

## **The Fine Art of Commercial Freedom: British Music Videos and Film Culture**

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In the “golden era” or “boom” period of music video production in the 1990s, the UK was widely regarded throughout the world as the center for creative excellence (Caston, 2012). This was seen to be driven by the highly creative ambitions of British music video commissioners and their artists, and centered on an ideological conception of the director as an auteur.

In the first part of this article, I will attempt to describe some of the key features of the music-video production industry. In the second I will look at its relationship with other sectors in British film and television production – in particular, short film, and artists’ film and video, where issues of artistic control and authorship are also ideologically foregrounded. I will justify the potentially oxymoronic concept of “the fine art of commercial freedom” in relation to recent contributions in the work of Kevin Donnelly (2007) and Sue Harper and Justin Smith (2011) on the intersection between the British “avant garde” and British film and television commerce.

As Diane Railton and Paul Watson point out, academics are finally starting to recognize that music videos are a “persistent cultural form” that has outlived one of their initial commercial functions as a promotional tool (2011: 7). Exhibitions at the Museum of Moving Image (MOMI) in New York and the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool have drawn the attention of *Sight and Sound*, suggesting that this cultural form is now on the verge of canonization (Davies, 2013). This new interest is resulting in a reassessment of the first wave of academic writings on music video by Andrew Goodwin (1992), Simon Frith, Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg (1993), and Ann Kaplan (1987). New theoretical frameworks have been proposed by Railton and Watson (2011), Roger Beebe and Jason Middleton (2007), Joachim Strand (2008), and Carol Vernallis (2004). Publications on music and moving image by John Richardson (2011), Donnelly (2002, 2005, 2007), Ian Inglis (2003) and John Mundy (1999, 2007) are also productive and will complement the earlier framework suggested by Dave Laing (1984).

Identifying a national film culture in an area of the screen industries often seen as the most globalized sector is a challenging task. However, as Keith Negus points out in his seminal study of the music industry,

*Producing Pop* (1992), the daily work of cultural intermediaries is heavily based on ideologies of local markets and local practices. The same is true of the production sector in music videos. This article draws on my own experience as a music-video producer and executive producer in the UK and US industries between 1992 and 2003. During this period, I worked at the production companies Picture Music International (PMI, a division of EMI), Propaganda Films (part of Polygram Films Europe), Black Dog (a subsidiary of Ridley Scott Associates) and other independents, where I produced music videos for acts including Oasis and Madonna, working alongside directors such as Peter Christopherson and Spike Jonze. The analysis is thus based on “industrial self-disclosure” and “observational participation” (Caldwell, 2009).

“Industrial self-disclosure” is used as a method partly because of the paucity of free, publicly available data on British music-video production, which is one of several *hidden* sectors of the British film industry. National statistics are not collected and published by the British Film Institute (BFI), Music Video Producers’ Association (MVPA), British Phonographic Industry (BPI) or Association of Independent Music (AIM). As for the British music-video industry generally, moving-image advertising is largely hidden from view. Whilst they are not without ethical issues and issues in reliability, industrial self-disclosures of the kind recently published by Winston Fletcher (2008) are valuable elements in a portfolio of research resources.

The data and analysis presented here is intended to complement existing studies and provide the basis for future curatorial and historical work. Whilst there are some exciting new analyses of the British cultural form represented by the recent work of Joseph Tate (2005) on Radiohead and by Richardson on artists such as Gorillaz, existing publications on production and distribution have concentrated almost exclusively on the USA (Denisoff, 1991; Banks, 1996, Austerlitz, 2008; Marks and Tannenbaum, 2012).

What constitutes “British” is not subject to a rigid definition within the industry. Legal authorship is generally vested in the record labels, which are defined in video contracts as “the production company.” However, the definition used for the UK Music Video Awards (UKMVA) is that video is eligible if the commissioning record-label department, the production company or the director is British, or if a substantial part of the production budget is spent in the UK on post-production and principal photography. This article will use the UKMV practice of taking a single criterion as sufficient for treating a video as part of the British canon.

