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**Music Video or Short Film:
The Use of Diegetic Sounds in
Narrative Music Videos**

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1. Introduction

The purpose of music videos is generally seen to be an advertisement for a song and an artist. If diegetic sounds are added to a music video, not temporarily but throughout the video, they will seek for the viewer's attention and thereby distract from the extradiegetic (or non-diegetic) sounds, that is the song to be promoted. In narrative music videos, the song fades into the background and functions as a soundtrack to a short film in which the storyline is foregrounded. To support this thesis, the following videos will be analyzed: Michael Jackson – “Liberian Girl”, Daft Punk – “Da Funk”, UNKLE – “Rabbit in Your Headlights”, Richard Ashcroft – “A Song for the Lovers”, Gnarl's Barkley – “Who's Gonna Save My Soul” and Bob Dylan – “Beyond Here Lies Nothin’”.¹

First of all, I want to provide a theoretical basis for my video analyses to rest upon in the form of a short synopsis of the narrative forms of both traditional films and conventional music videos. Also, I will briefly point out the relation between images and music in films and how this relation differs from the way music and images usually correlate in music videos. Subsequently, I will discuss each of the aforementioned videos individually. The selection of videos was determined by the precondition that the video provides a narrative that resembles conventional film narration and continuously combines music with dialogue and sound effects. My focus will lie on the relation between diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, as well as on the narrative structures of these videos and the relation between images and sounds, since these are the basic determinants that contribute to the feeling of watching a short film rather than a music video.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Narrative conventions in fictional films

The human mind is craving for telling and hearing stories to make sense of the world. Conventional films satisfy this need and tell a story by following the traditional Aristotelian formula, where we find ourselves confronted with an initial situation that, as the film proceeds, is altered into the final situation at the end of the movie. During the progression of the film, different events linked by a cause-and-effect relationship result in a climax and bridge the gap between the exposition and the ending.² The development of a climax will evoke an emotional

¹ Each of these videos is contained on an accompanying CD.

² Cf. Speidel 2007, p. 61.

response in the viewer and bring about the story's closure by resolving the cause-effect chain of the plot.³

A linear narrative is certainly more conventional because a chronological order of events facilitates the viewers' comprehension of the story that is told. They can, then, easily connect one event to the next by putting the main components of a narrative, which are causality, time and space, in relation to each other.⁴ In classical Hollywood cinema, the narrative is character-driven in the way that the course of the plot, meaning the succession of events, is determined by the characters' traits, desires, decisions and actions.⁵

2.2. The function of film music

Setting music to a movie can influence our perception of a narrative's characters and mood and, therefore, fulfills the function of adding to the narration. The musical sound track enables the viewer's emotional identification with the characters, lays emphasis on crucial events with a repeated signature melody or, looking at "mickey-mousing", mimics visual action.⁶

Because film music is usually of extradiegetic nature, that is to say that the music is not part of the fictional world of the narrative and the characters in the movie cannot hear it, it works in "the viewer's sensory background, that grey area of secondary perception"⁷ and keeps the viewer concentrated on the story. This avoids the recognition of the music's manipulativity so that, in the classical Hollywood conception, a score is "an 'inaudible' accompaniment"⁸ to the dialogues and pictures that tell the story. Traditionally, diegetic music, that is part of the narrative world of a film, e.g. in a scene located in a nightclub, still, as if by coincidence, matches "the scene's mood and pace with an uncanny consistency"⁹ in order to keep the story in the foreground of the viewer's perception.

Unlike the classical Hollywood score, stanzaic pop music, on the other hand, could compete with the film's narrative by providing its own story¹⁰ but is now commonly used for commercial purposes because it can increase the film's success and the popularity of the song's performer,

³ Cf. Bordwell 2008, p. 88.

⁴ Cf. Bordwell 2008, pp. 74-75.

⁵ Cf. Bordwell 2008, pp. 94-95.

⁶ Cf. Gorbman 1998, pp. 43-45.

⁷ Gorbman 1980, p. 183.

⁸ Gorbman 1998, p. 45.

⁹ Gorbman 1980, p. 199.

¹⁰ Cf. Gorbman 1998, p. 45.

especially among young people.¹¹ As Lapedis points out, however, easily recognizable pop songs can also convey the mood of bygone decades in films playing in the past.¹² The lyrics of the songs, in these cases, do not distract from the story but rather support it because the song makes the viewer aware of the time period in which the story is set.

