Cover Versions

We wanted our MTV, but we got much more: The music video seems to have recently disappeared from television—only to pervade our entire media environment with its accelerated clip and audiovisual onslaught. As what was once an interval, a promotional spot, returns to supplant other modes of perceiving (the long form, the single screen, the analog), we would do well to consider the format's transformation and resurgence. *Artforum* asked a range of contributors to reflect on their engagement with music video, from its sprawling contemporary manifestations to its unlikely historical fonts. Directors **MICHEL GONDRY** and **E*ROCK**, and artists **RODNEY GRAHAM**, **MICHAEL BELL-SMITH**, **STEINA**, and **CAO FEI** each take up the features, dead ends, and possibilities of the genre, while curator **BARBARA LONDON** traces the rise of the music video and its surprising convergence with video art, minimal music, and pop marketing.

MICHEL GONDRY

THE PAST. It's true that video killed the radio star. Unfortunately, I am guilty. I tried to use the medium in the best possible way, to extend the creativity of the artists. I remember the little theater running in my head while listening to the vinyl. The cover of the album was the poster for the film, and my imagination was working on the rest. Now the album covers have shrunk, and moving images have smothered most of the music.

When I play a track, I scan all sorts of ideas through my brain. The one I toss the fastest into the reject bin is usually the one I fish back out. The most ridiculous idea is inherently the one that requires the most effort to bring about. But the stretch it takes and the results of the experiment are what keep me going. My friend (and director of photography) Jean-Louis Bompoint once caught me rushing to see how my animation worked on the big screen and told me that this urge would fade with age. It never did. Assembling a succession of slightly different images and witnessing their new dimension and their movement when they are animated delivers the same level of anxiety and excitement to this day. The same enthusiasm might come from all sorts of ideas: What would happen, for example, if I played backward some footage of my aunt walking backward in the snow? She would erase her footprints as she walked into them. I want to try it and see the result. What would happen if I shot a still image of the glass window in her kitchen door—which is divided into hundreds of squares, each one reproducing the full image of the room—then separated each square and animated one after another? I would move into a weird dimension. I have to see it. This sort of desire is what makes me want to get up early in the morning. And I am not lacking in ideas I want to test out. In fact, even if my brain were suddenly caught short I would still have all my old notebooks full of ideas nobody would support.

> The landscape of moving images has stretched nearly to infinity. The texture of this landscape cannot hold the surface it is supposed to cover, and more and more holes and cracks have opened.

THE PRESENT. Between large-format or high-definition systems and the myriad ridiculously small images that bombard our brains through our computers and other invasive orifices, it seems that the landscape of moving images has stretched nearly to infinity. The texture of this landscape cannot hold the surface it is supposed to cover, and more and more holes and cracks have opened. New systems are constantly aborted through natural selection. I once heard that there were clocks in the thirteenth century that ran anticlockwise, but ultimately more clocks were built to run clockwise; the public got used to it, so no more backward clocks were ever built. This explains the principle of evolution and natural selection. The next example is the late-1970s and early-'80s battle between Betamax and VHS. Betamax was in fact the better system, but for some reason, maybe the sound quality, the public preferred VHS, pushing Betamax into oblivion. And some systems or organizations remain even though they are obsolete. For instance, the QWERTY keyboard was conceived to avoid jamming mechanical typewriters by separating the keys most likely to be used in quick succession in the English language. It's interesting to see that this has become useful again a hundred years later as people use their thumbs to type on the microscopic keys of their BlackBerries.

In the same way, directors such as Spike Jonze and myself felt overwhelmed by the incredible precision and grandeur of the big video directors of the early '90s. At the time, new digital formats and screens were giving their style a natural advantage. Now, the way to see videos is on YouTube or elsewhere on the Net. Our videos have the advantage, because they don't rely on high-definition images. But this will change again and again.

THE FUTURE. The survival of music is guaranteed. We need it, in addition to alcohol or other mind-altering products, to overcome our embarrassment and breed. The future of the moving image is less certain. Its necessity is not so clear and its fabrication is much more complicated and expensive. □

MICHEL GONDRY IS A NEW YORK–BASED FILM AND VIDEO DIRECTOR. (SEE CONTRIBUTORS.)

This page, from left: **Still from the Chemical Brothers' 1999 music video** *Let Forever Be,* **directed by Michel Gondry. Glass block window, 2009.** Photo: Michel Gondry. Opposite page, from top: **Rodney Graham,** *The Phonokinetoscope,* **2001, still from a color film in 16 mm, 5 minutes. Still from a black-and-white film in 35 mm credited to William K. L. Dickson, made for Thomas Edison's kinetophone and published by Edison Manufacturing Co., ca. 1895.**

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BARBARA LONDON

MINIMAL MUSIC GAVE US MAXIMAL VIDEO. The frenetic pace of early MTV might seem removed from the extended duration of phasing or ambient drones, but sensory assault and perceptual slowness are far more closely intertwined than we might think. Indeed, the short form of the music video seems to contain within it both pop decadence and avant-garde asceticism. Now that the music video has in many ways become the signature form of *all* media—migrating away from MTV toward YouTube and scaled down to iPhones—it is worth considering the genre's relationship to experimental, interdisciplinary activities of the 1960s and '70s.

