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ABSTRACT

Rock videos have their antecedents in film and television images, although music in films is usually background music. Television made possible the live transmission of musical numbers with visuals. The musical television commercial is an amalgam of conventions, with background music suddenly erupting into text, unheard by the characters but obvious to the listeners. New wave television commercials, closely allied to rock videos, resemble silent film, with synchronous, nondiegetic background music, and actors performing in a strange matrix of nonnaturalistic place and threatening character. A generic approach to the study of rock video (with over 100 videos viewed) identified the following distinguishing motifs and conventions of the genre: (1) fragmentation and dehumanization of the body; (2) location--separation in space and time; (3) images of horror, hell, and apocalypse; (4) hypermediation; (5) "impossible" imagery; (6) musician as leader/storyteller; (7) video as instrument of ritual celebration or cultural solidarity; and (8) shots into bright lights. Many of the motifs are present in the popular video "Here Comes the Rain Again" by the Eurthmics. Although the cultural and artistic significance of rock video is still uncertain, it appears to be a dialectical combination of two music "aesthetics": heavy metal, representing content, and new wave, representing form. The apparent central myth is that subjective knowledge, though ambiguous, provides a necessary frame for coming to terms with harsh external realities. The "dominant" mode of consciousness--rational, scientific, and unemotional--is rejected in favor of an alternative mode--irrational, expressive, playful, self-conscious, and visually charged while tied to music. (Notes are appended.) (NKA)

Music, Television, and Video:
Historical and Aesthetic Considerations

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Music, Television, and Video:

Historical and Aesthetic Considerations

Rock videos grow out of a long tradition of artistic efforts that have combined music with moving images. If one wished, the historical line could be traced back through live dance, opera, and theatre to ancient times. Rather than follow this path, let us concentrate on mediated moving images, i.e. film and television.[1] It is from these sources that the new form of rock video most directly springs.

Background Music

Most music we hear in films and television is background music. That is, the images and story exist first, then music is added very late in the production, actually during the "post-production" stage in most cases. Background music serves several purposes. It creates mood, fills in the space that would otherwise have no sound, provides a rhythm that interacts in various ways with the visual editing (e.g. music can "hide the cut" in a film), and can provide cues that link a specific TV program or film with other cultural texts (e.g. "Harlem Nocturne" as a theme song links together the various episodes of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer and The New Mike Hammer; the song's history and the instrumental style of the recording used in the first incarnation of the Stacy Keach series evoke the end of the Big Band era and 1950s-style detective series and films noirs; the well known title of the song adds to the series's strongly established sense of location in New York City).

Most background music is nondiegetic.[2] That is, the audience can hear it but understands that the characters cannot. The oldest example in film is, of course, silent film accompanied by live music. The existence of two separate worlds is obvious--the live musician occupies one, the silent film actor the other. The actor's world exists first,

is recorded, and is unchangeable once the projector starts running. This world dictates the plan of the accompanying music. The music uses the image's narrative flow and diegesis as its frame of reference but remains entirely on the exterior of that diegesis. The silent film audience could see both the illusionary image and the live musician(s), and thus was established for the medium of film the convention of nondiegetic background music.

Sync Sound

Much of the earliest synchronous sound in film was background music, in effect nothing more than the substitution of a recorded score for the live music of earlier years (e.g. Don Juan, Sunrise, most of The Jazz Singer, and large portions of other early sound films). But sync sound also permitted the use of diegetic sound of all sorts. Diegetic dialogue sound eliminated the need for intertitles. As dialogue became more important in telling the story, background music receded even farther into the background. Meanwhile, precise synchronization permitted the faking of diegetic sound and made audio post-production an important part of filmmaking. Dialogue "looping" and the lip-synching of music became standard practices.

Lip-synching made it possible to present popular stars (or anybody) singing musical numbers (sometimes with a better singer's voice dubbed in). This was highly desirable from a commercial standpoint, but was difficult to accommodate in a narrative. Excuses had to be found for characters in dramas to sing songs. Suddenly stories about musicians and show business became common. Even so, production numbers often interrupted the story rather than contributing anything to it. Production numbers are quite different from background music. Rather than the

narrative and visuals determining musical style, music is the basis for the visuals.

