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**Exploring the Vid:  
A Critical Analysis of the Form  
and its Works**

**by**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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## Abstract

This project asks what a fanvid (vid) is, and by extension, what vids are to television. Vids are derived from television and film sources but they are themselves neither television episodes nor films. These works approximate the music video in appearance and duration, but are non-commercial fan works which construct creative and critical analyses of existing media. Vids remake narratives for a deeply attentive fan audience who watch with a deep knowledge of the source text, or with familiarity of the codes and conventions of the vid form. This thesis is concerned with vids of live-action narrative fiction and covers technological changes from broadcast television, to VCR and the rise of home video, to digital viewership. The chapters focus on different aspects of the vid form in relation to current issues in television studies, with some recourse to the growing field of fandom studies to provide appropriate subcultural context.

The first case study chapter addresses contrasting theoretical understandings of collections and archives to contextualise the kinds of archival work done by vidders as a form of historiography. Vids are created from personal archives of film, television and other media sources; vids bear traces of their archival origins, and their creation is the performance of the vidder's knowledge of their own archive. This chapter includes vids from the VCR era, and has a particular focus on *Star Trek*. The next chapter addresses multifandom vids – a vid genre that draws together video clips from several sources to compare and contrast norms of representation – alongside critical work on found footage films, to analyse the visual pleasures of vids and their relationship with audience fascinations (of erotics, of spectacle, etc.). The final chapter is an intensive case study of a trilogy of *Battlestar Galactica* vids, to analyse both the vid's relationship with adaptation and genre, and the central role of songs in vids. While vids rely heavily on their soundtrack to structure meaning within the work, they are not abstract illustrations of songs. Instead, the clichés and idioms of the chosen song's instrumentation are vital in completing the vid's reinterpretation of its source text.

Television studies is an appropriate disciplinary frame for studying the vid, as it offers ways of thinking about audiences, sequential narratives and the textuality of video forms. The creators and audiences of vids are highly competent in the deep reading and careful viewing of both mainstream and cult television and film, and keep archives of media which they reframe and re-present.

# Exploring the Vid: A Critical Analysis of the Form and its Works

## Introduction

The vid *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Skud, 2010)<sup>1</sup> takes its name from Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 feminist treatise of the same name, and is a rapidly-edited montage of clips that have been taken from films and television series, set between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries<sup>2</sup>. Set to Joan Jett's song 'Bad Reputation', this vid gathers many different clips of women running, fighting or otherwise behaving in an 'unladylike' manner, such as laughing, dancing, experiencing exuberant emotions, and dressing as men. The vid begins with a series of split screen images, framing a number of actresses in period dress who walk forward in the shot, set to the fast and loud guitar riffs that start the song. The impression given is of confident women lining up to share in the declaration that follows once the lyrics begin; that they 'don't give a damn about [their] reputation'. The reference to

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<sup>1</sup> Vids are short videos which are self-contained and released as individual works. Accordingly, I format vid titles and use an in-text citation style that follows the convention for complete works (italicized) rather than for segments of longer works (in quotation marks).

<sup>2</sup> In order of appearance, the vid includes clips from *The Duchess* (Saul Dibb, 2008), *Brotherhood of the Wolf* (Christophe Gans, 2001), *The Incredible Journey of Mary Bryant* (Peter Andrikidis, 2005), *Vanity Fair* (BBC 1998), *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (Gore Verbinski, 2003), *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (Gore Verbinski, 2006), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (BBC 1999-2000), *Casanova* (Lasse Hallström, 2005), *Cutthroat Island* (Renny Harlin, 1995), *Sharpe* (ITV, 1993-1997, 2006, 2008), *Wives and Daughters* (BBC, 1999), *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995), *Dangerous Liaisons* (Stephen Frears, 1988), *Byron* (BBC, 2003), *Marie Antoinette* (Sophia Coppola, 2006), *Sense and Sensibility* (BBC, 2008), *Jefferson in Paris* (James Ivory, 1995), *Persuasion* (Adrian Shergold, 2007), *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995), *Lost in Austen* (ITV, 2008), *Quills* (Philip Kaufman, 2000), *Northanger Abbey* (ITV, 2007), *Plunkett & Macleane* (Jake Scott, 1999), *Doctor Who* (BBC, 2005-present; episode 'The Girl in the Fireplace', 6 May 2006), *Catherine the Great* (Marvin J. Chomsky and John Goldsmith, 1995), *Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1992), *Amazing Grace* (Michael Apted, 2006), *Beau Brummell: This Charming Man* (BBC, 2006), *Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005), *Valmont* (Miloš Forman, 1989), *Hornblower* (ITV, 1998-2003; episode 'The Duchess and the Devil', 24 Feb 1999); (Skud 2010: n.p.).

Wollstonecraft's title roughly evokes the period films/series which compose the vid, while there is a pleasurable disjuncture between the formal Enlightenment title and the more profane lyrics to the rock song.



**Figure 1**, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Skud, 2010), stills taken from the sequence in which sword-fights lead to sexual encounters. The films/series represented are, clockwise from top left: *Cutthroat Island* (Renny Harlin, 1995), *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (Gore Verbinski, 2006), *Doctor Who* (episode 'Girl in the Fireplace', BBC, 2006), and *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995).

This kinetic vid uses many clips of active, tomboyish female characters to create an abundance of movement within the frame; the vid includes these performances – along with less physical pursuits – as representations of an empowered femininity. A montage of women whispering gossip to each other is followed by a sequence of women smoking cigarettes, pipes and cigars, which is itself followed by swordfights in which at least one participant is a woman. The next sequence, timed to the start of a new verse (and repetition of the first line), is a montage of female characters forcefully kissing men and otherwise instigating sexual relations (see Figure 1), in contrast to expectations of demure female conduct. Jett's growling vocal performance gives a forceful voice to the many different characters shown in the vid, uniting their actions under a common rallying cry. As discussed throughout the thesis, the extensive

knowledge required to locate these moments is a manifestation of the fascination these moments hold as a spectacle of (and, perhaps, fantasy of) precursors to later feminist movements. *Vindication* is also evidence of a disregard for medium-specificity typical of the vid form that would otherwise separate film and television, as the vid's clips are taken from British, American, and Australian theatrical-release feature films, made-for-television films, and television series, the oldest of which was released in 1988.<sup>3</sup> The range of production dates for the source material is evident in the variation in image quality between clips; more significantly, the more than thirty source films and episodes represented in the vid suggests much about the vidder's personal collection of media. As Chapter Three argues, vids are textual evidence of media collections being used as archives of source material.

Like the works discussed in Chapter Four, this vid also features a rapid sequence of bodies in action; however, these are not (or not *just*) erotic spectacle. Their costuming is arguably designed for a male gaze (either by contemporary art direction, or through period-accurate design), though this does not preclude a queer desiring female gaze. The vid's lasting impression, however, is that in 'not giving a damn' about how they are perceived, these women are *enjoying* themselves as they act for their own pleasure; for the vid's audience, this vid can be read as a catalogue of successful challenges to patriarchy, not a litany of oppression. Without narrative context, the vid takes these moments of activity to create a version of the past that looks appealing and fun, even while the audience may suspect (or know) these moments are ruptures. *Vindication* is also a spectacular montage showcasing the

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<sup>3</sup> With a near-even split between television and film sources, with four made-for-television films and eleven television series, to sixteen films produced for theatrical release. There is also a degree of temporal irony that Joan Jett's song, released in 1980, pre-dates the source material.

pleasures of period dramas: from the sumptuous costuming to the pleasures of identifying a character type across media and many decades of production.

*Vindication* also relates to arguments made in Chapter Five of this thesis, as it uses the instrumentation, lyrics, and star persona of Joan Jett and her song to create a common internal monologue for the characters that explain their motivations. They become Regency-era feminist punks, characters which share a common goal in throwing off demure feminine behaviour in favour of assertive self-expression. As with the vids in Chapter Five, *Vindication* adapts its source material by eliminating extraneous narrative information to construct a group of women who confidently navigate traditionally masculine activities – smoking, sword-fighting and sexual forthrightness – and who do not appear burdened by cultural convention.

In introducing this vid I have demonstrated my approach to reading and understanding the textual richness possible in vids through close textual analysis of image and sound, paying attention to song lyrics and instrumentation in order to highlight narrative and thematic content complementary to the video source. My overview of the introduction to *Vindication* is an example of the detailed reading necessary to decode the interactions between the juxtaposed audio and video moment by moment, reading these works as complete texts in their own right as neither audio nor video is subordinate to the other. To understand a vid is to read these juxtapositions.

My thesis, therefore, is about the *vid* (also known as the fan vid, or fanvid), which is one variety of fan-made short videos, made from the segmentation and re-editing of existing audio-visual sources with a popular song as soundtrack. A vid is frequently made *of* film and television, but is not film or television itself, though it

intersects with many current concerns in the study of television and television audiences. The chapters of this thesis are organised around themes of collecting and archiving media, of the visual pleasures of film and television as presented through the vid, and of the adaptation and transformation of narrative within the vid. My first case study chapter examines the role of videotape, digital files, and storage of home video<sup>4</sup> in the vid. My second chapter looks at the play of images in vids to examine the fascinations and erotics of visual media. My third and final chapter argues that the relationship between a vid and its source is a form of adaptation, one which is directed by careful editing choices as well as the connotations of the vid's soundtrack.

### **Brief Introduction to Fandom and History of Vids**

The vid is a product of *media fandom*. As a subset of media audiences, fan audiences are 'distinguishable from the general audience in their emotional connection to their specialized interest' (Brayton 2006: 138), and they self-identify as members of a subculture. One can be *in fandom* (a member of the subculture) generally, but self-identification as a fan of one media text does not necessarily indicate automatic membership in another specific fandom. This thesis focuses on the texts which were produced within the subculture that grew out of the organisation of mostly female audiences of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC, 1964-1968) and *Star Trek* (Paramount, 1966-1969), whose interest in these series was expressed in part through critical and creative responses; media fandom continues to have a strong interest in television, though often in connection to other media. Therefore, this is a thesis about vids made out of and in relation to television, on the whole; however, as will be demonstrated

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<sup>4</sup> A phrase which emphasizes a domestic viewing/re-viewing context and accessibility via storage media over the specificity of content (film, television).

throughout, the re-use of home video in the vid suggests a minimal difference between the home use of film and television.

Fan works represent a diverse array of engagement with films, television series, and other media. These creative practices include critical and artistic work across all media, and occur both online and off. Alongside vid-making, fans write fan fiction (also known as fanfic, or fic), which is prose fiction of many different lengths and styles. Podfic is an audio performance of fic, sometimes including elaborate audio design. Fan art can include the visual arts and handicrafts, such as knitting, quilting, jewellery making, stained glass, and woodworking. Outside these specific creative practices, fans may also attend fan conventions, help in their organisation, and/or provide objects (such as memorabilia or fan works) for sale or trade; this is a usual place to see cosplay, that is, attending in costume. The most common fan works are critical responses to media texts, through mailing lists (on paper and online), online message boards, blogging communities, in conversation, and other social media. Vids exist between these creative and critical responses.

My personal introduction to vids was through the alt.tv.x-files.creative newsgroup in approximately 1999. Being a younger fan, and living outside a major urban centre, my experience of fandom was online and not through fan conventions where I might have been able to attend vid screenings. I lacked a fast enough internet connection to download and view video files, but followed discussions on the newsgroup regarding the vidding process and clip selection. My second, and more permanent, introduction to vids was as an undergraduate with access to the campus network, and the encouragement of friends with media collections and a willingness to share them.



This thesis is concerned with vids in the tradition of works first shared at media fandom conventions in the United States, such as Escapade and Media West.<sup>5</sup> VividCon is a three-day vid-specific convention that has met annually since 2002; its European counterpart, VidUKon, has run since 2008. The first vids in this tradition were made on videotape, and were themselves inspired by a series of slide shows presented at American *Star Trek* fan conventions in the 1970s. The first of these was Kandy Fong's *What Do You Do With a Drunken Vulcan?* (1975). This performance advanced slides – made from film left over from editing *Star Trek* episodes – in time to a fan-recorded cassette soundtrack (Coppa 2008: 3.1-3.3). The videotape works that followed were inspired by Fong's work but lacked her privileged access to off-cuts. Instead, domestic VCR technology was used to edit videotapes with a similar purpose. In this way, vids tell part of the story of audiences' re-use of media; this is explored further in Chapter Three's discussion of audiences who maintain personal archives of media.

The first videotape vidders are unknown, but Kendra Hunter and Diane Barbour made vids of *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) 'as early as 1980' (Coppa 2008: 4.1). Significantly, this turned the living room (or den, family room, rec room, kitchen) into a site of media production for an overwhelmingly female audience; see below for further discussion of gender and fandom. Videotape compilations of these works, known as songtapes, were shared with other fans in exhibitions at conventions and were traded through the mail, which required the fan to have personal contact with other fans. In order to learn about this form, interested fans would attend workshops at conventions or join a videotape collective such as Media Cannibals and Clucking Belles (Penley 1991, Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992). As early as 1992 (Coppa 2006: 53), online

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<sup>5</sup> Other forms of fan-made video that make use of existing footage, such as faux-trailers, Machinima, and anime music videos (AMVs), are beyond the scope of this project.

resources enabled a transformation of this body of knowledge, as online access broadened the accessibility of fandom. Vidding was aided and enabled by related fan practices of tape-sharing and tape-collecting; this circulation of media has been accelerated by digital file-sharing and the increased power of personal computers and reach of broadband internet. Today, there are innumerable websites, communities, and discussion forums dedicated to sharing information about the vidding process.

This thesis is written in alignment with the critical consensus that women are an unambiguous majority in media fandom. Constance Penley (1991) and Camille Bacon-Smith (1992) write from the position that media fandom is a female subculture. Jenkins describes media fandom as 'largely female, largely white, largely middle-class, though it welcomes into its ranks many who would not fit this description' (1992: 1). Elsewhere, Jenkins describes fan fiction as a 'predominantly feminine response to mass media texts, with the majority of fanzines edited and written by women for a largely female readership' (in Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 197). Rhiannon Bury, in her book-length study of women and online fandom, likewise asserts that reading and writing fan fiction is 'unquestionably a gendered practice' (2005: 72). Cornel Sandvoss notes a gender split in fan communities based on interest, but supports others' findings regarding women in media fandom (2005: 15-16). Kristina Busse describes early media fandom as being composed of 'primarily female fans' (2009: 106) and does not suggest there has been any change in this. Francesca Coppa affirms this, stating that vids are made 'overwhelmingly by women' (2009: 107); Jason Mittell similarly notes that the creation of fan works occur 'in overwhelmingly female fan communities' (2010: 377).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This demographic fact is not without implications: Paul McEwan notes a continued devaluation of fan works outside of the subculture, which he argues 'is more a result of their status as gendered and amateur objects, rather than a reflection of their inherent value as creative works' (2011: 44).

The earliest essays on media fandom – from Joanna Russ ('Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love', 1985) and Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diane Veith ('Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and *Star Trek* Zines', 1986) – addressed '*Star Trek* fan fiction as a literature written mainly by women' (Coppa 2006: 46) and were published in the context of feminist pornography studies as evidence of 'a liberatory practice for the women writing it' (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 17). The work described in these essays was by '(mainly) female fans' who had been made to feel unwelcome by the many 'traditional fans [who] dismissed *Star Trek* as science fiction for nonreaders' (Coppa 2006: 45). Tisha Turk and Joshua Johnson (2012) and Sarah Fiona Winters (2012) use *female* pronouns to discuss a hypothetical vidder;<sup>7</sup> the choice to use explicitly female pronouns is a purposeful and significant gendering of media fandom's creators and audiences. This gendered context is particularly significant to Chapter Four's argument regarding spectatorship, but also informs Chapter Five's discussion of the vid's potential intensity of emotion as a form proximate to the melodrama/woman's film.