A dense yet twisted braid of connections ties video to music during this period. Such a composite history is all too often treated as a series of separate strands: Video, for example, has been considered largely in the province of the visual—whether as a continuation of documentary photographic practices, of textual communication, or of pictorial abstraction. But the aural and temporal aspects of video are, of course, no less important; despite a spate of exhibitions focusing on the tradition of "visual music" in recent years, divisions between media and the senses seem as rigid as ever. To understand these continually latent links and interactions, we must turn to the plane of technology: not as a deterministic engine of innovation, but as a common platform where music and video were treated as translatable signals or codes.

In the '60s, advanced, room-size computers were the focus of collaborations among engineers, musicians, and artists. Under the auspices of technical research or groundbreaking residency programs, artists were invited to such high-tech corporate enterprises as Bell Laboratories in New Jersey and the Siemens studio for electronic music in Munich. Much of the experimentation in electronic and computer music was directly related to the rise of minimalism and automated compositional structures: Artists illustrated common sounds, repetitive words, and unhurried actions, often for long intervals. These intermedia endeavors owed as much to John Cage's embrace of ambient noise and chance operations and David Tudor's use of signal processing and feedback as to the work of film-sound pioneers such as Mary Ellen Bute, who based many of her intricate film animations on oscilloscope patterns or on mathematical formulas for transposing music into graphics. Bute's works had actually screened as shorts preceding feature films in regular movie theaters (such as Radio City Music Hall) in the '40s and '50s—deploying sophisticated technology and arcane notational systems simultaneously to induce a timely pause or break in mainstream entertainment.
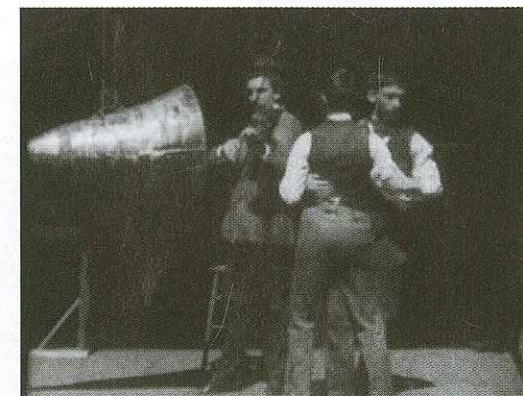
Others in the decades following Bute would continue to explore the tempo, distribution, and production of mass media, taking up electronic instruments that came on the consumer market at the same time as the first portable video cameras. Many of these artists, such as Tony Conrad and Steina, were engaged in developing distinct personae through recorded actions. They might extend time, repeating an action for the length of an open-reel videotape, either thirty or sixty minutes. Or they might opt for succinctness and make work that adhered to the length of a pop song or a one-minute television commercial. Rooted in the historical exploration of slowness, the intersections of music and video began to traverse technology's exponentially increasing upgrades, from high-end equipment and broadcast television to lo-fi improvisation. ▷

RODNEY GRAHAM

MY PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT with music video, that quaint relic of the television age, goes back to the early days of MTV. Around 1982, it occurred to me that making music videos would be a perfect day job for an unemployed visual artist. I managed to get my foot in the door, writing and producing a clip for a local Vancouver band with a record contract; the video did in fact help break the band in the US (and still gets played on oldies video shows). Emboldened, I tried approaching other groups with some rather slickly drawn storyboards. Jeff Wall actually did the renderings; unlike me, he could draw, and so answered my appeals for help. It would be great to see these sketches now but, alas, they're lost. However, I can still recall a mental image of the Headpins' lead guitarist in a space suit in a vast white eighteenth-century room, facing an ancient figure who lies prone in a great bed; this is Darby Mills, the band's lead singer, and she is gesturing to the guitarist, slowly raising her fist in a heavy-metal salute. . . .

Eventually, I got nowhere and gave up, having learned a few lessons about film production and hauling band equipment. Some of my proposals were probably unrealistic, but I did see my ideas reach fruition in the mid-1990s video masterpiece *November Rain*. (I'm just kidding about *November Rain*.)

Later, I attempted to incorporate elements of this "nascent art form" into my own artworks, largely without success. But I did make one piece, *The Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, which followed from the radical premise that although some juxtapositions of sound and image are better than others, pretty much all of them are aesthetically acceptable. The deliberately *asynchronous* work was a 16-mm film loop that the viewer could activate by engaging the stylus of a turntable, placing it on a vinyl record of an acid-rock sound track at any point that he or she wished. I was consciously replicating the earliest attempts at film/sound synchronization by William K. L. Dickson at Thomas Edison's Black Maria film studio in New Jersey. The *Dickson Experimental Sound Film*, as archivists now call it, depicts Dickson himself playing a light operatic barcarole on the violin, while two male Edison employees dance together in accompaniment.

Curiously, the image (forty feet of 35-mm film) and the sound (approximately sixteen seconds on a wax cylinder) of Dickson's proto–music video (as we might call it), although shot and recorded circa 1895, were not actually combined until 2000, the same year I shot my homage to Edison's studio. Indeed, it was nothing more than governmental interdepartmental bureaucracy that kept the image and the sound apart (the film was in the hands of the Library of Congress, whereas the wax cylinder was with the National Park Service, the administrator of the Edison National Historic Site)—but this fact does little to diminish the pleasure this piece of synchronicity gives me. □

RODNEY GRAHAM IS AN ARTIST BASED IN VANCOUVER. (SEE CONTRIBUTORS.)