The first phase of British music-video production lasted up to 1993. After the launch of MTV in 1981, music-video production increased to meet

broadcast demand. Initially, many music videos were produced in-house by video departments such as PMI. New independent production companies emerged, such as Limelight and MGMM (constituted by directing and producing partners Scott Millaney, Brian Grant, David Mallet and Russell Mulhaney). Feature film companies such as Palace Pictures set up video divisions. The first generation of influential directors included, as well as the MGMM team, Kevin Godley and Lol Creme, Steve Barron, John Maybury, Andy Morahan, Julian Temple, Storm Thorgerson and Nick Egan.

In the mid-1990s, British music-video production entered a second phase of consolidation and professionalization. A new generation of video directors emerged, including Jonathan Glazer, Walter Stern, Jamie Thraves, Chris Cunningham, Sophie Muller, Dawn Shadforth, Dom & Nic, Vaughan Arnell, Pedro Romhanyi, W.I.Z., and Hammer & Tongs. Some data exists on the second period as a result of research conducted by myself, the commissioner of East West Records, the commissioner of Universal Music and the commissioner for EMI (Caston, Parti, Walker and Sutton, 2000). This research was originally published as a report with the principal trade publication, *Promo*. It revealed that in 1998, the UK record industry spent £36.5 million on approximately 850 music videos. This figure was based on a combination of questionnaires completed in face-to-face interviews with CEOs, label managers and video commissioners. An estimate for the benchmark year of 1984, by contrast, put the figure at £10 million (Fisher, 1984: 1). Thus there was very significant growth in British production between 1984 and 1998.

During this second phase, leading industry figures sought to secure professional regulation of and recognition for the British industry and its writers and directors. In the production sector, the last in-house music-video department, PMI, closed. Production became centered on approximately 80 small- to medium-sized independent production companies. The leading production companies formed a UK MVPA modeled on the long standing USA MVPA. The distribution sector was constituted by UK divisions of US major labels incorporating publishing and recording houses. These were often themselves subsidiaries of international multimedia conglomerates, semi-independents partially owned by these conglomerates (such as Independiente), and independents such as Mute and Skint. The majors – including Virgin, EMI, Warners, Sony and Universal – spent £26.5 million, and independents and semi-independents spent £10 million. Average budgets were between £25,000 and £65,000, but 69 videos commissioned that year had budgets of £100,000 or more. The exhibition sector was constituted chiefly by VHS, CD, and DVD retail outlets; the internet; and satellite, cable and terrestrial TV stations (Caston, Parti, Walker and Sutton, 2000).

However, neither regulation nor recognition was achieved. In the early 2000s, British music video entered a third phase, precipitated by changes in distribution. During the first two phases, the primary market for British music videos and video sales had been Britain: the exhibition outlets most valued by pluggers were not cable or satellite channels but *The Chart Show* (Channel 4, 1986-1988, and ITV, 1989-1998) and Saturday morning children's TV shows featuring music-video segments, such as *Live and Kicking* (BBC1, 1993-2001). The UK industry suffered a major blow when *The Chart Show* was axed in 1998. Commissioners ceased automatically to make videos for the first three single releases from an artist's album because there was no dedicated British exhibition outlet. MTV ceased to broadcast music videos regularly on its main channels, first in the US and then in the UK, and the audience was splintered into a proliferation of smaller channels. This led to further falls in both the number of videos commissioned in the UK and the production budgets awarded to them.

During the third phase, British music video became increasingly unregulated. Distribution shifted to social media, internet sites and mobile phones. The MVPA ceased to operate independently of its British parent company, the Advertising Producers' Association (APA), and a diminishing number of videos were submitting for licensing by the British collecting agency, Video Performance Ltd (VPL). Artist managers began to take over the commissioning role from labels. Music-video production splintered into two segments: an increasingly cottage and amateur business constituted by small, home-based businesses delivering videos shot on digital cameras for YouTube and Vevo, for artists whose main sales base was perceived to be in the UK; and a professionalized, high-budget business for artists whose music was selling in significant international markets.

