Rewind – Play – Fast Forward

The Past, Present and Future of the Music Video:

Introduction

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> "Art presses the "Stop"- and "Rewind"-buttons in the stream of life: It makes time stop. It offers reflection and re-collection, it is an antidote against lost certitudes."[1]

Like perhaps no other medium, the music video clip is marking and shaping our everyday culture: film, art, literature, advertisements – they all are clearly under the impact of the music video in their aesthetics, their technical procedures, visual worlds or narrative strategies. The reason for this has not only to be sought in the fact that some of the video directors are now venturing into art or advertisement, but that also people not working in the field of producing video clips are indebted to this medium.[2] Thus, more or less former video clip-directors such as Chris Cunningham or Jonas Åkerlund have established themselves successfully with their creations which very often are based on ideas and concepts, originally developed for earlier music videos: both Cunningham's works *Flex* and *Monkey Drummer*, commissioned in 2000 respectively 2001 by the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, evolved out of his earlier music videos.[3] *Flex* relies on the fantastic and weightless underwater cosmos Cunningham designed for the images that accompanied Portishead's *Only you* in 1998. *Monkey Drummer*[4] is heavily based on the soundtrack written by the Irish musician Aphex Twin (Richard David James) for whom Cunningham had previously directed famous videos such as *Come to Daddy* (1997) and *Windowlicker* (1999). Åkerlund, on the other hand, made an even more direct recourse to his earlier music video. His film, *Turn the Page*, presented in 2004 at the Schirn in Frankfurt in the context of the short-film exhibition *3-minutes*, uses exclusively footage he had shot six years earlier for the

video clip, accompanying the song *Turn the Page* by the band Metallica (which also is used as a soundtrack for the film).[5]

In the field of literature not only directors such as Chris Cunningham have served as models for characters in novels like William Gibson's 2003 novel *Pattern Recognition* in which the clip of a fictitious music video-director who puts "robot girls in his video"[6] is characterized by the following words: "No sci-fi kitsch for Damien. Dreamlike things in the dawn half-light, their small breasts gleaming, white plastic shining faints as old marble"[7] (this a clear reference to Cunningham's music video for Björk's *All is Full of Love*, directed in 1999: fig. 1).[8]

Fig. 1: *Still from the music video by Chris Cunningham:*
Björk, All is Full of Love, *1999*
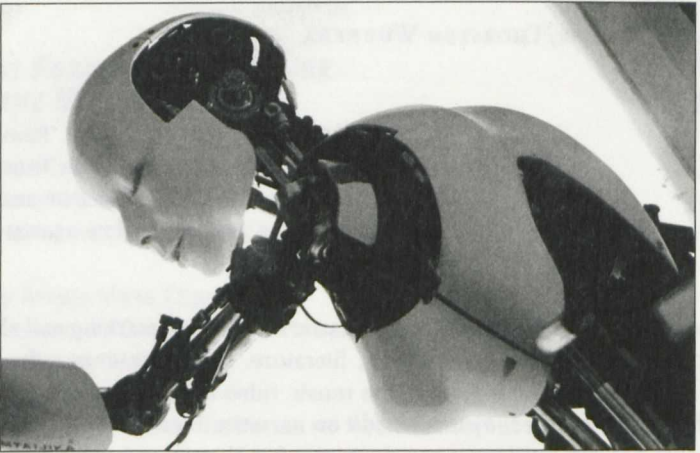
But also narrative structures and devices are taken over from the music video. For example, the writer Jasper Fforde (who had previously worked as a cameraman) was obviously inspired by a music video when he endowed its heroine Thursday Next[9] with the capacity to read and thus insert herself physically into the context and the setting of any given book and to thus allow its plot to feature abrupt changes in places, times and contexts – exactly as seen in the famous clip shot by John Landis for Michael Jackson's song *Black or White* in 1991 where the singer also abruptly changes from one cultural and narrative setting to the other.[10] And as a hint that his novel also deals with the history of pop- and rock music, Fforde equips Thursday Next with a car that is more or less identical with Janis Joplin's famous Porsche 356c Cabriolet (figs. 2 & 3).[11]

Fig. 2: *Janis Joplin's Porsche 356c Cabriolet (left)*
Fig. 3: *Mark Thomas: Cover Illustration for Jasper Fforde,* Something Rotten,
2004 (right)
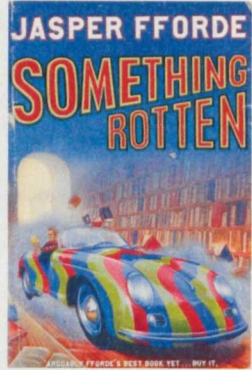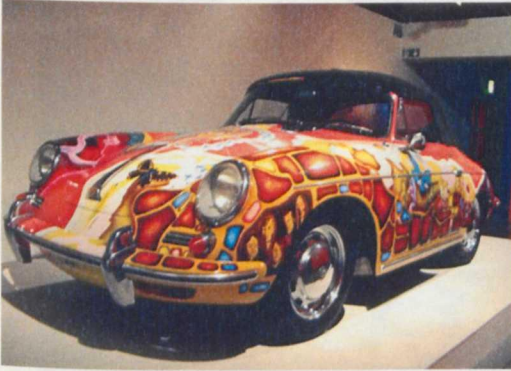
It may sound strange to state that the music video is also influencing advertisements, given that a video clip is more or less an advertisement itself, but the influence is increasingly evident. In 2006, for example, an advertisement for the computer company Apple (fig. 4, left) stirred pop music fans and music journalists, as well as the general press because the advertisement relied on images which were nothing more than a remake of a music video produced three years earlier for the song *Such Great Heights* by the pop group The Postal Service (fig. 4, right).[12]

