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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with Music Television (MTV) as a twenty-four hour music advertising channel. I intend to analyse MTV's style and structure in the hope of fortifying my argument that advertisers outside the music industry have identified MTV's style with all youth advertising and have taken up this unique style so as to infiltrate the youth market and reap the benefits of its money-making potential.

MTV was originally available via cable to the youth population in the United States. It is now available all around the world with affiliates in Europe, Asia, and South America. In this thesis I will deal with MTV U.S. as it is the root foundation for all its other branches. The basic format in structure, style and programme content is similar to all extensions of MTV U.S. and, therefore, my analysis of MTV U.S. can be applied to all of its other affiliates around the world.

Music has been an entertaining device for generations. It was only in the 1950s, with the advent of Rock and Roll, that the adolescent music market was defined. The 1960s environment, influenced by Vietnam and John F. Kennedy, was reflected in the attitudes and music of the youth generation. Freedom, love and peace were represented in songs by The Beatles, The Doors and Janis Joplin. The 1970s provided an environment where young people distrusted their leaders. There was an air of anarchy and anti-authority. These attitudes were openly displayed through Punk, Heavy Metal, and New Wave styles, both in fashion and music.

Each decade since the 1950s has defined its youth culture by the political and economic influences it imposes on them. In relating this to my argument, Chapter one shall deal with the 1980s environment in which MTV was born. I will also discuss some of the numerous other music programmes similar to MTV that sprang up in the early 1980's. These other programmes never became as successful as MTV and most of them have disappeared altogether. This discussion will highlight the uniqueness and strength of MTV over its competitors as the most

successful youth advertising channel since 1981. This in turn will hopefully back my argument that other advertisers have copied MTV's devices in the hope of attaining similar success with the same target audience, that is, fifteen to thirty-four year olds.

As I will examine how advertisers have imitated MTV's style and structure, it is relevant to define clearly what both of these entail. In Chapter Two I will attempt to do this by firstly analysing MTV's structure and then constructing a clear picture of its style by investigating and describing its main programme contents and video gap fillers. I will also briefly discuss the main media used in achieving this style, that is, animation and video techniques.

The final chapter will analyse some of the advertisements that have imitated MTV's 'look' in the hope of breaking into the youth market. I will discuss how they have used MTV's techniques, whether they have been successful in doing so, and why the advertisers continually pillage the inventive freshness of MTV's style.

As this thesis is based on an animate subject, I have included a video containing examples of MTV's programme contents, video gap fillers, and advertisements relevant to this argument. The illustrations that I have used within the text itself have been photographed from the television and some of these items are shown on this tape. If time allows, it would be very revealing and informative to watch this tape, even for your own personal enjoyment.

CHAPTER ONE

MTV'S BIRTH AND ITS ENVIRONMENT IN THE 1980S :

Music Television began in 1981 as a twenty-four hour music video channel. It was the brainchild of two men, John Lack and Robert Pitman, and became the most successful seller of music albums and videos in its field due to its ability to advertise music in an enjoyable new way. Its target audience was the majority of young adults between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four. It has outgrown all other forms of music video entertainment through its unique dynamic visual style. This chapter will deal with the environment in which MTV began and flourished, including many of the rival music channels which were wiped out in the race for cable subscribers.

The early 'eighties saw the rise in cable networks. Ted Turner had launched an all news *Cable News Network*. A merger of American Express and Warner Communications had already created an *All Children's Channel* with Nickelodeon and an *All Movie Network* with The Movie Channel. Selling to the fifteen to thirty-four year olds was becoming a large money generating area. With the advent of multinational corporate capitalism, advanced computer technology, Regan's Star Wars programme and other high tech developments, the stage was set for a decade of fast moving Yuppies. The Yuppie generation had been defined by all this newness. This was a set of young adults aged between twenty and thirty-five who were setting out to grab all the money making potential of these high-tech developments. Multi-million dollar businesses were being managed by twenty year old executives with money to spend on the leisure activities. Advertisers spotted this niche in the market and began to direct their products at this particularly up and coming affluent sector of society.

John Lack, who was the executive vice-president of the Warner-Amex cable ventures, had begun to develop an all music channel to cash in on this new type of market. Music and the youth generation have always been synonymous with each other, at least since the 1950s, and

so Lack decided to direct his new type of channel towards this specific demographic group. The great depression of the record sales business in 1979 also boosted opportunity for a new form of music advertising rather than through radio alone. The public's perception of the value of the audio record had changed due to the visual dynamic that television had impressed on them. The audio record no longer captivated their excitement and interest. TV was becoming a far more exciting medium yet to be explored and the public no longer accepted sound without image.

Lack hoped to use this ploy to obtain music videos from the record companies for free in exchange for free advertising in the form of showing these videos on his new music channel, MTV. Record companies, of course, were completely against this concept, as they feared people would stop buying records altogether and look to their television sets as a source of musical entertainment. Lack argued that the record sales business could be saved by the injection of the new energy of television. The device of using short visual clips to sell records was similar to using advertisements in-between programmes. They would also act as entertainment. The only difference was that Lack's music station wouldn't have any set programmes, just a continuous twenty-four hour flow of music videos. There would be gaps left between videos of ten to thirty seconds, which would break the flow and input variety. These would be filled with flashing highly visual MTV logo identities and were later to become liquid TV segments, pro-social announcements, cartoon clips, and other dynamic eye grabbers. See page 16.

MUSIC TELEVISION AND ITS ADVERSARIES :

When MTV began in the United States in 1981 it broadcast five minute video clips, twenty-four hours a day, with different video jockeys adding supplementary commentary. It relied purely on the music video form of entertainment as the only programme content. It obtained capital by introducing advertisements and by 1983 it had,

125 advertisers representing 200 products. These

advertisers were selling their products solely to the youth audience that MTV had plainly established. Pepsico, Kellogs, Coca-Cola and others were among the many companies supplying MTV's ad revenue.

(Kaplan, 1987, pp.1,2.)

In 1985 MTV's ratings slipped as the public had got used to the idea of the music video format and they also had a wide range of channels to choose from. During the first four years of MTV's life, music video programmes popped up everywhere. NBC featured *Friday Night Videos* Dick Ebersol who produced this show was one of the original forces behind *Saturday Night Live* (a still very popular comedy show). *Friday Night Videos* was more accessible to the public than MTV because it was not on the cable system¹ like MTV and in the early 1980s many American households weren't even wired to cable. *Friday Night Videos* was broadcast after the local evening news once a week and lasted only ninety minutes. But as more and more households became wired to cable, *Friday Night Videos* was disadvantaged by its inability to play videos twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and soon disappeared. ABC's *Hot Tracks* was similar to MTV in structure, however, it featured weekly hits and never kept to the same playlist. They would play a Heavy Metal hit next to Madonna's latest hit and, because these two types of music appealed to different types of listener, they never succeeded in holding either type of audience for more than a four minute video.