In the first and second phases, few marketing departments would expect MTV in the USA to pick up a British video for a British artist unless that artist had already achieved significant sales there. Exceptions tended to occur as a result of viewer demand rather than plugging. Chris Cunningham's video for the Aphex Twin's "Come to Daddy" (1997), for example, was voted the best video of the week on *12 Angry Viewers* (MTV, 1997-1998) and as a result of this exposure went on heavy rotation on MTV, leading to a very significant surge in sales of the Aphex Twin's music in the USA for the UK's Warp Records.

Academics from a film-studies background have sought a framework for critical appreciation of music videos. In Kevin Donnelly's view (2007), the commercial conditions of music are not conducive to creativity. The instrumental logic of capitalism dictates and delimits the artistic form by predisposing artistic practice towards the recycling of genres already demonstrated as effective in promoting record sales. Keith Negus and

Michael Pickering (2004) argue that such a view is a currently fashionable ideology of creative practice that excludes a historically long-standing definition of creativity as excellence *within* genre. It also makes unjustified assumptions about creativity, artistic intention and artist control. For the music industry and audiences, excellence within genre is highly valued and exceptionally difficult to achieve. In this article, I use the terminology widely used by video commissioners in the 1990s in order to categorize videos into four overlapping groups according to their internal artistic goals.

The first category consists of performance-based videos in which the artist performs in sync with the music, either with vocals only or with instruments. Most of the early videos integrated performance with one of the genres below. The early PMI videos for Duran Duran, Adam and the Ants, and Ultravox, for example, integrated lip-sync performance with gothic and extravagant sets, locations and costumes. Performance styles and cinematographic styles from recordings broadcast on the early television music shows such as *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (BBC, 1971-1987) and *The Tube* (Channel 4, 1982-1987), as were film technologies such as the Jimmy Jib crane, which was cheaper and more affordable than the Technocrane used on feature films.

The performance-based video was premised on the essential deception that the artist was singing or playing live. Some bands struggled to reconcile these codes of fake performance with their ideas of themselves of authentic musicians. There are some rare examples of pure performance videos that do not participate in this deceit. Peter Christopherson's video for Nine Inch Nails' "March of the Pigs" (1994) is an important example of this. British director Christopherson, a.k.a. Sleazy, (1955–2010) was a musician in Coil, a former member of the influential British design agency Hipgnosis, one of the original members of the infamous Industrial Records band Throbbing Gristle and a founder of Psychic TV. He had collaborated with Nine Inch Nails on many other projects. In the video, the band played live against a white backdrop and Christopherson recorded their genuine vocals and instruments for the soundtrack. The recording draws the viewer's attention to its own apparatus: Reznor pushes other band members aggressively and repeatedly throws his microphone away, and crew visibly move into the frame to reset the equipment. In addition, the video was recorded in one long take.

The second category is concept videos. These would include performance, but would have an unusual premise, setting or film technique. An important early example is that for Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1976; directed by Bruce Gowers). With a concept video brief, a director could experiment with the possibilities of film as a medium, and with

technological innovations in film production, editing and cinematography. This type was appreciated and used by many directors from a fine arts background such as Chris Cunningham, whose video for Portishead's "Only You" (1998) filmed lead singer Beth Gibbons underwater, synchronizing her vocals. Other well-known later examples include Jonathan Glazer's video for Jamiroquai's "Virtual Insanity" (1997), in which Jay Kay seems to be dancing on moving floors, and Sophie Muller's video for Blur's "Song 2" (1997), in which the band appears to be hurled towards the back of a room.