MICHAEL BELL-SMITH

FIVE YEARS AGO, music videos were specific things you saw in specific places. Working with music video meant engaging a big-budget, commercially motivated form that was strongly tied to the cable stations (MTV, BET, etc.) promoting it. Artists could be complicit with this structure, intervene in it, work alongside it, parody it, or deconstruct it, but, explicitly or implicitly, these acts were always undertaken with regard to this highly codified commercial system. It was a stratified relationship.

Today, discussions of who has access to technology aside, that relationship is far more level. Music videos are no longer about MTV: They're about YouTube. With the exception of certain pay-for-placement programs—a special fee gets your video into a "promoted" section, for instance—YouTube treats all videos the same, whether they're from a label like EMI or a guy with a guitar taping himself in his bedroom. And with few contextual clues, the online audience treats all videos the same: Be it a music video, a commercial, or a work of art, all viewers want is something to hold their attention.

While this leveling is utopian in some respects ("It's like public access that actually works!"), it also puts artists working in music video, or any other pop form that's prevalent online, in a tricky position. They're no longer working in relation to a singular commercial form; they're working in relation to a constant and rapidly changing dialogue of videos, remixes, sharing, and commentary. In addition, many of the strategies artists have traditionally employed in the critique of culture—amateurism, appropriation, and humor—have become the customary language of YouTube and Internet culture. While the democratization of these techniques also seems utopian, with their spread comes their adoption by the very culture they were initially employed to critique, which brings their efficacy into question.

As an artist, I'm not sure how best to negotiate this new landscape. One option is to make work that takes up these new relations as its very subject. Another is to fully embrace the messiness, putting work online and allowing it to be read (and misread) as part of the Internet dialogue. Yet a third option is to distance one's work from the mutability of digital media and single-channel video entirely, taking up forms that require a physical, and therefore more controlled, engagement—installation, objects, performance, etc.

I've tried variations of these approaches in my own work. For instance, my videos *Chapters 1–12 of R. Kelly's Trapped in the Closet Synced and Played Simultaneously* [2005] (whose title speaks for itself) and *Subterranean House (Oonce Oonce)* [2007] (which digitally reconfigures Bob Dylan's famous music film for "Subterranean Homesick Blues" as an endless loop with a house beat and a single onomatopoeic cue card) were designed to dovetail simultaneously with Internet culture and the preexisting threads of video art. Both works are distributed online as well as shown in traditional art settings, each audience bringing different associations to the work. Much of my work in animation, on the other hand, has focused on reconsidering Internet and digital aesthetics outside the framework in which they are normally viewed: a lone person sitting at a computer. With these pieces, the controlled physical engagement of the gallery is part of the project.

Perhaps more than suggesting a specific strategy, this new set of conditions simply requires that artists—and not only those working with music video but those working in all video, as well as images, sound, and text—fully consider the context and distribution of their work, integrating into their practice an awareness of what's happening online. This doesn't mean making paintings of chat rooms, but rather recognizing how the Web has changed (and continues to change) the way much of society thinks about media, information, and social relations. Perhaps ultimately, surfing the Web has become as necessary and fruitful an engagement with the world as opening the newspaper or taking a walk. □

MICHAEL BELL-SMITH IS A NEW YORK–BASED ARTIST.

This page: **Michael Bell-Smith,** ***Chapters 1–12 of R. Kelly's Trapped in the Closet Synced and Played Simultaneously,*** **2005,** still from a color video, 4 minutes 22 seconds. Opposite page: **Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut,** ***Beatles Electroniques,*** **1966–69,** stills from a black-and-white and color video, 2 minutes 59 seconds. Photos: Electronic Arts Intermix.

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WHILE NAM JUNE PAIK later became known for his rapid-fire editing style,
he, too, started out slowly. In the early '60s, after having met both Cage and
Karlheinz Stockhausen in Germany, Paik drew on his background in classical
music and Buddhism to enact "action music" works. In these performances,
after a whimsical foreplay of slowly moving about the stage, he would typi-
cally conclude with one mesmerizing note, usually played on a piano.

Paik famously obtained one of the first portable video cameras to reach
New York and began making short minimal pieces. But these spare events
and compositions soon appeared in other contexts, marked by sensory
profligacy rather than reduction. In October 1965, Paik screened his first
videotapes as part of a series of "happening nights" at the Greenwich
Village nightclub Café au Go Go—a venue that included Lenny Bruce and
the Grateful Dead among its roster of performers. The young Japanese
composer Takehisa Kosugi, who had recently immigrated to the city, pro-
vided live accompaniment. *Beatles Electroniques,* 1966–69, made with
the experimental filmmaker Jud
Yalkut, is nothing less than an
early black-and-white music
video. Paik grabbed bits from the
mock documentary *A Hard Day's
Night* (1964), refilming and fur-
ther distorting the footage through
his video synthesizer (developed
with engineer Shuya Abe). Snippets
of the Beatles' faces are caught in
a loop of warped abstraction. To
accompany the endlessly folding
imagery, Paik created a sound track with Kenneth Lerner, which featured
fragmented Beatles songs recited again and again. Whereas the original film
is an upbeat paean to Beatlemania, Paik's strategies of appropriation and
repetition are conceptually closer to Andy Warhol's silk-screened paintings
of celebrities, such as *Marilyn Monroe,* 1962, and Steve Reich's phasing of
spoken words from a publicized racial incident in his sound composition
Come Out (1966). Like these works, *Beatles Electroniques* brought seriality
into the realm of sensory overload.