Fig. 4: *Comparison of stills taken from an "Apple"-advertisement by Josh (Melnik) and Xander (Charity), 2006 (left) and from their music video for The Postal Service,* Such Great Heights, *2003 (right)*
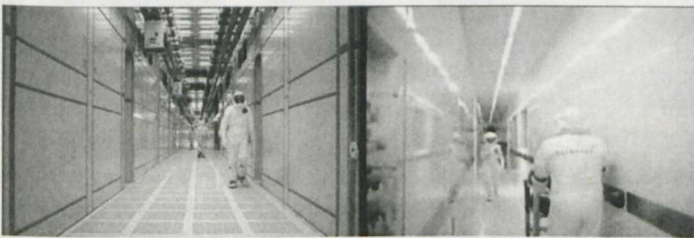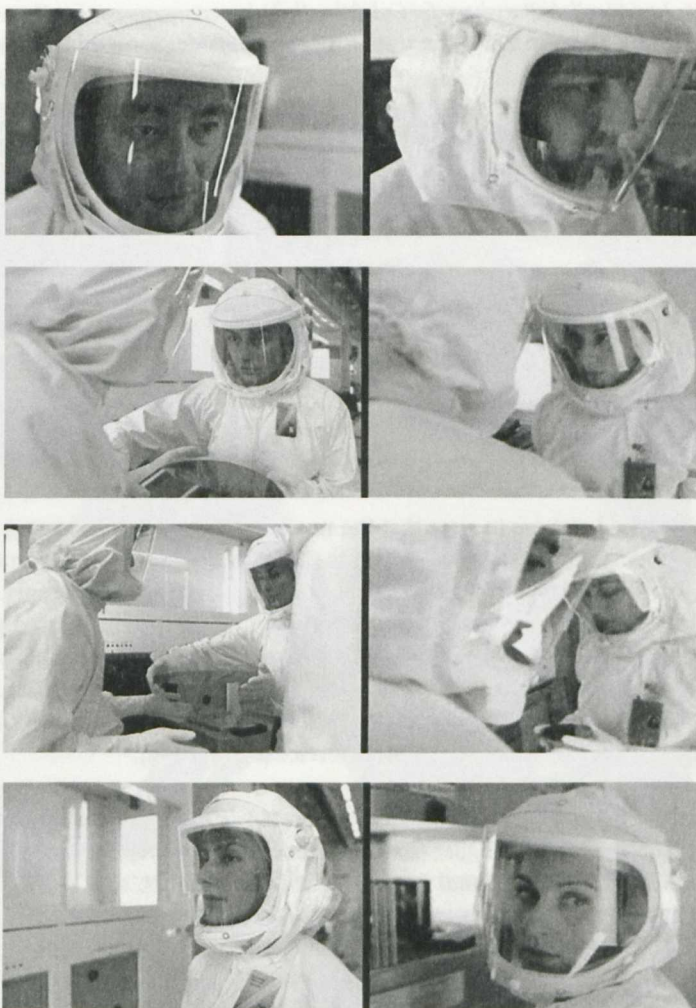
Likewise, a recent advertisement for the candy mint "Tic Tac"[13] is heavily indebted to Spike Jonze's groundbreaking music video for Fatboy Slim's track *Weapon of Choice* from 2001. Both the commercial and the music video feature a tired salesman (fig. 5 & 6), sitting in an armchair in a hotel lobby, next to a trolly with cleaning products and a radio (fig. 7 & 8). Whereas the salesman in Spike Jonze's video hears Fatboy Slim's music coming from the radio and is incited to dance, the salesman in the "Tic Tac" commercial requires the additional help of a slim blonde who shakes a box of "Tic Tacs".

Fig. 5: Still from the music
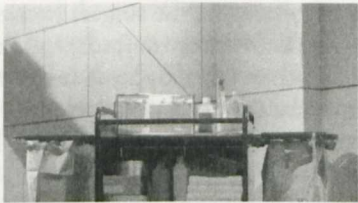video by Spike Jonze: Fatboy
Slim, Weapon of Choice,
2001

Fig. 6: Still from the advertisement
by Jacky Oudney for "Tic Tac",
2008

Fig. 7: Still from the music
video by Spike Jonze: Fatboy
Slim, Weapon of Choice,
2001

Fig. 8: Still from the advertisement
by Jacky Oudney for "Tic Tac",
2008

The possibility that the means of a music video could be instead used one day as a vehicle for election campaigns was already envisioned in 1992 by director/actor Tim Robbins who in his satire *Bob Roberts* plays a homonymous singing conservative politician whose revisionist approach is – among others – underlined by his adaptation of Don Alan Pennebaker's legendary (and for the music video: highly influential) film sequence for Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues* from 1965. The content of Dylan's skeptical and liberal approach is not only reversed by Roberts into its exact opposite by substituting the title of Dylan's album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* (1964) against the cynical "Times are Changin' Back", or by replacing the lyrics on Dylan's famous cue cards (fig. 9) with slogans such as "By any means necessary, make millions", but also by exchanging the famous bystanders in Pennebaker's clip – among them the pop poet Allen Ginsberg (fig. 9) – with two bankers and sexy dancers (fig. 10). That this political use of music videos as a – in the end: very successful – part of an election campaign is not just an exception, but a consequently followed strategy becomes even clearer in the course of the film when Roberts again relies on this medium in order to also advertise his patriotism.

Fig. 9: Still from the film by Don
Alan Pennebaker: Bob Dylan,
Subterranean Homesick Blues,
1965

Fig. 10: Still from the film by Tim
Robbins: Bob Roberts, 1992
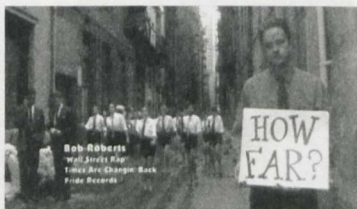
Interestingly, in "real life" (as opposed to the reality depicted in a film) it was rather in the politically opposed party of the democrats that video clips were used as part of the recent election campaign in America: famous sympathizers of Barack Obama (such as, among others, the actress Scarlett Johansson, the singers Nicole Scherzinger and John Legend and the musician Herbie Hancock) had interpreted his now famous "Yes, we can"-speech in February 2008 under the direction of Will. I. Am (from the group Black Eyed Peas) and Jesse Dylan (the son of Bob Dylan) in the form of a music video in order to promote the candidate (fig. 11).

