

MUSIC VIDEOS INTRO

Conventions: sets of codes repeated across numerous media texts from the same form and within the same industry.

ANDREW GOODWIN MUSIC VIDEO CONVENTIONS

Goodwin (1992) studied hundreds of music videos

He tried to find what most of them had in common.

1. There is a relationship between lyrics and visuals.
2. There is a relationship between music and visuals.
3. Music videos demonstrate genre characteristics.
4. Communicating (or creating) Star power will be required by the record company.
5. Audiences are encouraged to become voyeurs and are positioned to look intently at individuals (often objectifying them)

MUSIC VIDEOS INTRO (cont)

6. There are often intertextual references to other media texts - films, TV programmes, other music videos etc.

RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION

Vance Joy, Riptide, 2013

Real name: James Gabriel Keogh

Australian singer-songwriter

Signed to Atlantic records: subsidiary of major label, Warner

Lyrics have been described as a "coming of age story"

Contains many metaphors

And pop culture references

Video directed by Dimitri Basil and Laura Gor

Roland Barthes - Semiotics

Meaning is communicated through a process of signification

RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

Denotation – literal or common sense meaning of a sign

Connotation – associated or suggested meanings

Connotations usually rely of multiple possible meanings, depending on the situation and interpretation

Barthes said that many signs are POLYSEMIC - have many meanings.

The connotations usually rely on culturally learned meanings

Lyric - "All my friends are turning green"

Denotation – these people are friends of the singer, they are looking at the money.

Connotations - the symbolic nature of the colour green: Envy/jealousy, illness/sickness, nature, growth, life etc. The symbolic nature of money: Wealth, status, power, success



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RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

Is it implying that friends are envious about the success of Vance Joy as he will be making lots more money than them?

that friends (possibly in other bands) have "sold out" by giving into money? (turning away from the singer and towards the money)

That money will always cause problems and sour romantic relationships – the money is becoming between the two people in shot.

Consider intellectual montage

Does Riptide feature Goodwin conventions?

RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LYRICS AND VISUALS - In Riptide there is a direct connection between what we hear and see -texts communicate meanings in a process of signification. Mostly the images denote the lyrics – using first level signification. Some images connote deeper meanings – using second level signification. Some signs in the text are polysemic.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC AND VISUALS - The editing of the visuals is on the beat of the music. *However* the edits are irregular compared to the beats (shots are held for different lengths). Some elements of the visuals repeat (to an extent) with the chorus. **BUT** the overall 'upbeat' nature of the music contrasts the 'dark' atmosphere in the imagery (horror and abuse references)

RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

MUSIC VIDEOS DEMONSTRATE GENRE CHARACTERISTICS - **Vance Joy's Riptide belongs to the hybrid genre of Indie Folk.**

Repetition within the Indie Folk genre includes lo-fi videos with bands playing instruments, basic narrative (if any) and few special effects. *Riptide is relatively unusual as an Indie Folk video in terms of its production values, its lack of performance and its different settings and iconography.*

COMMUNICATING STAR POWER - Vance joy was a relatively unknown artist – new to a major record label, might expect the label to want to use the video to build star power for a new artist. **However Vance Joy does not appear in the video**

It is very cinematic and has high production values



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RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

The colour scheme, composition and quirky performances might remind audiences of Wes Anderson's films

Independent film aesthetic

Lends indie credibility to Vance Joy as an artist

INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES - This shot of tarot cards also references the French New Wave film Cleo from 5 to 7 (Agnès Varda, 1962), Midnight Cowboy (John Schlesinger, 1969): Referred to in the lyrics "There's this movie that I think you'll like" ETC

The video opens with text similar to a billing block on film posters

So many parallels with and references to film

Could communicate to an audience that this is more ambitious and artistic than an average music video

RIPTIDE - MEDIA LANGUAGE/REPRESENTATION (cont)

Therefore communicating that Vance Joy is an ambitious, creative, forward-thinking artist

Riptide is a very polysemic text – it is ambiguous and open to interpretation

It's good to be able to acknowledge and explore multiple possible meanings

Meanings aren't fixed and are created by audiences

THINK Gauntlett Identity theory

The ambiguous nature of the text means that audiences can pick and mix the elements of the video that appeal to them

Audiences may interpret the video according to their own identities

FORMATION CONTEXT

NEW ORLEANS

Louisiana (southern USA)

Majority black population

Culturally mixed

Distinctive culture called créole

Spanish and French influences from colonial era, mixed with African, Native American etc.

Famous for mardi gras

The Mardi Gras Indians are black citizens who wear elaborate costumes

Inspired by Native American traditions

Famous for music

Marching bands ...which developed into jazz – 'invented' in New Orleans

... and Blues music

And known for food

Especially sea food

Influenced by both African and European cultures



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FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

Problems with poverty

Locals often work in poorly paid service jobs

Disproportionately affects the black community

Economy relies on tourism

31% black residents live in poverty

Compared to 10% white residents

Average black-owned home is worth half as much as average white-owned home

'Antebellum' period in Louisiana – early to mid 19th century

Formation refers to the fashion of this era

- And the grand homes built then

These would have been accessible only to wealthy white people

HURRICANE KATRINA

August 2005

Category 5 hurricane

- "Catastrophic damage will occur"

FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

- "Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months."

