 1966, 3:00, courtesy of Canyon Cinema
- Pluto*, music by Moby Grape, directed by James Herbert, 1968, 6:00, courtesy of James Herbert



Photo credits: *Muntz TV*, *Sailboat in the Sky*, *Minnie the Moocher*, *Boots*, *Queen of the House*

PROGRAM 4

Notes from the Underground

While the pop mainstream churns out glossy album ads, renegade media concerns backing alternative voices and visions attempt to keep alive a music video counterculture. This program surveys independent labels' ongoing rebellion against the mediocrity of corporate formulations. It also includes bands whose successes have forced major labels to add alternative artists. The range of sources for clips in this program attests to the rise of home video labels such as Atavistic Video, and to the influence exerted by production companies such as H-Gun and C-00 Film Corporation. It also points to reduced production by the larger independent music companies who face diminished returns from limited telecast and generally difficult financial times.



Photo credits: *Knob Off*, *Soul Soldier*, *The Wagon*

Declarations of Independents

One of the most basic characteristics of underground music video is its assertion of the primacy of individual perspective—its independence from the tyranny of majoritarian demographics. These works typify alternative music video's pronouncement of autonomy, and the highly personal voices and visions it embodies.

I Against I, music by Bad Brains, directed by Paul B. Rachman, 1987, 3:51, courtesy of SST Records

Knob Off, music by Skunk, directed by Kurt Kellison and Paula Froehle, 1991, 3:48, courtesy of Twin Tone Records and Atavistic Video

Katalavox, music and direction by Illusion of Safety, 1987, 3:46, courtesy of RRRecords and Atavistic Video

Turning Brown and Torn in Two, music and direction by Tall Dwarfs, 1988, 4:02, courtesy of Flying Nun Records and Atavistic Video

What Am I Doing Here?, music by Rollins Band, directed by Jim McKay, 1990, 3:16, courtesy of Texas Hotel Records and C-00 Film Corporation

Sense of Place

Symptomatic of the postmodern condition, commercial music video seems to come from everywhere and nowhere. These videos raise issues of regional identity that distinguish independent music from the corporate pop of "universal" culture.

Flat Duo Jets Document, music by Flat Duo Jets, directed by Jem Cohen, 1990, 5:55, courtesy of Dog Gone Records and C-00 Film Corporation

Look Alive, music by Pylon, directed by Jim McKay, 1990, 4:17, courtesy of C-00 Film Corporation

Hurting Word, music by The Leaving Trains, directed by Jim Sikora, 1991, 3:38, courtesy of SST Records

Soul Soldier, music by Throwing Muses, directed by Charles Jevremovic and C.L. Monroe, 1987, 9:00, courtesy of Sire Records

Fluffy Little Cloud, music by The Orb, directed by Marion Waldorf, 1991, 4:00, courtesy of Big Life Records

Twisted Toons

As much as any artistic enterprise, animation has been the predominant mode of experimental visualization adopted by commercial music videos. A diverse array of alternative animation approaches are featured in this survey of raw techniques and warped visions.

The Wagon, music by Dinosaur Jr., directed by Sam Fell, 1991, 3:30, courtesy of Sire Records

Jimmy/Lesbians of Russia, music by Bongwater, directed by Jim Spring and Jens Jurgensen, 1988, 6:18, courtesy of Shimmy Disc and Atavistic Video

The House of God, music by DHS, directed by Ben Stokes, 1991, 3:00, courtesy of H-Gun

Harry the Head, music by The Residents, directed by Jim Ludtke and The Residents, 1991, 3:00, courtesy of Cryptic Corporation

Tales from the Dark Side

Independent music video's resistance to mass culture often takes the form of an "anti-aesthetic" that disestablishes artistic convention in favor of an ugliness and alienage too disturbing to be coopted by commercial media. This survey features a range of such clips that probe the dark underside of mainstream values.

Songs for Swinging Larvae, music by Renaldo and the Loaf, directed by Graeme Whifler, 1981, 5:40, courtesy of Cryptic Corporation

Death Valley '69, music by Sonic Youth, directed by Richard Kern and Judith Barry, 1986, 5:21, courtesy of SST Records

Framingham, music by Nice Strong Arm, directed by Steve Brown, 1990, 3:58, courtesy of Homestead Records and Atavistic Video

The Rant, music by Helios Creed, music by David Roth, 1990, 1:52, courtesy of Amphetamine Reptile Records and Atavistic Video

Top End Killers, music by King Snake Roost, directed by Kurt Kellison, 1990, 2:48, courtesy of Amphetamine Reptile Records and Atavistic Video

H-Gun Productions

The program concludes with a showcase of the hottest independent production house in the country, Chicago's H-Gun. Consisting primarily of a group of artists out of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, this cadre of directorial talent—including Eric Koziel, Ben Stokes and Eric Zimmerman—works in close-knit collaboration, and has developed a thoroughly unique hyperkinetic visual style. The production house is also a nest for two studio bands, Crunch-Ø-Matic and DHS.