Fig. 11: Still from the music video by Will. I. Am
and Jesse Dylan, Yes We Can, 2008
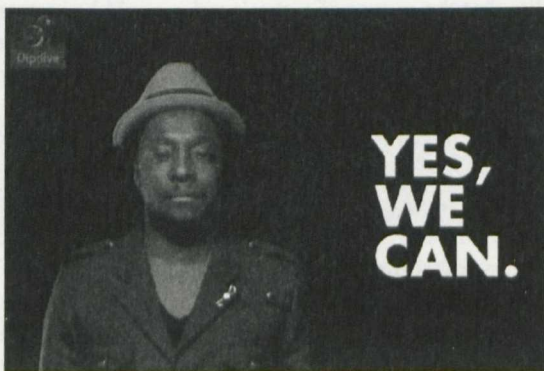
In three short days, the video garnered more than a million views on YouTube and 10 million on the host site, yeswecan.dipdive.com, and was even awarded an Emmy in June 2008 in the new category "Best New Approaches in Daytime Entertainment".[14]

To finish our short survey of forms indebted to the music video, we want to briefly mention the cinema where the style, narration and the technical means, developed in the field of the music video have had a great impact – be it that movie directors, obviously impressed by the music video, have adapted for example its imagery [15],editing or pace (as just one early

example one could refer to Tony Scott's film *Top Gun* from 1986), or that directors of music videos were and are shifting to film making, thus bringing with them and importing some of the hallmarks of the music video into the cinema. One can think here about directors such as David Fincher, Mark Romanek, Michel Gondry or the already mentioned Spike Jonze. But such a shift from music advertisement to film already happened in the 60s when directors such as Claude Lelouch, Francis Ford Coppola or Robert Altman first learned the filmic ropes by shooting so-called "Scopitones", more or less direct antecedents of the music video, and then changed over to the cinema of the Nouvelle Vague without forgetting what they had learned while making the musical short films.[16]

But exactly such a change from helming a music video to directing a film now symptomizes a crisis in which the video clip finds itself after years of both financial and aesthetic prosperity (for which the notorious 7 million dollars reportedly paid for Mark Romanek's video for Michael and Janet Jackson's song *Scream* in 1995 is perhaps the most incisive example).[17] Due to economic declines over the past years the record companies have invested increasingly less money into the production of music videos while in turn their way of presentation has also drastically changed. Whereas music videos were once shown on television on music channels such as MTV [18], the Internet, cellphones and other emerging platforms with their, however, reduced quality considering vision and sound, have overtaken the market. Thus, already in June 2000 Mark Cohn and Ken Martin (under the name "The Broad Band") mocked the former hymn of the music video, the song "*Video Killed the Radio Star*" by The Buggles, chosen by MTV on the 1st August 1981 in order to inaugurate and hail its airplay, by sneering: *Internet Killed the Video Star.*[19]

Since that time, the authors of articles, blogs and books have asked time and again whether or not the music video is dead (fig. 12).

Fig. 12: Screenshot from website forum
http://videos.antville.org/ (15 July 2006)

More often than not, the answer has been: yes.

Nevertheless it has to be asked if this answer is not perhaps premature and at least moot: while one might not want to argue with the viewpoint that the music video in its up to now familiar and known form might have started to cease to exist, one might however ask if perhaps it will just continue to exist in another, new form. "Music TV was yesterday. Today, you best watch music videos together with friends late in the evening, tightly pressed together in front of the computer screen – or on the big movie screen", the journalist Sarah Stähli writes in her introduction to the section *Sound & Stories* of the 45th Solothurn Film Festival 2010 in which the best Swiss music videos were presented and awarded.[20]

Moreover, it can be read as a sign of enduring sturdiness that the music video furthermore tries to come at hands with the factors threatening it instead of blindly continuing to do its business as usual. This might be eased by the fact that it was in the genre of the music video in the first place that the idea of an online presence of a musical star was conceived and visualized: In Paul Hunter's clip for Jennifer Lopez' song *If You Had My Love*, released in May 1999, the singer was presented as a sort of a "belle captive" (as one could put it by quoting the title of a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet), because she seems to be confined to a series of white, clinical rooms where everything is under observation. While she performs her song, cameras, controlled by online viewers, are following her movements, broadcasting them to different locations such as a garage, a call center, private homes, a dance hall etc. where J.Lo's performance is followed on TV- and computer-screens by her audience. That Lopez is indeed more or less the marionette of an interactive display, becomes evident when a user out of given menu chooses to view the lyrics sung by her or selects a certain dance style she then has to perform during her song – or when he chooses to see her taking a shower.

Of course, the reality as it was viewable on Internet TV and from February 2005 on at the YouTube-platform[21] was much less glamorous and stylish than the surroundings of J.Lo, but it went more or less into the same direction.

In any case, the genre of the video clip nowadays does not ignore the YouTube-phenomenon, but instead tries to benefit from it, as two briefly discussed examples, both produced in Spring 2008, show.

In May 2008 the band Weezer, the 1995 winners of four MTV-music video awards for the video directed by Spike Jonze for their song *Buddy Holly*, released a clip for their latest single "Pork and Beans". It is not by chance that this video did premiere not on MTV or any other TV-channel, but on YouTube. This was appropriate insofar as the video features many people made famous by YouTube and the Internet, some of them not even known by their proper names but being characterized rather by their activities on YouTube such as "catching Raybans with one's face", the "Free Hugs Campaign", the "Dancing Banana", "Diet Coke and Mentos eruptions" or "Will it blend" (the latter two featuring phony records and experi-

ments). Partially chosen by the members of Weezer, each of whom picked their favorites, all these people were contacted by the director of the clip, Mathew Cullen, after which they were flown over to Los Angeles for the four-day shoot. Whereas an episode of the cartoon series *South Park* had previously rather mocked these celebrities[22], Cullen followed the path indicated by the music video for the Canadian rock band The Barenaked Ladies, who in the clip for their song *Sound of Your Voice* from February 2007 have also replaced their own appearance with the presentation of several YouTube-celebrities, lip-synch the song and pursue their own original and inventive activities.

While Cullen declared his clip to be a "celebration of that creativity", it is quite obvious that the video – by featuring YouTube-celebrities – was also trying hard to generate greater attention by the YouTube-audience as well as by other media which are carefully and/or distrustfully observing YouTube and its cult and culture. The strategy was successful. The video had over 1.2 million views in its first 24 hours on YouTube and after only four days 3.6 million people had watched it. The video quickly attained the status of being the most watched video on the Internet during those days[23] – a success which recalls the time when John Landis' groundbreaking video for Michael Jackson's *Thriller* was announced and broadcasted on MTV and broke records with respect to audience ratings.

The other example comes from Germany: Also in Spring, in April 2008, the German band Wir sind Helden released a video to accompany the single *Die Konkurrenz*. Instead of hiring a director, the band had posted a notice on their website the February before, which encouraged their audience to shoot their own video to suit the song and to hand it in. Arguing that self made things are somehow nicer, the band invited their fans under the title "Mehr Wettbewerb mit der Konkurrenz" to let their creativity flow (the title, in English meaning "More competition with the concurrence", already indicates the conceptual nature of the approach: videos were invited to compete with one another in order to accompany a song on "concurrence").[24] Whether reference was made to the lyrics of the song or not was irrelevant – on their website the band just stated that everything, except naked women and helicopters, was welcome.[25] Out of the many submissions received, rather than choose the best video, the band took just the best scenes from the various entries and then edited them into a music video for their song.[26]

The final result is not only interesting insofar as it combines heterogeneous material, reminiscent of Weezer's *Pork and Beans*, but also because of the way this material was framed and presented. On the one hand the small screen space, featuring the clickable "Play"-icon, with below the control device (fig. 13) clearly makes reference to the typical YouTube-appearance (fig. 14): thus, despite the fact that the shown snippets were not taken from YouTube, the video ironically present itself as a typical YouTube-video.