Like the trick films of British directors William Paul and George Smith, for example *The Big Swallow* (1901), these music videos contrive to suspend and invert the laws of nature using "trick" photographic and editing techniques for novelty entertainment value (Gunning, 1989). Over 40 years, the British music-video industry has produced many cycles and sub-genres of concept videos. The trick "uncut" close-up performance video is one example. This uses composition, trick effects and a dramatic performance by the lead singer to stimulate an emotional response in the viewer and a sense of awe and amazement at the physical extremes of the performance. Examples range from Stephen R. Johnson's comedy animation video for Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer" (1986), to John Maybury's melodramatic video for Sinéad O'Connor's "Nothing Compares to You" (1990) and Grant Gee's stunt video for Radiohead's "No Surprises" (1997).

A third type is dance videos. Lesley Vize (2003) argues persuasively that dance film should be treated as a separate genre to the musical. One of Britain's leading performance-dance video directors is Dawn Shadforth, who conceived and directed the videos for Kylie Minogue's "Spinning Around" (2000) and "Can't Get You Out of My Head" (2001). Shadforth's work is well known for its tightly choreographed performances. It draws on styles from her earlier practice as an award-winning sculptor. Another important British dance video director is Jake Nava, the only black British director to have broken through to work in the US music-video market for international R&B acts, alongside established Black R&B directors from the USA such as Hype Williams. Nava conceived and directed the videos for Beyoncé's "Crazy in Love" (2003), "Baby Boy" (2003), "Naughty Girl" (2004), "Beautiful Liar" (2007), "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" (2008), and "If I were a Boy" (2008).

In conceiving, directing and editing dance videos, video directors in Britain have drawn on genre techniques from musicals. Although American-born and based in Los Angeles, Spike Jonze worked regularly with British musicians and British record labels, and his video for Björk's "It's Oh So Quiet" (1995), commissioned by her London-based label, One Little Indian, is a self-conscious recreation of Busby Berkeley-style



choreography. With their tightly choreographed group dance routines, many US music videos for US R&B artists reflect the musical genre. However, the musical has not been the default genre style for the marketing of British black R&B artists, partly because British budgets were insufficiently high to afford the production costs of US R&B videos. In 1998 Chris Cunningham parodied the US R&B musical genre with his video for the Aphex Twin's "Windowlicker" (1998).

A fourth type is narrative videos. Narrative videos have a main character overcoming obstacles in pursuit of a goal with a beginning, middle and an end. Most intercut their narrative with synchronized performance. Steve Barron's video for Ah Ha's "Take On Me" (1985) is one of the important early examples of the form. Many of the directors have had successful feature films. Steve Barron, for example, later directed *Electric Dreams* (1984) and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990). The directing, producing and editing duo Hammer & Tongs, who directed critically acclaimed narrative videos such as Blur's "Coffee and TV" (1999), went on to make *The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy* (2005) and *Son of Rambow* (2007).

Leitmotifs can sometimes be detected in the music videos and feature films of a director. Jamie Thraves won acclaim as a video director for his narrative videos for Radiohead's "Just" (1995) and Coldplay's "The Scientist" (2003). He has written and directed three British feature films: *The Low Down* (2000), *Cry of the Owl* (2009) and *Treacle Jnr* (2010). His work tells stories about the impact of seemingly uncaused acts of real physical or symbolic violence. In the "Just" video, a man lies on the pavement and is confronted by an angry crowd wanting an explanation from him; it garnered industry critical acclaim for its strong narrative structure and use of subtitles. A similar random act of violence occurs in his video for "The Scientist." The story of *Treacle Jnr* begins when Tom is attacked for no apparent reason by a gang of thugs in a park at night.

In the late 1990s, non-performance videos became increasingly common. This was largely a result of the commercial success of electronic artists and DJs who preferred not to appear in their music videos. The videos for the Chemical Brothers commissioned by Carole Burton-Fairbrother at Virgin Records and the videos commissioned by Mark Conway at Higher Ground/Sony for Leftfield typify this development. Soon the trend for commissioning an "open brief" took off and this yielded cycles of pure concept videos for electronic artists in which musical-genre traits featured heavily, such as Spike Jonze's videos for Fatboy Slim's "Praise You" and "Weapon of Choice" (both 1998), which were commissioned by John Hassay at Skint Records, and Fredrik Bond's video for Moby's "Bodyrock" (1999), itself commissioned by John Moule at Mute.