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THE ARRIVAL OF PORTABLE VIDEO GEAR meant that artists as well as garage
bands with homegrown agendas were equipped to play with image and
sound—and to entertain the dream of democratic and total media distribu-
tion as well. Yet this anarchic enterprise simultaneously paralleled the rise
of the short-format music video as a promotional tool for musicians and
record labels. In 1970, Captain Beefheart (aka Don Van Vliet) garnered free
time on public-access cable television in Los Angeles and aired the promo
he had made for his new album, *Lick My Decals Off, Baby.* Within a scant
ninety seconds, a TV announcer refers to band members by their oddball
names as he performs clownlike madcap actions. A hand tosses cigarette
butts through the air, and then, sporting a fez, Beefheart's bandmate
Rockette Morton paces, winding an eggbeater. Echoing William Wegman's
concurrent short vignettes made in his studio with his dog, Beefheart's proto-
typical music video draws on the contingent rhythm of slapstick. Just as his
musical sound was an eclectic sampling of shifting time signatures (influenced
by free jazz) and Frank Zappa (Beefheart's close friend and collaborator),
this initial video exploration resonated with the surrealistic character of
psychedelic environments, such as Joshua White's well-known light shows at
the Fillmore East in New York, which accompanied the pitch distortion
and feedback of Jimi Hendrix and others. Akin to Bute's insertion into the
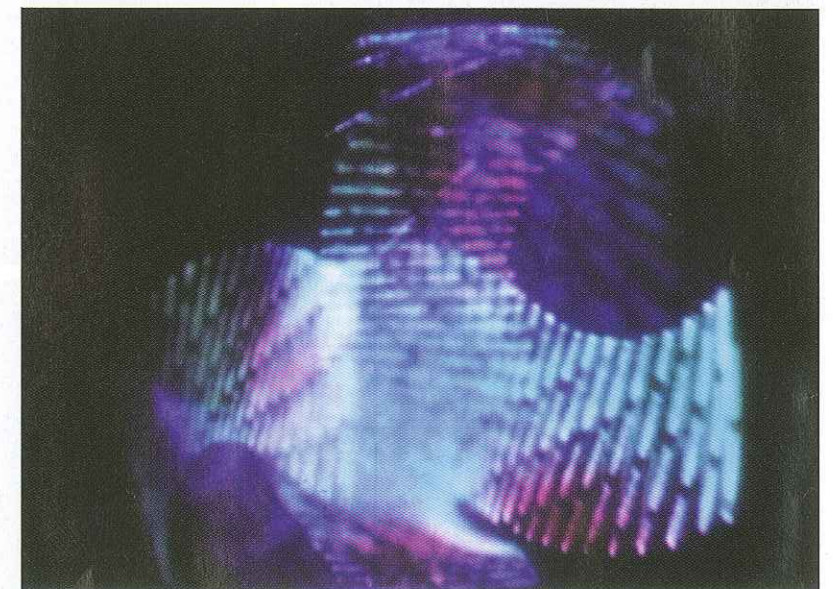
STEINA

IN THE 1960S, Jonas Mekas wrote that video artists should make silent video, just as "serious" film should ideally be silent. But I thought this was strange, because video was not simply a little stepchild of film. It was an entirely different field, with divergent views of the relationship between sound and image: We might even treat the visuals as a by-product of the audio, since we could process both components as electronic signals.

There has to be equity between the two elements of audio and video. This credo informed my earliest efforts in developing and adapting video-production tools—as when my husband, Woody Vasulka, and I first used the Putney sound synthesizer for electronic image and sound compositions in the late '60s. However, we specifically did *not* want to throw arbitrary songs or classical music over videos. This was frequently done in Europe at the time; artists would make a video and just put some Beethoven with it. By contrast, we were strangely more aligned with what would become the MTV format—generating original tracks to go with original visuals.

I was a musician by training, and Woody came from the film world—he couldn't stand the separation of audio and video, typified by Hollywood's narrative illustration of images, where they gave you (and still do) mood music to sadden, to excite, and so on. Even before we were working with video, we were interested in the film-sound experiments of Oskar Fischinger and in instruments such as the light organ. We felt a great kinship with Nam June Paik's early use of oscillators and mathematical patterns; in the early '70s, we went to Bell Labs and met [computer-music pioneer] Max Mathews and [experimental psychologist] Béla Julesz. And abstract sound and light were literally in the air: At Max's Kansas City restaurant in New York, there was a laser beam that the artist Forrest Myers projected from his studio on Fourth Avenue. It came through the window; hit a

mirror affixed to a speaker, whose vibrations would make the laser bounce and tremble; and then redirected to the back room, where the famous customers (like Andy Warhol) would sit.

We began holding performances and events where we wanted to change conditions of perceiving. We played slowly paced tapes on multiple channels, in venues like Judson Church and the WBAI Free Music Store. The audience always enjoyed it; they would be sitting or lying on the floor. People had time. It was before this great rush came on.