Hot Tracks and MTV in the early 'eighties played exclusively white Rock, although Micheal Jackson's *Billie Jean* and *Thriller* were shown on MTV after hitting number one on the radio charts. The majority of videos were performed by white American musicians. This left a gap in the music video market for an all-black music channel, similar to MTV and Hot Tracks but featuring a broader spectrum of contemporary music television entertainment. *Video Soul*, produced by Robert Johnson, filled this gap. It was launched on cable by The Black Entertainment Channel (BET) and was aired for six hours a week. It was

a strong contender to MTV and Hit Tracks because its content was not as rigid as their all white Rock agenda. *Video Soul* played videos by black and white artists, once their music was considered either Soul or Rhythm and Blues.

In 1985 however, Warner-Amex went into liquidation and sold its shares to Nickelodeon. Nickelodeon took over and MTV became MTV Networks (MTVN). There was also a change in the music market with the rise in popularity of black urban contemporary music. There was also a rise in the upwardly mobile professional in the twenty-five to forty-nine year old demographic group. If MTV was to survive this change it had to either be more democratic and widen its music area or come up with another channel that was geared towards an older audience with a broader taste in music.

Video Hits One (VH-1), launched by MTVN in 1985, was the answer to the older sector of the population who were left out by MTV's youth-orientated format. It featured older stars that had big hits in the 1960s and 1970s like Marvin Gaye and Diana Ross. These artists appealed more to the thirty-five to forty-nine year olds. VH-1 also featured *Soul of VH-1* which encompassed a range of music similar to that of Johnson's *Video Soul* on B.E.T. Another style of music that had been ignored by MTV, but had a strong following by the older generation, was contemporary Country Music. VH-1 was slow to gain cable subscribers but picked up steam by the end of the 'eighties.

It adopted an audience of thirty to fortysomethings who wanted music that echoed their youth, the identifiable struggle and breakthrough of the sixties and seventies. It catches exactly the crucial divide in music sensibility and mindset of forty-two year olds.

(York, 1994, p.84)

VH-1 has been available to U.S. subscribers since its conception in 1985, but on September 30th 1994 it became available to the European cable viewer. MTV became available in 1987.

In this chapter I have described the 1980s environment as one of new developments in technology and a new attitude to the visual image on television. Sound without images was no longer acceptable. Through MTV the moving image in the form of music videos had begun to play a huge part in the sales process. I have described some of the many other music programmes apart from MTV that sprang up in the early 'eighties. All of these other music programmes had their own significant influences on MTV's development and in turn on other forms of advertising.

1. Unlike the BBC and our own RTE there is no license fee system in operation in the USA. That is to say American television networks run on a sponsorship television system similar to radio, ie. Networks earn profits by selling time to commercial sponsors. American commercial television is free to the public. MTV follows this model by gaining capital from companies like Coca-Cola, Mars, and Pepsi who specifically want to target MTV's youth audience.

CHAPTER TWO

STRUCTURE, STYLE, AND CONTENT OF MTV

This chapter will deal with MTV's style by analysing its programme structure, content and the main methods of media used. I hope to establish a clear picture of MTV's unique, frenetic, image-packed, sometimes crazy style.

MTVS STRUCTURE : THE SEDUCTION OF FAST MOVING IMAGES

Because MTV's format consists of short running music video segments of four minutes or less, it keeps the viewer in a permanent trance, waiting for his or her favourite song to come up next. This seductive promise of fulfilment is emphasised more in MTV than any other television channel because of the shortness of its segmented structure. Because of the constant flow of short videos, combined with the thirty second video gap fillers, the boundaries between programmes are disguised and in turn disguise potential switch off points. John Fiske describes normal behaviour outside the MTV format :

The minute the viewer comes to a commercial break they lift up the remote control and start zapping to other stations, trying desperately to find something that will satisfy them.

(Fiske,1987,p.104)

What keeps the MTV viewer in a state of attention is the variety of images that have no immediate connection. This can be obtained by flicking through numerous different channels, catching short segments of each one. MTV captures this miscellany of consumable images through its speed and variety of media and so evades any loss of attention or excitement. It masks what is really a continuous flow of advertising with its non-narrative structure and its juxtapositioning of random texts. The parallel must be made at this stage between music videos as shown on television stations and all-music radio stations. The distinction being that radio advertises the CD or record as a commodity in itself by playing the music, and the television promotes

that commodity through music video. Music video is not more usually sold as a commodity in itself, and therefore serves the function as a television promotion for the CD or record. For example Thriller, Micheal Jackson's 1984 hit album was the largest selling record album of the 'eighties, selling over forty million copies. The video to the title track of this album only sold one million and was deemed the largest selling music video of all time. Therefore this indicates that music videos, although classed as entertainment, were originally an advertising device.

As Stephen Levy notes,

MTV's greatest achievement has been to coax rock and roll into the video arena, where you can't distinguish between entertainment and the sales pitch.

(Levy, 1983, p.37)

MTV hasn't only lead Rock and Roll into the video arena, it has also lead a population of young adults into a world where advertising has become entertainment. MTV's structure has brought about a changeover in the perceptions of young adults towards advertising. Individual advertisers selling other products to the same target audience such as (Sprite, Smithwicks and Pepe) have assumed this MTVish structure so that their product's adverts won't be thought of as merely boring advertisements, but as highly visual entertainment and so, in turn, sell more. Due to this turn-a-round, the sales pitch has become pleasurable rather than a bane on the viewer.

The masked sales pitch on MTV is one of selling itself and secondly selling music through video promos.

(Kaplan, 1987,p.18)

MTV's power is its ability to address a viewing audience of over "thirty-two million households" (Cordero, Sept '94, interview, New York) worldwide. Because an audience this large is going to be composed of

a wide range of different social groups, representing class, sex, colour, religion etc., MTV's contents must relate to all of these groups comprehensions. MTV is successful in relating to this extreme variety of groups through its images, vivid colour and speed. The viewer is invited to make his or her own link to their personal social experiences and ideologies.