When music is dominant, narrative is reduced in most cases to ambiguous images of moments, connected less explicitly than in other forms of cinematic narrative. Lyrics "usurp" the function of dialogue, while instrumental backing usually retains a background function of sorts. The instrumentation, in fact, often seems to emerge from nowhere. The audience can hear it, the characters can hear it, but nobody can see the band. Either the sound of instrumentation exists "magically" in the diegesis or else the diegetic singer is singing along "magically" with nondiegetic music. In any case, the source of instrumentation in such a situation is apparently nondiegetic. The development of this convention in film was not surprising given the well established convention of the orchestra pit which, in live theatre, hid the source of music from the audience's view of the diegesis while at the same time providing sound the characters could hear (or somehow sing along with "magically").[3]

The placement of musical performance within a narrative context heightens the tendency toward first person-second person lyrics, e.g. boy singing "I love you" to girl. The singer addresses these lines to another performer, while the camera looks on objectively. Despite its interruption of the flow of the story, the musical number remains part of the narrative and the performers remain faithful to a "matrix" of fictitious time, place, and character.[4]

Television

Television made possible the live transmission of musical numbers, complete with visuals. As in most narrative film (including most film used on TV), live dramatic TV relied most heavily on story, images, and

dialogue. Music remained in the background. But in variety shows, with historical roots in radio and theatre rather than film, music was often pushed to the foreground. As with production numbers in films, the music is picked first, then the images. But in the TV variety show, there is often no narrative context for a production number.[5] Hence there is no "matrix" of time, place, and character. The singer inevitably has persona, but there is no pretense that the singer is a character located at some other place, living in some other time. The singer is free to relate directly to the audience rather than to other characters, and live television (including live-on-tape and live-on-film[6]) often has a live audience. The objective camera observes the interaction between performer and audience from numerous vantage points, including over the audience's "shoulder." Zoom in slightly, or eliminate the audience, and what remains is direct address to the camera, a shot almost unknown in narrative film but quite common in television, the equivalent of a subjective camera from the audience's "point of view."

Singing directly to an audience changes "I love you" from the equivalent of a line of dialogue to a pseudo-intimate contrivance. We no longer are invited to pretend that a singer loves another character, but instead that the singer loves us. We do not consciously believe the direct address any more than we believed the matrixed drama, but the nature of our fantasizing is different. The singer using direct address speaks to us as participants rather than to a character while we observe. Whether the persona of the singer suggests a storyteller, preacher, friend, enemy, parent, or something else, the important fact is that the story is told to us, the sermon is preached to us, and the singer is our friend, enemy, or parent. The illusion lasts as long as

the singer addresses the camera. If we cut to another camera with a different view, as often happens in television, the stare is broken.

Multicamera television shooting (including live-on-tape and live-on-film) is mostly continuous as compared to single-camera film and video, which are made one shot at a time. Continuous shooting is especially likely if a live audience is present, as in most TV variety shows. Although television is often called a close-up medium, this is deceptive because a live television close-up is not as tight a shot as a film or video close-up. In multicamera shooting, shot after shot after shot must be framed as the action continues, without pause. If a close-up is framed too tightly, the head may leave the frame accidentally. Fixing such a mistake is difficult or impossible; therefore, extremely tight shooting is usually avoided. In single camera shooting, the pace is much more leisurely and mistakes can easily be reshot. While direct address may have initially made television's treatment of music seem more intense than film's, the effect must have been mitigated by television's loosely framed shots and small screen.

Live, multicamera television is edited as it happens, by pushing a button to select one camera, then pushing another button to select a different camera, etc. The faster the cuts, the more difficult the process becomes for all involved, and the more likely it becomes that there will be a mistake. By contrast, film, which is edited long after shooting (in "post-production"), can easily have extremely fast cutting. Therefore television, on the average, has slower editing than film. To make up for this, television makes greater use of dissolves, superimpositions, wipes, keys, mattes, and other effects than does film. They contribute visual variety to make up for slow cutting, are easy

to preview while shooting (which is impossible with film), and are easy and cheap to do (while being difficult and expensive in film).[7] Dissolves and superimpositions are especially common for music that is slow, soft, or flowing.