When I started the Kitchen performance space with Andreas Mannik and Woody in 1971, we didn't have any equipment, so people would have to drag in their own synthesizers to participate. But we could use the same tools for different purposes: We understood that audio synthesizers could also be used for video. There 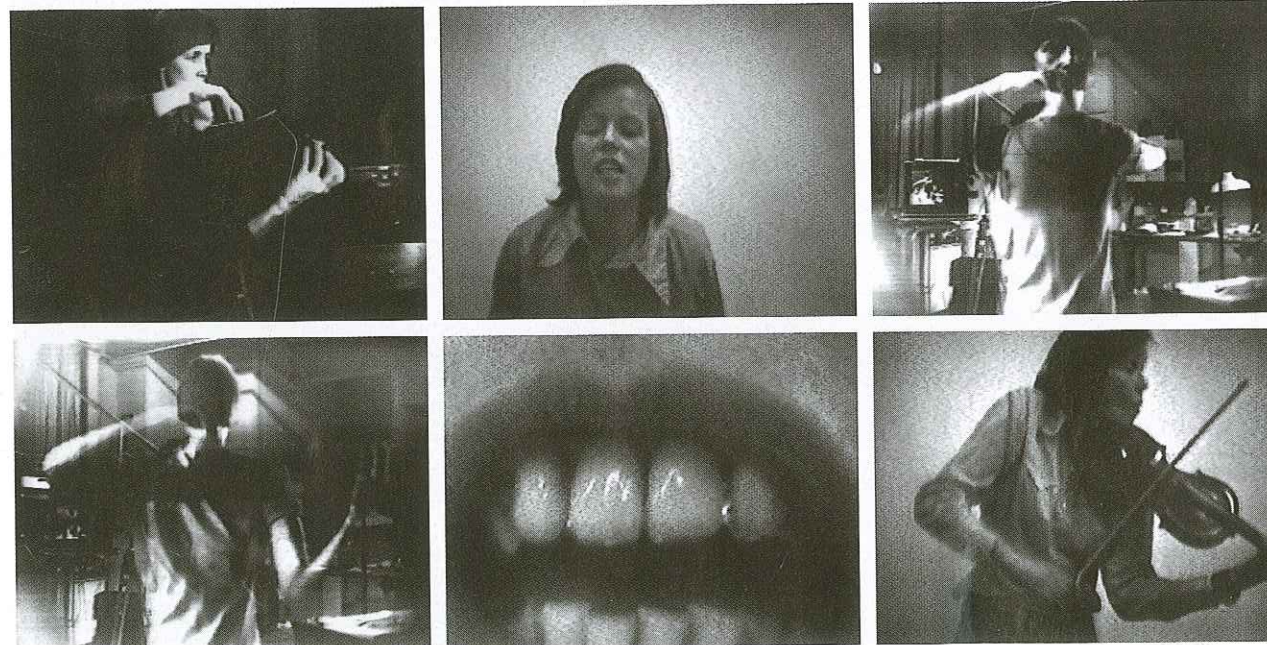were three ways to do this: You could send the audio signal into video and permutate the video signal by the audio, or vice versa; you could send the video signal to an input on the synthesizer and have it interact with the audio; or you could use the synthesizer or any other sound source as a simultaneous generator of both video and audio.

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In *Violin Power*, a project begun in 1970, I aimed to control images with an acoustic violin, translating my movement and the sound waves into a visual analogue; in the '90s, the project changed significantly, upon the realization that you could directly control video signals with MIDI [musical instrument digital interface]. I used a laser disc and would find certain points at which to move back and forth or faster and slower. But as software capabilities caught up, we developed a system with electric violin and QuickTime movies. I am amazed that to this day, when I perform the piece, there are always people in the audience who are totally confused: They are hardwired to think that one cannot do that. □

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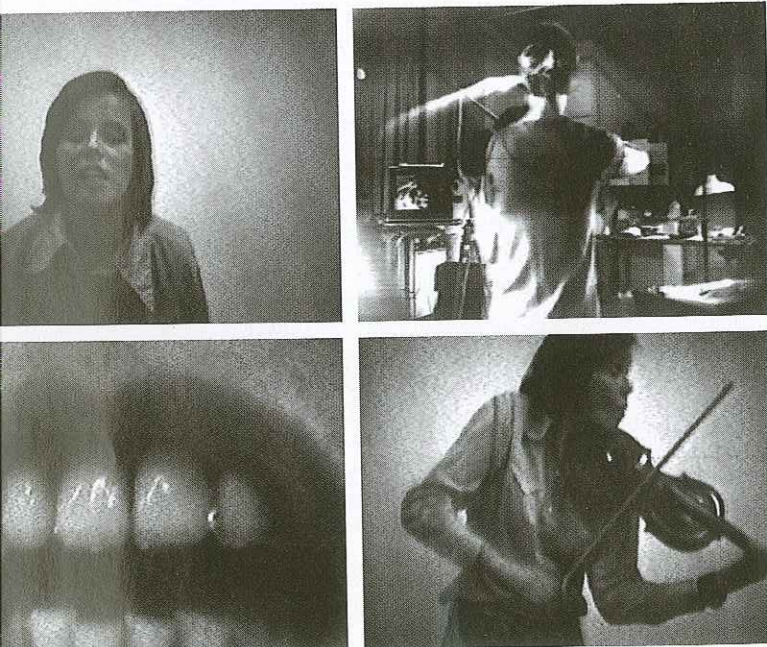
Hollywood film screening, Beefheart's videos introduced a bizarre instance of both interruption and continuity into broadcast-television programming.

