The Perception of the Song and Its Video Clip

Mariselda Tessarolo

University of Padua

Recommended Citation

Volume 3 Issue 3 (September 2001) Article 6
Mariselda Tessarolo,
"The Perception of the Song and Its Video Clip"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss3/6>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 3.3 (2001)
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss3/>

Abstract: In her article, "The Perception of the Song and Its Video Clip," Mariselda Tessarolo ex-amines the relationship between image and music within promotional video clips. Tessarolo ob-serves that images underline the music, where the song marks the rhythm to be given over (and into) the images. As a consequence, emotion prevails over narration within video clips: Affect is their desired effect. The Schwichtenberg typology is used to determine the nature of the relation between emotional and perceptual response. Video clips were classified according to the way they enact this relation, and 100 university students provided the responses to be evaluated. Research was done in accordance with the semantic differential technique, which detects and evaluates af-fective meaning. The research design planned for the administration of separate songs and video clips, and the resulting data underwent factorial and cluster analyses.

Mariselda TESSAROLO

The Perception of the Song and Its Video Clip

Introduction
Representing music through video clips has changed the way in which individual songs are produced and promoted. Videos can be considered short movies, lasting three or four minutes at most, in which a song is accompanied by images in movement. Since 1981, when MTV (music television) began broadcasting, the phenomenon of videomusic has started to attract criticism, but also success. This TV station broadcasts music 24 hours a day (advertisements and videos only) reaching 194 million homes. Film music, even after the advent of sound pictures, has continued to be conceived as the accompaniment of an image. Musical background is rarely considered an integral part of the movie action -- possibly because the music "added" to the movie during editing is unrelated to the protagonist and exists only for the audience. Moreover, music is necessary in a movie as it can make people re-live emotions, creates atmospheres, outlines the emotional path of narration, and gives echo to the images (Tessarolo and Kermol). In videos the converse happens: it is the images that must give echo to the music, it is the rhythm of the song that decides the rhythm of the images: Emotion appears to prevail over narration.

We can say that the video is a new way for music groups to promote their songs and amuse the audience. The strong resemblance between videos and advertisements is recognized by several researchers: there are those who see it in the non-sequentiality of images (Sherman, 1991), those who see it in keeping up attention to avoid boredom through the adequate mix of visual and sound elements resorting to many production techniques used in TV advertising (Cupchik and Saltzman). Fry and Fry (1987) found that in advertisements many cuts were used (28.33 shots a minute on average); in conceptual videos of shots per minutes is similar in number to those used in advertisements (on average 20.38). Performance videos, which are based on a singer's live performance, have an average of 19.94 shots a minute, while narrative videos have an average of 9.95 (Sherman, 1991).

For and Against the Video clip: An Open Debate
The success of a music video depends on the ability of integrating audio (songs) and visual (images) stimuli. It is not an easy blending since eyesight has physiological prominence over hearing. The relation between eyesight and hearing has to be conceived in terms of competition. Behne (1987) distinguishes three relation modalities between the two perceptive channels: the first sees music and images perceived at the conscious level as separate between themselves; the second is perceived at the conscious level as a fluctuating unit. Then, the visual and audio stimuli join up in producing a single perceptive act. Springsklee (1987) has found that appreciation for and spontaneous association with a song change in passing from the audio to the audiovisual modality. No song appreciation change has been found between one condition and the other. Schwichtenberg (1992) does not think fans are passive subjects exposed to record companies' manipulation.

The acquisition of knowledge and expectations related to music is determined by the everyday relationship with musical forms in their varying fruition modalities. Baroni and Nanni (1989) find that adolescents' appreciation for the audiovisual modality increases with age. Videos seem to be used as the background for other actions -- just as radio music is. These results confirm Roe's (1988) who found that the audio modality prevails over the visual in the way the video is perceived: if the video movie is not liked, then it is the song that comes to the foreground. This is not consistent with Behne's (1987) evaluation, never actually verified, which supports the prominence of the visual over the audio.

Application
Contemporary research has not been able to establish whether images prevail or not over music. Recent studies, however, have noted an element of convergence between the movement of image in time and the structural components of music. Thanks to the intervention of the Gestalt theory, the global nature of the movie message and the pre-logic affective nature of movie fruition that conjoins it with music fruition have been highlighted. In the videotape, which is a unique aesthetic object, the producer's aim is not to tell a story, but rather to affect and excite the audience. The

images will hardly get the spectator's involvement if the song is not liked or if it is not known. A comparison was carried out between videos with different formats and songs, utilizing seven-point scales (semantic differential) to study individuals' attitudes toward videos belonging to different categories and to check whether attitudes change or remain the same when songs are listened to without images. Previous work on adolescents' attitudes toward pop/rock music had shown the utility of this technique in measuring responses music can arouse in fruition behavior (see Tessarolo). The affective response is in this case the nearest to the global fruition which is characteristic of artistic communication. In choosing the videotapes to be submitted for judgment Schwichtenberg's classification in conceptual, narrative, and executive videos was taken into account. The hypotheses lie in detecting possible fruition modal (audio and visual) differences between genders and videotape categories.