CONVENTIONALISING MTV'S CONTENT

As I have mentioned in chapter one, MTV relied solely on music video for its programme content. From 1981 to 1985 this was true. The odd MTV logo identity would be introduced in-between videos but MTV's basic programme content was a constant flow of music videos repeatedly shown nine or ten times within a twenty-four hour period. In 1985, however, with the change in ownership to MTV Networks, Bob Pitman left and Tom Freston moved up to become chief. The slip in the viewership ratings in the mid-1980s might have been due to this tendency to repeat the same videos over and over again. Also viewers didn't stop long enough to watch MTV so that it would be recorded on the Nielsen Ratings which is fifteen minutes. Freston began to experiment with thirty-minute music countdowns, to hold the viewer past this fifteen minute stage. There were top 100 videos of summer, top 200 videos of all time, etc. Although these thirty minute programmes were a form of conventionalising MTV they kept the unique spirit of MTV in the fast moving logo identities and video gap fillers. There was a movement towards more and more speciality programmes, for example :

CLUB MTV ; featuring specifically Dance music;

THE HEADBANGERS BALL ; featuring Heavy Metal;

YO-RAPS ; including Rap and Hip Hop videos;

MTV UNPLUGGE ; a showcase of popstars playing live in the MTV studio;

ROCKUMENTARIES ; thirty minute documentaries on specific pop stars' rise to fame;

These thirty minute programmes were a form of packaging related styles of music into a set spot. MTV could then be listed in the television section of the newspapers and so the viewer could turn on

his or her preference of music whenever they wanted. All of these programmes were, and still are centred around the musical wheel. When a style becomes fashionable, a new programme is devised and when popularity wanes, the particular programme is taken off the list.

MTV has changed its basic narrow format of featuring solely White Rock to a more open ended range of musical styles. In 1986 Viacom bought M.T.V. Networks and Freston was pushed further to find more subscribers. He started to conceive non-musical programmes in the hope of gaining extra subscribers, expanding the programme format to include thirty minute game shows, comedy spots, and fashion shows. MTV began to veer further and further away from the original concept, and of course, from its perceived nature as embodied in the channel's name, Music Television. Karin Perrin a designer with MTV's 'on air' department, believes that it has not remained true to its form:

The viewer switches on MTV to see music, not a
hyped up thirty minute game show.

(Perrin, 1994 -interview, New York)

MTV U.S. includes eighty percent music to twenty percent news and features mix. It has got rid of the naff comedy shows and gimmicky game shows.

CURRENT PROGRAMME CONTENTS ON MTV

Thirty Second Comedy Spots :

These segments act as advertisements for MTV. Denis Leary was one of the very prominent comedians to advertise the channel and is now being used by Holsten Pils to advertise their lager in exactly the same manner. These thirty second spots consist of Leary in a surrealist setting, a strange Texan saloon, or on the peak of Mount Everest (these settings are always out of context with the surrounding programmes). Leary would rattle off a very speedy speech and it would be over so rapidly that you would need to see it three or four times before you understood what he said. This type of spot echoes the whole fast, crazy style that makes MTV so intriguing.

House Of Style :

This is a thirty minute fashion programme hosted by Cindy Crawford. It is produced in the quick cutting young style of MTV and reviews the latest fashions on the street, often relating them to music stars, therefore connecting fashion and style with MTV's main form of programming - music video.

The Real World (Figs. 2.1 - 2.2)

This real life soap opera is created in the style of Beverly Hills 90210 hip and trendy. It is a serial based on the lives of five young people, all from different backgrounds, put together in an apartment. MTV supplies them with free accommodation in return for their camera crew being allowed to film their daily lives including parties, fights, and whatever they may get up to. None of the people living in the apartment are acting.

Cinematic or The Big Picture :

This is a film review show. The host is placed in authentic settings to capture the mood of the latest number one film he or she is counting down to.

Beavis and Butt Head (Fig. 2.3):

This is a thirty minute animation show. It involves two rebel youths who do everything in their power to upset the norm of the community around them. The series follows their everyday lives and the mischief they get up to. They represent the anti-authority, nihilistic values that MTV's youth audience relate to.

MTV News :

Although "world news" conjures up thoughts of political and social upheavals, MTV-News mainly reports the goings on of Rock groups, when their new releases are coming out, tour dates, etc. It also looks at anything new in the music video industry, for example new advances in imaging device that would be of relevance to the youth market such as CD Rom.



Figs. 2.1 - 2.2
The Real World



Fig. 2.3
Beavis and Butt Head

VIDEO GAP FILLERS :

To keep MTV's reputation as the alternative, anti-authority, 'cool' channel from coming off the rails, there are assorted types of gap fillers. These were conceived to fill in the thirty second gaps left between videos, programmes, or the space of time left randomly in-between product adverts. The one unique type of programming that distinguishes MTV from other music channels are these gap fillers, whether they are station identity spots, liquid television, pro-social announcements or just plainly an amalgamation of condensed images all squeezed into a frenetic thirty second image blasting spot. These segments are all building blocks that piece together the uniqueness of MTV's style.

Station Identities :

As with any other channel MTV had to represent itself in a station identity. This logo had to be visually compelling and slightly off-beat. The young audience that MTV targeted had been hit by the punk revolution of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the anti-establishment attitude ruled. MTV's logo had to make a statement, one that bespoke youth and anti-authority.

Something forever changing, ever evolving and
totally cool-on-the-edge and in your face.

(Canemaker, 1992,p.21)

The design team that encompassed all of this in three simple letters were Frank Olinsky, Pat Gorman, and Patty Rogoff from Manhattan Design. They created an icon for music TV that was original and unique in terms of logo identities. NBC had just come up with its moving peacock logo, but it was nothing extraordinarily exciting. It didn't contain any variety in its image and has remained that way for fourteen years. The MTV logo, however, consisted of a blocky **M**, which was representative of a large looming father figure, all important and encompassing; the **TV** was spray painted on the side of the **M**, similar to graffiti, a defacement of the **M** (echoing anti-authority

values). The ID had the feel of a music video, involving movement and evolving states from the basic form.

The first ID spot (**Fig. 2.4**), consisted of the original film of Neil Armstrong's first landing on the moon, but in place of the American flag was a Music Television one. This replica flag suggested a slight air of rebellion and irreverence, both of which MTV boasted. There are flying ID's, where a strange looking girl swallows the logo with her five foot frog-like tongue (**Figs. 2.5 - 2.8**). Another logo symbolises the earliest form of language, written before hieroglyphics, as MTV in (**Figs. 2.9- 2.10**). MTV becomes a fish tank in (**Figs. 2.11 - 2.12**), a tooth and bird in (**Figs. 2.13 - 2.14**) respectively. The development of the logo by using diverse and varied forms of animation led to its extensive use throughout the network's programming. Animation, due to its ruleless nature, was the perfect medium in which to express an evolving music industry.