In addition to gender, the pseudonymity of fan creators is an understood part of fan works' presentation. Throughout the thesis, I credit vidders using the names under which they release their work. Cumberland (2000) notes 'the paradox of cyberspace' (n.p.) is that the 'public' forum of the internet can be used anonymously. She finds that through the use of pseudonyms for her subjects, female authors of erotic fan fiction, 'the protection and freedom of cyberspace [enables] these writers to defy many of the social taboos' (Cumberland 2000: n.p.). Indeed, the fluctuating

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<sup>7</sup> For example, 'What can a vidder anticipate about how an audience will make sense of her vid? What can *she* assume, or how can *she* learn, about the significance her audience will ascribe to particular clips?' (Turk and Johnson 2010: 2.6, emphasis added).

permissibility of format-shifting and legal re-uses of media for artistic and/or critical purposes is a further reason to maintain the relative anonymity of vidders where they use to present their works pseudonymously. Sharon Marie Ross (2008) reports that her respondents were similarly appreciative of online anonymity; this freedom to explore one's private interests without fear of discovery is significant, as outing oneself as a fan is still potentially a source of shame (Larsen and Zubenis 2012) and 'work and personal relationships' can be 'negatively affected by an outing' (Busse and Hellekson 2012: 39). While the vidders whose work I cite do often use ambiguously-gendered pseudonyms, the evidence provided by the above accounts of gender in media fandom leads to the credible assumption that vids are, on the whole, made by (and for) *women*.

### **Remix, Recut, Reuse**

The vid is an audio-visual form that re-uses existing moving images, and the re-use of moving images has a considerable history within experimental and mainstream traditions.<sup>8</sup> Chapter Four relates the vid to these traditions in more detail; this section therefore addresses why I use the terminology of fandom rather existing nomenclature associated with found footage film, remix video, or other similar forms.

Vids fragment the source text to facilitate new layers of meaning. Like found footage films, vids can be a 'self-reflexive exposé of how meaning is read' (Desjardins 1995: 26), though in many cases that reflexivity is not the purpose of the vid: it is the mechanism through which the vidder's purpose is expressed. William Wees argues that found footage films exhibit 'an analytical and critical attitude toward its images and their institutional sources' (1992: 53); while vids demonstrate the same reflexive

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<sup>8</sup> Using film clips 'at variance with the original producer's purpose' occurred as early as 1898 (Leyda 1964: 13-14), though Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936) is regularly cited as 'an isolated early example of the found footage film' (Barefoot 2011: 166).

qualities, the transformative aspect of the vid form is essential to this process. In the same way that Soviet montage saw editing as the instrument of meaning-creation of in film – one shot, followed by another shot, created a third meaning – appropriating and re-editing a film is more than simply adopting these elements: it is transforming them.

My disinclination to use ‘remix video’ to describe vids’ re-use of moving images extends to ‘recycled images’.<sup>9</sup> The virtuous environmentalist implications of recycling suggest, on the one hand, judgements about the value of what has been discarded and recovered, and on the other hand, the rescue of moving image detritus from stagnation in a landfill or destruction in an incinerator. While recycling may be the most apt term for found footage films made using discarded scraps of film, to use the term for vids or other creative re-uses of television (and of films edited from videotape or digital formats) might by extension argue that broadcasting and home video distribution is akin to garbage disposal. I am not cynical enough to argue in favour of this extended metaphor; therefore, re-use seems to be the plainest description across all variations, and the most direct term available at this time. Compilation films and archive films have a somewhat more seemly implication, as these works are made of clips with scholarly value which have not been discarded, but merely archived and ready to be researched.

I have chosen the general term ‘moving image re-use’ to describe a range of approaches to practices and works that have been elsewhere called found-footage film, archive film, experimental video appropriation, film collage, and other terms that refer to specific media, production contexts and methodologies. Digital copies of films and transfers of videotape sources may be combined in the same vid; subsuming all

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<sup>9</sup> With respect, that is, to Wees’s *Recycled Images* (1993) and Barefoot’s ‘Recycled Images: *Rose Hobart*, *East of Borneo*, and *The Perils of Pauline* (2011).

within a single medium seems unnecessarily sloppy. Video montage and scratch video (cf. Meigh-Andrews 2006, Rees 2011) are respectively too vague and too precise to be of use. Where Bruce Conner can claim to have purchased a bucket of old film reels and picked through them to see what he could produce,<sup>10</sup> vidders are more direct in their selection of material: a vid is an outcome of careful viewing, not rummaging through a remainders heap (no matter what critical snobbery is applied to broadcast television).

While Kandy Fong's pre-vid works were indeed made from discarded film stills, vids made from off-air recordings, format-shifted DVDs or digital downloads use source material of a different status. Therefore I use variations on 'moving image re-use', which seems to most accurately represent the general tendency of finding secondary purposes for pre-existing film and video, regardless of differences in intention, purpose, or medium.

### **Fannish Genres and the Vid**

Just as film and television broadly conform to genres, each with their own tendencies and characteristics, so too can vids be grouped by recognisable genres. In discussing films or television programmes, it is generally accepted that the critic or scholar will have a wide viewing experience and general knowledge of similar texts in order to inform analysis. However, as I am aware that the vid form is marginal, I offer the following explanations developed during the course of my research. A vid involves the 'selection and juxtaposition [of clips] to highlight particular moments in the source text to tell a story that is or is not present in the text or to analyze a particular character' (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 12). Vids can be difficult to interpret for those who may

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<sup>10</sup> Hatch writes, 'The final product's footage was taken from considerably less illustrious sources [than prints of Hollywood films] (much of it acquired cheaply at a local camera store, in hundred-foot reels from the sale bin)' (2012: 119).

know the source material but not fan discourse, but the captioning effect and structuring created by vids' soundtracks makes vids generally accessible to non-fannish viewers. It is common in vids to address character psychology, proposing a voice for characters' inner thoughts and feelings. When addressing a single character, these are known as character study vids, and are explored in more detail in Chapter Five.<sup>11</sup>

Like other fan works, vids may be classed as *gen*, *het*, and *slash*, indicating whether the work includes romantic pairings (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 10). *Gen* refers to a *general* work, one that does not focus on sexual relationships. *Het* involves a *heterosexual* pairing of characters, in a relationship either present in the original material or created in the work. *Slash*<sup>12</sup> works create a narrative space that elaborates a 'perceived homoerotic subtext' (ibid) in the primary work. *Ship* (relationship) vids can act as explicit declarations of romantic desire or friendship beyond the relationships that are demonstrated in the text. Some vids can be *friendshipy*, and imply a close bond between characters, though not an overtly sexual relationship.<sup>13</sup> *Kryptonite* (Seah and Margie, 2002) for example, is an *Invisible Man* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2000-2002) vid about the show's two main characters that describes friendship, respect, and sacrifice using the song 'Kryptonite' by 3 Doors Down as its soundtrack; the close bond between the characters could be read as romantic, though not explicitly desiring or erotic.

Slash is the amplification or construction (Penley 1991) of subtext, where clips are used as evidence of desire or affection, and not necessarily to construct a new

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<sup>11</sup> As Jonathan Gray argues, "This ability of vids to drill deep into a character's psyche leads to many of the form's better offerings' (2010: 157). Fan works are a place to expand upon characterisation in a context where the episodic structure of television runs counter to character development. The growth of long-form narratives on television have recently allowed more space for character development.

<sup>12</sup> The term refers to the typographical mark separating the characters being 'slashed' (i.e. 'Kirk/Spock' is the pairing of Kirk and Spock), which 'serves as code' that fan work so designated will 'concern a same-sex relationship between the two men' (Penley 1991: 137).

<sup>13</sup> This does not preclude reading a close relationship as a prelude to sexual attraction or indication of off-screen physical intimacy; however, in the work itself such a relationship is not explicitly implied.

narrative. Early scholarship on media fandom has ‘a history of attempting to understand the underlying motivations of why (mostly) women write fan fiction and, in particular, slash. As a result, *m/m* (male/male) slash fiction has received disproportionate treatment’ (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 17).<sup>14</sup> However, the many varieties of slash fiction – and of fannish genres in general – complicate a single explanation of this phenomenon of explicit eroticisation of characters in film and television. Equality in relationships is noted as a possible explanation by Penley (1991), Busse and Hellekson (2006), Kaveney (2010) and others, though Kaveney continues, offering that slash ‘is also a way of doubling the number of objects of erotic consideration’ (Kaveney 2010: 245).<sup>15</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter Four, multifandom vids can exponentially increase the number of ‘objects of erotic consideration’, through this female gaze at male (and female) bodies.<sup>16</sup>

Vid genres are also defined by the nature of the transformation enacted within the work, rather than by their ‘ship’. These include: *constructed reality*, *multifandom*, *meta*, *character study*, *real person* and *recruiter vids*. These genres have fluid boundaries, can be hybridised, and may be known by different names in different fandom communities. I use terminology drawn from my experiences in fandom, through attending vidding conventions in the United States and Britain, with reference to convention programme books and to the fan-written wiki site [fanlore.org](http://fanlore.org).<sup>17</sup> While the set of descriptions below is not an exhaustive enumeration of vid genres, or

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Slash’ almost exclusively describes male/male relationships. ‘Femslash’ (alternately, ‘femmeslash’) is the (less prevalent) female/female equivalent (Coppa 2008: 5.1).

<sup>15</sup> Larsen and Zubenis use a similar explanation in conversation with actor Jared Padelecki (2012: 217).

<sup>16</sup> However, noticing the ‘masculine utopia’ (Jenkins 1992: 215) of slash does force an awareness of ‘fandom’s inherent problems, such as misogyny and homophobia’ (Green, Jenkins and Jenkins 1998; cited in Busse and Hellekson 2006: 21). The conclusion of a slash narrative is the successful creation of a monogamous (queer) couple, but if this happens at the expense of characters’ wives, girlfriends, or female love interests, this has the effect of intensifying the underrepresentation of women in media.

<sup>17</sup> Jason Mittell notes the value of fan-run wiki sites as ‘a tool for online fandom’ (2013: 35).



intended as an ethnographic insight into the vidding community, it indicates the form's possible variations.

*Constructed reality* vids use clips to construct a new narrative, sometimes including clips beyond the single source to build a cohesive story. Constructed reality vids rely on editing and song choice to create these alternate storylines. For example, *Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)* (Killa and Carol S., ca. 2001), cuts together clips from the *Highlander: The Series* (Gaumont Télévision, 1992-1998) with the aforementioned Pet Shop Boys song to make it appear as if the characters have decided on a 'life of crime' (as described in the vid's opening credits). The original source contains all the elements which could then be recombined into a new narrative with radically different meanings. While a slash vid may appear to be constructing a different reality for its subjects, slash vids are not typically constructed reality vids. Slash is the amplification (or construction, see Penley 1991) of subtext, where clips are used as evidence of desire or affection, and not to construct a new narrative.

*Multifandom* vids, explored at greater length in Chapter Four, use multiple films and/or series (multiple 'fandoms', hence the name) as their source material to construct a comparison or demonstrate contrasts between the various sources; this enacts a kind of audio-visual genre study. For example, *Around the Bend* (Danegen, 2010) collects clips and still images of women operating cars, motorcycles and aircraft to celebrate the representation of a female presence in an activity traditionally dominated by men. These clips include selections from fandom's usual cult film and television focus, but also include historical/archival footage, international films, and commercial music videos. As is typical for multifandom vids, there is no narrative in *Around the Bend*, but the vid uses The Asteroids Galaxy Tour's jubilant song 'Around

the Bend' to construct a diegetic space dominated by happy and confident women in charge of these powerful machines.<sup>18</sup>

*Meta* vids make a comment about an issue or situation beyond the narrative in the vid itself. These may often be multifandom vids, as they use clips from multiple sources to compare and contrast issues of representation; for example, Laura Shapiro's unsettling vid *Stay Awake* (2010) matches congruent storylines from series such as *Farscape* (Nine Network/Sci-Fi Channel, 1999-2003), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), and *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002) to highlight the problematic representation of the pregnant female body in science fiction television. Other meta vids take vidding as their subject, including clips from other vids to comment on the form's potential and successes. Further examples include *Us* (Iim, 2007), and *Destiny Calling* (counteragent, 2008).

*Character study* vids, as mentioned earlier, are focused on examining a single character's motivation with minimal transformation to the source narrative, and is particularly effective in promoting secondary characters to a leading role within the vid. For example, *The Adventure* (greensilver, 2012), is a vid of the *Harry Potter* film series<sup>19</sup> that uses clips of supporting character Neville Longbottom (Matthew Lewis).

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<sup>18</sup> Fans of comedy/horror podcast series *Welcome to Night Vale* (Commonplace Books, 2012-present) have used the principles of constructed reality to create vids of this audio-only source. One particularly well-executed and effective example is *Bloody Shirt* (unfinishedidea, 2014), which gathers clips from eighteen film and television sources to construct a visual reality for the podcast. *Bloody Shirt* does not create visuals to illustrate any particular episode or narrative arc, but instead creates an abstract and atmospheric space that draws on the same narrative conventions and tropes that are used in *Night Vale* itself. While the vid does use multiple sources, it is not a multifandom vid as the clips are adopted as representations of Night Vale, its residents, and the history of its community radio station, rather than being used as individual examples in a vid which compares and contrasts multiple fandoms.

<sup>19</sup> This series, based on J. K. Rowling's novels, consists of eight films made over a decade: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Chris Columbus, 2001), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Chris Columbus, 2002), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2004), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Mike Newell, 2005), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (David Yates, 2007), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (David Yates, 2009), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 1* (David Yates, 2010), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 2* (David Yates, 2011).

The necessities of narrative economy limit the amount of diegetic introspection permitted to these kinds of characters, but character study vids are a way to devote a concentration of screen time to the feelings, experiences and motivations of characters beyond the main few. For the duration of the vid, Neville is the hero: as his small acts of courage through the film series are collected and displayed, the vidder argues that Neville has been just as vital as Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) himself in defeating Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes). When used to treat secondary characters, character study vids have a pleasurable tinge of righteous justification as underdogs are given a heroic space, or as villains are granted the illicit allure of an anti-hero. The final chapter of this thesis is a case study of three character study vids.

As with genres in other media, vids may be hybridised. For example, *real person (RP)* vids focus on an individual much in the manner of a character study vid, using the vid form to delve into the media representations of actors, pop stars, and other celebrities. As an RP vid addresses an individual's star image – which 'is found across a range of media texts' (Dyer 1979: 86) – RP vids are also arguably multifandom works due to the diversity of their source material. The examples of this form analysed in Chapter Four demonstrate that the vid form's critical responses are equally applicable to celebrities as fiction. In this sense, RP vids are about representation: rather than delving deep into a text to reveal a character, this genre reaches across many texts to assemble and examine a star image. RP vids textually manifest a deep knowledge of media texts in the same way a genre-based multifandom vid relies a similar familiarity with genre tropes, and show off a similar breadth of spectatorship and access to source material.

Finally, the *recruiter* vid is intended to convince a viewer to watch the film or series on which the vid is based. These can adhere to any of the main genres (gen, het or slash), and will highlight aesthetic or thematic elements that make the series appear compelling. Vids do not have to be made as recruiter vids to be used as such, but in showcasing a series or performance, could be used to pique interest in a series. For example, Jayne L.'s *Fireworks* (2010) was made to showcase the television series *Power Play* (CTV, 1998-2000), a lesser-known Canadian series has not yet been released on DVD; as noted above, the Review of Literature and Chapter Three expand on the uses of personal archives. As Jonathan Gray argues, successful vids 'have something interesting, substantive, and/or revelatory to say about the show [or film source]' (2010: 159): vid genres are significant, in part, because they offer different frameworks against which to re-present their source material.