In fact, however, a movement had taken off. Musicians working in other genres such as Damon Albarn (with the Gorillaz project), and Radiohead, opted, with influential and pioneering video commissioners such as Dilly Gent at Parlophone, not to appear in their videos. The development overcame the problem of authenticity and synchronicity and liberated the genre for directors. It removed what had previously been a central defining trait of music video as a cultural form or industry practice: the incorporation of synchronized bodily performance, whether through lip sync with vocals, instruments or dance.

“Talent Development” has long been deemed a core responsibility of national arts funders and broadcasters and has its roots in policies and policy shifts of the 1980s. Audiences might perceive sectors such as feature films and gaming to be wholly separate. In practice, many are tightly integrated and mutually dependent. Talent development is one such area. Many production companies have content divisions for different entertainment platforms. A production company such as Ridley Scott Associates operates in commercials, music video, fashion film, feature films, television drama and digital content, and can potentially offer a director representation in all of these sectors.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the number of young people seeking a career in film increased. The 1990 edition of the *BFI Film and Television Handbook* lists some 166 courses in media studies in universities and art colleges. By the 1998 edition, there are 270 courses (Brown, 2000: 29). Because there were more young people wanting employment opportunities in film than existing institutions could provide, the industry offered a solution by commissioning new directors to make karaoke films and music videos.

The merits of entering the film industry through a career in music video appeared numerous. Firstly, music video had *no barriers to entry*. No qualifications or showreels were needed to get an initial “break.” The only requirement was that an aspiring director knew some bands, was passionate about their music, and had strong social skills. To secure a commission from a national arts funder or broadcaster, by contrast, a showreel was needed. Secondly, the budgets offered by labels from the late 1980s onwards were sufficiently high to enable cinematographers and directors to shoot on film. By the end of the decade almost all videos were shot on 16mm, and those above £50,000 were likely to be shot on 35mm. Cinematographer Seamus McGarvey, for example, who has played an important creative role in new British cinema, began his career in video as cinematographer on over one hundred music videos for such artists as U2, the Rolling Stones and Coldplay.



Thirdly, music video production allowed filmmakers immediately to engage with a large public audience. As a result of programming and scheduling changes in British cinemas during the early 1970s, most audiences were unable to view short films, and very few filmmakers could get their short films to a wider audience (Eileen and Kelly, 2002: 10). Television commercials and music videos became, from the British audience's point of view, the new short film. *The Chart Show* and MTV allowed young British directors to communicate with a diverse audience and receive feedback from that audience.

Fourth, music videos provided young filmmakers a chance to develop their "authorial voice." The structure of a pop music track was not linear, and dialogue could not be used. *Mise-en-scène*, production design, performance, cinematography, composition, music and editing were the building blocks of a music video, not scripts and scenes. Without the option of dialogue or sound effects, the writer-director had to learn to develop a sophisticated repertoire of visual techniques for communicating emotion, purpose, structure, poetics, humor and pleasure. Music video commissioners rarely requested more in their commissioning briefs than "a concept video featuring lead singer only – band don't want to appear." The writer-director had great freedom to invent the premise, create the storyboards and direct the film.