New Orleans is surrounded by water

Much of the city is below sea level

Man-made 'levees' hold the water back from the city

Several of these broke in the hurricane, causing flooding

80% city was under water

What were leaders expecting to happen after they moved citizens into temporary shelters?

- Outside help would soon come

- Federal police, national guard etc.

- A mass evacuation was expected

What actually happened?

- People were stranded without food and medical support

- Ordinary citizens had to take charge of rescue

FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

- Wealthy residents were able to leave by car

- Poorer residents were trapped in the city

BUSH: response was too slow, did not publicly acknowledge hurricane Katrina at first. Relief package signed 3 days after hurricane ended. Took too long to visit New Orleans. Claimed the government didn't know the hurricane was coming but this was proven to be untrue**

why do people think Bush responded this way?

- Worst affected areas were working-class and predominantly black

- Some felt racism played a part in the slow response

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Term was first used in 2013

Response to the death of 17 year-old Trayvon Martin



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FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

Shot and killed by a member of a local community watch group on his way back from a nearby shop

His killer was acquitted of murder and manslaughter

Responding to deaths linked to police brutality

Argues that racism is systematic + 'Embedded' in the way the police operate

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY 1966 - 1982

Called for;

- End to police brutality
- Employment for black Americans
- Better housing for black Americans
- Justice for black Americans
- Part of wider Black Power movement
- Worked within community: free breakfast for children, free health clinics
- **But were not pacifists and often clashed with police**

FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

- Observed secretly by the FBI

BEYONCE 2016 SUPERBOWL PERFORMANCE

Her dancers were dressed in berets and black leather : referencing the Black Panther party

2016 was the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Party

This reference might make us think about how much progress has been made since 1966

the demands of the Black Panthers are the same issues still affect black people

Black Lives Matter takes up many of the same concerns the Panthers had in the 1960s

Some people felt the Panthers were anti-white

Some associated with the party supported black separatism: Idea that white and black people could not co-exist

Hip Hop Evolution – New Orleans 'bounce'

FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

Africans were brought to New Orleans in the slave trade

French colonisers let them retain elements of their native culture

Second line tradition: The centrality of music and dance, part of life and death, something everyone can participate in

TIGGERMAN

- A song by New York group The Showboys

- A particular drum beat from the song became popular with New Orleans DJs

CHARACTERISTICS OF BOUNCE MUSIC

- Use of 808 drum machines (including the 'Triggerman' sample)
- Call and response
- Dancing
- Links to the 'second line' tradition and New Orleans' musical heritage



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FORMATION CONTEXT (cont)

SISSY BOUNCE

- Inclusive subculture of bounce music
- LGBTQ+ rappers and DJs
- Performers often non-binary and explore gender identity
- Performers often non-binary and explore gender identity
- Beyonce samples 'sissy bounce' artist Big Freedia in Formation
- Big Freedia is a gay man, but describes himself as "gender nonconforming, fluid, non-binary"
- Sometimes uses pronouns 'she' and 'her'
- Referencing Big Freedia might tell us that ... Beyonce wants to represent diversity within the black community
- Sending the message that there is no "correct" way to be black, to be a man, etc.

context 2



Beyonce sings...

"My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana
... make a Texas bamma"

Her mother is Louisiana Creole

Beyonce would be considered Creole

because of her family heritage

She owns a home in New Orleans

she suggests a personal connection to New

Orleans and its culture. "Bama" - Southern

slang - 'unsophisticated person'

Perhaps suggesting a hierarchy in which

she is seen as "less black"

she reclaims the stereotype and uses it
positively

STAR POWER -powerful



Gesture code

Confident pose, legs spread

Might remind us a male rapper in a music
video

Matched by the tone and delivery of her
vocals

Clothes and mise-en-scene

Connotes Beyonce's wealth and success



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STAR POWER - defiant



Gesture code is a clear message of defiance
Although the two images are not consecutive, we might be reminded of this moment in the video...
Could be seen as a message to paparazzi who intrude on her private life
The lyrics say, "Paparazzi, catch my fly, and my cocky fresh"

ANTEBELLUM ERA REFERENCE



Reference to the Antebellum era
Then, clothes and houses like this would be almost exclusively for white people
In Formation, these settings are all-black spaces
Perhaps challenging stereotypes of black people as poor or not successful?
Perhaps reimagining the Antebellum history
What if black people had had power, rather than been enslaved?

SEXUALISED?