### **Music Video**

As mentioned earlier, the commercial music video is an important proximate form to the vid. Music videos are not, in themselves, considered as films or programmes and therefore do not have an easy disciplinary home. As can be argued about vids, Carol Vernallis writes that music video 'belongs somewhere among music, film, television studies, cultural studies, ethnic studies, and communication studies, as well as philosophy, theater [sic] and dance' (2004: ix); therefore, they may be read as commercial advertisements for the recording artist, as artistically or aesthetically compelling works of art, as dense semi-narrative texts with rapidly-developing codes and norms, and artefacts instrumental in discursive (sub-)cultural practices. Michel Chion (1994), notes that 'Cinephiles especially attack music videos as eye-assaulting', countering that music video is 'altogether different' to cinema, 'since it does not

involve dramatic time' (166). Like vids, the length and structure of commercial music videos are largely determined by the pop song which is their soundtrack, and both tend towards rapid editing and experimental narrative styles. However, as Coppa (2008) argues, vids are not motivated by the song – vids are primarily the manipulation of the visual source, rather than illustrations of a song – and as such the similarities between music videos and vids tend toward appearance rather than purpose. This similarity is not accidental: in the videotape era, vidders explicitly drew on music video forms for aesthetic inspiration, for example, suggesting newcomers to the form should 'Watch MTV or VH1 and just see what they do' (qtd in Penley 1991: 145-6) in place of formal training in editing. Bacon-Smith briefly notes that vidders took 'inspiration from MTV and the amateur film tradition in science fiction' (1992: 175), but as Henry Jenkins argues, the uses and meanings of clip in vids differ to music video, in which 'images function as *images*, as free-floating signifiers; images in fan videos are shorthand for much longer segments of the program narrative' (1992: 234).

The focus of the music video is the song and performer even if the performer does not appear in the clip. Accordingly, all but one of Joe Gow's categories of music video 'formulas' concern performance: he lists special-effects extravaganza, anti-performance, pseudo-reflexive performance, song and dance number, performance documentary, and enhanced performance (1992: 56-66). While enumerating kinds of performances is a start to understanding the 'richness' of music video (Gow 1992: 43), Diane Railton and Paul Watson suggest approaching music videos with the more flexible concept of genre, offering pseudo-documentary, art, narrative, and staged performance (2011: 41-65). Following K. J. Donnelly's argument that video mash-ups found online mean that 'unofficial pop promos have lost the requirement to act as an

advertisement for a piece of music' (2007: 178), it can be argued that vids have long been engaged in advertising vidders' interpretations of the source material. While vids resemble the form of music video, where music video sells a song or artist (to promote record sales, but also to perform a legitimating social function for the artists, selling the artist as well as the record), the vid 'sells' a narrative or an analysis. Arguably, slash vids (described in Chapter Three) sell a reading of a particular relationship, multifandom vids (Chapter Four) sell a way of broadly viewing film and television, and character study vids (Chapter Five) sell a way to view a specific character. Despite formal similarities – such as rapid editing, length of clip, and lack of live performance – this thesis is concerned with transformation/adaptation of narrative, and representing fascination and desire, rather than an exploration of editing. As with the experimental forms discussed above, the music video is a proximate form to the vid, and one to which the vid bears more than a superficial resemblance.

### **Structure and Aims of the Thesis**

Underlying this project is the question of how meaning and understanding are constructed in vids: as a dialogue between the images as edited, the use of the chosen song, expectations for narrative or character development as constructed by the original source material, and by the new vid. Vids remake narratives for a deeply attentive fan audience who are watching with either an extensive knowledge of the source text, or with sufficient familiarity of the form's codes and conventions. This thesis is concerned with vids of live-action narrative fiction, not of animation, because this reflects the majority of vids in this fandom and covers technological changes from broadcast television to VCR and the rise of home video, to digital viewership.

The organising question for this project asks what a vid is, and by extension, what vids are to television and film. The vid form's dense textuality, its use of evolving media technologies, and its correspondence with non-institutional archives, suggests congruence with the extra-textual life of television: if television is re-edited outside of television's flow, or combined with excerpts from film, does it stop being television? How does television exist outside of television? Ultimately, vids are not television: however, their form, content, and context are derived from television, and therefore deserve to be part of a more comprehensive contemporary history of home viewing and recording. Exploring the boundaries of television does not automatically indicate an interdisciplinary project as the hybridity and expansion of television studies (cf. Brunsdon 1998) follows the movement of television audiences' use of the medium and its products.

My thesis begins with an overview of my approach. This Methodology chapter argues that the vid is a form capable of withstanding serious scholarly attention, and that textual analysis is appropriate to achieve this goal. In this chapter, I describe the extensive programme of research viewing undertaken in the preparation of the thesis, reflect upon my selection of examples and how this process intersects with the formation of various canons, and discuss the process and locations of research which are specific to a textual study of the vid form. The chapter concludes with a description of how I use semiotic theory to inform my understanding of the vital role music plays in making meaning in the vid form. I then move on to a Review of Literature, addressing fandom studies and television studies. This chapter starts with scholarship on fandom as it relates to gender and technology, and covers the current academic presence of vids. It concludes with a discussion of issues regarding control of, access

to, and uses of television, with particular attention paid to active audiences, archives, 'quality TV', and medium specificity.

The case study chapters of the thesis focus on different aspects of the vid in relation to current issues in television studies. The first chapter looks at contrasting theoretical understandings of collections and archives to contextualise the kinds of archival work done by vidders (and watched by vids' audiences). Vids are created from personal archives of film, television and other media sources and bear traces of their archival origins; they textually enact interpretations of the source material in a kind of historiography. This chapter includes analysis of vids from the VCR era, and has a particular focus on vids made of *Star Trek* and its spin-offs. The second chapter addresses the vid as a form of critical engagement grounded in an intense fascination with the image. This chapter also addresses multifandom vids – a vid genre that draws together video clips from several sources, often to compare and contrast norms of representation – alongside critical work on found footage films, to analyse the reflexivity of multifandom vids and their expression of audience fascinations (of erotics, of spectacle, etc.). The third chapter is an intensive case study of a trilogy of *Battlestar Galactica* vids, to analyse both the vid's relationship with adaptation and genre, and the central role of songs in vids. Made by a single vidder, these vids use songs by the artist Pink to revisit the character Kara 'Starbuck' Thrace (Katee Sackhoff). While vids rely heavily on their soundtrack to structure meaning within the work, they are not abstract illustrations of songs. Instead, the musical clichés and idioms of the chosen song are vital in completing the vid's reinterpretation of its source text as feminist adaptations of a science fiction ensemble narrative.



## Conclusion

The vid, as a complex technological cultural artifact, is worthy of as much critical academic attention as other forms of fan activity, such as fan fiction (Russ 1985, Lamb and Veith 1986); as detailed in the Review of Literature, vids have only very recently been the subject of scholarship. The vid is a form of cultural production that represents a unique relationship to technology and media: it is a product of a decades-long, organised, parallel industry where material and immaterial production is linked to practitioners' knowledge as both technically skilled digital and as active and critical audience members. The vid form strongly suggests an audience that is competent in the deep reading and careful viewing of mainstream and cult television and film, and that keeps archives of media with which they engage both critically and creatively.

Vids are made by women in media fandom, and are their responses to tendencies in mainstream media and cult texts which marginalise women's stories and experiences, reframing narratives which exclude them. This thesis also highlights the importance of stardom and performance to television audiences, and the pleasures and attractions of television and film that are concentrated and made visible in vids argues for an audience whose spectatorship is based on more than a concern about narratives unfolding. Fundamentally, my thesis argues that the vid form demonstrates that television's active audiences are active *media* audiences, watching broadly across various screen media. This takes into account the importance of the songs used in vids, because instrumentation, vocal performance and lyrics all caption a vid's moving images. The interplay between sound and image in vids is where meaning is derived; the vid form is therefore about more than simply viewing.

## Chapter One – Methodology

Appropriately for a research project aiming to take the vid seriously as a form in its own right, with its own formal history and aesthetic strategies, the primary methodology applied in this thesis is textual analysis. This method is characterized by close readings of media texts, and is 'at the core of television studies' (Casey et al. 2008: 289), the discipline to which this study most closely relates, as discussed below. In order to select appropriate examples for this thesis, I embarked on an extensive programme of viewing vids of all genres and made from diverse source material, television and film alike.<sup>1</sup> This viewing was accomplished through accessing digital files streamed online as well as downloaded to my own computer, on DVD compilations of vids included in convention memberships and also sold by individual vidders, and at screenings of vids at conventions in vidshows. I viewed at least 2000 vids in the process of this research.<sup>2</sup> There is a rudimentary academic canon of vids which I contribute to by choosing certain vids which have already been discussed in previous critical literature on the vid: for example, *Closer* (T. Jonesy and Killa, 2003), *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005), and *On the Prowl* (sisabet and sweetestdrain, 2010). However, as the study of vids is relatively new, my decision to include many examples beyond these is, in part, to expand the number of works discussed in detail in the academic context.

This thesis proposes that television studies is an appropriate disciplinary frame for studying the vid form as it offers ways of thinking about mode of address, sequential narratives and the textuality of video forms. Derived from television and

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<sup>1</sup> Including the occasional work which incorporates material from neither film nor television sources: for example, *Around the Bend* (Danegen, 2010) includes documentary still images.

<sup>2</sup> I also, where feasible, watched vids' source material to contextualise the clips.

film sources, vids are neither television episodes nor films. Vids rely on songs to create and structure meaning, but are not abstract illustrations of songs. Vids remake narratives for an attentive audience with a deep knowledge of the source text, or of the conventions of vidding, or both. While vids are created digitally and distributed online and at fan conventions, as described in my Introduction, vids precede the internet with direct antecedents in fandom's use of media as an extension of the experience of television.<sup>3</sup> However, in this thesis I am not looking at the practice of making vids as much as the vids themselves. My over-arching concern is to take vids seriously as texts in their own right, and as texts which can withstand critical and aesthetic analysis. In doing so, I am adopting and extending an argument put forth by Jason Jacobs in relation to using textual analysis for the study of television: 'that while some programmes are designed as pleasant casual distraction... many will be able to withstand the kinds of critical pressure that we normally apply to other artworks' (2001: 431). Therefore, this thesis reconsiders the boundaries of television, and of television studies, alongside addressing the question of how to approach texts like vids which are most often *of* television but not *on* television. One boundary is that of medium-specificity: the distinction between film and television as separate media is eliminated in vids, as both are treated as different forms of home video in the vid.<sup>4</sup> As vids are neither film nor television I was compelled to adapt existing methodologies for their analysis, and occasionally to develop a novel approach, to pursue my questions about this form.

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<sup>3</sup> This occurred first with slide shows, and progressed by 1980 to videotape (Coppa 2008).

<sup>4</sup> This observation, and the thesis more broadly, corresponds to the aims and methodology of the edited collection *Ephemeral Media*, which aims 'to explore, and claim as significant, moving image forms which exist in relation to the more solid and substantial film and television content traditionally privileged within screen studies' (Grainge 2011: 10).

Current academic engagement with vids position these fan works as examples of queer and feminist re-textualisation (see Review of Literature), but pay little, if any, attention to these works as textual forms or works of art/culture in and of themselves. Much of this work comes from within fandom studies, but has historically been more interested in fan fiction than in vidding, perhaps due to the disciplinary bias of these previous scholars and the lower profile of the vid within fandom. I approached this project wishing to address this critical oversight and to instate a methodology which enables me to closely analyse the vids themselves, to read and assess them as: a) works of historiography which construct textual histories of ongoing televisual and filmic narratives, and which explore and expose the biases and blind-spots of programming, film, and other historiographical works; b) works of art and culture which expose and distil the forms of pleasure and fascination that viewers may find in the media text; and c) works of criticism which construct a coherent argument about a text, genre, or film/programme-making practice, often exposing inherent misogynies in the film and television industries.

As a scholar who is also a fan of vids and vidding, this methodological approach connects with my personal experience of media fandom as a form of audio-visual play, critique, and resistance, though my disciplinary position within television and film studies is perhaps more significant here. I bring from these disciplines: an understanding of semiotics as applied to visual media, which underpins my analysis; a perspective on media texts which views these as works of art and culture which nevertheless also operate on 'ideological machinery' (Gray and Lotz 2012: 38); and 'an awareness of production contexts and active audiences' (Casey et al. 2008: 289) as significant in conveying the complexities of media texts.

My use of textual analysis as a method for analysing the vid is a turn which has also recently been taken in the analysis of television, in addition to sociological or cultural studies methods to the medium (cf. Caldwell 1995, Jacobs 2001, Creeber 2004, Wheatley 2006, Shimpach 2010, Cardwell 2013, Jacobs and Peacock 2013). Similarly, Steve Bailey proposes that textual analysis is an appropriate method for studying fan works, arguing that fan works such as vids 'offer particular access to the interpretive work central to the fan experience' (2005: 50) and concludes that textual analysis is therefore 'particularly critical in providing a strong sense of the semiotic contours of the fan's symbolic world' (ibid: 51). However, the access offered by textual analysis is not just to the specific interpretive work of the individual who created a particular vid, but to the meanings that are drawn out through analysis. As such, to borrow a phrase from Helen Wheatley's discussion of textual analysis in television studies I employ this method to 'dwell[...] on illuminating moments' (2006: 21) in vids to show how these meanings are created and how they may be read.

This approach to vids is presently only found in the short section discussing vids in Jonathan Gray's monograph on paratexts, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (2010). Over a few pages, Gray summarizes the general message and content of three vids, describing how each vid's juxtaposition of clip choice to lyrics guides a viewer's reading and interpretation of the work (as marginalia and highlighting guides a reader through a printed text), which therefore 'allows viewers the time and reflective space' that the source narratives 'never truly provide' (Gray 2010: 156). He concludes that, ultimately:

Vidding's "elegance" lies in the fact that it is its own art form, presenting its case in a visually and aurally pleasing manner. ...vids [have] become texts in and

of their own right, watched closely, parsed for meanings, eagerly anticipated, traded in fan communities, given commentary tracks, and becoming the basis for their own conventions. (Gray 2010: 159)

Gray briefly mentions ten more vids in this section, but does not discuss the history of the form, nor (as discussed in my Introduction) the gendered nature of the subculture; significantly, the section is structured so that his textual analysis of the vids precedes his discussion of vidders' reflection on their practices. By first presenting vids as texts in their own right, Gray takes these works seriously as critical objects for analysis.

However, as discussed in my Review of Literature, the vid form has a specific genesis and audience which, if explicated, can deepen a critical reading of particular texts. This is not uncommon in textual analysis of television, as noted earlier, which is work that includes 'an awareness' of audiences and contexts (Casey et al. 2008: 289). Close readings of texts do not lead to conclusions about the subculture itself; however, the specific production context of vids, and what their existence reveals about conceptions of active audiences, do lead to a more nuanced understanding of a vid's mode of address which itself assumes an attentive, engaged viewer.

As developed in relation to the study of films (from an origin in the study of literature), and later applied to television and other media, textual analysis is an approach which is intended 'to redirect attention to the movie as it is seen, by shifting the emphasis back from creation to perception', where scholarly description is used to present and analyse the work 'as it exists for the spectator' (Perkins 1972: 27). In his influential book *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (1972), V. F. Perkins writes that the interpretation of films is done 'in two ways, on the basis of its form and on the basis of our experience' (174); these bases together are the indivisible essence

of the approach, and the person of the critic/scholar is therefore very much a part of the process. Indeed, Perkins argues that, 'A descriptive analysis will need at least to make claims about the distribution of the film's emphasis; and emphasis is as subjectively perceived, relies as much on a personal response, as judgement' (Perkins 1972: 191). Though Perkins does not unpack these concepts of experience and subjective perception, the notion that personal response will be informed by the context and experience of the critic/scholar is therefore an understood and expected part of this approach. Within the disciplines of film and television studies this point often goes unstated. Therefore let me be clear: my experiences and perceptions of vids have been informed by my experiences in fandom just as much as my academic training. With the particular case of vids, as media fandom is not as mainstream as 'watching television' or 'going to the cinema', it is perhaps warranted to reflect on the impact of auto-ethnography on classic textual analysis. I will return to this later in the chapter.