There was an additional stimulus: funding for experimental short films had diminished significantly. In 1979, the Production Board ceased to commission and fund short films (Butler, 1971: 30). Whilst Colin MacCabe resumed the funding of shorts when he took over as Head in 1985, the Board did not return to its former funding for experimental work. Artist filmmakers such as Peter Woollen argued that in so doing the Board was not fulfilling its critical role in funding alternative artist film and was instead acting as a Hollywood major. **[1]** In its early years, Channel 4 offered important new programming slots in the form of *Eleventh Hour* (1982-1988) and *Midnight Underground* (1993-1997). However, schemes such as the BFI's New Directors, Channel 4's *Short and Curlies* (1989-1999) and others run by regional arts boards, media development agencies, and local and national broadcasters were increasingly "tied into the development route to features" and, as a result, the role of shorts "as a forum for purely visual and avant-garde work [was] in danger of disappearing" (Ogborn, 2000: 61). A full analysis of the impact of British music videos on film culture would need to investigate the long-term impact on audiences and film literacy. In this article I can only identify potential areas of impact based on my own experience as a producer and critic, and on existing research.

Several academic have looked at the impact of music videos on film style in mainstream narrative feature films. Carol Vernallis argues that

directors who began their careers in music video have a tendency to “illuminate musical form” in their feature films (2008: 277). Using Michel Gondry’s *External Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) as a case study, she contends that a new “intensified audiovisual aesthetics” has found its way to film form, in which “everything becomes heightened, set off, voluble” (2008: 278). Features such as multiple motivic threads, unpredictable narrative structuring, open-endedness, hook-like repetition, rhythmic editing practices, and the layering of sound all contribute to an overriding musical sensibility (2008: 286-287). Elsewhere, she argues that music video has contributed a “faster pace of editing” (Vernallis, 2001), as do Gary Burns and Robert Thompson (1987). Kay Dickinson suggests that an MTV aesthetic has given rise to phenomenal presence of popular music on soundtracks, use of music that resists integration into “suturing narrative formations,” an impatience with shot/reverse shot conventions, use of “rapid edits, often constituted from restless moving shots, zooms and swish pans of, at times, less than a second” (Dickinson, 2003: 144).

Many highly influential British music videos, for example Grant Gee’s video for Radiohead’s “No Surprises,” do not fit these theories, however. Most of the videos that have achieved critical industry acclaim from award bodies such as the D&AD (Design and Art Direction Awards), CADs (Creative and Art Direction Awards), and UKMVA, and from reviewers in *Shots*, *Creative Review* and *Promo*, do not fit criteria modeled on the “canonized” British film sectors.

Music video has impacted the film industry by providing a talent development ground for new directors. A significant number of British directors either gravitated from music videos into feature film production or have supported themselves financially by working on music videos in between their (low-budget) independent film projects. In the former category is Jonathan Glazer, who shot to fame with his video for Jamiroquai’s “Virtual Insanity” and went on to direct *Sexy Beast* (2000) and *Birth* (2004). Before he directed feature films including *Absolute Beginners* (1986), *Joe Strummer: The Future is Unwritten* (2007) and *London: The Modern Babylon* (2012), Julian Temple made music videos in the 1980s for Depeche Mode, Dexy’s Midnight Runners, Culture Club and David Bowie. Both Jamie Thraves and Jake Scott have combined careers in both sectors. After he directed *Plunkett and Maclean* (1999) and *Welcome to the Rileys* (2010), Jake Scott continued to direct music videos through Black Dog RSA. Thraves also continues to make music videos.

Yet a significant number of music-video directors have not written and directed theatrical feature films, not because of a failure to “break in” to the more esteemed sector, but because they do not want to work in linear, causal narrative time-based media. Dawn Shadforth, Peter

Christopherson, Chris Cunningham and Stephane Sednaoui are examples. Many of Britain's first and second generation of video directors came from the same art-school background as the avant-garde: Central St. Martins (Andy Morahan, Sophie Muller), the Slade School of Art (Derek Jarman), fine arts and design courses at British polytechnics (John Maybury, Nick Egan), and the Royal College of Art's masters in film (Storm Thorgerson, Jamie Thraves). According to Sue Harper and Justin Smith, avant-garde film of the 1970s "was characterised by artisanal practices and energised by a revolutionary zeal. This powerful combination of forces promoted a quasi-Romantic notion of artistic autonomy and integrity" (Harper and Smith, 2011: 207).