Fig. 13: *Still from the music video by and for* Wir sind Helden, *Die Konkurrenz, 2008*
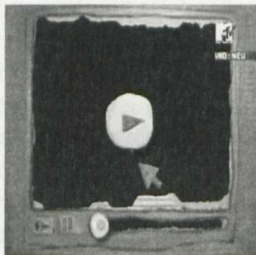
Fig. 14: *Screenshot from YouTube, displaying the music video by Mathew Cullen:* Weezer, *Pork and Beans, 2008*

But the self-made character of the whole screen does not look like something from the Internet, but rather like something tinkered out of roughly cut and painted cardboard in order to just artlessly simulate a typical YouTube-screen. It is interesting to state that this look was not conceived originally by Wir sind Helden themselves but that this, too, is – so to speak – second hand, which means: borrowed from somewhere else. The correct term in order to describe the appearance of the child-like, rough style would be certainly "sweded", because this is the word coined by Jerry, the protagonist of Michel Gondry's feature film *Be Kind – Rewind* (2008). Faced with the dilemma of having accidentally erased the entire collection of his friend Mike's video-rental-store, Jerry decides to re-make the lost films with the simplest means and with him and his friends as the actors, taking on roles such as characters from *Rambo*, *The Lion King*, *Rush Hour*, *Ghostbusters*, *When We Were Kings*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and *Robocop* – with charmingly amateur results which, surprisingly, meet the taste of the customers of the store who request more and more movie remakes of that kind. Since Jerry, in order to explain his source for these films, claims that they are coming from Sweden (thus also justifying the long waiting times and especially the high prices he asks for these European "imports"), the redone films are quickly branded as "sweded". It is exactly this "sweded" look of the rough and handcrafted tinkering that has successfully proven itself, appearing not only as part of such a re-modeled YouTube-screen (fig. 15), but, apart from the Wir sind Helden-clip, even in advertisements for TV Soap Operas.[27]

Fig. 15: Screenshot from the former website for the film
Be Kind – Rewind, 2008

However, it is important to remember that the director of *Be Kind* was and still is a music video director and that he had designed and developed the "sweded" aesthetics already in the context of his earlier music videos (such as the video for *Walkie Talkie Man* by the band Steriogram, shot in Spring 2004).[28] While the rough reproduction of things in the video such as helicopters, a recording studio, musical instruments and cars (fig. 16) gives the clip a wild and funny appearance, Gondry sanctioned this look in the context of his feature film as due to the modest means Jerry and his friends have at their disposition when trying to re-make a Hollywood blockbuster.

Fig. 16: Still from the music video by Michel Gondry:
Steriogram, Walkie Talkie Man, 2004

At the same time, this is in a certain way a comment Gondry also makes on the genre of the music video itself which was often considered as the cheap little sister of the big, expensive Hollywood blockbuster.[29] It is perhaps also due to this parallel that Jerry's "sweded" films in *Be Kind* have more or less the same duration like a music video, that is of around 3 minutes in which the content of a whole film – as sometimes also in the

case of a music video – is condensed, and that this short, cheap, "sweded" versions, however, are then more appreciated by the customers than the long, expensive Hollywood-originals (author Matt Hanson's words "Music video has become meta-cinema" come to the mind).[30]

One could continue this thread even by putting Jerry's cheaply looking "sweded" films into relation to the current video clips which have also lost their once sometimes blockbuster-like budgets and have now to try to also charm the audience with most modest means – this not only by making recourse to the humble YouTube-style[31], but also by coming up with clever ideas. One can here directly refer to the example of the most recent endeavour of the Los Angeles band OK Go: In a music video (directed by James Frost, the band itself in cooperation with Syyn Labs[32] and released in March 2010) for their song *This Too Shall Pass*[33], they tried to set something against Hollywood and its costly digital effects by putting their credo "Back to the mechanical"[34] into visual action. With the intention "to create cool stuff which you can see is also really real"[35], they designed together with their collaborators a machine, displayed over the two storeys of a warehouse and involving "more than 700 household objects, from flying rat traps to a plummeting piano" into a frenetic chain reaction, triggered by a toy lorry, then going on continuously for four minutes (the song's length) and finding its climax in a series of paint-loaded canons, being fired off against the four band members. The result, as journalist John Harlow concludes: "Even by the overheated standards of the internet, the success of the (...) video (...) has been extraordinary. In its first few days of release on the web, it has attracted more than 8.7m viewers."[36]

Interestingly, with this approach OK Go in a certain way did nothing else than to repeat the earlier success of a very similar video which, although conceived as an advertisement for a car, was nevertheless directed in 2003 by the renowned music video director Antoine Bardou-Jacquet.[37] In this advertisement, Bardou-Jacquet staged a kind of "Ballet Mécanique" by combining components of the then new Honda Accord to a very similar, complicated 1:45 minute chain reaction which in the end did lead to nothing else than the closing of the car's trunk which, eventually, did made the car roll from a tilting platform – an action accompanied by an off-voice asking "Isn't it nice when things just work?"[38] Given the meticulous interaction of the isolated car parts, starting with a small, single, rolling cog, and ending with the entire rolling car, the choreography of the components suggests an assembly belt which in the end launches the sum of all these interacting pieces, the finished car.