What Perkins argues for film is also argued implicitly for television in a strand of television studies focusing on televisual aesthetics: that is, work which views television as a form with artistic merit. Work that argues for a theory of televisual aesthetics (such as Zettl 1978, Caldwell 1995, Cardwell 2006, Jacobs 2006, Cardwell 2007, Creeber 2013, Cardwell 2013, Jacobs and Peacock 2013), implies a reliance on textual analysis as a methodology. It is also grounded in a subject position conscious of the intimacy of critical perception, for example, as revealed when Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock assert: 'There are many television moments that strike us as compelling, extraordinary, haunting or distinctive. All provoke both an instantaneous response and linger in the mind' (2013: 8). This work is part of the ongoing assertion/re-inscription of

claims that television can withstand textual analysis, for example, that it is ‘worthy of the kind of study that closely examines aspects of style’ (Cardwell 2013: 23); Perkins’s work is part of that same process in which film gained a similar status (as art-worthy-of-aesthetic analysis). I claim for vids a similar distinction: though derived from existing media, the vid form is no less capable of withstanding similarly rigorous scholarship.

### **Corpus Selection**

In this section, I discuss the choices which guided my corpus selection. Regarding selecting example programmes for citation in television scholarship, Jonathan Bignell writes that ‘a programme becomes an example representing a larger context and history’ (2005: 16) when discussed in critical literature. The heterogeneity and idiosyncrasy of vids, both in content and in distribution, does not provide a stable base on which to perform a systematic sampling. Selecting vids for analysis based on content (for example, attempting to gather all vids from a certain fandom), or year of production, would lead to an artificially restricted picture of the vid form. My goal was rather to select examples which were typical of broader tropes and genres of vidding, which necessitated much wider research.

When discussing films or television programmes, it is generally accepted that the critic or scholar will have a wide viewing experience and general knowledge of similar texts in order to determine exemplarity, and the contextual viewing which informs analysis of this text or another is accepted without the need for further explication. However, as I am mindful that this form operates at the fringes of a subculture, at this point I will discuss the scale of vid production, and the scope of my research. In detail or in passing, this thesis mentions approximately 72 vids. It is not possible to precisely quantify the number of unique vids I have ever watched, but I can



offer some data which will allude to the volume of vids which I have accessed, and consequently indicate the degree of selection that has taken place, in order to construct the corpus for this thesis. Vidders currently offer their works for download and/or as streamed files; I download vids to an external hard drive as assurance against the loss of web hosting, and to allow for access to these research materials in the absence of an internet connection. As of autumn 2013, the drive holding my collection of downloaded vids had 1023 unique files, a minor portion of which admittedly duplicates my collection of vid DVDs. This collection includes vidders' own releases, as well as DVDs from four different fan convention organizations with at least two unique releases per organization.<sup>5</sup> Conventions ('cons') are significant (but not sole) sites for new vids' release, but I did not limit my viewing to a single con, which would exclude the other starting points of vid circulation as discussed in Chapter Three. For the purposes of research, I attended six vidding-focused cons: VividCon 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2014; and VidUKon 2013, and 2014.<sup>6</sup> Each con includes a substantial number of new vids.<sup>7</sup>

Through the course of this cumulative viewing research, key themes of this thesis became evident around questions about historiography, fascination, and critical adaptations. It is neither possible nor necessary to view every vid ever made in order

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<sup>5</sup> *Apocalypse West Vidding Collection 2000 to 2005* (76 total vids), *Apocalypse West 2011 Reel* (15), *Escapade Vid Show Retrospective 1992-2001* (17), *Escapade 5 Song Vid Show 1995* (11), *Escapade 6 Song Vid Show 1996* (12), *VidUKon 2013 – Premiering Vids* (21), *VidUKon 2014 – Premières* (14), and the multi-disc sets of premiering vids from VividCon 2008 through VividCon 2014 (7 sets).

<sup>6</sup> As listed in the convention programme books, the total of vids screened during each convention was as follows: VividCon 2010, 291; VividCon 2011, 293; VividCon 2012, 290; VividCon 2014, 262; VidUKon 2013, 169; VidUKon 2014, 185.

<sup>7</sup> To test VividCon's reputation as a significant site for new work, I counted the number of vids shown in every vidshow over the last six conventions (2009-2014), and noted whether they were new. Some annual vidshows feature only new vids – Premieres, Also Premiering, Challenge, and Auction – and others may include premiering works, which are identified as premieres in the vidshow listing. According to these VividCon programmes, an average of 100 new vids were shown every year. As it relates to corpus selection, this indicates something of the recent scale of production.

to produce a critical analysis of the vid form, just as it is impossible and unnecessary to view every film ever made in order to write about film, but rather extensive viewing research can reveal key thematic trends. Out of this research, I selected a relatively modest number of vids to use as representative examples.

To return to the questions of exemplarity and canon formation, Chapter Three, which concerns vids as archival works, has a particular emphasis on vids made from *Star Trek* (Paramount, 1966-1969) and its spin-offs. This is because *Star Trek* is a favourite source for vidders, media fandom in general, and fandom studies (cf. Penley 1991, Jenkins 1992, Bacon-Smith 1992); in this sense, *Star Trek* and the texts made from it provide a rich history both of the form and its scholarship. It is also foundational: in Kandy Fong's 1970s slide shows, *Star Trek* is where Francesca Coppa (2008) locates the origins of fandom's moving-image re-use. This case study also represents a continuity of fannish attention paid to texts across decades of franchise re-launches, reboots and spin-offs, and across media. Chapter Three includes vids made from other source material, because the history of vidding's relationship with home video and the creation of personal archives goes beyond *Star Trek*: early vids which presently survive in circulation were made from a variety of series.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as demonstrated throughout my thesis, the broad scope of the vid form as it has developed exemplifies the broad attentions of media fandom. However, returning to *Star Trek* enables a continuity of discussion of distribution and exhibition practices associated with vids before and after fandom's digital shift. This includes the transition from projected slides to magnetic videotape to digital files, from objects with a physical presence to streamed objects. The persistence of *Star Trek* in syndication and

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<sup>8</sup> Including *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966-1971), *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979), *The Professionals* (ITV, 1977-1983), and *Blake's 7* (BBC, 1978-1981).

in home video releases makes it a good example to use, especially as the original series has been remastered and re-released on disc. Using *Star Trek* demonstrates the utility of personal archives in creating critical works that: articulate fan readings of characters, norms, and expectations for cult and mainstream texts; and the ways vids may be considered as 'textually archival' as they formally reflect an archival aesthetic.

Chapter Four was originally conceived as an exploration of vids as an unrecognised variety of found footage films. My aim was to investigate a similarity between multifandom vids, which draw on multiple sources, and experimental film and video works that also re-use moving images. The diversity of multifandom vids and the extensive history of moving image re-use immediately complicated this retrospectively naïve starting point. What emerged were questions beyond the scope of this thesis: questions of classification (subgenres of vids, motives of experimental works), of medium-specificity, and the utility of generalising across idiosyncratic (and historically varied) practices, artists and works.

Returning to a selection of multifandom vids which I had observed as possessing clear critical, thematic, or emotional content (as determined by my previous extensive viewing), what was most compelling about these texts is how they enact the intense spectatorial/scopophilic gaze of their creators and audience. As discussed in my Introduction, it is reasonable to assume that it is predominantly women who make and watch vids, and that vids' mode of address is pitched accordingly. Therefore, there is an undeniably feminist story to be told by these vids; however, rather than attempting to shoehorn vids into a history of women's experimental film and video art, my purpose is to understand these vids on their own

terms through the use of textual analysis, and to provide a framework in which to understand similar works.

Chapter Five was initially guided by questions of authorship and continuity. The three vids of the chapter's core case study presents a coherent trilogy that performs an intense and sustained exploration of one character from the recent *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009) series. As scholarly objects, the trilogy represents a sustained exploration of the character study vid genre, as all three vids feature the same main character, use songs by the same artist as soundtrack, and are made by the same vidder. The first of the three, *God Is A DJ* (Dualbunny, 2006), is a highly enjoyable work; its sequels also inspire intense emotion. The markers of continuity beyond authorship – character, performer – prompted the chapter's questions about re-forming a long-form presentation of character development (adaptation) and the primary tool by which this is accomplished (music). Other *Battlestar Galactica* vids were chosen out of my previous viewing to provide illustrative counter-examples to better define the use of music in character study vidding.

With this thesis, the canon of vids I have constructed is a by-product of the selections necessary to present a pointed – rather than comprehensive – overview of vids. The examples I discuss here enable me to explore particularly interesting and critically significant aspects of the vid as text (as outlined in each chapter/case study) rather than trying to offer an exhaustive analysis of the vid as textual form. Through the process of extensive viewing, these critical themes emerged as the most pressing and important. Ultimately, the fact of viewing some vids and not others (regardless of the extensiveness of my research as detailed above) has determined these critical foci. As Bignell (2005) notes, access to texts does determine one's choice of examples,

which can imply comprehensive evaluation and judgement beyond the samples available. I screened the VCR vids analysed in my first chapter from DVD compilations of older works, but these represent only a portion of the vid's textual history.<sup>9</sup>

John Ellis's definition of criteria for inclusion in a canon – 'that a text should be amenable to use beyond the confines of the historical context in which it was generated' (2007: 25) – in relation to the vid form suggests that 'historical context' could be not just a temporal periodization but also, as a way of addressing the comprehensibility of vids outside of the fandoms for which they are made.<sup>10</sup> This is also a useful reminder that the form of textual analysis common to film and television studies includes a critical awareness of a work's context. Again, as discussed in my Introduction, one important context of fan works of this type is the assumption, supported by empirical research produced over several decades, that the producers and audiences of vids are very likely to be women; therefore it is reasonable to understand vids as originating in a context of female authorship and spectatorship. Vids discussed in existing literature form the beginnings of an academic canon. While the majority of vids discussed at length in this thesis have not been addressed in scholarship, I do return to some works which already have an academic presence, thereby affirming their canonical nature.<sup>11</sup> For example, *On the Prowl* offers a female narrative voice in its soundtrack which textually re-frames its sequence of male bodies in pain to one explicitly seen through a female gaze; one might make sense of this in reference to the fannish concept-cum-genre-cum-trope of 'hurt/comfort' (cf. Larsen

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<sup>9</sup> It was beyond the scope of this thesis to visit the University of Iowa's Morgan Dawn Collection of vids and fanzines.

<sup>10</sup> For example, *God Is A DJ* as a text has fans distinct from fans of its source material. When it was shown during VidUKon 2011, the VJ's note in the programme said of the vid's central character 'I like her even though I've never seen the show' (Cesy 2011).

<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, these include *Closer*, *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness*, and *On the Prowl*.

and Zubernis 2012, S. Winters 2012), but the vid itself is also a coherent work that intensifies a form of spectatorship and spectatorial pleasure.<sup>12</sup>

A less significant criterion for academic canon-formation is the popularity of a text, which affects its visibility as a potential research subject. The number of scholarly studies of *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008), for example, suggest that critical acclaim and strong personal feeling are not necessarily unrelated to the formation of an academic canon of media texts. According to the convention database Vividcon.info, two vids I discuss in this thesis, *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* and *God Is A DJ*, have each been shown at VividCon eight times, making these two the most-shown as at VividCon 2014. This frequency is not the reason I chose these particular vids, nor did popularity otherwise influence my corpus selection; however, it does indicate something of these works' clarity of authorial intent, and the effectiveness of their emotional appeals. In this case, the academic canon and fannish canon overlap.

### **Approach: Textual Analysis**

Approaches to textual analysis have both quantitative and qualitative forms; for this thesis I have maintained a qualitative approach. A quantitative approach to media texts such as content analysis, which 'is a systematic approach to media representation that analyses a number of texts by breaking them down into their constituent parts in order to establish patterns and trends' (Casey et al. 2008: 53), is also 'little more than a set of guidelines about how to analyse and quantify media content in a systematic and reliable fashion' (Hansen et al. 1998: 123). If applied to vids, this approach could be

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<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the emerging canonical texts in vid scholarship are, like the fannish genre of slash, those which require some further explanation to those unfamiliar with norms and conventions of fan works, in order to unpack their sociological import (or to place the examples within a subcultural framework). Once that initial work is done, it becomes possible to take a step back and evaluate the vid form as texts on their own, with something to offer in and of themselves.

used to determine the frequency of a variety of elements appearing in the clips which make up the vid: for example, gender of actors, types of shots (establishing, medium, close-up), and perhaps shot length. However this is less appropriate to this study because a quantitative method – counting clips for analysis – does not allow for an in-depth (qualitative) analysis of the image/sound juxtapositions which are at the core of a vid’s meaning-making. Qualitative methods allow for a deeper and richer analysis that can draw out a vid’s textual density. Content analysis would not be an appropriate method for this project, as breaking apart a vid to count its constituent parts similarly breaks down the juxtapositions that are the core of a vid’s meanings. Following a method of textual analysis as laid out by Perkins, as described earlier, provides an approach which is involved, interested, passionate.

While vids can frequently be released with a lengthy exposition of process and intention – both technical and artistic, written by the vidder in accompanying blog post and elaborated upon in viewer comments – this thesis seeks to view the vids as works of art and culture which speak for themselves. In contrast to previous scholarship on vids (see Review of Literature), I do not seek to position vids as symptoms of specific subcultural beliefs or behaviours, beyond what norms and conventions can reasonably be extrapolated from several years’ wide viewing of diverse examples of the vid form. Therefore I do not place an emphasis on these commentaries, which one might call the vids’ own paratexts<sup>13</sup>, as the vids I have selected for analysis speak for themselves. However, I do draw on this material when necessary; for example, when listing a

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<sup>13</sup> Though, as defined by Gray, the paratext is part of a ‘speculative consumption’ of marketing material and assorted cultural information that leads up to one’s consumption of a specific film or television series (2010: 25). Consumption of paratexts helps guide one’s decision to consume other related texts. With vidding, commentary is presented with a vid in the manner of an artist’s statement or technical notes, not as marketing tool. In this language, the *vid’s* paratexts are an interest in the source, the song, the vidder, and/or how the song and source are juxtaposed.

multifandom vid's source material (as with *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [Skud, 2010] in the Introduction or *On the Prowl* in Chapter Four), or in noting a vidder's own acknowledgement of the constraints of using source video of poor image quality (as with *Freedom Hangs Like Heaven* [quigonejinn, 2008], in Chapter Three). Overall, my focus on vids as texts largely meant that vidders' commentary was extraneous: I did not place great emphasis on these intertexts because of the focus of this particular method, which presumes the vid is a self-contained object of study.<sup>14</sup>

The extensive use of textual analysis in this thesis is congruent with my understanding of vids as, fundamentally, the result of fans' close readings of media texts. I take this mode of viewing and creative practice as evidence of fandom's own proof of contemporary television studies scholarship that 'refutes previous claims that television is a medium which defies intense analysis, and which is subject to a distracted glance, rather than a more concentrated gaze' (Wheatley 2006: 21). Vids intensify that concentrated gaze: they are textual evidence of it. Further, Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel note 'a certain shared chronology between early feminist textual analysis of television and the new abilities to view programmes more than once': changes in domestic technology enabled 'fan productions and "Slash" tapes [vids]', 'a practice [...] which today continues with digital fan art now circulated on fan websites and more widely on YouTube' (2008: 8). Brunsdon and Spigel conclude that, 'In this sense, textual analysis is not just a critical mode but is also related to the production of art and the cultures surrounding women's investments in television

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<sup>14</sup> As stated earlier, I did move beyond the vid text in my research to screen vids' source material wherever possible in order to appreciate the nature of the transformations enacted in each work.



series more generally' (2008: 8).<sup>15</sup> Therefore textual analysis is the most apt methodology to explicate the mechanics of this dense form. The heterogeneity of television requires a method that pays close attention to specifics of a text through close reading, and a similar range of vid genres, vidders, presumed audiences, and distribution/exhibition contexts requires the same consideration.

However, as Bailey notes, textual analysis can be effective in the study of fandoms when complemented by other 'research strategies' (2005: 51). In contrast to recent scholarly accounts of vids that use their examples to explicate specific tendencies within media fandom, where an overview of the vid(s) in question gives way to ethnographic analyses (see Review of Literature), I shift the balance to include occasional observations where appropriate to provide contextual framing for the production and cultural context of the vid. These are not based on structured interviews, but on my experiences as a long-time participant in media fandom.