With some small exceptions, British directors brought this art-school, revolutionary zeal to the music industry in the form of a legitimating ideology of total artistic control over production that no other sector of British moving image production at the time could offer (Caston, 2000). It was matched by the open briefs of video commissioners and the creative license given by CEOs and label managers to their video commissioners and artists. This situation is illustrated by a quote from Carole Burton Fairbrother, who worked as video commissioner at Virgin Records for twenty years, before retiring in 2009. She talks about her experience of working with Michel Gondry on his video for the Chemical Brothers' "Let Forever Be" (1999):

I read the script, which was some scribbles and diagrams from Michel Gondry, because it was such a complex idea... and I thought: 'mmm, I don't have a damn clue what he's saying here'. We had a conference call, so that he could explain it in his French accent... and I put the phone down and thought... 'mmm, still don't have a clue what this is going to be like...' But what are you going to do? It sounded extremely clever and it's Michel Gondry. The guy is a genius, and it's still one of the cleverest videos I've seen. **[2]**

The new directors also brought with them artisanal practices that were relevant and appropriate to working on short form projects. Production in music video was a "fine art" in the sense that it enabled microscopic attention to detail with individual frames layered with dense, extremely carefully chosen information. The creative conditions of production enabled fastidiousness about moving-image composition that was not possible when working on long-form, dialogue-based films for cinema or television. Working from storyboards rather than scripts, directors from a background in photography, graphic design and fine arts were able to communicate their ideas in color, texture, shape and composition.

There is very little data collected by marketing departments on music video's impact on music sales. In our 1998 research, we were impressed

by the consistent disregard for data linking sales to promotional video budgets and the almost willful refusal to heed the advice of the BPI's 1984 report on music video, which recommended that record labels immediately move to exploit direct video sales for further revenue streams (Fisher, 1984). This suggests that there is no such thing as the logic of capitalism, to which Donnelly (2007) eludes, at play in the production of music videos.

Harper and Smith argue that in the 1970s, there was a "gulf between the avant-garde and the market for commercial cinema. The two were wholly divided on the matter of audience pleasure. The avant-garde was premised on intellectual labour and distancing" (2011: 207). In the 1980s, the revolutionary zeal and artisanal practices of larger numbers of British art school graduates interested in film went in search of new opportunities. Some found an outlet in the opportunities offered by Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department, whilst others went in search of the *pleasure* of music. They were a generation of artisanal auteurs who did not seek intellectual distancing. As Harper and Smith argue, this continued a process in which the gap between the "high-brow" and "low-brow" of moving-image production widened. The new generation that embraced pleasure found themselves placed at the bottom with the low-brow because of this and as a result of their association with commerce (which Winston Fletcher, in his analysis of British advertising, ascribes to "the traditional British intellectual distaste for salesmanship" [2008: 2]). The work of Kay Dickinson (1999), David Curtis (2006) and Julia Knight and Peter Thomas (2012) on British artist film and video work provides an immensely valuable basis to research this further.

Music videos have also had an impact on British film production and distribution. Initially the music industry served as a revenue generator for funds with which British producers moved into feature film production. MGM's subsidiary companies included Initial Film and Pictures (aka Initial Film and Television / Initial Pictures), which Millaney co-founded with Eric Fellner. This produced films such as *Sid and Nancy* (1986), *Straight to Hell* (1987) and *Hidden Agenda* (1990). In 1998, it became a subsidiary of Endemol. Michael Kuhn, who began his career as a music lawyer at Polydor Records in the 1970s, describes his role in forming PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFM) through working in live music, long-form music video and music-based films in the mid-1980s:

Heavily disguised as a long form music video 'with words', albeit with a high budget, we decided to enter the feature film business. We wanted no downside risk at all. We therefore decided to tailor this movie to be attractive to the video market. I spoke to the only person I knew in the film business – Nigel Dick. Nigel had been a

commissioner of pop promotional videos at PolyGram in the UK before starting to direct promotional videos himself. (Kuhn, 2002: 21)

Kuhn was president and CEO of the PolyGram Filmed Entertainment Group, as well as Executive Vice President of PolyGram. Under his guidance, PolyGram became the corporate backer of Working Title in 1992 and went on to back successful features such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) and *Notting Hill* (1999).