Live television uses live audio. In variety shows, this usually means live music. The advantage of lip-sync is that sound studios can be used to achieve better quality recordings than could be made using live musicians on a set. When specially composed and recorded music and single camera shooting are used, the artificiality of lip-sync can be well hidden. But on American Bandstand and similar programs, well known hit records and multicamera shooting have often been used with lip-sync. In such a case, sometimes it is obvious that the musicians are not playing their instruments, and occasionally electric instruments are not even plugged in. These pseudo-concerts are touted as high points of the show, even though the celebrity musicians may not do anything musical. The mere presence of celebrities is evidently enough. With the advent of lip-sync shows such as Puttin' on the Hits, the celebrity's voice is enough.

Commercials

The musical TV commercial is a strange amalgam of conventions. The starting point in planning a commercial is its length. Because this is so short, sound and images can be planned in tandem to a great extent. But despite their shortness, commercials consist of even shorter segments. A musical change is often one sign that a new segment is beginning. For example, in a recent coffee commercial, a small drama transpires as wife tells husband how wonderful she considers their family life. As this ends, the background music suddenly becomes dominant and a voice sings

"Times like these were made for Taster's Choice." Background music seldom has words, whereas music used as the dominant element usually does have words. The second segment in the Taster's Choice commercial is a variation on the musical number which interrupts the narrative. The main difference between this common commercial style and film musical style is that music such as the Taster's Choice theme is nondiegetic--the characters cannot hear it. The singer is a "voice of God," separate in space from the images but a determiner of those images. The actors perform dramatic "proofs" of the lyrics, which are not stories but categorical statements or commands. The performers demonstrate the statements or obey the commands in "lifestyle" celebrations, the slickest of which are probably those found in soft drink and telephone commercials. The relationship between music and images is the same as in the "visual essay" (a common assignment in introductory television production classes)[8] except that the images are linked thematically, and with a clear didactic purpose, to the lyrics. In addition, single camera shooting and extensive post-production are used, with the result that production is tightly controlled and precise.

Nondiegetic music is occasionally used as a dominant element (i.e., not as background music) in feature films. One of the most familiar examples is "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. In this case, singer B.J. Thomas is not exactly a "voice of God" but seems to be identified with the Butch Cassidy character, partially because of the song's first person lyrics. As in a musical, the number interrupts the narrative, but the images are not concerned with musical performance. Instead the visuals have a "lifestyle" feel, but within a larger narrative context. We are already involved with

the characters, so the musical interlude builds further identification with particular people as opposed to the musical commercial which tries to turn anonymity into universality.

The latest breed of musical commercial, closely allied aesthetically to the rock video, is the New Wave commercial, which combines a number of old conventions in new ways. The main innovations are visual, although these are in many ways merely recapitulations of earlier forms. The New Wave commercial in fact resembles silent film, with synchronous, nondiegetic background music. Actors perform in a strange matrix of nonnaturalistic place and threatening character. Impossible things happen (e.g. characters magically appearing or disappearing). Ostensibly unrelated images are edited together to create surprising associations. The diegesis is a dreamscape and the camera serves as the mind's eye.[9] The audience is invited to "share the fantasy," to quote from the voice-over in a New Wave commercial for Chanel perfume. Most New Wave commercials have no dialogue. Many have instrumental music tracks heavily laden with synthesizers. The Chanel commercial is an exception on both counts, using a subjective camera shot of another character's direct gaze into the camera, combined with a voice-over by that character (an "interior monologue" effect[10]); and Rudy Vallee-style vocal music.

New Wave commercials represent the evolution of a new visual style from sources such as punk fashion and commercial photography. The clearest cinematic precedents are the surrealist and related films of the 1920s and '30s (Un Chien andalou, Entr'acte, Ghosts Before Breakfast, Ballet mécanique, etc.), although Eisenstein is also cited as an inspiration.[11] With roots in silent film, New Wave commercials are visually sophisticated and occasionally make innovative, or at least surprising, use of music

(e.g. Chanel, Bonjour jeans, Candy's shoes). When music is the dominant element, the application of surrealistic and New Wave visual style produces rock video as it has already become conventionalized in its short history.

Rock Video

What are the conventions of rock video? A definitive answer is impossible, both because rock video is young and still evolving fast, and also because it accommodates such a large number of stylistic variations and subgenres. Nevertheless, we believe a generic approach to the study of rock video is both possible and profitable. We embarked on such a study in 1983, with the goal of identifying the distinguishing motifs and conventions of rock video. From these, we hoped to find an underlying concept and unifying myth that define rock video as a genre.