The short film has become a huge success on YouTube where it is often presented under the catch-name "Honda – The Cog". So it seems as if – again – a YouTube-success would have triggered the inspiration for another, latest YouTube-success. However, as Thomas Elsaesser has recently emphasized, the Honda-advertisement itself is heavily indebted to a forerunner:[39] In 1987 the artist duo (Peter) Fischli & (David) Weiss presented a 30 minute video at the Kassel *documenta 8* under the title *Der Lauf der*

Dinge ("The Way Things Go") which did mark their international break-through. As in the case of the Honda-advertisement, it shows a chain reaction of different items, put together in a 70-100 feet long structure inside a warehouse, but while the Honda-advertisement relies mainly on mechanical interaction, Fischli & Weiss also included chemical procedures which often enhance the suspense because the viewer has to wait for them to take place and to have their effect, so that there is always the uncertainty if the process is successfully continuing or if it will get interrupted. According to some sources the artist duo tried to sue the Honda-company because they considered the advertisement as a plagiarism[40], but it certainly would have been very difficult to prove this, given that *Der Lauf der Dinge* itself could be put into a long line of similar, earlier conceptions: Not only did director Richard Donner (who has a weak spot for such chain-reacting ballets – see for example also the beginning of his 1983 movie *Superman III*) already in 1985 include a scene into his movie *The Goonies* where a simple door-opener is conceived as a chain-reacting contraption, but the entire concept can be traced back to the idea of Reuben Lucius Goldberg (mainly known today as Rube Goldberg: 1883-1970), a Jewish American sculptor, author, engineer, inventor, and cartoonist, who is today famous for exactly the invention of complex, chain-reaction driven devices that perform astonishingly simple tasks in most complicated and convoluted ways (in his comics Goldberg from 1934 on made his character "Professor Lucifer Gorgonzola Butts" invent and build such machines) – thus his name became the epitome for these "Rube Goldberg machines".[41]

To return to the OK Go-video and his ancestors: They are not only linked by the basic concept of such a "Rube Goldberg machine", being each time at the center of the films, but, especially in the case of the Fischli & Weiss-project and the OK Go-video, also by the underlying bias of the works. Adapting Elsaesser's word, originally addressed to a comparison of the Fischli & Weiss-video with the Honda-advertisement, but actually even fitting better concerning the OK Go-clip, one can state: "(...) in both works, one notes a studied anachronism, a retrospective temporal deferral at work. (...) Fischli & Weiss produced their tape around the time when artists were seriously considering their respone to the new media technologies of video compositing and digital editing. Their work is clearly a manifesto in favor of materiality and indexicality, an ironic middle finger stuck in the face of the digital to come, and taking their stand in the heated debate about the loss of indexicality in the post-photographic age."[42] Exactly such an emphasis and celebration of the "visble, tangible world" and the insistence "on a linear causality vanishing in the media" (as opposed for example to Lady Gaga-clips), can be also observed in the OK Go-video.

All this shows that the music video continues to do what it used to do for decades: to look for all kinds of possible inspiration, to try to do something new with it and to thus inspire itself as well as other media forms.

However, the signs of its crisis can't be denied either – it is perhaps not wonder that discussions about the music video very often feature the words "rethinking" and "reinventing". As two examples among many others we'd like to refer first to the book published by Matt Hanson in 2006, titled *Reinventing Music Video – Next Generation Directors*. Second we want to mention the Swedish designer Jakob Trollbäck who, in March 2007, delivered a talk with the title "Rethinking the music video" in the context of the TED-conferences (the letters standing for "Technology, Entertainment, Design", a series of talks started in 1984 where people from these three areas come together).[43]

It is, however, interesting to see that both the book published by Hanson as well as the talk given by Trollbäck repeat rather than advance history: "Re-thinking" resp. "re-inventing" in their case thus takes on more the colors of an approach where already existing things of the past are taken up and thought through or invented again.[44] Trollbäck's claim for example to have created a music video for Brian Eno's and David Byrne's 1981 song *Moonlight in Glory*[45] that is more directed by the music than driven by a filmmaker's concept and which thus achieves "to show purely the expression of a great song"[46] (fig. 17), in our view ultimately leads to nothing more than a rather tame and even not as original renewal of older videos which already showed the lyrics of a song while trying to translate its music into abstract patterns of light and colors (the most advanced masterpiece here is perhaps Bill Konersman's clip for *Sign 'O' the Times* by Prince, produced in 1987: fig. 18).[47]

Fig. 17: *Still from the music video by Jakob Trollbäck: Brian Eno and David Byrne*, Moonlight in Glory, *2007*
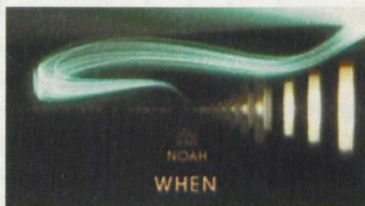
Fig. 18: *Still from the music video by Bill Konersman: Prince,* Sign 'O' the Times, *1987*

Especially in Trollbäck's case the well-known phrase "If you don't know history, you are doomed to repeat it" springs to mind. The unconscious orientation on the past (since it seems that Trollbäck's claim to have created such a pioneering video is only possible because he apparently doesn't know about the Prince-clip) touches upon another important aspect of the crisis of the music video: it's historic dimension.

Apart from the fact that books such as the one by Hanson or endeavours such as the one by Trollbäck are simply repeating history, the current crises shows clear parallels to a crisis which had previously beset the

music video in the early 90's. Just like today it was of a financial as well as consecutively aesthetical nature, and already then some heralded this as the end of the music video while others saw it as a healthy process which would further allow only "good" musicians to have likewise "good" music videos (as opposed to the prior situation where, as the music video director Rudi Dolezal did put it, "there was a video clip for every idiotic band").[48]

This shows, however, that the music video has not one, but several histories[49], which are separated by ruptures, breaks, endings and starting points. Therefore, what we are witnessing now may not be the symptoms of an irretrievable end, but rather a point where the clip – once again – begins to change, differentiate, evolve into something new.

This view is confirmed if we take a look at other histories of the music video in which the antecedents of the form did not tie into each other, but followed each other paratactically. For example, the early "Phonoscènes", which after 1907 were produced with a certain routine and exhibited a refined correlation between the music, the lyrics and the images (see the article by Thomas Schmitt in this volume) did not directly lead into the "Soundies" of the 40s and 50s. Jazz musicians often did star in these short films which also and again presented a quite elaborated narrative in order to interpret the music, its sections and structures. Their sometimes very artful visual style actually did anticipate already some of the stylistic features which were used later in the 70s during the rise of the music video (Gjon Mili's and Norman Granz's film for *Jammin' the Blues* from 1944 for example anticipates with its optical multiplication of a single musician some moments of Bruce Gowers' famous music video for Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, made in 1975: figs. 19 & 20).[50]

Fig. 19: *Still from the film by Gjon Mili and Norman Granz:* Jammin' the Blues, *1944*

Fig. 20: *Still from the music video by Bruce Gowers:* Queen, Bohemian Rhapsody, *1975*

The same happened concerning the "Panoram Jukebox" and the subsequent "Scopitones" whose directors didn't rely on the aesthetic achievements of the Soundies, but started afresh instead. This was also perhaps due to the fact that the "Scopitone", which started to spread in the early 60s, was considered a technical improvement over the "Panoram" when the latter fell out of fashion due to the Second World War. The user of the "Panoram" didn't have any choice to view a particular film, but had

to watch a sequence of black and white films as they were edited together (much in the same way the audience of MTV later had to watch the sequence of clips chosen by the producers of the show or dictated by the charts). Instead, the user of a "Scopitone" could directly pick a particular film (much in the same way the Internet currently allows)[51] which was, moreover, in color. Such features made the "Scopitone" a rival of black and white television, which was dominant at the time.[52] Following the decline of the Scopitones, the first directors of music videos didn't use and view the "Scopitones" in order to learn from what had already been achieved there in terms of visual styles and the possible linking of music, words and images, but rather started afresh (the "Scopitones" were actually only re-discovered much later and then first rather as collector's items).