Beefheart got in early, and musicians paid attention: As the nascent music video slowly emerged as an effective marketing vehicle for the recording industry, its forms and outlets were left wide open. Following Beefheart, the Residents (based in San Francisco), for example, were anticipating a broad audience for music videos and believed that they could shape the format—less to sell records, though, than to infiltrate systems of television and radio promotion. The cover of their famous 1976 album *The Third Reich 'n' Roll* features Dick Clark in an SS uniform holding a carrot. De-skilled tracks started out with pilfered clips of classic rock and funk songs that were spliced, overdubbed, and layered with new instrumentation. To accompany the songs, the group immediately produced brief music videos (after having attempted, from 1972 to 1976, to film the first long-format music video; this was never released in its entirety). These shorts were shot on film and initially screened in art-house theaters and in film festivals. Once the Residents began to perform live in 1982, however, the videos also began airing on the newly launched channel MTV and the influential late-night television program *Night Flight*. Like the group's aural pastiche, their "expressionistic" videos drew on the dark montage of John Heartfield as well as that of fellow Bay Area artists Bruce Conner and Wallace Berman. But the Residents' samples and cut-ups managed to enter wider and more diversified streams of circulation, flouting institutional boundaries that the art world was just beginning to breach. The interlude became the centerpiece.

MUSIC VIDEO AROSE as an interstitial arena in which to toy with popular modes of distribution—and it was also the perfect field for testing new kinds of televisual celebrity. Paik had already presaged this with his audio-visual deformations of the Beatles, yet perhaps it was David Bowie who most forcefully exploited the music video to turn the subcultural into the

CAO FEI

IN THE LATE 1980s, before music videos could be seen on Chinese television, I would often watch VHS tapes of old music videos that my older sister and her classmates passed around. By the early '90s, pop culture from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the West was gradually infiltrating southern China, and since I grew up in the first mainland city to open up to the world—the incredibly inclusive southern provincial capital of Guangzhou—I spent my entire adolescence captive to music-video culture, as well as to Hollywood movies, Western television programs, and so on. These media were an explosive cultural stimulus for my generation in China. I fell in love with MTV for a time, imitating the dances and fashions I saw in the videos. I would listen to pop music on my Walkman on the way to and from school, and the fruits of my diligent study were obvious every time I hit the dance floor. I even danced in some local television advertisements. Quite naturally, this period came to influence the narrative techniques and emotional tenor of my later artistic practice, specifically in the way I incorporate commercial advertising's rapid editing, music videos' handling of sound and image, and, of course, montage. My work also shares with music-video culture a fascination with movement, color, and light, an emphasis on the psychological impact of the visual,

> Music-video culture was an explosive stimulus for my generation in China.

and the strategem of using as a main narrative element rhythmic and lyrical elements that emerge from beyond the images—all of which enables me to capture something of the bewildering hybridity of postmodern Chinese society. Mine is the culture of an almost theatrically materialistic era, drunk on and dazed by its possessions, divorced from the political ideology of the previous generation. Amid the revelry of ubiquitous appropriation and adaptation, and against a backdrop of headily interacting and ever-changing media, I take these pop-cultural forms as a bridge and not simply a reference. □

CAO FEI IS AN ARTIST BASED IN GUANGZHOU, CHINA.
Translated from Chinese by Philip Tinari.
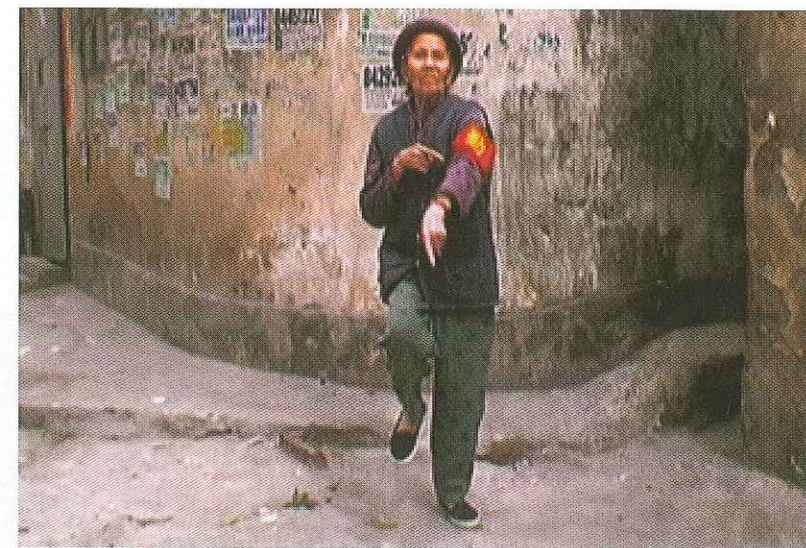
Opposite page: Steina, *Violin Power*, 1970–78, stills from a black-and-white video, 10 minutes 4 seconds. This page, from top: **Still from a promotional video for Captain Beefheart's 1970 album *Lick My Decals Off, Baby.* Cover of Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* (Straight Records, 1969). Cao Fei, *Hip Hop*, 2003, still from a color video, 3 minutes.**

E*ROCK

WANTING TO VISUALIZE MUSIC is a natural inclination. I was first drawn to that experience through making animations on a camcorder and playing in bands; I loved the superflat images of cartoons, video-game graphics, and 1960s psychedelic illustrations. When I saw Flash animation in the late '90s, in fact, I thought it was garbage—I preferred a more handmade feel. But then I discovered the artist Mumbleboy [Kinya Hanada], who used Flash to create an idiosyncratic, self-contained world. I began making music for his animations and then started creating my own videos. The ability to produce at home, share the work in progress, and immediately publish online led to new collaborations. I met the Paper Rad group and began working with them in 2005 as Wyld File, producing music videos for musicians from the Gossip to Islands.