Our original sample consisted of more than 100 videos viewed on randomly chosen days on broadcast video programs aired in Chicago from December 1983 through February 1984. Since the presentation of our results at a 1984 conference, we have updated the study by watching hundreds of additional videos and by referring to the published works on music video that have appeared since 1984. This has resulted in a fine-tuning of our original categories, although for the most part our original thinking has been confirmed.[12] As a final check of reliability, we viewed the MTV "top 100 videos of all time," aired in August 1986, to see whether the categories we developed in 1984 made sense for the most heavily aired videos played on MTV since it went on the air in 1981. They did.

We define a motif as a visual, auditory, or thematic sign that recurs or often appears, and a convention as a habitual practice in video production that the audience understands and accepts. We have chosen for discussion those motifs and conventions whose recurrence is, in our

opinion, striking. While not every video includes all the features we enumerate (in fact, many of them do), all the following characteristics heavily permeate the videos we have seen.

Fragmentation and Dehumanization of the Body

Most of the videos we have seen do symbolic violence to the human body by visually fragmenting it or removing the life from it.[13] This is done using several different mechanisms. In many cases, an extreme close-up of part of the body serves to dissociate it from the whole body. Special effects are used for similar purposes. In Michael Jackson's Billie Jean, for example, a frame is put around various parts of Jackson's body; these frames are then moved around the frame of the television screen. By "dehumanization," we refer not only to the gruesome effects in videos with a horror theme (e.g. Michael Jackson's Thriller[14]), but also to the use of artificial bodies, robots, etc. For example, Herbie Hancock's Rockit uses almost exclusively nonhuman characters. The "cast" consists mainly of robots, most of which are only parts of bodies. Several pairs of neatly dressed legs kick in step and in time with the music. These legs are not attached to a body, but to a mechanical device which makes them move. Robots, dummies, and artificial bodies are present in many other videos.

Eyes are the most commonly isolated or emphasized body part. Extreme close-ups of eyes are common. Bonnie Tyler's Total Eclipse of the Heart isolates eyes not only through close-ups, but also by introducing a glowing light into the eyes of one of the characters.

Location: A Separation in Space and Time

In the tradition of Romantic literature, many videos take place in a time or location (or both) far removed from that of contemporary

life. Men Without Hats's Safety Dance takes place in a feudal, medieval setting. Many videos apparently take place after the destruction of civilization. Others, including videos by John Cougar Mellencamp and Robert Plant, take place in small towns that seem to be isolated from the rest of the world. The purpose these various devices of setting have in common is to establish a sense of "once upon a time," to allow the video to do its work in a context of fantasy, nostalgia, fear and longing. It is this context that is mainly responsible for rock video's occasionally strong mythic resonance.

Images of Horror, Hell, and Apocalypse

"Apocalyptic chic" is one of the most striking motifs in rock video. Flames, Satan, demons, monsters, nuclear devastation, mushroom clouds, and mutants lurk in many videos. She Blinded Me with Science, Dancing with Myself, New Frontier, Thriller, Foolin', and Here Comes the Rain Again are a few of the videos that feature this imagery in a striking manner.

Hypermediation

Media references abound in rock video. Cameras play a major role in many of them, e.g. Culture Club's Church of the Poison Mind. Many videos include cameramen following the artists, apparently shooting the video we are seeing (Eurythmics' Here Comes the Rain Again is an example).

Television equipment is present in many videos. Often, the destruction of a TV set is shown. Many other devices of mass communication--stereos, radios, etc.--appear with great frequency in rock video.

Since Irene Cara's Flashdance. . . What a Feeling and Michael Sembello's Maniac, both derived from the theatrical film Flashdance,

the practice of constructing videos partially or entirely out of footage from feature films has run rampant. Thus, through highly developed mechanisms of cross-promotion, video has become not only a plug for sound recordings and long form videocassettes, but also for feature films in both theatrical and home exhibition formats.[15]

Regardless of whether audio-visual apparatus is displayed or referred to, rock video reminds us of mediation by often showing frames within the frame of the screen. Windows, mirrors, fences, and other rectangular objects frequently frame the material being presented.

