

Introduction:

In Unit 1 Section A you will explore how the **music video sells images** as a means of marketing artists in the music industry. It is important to study the music video as a promotional form and the ways in which representations are used to **sell values, lifestyles, and images, to audiences**. Across music genres there are a **diverse range of representations** offered by music video in relation to

gender and ethnicity. The **audiences' response** to the messages and values communicated offer interesting areas of exploration. For this unit **skills of analysis** need to be practised through the study of a range of contemporary music videos across a variety of music genres. Close analysis needs to be underpinned with **knowledge and understanding** of the key concepts.



Media Language:

You will need to consider how media language is used within the form of the music video as it has its own particular use of media language.

- camerawork (distance, angle, movement) and its relationship to the music
- tilts and zooms (can create, dynamic movement)
- pans/whip pans
- tracking/travelling camera mvt
- panoramic shots (create a sense of the bigger picture/locale/environment -could be linked to production values or specific meanings to be communicated within the framing of the music/lyrics)
- use of close ups (CUs, BCUs to promote the star image, to develop a privileged relationship with the audience)
- direct look to camera (acknowledges the audience and their importance to the performance)
- MS, LSs, ELS (to show the relationship of the artist/band to a setting, location, environment)
- high angle and low angle shots (to present the performer from different perspectives)
- mise-en-scène (settings, locations, costume, props)
- editing (continuity editing to create a sense of narrative)
- montage editing (to show the relationship between images)
- jump cuts (to create excitement and energy)
- intercutting: to repeatedly showcase the performer(s)
- dissolves/fades
- sound; tone, tempo, rhythm, lyrics, refrains, chorus.

Key questions:

Developing analysis skills, knowledge and understanding.

- What is the relationship between the lyrics and the visuals? Do the images illustrate the lyrics?
- Is there a sense of place? Or is the video focussed on studio performance?
- How is the video edited? [In sync with the beat, montage editing]
- How is camera work and movement used?
- Are there close ups? How are they used on the artist, performance, instruments?
- Consider the dress codes/costume of the artist- do they add a sense of ordinariness or artifice and construction?
- Are there references to notions of looking and conscious display?
- Is there a sense narrative? How is this structured? Does it illustrate or add to the meaning of the lyrics?
- Are there repeated images [motifs]? What is the significance of these? What meanings are being communicated?
- Are there intertextual references to other cultural products such as film, other music videos?
- What pleasures are offered?

Section A: Selling Images - Music Video

Music Video format:

There are different styles of music video that frame the meanings communicated.

Performance Video: These videos focus on the performance of the artist/group. There is an emphasis on playing instruments, the resonance of the voice, with possible cutaways to live footage, the audience and the stage. Camera work creates energy and captures the atmosphere of *live performance*. The performance video articulates ideas about authenticity and the artist as accomplished musician. However, this is dependent on the music genre as the *performance* can also be of dance and choreography where there is an emphasis on *display* and *voyeuristic* pleasures. The video serves to reinforce aspects of the star image in trademark performance or dress codes to reinforce what is essentially the star's brand identity.

Narrative video: Often quite filmic (higher production values) the narrative video illustrates or adds to meanings in the song itself. The artist often plays a character within the diegesis and the structure is straightforward with a

situation, complication/development and resolution. Some narratives combine storytelling with performances with the artist acknowledging the presence of the audience.

Conceptual Video: This is based around *an idea* that can communicate meanings metaphorically rather than literally. There is an emphasis on uniqueness, creativity and artistry.

Historical music videos: *It can be useful to study older examples of music videos to understand how the form has evolved and how representations have changed across the decades.*

Undertake some research into seminal music videos and produce a timeline. Present or share in class explaining your choices: Bohemian Rhapsody: Queen 1975, Kiss: Prince 1986, Sledgehammer: Peter Gabriel 1987, Vogue: Madonna 1990, Smells like Teen Spirit: Nirvana 1991, Black or White: Michael Jackson 1991, The Hardest Button to Button: The White Stripes 2003 etc.

Audience:

The audience has a key role to play in the meanings created as they negotiate meaning in relation to their own social and cultural experiences. The audience can: use the music artist to construct a sense of identity; they are encouraged through social media to feel a personal connection to the artist, the real person;

a sense of belonging is created in fan communities so meanings are created in the interaction of media language, representation and audience response.

Representations:

All music videos fall into a **genre** and each genre has its own **repertoire of elements** e.g. *iconography, costume, performance codes, repeated themes, and visual motifs* so genre relies on familiarity and expectation. Traditionally genre can be considered a device to categorise and package music however with new developments in technologies the distribution and consumption of music this is more complex as genre boundaries dissolve. Distinct styles still exist; *rock, alternative rock indie, hip-hop, pop, R&B, singer-songwriter, grime, folk, country*. The genre of music frames the representations constructed.

Gender representations: Different genres can be **reinforced** or **challenged** e.g. within rap and hip-hop there is often a focus on hypermasculinity with the female representation used to symbolise the wealth and status of the male. Pop music encourages *the gaze* through costume and dance and is dominated with female performers who challenge and subvert hegemonic power dynamics (where the female is perceived to be passive and to be looked at) as they control the construction of their image.

Representations of ethnicity: Hip-Hop is often surrounded with controversy due to claims that **stereotypes** are reinforced, and negative images proliferate. However, stereotypes can also be challenged and increasingly there are female rappers within the genre who explicitly address issues surrounding gender representation.

Star image: The music video helps to promote the **star image**. The star's **persona** relies on the dynamic between the image presented and the *real* person. The image embodies ideas and values that audiences can identify with and use to explore their own identity. Stars can also reflect wider contemporary social, political, and cultural concerns which are articulated through the music, lyrics, and performance codes within the music video.

Critical perspectives:

Stuart Hall: Are stereotypes present within the music video? Could they be considered as reinforcing ideas about gender or ethnic groups? Or are ideas about groups in society subverted or challenged? How might audiences respond to the meanings created: could meanings be altered in relation to their own social, cultural context?

Gauntlet: Do the music videos offer audiences opportunities to construct their own identities? Do they offer versions of our ideal selves?