Iceolate, music by Front Line Assembly, directed by Eric Koziel, 1990, 5:20, courtesy of Wax Trax Records

Anti-plastik, music by Crunch-Ø-Matic, directed by Eric Zimmerman, 1990, 4:04, courtesy of H-Gun

People Are Still Having Sex, music by Bud La Tour, directed by Eric Zimmerman, 1991, 4:12, courtesy of H-Gun

Holophonic Sound (remix), music by DHS, directed by Ben Stokes, 1991, 4:32, courtesy of H-Gun

Direct Effect PSAs

Executive Producers: Jim McKay, Michael Stipe and Tom Gilroy, 1990, courtesy of C-00 Film Corporation

Interspersed throughout the program are a number of artistic and persuasive public service announcements produced by a number of artists connected to the music video field and working with C-00 Film Corporation, including Adam Cohen, Jem Cohen, James Herbert, Jason Kliot, Jim McKay, Natalie Merchant, Patti Munten, Jane Pratt, Susan Robeson, Abigail Simon and Michael Stipe.

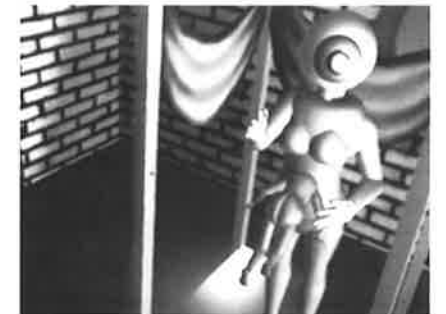


Photo credits: *Harry the Head*, *Anti-plastik*, *Holophonic Sound*

PROGRAM 5

Artists' Advertisement Alternatives

The future of music video as an art form is seen here in the hands of those initially responsible for the approaches and imagery that lent its commercial manifestation a meaningful claim to aesthetic innovation— independent media artists and their compatriots in the alternative music arena. Working almost entirely outside of the music industry, these artists elaborate upon the form's development disengaged from the driving dynamic of advertisement. This effort takes various forms: striking a balance in favor of the video side of the equation through collaboration; reaching back towards the tradition of Visual Music; engaging in committed advocacy; and, defining new media forms. In each case, the works in this program envision a future where the art form can both embrace new audiences educated to appreciate experimental visualization and narrative by MTV, and refine music video as an integrated and expanded set of aesthetic and cultural terms. Herein lies the challenge: to resonate outward into the larger culture and inward into a fuller conjunction of sound and vision will be the defining dynamic for the art form of music video in the nineties and beyond.

Video/Music: Cutting-Edge Collaborations

Striking a balance between image and sound components, these recent works inventory a range of new visions from the arena of video art. They acknowledge the cultural context of commercial music video, embrace music within a collaborative framework and achieve confluence through an integrated set of aesthetic terms.

The Word of God, directed by Gary Glassman and Oza Marika Borofsky, music by Jonathan Borofsky and Ed Tomney, 1991, 3:55, courtesy of Gary Glassman

Blue Monday, directed by William Wegman and Robert Breer, music by New Order, 1988, 4:06, courtesy of Cascando Studio

This Time Around, directed by Jane Aaron, music by Donald Fagen, 1989, 5:00, courtesy of Jane Aaron

Tunic, directed by Tony Oursler, music by Sonic Youth, 1990, 6:17, courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Glue Man, directed by Jem Cohen and Ian Mackaye, music by Fugazi, 1989, 5:30, courtesy of Video Data Bank

Neo Geo: An American Purchase, directed by Peter Callas, music by John Zorn and Stephen Vitiello, 1989, 9:15, courtesy of Peter Callas

Back to the Future: Tele-Visual Music

The Visual Music movement that originated in Europe in the twenties provides the most rarified roots of music video, attempting to achieve a structural synergy of painting and music. These contemporary works reach back to the formal aspirations of Visual Music, updated by tele-visual sensibilities.

One Word, directed by Brian Eno, music by Brian Eno and John Cale, 1991, 3:42, courtesy of Opal Records

Voiceprint (version 2), directed by Gustavo Garzon, music by Jon Hassell, 1990, 4:24, courtesy of Opal Records

Continuum: 1. Initiation, directed by Dean Winkler and Maureen Nappi, music by Kronos Quartet, 1989, 2:42, courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

Destruction Site, Florida Flower and Slo Drone Loop, direction and music by Lee Ranaldo, 1988, 3:05, courtesy of SST Records



Guerilla Music Television

Taking inspiration and philosophy from the Guerilla Television movement of the seventies, advocacy work has swept to the forefront of the video art world in the nineties. Artists committed to advancing social change are engaging the broad cultural reach of music video in an effort to address new audiences with their commentaries. The videotapes in this section demonstrate that such work can be both populist in its bearings and eloquent in its speech.