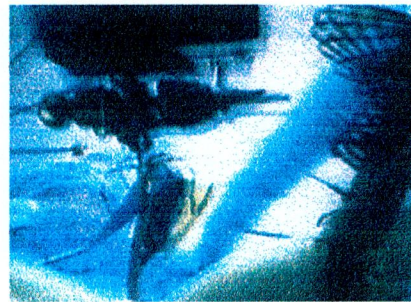
Liquid Television :

Liquid TV, which is an animated variety segment encapsulates a random juxtaposition of highly visual experimental thirty second spots. MTV was not the first to introduce such segments in the programming flow. A much earlier example, and maybe an influence on the devising of MTV's liquid TV, was created in 1971 by David Hall for Scottish TV. These short pieces were intended for similar purposes as liquid TV - to add diversity to the flow of programming so as to keep the viewers attention and to avoid boredom. The short segments were aired during the Edinburgh Festival in August 1971.

MTV's strength lies in its ability to push the edge in animation looks, content, and format. Liquid TV segments, do just this. John Payson, creative director and Abbey Terkhule, senior vice president of the Creative and Animation Department, are responsible for all MTV 'on air ' promotions, as well as the over-all look and packaging of ongoing and new programmes, contests and image productions. The programming of liquid TV provides a cultural diversity to the style of MTV by tapping into the global talents of students, animators, designers



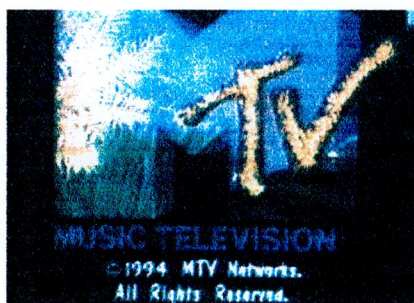
*Fig. 2.4
First ID Spot
Neil Armstrong*



*Figs. 2.5 - 2.8
Flying Logo*



*Figs. 2.9 - 2.10
Hieroglyphics logo*



*Figs. 2.11 - 2.12
Fish Tank logo*



*Figs. 2.13 - 2.14
Tooth and Bird
logos*

and film makers from all over the world. MTV has established international affiliates with their growing success in Europe, Asia, and South America (**Figs. 2.15 - 2.19**). All contribute animations or short films and this leads to a wide variety of techniques such as clay, 3-D puppets, computer generated animation, moving ink drawings, the list is endless. All of these add to the provocative off-beat individuality of MTV's style.

These animations have no set format and each segment is self contained. There are simple stick figure theatre presentations lasting thirty seconds (**Figs. 2.20 - 2.22**). These are reductions of scenes from famous plays, movies, and old fairy tales, all represented by line drawings that come alive and jump off the page. There are five minute mini-films consisting of a combination of collage, photo montage, video and computer animation all merging into one pulsating fast flowing piece (as seen on video). Also used are cut out puppets mixed with claymation sequences using the stratocut technique and a variety of other pieces using Photoshop, Quantel Paintbox and Morfing programmes.

Director and writer Gordon Clark used these programmes to produce his liquid shorts entitled "Ms Lydia's Make over" (**Figs. 2.23 - 2.25**) in 1991. It was an animated segment featuring well known stars both in the film and music industries. The objective was to enhance their physical features by using this beauty computer (a late 1980s skit on the rise of cosmetic surgery, used by these stars to change their image). The theme had an ironic twist and stars such as George Micheal were blended into cartoon characters that best suited their own character such as Mrs. Flintstone.

Sometimes a liquid TV mini-film joins onto an ID logo like in (**Figs. 2.26 - 2.29**) where a rather sultry figure starts to eat a taco. He cuts into the centre and tiny figures start oozing out and enveloping him, sliding into his mouth, ears and up his nose. The figure then explodes and all the tiny figures inside him form an **M** followed by a gorey splurge of blood to form the **TV** part of the logo. These short segments

AS INTERPRETED BY MTV ASIA.



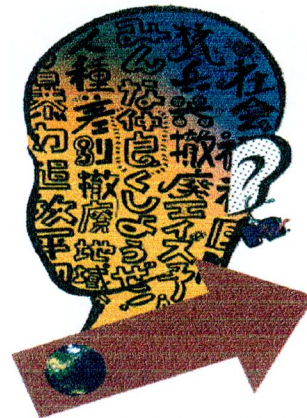
AS INTERPRETED BY MTV INTERNACIONAL



la cara del mundo



AS INTERPRETED BY MTV BRASIL.

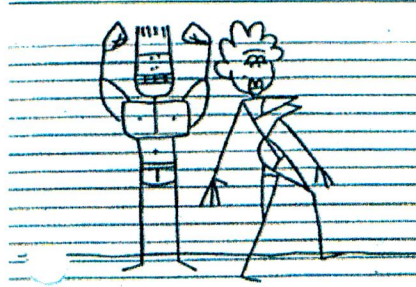
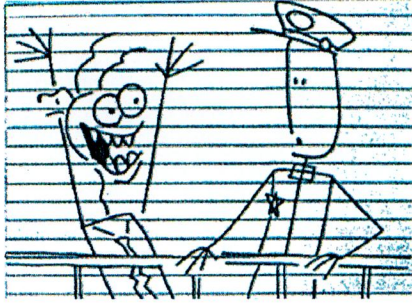


AS INTERPRETED BY MTV JAPAN.

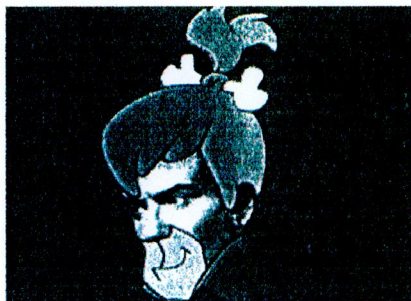


AS INTERPRETED BY MTV EUROPE.

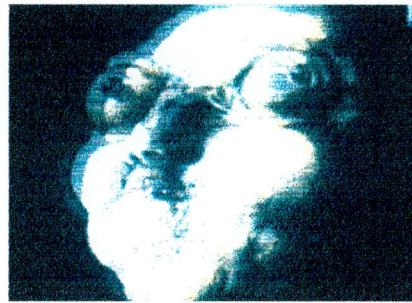
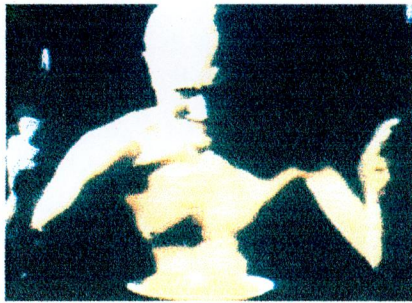
Figs. 2.15 - 2.19
International Affiliates



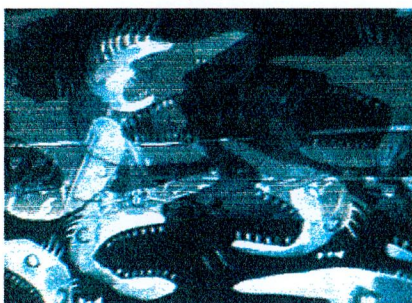
*Figs. 2.20 - 2.22
Stick Figure Theatre
Presentation*