Often the mediated imagery is presented as the dream of a character in the video. For example, in Bryan Adams's Heaven, we are asked at the end of the video to believe that what we have been seeing was actually Adams's dream, projected through a TV set which has been sitting next to him as he sleeps. In this and numerous other videos, media provide a "dream screen" for the dramatis personae.[16]

"Impossible" Imagery

Practically every video we have seen uses some form of image manipulation which presents movement or activity having no correspondence in reality. The techniques of manipulation include slow or fast motion, repeated sequences, animation, backward motion, chromakey and matte effects, trick editing, timelapse photography (e.g. clouds racing by), jerky movement, freeze frames, multiple images, and objects magically appearing or disappearing.[17] This "impossibility" is undoubtedly the single most common visual and narrative convention of rock video. It undercuts whatever "realism" the video may have and anchors the video instead in the realm of presentational subjectivity.

Musician as Leader/Guide/Storyteller

As Virgil guided Dante through Hell, so the performer guides the viewer through the infernal imagery of the rock video. In nearly all vidoes, the singer addresses the camera directly, taking on a role something like that of master of ceremonies.

Music Video as an Instrument of Ritual Celebration or Cultural Solidarity

Many videos play a significant role in presenting and negotiating cultural identity. John Cougar Mellencamp's videos are illustrative. Pink Houses, for example, is full of populist imagery which seems to solidify a developing myth of rural America.[18]

One difference between videos by black artists and white artists is that many of the former emphasize the culture-building role of musical performance. Many of the black videos we have seen celebrate gatherings of people in public and neighborhood surroundings such as the beach, street corner, and apartment doorstep. On the other hand, mass media devices seem to be significantly less prominent in videos by black artists. Moreover, in the world according to video, blacks are more likely to perform music on the street or at the beach to a small, dancing, participating audience than are white performers, who often perform on large stages full of microphones and electronic equipment (sometimes without any audience visible in the video).[19]

Shots Into Bright Lights

Direct shots into bright lights, fires, the sun, and other blinding lights are a pervasive image in most of the videos we have viewed. In a related vein, videos often draw attention to shafts of light through such devices as silhouette shots, foggy or dusty air, and Venetian blind effects. Formalistically speaking, this usage of illumination echoes

the expressionism of Citizen Kane. The thematic significance of bright light is much more difficult to pin down. As Emery and Emery point out,[20] we are used to reflected light, so emitted light catches our eye the way a campfire does. In the case of video, however, the communality of the campfire is replaced by the anonymity and discomfiture of the police station third degree. We know something or somebody is behind the bright light, but he, she, or it is hidden. The light both fascinates and blinds us. Like the light reported by patients brought back from near death, the bright lights in rock video, which are often associated with show business, draw us toward a twilight, never-nether world of mystery, instinct, and totality.

A Sample Analysis: Here Comes the Rain Again

A brief examination of a single music video should help illustrate the applicability and coherence of our categories. We chose Here Comes the Rain Again because it was a very popular video, which was broadcast frequently and which seemed to exemplify most of our motifs and conventions clearly and interestingly.

Our locational and apocalyptic motifs are readily apparent in the first images of Here Comes the Rain Again. Biblical imagery establishes the mythical import of the video and locates it in a distant time and place.[21] The opening scene is a panoramic shot of a turbulent sea crashing against a rock cliff. A bird flies above the scene and the ruined remains of a large ark-shaped vessel are present. What these images suggest is the last part of the story of Noah's Ark. The Ararat-like cliff poking out of the sea, the dark but receding rain clouds--even the bird is consistent with the Biblical story. The apocalyptic theme becomes clear when we remember that the story of Noah's

Ark was one of holocaust, albeit diluvial rather than nuclear. By displacing the apocalyptic imagery into a place and time far removed from our own, and by invoking the Bible, the video takes on the flavor of a visual parable, a "story" for all times. And in spite of displacement, the relevance of the presentation for our own time is emphasized by the title lyric, "Here comes the rain again." "Again" suggests the return of holocaust (and this time we have no ark; the one in the video is rotten, ancient).[22]

The Biblical and mythical overtones of the video are reinforced by the use of "impossible" imagery. In several of the shots, singer Annie Lennox is given a white, glowing halo which surrounds her entire body. This looks similar to techniques familiar in Biblical film epics, reinforcing our Biblical interpretation of much of the video's iconography. Some of the cinematography in the video has a crisp, solarized look, resembling the reversed-polarity images associated with nuclear blasts and apocalyptic themes in films such as The Day After, The War Game, and Alphaville.

