Product Context

Vance Joy is an Australian singer-songwriter signed to *Atlantic records (a subsidiary of major label, Warner). His music can be categorised as fitting into indie folk-pop genre.*

Riptide was Vance Joy's **first single to be released in the USA, following his debut EP**, "God Loves You When You're Dancing". It became a **platinum selling single.**

The video was **directed by Dimitri Basil and Laura Gorun** and has had nearly *100 million views on YouTube.*

Riptide Music Video

Video: http://youtu.be/uJ_1HMAGb4k

"I was scared of dentists and the dark"



Woman tied up

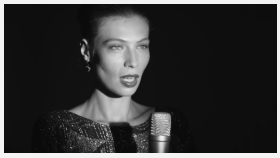


"Take me away to the darkside"

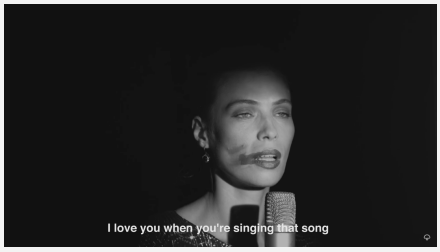


Woman's hands being dragged out of shot

Singer



Singer (2)



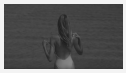
Singer (3)



Cowboy



Undressing



Media Language

-- ECONOMIC CONTEXT --

The seemingly **low budget, unique style of the music video was either an artistic decision or economic one** (or both?). Later Vance Joy's music videos *(such as "Georgia") would make use of larger budgets, special effects and elaborate, coherent narratives.*

Media Language (cont)

Funding could be discussed in relation to music video in terms of the way that bands might start out with small low budget productions which increase in scope and budget as they gain popularity and fans.

The *budget impacts artistic decisions and the visual style of music videos, and it could be discussed whether or not music videos are somewhat an 'advert' for the band or a representation of how 'valuable' the band are to producers*.

Are mainstream audiences impressed by larger budget music videos and attract to the apparent implied 'quality' of that band?

-- HOW THE COMBINATION OF ELEMENTS OF MEDIA LANGUAGE INFLUENCES MEANING AND INTERTEXTUALITY --

The video makes intertextual references to different media forms and offers a wide range of seemingly disparate elements.

Montage editing is used in an overt way- a wide range of contrasting shots juxtaposed (often through hard jump cuts) to convey a large amount of information.

The **editing together of seemingly disparate images invites audience interpretation** and candidates could consider **Eisenstein's concept of 'intellectual montage' where new ideas emerge from the collision of images and generate new meanings that might not otherwise exist:**

For example, **the sequence where a male and a female suddenly turn their heads to look at something off-screen and the next shot shows a seemingly unrelated pile of dollar bills- consider the connections audiences are being asked to make through this use of montage.**

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Media Language (cont)

Many of these cuts also have a clear link to the lyrics themselves and candidates might explore the visual metaphors and possible significance of these edits in relation to the lyrics.

The music video for the most part **rejects a clearly defined narrative.** There are **some short coherent narrative sequences (such as the scene where the girl goes missing in the graveyard) but for the most part the sequences deliberately lack narrative coherence.**

Many people writing about the music video might explore the way in which the music video seems to **reference surrealist or avant-garde cinema (such as the work of Luis Bunuel)** and discuss the impact these references might have on the meaning of the video.

-- CODES AND CONVENTIONS OF MEDIA FORMS AND PRODUCTS --

Ways in which the music video seems to defy or subvert music video conventions:

Whilst it is a convention of the music video form to have song lyrics interpreted on the screen, the overt and deliberate way the lyrics are interpreted in this music video might be subverting this convention:

The opening line "I was scared of dentists and the dark" is interpreted explicitly with a shot of a female looking "scared" with a metallic contraption in her mouth that suggests she is in a dentist's chair and followed by a shot of a light swinging in a darkened room. This overt graphical representation of the lyrics is largely repeated throughout the video.

The music video seems to explicitly reference feature films:

Media Language (cont)

The **opening shot makes use of cinematic style credit**s and information about the music is presented with a title at the bottom of the screen. This **title is graphically similar to a "billing block"** or "credit block" which is **often seen on film posters or in trailers**. This style of presentation might've been appropriated from the film genre and this might frame an audience response**- is the video presenting itself as a short film or a music video?**

The video frequently **references the Western and Thriller genres (and arguably the hipster styles of Wes Anderson films), but most notably uses Horror genre iconography, e.g. females repeatedly dragged offscreen by unseen forces and a character going missing in a dark graveyard.**

The overt use of references to film might be attempting to offer an implied artistic value that transcends the music form.