The visibility of a researcher in a project's final write-up is at issue here; whereas textual analysis implicitly allows the scholar's selection of texts – understood to be guided, as Perkins argues, by individual taste and judgement – the more personally reflexive methodology of auto-ethnography could enable a more explicit, personal voice throughout a project. Therefore, a small reflection on auto-ethnography is warranted, as it is impossible to determine the relative degree to which the systems of value and taste which inform my critical perspective on vids have been formed by my scholastic experience and my experience in fandom. As a social sciences approach, auto-ethnographies are of a genre of narrative inquiry 'that express the way the world

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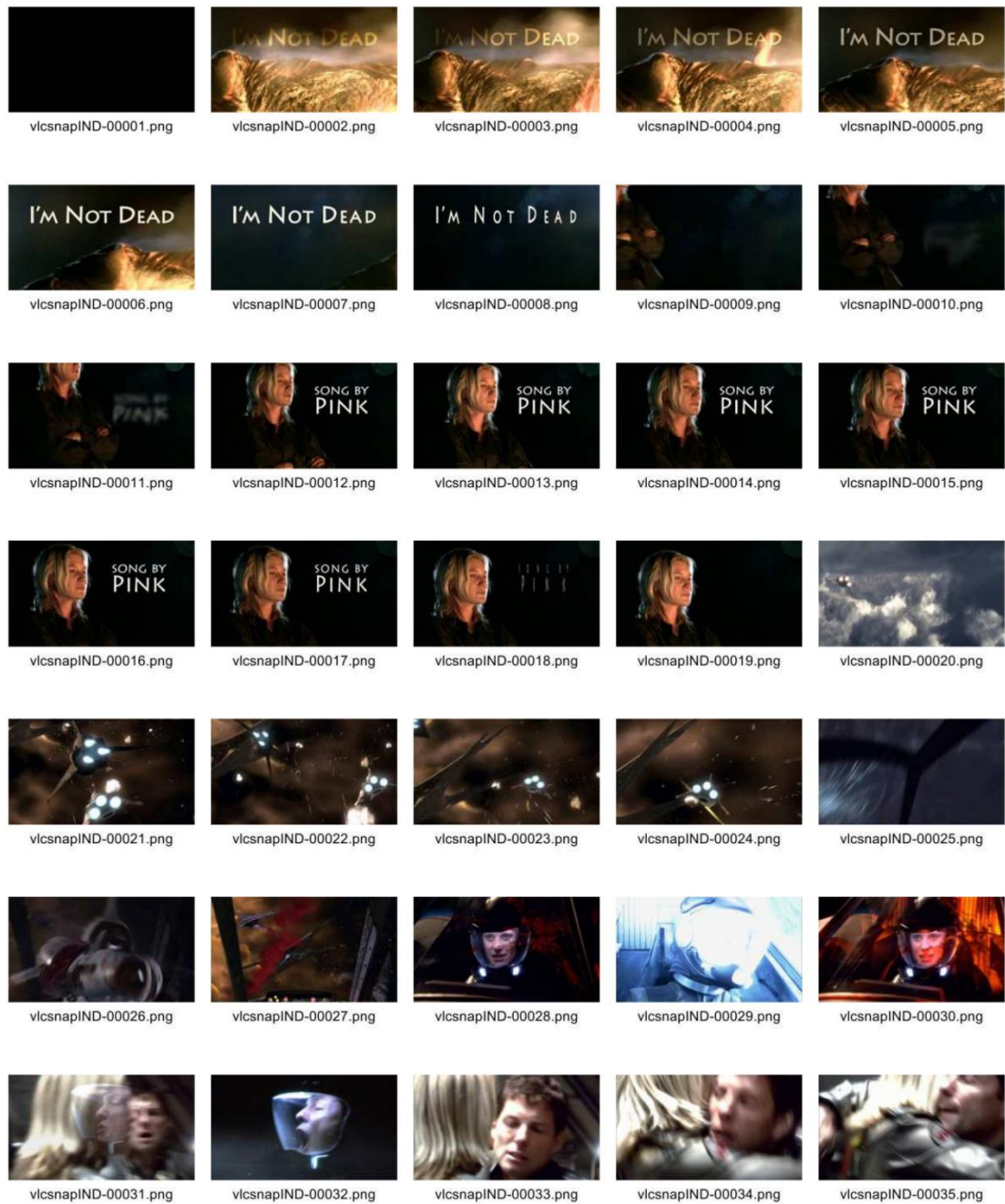
<sup>15</sup> This correlates with Jason Mittell's argument about critically aware audiences: 'While fan cultures have long demonstrated intense engagement with storyworlds', recent 'narratively complex television' encourages this mode more broadly, 'convert[ing] many viewers to amateur narratologists' (2006: 38).

can be perceived, felt, and lived' (Ellis and Bochner 1996: 18). Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln note the term was coined by David Hayano in 1979, and has come to encompass a 'variety of terms and methodological strategies ...associated with [its] meanings and uses' (2000: 636). An intimate auto-ethnographic foray into 'narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation' (Chang 2008: 43) might lend certain insights into the culture of vidding from my subject position of a vidfan (vid-watcher). However, this thesis is not meant to be 'a study of the researcher's own people' (Chang 2008: 56), but instead an investigation of the vid as a textual form within a disciplinary framework in which the scholar's subject position is already a part.

A potential critique of V.F. Perkins's version of academic film criticism – which presumes an uncomplicated congruence between the theoretical spectator and Perkins himself – is that his experience and therefore his judgements are less applicable outside that spectator profile. As I myself am active in media fandom, I present interpretations of vids for a theoretical spectator who is congruent with my experience. Unlike Perkins, however, by acknowledging this experiential bias and highlighting where my readings appear to be typical of other readings as expressed by other media fans, I can offer an analysis of vids which is consciously and reflexively informed by that experience; to present a mode of viewing that is typical/normal to the form, if not (as with Perkins) presumptively universal.

Ultimately, however, my purpose with this thesis is not to record how vidding operates within fandom, but to situate these works and practices within a broader textual context, while recognizing their origins in a particular production and distribution context (just as one would do with any text under study). This involved finding ways to articulate the pleasures and insights of vids within an academic frame

and to evaluate points of scholarly interest rather than attempting to recreate each vid in written form. Reading vids as a scholar and a fan has meant balancing the vid's affective (and, regularly, quite effective) emotional appeals with critical analysis of the texts. Linguistically, this also means I decided to emphasise *vids* (the form, the examples) as opposed to *vidding* (the practice, cultural context).



**Figure 2**, first page of 'contact sheet' created from screen shots of *I'm Not Dead* (Dualbunny, 2009).

The process of performing textual analysis estranges vids from their usual mode of viewing, as select sequences and even split-second beats within the text are discussed as exemplifying aspects of the whole work. Vids are such dense works, that to slow down a vid for analysis – rather than experiencing the work in its usual impressionistic rush of image and sound – distorts the vid even as it is rendered a more stable object of study. A method of textual analysis suitable for the analysis of vids thus became necessary. I first tried to alter the vids’ playback speed in order to see the vid’s connections more easily; I found myself regularly pausing playback to take notes, replaying short sections, and muting the volume to minimize the distraction caused by slowing the audio. Ultimately, I found it helpful to take hundreds of screen captures per vid and create comprehensive ‘contact sheets’ for each work (see Figure 2 for an example<sup>16</sup>). By turning vids into still images, I turned the flow of each vid into a static sequence for the ease of analysis. As a vid’s meaning unfolds in a series of tightly-considered juxtapositions between audio and video, this process enabled close analysis of the structure of a sequence.

This method enabled me to take the time to evaluate a vid’s complex structure, and to move non-linearly through the vid. The ‘contact sheet’ also acted as viewing notes, as a visual (rather than a text-based) account of each vid’s content; depending on rate of screen capture, this could operate like a storyboard, offering a representation of camera movement or clip duration. More usually, this aided in the

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<sup>16</sup> While not commonplace, this process has precedents; for example, Brian Henderson’s article analysing a sequence in *Badlands* (Terrence Malick, 1973) is accompanied by an appendix in which he numbers and describes each of the 48 shots in the sequence (1983: 50-51). In contrast, the shot breakdown table in Jason Jacobs’s reconstruction of a 1937 television play (2000: 72-74) includes columns for dialogue, camera movement, and sound effects. Eve Ng includes a similar table in her study of *All My Children* (ABC, 1970-2011) vids, presenting a single vid in a two-page table with song lyrics, shot descriptions, and clip airdates arranged against time codes (2008: 112-113). My ‘contact sheets’ were developed to aid in writing descriptive analysis; vids’ non-linear complexity is indicated in the text, and no comprehensive schematic table was constructed for any vid.

identification and analysis of clips themselves; for example, in Figure 2, the first page of the 'contact sheets' created for Chapter Five's *I'm Not Dead* (Dualbunny, 2009) shows clearly that in the vid's opening sequence, both the beginning and (near) end of the series is represented: the final three images on the bottom row are from the miniseries which preceded the first full season, whereas the title/credits clips that start the vid are taken from the series' final season. A final consequence of using 'contact sheets' is that its creation of print-based research material enabled me to work away from computer or television screen. After working with 'contact sheets', and gaining a deeper understanding of a vid's composition, returning to the complete work (with moving images and sound) often yielded new insights as my focus would then shift to the soundtrack.

This was also accompanied by more standard viewing practices: I watched vids online and at conventions, and used vid DVDs and downloaded digital files for repeat close viewing. The experience of performing textual analysis of vids at conventions necessitated following the rules for vidshow audiences, for example, to not speak and to remain attentive during a vidshow. At VividCon and VidUKon, the rooms used for vidshows are darkened hotel meeting rooms, set up with rows of chairs facing a large screen onto which the vidshow is projected; this mimics a cinema, and there is a similar experiential difference in viewing the same vid in a group on a big (convention) screen, and alone on one's own smaller (television, computer) screens. Early academic descriptions of vid-watching draw a distinction between 'convention' and 'living-room' vids, named for their screening location, but referring to their mode of address and anticipated audience. Henry Jenkins describes convention vids as being 'broadly drawn to allow immediate recognition from a wide range of fans' (1992: 238) and living room

vids as ‘made for a more select and analytic audience familiar with the community’s interpretive conventions’ (1992: 239). The range of media currently used as vid source means this limitation has evolved to an assumption that viewers unfamiliar with the source will be able to enjoy a skilfully-made vid for its own merits. Indeed, the present viewing culture at vid-focused conventions asks the audience to remain seated and silent during screenings, recalling the focus and intensity of Christian Metz’s traditional model of ‘silent, motionless’ cinema spectatorship (1986: 96).<sup>17</sup> The exception is VividCon’s Club Vivid vidshow, an evening event in which the furniture in the convention screening room is reset to allow dancing and conversation, accompanied by three-hour programme of vids with up-tempo soundtracks.

Between screening room and living room, a third public location for watching vids is the convention hotel room.<sup>18</sup> This space can be used for informal convention programming where the vidshows’ strict viewing rules are relaxed. A vidder can use this space to share works in progress, the convention attendees can review past vidshows via the convention’s own library, and it can also be the location for a vid-focused room party.<sup>19</sup> In convention hotel room parties I attended as part of my research, attention to the vids did wane as those present discussed the series and characters on screen, and the conversation moved to other topics, though striking

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<sup>17</sup> This code of behaviour is in contrast to early experiences where specificity apparently encouraged unruly behaviour from an audience that did not share deep knowledge of the source. As vidder MVD says, ‘They can’t take the complex ones in a large group. They get hyper. They aren’t concentrating that deeply. They want to all laugh together or they want to share their feelings. So it’s got to be obvious enough that the people around them will share those emotions’ (qtd in Jenkins 1992: 239).

<sup>18</sup> This depends on availability of technology; while televisions are expected in hotel rooms, other pieces of equipment (VCR, DVD player, computer video output cables, etc.) are brought by fans.

<sup>19</sup> Such as a Mystery Vid Party, which works without a set playlist, and instead draws on a vast archive to play vids at random; the partygoers’ identification of and reaction to each vid as it is selected and played is a chief pleasure of this event. It demonstrates and affirms the norms of vidding fandom, such as commenting on unusual pairings or source material, drawing attention to effective editing and song choice, and lauding effective or otherwise pleasurable vids.

moments in a vid would refocus attention on the screen. These gatherings, and Camille Bacon-Smith's observation of vids used as background media at a fan party (1992: 179), complicates Jenkins's report of living room vids as the serious and focused version of the form. In contrast to the cinematic vidshow experience, this mode of viewing resembles a traditional understanding of television 'as a casual, domestic form, watched without great intensity or continuity of attention' (Ellis 1982: 146). Without exception, all vids used as examples in this thesis were subject to multiple viewings; these different scales of viewing, with different audiences and degrees of distraction, provided contrasting environments to analyse the vid's form and content.

### **Semiotics and Captioning**

Beyond these concerns about qualitative methodology and corpus selection, I draw on certain strands of semiotic theory to inform my interpretation of vids and thereby ground my method in semiotic analysis. I base my understanding of how meaning is constructed in vids as largely dependent on and produced by the relationship between image and lyric: as a dialogue between the images as edited and the song choice, and expectations for narrative and/or representation, and in the reconstruction or adaptation of the original source material into vid form. I am also interested in the semiotic density of the vid form, as vids are read on several layers simultaneously, as a complete object, structured around the song's lyrics, but frequently based in recognition of the context of the source clips.

Vidding relies on sharpening and somewhat redefining signifiers – primarily, fragments of television and film sources – so that in addition to being excerpts from a story, they are re-presented with the song lyrics and more precisely defined as part of the vid's new context. Roland Barthes writes that reading an image is neither arbitrary

nor anarchic: 'it depends on the different kinds of knowledge – practical, national, cultural, aesthetic – invested in the image' (1977: 46). In the vid, I argue that the process of matching song lyric to clip or sequence is akin to captioning. To explain, Barthes writes that when text is applied to an image, it will fix a 'floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs' (Barthes 1977: 39), limiting the variety of possible interpretations and rendering the image sensible in a specific manner and to a particular end. Barthes argues this anchoring of meaning can be used to communicate a complex concept in tidy visual shorthand. While Barthes writes primarily about captions in advertising, his work is easily adapted to the interaction between narrative (words) and images in moving pictures. In vids, clips are recognisable either specifically as being extracted from a particular narrative or more generally as containing gestures and glances of the sort that are typically understood as significant to character or narrative (Jenkins 1992). Barthes argues that captioning helps the viewer 'to choose the correct level of perception', focusing both one's gaze and understanding, 'constituting a kind of vice which holds connoted meanings from proliferating' (Barthes 1977: 39).

An illustrative example may be found in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972): Berger argues that Vincent Van Gogh's painting *Wheat Field with Crows* on its own contains a certain set of meanings about the artist, the style, the subject matter, and there can be a complete and contained narration of the painting's meaning and relevance. However, Berger argues, if the same work is displayed with a caption explaining it is Van Gogh's final piece, a further layer of meaning is applied to a viewer's understanding and interpretation of the work. In this case, the caption fixes the painting in a linear narrative of Van Gogh's life (and death): in Barthes's language,



fixing various floating signifieds (concepts) to the signifier of the painting, thereby directing the decoding or interpretation of the work. The layers of meaning created in vids are accomplished through this aural captioning.

In the vid, the role of the linguistic message as the role of the caption is taken by the popular music soundtrack, which functions as ‘an interpretive lens’ (Coppa 2008: 1.1) that explicates a vid’s purpose. In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the example discussed at the start of the Introduction, the vid collects representations of women acting without care for social restraints or conventions. The song lyrics (‘I don’t give a damn...’) captions these to support their feminist potential: the vid does not collect these clips of unruly women to condemn them, but to give a voice to their defiance. Signification in vids uses an additional, external signifier (song lyrics) to suggest a further layer of meaning expressed alongside the clips’ original range of meanings. A linguistic signifier (the song lyrics) works to narrow the possible interpretations in that moment in the vid as foregrounding its relevance. The collision of signifiers in the vid creates a degree of interpretive precision, which is neither anarchy nor absolute proscription, but rather a narrowing that is sufficient to focus that interpretive lens.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore, my approach to the vid form is grounded in textual analysis, with the goal of taking the vid form seriously as a text. Through an extensive program of viewing, I developed central research questions about historiography, fascination, and adaptations, and selected key examples to develop arguments to answer those questions. As a member of the media fandom subculture and a long-time vid-watcher, I bring to this project an awareness of the context of vids; this subject position informs

my corpus selection and analysis in the same manner as any scholar in the humanities is similarly grounded in and shaped by comparable personal experiences.