2.3. The narrativity of music videos

Typical elements of music videos, like the performance, lip-synching and dancing, are to highlight the song and showcase the artist. Most music videos tend to be nonnarrative to avoid the recession of the song into the background of the viewer's perception. Instead of displaying a linear storyline, the imagery of a music video follows the anecdotal and cyclical structure of the song and offers "a consideration of [the song's] topic rather than an enactment of it"¹³. Vernallis states that "music-video imagery gains from holding back information, confronting the viewer with ambiguous or unclear depictions"¹⁴ so that "if there is a story, it exists only in the dynamic relation between the song and the image as they unfold in time"¹⁵. To make up for the elliptical storytelling and sketchy characters for the viewer to identify with, the artist in a music video is being showcased and can establish a connection to the viewers on a personal level and prompt emotions by looking straight into the camera and directly address his audience.¹⁶

However, there are a few narrative videos, but their limited timeframe does not allow for the portrayal of a protagonist with detailed character traits and calls for temporal compression, ham acting and the exposition of decisive symbolic images to speed up and further the narration.¹⁷ The narratives of music videos tend to have a mysterious ending¹⁸ or present different situations that are incoherent¹⁹ as opposed to the replicable cause-effect chain of film narratives.

2.4. The relation between images and sounds in music videos

The correlation between music and images in music videos can be established in multifarious ways, such as syncretic or metaphorical relations or symbolic, iconic and indexical resemblance.

¹¹ Early examples would be *The Graduate* (1967) or *Easy Rider* (1969).

¹² Cf. Lapedis 1999, p. 378.

¹³ Vernallis 2004, p. 17.

¹⁴ Vernallis 2004, p. 17.

¹⁵ Vernallis 2004, p. 17.

¹⁶ Cf. Vernallis 2004, pp.48-49.

¹⁷ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 6.

¹⁸ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 8.

¹⁹ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p.11.

Immediate aural/visual synchronizations include lip-synching and playing instruments as well as editing to the beat and visualizing or alluding to the lyrics.²⁰ Also, recurring musical parameters, certain instruments or rhythms for instance, can be brought to the fore. The structure of the song can be emphasized by repeatedly joining images that are linked to each other, be it by shape, color, light or movement, with the verses as distinguished to the images from the chorus.²¹ Both music and images are associated with certain cultural and social contexts and can be combined according to or against these associations to form larger structures.²²

Instead of the characteristic film closure that is resolving the cause-effect chain, music videos can establish a certain closure by presenting beginnings, which deploy “close synchronization between music and image [...] much more frequently”²³, middle-sections and ends, where music/image relations gradually decrease in their occurrence.²⁴

Although sometimes the image “superimposes a complete diegesis upon the song”²⁵, it is usually complementing the music and provides an interpretation of it²⁶ and, thus, is inferior in the hierarchy of a music video’s elements to keep the focus on the song, since the primary concern of the record labels, which finance music videos, is to promote a song and sell records. Another reason for the subordination of the images is the fact that the songs exist before the video, which therefore is limited by the music that it has to go with.²⁷

3. Video Analyses

3.1. Michael Jackson: “Liberian Girl” (1989)

Michael Jackson’s video for „Liberian Girl” opens with a segment in black and white, accompanied the introduction of the song. The location appears to be an oriental market place before it is revealed to be a film set by someone holding a clapperboard in front of the camera (00:32)²⁸. At the clap, the picture changes into being in color, the actual song starts and the camera tracks back and allows a glimpse of the spotlights and the tracks of a dolly. What follows is the display of numerous celebrities who were popular in the late nineteen-eighties. In addition

²⁰ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 179-180.

²¹ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 188-189.

²² Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 191.

²³ Vernallis 2004, p. 195.

²⁴ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 196.

²⁵ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 195.

²⁶ Cf. Vernallis 2004, p. 195.

²⁷ Cf. Kaplan 1987, p. 14.

²⁸ The time codes refer to the currently discussed video and are compatible with the video files on the enclosed CD.

to the song, the dialogues between these people are audible, letting the viewer know that they apparently have been asked by Michael Jackson to take part in the music video for “Liberian Girl” and that they are now waiting for him to appear on the set. Only towards the very end of the video, the stars spot the singer himself sitting behind a camera, having filmed them all the while (03:37). The music fades out and Michael Jackson closes the video with the common words: “Okay, everybody. That’s a wrap.” The music fades back in for the video’s end credits (03:53-5:29), in which the various stars are thanked for their appearance in the video. Usually the closing credits are cut off on music television.