Given that the histories and pre-histories of the music videos stretch far further back than 1981 when MTV appeared (see already the fact that MTV had to rely upon earlier shot clips in order to fill its program), the consensus is that the beginning of the genre must be sought much earlier. The debate remains open regarding how far one should go back when seeking the earliest ancestor, however. As we suggested earlier, short films made for and with music had been already produced around 1900, and it seems that one origin can be seen in the way Thomas Alva Edison had devised his "Kinteophone" in 1891 (fig. 21) – we say deliberately "devised" because actually the technical realization wasn't up to Edison, who only dreamed about the possibility of sitting comfortably in an armchair at home while following a performance at an opera house in sight and sound.[53]

Fig. 21: Thomas Alva Edison's "Kineto-phone", 1895

In fact, this vision really describes what the television set would make possible later. But Edison's dream was more about making a performance accessible to the home viewer (much in the way, DVDs with a "Live on stage"-film do this), while a music video doesn't limit itself to this, even though it was and is clearly and mainly designed to work as a substitute for such a live performance (already the pop group ABBA in the middle of the 70s deliberately used their music videos in such a way because one band-member loathed big international tours – so the group came up with so called "promo films" and later music videos; thanks to them the fans were recompensed for this lack of live presence by, for example, granting them visual access into the studio while the band records a song, or by even giving them glimpses inside the everyday life and the emotional relationships of the group members).[54] But already this example shows that a music video didn't and doesn't limit itself to just record a live performance, but that it emancipates itself from this very tight context and instead comes up with a style which – in its best moments – aims at interpreting the music on a visual level. Thus, a second element has to be considered when dealing with music videos: the fact that music here receives a visual and reproducible interpretation. It is exactly this point of the possibility to exactly reproduce the always same performance that distinguishes the music video from the opera[55] while the fact that the interpretation of music in a music video can be freed from any narrative also discerns the video clip from forms such as the musical. A possible candidate as one of the first antecedents for such a reproducible performance can be seen in Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's "Eidophusikon" (fig. 22), a small picture theatre, introduced in 1781, where mainly non-narrative phenomena of nature such as storms and waterfalls were mounted on a small stage.

Fig. 22: *Edward Francis Burney, Watercolor-Drawing of Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's "Eidophusikon" (London, British Museum, ca. 1782)*
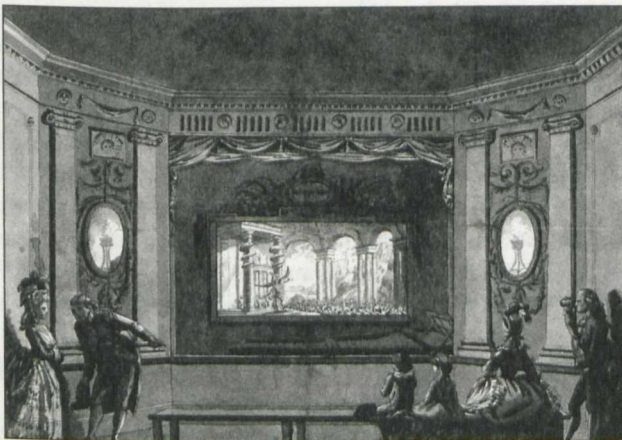
Given that the theatre was exclusively mechanical, the phenomena could be reproduced the same way continuously. Since music and sounds were an essential part of the whole show (and film director Werner Nekes even claims that no other than famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach's youngest son, Johann Christian, composed the music for these perform- ances)[56], one can agree with those authors who call the "Eidophusikon" the most significant multi media picture theatre of the 18th century.[57]

With this research for one of the earliest antecedents and forerunners of the music video we have, at the same time, already deeply stepped into the question what actually characterizes and defines a music video, and this leads further to the question about the methods we have at our hands in order to analyze the music videos.[58] Because only an approach which has previously reflected upon the characteristics, elements, ingredients and components of a music video will also be able to accordingly analyze it and to appreciate all its single levels and parameters as well as their mu- tual relationship and interaction.

Whereas earlier research has focused entirely on the images (given that music videos were considered to be nothing else than a derivate of the cinema) and neglected the music and especially the lyrics[59], more recent attempts have attempted to encompass all the different factors composing and concerning a music video. Apart from the images themselves, these include the music, the lyrics, the whole context of the particular song and video such as the album, and the image of the musician or band, as it has been shaped also by former videos etc. By comparing the results of such a fully formed research with the analysis of other, especially earlier videos and their predecessors, we can better understand not only the past of the music video as a genre as well as its changes and developments, but also its present and – perhaps even –its future. This all the more since one might ask not only questions about which specific histories to deal with, but also with which versions of the present, given that the genre of the mu- sic video finds itself at different points of development in each country.[60]

This volume thus tries to tackle all the three time parameters – the past, the present and the future of the music video (which, as we have tried to show, are deeply interwoven), as well as the geographical aspect.

Thus, Part one ("Rewind") deals with the past by first looking back to the Golden Era of the American music video (Saul Austerlitz), the history of the antecedents of the music video in France (Thomas Schmitt), the close relationship between visual arts and short music films between the 60s and the 80s (Barbara London) and the history of the Italian music video and the awareness and use of this history among contemporary Ital- ian directors (Bruno di Marino).

This awareness brings us into the present ("Play") where we will have a closer look at the contemporary reception of the music video (Klaus Neumann-Braun and Axel Schmidt), before raising questions concerning the methods in the analysis and interpretation of the music video (Giulia

Gabrielli, Matthias Weiß). This leads to issues concerning the actual state of the music video as an aesthetic medium (Paolo Peverini, Laura Frahm) and to the problem how to address and tackle this medium properly in the future (Christoph Jacke).