As argued earlier in this chapter, a vid offers more than just access to the specific interpretive work of the person who created it. Indeed, vids are comprehensible beyond the limits of one's foreknowledge of a vid's source material. The vid is therefore a robust and complete form, akin to film or television, which is capable of withstanding analysis independent of detailed knowledge of either the source material or the vidder's own interpretive motives/beliefs. Indeed, the use of songs to guide meaning in vids helps to nail down the ambiguities that would arise in interpreting a vid made outside its context, because the limitation of different potential meanings makes the work more durable.

## Chapter Two – Review of Literature

While vids are made out of more than just television sources<sup>1</sup>, this review of literature is focused on the vid's relationship with television and television studies because, as argued above, the vid was developed through the re-use of television material, and uses of home video technology in relation to broadcast television first enabled the practice of vidding. The vid is a supremely televisual form, and television studies offers a complex and hybrid set of ways to think about television technology, texts, and audiences, and subsequently those of the vid. Where fandom studies approaches to fan works such as the vid view these as the output of a productive subculture, relating the vid to television studies literature reveals: a) the technological developments which enable the creation of this form of fan work; b) theoretical perspectives on the structure and experience of television, articulated by Raymond Williams as 'flow' and developed by subsequent theorists to account for television's technological evolution, which can be explored to develop a critical account for the textuality of the vid; and c) the gendering of non-broadcast distribution, particularly online, relevant as the majority of vids examined in this thesis are digital texts. In this chapter, guided by ethnographic findings in the existing literature on the vid, I also make certain generalised comments about the practices of vidding which see it as a non-mainstream form of television reception. Reference to this extant literature enables me to proceed with the textual analysis of vids with the contextual knowledge that vidding is

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<sup>1</sup> Several vids in this thesis include film sources; additionally, some vids incorporate still images (documentary photographs, comic book pages, illustrations, etc.) and others use video game material. Using VividCon's screenings as a guide (as determined by convention programmes and online database), VividCon 2002 was approximately 90% television source, in contrast to the 35% film/other source in the Nearly New and Premieres shows of VividCon 2014. Television remains the majority.

predominantly practiced by women, for a predominantly female audience, and presents textual evidence of these fans' counter-readings of existing texts.

This Review of Literature begins with a review of existing literature on the vid, and an overview of certain historical concerns within fandom studies. This chapter then addresses the critical writing on the control of, access to, and uses of television to contextualise the perception of television form and content, in order to then explore the form and content of vids. A discussion of television programming's inherent segmentation is followed by an overview of the devices and practices which allowed television audiences to intercept, store, and manipulate these segments. I conclude with a discussion of the gendering of television access and the recent masculinised valorisation of so-called 'quality' narrative fiction formats.

As 'television is and always has been in transition' (Shimpach 2010: 1), I adopt Elizabeth Evans's definition of *television* as 'ultimately some kind of combination of text, technology and industry' (2011: 3); this definition is befitting of a discipline likewise characterised by its hybridity (Brunsdon 1998). I limit my survey to studies of Anglo-American television; commentary on national differences in approaching the study of television are similarly beyond the scope of this section. This chapter is concerned with the changing structure and shape of broadcast television, technological change, the increased opportunity for audiences to control their experience of television, and the issue of 'quality' television in the Anglo-American context. However, this chapter begins with the relatively understated place of the vid form in current television scholarship.

## The Vid in Existing Literature

In this section, I discuss scholarship on vidding in order to contextualise the textual analysis which follows in this thesis. This analysis, such as the gendered gaze analysed in Chapter Four, is shaped by an understanding of vidding practices drawn from this critical literature. Television studies does acknowledge media fandom (see Meehan 2007, Brunsdon and Spigel 2008, Ross 2008, Gray 2010, Mittell 2010, Gray and Lotz 2013); however, the bulk of academic engagement with the vid form is in the loosely-defined field of fandom studies. Accordingly, the balance of this section will review the relevant literature on vids, along with foundational concepts in fandom studies to provide critical context for the vid form as presented in this thesis. Two areas of concern in scholarship on fans and media fandom relate to the fan as producer, and the turn away from characterising fan practices as resistance.

The awareness of media fandom in television studies is sometimes oblique, with hints of an ‘engaged viewer’ who then joins an ‘interpretive community’ and may produce ‘semi-professional videos’ (Meehan 2007: 167).<sup>2</sup> The closest Sharon Marie Ross comes to discussing vids in *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet* (2008) is describing a feature on the website of an American teen network, TheN.com, ‘where users can engage in peer-to-peer sharing of video mash-ups’ made from clips provided to them (251). Instead, Ross focuses on fan discussions, rather than the ‘literal productivity via creative artwork’ (2008: 44). Brunsdon and Spigel argue vidding is a form of feminist textual analysis in their Introduction to *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader* (2008), though the form is absent from the collection beyond this paragraph. Paul McEwan’s discussion of *Hard Core Logo* (Bruce McDonald, 1996) adaptations

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<sup>2</sup> The word ‘fandom’ is not used. She mentions ‘media artifacts’ such as ‘semi-professional videos’ (Meehan 2007: 167) which may be vids, or any manner of video forms (e.g. Machinima, fan films).

briefly addresses ‘fan fiction and Internet videos’ (2011: 44) as legitimate cultural forms (ibid: 41-45). However, Jonathan Gray’s monograph on paratexts includes a small section on vidding (2010: 153-161) that positions vids as fans’ readings of film and television texts; this discussion is then summarised in Gray and Lotz’s textbook *Television Studies* (2012). Gray suggests that vids are like marginalia in books, arguing that ‘all viewer-created paratexts can work as highlighters and underliners, plotting a course through a narrative and leaving tracks for others to follow’ (2010: 154). This equation of vids to margin notes has a pleasant resonance with Chapter Three’s focus on collections and archives;<sup>3</sup> however, my argument is about both the metaphorical tracks through fan readings of a text left by a vid’s editing, *as well as* the material traces left by the degradation of its videotape source material. In vids, the textual traces in the image itself are the visible marks on Gray’s metaphorical page.

Even within fandom, vidding is a minority practice. Historically, this was due to ‘the greater difficulty of access to video equipment, than to desktop publishing and photocopying technologies [used for print fan works], which are often available in the fan’s own workplace and can be used even while on the job’ (Penley 1991: 145). To Bacon-Smith, while few fans were ‘able or willing to devote the financial resources necessary’ to buying the necessary equipment, its commercial availability meant there were few significant barriers to participation (Bacon-Smith 1992: 176). However, Coppa (2008) counters that the technology was expensive and cumbersome.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> And to a chapter title in *Textual Poaching*, ‘Scribbling in the Margins’ (Jenkins 1992: 152-184), itself a reference to Michel de Certeau’s description that official cultural products ‘leave no room where the consumers can mark their activity’ and therefore find ways to annotate their experience (1984: 31). Incidentally, Coppa refers to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s ‘damned mob of scribbling women’ in writing her ‘history of vidding women’ (2008: 1.5, author’s emphasis).

<sup>4</sup> So much so that a trio of vidders created the vid *Pressure* (Sterling Eidolan and the Odd Woman Out, 1990), a meta-vid nominally about *Quantum Leap* (NBC, 1989-1993) that comically details their process of ‘planning, measuring, and mathematics to compensate for the imprecision of the technology’ (2008:

Vids are generally understood to be works which are symptomatic of fandom's subcultural approaches to television and film. Bacon-Smith (1992) sees vids as a textual expression of the spectatorship taught by fandom, arguing the full meaning of a vid is often comprehensible only to other fans (1992: 179). However, as shown by the multifandom vids analysed in Chapter Four, clips may be chosen for erotic or iconic signification as well as narrative references; therefore vids are also a textual expression of spectatorship which is concerned as much with, for example, a fascination with bodies or genre tropes as with narratives. Jenkins describes vids as 'a unique form, ideally suited to [the] demands of fan culture, depending for its significance upon the careful welding of words and images to comment on the series narrative' (1992: 225).<sup>5</sup> He concludes that 'the pleasure of the form centers on the fascination in watching familiar images wrenched free from their previous contexts and assigned alternative meanings. The pleasure comes in putting words in the character's [sic] mouths and making the series represent subtexts it normally represses' (Jenkins 1992: 227-8). In relation to this idea, I argue in Chapter Five that the use of music in the vid follows certain conventions of film and television scoring, where songs contribute to our understanding of a character's internal reflection and emotional expression.

Jenkins (1992) explains vids as the manifestation of fandom's core attributes: textual poaching and material appropriation. Relying (as does Penley) on Michel de Certeau's discussion of 'the tactical nature of consumption and the nomadic character

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4.5). Unusually, this vid contains footage of the vidders themselves and their tools – for example, close-ups of their stacked videotapes, cables and devices – making this work 'unique record not only of the specific technological difficulties of VCR vidding but of the female fannish subculture within which vids were (and are) made' (Coppa 2008: 4.4).

<sup>5</sup> *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers* (2006) reprints some of Jenkins's early writing on fans. In 'Interactive Audiences? The "Collective Intelligence" of Media Fans', he briefly refers to his earlier description of vid production without devoting more than two sentences to the form (2006 [2002]: 143-144).

of the consumer's culture', he uses what he calls 'fan music videos' to build upon his earlier argument about slash fiction, that: 'fan-generated texts cannot simply be interpreted as the material traces of interpretive acts but need to be understood within their own terms as cultural artifacts' (Jenkins 1992: 223). Vidding for Jenkins forms the basis for theorising the aesthetic basis of 'poached' culture, where 'borrowing and recombination' are just as important as 'original creation and artistic innovation' (1992: 224).

These aforementioned accounts appear to be the only scholarly works that mention vidding in a meaningful way before 2008. While vidding has undergone a technological shift, early descriptions of form and content are recognisable when applied to more recent vids. With these exceptions, scholarship on fans and fandom focused 'on the *written* texts of fan fiction, as well as viewer commentary and criticism' (Ng 2008: 103, author's emphasis). Since 2008, the literature on vids has increased, thanks to an In Focus section in *Cinema Journal* (issue 48 no.4, 2009) and the efforts of the online peer-reviewed journal *Transformative Works and Cultures*<sup>6</sup>.

For example, Eve Ng (2008) uses vids of a lesbian couple from the American soap opera *All My Children* (ABC, 1970-2011) to discuss media representations of queerness. Ng acknowledges that vidding may signal 'significant challenges to traditional models of media political economy' and leaves fandom aside to examine 'the broader political stakes of queer representation' (2008: 104). Coppa (2008) addresses vidding prior to 1990 to demonstrate the evolution of the form as a tool for critical engagement, and argues that vidding represents 'a form of collaborative critical thinking' that guides both clip choice and sequencing (2008: 5.1). Coppa uses Kandy

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<sup>6</sup> To date, the similarly-recent *Journal of Fandom Studies* has not addressed the vid.



Fong's slideshow *Both Sides Now* (ca. 1980, taped 1986) as an example of the significance of the character of Spock as a point of identification (2008: 3.7). This work, which inspired the vid form, was therefore 'a visual essay in which music is used as an analytical tool and not a soundtrack' (Coppa 2008: 3.12). A later Spock-centred vid by Kandy Fong (*It's All Coming Back to Me Now*, 1997) is analysed in relation to other *Star Trek* vids in Chapter Three.

Coppa's essay is a response to Jake Coyle's widely-circulated Associated Press article 'The Best Fan-Made Music Videos on YouTube' that misunderstands the form due to the author's 'underlying – and unquestioned – assumption that the fans who make "fan-made music video" are fans of the audio source, that these fans edit footage to music because they like the bands' (2008: 1.2).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Coppa argues that the primary purpose of vidding is not to share a favourite song, but to construct an argument about the video source using the song as part of this commentary (2008: 1.1). Writing in *Cinema Journal*, Julie Levin Russo expresses similar concerns about the visibility of vidding outside media fandom and the potential for misinterpretation and caricature (2009). Gray (2010), Sarah Fiona Winters (2012), and others accept this critical purpose in vidding as a basic tenet; indeed, as I argue throughout this thesis, the analytical and critical work of the vid is demonstrated through the meanings made in juxtaposing re-used moving images with the song soundtrack.

New scholarship on vids tends to single out exemplar works to analyse these works' specific context in a particular fandom, or of a tendency in reading. For example, Coppa writes that *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005) is 'a

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<sup>7</sup> Coppa also objects to Coyle's historiography, arguing vids 'come from a tradition of vid making significantly older than "the dawn of YouTube." In 2005, the year that YouTube was founded, media fans celebrated the 30th anniversary of vidding at VividCon, an ongoing convention dedicated to vids' (Coppa 2008: 1.5).

veritable orgy of scopophilia' to discuss visual pleasure in vidding (2009: 107); Chapter Four elaborates on this work, in relation to further examples, exploring the erotic pleasures of putting bodies on display, as well as the pleasures of special effects spectacles in science fiction film and television. Alexis Lothian uses the vid *Us* (Lim, 2007) in her analysis of copyright issues and vidding fandom, in which she explores 'the implications of everyday digital thefts at the capital-saturated scene of online media production and consumption' (2009: 131). Louisa Ellen Stein (2010) analyses religiously-themed vids of *Supernatural* (WB/CW, 2005-present) to discuss theology of *Supernatural's* millennial audience, while Katharina Freund (2010) uses counteragent's vid *Still Alive* (2008) to discuss conflicts within *Supernatural* fandom. Sarah Fiona Winters (2012) analyses *Closer* (T. Jonesy and Killa, 2003) and *On the Prowl* (sisabet and sweetestrain, 2010) to discuss fannish approaches to pleasures and perversity; Chapters Three and Four respectively offer alternative analyses of these vids. Larsen and Zubernis also mention *On the Prowl* in a discussion of internalised shame and its reduction through validation (2012: 73-4). However, Tisha Turk and Joshua Johnson (2012) have sought to broaden this tendency, and call for an increase of scholarly attention on the systems ('ecology') of fan production to discover how the specific fannish contexts of a vid become shared knowledge within fandom.

Generally, however, fandom studies scholarship does not address the vid. The form's near-absence from Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse's edited collection *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006) is typical.<sup>8</sup> Busse and Hellekson briefly acknowledge that, in the age of the internet, vidders have abandoned VCRs in favour of 'more sophisticated' vids, where 'complex authoring software' is

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<sup>8</sup> Coppa's contribution to this volume, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom' (2006: 41-59), describes vidding in a single sentence in her conclusion.

used ‘to manipulate electronic files’ (2006: 12), but go no further. In scholarship on media fandom more generally, vids tend to be mentioned without further explanation. For example, Abigail Derecho’s essay arguing for fan fiction as an art form includes vids in a list without definitions, examples, or analysis (2006: 77n). Sandvoss’s Jenkins-citing list of fan works includes ‘self-produced videotapes’ (2005: 29), but his broader discussion focuses on written texts (zines, fan fiction), and not the audio-visual (vids). This brevity is also the case of vids’ three mentions in Paul Booth’s *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies* (2010: 2, 12, 167), which is a monograph on Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) that suggests fan works are ‘allegorical’ to ARGs. In *The Cult TV Book* (ed. Abbott 2010), vidding is mentioned in lists of ‘creative acts’ (Richards 2010: 180), “‘poaching” activities’ (Robinson 2010: 216), and ‘other fannish modes of expression’ (Kaveney 2010: 244<sup>9</sup>). Abigail De Kosnik, in *Digital Labor* (ed. Scholz 2013), cites Jenkins to note that media fans ‘make art and music and videos’ in a similarly brief list (2013: 102). My thesis therefore provides a deeper engagement with the vid form, particularly through close textual analysis of the vids themselves.