Until Beverly Johnson lip-synchs to the opening phrase of the song, the music seems to be extradiegetic. But the continuous lip-synching (01:09, 01:19-01:30, 03:00), supposedly reading the lyrics off from a note, or actual singing-along to the lyrics (03:09) and the dancing to the rhythm of the music (00:54, 02:45) and the fact that Paula Abdul is counting for the singing to start (00:50) suggest that the music is actually part of the diegetic world. Beside lip-synching and dancing being characteristic elements of music videos, the visualization of the lyrics can also be found. When the lyrics read “just like in the movies with two lovers in a scene”, Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta, famous for their portrayal of a couple in “Grease”, are shown seemingly rehearsing a love scene (01:16-01:30).

The use of diegetic sounds in this video, meaning the adding of the dialogue, clarifies the situation observed by the viewer. Though the music fades into the background when dialogue occurs, the song is also accentuated at times by using structural components typical for music videos. Because of the merging of extra-diegetic and diegetic sounds, the attention of the viewer is torn between concentrating on the dialogue or the lyrics. Being the ninth and last single taken from the album “Bad”²⁹, it might not have been of importance to foreground and popularize the song so that this uncommon sound arrangement was possible. When the music fades in again on the end credits, it serves as a soundtrack added during the post-production since there is no diegetic world it could be part of.

The story that is presented is fairly modest and seems more like a collage of what people do when they are waiting for a video shoot to start. The only motivation to watch this video again seems to be that it features an incredible amount of celebrities. Obviously, the video is to emphasize

²⁹ The album, published in 1987, included eleven songs.

Jackson's popularity by showing that he even people who are popular stars themselves admire him.

3.2. Daft Punk: "Da Funk" (1997)

The video for Daft Punk's "Da Funk" is set in a crowded city at nighttime. Entitled „Big City Nights“, the video begins with traffic scenes shown in fast motion accompanied by the sound of traffic and people scraps of conversation. These sounds continue when the music sets in (00:12) and the protagonist is being introduced when someone called Benny signs his leg cast. When the two part, it is revealed that the main character is an anthropomorphic dog with a crutch and a boom box (00:34). With a change in the song's structure (00:37), he begins his walk through the streets, meeting two boys referring to the music playing with the boom box (00:56). At this point, it becomes clear, that the song is actually a part of the narrative world. As he walks on, the viewer gets to know that the protagonist has been living in the city for only a month (01:28). Furthermore, we learn that the dog is unable to turn the music down asked to do so by a street vendor (02:27).

The diegetic character of the music is stressed when the song is muffled while we see the dog from the inside a shop window (01:50) and a woman inside the shop through the glass of a refrigerator (03:13). When she opens the refrigerator door, the music can be heard in the previous volume again (03:17). Eventually, when talking to the woman, the dog unveils their names, Beatrice and Charles (03:22, 03:43), the viewer is presented with more facts about Charles as it turns out that he and Beatrice grew up next to each other.

Again, the music as being part of the diegetic world is emphasized when Charles and Beatrice are filmed from the other side of the street, waiting for the bus. The noises of the cars driving in front of the characters are louder than the music because of the varying distances to the camera (04:34-04:38, 05:04). Charles cannot enter bus because there are no radios allowed and Beatrice leaves without him. Apparently, he is not only unable to regulate the volume of the music but also unable turn the boom box off altogether. The video ends with Charles continuing his walk through the streets when we hear someone whistling along with the song (05:16-05:25) while it is fading out with the pictures (05:20), leaving a black screen, the street sounds and the whistling.

According to Daft Punk member Thomas Bangalter, the band does not “believe in the star system” and “want[s] the focus to be on the music.”³⁰ With “Da Funk” being an instrumental song, the incorporation of dialogue and background noises does not challenge one’s aural attention as much as a stanzaic song does so that it is easier to pay attention to both the song and the dialogue. Because of the absence of lyrics and the fact that there was no need to showcase the band³¹, director Spike Jonze was allowed to depict a character in an extent that is unusual for a music video. The viewer gets to know more and more facts about the protagonist, including even his name, from his conversations and his behavior, making it possible to identify with him. The video has a linear narrative with chronological film-like cause-effect chain. To enhance the viewers understanding of the story, the prohibition sign saying “no radios” (Fig. 1) is repetitively shown while zooming in as the presentation had been too subtle in the first edit.³²

Ironically, no-one thematizes Charles’ dog-like appearance, although this is what strikes the viewer most. Beatrice does not even recognize him until he tells her who he is. In fact, even the people on the streets “were not really [...] paying attention to this crazy character”³³ since the video was being shot in Manhattan, “where nothing is really surprising anybody”³⁴.

