

Editorial

Cultural status elevation of the music video culture and its new golden age since the 2010s

The video clip format and genre are experiencing a renaissance. In the 2000s, due to the rise of the internet and the subsequent crises in the music industry and traditional television, the classic television music video seemed culturally insignificant¹ and on the verge of extinction. However, by the mid-2010s, the structural transformation of the pop industry had taken place. The third and fourth generations of internet technologies, as well as digital devices based on continuous mobile internet access (such as smartphones and tablets), not only replaced traditional media carriers (such as CDs, DVDs, and Blu-Ray) but also enabled the rise of various auditory, visual, and audio-visual internet platforms and streaming services (such as SoundCloud, Spotify, Instagram, and YouTube) and the emergence of a new influencer culture based on social media. During the 2010s, the creative economy of web content production was created and solidified by the end of the decade. The music and pop industry has also fully integrated into this new service and media industry. As a result, classic television music videos have evolved into YouTube music video productions.

At least from the mid-2010s, a new golden age that has dawned upon the video clip culture not only surpassed its previous heights in terms of quantity but also in its significance within contemporary audio-visual culture. The emergence of a new web content production industry and the music industry's integration into the digital creative economy was just one reason and a prerequisite for the resurgence of the music video culture. However, the reasons for this phenomenon are significantly more complex and multifaceted.

The "YouTube era" completely eliminated the high entry barriers once faced by professional TV channels.² Online video-sharing portals made a hobby, non- or semi-professional, and not least, artistic video-like creations visible and accessible, including older content. From the second half of the 2000s, the internationally accessible old and new music videos saw not only a quantitative but also a qualitative leap. Thanks to the "Spotify era," the number of musical performers and their works has exponentially increased, providing ample opportunities for creating music videos. In addition, two other phenomena related to the

¹ This "cultural irrelevance" is understood in terms of the pop cultural mainstream of the time.

² "During its peak period, 80 percent of the video clips shown by VIVA and MTV came from the four biggest record companies Universal, Sony BMG, Warner and EMI." Axel Schmidt and Klaus Neumann-Braun, "Concerning the Transition of the Reception of the Music Video Due to a Change in the Politics of Distribution of the Music Video- and the Music(-TV-) Market," in *Rewind, Play, Fast Forward: The Past, Present and Future of the Music Video*, eds. Henry Keazor and Thorsten Wübbena (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), p. 80.

appearance of video-sharing portals can be noted. Firstly, in many cases, it is worth producing not only one but several videos for a single music track. Apart from the official classic video music, the track may also have several other live recordings made in a studio, so-called visualisers or sound recordings with static images, as well as countless unofficial fan-made videos.³ These can expand the conceptual framework⁴ and audio-visual aesthetic possibilities⁵ of the classic music video genre.

The resurgence of a music video culture in the late 2010s was greatly aided by the self-conscious emergence of the “digital generations”. Pop stars such as Ed Sheeran and Grimes, who emerged in the first half of the 2010s, were typical heralds of the new type of influencer-like pop stars. However, it was not until the middle to the latter half of the decade that the appearance of influencer pop stars became widespread, coinciding with the emergence of influencer culture and the solidification of new structures in popular culture based on the web and social media. The emergence of the new generation of pop stars and bands represented both a qualitative change and, as already mentioned, a quantitative leap: major music labels began to employ and build them up in astonishing numbers. Billie Eilish, who became an iconic representative and a new type of “super diva”, advanced to the forefront. However, the online cultural emergence of the new generations is also noteworthy for other reasons. Partly thanks to the new generation that grew up with digital technologies, the previous user culture, which was originally a socially and culturally limited subculture of “nerds”, “computer freaks”, and early adopters, became a widespread global mainstream culture by the latter half of the 2010s at the latest. I have already mentioned the impact of prosumer culture⁶ on clip culture, which led to the proliferation of music videos and the fluidity of their genre and aesthetic forms. The dominance of prosumer culture also directly contributed to the growth of the cultural influence of music video culture. The new prosumer generations rediscovered the music video genre as one of the best expressions of their own lifestyle and style-consumption avant-gardism.

Meanwhile, the status of popular culture has also changed. By the 2010s at the latest, it permanently lost its status as a youth culture. Instead, it adopted the cultural myth of eternal youth: the so-called post-adolescent life stage⁷ now extends to age 35, and even those over 40 listen to pop music. This universal youth cultural framework has replaced earlier youth

³ Cf. Dieter Daniels, „Zur Musikalität des Visuellen. Thesen zur Videospezifik des Musikvideos,“ in *Musikvideo Reloaded. Über Historische und Aktuelle Bewegtbildästhetiken zwischen Pop, Kommerz und Kunst*, Acoustic Studies Düsseldorf, ed. Kathrin Dreckmann (Berlin and Boston: Düsseldorf University Press, 2021), p. 27.

