

Cornelia und Holger Lund:

„Get the cut“ – On the Relation between Music Video and Visual Music

Music video and the filmic manifestation of Visual Music are often handled as two different forms of the visualisation of music. In order to separate the one from the other, relevant criteria of the music video and of Visual Music can be opposed: in music video the principle of causality is respected, i.e. the makers of music are visible (even if this often doesn't correspond to probability: from where should come the electricity for the anyway not existing microphone to sing into?). In Visual Music the dispensation with such a principle of causality is instead fundamental: in entirely different ways visual elements can join the music or can be coupled with it, but usually the maker of the music is not depicted in the visuals. But this is where the clarity of the separation ends quite quickly because Visual Music as a genre is quiet open, e.g. towards Video Art, Expanded Cinema, dance film, animation, games - and towards the music video, too. This is not least due to the notion "visual" itself which includes all types of moving image, be it film, video, overhead, slide or even light. Visual Music ties on the other mentioned genres – and they in their turn tie on Visual Music.

Especially the music videos of more renowned directors such as Spike Jonze, Chris Cunningham or Michel Gondry repeatedly do without the musicians – just like Visual Music. What however almost always remains, quasi as a substitute for the not present musicians, is a narrative structure – which is rather alien to Visual Music. From time to time the directors of music video even boast with distinctive and intensive tales so that the music rather appears as a soundtrack, thus as secondary and afterwards adapted to the primary images. This is not very typical for Visual Music where the images almost always are equivalent or secondary in relation to the music.

The case becomes even more complicated because in Visual Music musicians can also appear in action, even though the music then, at the difference of the music video, often is generated with filmic means such as editing and montage.

Already this brief survey shows that the relation between Visual Music and music video is marked by interconnections which can be also pursued historically.

The paper will examine this relation more closely from a scientific-curatorial viewpoint with the help of selected examples from videos and film, focussing on separating cuts and discerning criteria. Get the cut...