*Figs. 2.23 - 2.25
Ms Lydia's Make Over*



*Figs. 2.26 - 2.29
MTV Liquid TV and Logo*



*Figs. 2.30- 2.31
Racial Segregation in the classroom*

sometimes consist of so many diverse animation devices, all condensed into thirty seconds, that the viewer is forced to watch the same spot at least five times before it becomes comprehensible. Therefore, these segments can withstand repeated showings without becoming boring. This device also leads to prolonged viewing, as the viewer is waiting to see the same spot again so they can catch the subtle images which they missed the previous time around. Advertisers selling to this youth market have picked up on this fast cutting technique and have used it to an extreme where it has become a normal part of our everyday TV watching. For example (Smithwicks, Golden Wonder Pot Noodles and Sega Computer Games)

Pro-Social Announcements :

M.T.V. not only entertains, it educates by combining funky imagery with a strong underlying social concept. It has produced a variety of on-going segments informing its youth audience on issues ranging from safer sex to the deterioration of the ozone layer and how to build a safer and better world to live in without sounding or looking boring. These pro-social announcements were developed in 1990 as part of MTV's on-going video gap fillers. MTV had been accused of racism due to its earlier 'all white Rock' format and was blamed for the shortening of our concentration spans due to its fast cutting style. Abbey Terkhule decided to counteract these criticisms by becoming aware, to use MTV as a billboard to make its young viewers aware too. AIDS, ozone depletion, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and the L.A. riots all played a part in this new form of programming on MTV. As incidents of ignorance, hatred and violence continued, MTV would be involved in exposing young adults to the power and potential of diversity. What makes these brief public service announcements so compelling is the variety of media and methods they use to give a freshness to what might have deteriorated into soapbox cliches. In (Figs. 2.30 - 2.31) a message about racial segregation in the classroom shows a small animated room filled with human-like blackboards with faces drawn on them, representing different races and colours. They all fight for their rightful place in the classroom as written messages alternate on the largest blackboard at the top of the classroom, informing them that



Figs. 2.32- 2.33
Racism

tolerance and understanding, whether you're black or white, Catholic or Protestant, is the only answer to peace. This animation segment uses puppetry, claymation and cel to attain a more interesting visual approach without losing the significant seriousness of the message.

Figures 2.32 - 2.33 show anger and violence literally rearing their ugly heads when a black and white person get together. The Los Angeles riots were reenacted with animated paper cut outs and presented with a caption "Paper is recyclable, people aren't". MTV's understanding of the appeal of using mixed media animation with a quirky sense of humour to expose these social disasters makes them all the more effective in getting their message across to young people.

VIDEO :

As MTV's main content is music video and the fact that television advertising has been influenced by the surrealist effects that can be obtained through this medium, it is necessary to include a brief analysis of this burgeoning medium.

The rise in video as an art form in the mid- 'seventies together with the extensive experimentation of visual music lead to a new form of advertising music through racy surrealist video images. Bruce Gower, a BBC director, produced the first prominent experimental music video for Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*. This was the beginning of a highly sophisticated, highly imaginative form of advertising music that has leaked into every other area of on-screen product marketing. *Bohemian Rhapsody* was a rather crude version of what music videos are today. However, this six minute Rock opera certified the pop group's classic success. It was in 1981, when MTV featured Buggles, *Video killed the radio star*, as its opening video that these micro-movies were acclaimed a successful record seller.

Film and video directors can now manipulate pictures with the same aesthetic and emotional effects as music. Computers can now be linked up to video editing stations and images can be artificially constructed or already existing video images manipulated. The

Quantel Paintbox allows artificial images to be constructed by first building a wire frame as a basic form to work from. Ampex Digital Optics (ADD) is capable of distorting already existing images by abstracting the image into areas of tone (Posteration), or a multitude of small squares (Mosaic). Two dimensional forms can be manipulated into three dimensional moving images. New advances in computer software have made it possible to create textures in computer generated graphics. Texture Synthesis, for example, can create slippery surfaces for water and metal, or fluffy textures for hair or cloth. The flexibility of video with the constant growth of new technology has led to its popularity in areas that require a highly visual effects such as music video, film special effects and advertising.

SCRATCH VIDEO :

Scratch video, which evolved back in the 1960s, was a visual form of mixing records. Andy Lipman defines it as :

A guilt-free piracy, pilfering sounds and images off broadcast television.....they are then fed into huge electronic blenders, mixing and processing the information into new juxtapositions and contexts.

(Walker, 1987, p.152)

Scratch video, therefore, is a moving collage of images all taken from pre- constructed television images and played at high speed so as to create a fast moving collection of related or non-related images depending on the theme of the video. This basic technique has been adopted by MTV in its isolation of short fragmented texts. Although MTV's short segments do not contain pilfered images from other broadcast television stations, the technique used is similar. The aims of scratch video as set out by John Walker in his book *Crossovers* bear witness to their similarity.

Aims of Scratch Video

(i) To break up the continuum and narratives of television by isolating short fragments of images.

- (ii) To disrupt the normal unitary relationship of words, sounds and images in television broadcasting.
- (iii) To make everyday T.V. strange and in doing so, more interesting. This effect renews our perception and deepens our understanding of the pleasures and power of the medium.
- (iv) Standard T.V. is characterised by a clear cut division between fact and fiction, news programmes and soap operas. Scratch blends fact and fiction in the conviction that fiction often influences reality.
- (v) Scratch video directors believed that to communicate to a large audience what is needed is visual pleasure. Firstly to attract attention and secondly to "sugar the ideological pill". (Walker,1987, p.156)

Scratch video died in the mid-'seventies. The artists had to pay a fee for each image used to its rightful owner and it became too expensive to produce this type of video legally. Essentially, though, the scratch video technique lived on as an influence in the development of MTV's structure. By exploiting this fast cutting technique MTV has become extremely successful in selling itself and its music and, in turn, has influenced other advertisers to use this technique for similar selling purposes. The vast diversity of techniques and ideas that provide MTV with its numerous contents, from specific programmes like *The Real World* to the satirical frolicking of Beavis and Butthead, and the combination of thirty second video gap fillers, have given MTV a unique hold on youth audiences worldwide. MTV have developed a visual identity for generation X¹. It is this identity that advertisers exploit to sell their commodities to this specific youth demographic. They mimic the garb of the MTV visual style to such an extent that both are virtually indistinguishable.

1. Generation x : The term used to describe the youth generation of the 'eighties and 'nineties who have been yearned on fast moving commercial television and the shallow consumerism of 'eighties Thatcherism.