### **Production and Resistance**

Early scholarship on media fandom (Fiske 1987, Jenkins 1988, Penley 1991, Bacon-Smith 1992, Fiske 1992, Jenkins 1992) was concerned with fan practices, and defined these practices as resistance to capitalism. This focused largely on what John Fiske termed fans’ ‘textual productivity’ (1992: 39) for examples of this resistance; however, this approach is based on the assumption that fan ‘productivity’ elevates those fans from the lesser status of mere ‘consumer’ (Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005). Though this

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<sup>9</sup> Kaveney’s brief description is: ‘clips from shows recut as the visual for appropriate music’ (2010: 244). However, to refer to vids (however briefly) as ‘acts’, ‘activity’, and ‘modes of expression’ preferences the practice over the form, which is a tendency I am refuting with my focus on the vid form itself.

framework has been significant in defining how fan works are perceived in academic literature, in this thesis I propose an engagement with vids as texts in their own right, rather than what a political economy approach may reveal. What is relevant to my analysis is a sustained understanding of fan works as evidence of counter-readings of existing media.

In Fiske's analysis, fans are 'semiotically', 'enunciatively' or 'textually productive' (1992: 36-39). Semiotic productivity, 'the making of meanings of social identity and of social experience from the semiotic resources of the cultural commodity' (Fiske 1992: 37) is an internal process which may be shared with others in person ('enunciated'). Fiske's 'typical'<sup>10</sup> examples of textual productivity are works created by fans who are engaged in 'filling in the syntagmatic gaps in the original narrative' and for circulation 'through an extensive network' of fellow fans (1992: 39). A fan work such as a vid is therefore made to be shared within a community. The movement of this 'popular cultural capital' (Fiske 1987: 314) within fandom 'reproduce[s] equivalents of the formal institutions of official culture' and is 'a sort of "moonlighting" in the cultural rather than the economic sphere' (Fiske 1992: 33). Vids' distribution and exhibition is addressed in Chapter Three, drawing on Penley's discussion of fans' 'enthusiastic' mimicry of 'the technologies of mass-market cultural production' (1991: 140). However, as Hills argues, Fiske's approach reduces all fan activity to 'productivity', while constructing a scenario whereby 'short of not watching a programme at all, there appears to be no way of not being "productive" in relation to it' (2002: 30).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Sandvoss notes that 'only a minority of fans participate in

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<sup>10</sup> That is, fan fiction and vids. Fiske refers to these as 'novels' and 'music videos' (1992: 39).

<sup>11</sup> However, Vincent Mosco suggests that 'simply not watching [television] at all' is a decision made in 'a social field whose terms of engagement are primarily set by capital' (1996: 149); in this sense, not

textual production' (2005: 29), meaning that the experiences of fans who participate without leaving textual traces cannot be adequately theorised (ibid: 30). Online activity allows the 'lurker': a fan who interacts with fan works without leaving comments or feedback.<sup>12</sup> These users are semiotically productive, but otherwise invisible. This also suggests that fan works have audiences who behave like a 'typical' television viewer, remaining anonymous to the works' creators. I am concerned with a specific form of textual productivity – the vid – but with a focus on the works themselves; this politico-economic argument contextualises but is not foregrounded in this thesis.

In *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992), Henry Jenkins looks at fans of *Star Trek* and *Beauty and the Beast* (1987-1990) to argue for an understanding of fans 'as active producers and manipulators of meanings' who 'try to articulate for themselves and others unrealised possibilities within the original works' as well as 'articulating concerns which often go unvoiced within the dominant media' (Jenkins 1992: 23). In this thesis, I argue vids can articulate fan readings of romantic/erotic subtexts in characters' relationships (Chapter Three) and the visual pleasures of television and film (Chapter Four), and can reframe marginalised voices (Chapter Five). To Jenkins, fandom is 'an ongoing struggle for possession of the text and for control over its meanings' and accordingly 'involves not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism' (1992: 24). Positioning fandom as a struggle contrasts with the playful manipulation of texts as described by Penley (1991: 137); the co-existence of adoration and frustration is apparent in Chapter Five's case

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watching a programme is akin to withholding one's labour (e.g. going on strike). The absence of production ('not watching') is still gauged in terms of capitalist paradigms.

<sup>12</sup> Extending the '1 per cent' rule regarding 'creativity and participation online' – in which '90 per cent of users are the passive audience, 9 per cent of users are editors [...] not creating content, and 1 per cent are the creators' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 84) – to media fandom online suggests that the size of an online audience for fan works will greatly exceed the number of fans producing work.

study, as the pleasures associated with the vids' main character are presented in tension with a frustration regarding her development.

In *Convergence Culture* (2006), Jenkins suggests audiences participate in the production of culture because of increasing opportunities for active engagement with media content and technologies. Critical conceptions of 'participatory culture' presume every individual who has access to production technologies *will* produce their own content, and producers of 'official culture' (Fiske 1992: 33) create experiences which capitalise on this apparent willingness to engage (Ross 2008, Russo 2009). This relationship is uneasy, as 'even companies that embrace the ideals of audience engagement are uncertain about how much control to abdicate' (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013: 35). In the case of the vid, control largely ends once an episode is broadcast or released on DVD, as fans can take over circulation and interpretation (see Chapter Three)<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, as Paul Booth points out, characterising fan activity as 'productivity' forces an unworkable metaphor: 'In order for the production/consumption metaphor to function, we must assume that *consumption also implies destruction* – the destruction of possession, or the destruction of demand' (Booth 2010: 22, author's emphasis). Rather than an act of destruction, a vid can demonstrate how this audience identifies points of significance within fictional narratives. Indeed, the *Star Trek* vids in Chapter Three reveal a recurring and abundant interest in (demand for) media texts.

Sandvoss notes the influence in fandom studies of Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), in which 'everyday life in industrial capitalism [is] a

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<sup>13</sup> For work on legal matters relating to fan works, see Murray 2004, Tushnet 2007, and Lothian 2009. Legal scholarship relating to unofficial sources of television (through digital downloads) is similarly beyond the scope of this thesis. For work in this area, see: Strangelove 2005; May 2007; Lewis 2007; Fisher and Harlow 2006; Leaver 2008; Newman 2012.

site of struggle in which those disempowered do not create their own products and symbols' and are left to "make do" with mass-produced culture through their own distinct and oppositional readings' (Sandvoss 2005: 13). This view leads to a characterisation of fan works as anti-commercial and therefore resistant.<sup>14</sup> These early scholars used a combination of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (cf. Fiske 1992) and concepts adopted from de Certeau's work – such as tactics (Penley 1991) and poaching (Jenkins 1992) – to argue fandom's productivity is a redemption of 'the trash' (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2006: 42) of popular culture. Penley defines tactics as 'guerrilla actions involving hit-and-run acts of apparent randomness... to turn to their own ends forces that systematically exclude or marginalize them' (1991: 139). However, where de Certeau's *bricolage* offers temporary 'moments of resistance or pleasure', fan works are 'real products' offering 'pleasures found lacking in the original products' (Penley 1991: 139). The vid is therefore a way to share the explication of subtext, or an intense examination of character development. Examples such as the slash vids of Chapter Three, the multifandom vids of Chapter Four, and the character study vids of Chapter Five, are real products which re-present television and film clips in ways that collect and intensify the pleasures of the source material. While not wholly oppositional, they represent a practical intervention in a media flow which is presented with minimal opportunities for audience control.

Jenkins's characterisation of fan practice as 'textual poaching' (1988, 1992) is a somewhat problematic use of de Certeau's concept. De Certeau's chapter 'Reading As Poaching' (1984: 165-176) builds on a series of oppositions throughout the book where writing and reading are opposed, such that reading (interpretation) is an act of

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<sup>14</sup> As vids re-use copyrighted material, fans arguably participate in a 'mass kleptocracy' (Keen 2007: 142).

liberation from oppressive structures of writing (dictated meaning). Reading-as-poaching therefore exercises ‘an autonomy in relation to the determinations of the text and a multiplication of the spaces covered’ (De Certeau 1984: 176).<sup>15</sup> In the context of fan works, Jenkins describes poaching as ‘an impertinent raid on the literary preserve that takes away only those things that seem useful or pleasurable to the reader’ (1988: 86); however, de Certeau’s definition is ‘the silent, transgressive, ironic or poetic activity of readers (or television viewers) who maintain their reserve in private and without the knowledge of “the masters”’ (1984: 170). De Certeau implies that every person has a ‘preserve’ stocked with ‘poached’ readings beyond the knowledge or control of producers of official culture, whereas Jenkins argues for a removal, theft, or loss that directly affects the copyright owners. Penley’s use of de Certeau is more constructive than Jenkins’s: she employs de Certeau’s theories of resistance to explain fandom’s vertically integrated parallel media industry, which does not propose an alternative to established structures of media production and distribution, but instead adopts and exploits those systems (Penley 1997: 105-106). The implication of duplication and individual meaning is particularly apt when considering the duplication of videotape or broadcast materials, as the source text is unaffected; the exception, as discussed in Chapter Three, is when videotape degrades through use. Indeed, as argued throughout this thesis, the comprehensibility and analytic power of a vid rests in the addition of a layer of textual meaning, not the replacement, theft, or destruction of the original meanings. Significantly, fan works are

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<sup>15</sup> The image of the poacher raises competing definitions, on one extreme of the Robin Hood figure redistributing resources (where fans take ownership the cultural objects which are part of their world, in defiance of absent and unduly entitled owners), and on the other, the black-market hunters endangering species to supply black market trade (that fans ultimately have no right to narratives and characters owned by others, and whose work poses a real threat to lives and ecological diversity).



directed to other fans (and not to the creators of the original work), offering ‘the prospect for those communities to construct a more intimate relationship to what may otherwise seem a “mass” text’ (Gray 2010: 161).

Sandvoss argues that fandom is not inherently oppositional, taking issue with Fiske's ‘overall paradigm of power and resistance in the analysis of fandom that has continued to shape much of the field’ (2005: 11). Indeed, by reviewing several decades' worth of research on fans and fandom, Sandvoss notes that fandoms tend to reproduce dominant discourses of race, class and gender, and do not uniformly oppose any system or institution. This echoes Andrea MacDonald's analysis of *Quantum Leap* fans, in which she refutes the anti-hierarchical rhetoric of Jenkins and Bacon-Smith, and of fandom itself (MacDonald 1998: 136).<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Ross records rifts in online *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fandom based on fans' access to offline activities organised through internet message boards (2008: 55). Kaveney likewise notes fandoms are ‘groups with internal hierarchies of prestige [...] and also, alas!, feuds’ (2010: 244). Rather than framing fan works as a wholesale attack on cultural production under industrial capitalism – a position undercut by their reliance on existing media as source material, a lack of a coherent target for a unified opposition, and a lack of a unified group to mount said opposition – it is nevertheless important to recognise that vids are constructed mainly by women, and women continue to have a marginal role in the production of culture in industrial capitalism. Therefore, an analysis of the vid reveals

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<sup>16</sup> MacDonald found that hierarchies were constituted along multiple dimensions: knowledge of the text, quality of participation, access to actors or producers, leadership (‘A natural dynamic of these smaller groups’), and of either physical or virtual venue ownership (MacDonald 1998: 137-8). Fandom's move online also divided fans based on comfort with and access to the technology: while some fans embraced the new platform, others were alienated (MacDonald 1998: 141).

the traces of a tradition of individual counter-readings of texts, performed by an engaged audience, who are skilled users of home video technology.

Much of the rhetoric of resistance in fandom studies arises from the observation that women in fandom are active producers of media, rather than passive consumers. This has a likely link to stereotypes surrounding traditional gender roles, in which it becomes surprising to witness women acting in contradiction to gendered assumptions about the passive female television viewer. However, much of the literature approaches media fandom as a subculture populated by women without making an essentialist argument that the creation of fan works is an *inherently* female activity. An exception is Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* (1992), which is useful for its descriptions of practices, if not for its conclusions. Citing Laura Mulvey and E. Ann Kaplan, she argues that re-watching television episodes is part of the uniquely feminine aesthetic pleasure found in identifying patterns, and offers quilting, needlework, and child-rearing as further examples (1992: 186). As the (Mulveyan) masculine-oriented gaze excludes the fan from the patterns she deciphers, creating fan works 'diffuses the anxiety of her own nonthreatening absence from the product by incorporating herself into the meaning through creative interaction with the characters and situations as they exist in her head' (Bacon-Smith 1992: 187). Busse and Hellekson cautiously offer that Bacon-Smith 'fails to accurately depict the diversity of fandom as she tries to impose universal interpretive models' (2006: 19); Jenkins is more strident, arguing that 'despite good intentions, the focus on pain and victimisation comes close to restoring the pathological stereotype of fans to the core of [Bacon-Smith's] explanation of fanish [sic] behaviour' (1995: 203).

Coppa refrains from presenting vidding as a practice in opposition to any existing hegemony; rather, she cites Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and the history of women as film editors in Hollywood to suggest vidding is part of a critical, analytical, and collaborative tradition of 'making art within the domestic sphere' (2008: 4.9). Looking forward to the thesis, like Jonathan Gray, I am interested in vids 'that do not so much work against a show or radically alter the text as much as they invite increased attention to a given plot, character, relationship, or mode of viewing' (2010: 46). Accordingly, I do not seek to position vids as radical re-presentations of source material, but instead as texts which work with (and within) other texts to extract and communicate fans' potential readings and interpretations of existing video content.

### **Flow and Interruptions**

I begin this section with a discussion of the changing form of television in order to establish an orthodox theorisation of the experience of the medium, in which the vid form originated and against which it can be seen to operate. In this section, I address the fragmentary nature of television programmes, which are broadcast in segments (in episodes, punctuated by ad breaks) and yet are easily understood as being part of a whole (flow, season, series, narrative arc); this whole is fragmented in a different way in order to make vids. Vids provide textual evidence which confirms the literature on television textuality explored below. Raymond Williams's *flow* argument is a central and persistent metaphor of television: he argues that 'abstract and static' (1974: 86) broadcast schedules promise a progression of 'discrete units' (1974: 88) – sporting events, episodes of a drama series, feature films – but that these units are interrupted with unannounced elements such as advertising breaks. Williams therefore proposes

that the experience of television 'is one of sequence or flow' (1974: 86) in which once-whole programmes lose their integrity as clearly-defined *units*.<sup>17</sup> In response to this, Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch proposed the idea of the 'viewing strip': an expanded 'definition of the television text' which describes the assembled 'viewing strip' or text made from the selections of individual viewers from 'the range of options offered by any given evening's television' ([1983] 2000: 567). This is their basis for the comprehensive textual analysis of television. In contrast to this linear and temporally-bounded representation of an evening's television viewing, the vid offers a textual representation of viewing across a series, genre, or more broadly still.

John Ellis argues that broadcast television is built from the *segment*, 'a coherent group of sounds and images, of relatively short duration' presented in 'a programmed series' and not a senseless montage (1982: 116). Ellis takes issue with Williams's focus on units and discrete texts, arguing that 'the vast quantity of broadcast TV's output' (1982: 116) is not 'cinema-style texts which appear in a context that reduces their separation one from another' (1982: 118); for example, as episodes of a narrative fiction series, as segments in a news programme, or self-contained advertising spots.<sup>18</sup> Segmentation is useful as an analogy to vids' construction and making of meaning: where television is made of segments, vids are made of moments (e.g. gestures, glances) found within individual segments.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Williams argues the theatrical revue or music-hall entertainment is the origin of the term *programme*: an assemblage of units presented sequentially over a set period of time, regardless of genre/theme. Each act is a single unit, assembled to become 'a series of timed units. Each unit could be thought of discretely, and the work of programming was a serial assembly of these units' (Williams 1974: 88).

<sup>18</sup> In contrast to Williams, Ellis calls adverts 'supremely televisual', arguing these are the 'standard form of TV construction' (1982: 119), wherein segments with different purposes and relations to surrounding sequences are not intrusions into a programme, they are inherently of the medium itself.