Hypermediation contributes to the otherworldly ambiance of Here Comes the Rain Again. Throughout the video, Lennox is followed by the other Eurythmic, David Stewart, who looks at her through a camera. In spite of the pessimism of the images, we are distanced from them by the repeatedly foregrounded reminder that what we are watching is artificial. Also present throughout the video are frames within frames within frames within frames. In one shot, for example, Stewart stands in the ocean and photographs the water around his feet. He wears glasses, several close-ups of which have already been shown. In other words, he is looking through eyeglasses, through the lens of the camera, at the image of himself

as reflected by the water. Another image, repeated several times, shows Lennox sitting in front of a triptych mirror with a bowl of water in front of her. Within the frame of the television, we see the center panel of the mirror. Within the reflection of that mirror, we see the reflection of the pool of water which contains a reflection of Lennox. Uncannily, her reflection in the two side mirrors of the triptych is different from the reflection in the center mirror. And if this weren't labyrinthine enough, cameraman Stewart is repeatedly shown filming all of this--through a multiple-framed window.

In this "post-modern,"[23] self-referential, narcissistic, and yet Biblical context of situation and posing, Lennox repeatedly sings to the sky or horizon, almost as though praying or chanting. In "response," bright lights appear in or descend from the sky. Salvation becomes the visual-thematic metaphor to flesh out a sketchily developed, although accommodating, love song lyric. As does the lyric, the visual incidents depict a state of need. The specific need, in the gloom of aftermath, is spun from the fertile symbol of "rain," which means much less in the lyric than in the video.[24]

Conclusion

It is already a commonplace that rock video has wrought major changes in the way popular music is produced, distributed, and consumed.[25] This set of economic facts should not be allowed to obscure the cognitive and perceptual implications of rock video. That is, given the economic importance of rock video, what is its cultural and artistic significance? A definitive answer to this question will probably require the accumulation of at least a few more years' worth of evidence. However, it is possible to state some tentative conclusions that seem to make sense based on

the videos that have been made so far.

In large measure, rock video (especially the type favored by MTV) is a dialectical combination of two "aesthetics": heavy metal and New Wave. Heavy metal is a form of music with roots in the 1960s (the Who, Jimi Hendrix, Cream, Iron Butterfly, Blue Cheer) and which became one of the most popular styles in the 1970s (Led Zeppelin, Grand Funk Railroad, Alice Cooper, Deep Purple, Black Sabbath). Recent practitioners include Kiss, Def Leppard, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, AC/DC, and Cinderella. The dominant imagery in the lyrics and visual styles of these bands includes violence, debauchery, death, Satanism, pain, destruction, decay, and general gloom and doom--all of which show up with some regularity in rock video.[26] New Wave, which might be called "media punk," invites us to share a manufactured, sustained subjectivity, presented with nonchalant acknowledgment of the artificiality of the "dream" we are seeing. To oversimplify a bit, we might say that heavy metal is the content of rock video, while New Wave is the form. In any case, the combination is one of demons and dreams.

Normally, demon plus dream equals nightmare. In much of rock video, however, the insertion of layers of mediation between viewer/listener and performer/author/producer makes it difficult to take the video seriously as nightmare. Instead we become subtly aware of our own subjectivity interacting with the programmed fantasy presented as anonymous subjectivity. Any demons are disarmed by being depicted as figments of imagination. Form defuses content. Thus the central myth of rock video, at least as we think we have deciphered it so far, is that subjective knowledge, though it is ambiguous, provides, when buttressed with an awareness of perceptual processes and technologies,

the necessary frame for coming to terms with harsh external realities.

That is, rock video provides an alternative way of knowing. Let us consider, as an example, the theme of holocaust and apocalypse so prominent in many rock videos. The most celebrated recent film treatment of this subject is The Day After (1983), which is shot in standard, "objective" style--that is, with a third person point of view, verisimilitudinous special effects, totally matrixed performances, and, in general, an attempt to make the illusion as "realistic" as possible.

