

An analysis on dashboard by modest mouse essay sample



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When you initially hear a song it is often difficult to understand the meaning of the song, and even in some cases the lyrics. This is where music videos can be very helpful. They put a story line with the lyrics. This allows the viewer to understand it much better. However, this was not always the case, as televisions have not always existed. It was a long time after the television had gained popularity that MTV came along, and MTV in turn was responsible for creating music videos. As television was a visual medium, it would thus require something to view. This resulted in the music video, which led many different artists to fame. One artist who has used music videos as advertisement was Modest Mouse, more specifically their song Dashboard.

The music video opens up to a bar that is in a sea-faring city. There is a group of fishermen telling tales, and one mentions a very large fish he saw. Upon hearing this, a man that entered the bar tells his story of how he pursued the fish, and it eventually bites off his hand. As he is telling the story the video takes us along on his journey. In the first scene he is sailing out into the middle of the ocean and is thrown around by a huge storm. Following this he is standing on the bow of his ship scanning the horizon, giving the sense that he had gotten lost by the large storm. When he is on top of his ship he sees the giant fish that he had evidently been searching for. He gets out a fishing pole and starts fishing, but does not have luck for a long time.

He begins keeping a journal, and we discover that it is day 66 and he finally gets a bite. The giant fish then pulls his boat to a ship graveyard, showing that the skipper was not the first one to pursue the fish. This is where the sailor wrestles the fish to try and capture it, but in turn gets his arm eaten by

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the fish. The sailor blacks out and wakes up being rescued by a group of people who seem to have erected sculptures to the fish. The sailor has his hand replaced with a microphone and is set off to return home. This whole time the other seamen had been laughing at his story, not believing a word of it. At this point the bar tender comes up to them and shows that his leg has been replaced with a guitar neck. Proving that the man with the microphone was telling the truth, as he was not the only one with a limb replaced by a musical instrument.

In the visual composition the Sargasso Sea has a lot of emphasis placed upon it. In the opening scene when the sailor begins his story he places a piece of a map of the Sargasso Sea on the table, and is met with laughter from the other men. The reason the men immediately write him off on the subject is because the sea is surrounded with superstitions. It is claimed to be the location where the Fantastic Four gain their super powers. But in closer relation to the Modest Mouse story, it is said to be the place where unknown sea creatures lurk. The book *The Loch*, which is inspired by the story of *The Loch Ness Monster*, started these superstitions. Also in *The Lost Continent*, Spanish conquistadors are trapped in seaweed for hundreds of years fighting sea monster. This gives premise of why the sailors' tale would not have been believed by the group of seafarers. Through this whole story the man repeats the lyric " Well it could've been, should've been worse then you would ever know, oh!" This lyric has great meaning when it is put in line with the music video. It is saying that as bad as things were the whole time, you can't believe how much worse it could have been. Not only worse, but

also worse than you could possibly imagine. However, after viewing the music video it becomes evident as to how much more is being portrayed.

The other lyrics of the song are telling of a car that has been destroyed and is sitting on blocks, the only use it has anymore is to be melted down. But there is still one thing in it that works, and it's the radio. This is saying that there is still one thing that is good with the car. Most of the lyrics to the song are pretty pessimistic, telling of how bad things are, but when you look deeper you see that it is actually looking at the glass half full. There are still good things. This then relates to the music video, telling as bad as it is that he lost his hand it is still much better than what could have happened. The giant fish could have killed him, but the fish ironically also saved him. Had the fish not existed, then the people who worshiped the fish would not have existed, and then the people who worshiped the fish would not have been able to save his life. The end meaning of this music video is that no matter how bad things are going for you, always look to the bright side of it and think of how much worse you could have it.