I am less interested in creating a straight narrative slung behind a song than in rhythmically syncing the animation with the audio track, intuitively reacting to the music in order to create a near-synesthetic relationship. With animation, you can work frame by frame and react very closely to physical sound waves, but I also want a certain amount of spontaneity—so I usually avoid using more literal or mathematical translations to program the visuals. In recent years, I've also been incorporating recorded or found footage using other software. If I'm recording video, I want to shoot the band performing in order to create that same tightly related result.

In the process, I like to see how much you can overwhelm sensation by including more detail than you could possibly take in; this oversaturation also helps create the illusion of a stand-alone world—like a snapshot of something bigger, with an infinite amount of detail just out of reach, or the artificial world of a video game, seemingly open to endless exploration.

Working with Ben Jones to make the video for "Gameboy/Homeboy," the 8-bit remix of Beck's "*Qué Onda Guero*," we wanted to push pixel-based techniques as far as possible by collaging them with linear animation.

> By running a simple language on a modern platform, you can take the limits of that language past anything it was intended to do.
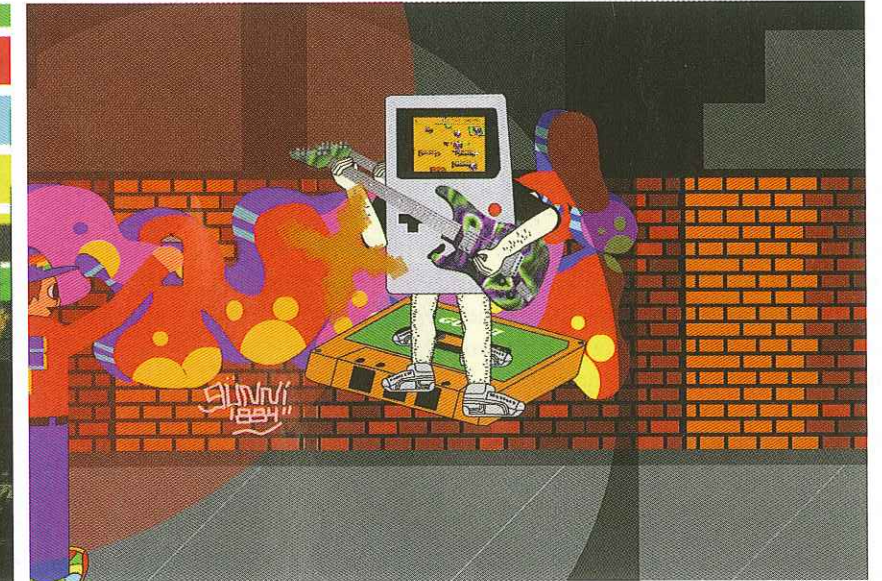
We had a long-standing appreciation for the pixel graphics used in archaic devices such as the Nintendo Game Boy, but we're not aesthetic purists. So instead of staying true to the source, we drew designs in Photoshop or snagged bits from old video games and then vectorized these in Flash, in order to further alter and manipulate them in a high-definition universe. By running a simple language on a modern platform, you can take the limits of that language past anything it was intended to do.

Sometimes technology gets its revenge. We made the *Gameboy/Homeboy* video for Universal, which took our extremely detailed video and made a low-resolution version for promotional purposes. This was before the widespread use of YouTube, so they streamed the video online at an inch-and-a-half wide—paradoxically reducing it to a soup of pixel puree. We are now strangely accustomed to absorbing things in this kind of downgraded, glitchy format, which would never have been passable in the '60s or the '80s. Since this incident, I've inversely started downloading clips from video games on YouTube, blowing them up, and collaging the smeared fragments into animations for its own creepy effect.

No one wants to pay for music anymore; major labels are cutting budgets for videos, even though they're cheaper to produce than ever. But this opens up possibilities for musicians who straddle different disciplines, as the visualization of sound migrates back into their hands. Earlier artists, like the Residents, were not making their own videos as a promotional tool; they were making them as a continuation of broader ideas. Now artists such as Ratatat, my brother's electro-rock band, are producing videos for live shows; for the track "Mirando," they cut up Arnold Schwarzenegger's movie *Predator*, which comes from the same era as many of the animation techniques and electronic sounds we use, mishandle, and modify. We like to abuse the tools we have. □