Method

The experimental design envisaged the presentation two batteries of six videos and six songs each to two groups of 28 university students (14 men and 14 women, mean age 24.6):

Table 1 Series of Videos and Related Songs

Battery A			
Video/song	Length	Type of videotape	Title
1.Cassius	3'9"	Conceptual	"1999"
2.Anna Oxa	4'6"	Narrative	"Senza pietà"
3.Madonna	3'56"	Conceptual	"Nothing really matters"
4.Britney Spears	3'52"	Executive	"Baby on move time"
5.Alex Britti	3'30"	Narrative	"Oggi sono io"
6.Almanegretta	3'46"	Conceptual	"Re-born cretin again"
Battery B			
7.Janet Jackson and Black Street	4'6"	Conceptual	"Girlfriend/boyfriend?
8.Biagio Antonacci	3'29"	Narrative	"Quanto tempo ancora"
9.Franco Battiato	4'6"	Conceptual	"Shock in my town"
10.Cardigans	3'30"	Executive	"Erase/rewind"
11.Irene Grandi	3'46"	Narrative	"8 e mezzo"
12.Peplab	3'22"	Conceptual	"Ride the pony"

The music videos were recorded from the main programs broadcast by MTV and Tmc2 in the week from 28 March to 4 April 1999. The six videos were chosen among 60 music videos by three judges.

Mean Profiles

The mean of the scores from each music piece and each video was the first analysis carried out. Analyses of variance was also carried out, taking into account gender and modality. With regard to gender, the significantly different scales turned out to be "*inexpressive-expressive*" ($p <= 0.040$), "*weak-strong*" ($p <= 0.001$), "*sweet-aggressive*" ($p <= 0.017$), "*flat-exciting*" ($p <= 0.052$), "*masculine-feminine*" ($p <= 0.037$) and "*passive-active*" ($p <= 0.004$). Women considered the videos and the songs "stronger" compared to the men, and the music pieces presented in the audio modality were more "expressive," "active," and "exciting" for the women. The men considered the songs as "feminine," while the women considered "masculine" the songs and videos alike. As to modality, significant differences were found in the following scales: "*deep- superficial*" ($p <= 0.026$), "*regular-irregular*" ($p <= 0.003$), "*hot-cold*" ($p <= 0.005$) and "*commonplace-original*" ($p <= 0.002$). The participants considered the videos significantly more superficial and commonplace than the songs. The latter were instead perceived as more "irregular" and "warmer" than the videos that went with them.

The gender modality interaction turned out to be significant in the following scales: "*passive-active*" ($p <= 0.045$), "*dynamic-static*" ($p <= 0.008$), "*pleasant-unpleasant*" ($p <= 0.05$), "*warm-cold*" ($p <= 0.026$). The audio only music pieces were perceived as more "dynamic" by the women; vice-

versa the men saw as more dynamic those presented in the audiovisual modality. Lastly, the men considered the musical videos more pleasant and stimulating, while the women considered the songs less superficial than their videos.

Factorial Structures

The data underwent factor analysis with the principal component method. The three components which were singled out underwent Varimax rotation. The factorial matrices thus obtained allowed to analyze the structure of the participants' judgments for each of the two conditions of music reception. From the factorial analysis of the songs a first, mainly valuational factor emerged (which explained 30.3% of the variance) describing the following dimension: original, beautiful, light, warm, expressive, strong, active, exciting, pleasant, stimulating, deep. The second factor (18.5%) determines a dynamic dimension: fast, aggressive, dynamic, cheeky, merry, active, tense, irregular, strong. The third factor concerns potency (13%) and includes light, easy, relaxed, feminine. The factorial analysis of the videos turns out to be very similar to that of the songs, with the difference that the potency factor takes up second place in the videos. Similar are the situations of the male and female participants in the two different modalities. The phi coefficient (coefficient of factorial similarity) was utilized to determine the differences of the factorial structures. The results are as follows:

	Phi*
F1 songs-F1 videos	0.98
F2 songs-F2 videos	0.87
F3 songs-F3 videos	0.90
Song	
F1 males-F1 females	0.97
F2 males-F2 females	0.96
F3 males-F3 females	0.92
Video	
F1 males-F1 females	0.98
F2 males-F2 females	0.31
F3 males-F3 females	0.61
Cross songs-videos	(females)
F1 songs-F1 videos	0.96
F2 songs-F2 videos	0.98
F3 songs-F3 videos	0.98
Cross songs-videos	(males)
F1 songs-F1 videos	0.99
F2 songs-F2 videos	0.87
F3 songs-F3 videos	0.75
Cross gender-modality (F1 only)	
F1 songs (females)-F1 videos (males)	0.97
F1 songs (males)-F1 videos (females)	0.98

(*the values equal to or > 0.92 are significant)

Noteworthy is the strong resemblance of attitudes, especially as concerns the first dimension, i.e., evaluation.

Cluster Analysis

The cluster analysis was applied to the distance matrix 1) between the songs, 2) between the videos, and 3) between the songs and the videos. The Johnson max method was used: It is a new

hierarchic method that singles out the groups of data between which the highest similarity indices exist.