The repeated references to the music make the song a part of the narration as well as they emphasize the music’s subordinate role to the plot. This inversion of the roles that music and images play in typical music videos, being that the images are usually determined by the music, makes the song become a soundtrack accompanying the dialogue scenes of the video.³⁵

The video “breaks with techno’s usual attention to psychedelic visual images, and whittles the song’s funky hooks down into background music”³⁶, as Grant points out. Missing central elements of stereotypical music videos, like lip-synching, dancing, the artists themselves and the performance of the song, the video is more likely to be regarded as a short film by the recipients. Likewise, the video for “Da Funk” “looks like [...] a seventies movie”³⁷ to Thomas Bangalter and is referred to as a short film by Tony Maxwell³⁸, the actor who played Charles. According to

³⁰ http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Artists/D/Daft_Punk/1997/04/12/744419.html

³¹ Cf. The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Daft Punk (02:10-02:22).

³² Cf. The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Daft Punk (04:40-04:57).

³³ The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Daft Punk (01:31-01:38).

³⁴ The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Daft Punk (01:25-01:30).

³⁵ Cf. Keazor 2007, p. 280.

³⁶ Grant 1997, http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Artists/D/Daft_Punk/1997/04/12/744419.html.

³⁷ The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Thomas Bangalter (Daft Punk) (00:27 -00:31).

³⁸ The Work of Director Spike Jonze, 2003, audio commentary by Tony Maxwell (00:24-00:26).

Keazor and Wübena³⁹, Jonze makes parts of the video appear like a conventional documentary film.⁴⁰

3.3. UNKLE: “Rabbit in Your Headlights” (1998)

As soon as the song “Rabbit in Your Headlights” begins, there is the sound of a horn honking along with other traffic noises before the protagonist of this video can be seen walking through a highway tunnel filled with driving cars. When the man is shown in the side-view mirror of a car passing by him (00:19), the traffic noises are edited out and the music becomes dominant the aural perception of the viewer. This lays stress on the opening line “I’m a rabbit in your headlights”. Also, when the perspective changes back to inside the tunnel and the car noises can be heard again (00:23), it becomes clear, that the music is extradiegetic because it can be heard at the same volume in the tunnel and inside the car.

Adding to the background sounds surrounding him and drawing the viewer’s attention back on him, the man starts to mumble and to yell, but his words remain elusive.⁴¹ After he begins to twitch with his shoulder (00:39), the beat of the song sets off, oddly discordant and contrasting to the man’s twitches. Apparently, the man is incapable of speaking coherently and not in control of his own body. Then he is hit by a car from behind (00:53) and stays lying down motionlessly until it is conveyed that he is dead. Suddenly, the man comes to life again and continues his journey. Again, we see the protagonist from inside a car and the traffic sounds become silent (01:17). Another car runs the man over (01:41), but the driver is unaffected by the man’s misfortune, as is everyone else driving past him. The cars’ headlights repeatedly light up behind the man, suggesting that the man is the rabbit from the song’s title (Fig. 2).

After the man got up again, someone pulls over to ask the man where he is going, but the man shows no reaction and keeps walking and talking. The passengers sitting in the car are the members of the band UNKLE. For as long as the car drives beside the man, the song “Rabbit in Your Headlights” is turned down and we can softly hear the music that is playing inside the car (02:10-02:30). When a third car collides with the protagonist (02:35), he gets up immediately.

³⁹ Cf. Keazor 2007, p. 280.

⁴⁰ Roman Coppola’s video for “Praise You” by Fatboy Slim was, indeed, filmed in a documentary style, including only diegetic sounds by letting the music play on a boom box as well. The video features Spike Jonze and is, also, contained on his music video collection DVD.

⁴¹ In fact, Denis Lavant, the actor playing the man in the video, does not speak English and repeated a text he was listening to over headphones. Cf. *The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer*, 2005, commentary by Denis Lavant, (03:50-04:26).

