

Comparing music promos

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The two videos I am going to compare are; a new and up incoming artist from London's underground scene, Kano with the video for 'Ps and Qs' an underground anthem that marks the mainstream break - through for grime and UK hip hop and a very comical band Tenacious D with the video for 'WounderBoy', who's main singer and founder of the band is a well known and respectable comedian - Jack Black.

The band who are responsible for songs such as 'Fu*k Her Gently' like to be seen as funny and not to be taken to seriously. Such a contrast between the band and the artist it is quite obvious that both videos are not going to be alike and great for comparing and contrasting.

Kano's 'Ps and Qs' promo is directed by Alistair Siddons, an up incoming director who works for the production company Colonel Blimp. He is well known in his chosen genre of music- underground UK grime and hip hop and has directed videos for highly respected bands and artists in that scene, such as 'The Streets', 'Roots Manuva' and 'Crazy Titch'. He tends to work with artists on a low budget although he does still continue to work with his artists once they have become more popular and have a larger budget. He is becoming increasingly well known and has recently won four awards for his work at this year's Underground Music Awards.

Tenacious D decided to use Spike Jonze, a well respected film and music video director, largely credited for his work in Blockbuster films 'Being John Malkovich' and 'Adaptation'. However Jonze also remains a pioneer in the world of music videos, and for many years has been best known as an award - winning music video, short film and commercial director. One of his most

famous promo' s being 'Fatboy Slim's' 'Praise You', in which Jonze stars as himself. Unlike Siddons, Jonze does not have preferable genre in which the videos he directs and has directed for a wide variety of musical styles and genres, from Hip Hop's Notorious B. I. G to digital, electro pop band Daft Punk.

'Ps and Qs' establishing shot is at a tilted, low angle looking up at high - rise city building, which has a lot of glass and reflection from street lamps, we can see that it is at night. There is fast, snappy editing that goes with the songs digitally modified beats and we can see more images of London and local streets that are graffitied and littered. This adds to the mise - en - scene of the video and gives an impression and feel of urban decay. Just before the lyrics start we can see Kano walk out from the darkness of an alley and into the light from a street lamp. He walks towards the camera and begins to rap (as though he is talking) to us. The camera begins to track backwards with Kano walking forward to us; Kano appears to be moving with the camera, as though he is on the tripod.

Tenacious D's video opens as though it were a film, with credits informing whom the director and the band is, the background is of the nights sky and we can see that it is snowing. The establishing shot is of tall snow mountains and a forest, the camera moves quickly into the forest and we can see the band's main singer Jack Black sat on a log. As the lyrics begin Jack starts to sing dramatically but serious - already we can sense intertextual reference to the world - famous film, 'Lord Of The Rings'. Editing is slow and typical of a fantasy/adventure film, camera shots are also very filmic e. g. extreme close

- up's of Jack Black, and large bird's eye view shots, that quickly sweep over scenery and closely focus on characters. I also feel that the video has been shot in double time or time and a half to create a slow motion feel.

As Kano's promo continues, we see more tall building projects, estates and back streets. Through - out the video Kano appears to be on his own travelling through out London. The film seems to have a dark green wash over it as the video appears to be off - coloured and darker than it should be, this also adds to the mise - en - scene of the promo and creates a atmosphere that is not overtly scary but menacing. The places that Kano travels through appear to be slightly threatening and the viewers find themselves relieving that they are not walking through these places on their P's! (On their own). The viewer can see that this video is on a lower budget compared to Tenacious D's 'WonderBoy' and does not have such graphic storyline or the need for great acting skills, however Kano's lyrical content mixed with clever camera and editing tricks make up for the lack of story - boarding.

Tenacious D's promo develops a story - line that the viewer can follow through the bands actions, their impressive acting skills and the song's lyrics, which sing about 'WonderBoy' and his evil archenemy - Young nasty man. Through out the video we see 'WonderBoy' (played by Jack Black) sat in the forest reciting lyrics, he begins to move as he sings and the camera tracks behind him, as WonderBoy dramatically turns around, we see his evil competitor, Young nasty man (played by the band's other member Kyle Glass). Shots are slow and dramatic with a lot of use of 'fade editing'. During

the song we approach a verse that is spoken (and shouted!) by Black, the promo at this verse fades into a picturesque view of Snow Mountains with Black and Glass's faces faded on top of the picture.

This is a technique used in 'The Lord Of The Ring' films and is usually used to show what the character is thinking about or the scene that he is creating with words. We see extravagant sets of icy snow deserts and the camera tracks behind Black on what seems to be a quest. Filming is slow and dreamy. The whole promo only actually uses 92 different camera shots most of which are faded into each other, compared to Kano's 'P's and Q's' which use's a mass of 156 different camera shots which are fast, snappy and edgy (and maybe dangerous for someone who has epilepsy).

In conclusion both promos are incredibly unique and directed to the highest standards, none better than the other but just of remarkably different genres and styles. Kano's promo pushes boundaries and throws out stereo - typical cliches of American, gangster Hip Hop with jewellery, woman and drugs. It too illustrates the wider shift in the way Garage and Grime music is incrementally developing from disposable dance floor music into a far deeper and infinitely more subtle medium capable of expressing the turbulent inner life of Britain's excluded urban underclass - a demographic discovering their own identity and voice through microphones, cheap computertechnologyand the sawn-of idiom of pirate music.

In turn Tenacious D's 'WonderBoy' offers amazing direction from Jonze and incredible theatrical performances from Black and Glass. A comical, yet serious parody lampooning a contemporary media phenomenon - 'The Lord

Of The Rings' and at the same time tells a humorous tale of how the band was started. Many critics and viewers found 'The Lord Of The Rings' to worthy and pompous yet Tenacious D and Spike Jonze saw this opportunity to successfully mock it.