Music video also served as a platform for new entrants to film production in the second phase. Founded in Sheffield in 1989 by Steve Beckett and the late Rob Mitchell, Warp was known for supporting and developing electronic artists, precisely those artists who have preferred not to appear in their own videos. This enabled Warp to commission some of Britain's most critically acclaimed directors to work with its musicians on relatively open briefs. From the outset, Warp treated its video content as a self-sufficient commercial product, releasing the video compilations *Motion* (1994) and *Warp Vision* (2004).

In the mid-2000s, Beckett founded Warp Films, an independent film-production company based in Sheffield and London. It was initially created with financial support from NESTA to produce a number of short films. Yet, under Mark Herbert, and later Robin Gutch, Warp went on to produce *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004), *Rubber Johnny* (2005), *This is England* (2006), *Dog Altogether* (2007), *Four Lions* (2010) and *Submarine* (2010) and, under Warp X, *Tyrannosaur* (2011).

In combination with recent work in popular-music studies, academic research is now beginning to generate an exciting new framework for appreciating the music-video sector. The analysis in this article suggests that in Britain, the character and quantity of music videos produced were stimulated by the policies of British terrestrial programmers and by the emergence of a new generation of independent filmmakers who sought pleasure within their artisanal practice. The auteur ideology was also a result of conceptions of authorship embedded in cultures of production such as fine art, graphic design and photography. **[3]** Many of the first directors brought working practices and visual styles not only from art school but from other cultures of production such as music, graphic design and photography.

From a research point of view, it is important to note that we are at risk of losing our archives of music-video production to history. Most are currently held in post-production houses in Soho gathering dust, or in directors' attics on analogue tapes. A tiny minority has been preserved on commercial DVDs, but without the kind of production information that

academic researchers require. [4] A small proportion of masters from PMI and several British director collections have been donated to the National Film Archive but have not been fully catalogued. The British Library holds a 16,000-title VHS video collection donated by the Musicians' Union. A third collection is managed by VPL and can be accessed on a commercial subscription and pay-per-view basis. There are, in addition, various temporary collections online at Vevo and on YouTube. A partnership between the British Library, the British Film Institute, *Promo* and the VPL is currently being formed to work collectively on identifying the most important "at risk" works and those best suited for restoration and preservation in high definition form.

Future research would benefit from using these archives to study the relationship between British graphic design, fashion and photography and British music videos, as well as the cultures of production in these different sectors. It should also elucidate the economic structure of the British film and television industry and provide insight into critical issues such as the sustainability and independence of a "national film culture."

## Notes

[1] Conversation with Colin MacCabe, 22 June 2012.

[2] "Carole Burton-Fairbrother leaves EMI today – her favourite commissions ever" in *Promo* 26 June 2009. Available at: <<http://www.promonews.tv>> [Accessed: 21 May 2013]

[3] By "cultures of production" I mean the cultural practices and belief systems of workers in these sectors (Caldwell, 2008).

[4] Titles include *Director's Label Series Box Set 1: The Works Of Spike Jonze, Chris Cunningham & Michel Gondry* (Palm Picture Records/Universal, 2004); *Directors Label Series Box Set 2: The Works of Anton Corbijn, Jonathan Glazer, Mark Romanek, Stephane Sednaoui* (Palm Picture Records/ Universal, 2005) *Video Killed the Radio Star Box Set* (Russell Mulcahy, David Mallet, Wayne Isham) (inD/3DD, 2010); *Radiohead, 7 TV Commercials* (EMI, 1998), *Bjork, Volumen* (One Little Indian, 1999), *Warp Vision* (Warp Records, 2004) and *The Best Videos in the World...Ever!* (EMI, 2005).

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