Song Clusters

Clusters	Index of Similarity
2-Oxa 3-Madonna	0.46
8-Antonacci 10-Cardigans 5-Britti	0.57-1.24
1-Cassius 7-Jackson 12-Peplab	0.69-1.23
4-Spears 11-Grandi	0.89
9-Battiato 6-Almanegretta	1.48

Video Clusters

Clusters	Index of Similarity
6-Almanegretta 2-Oxa 9-Battiato	0.37-0.88
11-Grandi 4-Spears	0.73
1-Cassius 7-Jackson 3-Madonna	0.81-1.31
5-Britti 8-Antonacci 10-Cardigans 12-Peplab	0.82-1.44

Video and Song Clusters

Clusters	Index of Similarity
4-Spears' song 16-Spears' video 11-Grandi's song 23-Grandi's video	0.21-0.89
1-Cassius' song 13-Cassius' video	0.23-1.34

7-Jackson's song
12-Peplab's song

9-Battiato's song
21-Battiato's video   0.33-1.02
14-Oxa's video
5-Almanegretta's video

5-Britti's song
20-Antonacci's video   0.38-1.50
17-Britti's video
6-Almanegretta's song

2-Oxa's song
3-Madonna's song   0.46-1.17
15-Madonna's video
7-Jackson's video

8-Antonacci's song
10-Cardigans' song   0.57-1.15
22-Cardigans' video
24-Peplab's video

Conclusion

The main objective of my study was to establish whether the two most widely used and best known modalities of music reception by the young public can actually arouse different emotions. Results show that videos and songs shape a very similar attitude concerning both mean profiles and factorial structure -- and partly also clusters. The latter show that the participants have been able to perceive semantic and structural proximity between the pieces presented in the two modalities: each cluster has at least one song-video pair. So the two modalities of music reception do not seem to contrast each other, but rather to be complementary. This leads us to wonder whether audiovisual attention is primarily directed towards the *relationship* between music and image. It is much more likely that the messages conveyed by the two channels (the eye and the ear) are combined in a unitary way, as happens in movie communication, producing an aesthetic or perceptual synthesis, in which there is no interference but concordance between the meanings simultaneously conveyed by both components.

Works Cited

Baroni, M., and F. Nanni. *Crescere Con il Rock* (*Growing up with Rock Music*). Bologna: Clueb, 1989.
Behne, K.E. *Film, Musik, Video oder die Konkurrenz von Auge und Ohr.* Regensburg: Bosse, 1987.
Burns, G., and R. Thompson. "Music Television and Videos: Historical and Aesthetic Considerations." *Popular Music and Society* 13 (1987): 11-25.
Cupchik, G.C., and M. Saltzman. "Reception and Memory for Serious and Light Rock Music Videos." *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 17 (1999): 59-72.
Fry, D.L., and Fry, V.H.. "Some Structural Characteristics of Music Television Videos." *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 52 (1987): 151-64.
Greeson, L.E. "Recognition and Ratings of Television Music Videos: Age, Gender and Sociocultural Effects." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 23 (1991): 1908-20.
Roe, L., and M. Lofgren. "Music Video Use and Educational Achievement." *Popular Music* 7.3 (1988): 298-324.
Schwichtenberg, C. "Music Videos: The Popular Pleasures of Visual Music." *Popular Music and Communication*. Ed. J. Lull. London: Sage, 1992. 119-30.
Seidman, S.A. "An Investigation of Sex-Role Stereotyping in Music Videos." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 36 (1992): 209-16.
Sherman, B.L. "Perceiving and Processing Music Television." *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes*. Ed. J. Bryant and D. Zillman. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991. 316-34.
Springsklee, H. "Video-Clips. Typen und Auswirkungen." *Film-Music. Videoclip oder die Konkurrenz von Auge und Ohr.* Ed. K. Behne. Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1987. 127-54.

Stockbridge, S. "Rock Videos: Pleasure and Resistance. *Television and Women's Culture: Politics of the Popular Communication and Human Values*. Ed. M. Brown. London: Sage, 1990. 102-04.

Tessarolo, M. "La Musica dei Giovani: Analisi degli Atteggiamenti Verso la Musica Pop/Rock ("Young People's Music: An Analysis of Attitudes toward Pop/Rock Music"). *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 15 (1991): 137-46.

Tessarolo, M., and E. Kermol. *La Musica del Cinema*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1996.

Author's profile: Mariselda Tessarolo teaches communication studies in the Department of Psychology at the University of Padua, Italy. Her empirical research is about the study of communication processes (their production, consumption and/or reception) from the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism. She is author of numerous publications including *L'espressione Musicale e le sue Funzioni* (Giuffrè, 1983), *Minoranze Linguistiche e Immagine della Lingua* (Angeli, 1990), *Il Sistema delle Comunicazioni. Un Approccio Sociologico* (Cleup, 1994), *Costruire L'informazione* (Cleup, 1996), and *La Comunicazione tra Dimensione Umana e Tecnologia* (Cleup, 1999). E-mail: <mariselda.tessarolo@unipd.it>.