At one level, The Day After indicts traditional, "objective" ways of thinking. The missiles fly in the movie as inevitable manifestations of business as usual. But while the film may be anti-war, it offers no alternative or escape, either in its form or content. The discussion aired by ABC after the film, while an unusual step for a network to take, was also, in its own way, business as usual--the same old people (especially Kissinger, Buckley, Shultz, and McNamara, offset somewhat by Carl Sagan and Elie Wiesel) reciting the nuclear-age platitudes we have all heard many times. In the film, the political events that lead up to the brief war are sketchy at best, emphasizing the helplessness and ineffectuality of individuals, and the species, in stopping the destined event. The "post-mortem" discussion presented an even more "objective" view of the nuclear problem and, if anything, merely confirmed the bankruptcy of conventional wisdom.

Rock video at least suggests an alternative mode of presenting, and thus perceiving, reality. In the presentation of apocalyptic imagery, many rock videos seem to be making an appeal for help. Def Leppard's Foolin' is full of fire, demons, and images of hell. The lyrics repeatedly and imploringly ask "Is anybody out there?", in what seems to be a

desperate, last-minute appeal to the Deity (part of an alternative, nonobjective consciousness) to intervene and rescue us from our impending doom. Similarly, in Duran Duran's Is There Something I Should Know, the band peers up into shafts of bright lights which emanate from above (with obvious religious implications) as they sing "Please, please tell me now/ Is there something I should know."

Thus, the central myth of rock video, in our view, is the rejection of the "dominant" mode of consciousness--rational, scientific, unemotional--in favor of an alternative mode. The conventionalized form and motifs of rock video reflect this rejection. The alternative mode is irrational, expressive, playful, visually charged while tied to music, and self-conscious. If this does not in itself solve any of the world's problems, it at leasts casts them in new terms, redefines what is possible and relevant, and disrupts TV's customary articulation of urgency and complacency.

Notes

[1] Relevant works on the history of music/film and music/television combinations include: Charles M. Berg, "Visualizing Music: The Archaeology of Music Video," ONETWOTHREEFOUR, No. 5 (Spring 1987), 94-103; Charles Merrell Berg, An Investigation of the Motives for and Realization of Music to Accompany the American Silent Film, 1896-1927, Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1973 (rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1976); Gary Burns, "Film and Popular Music," in Film and the Arts in Symbiosis: A Resource Guide, ed. Gary Edgerton (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, in press); David Ehrenstein, "Pre-MTV," Film Comment, July-August 1983, pp. 41-42; E. Jonny Graff, "Already Got My MTV," American Film, November 1984, pp. 65-67; Michael Shore, The Rolling Stone Book of Rock Video (New York: Quill, 1984); and Arnold S. Wolfe, "Rock on Cable: On MTV: Music Television, the First Video Music Channel," Popular Music and Society, 9, No. 1 (1983), 41-50.

[2] See Christian Metz, Film Language (1967), trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 97-99.

[3] See Rick Altman, "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism," Yale French Studies, No. 60 (1980), 67-79; and Margaret Morse, "Postsynchronizing Rock Music and Television," Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 15-28.

[4] Michael Kirby, Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1965), pp. 14 ff.

[5] However, see Arnold S. Wolfe, "Pop on Video: Narrative Modes in the Visualisation of Popular Music on Your 'Hit Parade' [sic] and 'Solid Gold,'" in Popular Music Perspectives 2, general editor David Horn (Göteborg, Sweden: IASPM [International Association for the Study

of Popular Music], 1985), pp. 428-441.

[6] See Alan Wurtzel, Television Production, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983).

[7] See Richard Hubbell, Television Programming & Production, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1956).

[8] This assignment goes by numerous other names including "visualization," "montage," and "graphics assignment." It consists of cutting or dissolving through a succession of still images (usually pictures taped on poster board), while a record plays.

[9] See Marsha Kinder, "Music Video and the Spectator: Television, Ideology and Dream," Film Quarterly, 38, No. 1 (Fall 1984), 2-15.

[10] See Gary Burns, "Dreams and Mediation in Music Video," paper presented to the American Culture Association, Atlanta, 1986.

[11] Art Ross, "The Aesthetics of 'New Wave,'" Back Stage, December 25, 1981, pp. 18, 22, 26, 29, 36. See also Joan D. Lynch, "Music Videos: From Performance to Dada-Surrealism," Journal of Popular Culture, 18, No. 1 (Summer 1984), 53-57.