The opening of the music video towards other media-forms (Holger and Cornelia Lund) and protagonists (such as artists making video clips: Antje Krause-Wahl) brings us to the question about the future ("Fast Forward") of the music video: Will YouTube resurrect the music video (Gianni Sibilla, Carol Vernallis) or will it experience completely different transformations (Christian Jegl and Kathrin Wetzel)?[61]

The articles published in this volume, with the exception of Antje Krause-Wahl's essay, are based on papers given during an international and inter-disciplinary symposium, which was organized by the editors and held in October 2008 at the Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main.[62] The conference was financially supported by the Volkswagen-Stiftung, the Vereinigung von Freunden und Förderern der Goethe-Universität, the Stiftung zur Förderung der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Beziehungen der Goethe-Universität, the Fazit-Stiftung and the Mainova. Without their support, this publication would have been impossible, so we would like to thank these institutions once again.

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Henry Keazor/Thorsten Wübbena,
Saarbrücken and Frankfurt/Main, August 2010

Note

The text by Klaus Neumann-Braun and Axel Schmidt has been translated by Henry Keazor, the text by Matthias Weiß has been translated by Eva Ehninger, the texts by Laura Frahm and Christoph Jacke have been translated by Steven Lindberg.

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2 | See for this also Thompson 2009.

3 | See for this Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 319-322.

4 | The title is not only referring to a children's toy, but at the same time to the highly influential track *Funky Drummer* by James Brown and his band, recorded in 1969, whose drum solo (performed by Clyde Stubblefield) is hailed as one of the most frequently sampled rhythmic breaks in hip hop and popular music, if not even the most sampled recording ever - see for this http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=16717 (last access 16.3.2010).

5 | See for this Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 323-325 and Keazor/Wübbena 2006: p. 46.

6 | Gibson 2003, p. 5.

7 | Ibid., p. 7.

8 | See Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 25, note 50.

9 | See his tetralogy *The Jane Eyre Affair* (2001), *Lost in a Good Book* (2002), *The Well of Lost Plots* (2003) and *Something Rotten* (2004) as well as the sequel *First Among Sequels* (2007).

10 | Keazor/Wübbena 2006: p. 46f.

11 | The car in the novel is not only described as a (Fforde 2001: p. 59) "brightly painted sports car", but even its model - (ibid.: p. 88) a "356 Speedster" - is specified.

12 | In this case this was due to the fact that the directors of the music video and of the advertisement, the duo Josh (Melnik) and Xander (Charity) were identical: see for this Keazor/Wübbena 2006, p. 46-47.

13 | See the TV-spot, designed by the agency Heimat (Berlin), directed by Jacky Oudney (for the production company Telemaz Commercials, Berlin) and released in summer 2008 also on http://www.tictac.de ("aktuell", "spot 3").

14 | See for this http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yes_We_Can#cite_ref-2 (last access 16.3.2010). The video inspired spoofs and parodies such as for example the anti-McCain-song *john.he.is* (see for this the article by Carol Vernallis in this volume, p. 248).

15 | The most recent example here seems to be Roland Emmerich's disaster movie *2012* (2009): several scenes (such as the car chase through a cityscape, disintegrated by an earthquake) seem to be inspired by the car race and the earthquake-sections in the music video, directed in 2002 by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris for *Californication* by the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

16 | See for this Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 59, Bovi (2007), p. 110/115 and Scagnetti 2010: p. 70/114-116.

17 | Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 302, note 53.

18 | See for this also the telling title of the article by Phull 2010: "I want my MTV back" which is provoked by the journalist's observation that MTV by now has even dropped the "Music Television" strapline underneath its logo, thus indicating that

it doesn't consider itself anymore as a TV station devoted to broadcasting music. Phull's reaction: "I was genuinely choked." In his article he reflects upon the possible impact MTV could still have today, even in the guise of a TV station not devoted to music anymore and concludes: "(...) we can only imagine what MTV could still do for someone with discernable talent – if it only chose to."

19 | The clip was produced by eStudio.com (a Silicon Valley-based interactive branding and animation company, founded in 1998, among others, by Mark Cohn and Ken Martin. The company did run one of the then first flashsites; in this context eStudio did present (as part of the so-called "regurge"-series) cartoon parodies of music videos such as The Buggles (episode 1), The Back Street Boys (episode 2), Limp Bizkit (episode 3) and Cyndi Lauper (final episode 4). In 2002, the founders of eStudio, Cohn, Martin and Ivan Todorov opened Blitz Digital Studios, an animation studio and integrated marketing firm, which did supersede eStudio.

20 | Stähli 2010: "Musikfernsehen war gestern. Musikvideos sieht man sich am besten spätabends mit Freunden an, dicht zusammen gedrängt vor dem Computerbildschirm – oder auf der großen Kinoleinwand."

21 | For YouTube in general and its different aspects see Burgess/Green 2009 as well as Snickars/Vonderau (2009).

22 | See the fourth episode of the twelfth season of *South Park*, "Canada on Strike!", first aired on the 2nd of April 2008. Later, somewhat consequently, *South Park* fans would then also produce a parody of the Weezer-clip with *South Park* characters singing a new text. See for this the article by Carol Vernallis in this volume, p. 256, note 11.

23 | According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pork_and_Beans_(song) (last access 16.3.2010) "it reached more than four million viewers in its first week and was that week's most-watched video. It was the most popular video of the month in June, reaching 7.3 million views by June 16, 2008."

24 | http://www.wirsindhelden.de/news/archive (last access 16.3.2010), under the 25.02.2008: "(...) mehr Wettbewerb mit der Konkurrenz."

25 | http://www.wirsindhelden.de/news/archive (last access 16.3.2010), under the 25.02.2008: "Keine nackten Weiber, keine Hubschrauber [...]."

26 | For a similar concept see the project for the music video for C-Mon & Kypski's song *More is Less*, where the visitors of the website http://oneframeoffame.com are invited to photograph themselves with a webcam while copying the pose from a given frame of already existing footage from the music video. The picture is then uploaded and added to a suited moment of the music video which is thus populated and made with/by the fans and "friends" of the band. Similar (so-called "audience-based") projects have been started in the meantime for example also in the fashion world: fashion photographer Nick Knight recently did upload raw footage for a promotional film on a website and asked the users to edit a short film out of it by using at least 25 % from the original material while also adding own footage. Out of the submitted films he then did choose usable ideas and incorporated them into his final advertisement – see for this Piepgras 2010, p. 33.

27 | In 2008, the German soap-opera "Marienhof" for example featured in their adverts also a YouTube-player which mimicked a "sweded" style.