CHAPTER THREE

MTV'S INFLUENCE ON ADVERTISING

In today's cluttered, multi-channelled, advertising landscape, the conventional wisdom holds that advertising must be faster, louder, hipper and more information-packed than ever before ; the result has been a proliferation of frenetic ads combining MTV style and Hollywood special effects.

(Berger, 1994, p.50)

The 1990s youth have been bombarded by more than "140,000 television commercials" (Weeks, 1994, p.16) and fourteen years of fast moving image manipulation by MTV. These young adults are technologically aware. They desire something new, something that will blow their minds, something quick, visually exciting and humourous. MTV embodies all these traits. As MTV has become the primary and most successful outlet for new-music, so too has it become the primary outlet for new-imaging techniques because of its underlying rule of experimenting with new technologies using a variety of different media. Abbey Terkhule believes that,

The irreverent atmosphere of MTV segments lends itself to obvious plagerism of many MTV innovations in advertising.

This, in turn, forces his creative department to continually reinvent. MTV exploits the maximum potential of new technology and therefore is always one step ahead in discovering the most visually exciting forms of transmitting images on television. MTV uses itself as a 'test dummy' for new techniques and ideas in the advertising market. This chapter will deal with specific cases where advertisers, addressing the same youth audience as MTV, have blatantly copied and used specific

styles, structures and sometimes concepts that MTV has projected in its programming. Firstly, I will deal with examples where the trend-fixated advertising world has used MTV's fast-cutting style in the hope of assuming a youthful vibrancy. I will also discuss its irreverent but humorous attitudes to the established norms of the advertising industry. I will then analyse adverts that have duplicated MTV's off-beat trendy 'look' by using surrealist images in an out of context scene, strange but compelling. And finally, I will compare certain advertisements that use similar media manipulations and characterisations as those found in specific programming on MTV.

THE FAST-CUTTING YOUTH TREND

MTV's style exemplifies the fast moving pace of the youth generation with its multitude of fast-cutting multi-media spots. Advertisers have adopted this technique with the ambition of being young and cool. They sell their products through fly-by images that reach out to the image devouring teen. The advertising market is saturated with a conceptless flow of visually appealing images. Sega computer game adverts embody this plethora of mindless image blasting. Segas adverts instill the desire for continual consumption by blurring the categories of fiction and non-fiction with random fast cutting surreal scenes and distortion of camera views. Sega Computer Games (**Fig. 3.1**) shows the familiar weather forecast section at the end of the daily news. This familiar scene is altered with the addition of a wide angled camera lens and a fast cutting collage of disjointed images. The Golden Wonder Pot Noodles advert (**Fig. 3.2**) follows this disorientating path with a very similar news room setting. Both adverts contain the elements of a TV ID logo as if these adverts were actually channels in themselves. They are mimicking the popularity of the all-fashionable channel hopping craze of the 'eighties and 'nineties. It is a parody of the multitude of channels there is to choose from giving these adverts a place in youth pop culture, and therefore more identifiable to its youth audience.

DISGUIISING THE SUPERFICIAL SALES PITCH WITH THE GRITTY BOTTOM LINE

Our youth generation have become aware that advertisers use visually pleasing images to coax the consumer into buying. Their ploys undermine the reality of today's world and bring the consumer into a fantasy dream where anything is possible. Because of this new awareness advertisers are now breaking the rules of advertising by going against these norms. In being literally truthful ie. showing the gritty truth, what the product actually does or doesn't do and using disturbing images rather than the pleasing norm to describe this, advertisers shield the exploitative image of the advertising medium. MTV uses similar devices in its attempt to disguise advertising as pleasurable entertainment, for example its ID spots advertising itself as a channel.

One such advert that attempts this new sales ploy is the Smithwicks 'Get into Ireland' commercial (**Fig. 3.3**). It uses the fast-cutting visual style of MTV combined with multi-layered blasts of gritty imagery. These images consist of smoky pub scenes, tacky tourist images of Ireland, dreary wet streets and flickering pub television screens, all scenes that the Irish viewer can readily identify with rather than sunny climes and blonde tanned super-models. The open-ended slogan "Are you going for a Smithwicks, or wha ? " implies that 'this advert is not forcing its product upon you, it's suggesting it in friendly familiar terms, that's all, and so makes the product more appealing. It doesn't tell you that this product will change your life forever, nor will it imbue you with instant social attraction. All its saying is 'if you're thirsty then maybe you'd fancy a pint of Smithwicks'. This advert like many others, exploits the truth by inverting advertising norms of desirable pleasures and showing the opposite to acquire a more identifiable status with its specific youth audience. The Smithwicks ad attempts to localise it's product by using irish colloquial terminology like 'Wha' at the end of its slogan. This adds a personal message to its irish audience and a more casual one for it's youth viewers which in turn disguises it's true commercial justification.

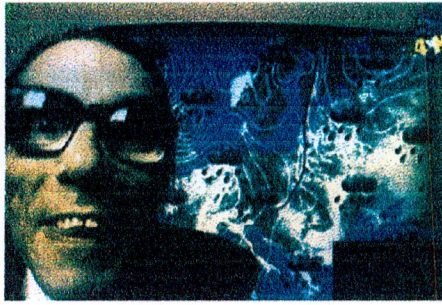


Fig. 3.1
Sega Computer Games

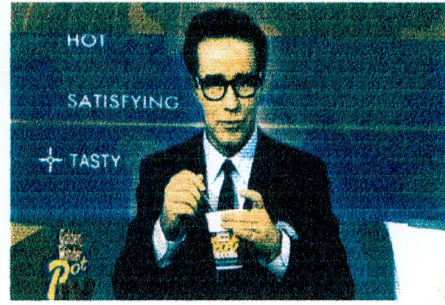


Fig. 3.2
Golden Wonder Pot Noodles



Fig. 3.3
Smithwicks



Figs. 3.4 - 3.5
Sprite

The Sprite advert (**Figs. 3.4 - 3.5**) contradicts the advertising norm with a humorous anecdote about a hunky male trekking through the desert in search of refreshment. The predictable images of sun, sand and a desirable young male set the scene for what turns into a satirical backlash on the superficial value of all these objects of desire. As the rough and ready young hero approaches an oasis he fearlessly plunges off his camel and drags himself through the scorching sand to reach it. The camera then focuses towards his three camels who are sucking Sprite through straws at a bar nearby. The camels become the clever heroes and the masculine object of desire is forgotten. The advert ends with the slogan 'Obey Your Thirst'. This humorous irony deflates the more familiar attractive young hero character by replacing him with three hairy nosed camels, therefore denying the fickle and superficial values he stands for.