The perspective changes to the man's ego perspective for a short time (02:40), clarified by a shot reverse shot with a shaking camera (Figs. 3 & 4), so that the viewer gains an insight into the man's point of view. The camera stays in the same position facing the traffic after the fourth collision with a car and the viewer already knows that it is waiting for the man to get up again and enter the frame (03:12-03:16). After the fifth crash (03:27), the man takes off his parka and reveals his injured body, while his madness increases.

When the song becomes calm with only the piano playing and the background noises break off, the protagonist suddenly stops (04:14), stretches out his arms and waits for a car to crash into him once more. Shown in slow motion with the beat back on, the car splits on the man like on a rock. As the music fades out and the picture fades to black, the traffic sounds are heard again.

The narrative of this video, a man being repetitively hit by cars and getting stronger after each crash⁴², relies on the original idea of evoking an emotional response in the viewer.⁴³ The diegetic speaking was added to the music because the video's director Jonathan Glazer considered it important to bring the mental state of the protagonist to light to enhance a connection between him and the viewer.⁴⁴ Although Glazer had only directed nine music videos until 2000, he is one of the seven directors whose videos have been included Directors Label's music video DVD collection because of his visionary and, from a commercial point of view, risky approaches to this medium.⁴⁵ The emotionally grasping story and disturbing images⁴⁶ of the video make the artists themselves (literally) take a back seat in this video, but the song and the lyrics still are emphasized at times.

The uncanny parallel between the protagonist being in the cars' headlights and the song's title and repeated line of the lyrics, though, almost led the director not realize his concept because he regarded the correspondence as being too obvious.⁴⁷ Still, for the most part of the video, the music seems to fulfill the function of supporting the narrative's atmosphere and is pushed into the subsidiary level of the viewer's perception by the extreme depictions of the car crashes.

⁴² Cf. Epstein 2005, <http://suicidegirls.com/interviews/Jonathan+Glazer+--+Director%27s+Label+DVD/>.

⁴³ Cf. The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by James Lavelle, (00:00-00:57).

⁴⁴ Cf. Dreher 2000, http://www.popzoot.tv/spezial_glazer.php3, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Cf. Epstein 2005, <http://suicidegirls.com/interviews/Jonathan+Glazer+--+Director%27s+Label+DVD/>.

⁴⁶ The video was banned by MTV in the U.K. and in France. Cf. Dreher 2000, http://www.popzoot.tv/spezial_glazer.php3, p. 4 and The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by Denis Lavant, (02:11-02:16).

⁴⁷ Cf. Dreher 2000, http://www.popzoot.tv/spezial_glazer.php3, p. 1.

3.4. Richard Ashcroft: “A Song for the Lovers” (2000)

In the video “A Song for the Lovers”, also directed by Jonathan Glazer, we can watch Richard Ashcroft in a hotel room. There are only diegetic sounds like the murmur of the tube light in the first sequence, the sounds produced by the singer and room noise, stressing that he is alone, until he turns on the song by remote control (00:26). The music, as well, turns out to be diegetic because Ashcroft is in control of it. The song drowns the low room noises, but we can still hear the artist talk when he picks up a phone. At the same time, the lyric’s first lines “I spent the night looking for my insides in a hotel room waiting for you” are sung and the viewer is lead to believe that these words refer to the situation Ashcroft currently finds himself in. Occasionally, Ashcroft sings along to his song in the same way people who are not professional singers do when they are home alone.

When the lyrics go “don’t wanna wait”, the singer impatiently opens the door to the hall and the music is muffled to demonstrate that its source is located in the room he just left (01:42). The music becomes more hollow when he returns and closes the door again, leaving the viewer in the hallway. The music is so loud that Ashcroft misses the knock on the door by the room service when he is washing in the bathroom (02:26). The sequence of shots before he starts eating indicates a temporal gap between the edits (Figs. 5) while the music plays on without interruption although has been thoroughly marked as being part of the fictional world of the video’s narrative before.

Like in the beginning of the video, we can see the tube light flicker again. As Ashcroft seems to hear something, mutes the song (04:00), listens to the room noise and turns the music back on. The second time turns the music down (04:22), he notices that the bathroom light is switch on, even though had turned it off previously. Hearing only the room noises and his own steps, the singer walks slowly into the bathroom as if to search for the source of what he believed to have heard when he silenced the music. He urinates and after he clears he throat, the music, now an extradiegetic sound, begins again (05:13). While the camera tracks back, the light in the other rooms are switched off and the song fades out.