Beyoncé (and other women) are often dressed in a way that displays their bodies
Some of the dancing accentuates certain areas of their bodies **However** Beyoncé has a strong + engaged presence
Frequent direct-to-camera address
Close-ups on her face
No voyeurism
Perhaps communicating that she is in control
showing her body doesn't mean she can't be powerful



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BASKETBALL SHOT



Shots of a basketball team with 'bamas' on their vests
Bamas are Beyonce's "team"!

REFERENCES TO BLACK CULTURE

Beyonce gives the black power raised fist salute

Lots of lyrical references to (particularly Southern) black culture

"I got hot sauce in my bag swag"

"I like cornbreads and collard greens, bitch"

Note the defiance

Perhaps suggesting these traditions are perceived as unsophisticated

REFERENCES TO BLACK CULTURE (cont)

"I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils"

Michael Jackson had plastic surgery to change the shape of his nose

Could reflect beauty standards – changing to look more 'white'

Could also refer to husband Jay-Z, who is often mocked for his nose

Beyonce rejecting white beauty standards and celebrating black features

Message of pride in Beyonce's identity

AGAINST FORMATION

New Orleans references are exploitative

Nothing to do with the song

Don't address the impact on (particularly black) lives in New Orleans

Designed to shock and attract attention

AGAINST FORMATION (cont)

"I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros."

- Argues that this line appears to celebrate natural black hair

- Possibly a reference to Beyonce's daughter who has natural black hair

- The dancers in the video mostly have natural 'afro' hair

Beyonce herself contradicts the above

Shown with a weave covering her natural hair

Beyonce is shown with a range of hairstyles throughout the video

Some more 'natural' than others

Perhaps suggesting that although pride in black features is important...

... so is personal choice

The video also includes shots in a shop selling wigs



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AGAINST FORMATION (cont)

Suggesting that hair is part of personal expression

Colourful wigs that suit that vibrant surroundings of New Orleans

BOY AND POLICE SHOTS



The boy is very young
Might remind us of some cases of black people shot by police
Tamir Rice, 12 – shot by police while playing with a toy gun in a park
He also wears a hoodie
When Trayvon Martin was wearing a hoodie when he was shot; it was cited as a reason for finding him suspicious

POLICE AND BOY SHOTS 2



Police outnumber the boy
Low angle shot
Power
Emphasising physical size
Helmets, vests etc. for protection
BOYS Gesture:
Surrender?
Showing he is not armed?
Open body language
Surrounded by open space
Emphasising vulnerability
Clear binary opposition (Levi Strauss) here
Police vs. young black man
Power vs vulnerability

CINEMATOGRAPHY



What might the quality of the images and the way they're shot remind us of?
CCTV footage
Drones
Helicopters
All associated with surveillance and police
The video presents the idea of dancing as resistance
Against police oppression
Against surveillance
Against racial inequality – Beyonce dancing in the Antebellum style house

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POLICE JOIN BOYS DANCE



Communication between black communities and police?

This requires the police to be open and vulnerable

Non-violence

This section ends with the "stop shooting us" graffiti

Reminder that this communication is only possible if police brutality ends

THEORIES

bell hooks

Beyoncé as a role model for women to achieve. Suggestion that women achieving status and success is in itself a challenge to patriarchy. Lyrics say, "You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making" and "best revenge is your paper"

Promotes solidarity amongst women

The word "formation" has connections to military – organising troops to go into battle

In the video choreographed dancing communicates the idea of unity and acting together

The video contains imagery that communicates empowerment of women...

And imagery that empowers black people

The extent to which it specifically comments on black female identity is debatable

GAUNTLETT

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THEORIES (cont)

Challenging 'singular, straightforward messages' about gender

Beyoncé as confident and powerful (e.g. adopting the stance of a male rapper)

Celebrating different elements of Beyoncé's own identity

Big Freedia sample

STUART HALL

Challenging racial stereotypes

E.g. mise-en-scene emphasising wealth, success, status challenging the dominant representation of black people as poor and or unsuccessful

Reimagining the Antebellum era with black people in positions of power

Drawing attention to and subverting racial power dynamics

LIESBET VAN ZONEN

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THEORIES (cont)

The question of whether Beyoncé's body is shown as an "object to be looked at" could be debated

Costume, suggestive dance moves etc.

But also filmed and edited in a way that doesn't allow for a lingering "male gaze"

ROLAND BARTHES

The concept of the signifier/signified, using specific signification in the music video and considering how this might be interpreted according to social convention

For example, the use of antebellum era dresses, or the boy in a black hoodie.

ROLAND BARTHES

Does the video challenge Baudrillard's idea that in the modern age of simulacra we are in a world of images which no longer refer to anything 'real'? Real events & issues...

THEORIES (cont)

Does this video refer very specifically to reality and encourage audiences to consider these issues, or is it just a promotional tool?

PAUL GILROY

Does the music video challenge racial hierarchy by subverting expectations and placing a black woman in a position of power and dominion?

But does it perpetuate a sense of binary opposition between races by perpetuating Gilroy's sense of 'otherness' and a clear divide based on racial lines?



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