These displays of unconventional marketing strategies have been demonstrated on MTV since its beginning in 1981 through the device of disguising promotional selling material as entertainment. These devices take the form of weird and sometimes threatening images that are contained in the unpredictable world of the extreme, they are intended to challenge the viewers' imagination and keep them glued to the television screen therefore selling MTV as a channel in itself. MTV also defies normal advertising methods through its on going anti-television pro-social announcements, for example its 1992 spot telling you to "Turn off the TV and read a good book", promoting the educational values of reading rather than watching television, or its animated logo ID spot showing a fat unhealthy potato lounging on a couch, representing a couch potato. These unorthodox creative techniques have been used by both Smithwicks in its realistic depiction of Ireland behind the glossy facade of tourist commercialism, and Sprite in its humorous denial of well known superficial selling techniques.

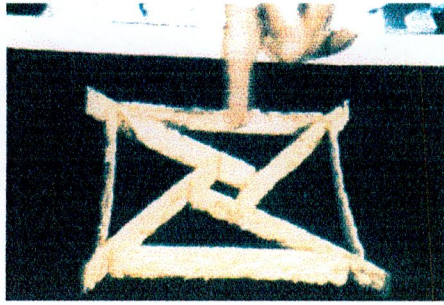
THE ATTRACTION OF ODDITY

Advertisers have realised the strength in using surrealist fictional

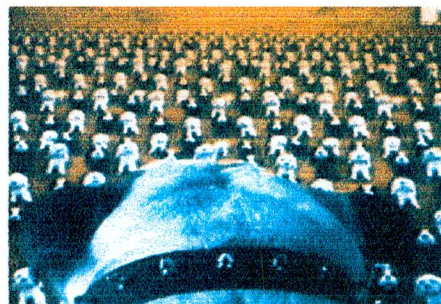
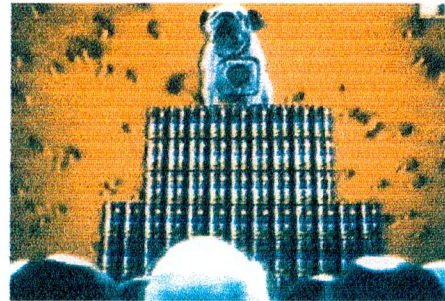
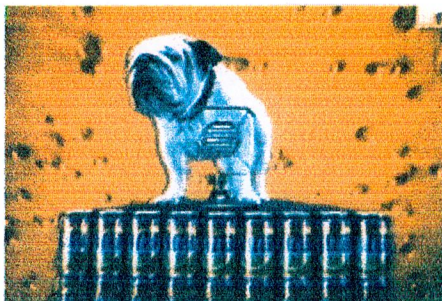
images and concepts in selling to the youth market from MTV's ongoing success in this area. Tango, a soft drinks manufacturer, taps into this device with a wilfully silly attitude and extra-ordinary off-beat storyline. It demonstrates that creativity and impact are not mutually exclusive. Its eccentric concept makes it all the more compelling. It involves a rugby fan watching a match while drinking a can of Tango orange. He is minding his own business, enjoying the match when all of a sudden the pitch goes bare, and an evil looking orange faced woman runs towards him with a strange looking cork screw attached to her hand. She smacks him in the face with an orange rubber glove and runs away. This scene quickly replays itself, as if it were a re-recorded image, and then returns to normality focusing on the man who looks dazed and confused. The advert's incompatibility and broken images leave the viewer in a similar state of confusion. This type of direct effect commercial uses a juxtaposition of non-related surrealist scenes, similar to MTV's programming, to create an impact and remain etched in the viewers mind.

The Wasa crispbread snack advert (**Fig. 3.6 - 3.8**) runs along similar lines in using the attractive seduction of strangeness to sell its product to the youth market. The commercial is set in a scientists laboratory, where a man clad in a white coat asks you (the viewer) to solve a puzzle by moving the crispbread sticks around the table in front of him. This scene cuts to a variety of distorted close-ups of his assistant, who is positioned in a sort of electric chair-type contraption, guzzling down the snack sticks to increase his brain power and solve the riddle before its too late. The abstract humour and fast moving clips of the crazed scientists draw the viewer in and create a hungry desire to watch it again so that some sort of rational can be determined between crispbread and mad scientists.

The Tango campaign starts with an idea the product gives you a 'good smack'. The style comes after the concept. The Wasa commercial informs the viewer of the healthy 'brain nurturing' properties of its product in an off-beat way. But there are commercials that present their campaigns by slavishly mirroring the extrinsic values of weirdos



Figs. 3.6 - 3.8
Wasa Crispbread



Figs. 3.9 - 3.11
Tizer

and wackiness and in doing so leave out the concept altogether. These over colourful, fast paced, pretentious slots deliver no sales proposal whatsoever. The current Tizer soda drinks campaign (**Fig. 3.9 - 3.11**) seems to embody this trend. It begins with an authoritative bull dog sitting on top of a throne made from Tizer cans, preaching to an audience of battery operated yapping dogs. He asks "What went before, the poof or the pavement?". The audience of yapping dogs reply "The poof, the poof". This advert says absolutely nothing about the product and is based on eccentric style alone.

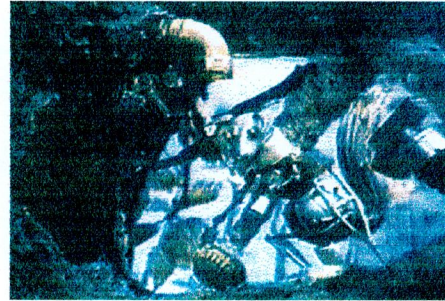
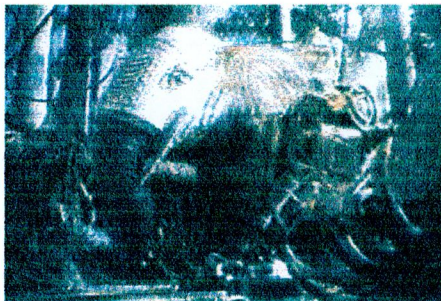
The new Guinness advert (**Fig. 3.12**), however, takes the viewer on a disorientating trip through a pint of guinness where a succession of Guinness bubbles change into planets in outerspace. The camera slowly moves through the darkness to an open walled room at the top of a huge tower (resembling the tower of Babel). Inside is another pint of Guinness and a television set playing another commercial for Guinness. The advert replays itself and the viewer is taken on the exact same 'trip' to reveal the same end (similar to Tango). This commercial, although pertaining to the whacky characteristics of MTV, has not followed in the fast cutting footsteps of the majority of adverts. It uses the playback technique to obtain individuality as well as visual appeal in the use of animated computer graphics. Advertisers are always on the lookout for something completely new and totally experimental so that 'their' commercial, as opposed to the next, will generate awareness.