The diegetic use of music in this video is comparable to the music in “Da Funk”. But whereas the dog in the Daft Punk video is unable to control the music, Glazer goes as far as letting the character of the video decide when the music should play and when it should not. Instead of visualizing a song, it is being instrumentalized to depict a situation that loosely relies on only the

opening lines of the lyrics. This instrumentalization leads to the moments when the viewer is confronted with silence, which is exceptional for a music video, but the silence, or actually the room noises, and the buzzing of the lights, being “things that you’re normally numb to”⁴⁸, contribute to creating an atmosphere of suspense and paranoia⁴⁹.

Since “A Song for the Lovers” was Ashcroft’s first single as a solo artist, it might have been of importance to create an image of the singer that differed from the image that people had of him as a member of “The Verve”. Because both the director and the artist were disaffected with conventional music videos, especially lip-synching⁵⁰, the general approach to the video was to film a short film or something that could be a scene of a film⁵¹ in which the atmosphere becomes dominant and determines the inferior status of the song. That way, Ashcroft became an actor rather than a singer performing his song, presupposing an artist who is not interested in the mainstream as much as in pushing boundaries and realizing experimental ideas.⁵²

3.5. Gnarls Barkley: “Who’s Gonna Save My Soul” (2008)

Right at the beginning of Gnarls Barkley’s video “Who’s Gonna Save My Soul” a woman can be heard saying that she “need[s] space” and “the time to just figure out who [she is]” (00:05-00:10), presenting that the viewer will be confronted with a woman breaking up with her boyfriend. Two seconds after she starts talking, the music fades in. Most of the woman’s face is covered by what prove to be her soon-to-be ex-boyfriend’s hands in the second shot.

After being introduced to the main characters, the woman and the man, the setting is being presented to be a diner. Instead of the expected fade-out of the conversation between them when the singing begins (00:18), the dialogue and the music remain at equal volume levels. The viewer has to decide whether to listen to what the woman has to say or to the song’s lyrics. When the words “all of a sudden has less and less to say” appear in the lyrics, the woman’s voice is finally turned down (00:34-00:36) until the music is the only distinguishable sound.

The woman keeps talking until the man cuts out his heart and puts it on a plate (00:50-01:14). The dialogue is brought back at the music’s sound level again when the two absurdly start talking about the man’s heart (01:15). The music, again, takes over when the heart becomes animated

⁴⁸ Cf. The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by Richard Ashcroft, (05:07-05:22).

⁴⁹ Cf. The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by Richard Ashcroft, (04:16-04:49).

⁵⁰ Cf. The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by Richard Ashcroft, (00:35-00:47).

⁵¹ Cf. The Work of Director Jonathan Glazer, 2005, commentary by Richard Ashcroft, (07:45-04:59).

⁵² Cf. Dreher 2000, http://www.popzoot.tv/spezial_glazer2.php3, p. 2.

and is growing extremities and lips (02:15). Using broccoli florets as a microphone, the heart is performing the song first for the woman (02:26), then for other guests in the diner (02:46). The members of Gnarl Barkley, who are playing chefs (02:58), seem to be the only ones that are surprised by the heart being animated. After the lyrics say “tired enough to lay my own soul down”, the last verse of the song, the heart stabs itself and pulls the man’s head out of its chest. The dialogue starts again (03:18) and the picture changes back to the initial situation of the video. We hear the woman asking her boyfriend whether he was listening to her. After his plain answer “no”, the video closes abruptly and cuts off the ending of the song.

The confusing plot of the video is dissolved by the man admitting not to have listened to his girlfriend. It appears that the line “all of a sudden has less and less to say” marks the point where the man starts to visualize what his girlfriend is doing to him. One could even come to the conclusion that the song is not hearable for anyone but the man. The dialog fading in and out would then indicate the varying degree of attention paid to the woman’s words. This interpretation becomes more probable in consideration of this video’s first shot, where the woman’s face is covered by the man’s hands. We become aware that this is shot from his perspective in the second shot, where he sits with his hands folded in front of his eyes (Fig. 6). By the man covering his eyes with his hands and letting his mind ramble, it is suggested that he does not want to be in this break-up situation.