Home(less) Is Where the Revolution Is, directed by Paul Garrin, music by Elliott Sharp, 1990, 2:00, courtesy of Video Data Bank

The Feeling of Power: #6769, directed by Robert Beck, music by Stephen Vitiello and Shin Shimokawa, 1990, 9:00, courtesy of Robert Beck

A Hard Reign's Gonna Fall, directed by Dean Lance, music by Bob Dylan, 1990, 7:10, courtesy of Dean Lance and Diva TV

Kissing Doesn't Kill, directed by Gran Fury, 1990, 2:00, courtesy of Video Data Bank

Intermedia-ries

Formal innovation on the fringes of music video, television, home video and video art by "intermedia-ry" works is forging a new set of cultural terms that promises to challenge the limits of venue, format and genre as the media arts move into the next century. This program concludes with three visionary experiments: the most adventurous program to air on MTV to date; an excerpt from a visionary music video opera released straight to home video; and four works highlighting ZDF Television's ground-breaking music video production collaboration with alternative television producers around the world.

Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions, directed by Henry Selick, music by The Residents, 1991, 5:00, courtesy of MTV: Music Television

Tell Your Heart That I'm the One from *Industrial Symphony No. 1*, directed by David Lynch, music by Angelo Badalamenti and David Lynch, 1991, 5:00, courtesy of Warner Home Video and Lynch/Frost Productions

Time Code: Music Transfer (excerpts), 1990, courtesy of Alive From Off Center/KTCA TV and ZDF Television

Kneeplay, directed by Claus Blume, performance by Traunwalcher Goasslschnalzer, Germany, 3:05

Living Eastern European Animals, directed by Andreas Wahorn, Hungary, 5:03

A Trip to Austria, direction and music by Muki Pakesch, Austria, 3:25

Hammer, directed by Matt Mahurin, music by James Turner and Daroll "Shamello" Durant, United States, 4:22

MTV Art Breaks, 1987-91, courtesy of MTV: Music Television

Interspersed throughout the program are MTV Art Breaks—part of the network's innovative self-promotion efforts that offer artists an opportunity to create free-form experimental television spots—by Dara Birnbaum, Church of the SubGenius, Eden Diebel, Julia Heyward, Jenny Holzer, Michelle Mahrer, Hans Neleman, Alex Proyas, the Quay Brothers, Jan Svankmajer, Tarsem and Barry Yourgrau.



THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THE GENEROUS AND INVALUABLE HELP IN ORGANIZING
ART OF MUSIC VIDEO: TEN YEARS AFTER

Emily Whitman, A&M Records; Jane Aaron; Alyce Dissette and Neil Sieling, Alive From Off Center, KTCA TV; Kurt Kellison and Paula Froehle, Atavistic Video; Robert Beck; Ken Weinstein, Beggars Banquet; Alan Levine, Big Life Records; Jem Cohen and Jim McKay, C-00 Film Corporation; Peter Callas; Michael Shamberg, Cascando Studio; Dominique Angerame, Canyon Cinema; Paul Burgess, Caroline Records; Kathy Lincoln and Denise Skinner, Capitol/EMI; Michael Chertok, Chertok Associates; Connie Coleman and Alan Powell; Gary Fisher, Columbia Records/Sony; Homer Flynn and Hardy Fox, Cryptic Corporation; Dean Lance, Diva TV; Brad Dunning; Sheri Hood, 4AD; Elfriede Fischinger; Stephen Vitiello, Electronic Arts Intermix; Dina Hirschler Mute/Elektra Records; Wendy Stern, Geffen Records; Gary Glassman; Bitsy, H-Gun; David Melman, I.R.S. Records; Tina Dunn, Island Records; Eileen Van Buren, Isolar Enterprises; Mary Ellen Strohm, The Kitchen; Abby Terkuhle, MTV: Music Television; Ann Magnuson; William Moritz; Michael Kachoeff, Opal Ltd.; Rick Prelinger, Petrified Films; Ron Lessard, RRRRecords; David Steinberg, Rebo High Definition Studios; Beverly Lund, Rock the Vote; Lillian Matulic, Ruthless Records; Ron Coleman, SST Records; Ivette Rodriguez, 6 West Home Video; Rocky Schenck; Steve Stephenson, Sire Records; Ruth, Skouras Pictures; Sue Barbato, Soul/MCA; Chuck Statler; Mark Trost, Streamline Film Archive; Ken Thurlbeck, Thurlbeck Studio; Kathleen MacQueen, Todo Mundo; Ayanna Udongo, Video Data Bank; Mary Barnett, Virgin Records; Sue Roberts, Warner Bros. Records; Bobbie Shea, Wax Trax Records; Carl Rettinger, ZDF Television; Nancy Gerstman, Zeitgeist Films.

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