⁴ Carol Vernallis, “Music Video and YouTube: New Aesthetics and Generic Transformations,“ in *Revind, Play, Fast Forward*, p. 234; Ann-Kathrin Allekotte, „Video with a Message: Gegenkultur und Subversion im zeitgenössischen Musikvideo“, in *Musikvideo Reloaded*, p. 55.

⁵ Daniels, „Zur Musikalität des Visuellen“, p. 33.

⁶ The word ‘prosumer’ is derived from the words ‘producer’ and ‘consumer’.

⁷ Rebecca Breitenstein, ed., *Lebensstile. Kunden verstehen. Märkte erobern!* (Frankfurt am Main: ZukunftsInstitut, 2020), p. 11.

subcultures,⁸ where individuals behaving as prosumers are representatives of their own self-made, individual subcultures, ideally as influencers themselves. The teenage and young adult generations of the mid to late 2010s finished the classification process of pop culture started before. Although the classification of pop music started at the turn of the millennium at the latest, it took on a different meaning in terms of quality after the constant retrospective CD and DVD releases and concerts of the 2000s,⁹ as “dad’s music” became “grandpa’s music” in the eyes of the latest generation. Both major and smaller, subcultural bands and performers became pop history classics by the 2010s, not only to be listened to again but also constantly remixed and even recited to evoke the atmosphere and mood of an era, as there is nothing new under the sun in pop music. As I mentioned before, not only professionals and experts but also amateurs can do this today: user-generated mashups have become established parts of individual and collective reception processes and the reception of works they use.¹⁰

In short, these technological, economic, and socio-cultural changes led to the cultural status elevation of music video culture. The process seems partly inseparable from the rise of YouTube, but it also happened in parallel with the gradual crisis and loss of significance of classic cinema and film culture. While music videos traditionally used to be considered the little brother of big Hollywood blockbusters,¹¹ today, thanks to YouTube, they are on a par with them regarding views and significance. In audio-visual culture, in the second half of the 2010s, alongside the Netflix series, YouTube music video productions became one of the most important and spectacular arenas for aesthetic and cultural innovation, one of the globally significant engines of the process of “hyperculturalisation.”

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Perhaps it is not necessary to justify the relevance and importance of the topic beyond what has already been mentioned. The video clip culture is still considered an under-researched area of audio-visual culture, despite the increasing number of English and German monographs and studies on the music video genre in the past one and a half to two decades.¹²

⁸ Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2017), p. 338; cf. Marc Calmbach et al., ed., *Wie ticken Jugendliche? Lebenswelten von Jugendlichen im Alter von 14 bis 17 Jahre in Deutschland* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2020), p. 565.

⁹ Cf. Simon Reynolds, „Das Jahrzehnt des ‘Re’,“ in *Retromania. Warum Pop nicht von seiner Vergangenheit lassen kann*, aus dem Englischen von Chris Wilpert, id. (Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2012), pp. 17–30.

¹⁰ Cf. Christina Pileggi, „Der Wandel intermedialer Praktiken,“ in *Jugend, Musik und Film*, Acoustic Studies Düsseldorf, eds. Kathrin Dreckmann et al. (Berlin and Boston: Düsseldorf University Press, 2021), p. 161.

¹¹ Henry Keazor and Thorsten Wübbena, “Rewind, Play, Fast Forward: The Past, Present and Future of the Music Video: Introduction,“ in *Rewind, Play, Fast Forward*, p. 17.

¹² They include Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Henry Keazor and Thorsten Wübbena, *Video Thrills the Radio Star. Musikvideos. Geschichte, Themen, Analysen* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005); Henry Keazor and Thorsten Wübbena, eds., *Rewind, Play, Fast Forward: The Past, Present and Future of the Music*

As noted by Kathrin Dreckmann in the preface of one of the most recent volumes on the subject, *Musikvideo reloaded*, published in 2021, referring to Carol Vernallis, among others, the music video has always been a “hybrid”, “permeable media format,”¹³ or, as I like to think of it, a “sponge” capable of absorbing anything. Therefore, it is natural that contemporary YouTube music video productions are also important, and perhaps even primary, media for the current socio-cultural and late modernity theoretical problems discussed in this issue under the banner of hyperculture.