The video makes use of what Vernallis calls graphic matches when the man focuses his attention on the woman again after his daydream. The transition from the man’s fantasy back to the narrative’s reality is attenuated by letting the shot showing the man’s head looking out of the heart be followed by a shot that shows the man looking into the same direction but out of the diner’s window (Fig. 7). The composition of shots “according to graphic similarities create[s] a momentary sense of completion and recognition.”⁵³

There are more common features of music videos in “Who’s Gonna Save My Soul”, such as the close relation between lyrics and images. The aforementioned line in the lyrics “all of a sudden has less and less to say” is highlighted by the fade-out of the woman’s voice, as well as the line “tired enough to lay my own soul down” is accentuated by the heart stabbing itself and laying down on a plate. The song, too, is foreground by the heart’s performance in the fantasy part.

⁵³ Vernallis 2004, p. 43.

The parts of the video that highlight the song can be considered to further the video's narrative of a man feeling uncomfortable having his girl friend breaking up with him. The video's narrative form is finally emphasized by the closure at the end of the video, in which the cause-effect chain is resolved instead of presenting an enigmatic series of images like many nonnarrative music videos do. The movie elements in this video might be the reason why the video is provided on the internet by the short film label Future Shorts.

3.6. Bob Dylan: "Beyond Here Lies Nothin'"⁵⁴ (2009)

Before the music starts (00:15), there is a man looking down a street before he begins to walk home being filmed by a hand-held camera. His footsteps, the traffic and the chirping of birds are still audible although the music, which is clearly extradiegetic from the beginning, is almost drowning the other sounds. When he opens the apartment door, Bob Dylan begins to sing. The man locks the door, goes into the kitchen and picks up a knife when there is a quiet creak to apprehend right between the first and the second stanza of the song (01:02-01:11). He unlocks a room and the lyrics cease when the bed with the bloody sheets are shown. As a woman, who has been abused and held captive, strokes the man on the head with a bottle, it shatters loudly (01:37). The instrumental section between the second and the third verse allows the pictures to receive the viewer's attention when the woman tries to escape from the apartment.

After the lyrics have started again (01:51), the man appears again and the two attack each other violently. The diegetic sounds produced during their fight, along with the depiction of the fight, distract from the lyrics demand the viewer's attention so that the contrast between the plot and the lyrics "we'll keep on lovin', pretty baby" almost remains unnoticed. Suddenly, when the lyrics are "for as long as love will last", the woman falls and pulls down a TV set, which shows Bob Dylan's face for a split second (Fig. 8). The sound of the TV falling down and breaking is followed by the stop of the music (02:07) and a tinnitus-like peeping, which becomes deeper when the woman is being knocked unconscious.

When the woman stabs the man, the music begins to play again (02:46). The last verse starts when the woman is in the car and the viewer awaits her to escape, with the lyrics "well, my ship

⁵⁴ I will examine this video's second version, often referred to as the film version. The first video version features a montage of old black and white photos by Bruce Davidson. Cf. Kreps 2009, <http://www.rollingstone.com/rockdaily/index.php/2009/05/12/bob-dylan-teams-with-ifc-for-beyond-here-lies-nothin-video/>

is in the harbor and the sails are spread” contributing to this expectation. Even more so after the woman reverses and runs the man over, one would expect her to escape having taken revenge. Finally, the woman gets out of the car (03:50), approaches the man and kisses him.

After the sedate beginning, the video creates such grasping suspense that it is hard for the viewer to pay attention to anything but the images. The hand-held camera work contributes to the panic haste of the woman and the uncalculability of the violent attacks as much as the apartment’s spatial limitation adds to the claustrophobic atmosphere in the video. The use of the diegetic sounds helps to put emphasis on the events by commanding the auditory senses to direct towards the plot in addition to the viewer’s visual perception. Eventually, the music is completely subordinated to the images when the song stops as a representation of the woman’s unconsciousness.

Despite the domination of the images, the music gets highlighted either by the contrast of what is depicted and what is being sung, as in the third verse, or by a possible correlation of the image with the lyrics at the beginning of the last verse. Momentary sync points can be found when the word “window” appears twice in the third stanza, and both times the word is uttered, the camera captures the kitchen window. Also, the moments when the lyrics appear, the woman seems to be defying the man’s control over her. During the first two stanzas, the man does not know yet that the woman has freed herself from being tied to the bed. Between the second and the third verse, the woman tries to escape, but she does not find the keys to the front door that have been locked by the man before. So during this instrumental passage the man’s former action keeps her from leaving the apartment. As soon as she finds the keys, the third verse starts. The ceasing of the music set to the woman’s unconsciousness seems to confirm her relation to the lyrical segments. The last stanza, finally, is sung when the woman is sitting in the car which the man is unable to enter.