28 | http://www.director-file.com/gondry/steriogram.html.

29 | See for this and its discussion Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 248.

30 | Hanson 2006: p. 11.

31 | See for this also the contributions by Paolo Peverini and Gianni Sibilla in this volume.

32 | Syyn Lab is a Los Angeles group of creative engineers who joined in 2008 with the objective to "twist together art and technology": see http://syynlabs. com/about (last access 21.3.2010).

33 | The band actually launched two music videos to accompany the song: The first one, directed by Brian L. Perkins and released in January 2010, features a live performance of the song in collaboration with the University of Notre Dame Marching Band, filmed in October 2009. See for this http://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/This_Too_Shall_Pass_(song) (last access 21.3.2010).

34 | Harlow 2010.

35 | Ibid.

36 | Ibid. Interestingly, the same issue of *The Sunday Times* in which Harlow's article is published, features also (p. 14: "News Review") a report on the world-wide success of the music video, shot in March 2010 by Jonas Åkerlund for Lady Gaga's *Telephone*: "(…) it's on its way to become one of the most watched videos of all time." This shows clearly that still different concepts in music videos can be successful: While Åkerlund's video relies on the by now almost hackneyed scandal-strategy by stirring media-attention thanks to a recourse to a "all-singing, all-dancing, lesbian-prison-sex and mass-murder"-scenario (so the above mentioned report), while being moreover heavily indebted to Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the music video for OK Go instead opts for a more modest and at the same time non-narrative approach. The above stated phrase "If you don't know history, you are doomed to repeat it" applies especially to the case of the music videos for Lada Gaga since almost all of them are more or less spiced-up and stylish rehashes of earlier video clips, especially those made for Madonna and Britney Spears (whose directors Lady Gaga tellingly also took over by hiring for example Francis Lawrence or Jonas Åkerlund). Given her succesful drawing-by-numbers-approach, one would almost wish for the sake of originality that Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta alias "Lady Gaga" – reportedly being a studied media scientist with a NYU-degree in music – will one day expose her career as the mere practical part of a research project on the ways and mechanisms the pop business functions todays.

37 | Already in 2005 director Mike Palmieri did conceive his music video for the song *An Honest Mistake* by the American rock band The Bravery by putting a similar chain reaction (consisting of dominoes and other mundane household objects) into the center of the band's performance.

38 | This – seemingly natural – "working" was, however, in some moments helped by digital post production.

39 | See Elsaesser 2009.

40 | http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Lauf_der_Dinge_(Film) (last access 13.5.2010).

41 | See for example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rube_Goldberg (last access 13.5.2010).

42 | Elsaesser 2009, p. 176.

43 | http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/jakob_trollback_rethinks_the_music_video.html (last access 16.3.2010).

44 | Thus, Hanson's book mainly deals with directors who – as interesting as their works might be – are rather developing before invented concepts further instead of actually inventing new techniques, designs and aesthetic strategies. Tellingly for the historical amnesia reigning in Hanson's book is the fact that the reader never encounters any production or release dates for the presented videos – thus, the (also historical) difference between the (as Hanson p. 14 calls them) "Icons of the Genre" (that is, groundbreaking directors such as Chris Cunningham, Jonathan Glazer, Michel Gondry, Hammer & Tongs and Spike Jonze) and the "Next-generation directors" is more or less blurred. Since Hanson also never displays his criteria for assigning certain directors to this "next generation", it almost seems as if only the technology, used by the directors, would be decisive for him: he presents them (p. 24) under the heading "digital-age music video".

45 | From the album "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts" which was re-released in expanded and remastered form in 2006.

46 | So Trollbäck in his introduction.

47 | For the music video see Vogt 2008 and Keazor/Wübbena 2010: 229.

48 | Dolezal 1994: 169: "Es wird nicht mehr (...) für jede Idiotenkapelle automatisch ein dazu passendes Video produziert."

49 | See for this for example already the title of the book by the Italian historian Paolo Mieli, "La storia – le storie" (Milan: Rizzoli 2000), where the difference between one singular historical narrative ("The history") and its manifold counterpart ("The histories") is stressed. Carrier (2000), p. 118 reports a suggestion of Paul Barolsky according to whom also "The story of art is really lots and lots of very particular stories."

50 | Keazor/Wübbena 2010: p. 225.

51 | See for example the conclusion by Phull (2010): "(...) for the technically savvy, finding or hearing the music they like is no longer a matter of watching television for hours (...) in the hope of hearing a song that appeals to you."

52 | For the Panoram and the Scopitones see Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 57-59, Herzog 2007 and Scagnetti (2010).

53 | See for this Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 57 and Keazor/Wübbena 2010: p. 223-224.

54 | See for this Keazor/Wübbena 2007: p. 64-65.

55 | Nevertheless, Liggeri 2007: p. 53 sees Richard Wagner's concept of a "synthesis of the arts" at the origin of the "synaesthesia" of the music video.

56 | See http://wernernekes.de/00_cms/cms/front_content.php?idart=101#Eidophusikon (last access 15.3.2010).

57 | See Mungen 2006, vol. 1: p. 168-175 and Keazor/Wübbena 2010: p. 223.

58 | Middleton/Beebe 2007: p. 6 are still diagnosing an "apparent standstill in the theorization of music video", apparently due to a lack of "new and innovative models for analysis."

59 | Middleton/Beebe 2007: p. 5: "One difficulty in music video studies (...) is the fact that theorists of the visuals are often not trained in musical analysis and perhaps are not even particularly familiar with or interested in popular music itself." See for this also the article by Jacke in this volume.

60 | See here also the admonition by Phull 2010 who reminds us of the still prominent role of music TV in other parts of the world: "It should not be forgotten, however, that in the wider world, where people don't have the time to spend hours trawling through trend-setting blogs, or to sit at their laptops downloading MP3s, TV is still a dominant medium." See also the essay by Hayward 2007.

61 | Other possible forms, not discussed here, into which the music video could and certainly will diffuse are the fashion film (see for this Piepgras 2010, p. 33) and modern museum displays: The Bach-Museum in Eisenach for example grants their visitors the possibility to "enter" a composition by Johann Sebastian Bach by stepping into a multimedia room where the music is "translated" into immersive visuals. The installation, designed by the director and media-artist Marc Tamschick did win the award of the "Finalist Diploma" during the 2008 World Media Festival in Hamburg. See for this http://www.tamschick.com ("projects", "Begehbares Musikstück").

62 | See http://www.muvikon08.net.

63 | Nevertheless, possible mistakes are not his responsibility.

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