Hyperculture is a comprehensive, global phenomenon that, whether we like it or not, is present in our daily lives and permeates them organically. What Byung-Chul Han and Andreas Reckwitz call hyperculture¹⁴ is not an entirely new cultural phenomenon that began today. The roots of the processes that led to its formation date back to the 1970s and 1980s, or even 1968. The postmodern cultural and aesthetic movements of the 1980s also exhibited the characteristics that continue to characterize today’s hyperculturality. Hyperculture is not a critique or a transcendence of postmodern tendencies; instead, it is their contemporary realisation, namely the fulfilment of global culture. The 2010s have made the social, media, and cultural consequences of the post-industrial era and their interactions more visible than ever before. It is time to account for them not only through formal case studies but also through more comprehensive, transdisciplinary theories and concepts.¹⁵

The current issue is connected to a university seminar I held at the Department of Aesthetics and Film Studies at ELTE in the fall semester of 2022/2023. The course had a rather long title: *Remix-Aesthetics, Retrotopias, and Hyperculturalism in the YouTube Music Video Productions of the second half of the 2010s*. The issue contains selected essays from the seminar’s students. To my great pleasure, not only did students from theoretical disciplines

Video (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010); Mathias Bonde Korsgaard, „Music Video transformed,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*. Ed. John Richardson (New York: Oxford University, 2013), pp. 501–517; Carol Vernallis, „Music Video’s Second Aesthetic?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, ed. John Richardson (New York: Oxford University, 2013), pp. 437–466; Carol Vernallis, *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and The New Digital Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Holly Rogers, *Sounding the Gallery: Video and the Rise of Art-Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mathias Bonde Korsgaard, *Music Video after MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Gina Arnold and Daniel Cookney and Kirsty Fairclough, eds., *Music/Video. Histories, Aesthetics, Media* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Renate Buschmann and Jessica Nitsche, eds., *Video Visionen. Die Medienkunstagentur 235 Media als Alternative Kunstmarkt* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020); Kathrin Dreckmann, ed., *Musikvideo Reloaded. Über Historische und Aktuelle Bewegtbildästhetiken zwischen Pop, Kommerz und Kunst*, Acoustic Studies Düsseldorf (Berlin and Boston: Düsseldorf University Press, 2021).

¹³ Kathrin Dreckmann, „Vorwort und Einführung,” in *Musikvideo Reloaded*, pp. 1–3.

¹⁴ Byung-Chul Han, *Hyperkulturalität. Kultur und Globalisierung* (Berlin: Merve, 2005); Andreas Reckwitz, “Cultural Conflicts as a Struggle over Culture: Hyperculture and Cultural Essentialism,” in *The End of Illusions. Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity*, ed. id., (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), pp. 15–18.; Reckwitz, *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*.

¹⁵ Cf. Andreas Reckwitz and Hartmut Rosa, „Einleitung,” in *Spätmoderne in der Krise. Was leistet die Gesellschaftstheorie?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2021), pp. 9–19.

attend the course, but also two students from the film directing program. Thanks to them, the course had other tangible results beyond this issue. Tamás Szabó Sipos's work, titled *Something: Behind The Scenes Video*,¹⁶ which is "more than a music video" in terms of genre, created for the band Freakin' Disco, continued to develop from the exam material submitted with Jakab Bóna for the course. Thus, something from the ideas discussed in class and presented in this issue was implemented in practice.

I am deeply grateful to György Farkas, the editor-in-chief of *Filmszem*, who was not only open to the idea of the issue but also gave me a free hand in editing. Additionally, I would like to thank my friend János Szita for our extensive, enlightening conversations on popular music and pop culture. I also want to express my gratitude to Dr Tamás Dudlák for his diligent work as a translator and professional editor, as well as to Dr Dániel Oross for his professional advice. Furthermore, I express my appreciation to all students who attended the course, not only for creating a good seminar atmosphere but especially for the truly productive workshop. Although their work does not appear in this volume, I must mention Hanna Dorka Balogh, Jakab Bóna, Vince Herman, Dóra Kóvágó, and Marcel Faniszló separately. I thank those whose work appears here for their cooperation, without whom this issue would not have the same rich thematic and perspective content. I hope that readers will find this to be the case.

The Editor

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¹⁶ See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuhFxKz0QxU&ab_channel=Freakin%27Disco (last access 2. April 2023).

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Clipography

Freakin’ Disco: *Something. Behind The Scenes Video*. Art. Tamás Szabó Sipos, 2023.