[12] Our categories are quite compatible with the most thorough general content analysis study published to date, Richard L. Baxter, et al., "A Content Analysis of Music Videos," Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 19 (Summer 1985), 333-340 (co-authors Cynthia De Riemer, Ann Landini, Larry Leslie, and Michael W. Singletary). See also Gary Burns, "Music Video: An Analysis at Three Levels," Popular Music Perspectives, in press.

[13] Violence is also depicted in many videos. See Richard E. Caplan, "Violent Program Content in Music Video," Journalism Quarterly, 62 (Spring 1985), 144-147; Sharaf N. Rehman and Susan S. Reilly, "Music Videos: A

New Dimension of Televised Violence," Pennsylvania Speech Communication Annual, vol. 41 (1985), 61-64; and Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, "Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll," Journal of Communication, 36, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 79-93.

[14] See Kobena Mercer, "Monster Metaphors: Notes on Michael Jackson's 'Thriller,'" Screen, 27, No. 1 (January-February 1986), 26-43.

[15] See Becky Sue Epstein, "Music Video--The Hot New Way to Sell Hot New Movies," Boxoffice, July 1984, pp. 12-17; and Richard Harrington, "The Saga of the Sound Tracks," Washington Post, January 12, 1986, pp. K1, K10-K11.

[16] See Burns, "Dreams and Mediation in Music Video."

[17] For a detailed discussion of editing in music video, see Donald L. Fry and Virginia H. Fry, "Some Structural Characteristics of Music Television Videos," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 52 (Winter 1987), 151-164.

[18] On music video as myth, see George Lipsitz, "A World of Confusion: Music Video as Modern Myth," ONETWOTHREEFOUR, No. 5 (Spring 1987), 50-60.

[19] For additional information on the differences between videos by black and white artists, see Jane D. Brown and Kenneth Campbell, "Race and Gender in Music Videos: The Same Beat but a Different Drummer," Journal of Communication, 36, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 94-106; and Sonja Peterson-Lewis and Shirley A. Chennault, "Black Artists' Music Videos: Three Success Strategies," Journal of Communication, 36, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 107-114.

[20] Merrelyn and Fred Emery, "The Vacuous Vision: The TV Medium," Journal of the University Film Association, 32, Nos. 1 and 2 (Winter-Spring 1980), 27-31.

[21] The video was shot in the Orkney Islands. See Frank W. Oglesbee, "Seeing Duality: The Visualization of Eurythmics," paper presented to the Popular Culture Association, Louisville, 1985.

[22] The nuclear connotations of "rain" in pop lyrics date back at least to Bob Dylan's "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall." Our thanks to Jim Roble for pointing out to us two recent, related examples (John Foxx's "Europe After the Rain" and the Comsat Angels' "After the Rain"). Roble also drew our attention to surrealist painter Max Ernst, whose work included the apocalyptic Europe After the Rain I (1933) and Europe After the Rain II (1940-1942).

[23] See John Fiske, "MTV: Post-Structural Post-Modern," Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10, No. 1 (Winter 1986), 74-79; and E. Ann Kaplan, "A Post-Modern Play of the Signifier? Advertising, Pastiche and Schizophrenia in Music Television," in Television in Transition: Papers from the First International Television Studies Conference, ed. Phillip Drummond and Richard Paterson (London: BFI Publishing, 1985), 146-163.

[24] The lyrics of "Here Comes the Rain Again," written by Annie Lennox and David A. Stewart, are printed in Song Hits Magazine, May 1984, p. 4.

[25] See Maria Viera, "The Institutionalization of Music Video," ONETWOTHREEFOUR, No. 5 (Spring 1987), 80-93. See also Andrew Goodwin, "From Anarchy to Chromakey: Music, Video, Media," ONETWOTHREEFOUR, No. 5 (Spring 1987), 16-32; and Dave Laing, "Music Video: Industrial Product, Cultural Form," Screen, 26, No. 2 (March-April 1985), 78-83.

[26] See Donald M. Davis, "Rock 'n Roll and Death: Nihilism in Music Videos," Feedback, 27, No. 6 (Fall 1986), 9-13.