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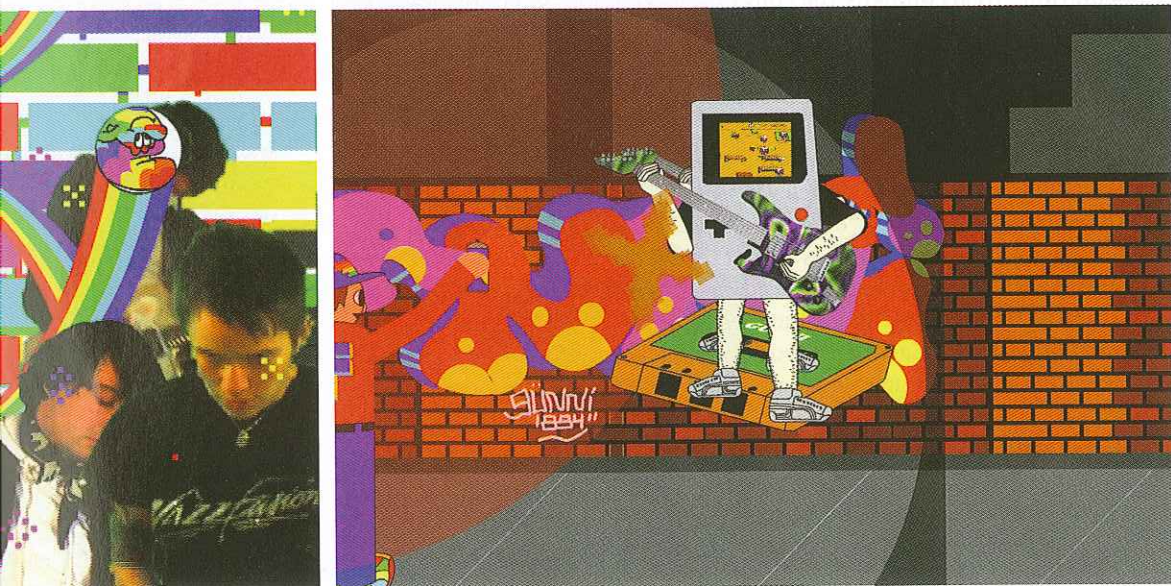Sometimes technology gets its revenge. We made the *Gameboy/Homeboy* video for Universal, which took our extremely detailed video and made a low-resolution version for promotional purposes. This was before the widespread use of YouTube, so they streamed the video online at an inch-and-a-half wide—paradoxically reducing it to a soup of pixel puree. We are now strangely accustomed to absorbing things in this kind of downgraded, glitchy format, which would never have been passable in the '60s or the '80s. Since this incident, I've inversely started downloading clips from video games on YouTube, blowing them up, and collaging the smeared fragments into animations for its own creepy effect.

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iconic. As Thurston Moore has observed, Bowie "burst into the psychosis of the young and restless intellectuals around the world" with his outré art school look and mannered androgyny. And music video was the catalyst: Bowie's canonical single "Space Oddity," recorded and released to coincide with the first moon landing in 1969, uses this persona to tell the story of Major Tom, an astronaut who becomes lost in space. The five-minute video, made in 1972 (and originally shot on 16-mm film) for the track's US release, opens and closes with what appear to be abstract waveform signals and extraterrestrial sounds of static; in between, a very young and colorfully lit Bowie is seen in close-up. Directed by Mick Rock (the photographer-filmmaker best known for his legendary shots of '70s glam rockers), the clip would have been shown on Scopitone apparatuses—primitive 16-mm film jukeboxes—housed in bars and clubs. This precursor to the latter-day music video was, then, a kind of privatized conduit for rock-star fame, superseding rock magazines as the place where fans could connect with their idols. It should come as no surprise that at precisely the same time as the *Space Oddity* video, Bowie would assume the larger-than-life character of Ziggy Stardust, complete with what Moore has called his "alien rooster cut and spaceman glam gear."

ART VIDEO AND MUSIC VIDEO thus met in an unruly fashion in the '70s, but they would soon arrive at the type of conjunction we think we know best: MTV. The advent of MTV was a no less heterogeneous affair, its beginnings stirring in both the celebrity-driven commodification of music and the aesthetic testing of perception. The station actually presented brief "Art Breaks"

> If artists have historically been attracted to music for its dream of a universal language, then music video is perhaps the inverse incarnation: a particulate and fragmented form.

that it commissioned from artists such as Jenny Holzer or Dara Birnbaum. But other videos not labeled as such were equally vanguard: Think of the wittily mordant Devo, or of Laurie Anderson, who made her renowned music video O *Superman* for Warner Bros. Records in 1981—just in time for the launch of MTV. Multimedia artist Perry Hoberman (who had been turning obsolete technologies such as 3-D slide systems into droll animated narratives) joined Anderson as artistic director. Accommodating the consumer TV set's small scale, they concentrated on close-up shots of Anderson, exaggerated silhouettes of her shadow-puppet hands, and her glowing face, illuminated by a tiny pillow speaker placed inside her mouth that emanated a prerecorded violin solo she modulated with her lips. Anderson's video aired in rotation in between both "Art Breaks" and "mainstream" videos—the long duration and sustained sensations of past sonic and visual experiments now a series of fast gaps and fills.

If artists have historically been attracted to music for its dream of a universal language, a latter-day harmony of the spheres, then music video is perhaps the inverse incarnation: a particulate and fragmented form that mapped the individualized and diversified paths of media today. What is most dated to us now—the fleeting, analog sounds and images of the small screen—is also becoming more familiar again. □

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