The twist in the ending resolves the contradiction between the images and passages of the lyrics set to them. Retrospectively, the first stanza saying “you’re the only love I’ve ever known, just as long as you stay with me, the whole world is my throne” can be an allusion to the man and the woman being a couple in a (love-hate) relationship in which the man tries to make the woman stay with him. Just like in conventional films, the narrative of Bob Dylan’s video is character-driven in the way that the cause-and-effect chain relies on the video’s characters decisions. The filmic narrativity of this video might be the reason why it premiered on IFC.com, the

Independent Film Corporation's website. As Kreps noted, "the clip is so riveting you forget that you're watching a music video and not a short film."⁵⁵

The video for "Beyond Here Lies Nothin'" resembles imagery of a film in an extent that it might even evoke comparisons to Tarantino's visual aesthetics⁵⁶ in "Kill Bill: Vol. 2", where we can find the overt portrayal of violence in a claustrophobic environment during the fight scene between Beatrix Kiddo and Elle Driver in Budd's trailer. Considering Dylan's bluesy song, one could also be reminded of the movie "Black Snake Moan", in which the atmosphere is generated by the blues soundtrack. The fact, that in this movie, a woman, Rae, is held captive in the house of a man, constitutes another similarity to the film. Also, Rae seems to be connected to the music since her presence helps the man to finally be able to play blues again after his wife had left him.

4. Conclusion

The more a music video using diegetic sounds resembles a conventional film in the way the narrative is deployed as much as in the subsidiary use of the music, the less we are aware of actually watching a music video. Since I was not able to find any literature on short films, I assume that they are considered to be miniature movies, sharing the same attributes as feature films. Hence, due to music videos' limited length, the perception of music videos with film-like narratives can be identical to the perception of short movies, considering that they use the same stylistic devices that feature films do, but are more experimental by allowing for greater creative freedom while having to deal with severe temporal restrictions the way that music videos are.

The portrayal of complex characters like in Daft Punk's video simplifies the viewer's identification with this character and the story. Also, creating an atmosphere that the viewer can relate to seems to be of importance because the viewer will emotionally respond to the story, as can be seen in Jonathan Glazer's and Bob Dylan's videos. Still none of these videos, not even the video for the instrumental song "Da Funk", is completely liberated from the music-video conventions of the more or less close image/sound/lyrics relations. The more a video stays within music video narrativity, like "Liberian Girl" and Gnarns Barkley's video, the more confusing is the use of diegetic dialogue and sounds in combination with music, especially since these two videos provide only minimal storylines.

⁵⁵ Kreps 2009, <http://www.rollingstone.com/rockdaily/index.php/2009/05/12/bob-dylan-teams-with-ifc-for-beyond-here-lies-nothin-video/>

⁵⁶ Cf. Dombal 2009, <http://pitchfork.com/news/35479-directors-cut-bob-dylans-beyond-here-lies-nothin/>.

To realize a music video that successfully leaves the impression of it being a short film, one requirement seems to be that the artist is either not at all or just briefly featured in the video. Even in Ashcroft's video, it is not the performer being showcased but the portrayal of normal behavior in an ordinary situation. Also, the artist has to be open to the idea that the music will fade into the background for most of the time.

Eventually, the videos need to be directed by people who are willing to push boundaries to realize an idea according to their visual, artistic aesthetic instead of working within the given frame of conventions. Not to my surprise, half of the videos dealt with were made by directors considered music-video avant-garde, which illustrates that videos of that kind are exceptional among the mass of conventional music videos.

Screenshots



Fig. 1: Daft Punk, prohibition sign (04:44).



Fig. 2: UNKLE, "Rabbit in Your Headlights" (01:59).



Fig. 3: UNKLE, shot reverse shot 1 (02:40, 02:41).



Fig. 4: UNKLE, shot reverse shot 2 (02:54, 2:55)



Fig. 5: Ashcroft, temporal gap between consecutive shots (03:12, 03:14, 03:16)



Fig. 6: Gnarls Barkley, first and second shot (00:09, 00:11).



Fig. 7: Gnarls Barkley, graphic match of adjacent shots (03:22, 03:23).



Fig. 8: Bob Dylan, performer's cameo on TV, detail (02:07).

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