THE INFLUENCE OF MTV'S FICTIONAL SPIRIT WITH THE USE OF MIXED MEDIA ANIMATION

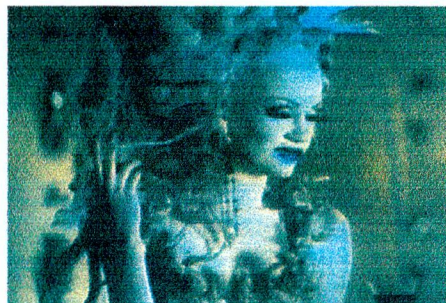
MTV's use of fictional themes with the help of mixed media animation has enhanced its alternative appeal. The Fanta orange 'ELEFANTA' commercial (**Figs. 3.13 - 3.16**) uses similar mixed media animation techniques, including metal puppets and claymation to induce the effect of an entertaining animated cartoon and therefore implying that this advert is not just a sales gimmick but an entertaining slot. The sheer elegance of the new Harveys Bristol Cream advert (**Figs. 3.17- 3.20**) is enough to sell it but it also contains a quirky off-beat look



Figs. 3.12
Guinness



Figs. 3.13 - 3.16
Fanta Orange



Figs. 3.17 - 3.20
Harveys Bristol Cream



Fig. 3.21
Pepe Jeans

with a colourful classy theatrical setting. Its use of an eccentric puppet-like display, where a magical doll comes to life on a mystical stage setting, likens it to a multi-media liquid TV spot. Along with this trend of using interesting assortment of diverse animation techniques in the one spot, similar to MTV's liquid TV segments and ID spots, advertisers have been influenced by certain specific programmes aired on MTV. They have used their concepts to evoke MTV's rebel youth style, for example Pepe jeans (**Fig. 3.21**) follows along the lines of 'The Real World' in that it uses the basic idea of filming a real life situation involving five hip and trendy young people and the activities they get up to. Because this type of angle imposes an illusion of non-superficial (acted out) scenes, young viewers more readily identify with it.

CONCLUSION

MTV has taken the television image to the edge and continues to do so. Dispensing with traditional structural programming it espouses a more dangerous, fast moving, intuitive approach which reflects the alternative spirit of its content. It addresses the constantly changing visual orientations of the youth generation by evolving and re-inventing itself.

The rapid explosion of new computer technology both in the 1980s and 1990s has enabled the realisation of the most amazing visual images in both motion and print. Because of this our youth generation, exposed more openly to new imaging devices through numerous new cable channels, music video shows, computer generated games, and special effects both in film and advertising, have grown to expect a highly visual approach as the norm in TV watching. The appeal of fast-cutting editing techniques has become just as familiar, first introduced on a regular basis through MTV's segmented programming structure involving jumpcut techniques to create a more interesting effect and therefore renew our perceptions and deepen our understanding of the pleasures and power of the TV medium. This technique has been duplicated to such an extent by advertisers (Smithwicks, Sega, Pepsi Max etc.) that audiences' tolerance for more short and speedy subjects has grown and it has become a normal phenomena in everyday TV watching.

Because MTV was the first twenty-four hour channel to provide entertainment specifically to a population of young adults it has had a very prominent influence on their viewing expectations. As MTV girdled the world, its visual diversity expanded. With graphics being supplied by its affiliates in Europe, Asia and South America the concoction of assorted traditions and cultures brought about a uniqueness to their visual style. This specific demographic group of 15-34 year olds had never been accommodated for continuous twenty-four hour periods before 1981 by any television channel. Therefore this particular channel's visual style had a reinforcing influence on their popular preconceptions of TV entertainment, or should I say advertising, as MTV is a music advertising channel which disguises its sales pitch as

entertainment. This form of advertising as entertainment was quickly adopted by every other youth advertising campaign in the hope of relating to this new highly image conscious youth audience.

MTV, through its experimental and dynamic style, has become a guinea pig for new and radical design methods. After being tried and tested as a successful attention grabber for youth audiences, advertisers imitate the newest discovery of MTV until the TV screen becomes saturated with similar fast-cutting, frenetic, rather off-beat youth commercials. But because MTV is always one step ahead, with its underlying policy to continually reinvent, its style never comes under threat from over-exposure. The advertisements on MTV, which make up eighty percent of MTV's content (music videos and MTV adverts including logo IDs and liquid TV), have a distinct advantage over regular product advertisements in that they are forced to have a shorter TV life because, although they are adverts, they also represent the programmes on either side of the ad break.

MTV will continue to experiment with the latest imaging and communicative devices. As long as there is music, there will always be an MTV.

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VIDEO: MTV RIDES THE CULTURAL WAVE
LENGTH: 20 MINUTES 47 SECONDS

Contents:

MTV RIDES THE CULTURAL WAVE - Video Gap Filler
PEPSI MAX - Commercial
ADDIDAS - Commercial
OLD AGE - MTV pro-social announcement
MTV ID - Video Gap Filler
THE REAL WORLD - Programme content on MTV
TIZER - Commercial
MTV ID - Video Gap Filler
MTV ID - Video Gap Filler
MTV ID - Video Gap Filler
WASA CRISPBREAD - Commercial
BIRDS EYE - FAR FETCHED MEALS -Commercial
HOLSTEN PILS -Commercial
HARP LAGER -Commercial
COCA-COLA -Commercial
VAX NEW WAVE -Commercial
FANTA ORANGE -Commercial
HEINEKIN -Commercial
BEAVIS AND BUTTHEAD - Programme content on MTV
SPRITE -Commercial
HARVEYS BRISTOL CREAM -Commercial
THE WEATHER - MTV pro-social announcement
MTV ID -Video Gap Filler
MTV UNPLUGGED - MTV advert for programme content
IN TIME OF ANGELS -Video Gap Filler
ROLLING STONES - Modern music video
BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY - First influential music video
CD ROM - MTV News segment informing on new aspects of media technology
MIKE OLFEILD - Example of new programmes use in a music video
LIQUID TV -Video Gap Filler (using new programme 'MIS'- an example of MTV's use of new imaging techniques)
MTV MUSIC AWARDS - Different use of mixed media to introduce stars

MTV ID AND PRO-SOCIAL ANNOUNCEMENT -Video Gap Filler
MTV MUSIC AWARDS - Introducing best male
SKETCHER'S FOOTWARE - Commercial
MTV ADVERT FOR 24-HOURS A DAY - Video Gap Filler
ROCKY MTV FILM - Video Gap Filler
MTV ROCKUMENTARY -MTV advert for programme content
MUSIC NON-STOP MTV ADVERT - Video Gap Filler
MTV ID - Video Gap Filler
SMITHWICKS - Commercial