-- SIGNIFICANCE OF CHALLENGING AND/OR SUBVERTING GENRE CONVENTIONS --

Riptide is relatively unusual both as a music video and specifically as a text within the indie folk genre in terms of its style, rejection of narrative and lack of spectacle or special effects.

Comparison could be made with a later **Vance Joy video ("Georgia", 2015) which follows many more conventions**, to consider why Riptide challenges or subverts the conventions of the genre.

Is the music video designed to confer a sense of uniqueness or intrigue to the band- what's the purpose of the music videos and the way that Vance Joy has been marketed to audiences through the style of the video?

-- APPLYING THEORY --

Barthes - Semiotics

Media Language (cont)

Theory recap: (1) the idea that texts communicate their meanings through a process of signification. (2) the idea that signs can function at the level of denotation, which involves the 'literal' or common-sense meaning of the sign, and at the level of connotation, which involves the meanings associated with or suggested by the sign. (3) the idea that constructed meanings can come to seem self-evident, achieving the status of myth through a process of naturalisation.

"Oh all my friends are turning green", - the idea that constructed meanings can come to seem self-evident by discussing the connotations of the **colour green in relation to both money and envy**- this could be said to have achieved Barthes' status of myth through a process of naturalisation which might allow for complicated readings of the image.

This example of polysemy could be interpreted in a variety of ways **(e.g. is it implying that friends *possibly in other bands* have "sold out" by giving into money? Or might instead these friends be turning green with envy at the success of Vance Joy?)**

Neale - Genre

Theory recap: (1) the idea that genres may be dominated by repetition, but are also marked by difference, variation and change. (2) the idea that genres change, develop and vary, as they borrow and overlap with one another. (3) the idea that genres exist within specific economic, institutional and industrial contexts.

The **indie folk music video genre is dominated by repetition (low-fi videos with bands playing instruments, etc) and Riptide offers variation to these aspects.**

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Media Language (cont)

The video fits into the wider economic and institutional context of the music industry- some may write about the purpose of the video- **whether it's artistic or purely for profit by being different.**

Representation

-- SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT --
Surrealism, exploring violence and sexual desire.
The famous eye cutting scene in "Un Chien Andalou" could be compared to the hand stabbing scene in the music video.
Exploration of the subconscious might also give you the chance to talk about the **representation of issues in the video and sometimes its dream-like logic.**
-- HOW MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS CONVEY VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE WORLD --
The video offers **many interesting examples of the representation of women** - consider whether or not the video reinforces a **patriarchal world view or is subverting the objectification of women** in media.
Women in the video are repeatedly presented as an object to be watched:
In one shot, a **woman with her back to the camera undresses out of her swimming costume** and there are a **number of instances where we see disembodied, isolated sections of women's bodies such as bare feet running away or feminine hands being dragged out of shot.**
Are these images of women *being sexualised and offered to the audiences for their pleasure (scopophilia) or presented in a way that challenges the sexualisation of women in many music videos?*

Representation (cont)

Explore the lip-sync sections where a woman sings the lyrics of the song into a microphone. **At first she has immaculate make-up and is framed and lit in a flattering way arguable conforming to social norms of beaty and glamour associated with mainstream media texts.**
As we repeated return to this character, **she becomes increasingly dishevelled, her make-up smudges and her expression becomes more and more vacant as she sings "the words wrong".**
Does this challenge typical gender representation? Does it sit with the other representation of women in the video?
Along with the representations of women, the music **video also presents a number of scenes that offer images of violence, such as a female hand being stabbed by a knife and a fun being pointed off-screen.**
The lip-syncing **woman also clutches at her own neck and we see what seems to be blood over her hand.** *Why are these images used and are they trivialising or normalising violence?*
-- APPLYING THEORY --
Gauntlett - Identity
Theory recap: (1) the idea that the media provide us with 'tools' or resources that we use to construct our identities. (2) the idea that whilst in the past the media tended to convey singular, straightforward messages about ideal types of male and female identities, the media today offer us a more diverse range of stars, icons and characters from whom we may pick and mix different ideas.

Representation (cont)

The concept of "pick and mix" seems particularly relevant to the style of the video which constructs a range of different stimuli that the audience are invited to interpret.
The video rejects singular, straightforward messages and instead invites a variety of different responses and interpretations.
Hooks - Feminist
Theory recap: (1) the idea that feminism is a struggle to end sexist/patriarchal oppression and the ideology of domination. (2) the idea that feminism is a political commitment rather than a lifestyle choice. (3) the idea that race and class as well as sex determine the extent to which individuals are exploited, discriminated against or oppressed.

Hooks could be used as a stimulus to explore the seemingly contradictory messages about gender in the video. **Is the video objectifying women in an ironic or knowing way or is it instead feeding into the oppression of women in a patriarchal society?**

This subject makes me want to die.

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