<sup>19</sup> The highly-attentive fannish mode of watching television prompts the identification of individual moments of significance, as defined by their place in plot or character arcs (Bacon-Smith 1992: 131) and, particularly for character study or relationship vids, indicated by a close reading of actors'

Ellis's definition of a programme as 'what is characteristically *taken to be* an independent textual entity' (1982: 122, emphasis added) highlights the role of the audience's perception for televisual coherence, even as the phrase 'watching television' is one 'which Williams suggests is revealing of the subordinate nature of the individual programme to the actual form' (Wood 2007: 491). Indeed, Gripsrud argues that Williams's familiarity with individual programmes undercuts the argument for a homogenised experience of indistinct segments (1998: 28), even as the lack of 'markers of "interval" between the scheduled film and the inserted commercials and trailers for other films' meant 'it was possible to construct meaningful relations between the disparate elements' (1998: 27). This reflexive construction of meaningful relations between elements is the principle by which vids' meanings are made; however, as argued above, vids are constructed from non-contiguous (but conceptually-related) moments extracted from programmes in a manner comparable to the way segmented programmes are perceived as being part of a whole within the broadcast flow.<sup>20</sup> Building on this, vids fragment the linear presentation of television segments; their re-assembly presents these fragments in a new and intensified sequence. The progression of a vid's montage is guided by the linear temporality of the vid's pop song soundtrack, as meanings are made through this defined sequence.

While Caldwell argues that flow is a useful reminder that 'television is... about the experience of viewing extended, composite sequences comprised of a succession

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gestures and body language (Bacon-Smith 1992: 188). These moments will then guide clip selection for making a vid, as they have been already singled out as significant.

<sup>20</sup> Gripsrud (1998) challenges the centrality of flow in television theory, in part because the metaphor is applicable to other media – as with radio broadcasting or in reading a newspaper's collection of segments – and therefore not specific to television. However, Williams argues that television provides a linear programme sequence 'in a single dimension and in a single operation' (1974: 87); this is what makes broadcasting distinct from Gripsrud's example of reading a newspaper (1998: 28), despite the latter's suggestion of a sequential reading order. Williams argues that these factors make television fundamentally different to other media forms, as is the audience's reaction and response to it.

of texts' (2004: 63-64), flow describes an experience of television which vidders subvert to obtain their source material. Vidders engage with single programmes, and vids are evidence of this engagement outside of flow. The isolation of the episode is performed not only cognitively – choosing to disregard the mortar between the bricks of an episode – but also practically and materially, when the episode itself is fully extracted from the flow (for storage, sale, rental or ad-free digital access). The critical literature that examines the consumer technology which enables this practice will be addressed in the next section.

Vids are textual proof that television is, and has been, seen as existing outside of flow. For example, Caldwell notes industrial practices of block scheduling and counter-programming (2003: 134) are 'classical "first-shift" programming' (2003: 136). Caldwell adopts terminology from police procedurals to argue that the 'first shift' of industrial practices and scholarly metaphors, developed in the era of network dominance, have been forced off-duty by changes in technology and practice that 'promoted a fragmentation of the flow' (2003: 134). With multi-channel broadcasting's disruption of the stable and predictable audience figures, the certainty and confidence of programming is equally lost; therefore 'second-shift practices attempt to bring new forms of rationality to unstable media economies' (ibid: 135) as 'programming strategies have shifted from notions of network *program* "flows" to tactics of *audience/user* "flows"' across multiple media (ibid: 136, author's emphasis). Helen Wood develops the concept of 'user flows', noting that television technologies 'potentially allow television texts to become navigable space, which can rupture the narrative drive of television's traditional linear mode of representation' (2007: 489). Recent technological change provides new avenues for audiences' semiotic navigation

of flow as previously described by Newcomb and Hirsch: 'Bringing values and attitudes, a universe of personal experiences and concerns, to the texts, the viewer selects, examines, acknowledges, and makes texts of his or her own' ([1983] 2000: 570). This personalisation is made literal in vids. Vids provide textual traces of vidders' semiotic (as well as literal) navigation through television texts as each clip has been carefully selected for its significance and semiotic resonance. Jonathan Gray describes fan works' non-linear re-presentation of texts as 'plotting a course through a narrative and leaving tracks for others to follow' (2010: 154). Vids therefore reveal a way of reading a text outside of flow. If, as Wood argues, television texts are 'navigable space' (2007: 489), vids construct a map detailing points of interest such as 'specific characters and relationships' (Gray 2010: 154) but also, as demonstrated by multifandom vids, tropes and trends in representation more broadly.

Digital television and digital viewership call for an update of the concepts of flow, broadcasting and other metaphors discussed by Gripsrud (1998). Two digital metaphors used to describe new ways of accessing televisual texts are 'streaming' (recalling flow's directed watercourse, branching off from the main channel but still from a common origin) and 'downloading' (a spatial metaphor, figuring the unit of programming as a discrete entity). James Bennett (2008) suggests that 'database' should supersede 'flow' as the most appropriate description of television, given the increase of on-demand streaming options where single episodes can be watched in near-isolation.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, in Chapter Three, I propose 'archive' as a metaphor for how vids provide textual evidence of a relationship between audiences and their

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<sup>21</sup> Broadcasters' web-based on-demand services typically include a station ident clip and many insert advertising spots, and box set releases also include promotional materials. Digital downloads (and other unofficial methods of accessing programmes) appear to be the only method of accessing single episodes in isolation, though 'TV-rip' episodes may preserve superimposed graphics from its broadcast.

personal collections of media. Both terms suggest centrality, permanence, and authority; however, where 'database' implies the administration of information about television, as a catalogue of titles (and/or airdates, ratings, content summaries, genres, etc.), 'archive' suggests the curation of programming itself. The selection process of material to include in one's archive, the varying degrees of permanence (from streamed episodes through downloads with an expiry date, to purchases of pre-recorded media), and the idiosyncratic manifestation and arrangement of the objects themselves, requires terminology that can bridge the material and the immaterial to include videotape and discs with digitally-recorded media.

### **Technology and Audiences**

This section addresses technological change and the increased opportunities for audiences to assert control over their experience of television. The vid represents an extreme version of this control, and textual evidence of it: vids' critical analyses are enabled by, and leave traces of, the engagement allowed by evolving television and home video technology. However, the critical literature on television recording and distribution focuses on mainstream practices, and therefore fails to take into account how these practices can and have been extended to produce vids. Indeed, without home video technology, the vid form would not exist. The precise technologies of time-shifting and place-shifting which enable this control – the VCR, the DVD, personal computers<sup>22</sup> – also provide the means for making vids, as they capture the individual episodes and films out of which vids are made. Vids are therefore part of the history of home video technology, albeit as a marginal form. Considering the literature on home video in relation to the vid contextualises visible changes in vids' textuality: differences

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<sup>22</sup> On-demand subscription services are less directly available for use as vid source material.



in image quality and colour saturation, for example, can indicate the videotape provenance of a vid's source material and therefore demonstrate where vidders have taken advantage of changing technologies. The VCR enables an immediate intervention into and control of the flow, and its use for time-shifting is highly significant.<sup>23</sup> Devices which follow the VCR continue to alter the experience of watching television and raise questions surrounding the amateur archiving and preservation of television content.<sup>24</sup> While vids are now made digitally – DVDs and digital files provide source material and distribution methods – the form's origins are in videotape. By considering scholarship on videotape as an antecedent to other forms of digital time-shifting, along with vidders' use of these devices, I argue that the development of the vid text reveals a continuity of the experience and use of television. The VCR is the tool by which audiences achieve personal control over programme units, and its digital successors have not significantly changed these practices.

Home video technologies were preceded by industrial use of videotape for syndication and archival purposes, beginning in the late 1950s (Barnouw 1990, Turnock 2007). Domestic VCRs brought these abilities to the home, allowing audiences to record programmes off the air to watch later (time-shifting) and play pre-recorded videocassettes in the home (renting/buying). The effect of the VCR on the film industry – creating an expectation that cinematic releases will be followed by pre-recorded videocassettes for home viewing – has been profound and multi-faceted (Wasser 2001). However, as pre-recorded videocassettes of television series were less common

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<sup>23</sup> Sony's Betamax was marketed as a direct subversion of television schedules 'that would take control away from programmers and give it back to the consumers' (Wasser 2001: 83), which suggests these 'consumers' had control over what was broadcast.

<sup>24</sup> Broadcasters and producers can be cast as villains in histories of television, owing to their well-known erasure and re-use of videotapes at the expense of archives.

than of films<sup>25</sup>, the story of television and videotape is predominantly that of viewers' domestic uses of their technology, and not that of official home video releases.

Uricchio discusses 'the ambivalence between programming-centered and viewer-activated notions of flow' characteristic of the mid-70s to the mid-80s:

On one hand seemingly passive, drawn from one time block to the next, the consummate *television* viewer, the couch potato seemed to be the perfect target of the program-driven notion of flow. On the other hand, armed with a television RCD [remote control device], a VCR, a VCR RCD, a stack of tapes, and a cable television guide, the couch potato as active zapper and zipper engaged in viewing activities that were highly mobile and unpredictable, thus embodying a viewer-side notion of flow. (Uricchio 2004: 171)

Fannish modes of viewing – which led to the development of vids – are a hidden part of this history of technological change. While Uricchio's description of 'highly mobile and unpredictable' viewers suggests an accelerated flow, vids are textual evidence of a practice which uses these technologies to interrupt the flow in order to isolate, re-view, and re-use programme segments. Jason Mittell argues that the remote control 'did not directly cause a shift in viewing practice' but it did enable 'a mode of channel grazing that disputed flow' (2010: 416). The VCR made it possible to watch episodes, films, and even ads and idents, at a different time (and, potentially, different place; Bjarkman 2004) from their original broadcast or release. This also allowed the viewer to construct a composite sequence out of multiple episodes for 'compressed multiple-episode viewing' (Bacon-Smith 1992: 130), a practice lately given 'the somatic metaphor of "bingeing" to describe the domestic viewing of multiple episodes

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<sup>25</sup> The home video market for television was minimal until the development of higher-capacity DVDs (Wasser 2001, Kompare 2006).

sequentially' (Brunsdon 2010: 64-65).<sup>26</sup> Most importantly for this thesis, the same domestic technology also enabled the production and distribution of vids.

An awareness of vids reveals an odd disconnect between two of the approaches to television discussed by Eileen Meehan (2007): the 'engaged viewer' and the 'self-programmer'. The 'self-programmer' chooses to 'view home-made or home-duplicated materials, time-shift television programs, and use prerecorded materials to create [their] own schedules', where the 'engaged viewer' becomes 'absorbed with a television series... [c]onsistently watching and rewatching episodes' (Meehan 2007: 167), on the way to participating in media fandom. However, a viewer can only become 'engaged' if they have access to the technologies of self-programming in order to re-watch episodes. Meehan's reduction of time-shifting to a matter of scheduling elides the fact that time-shifting often creates *copies* of programmes which the viewer then can control and manipulate, and thereby obtain the raw material for vid-making.

Ann Gray's book *Video Playtime: The Gendering of a Leisure Technology* (1992) demonstrated the complex role that the VCR played in the daily lives of British women from a variety of economic backgrounds and education levels. Gray notes a tendency to use the time in front of the TV for essential tasks such as knitting, ironing or mending, in order to redeem time which was 'not to be squandered on valueless or unproductive activities' (Gray 1992: 74). This multi-tasking approach explains a 'domestic context and the social relations of power' leading to a 'feminine mode of viewing which is distracted and lacking in concentration' (Gray 1992: 126). However, the vid form provides evidence of an alternative deeply attentive use of this domestic

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<sup>26</sup> The on-demand service Netflix will actively promote sequential viewing by interrupting end credits sequences to automatically play the next episode in the season; the viewer must opt-out of this programmed flow, rather than making an active decision to continue viewing.

technology by a largely female audience, alongside the mainstream use of home video described by Gray.

Gray notes that half of her interviewees had an 'interest in either television, the VCR, or both' (1992: 214); those who time-shifted did so to keep up with a serial programme. This short-term time-shifting was successful, insofar as they watched what they recorded. Where the women were content to reuse their tapes, maintaining the tape's utility as a technology for single viewings outside the broadcast schedule, 'children and partners' of middle-class families kept archives 'based on the assumption that there will be more than one viewing of the product' (Gray 1992: 216). Gray suggests that this gendered preference is partially due to a lack of time to re-watch programs, and partially because responses indicated that once a story 'is known, there seems little point in re-engaging with the text' (1992: 216). Helen Wood observes a similar gendered tendency in negotiating how to use the DVR as a potential archive (2007: 499). However, as demonstrated throughout my thesis, the appeal of keeping up with the serial narrative is only one of the pleasures of television; the vid form suggests a sustained engagement with texts' visual pleasures (Chapter Four), and demonstrates the pleasures of re-working a narrative (Chapter Five).

After time-shifting, Gray discusses the 'main use for the domestic VCR, other than off-air recording' which is 'playing pre-recorded tapes' (1992: 217). Her description of high street 'video libraries' notes the brightly-coloured cardboard packaging, the typical rental fee and sale price for pre-recorded tapes, and the variety of movies available in this format (films produced for cinematic release, for television broadcast, or as straight-to-video). Derek Kompare's (2006) description of the first DVD box set of a complete television season in the US – the release in 2000 of the first

season of *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002) – also takes note of the slick, attractive packaging of the set, and retailers’ strategies to display these items for sale. Kompare writes that the DVD box set ‘culminates the decades-long relationship between television and its viewers, completing the circle through the material purchase—rather than only the ephemeral viewing—of broadcast texts’ (2006: 338).<sup>27</sup> However, as I argue in Chapter Three, though collections of vids released on DVD mimic the production of these official releases, they also continue a history of distributing vids on videotape: the material possession of television has always been a factor in the story of vids, which to some extent challenges Kompare’s account of this relationship.

Kim Bjarkman (2004) looks to the videotape-sharing community to discuss fan-archivists who collect television content.<sup>28</sup> Within this group of ‘avid fan-collectors’, the VCR’s ability for time-shifting becomes, as Bjarkman argues, ‘a tool for *place-shifting*’ (219, author’s emphasis). The international tape-sharing communities allowed for self-directed reruns and enabled many practices that DVD releases and downloading have continued, such as sustained, intense viewing of episodes of a single series in sequence, and of making vids. In Gray’s account, and in the experience of the cinephile videotape collectors interviewed by Uma Dinsmore (1998), VCR users do not share their tapes outside the home, though Gray reports that in several households each family member may have a tape of their own to use (and re-use) as they will. As Dinsmore notes, the collectors’ relationship with the VCR is intensely personal and inward-focused as the pleasures of tape-collecting are not shared with anyone else.

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<sup>27</sup> Kompare (2006) argues that television DVD box sets signal a shift from the flow model of broadcasting to that of publication, in which the consumer obtains a tangible media product from a producer rather than through networks. Indeed, box set releases codify the programme and episode as discrete events by removing them from the flow, and away from the original broadcast context.

<sup>28</sup> Bjarkman counts herself part of this group, owning ‘more than two thousand tapes’ (2004: 219).

To some of Bjarkman's subjects, an episode is not truly complete if it is removed from its flow without commercials and such intact.<sup>29</sup> Unlike Gray and Dinsmore, whose subjects use the VCR as a domestic technology for personal use, Bjarkman's VCR users collect tapes with the knowledge that they may one day copy any given tape for trading with a larger, geographically-diverse community. This community-minded use of videotape is also seen in media fandom; for example, as tapes were circulated locally and internationally (Bacon-Smith 1992), women would join with others to form vid-making collectives, sharing resources such as tapes in order to produce their work (Jenkins 1992).<sup>30</sup>

The personal computer and digital distribution methods prompt questions about the future of television. Ellen Seiter's prediction that 'Television sets and computer terminals will certainly merge, cohabit, and coexist in the next century' (1999: 116) has come to pass, though James Bennett argues this is not as a binary hybrid but as a digital form: 'a non-site-specific, hybrid cultural and technological form that spreads across multiple platforms as diverse as mobile phones, games consoles, iPods, and online video services' (2011: 2). These multiple platforms function as broadcast (or digital stream) receivers, rather than as VCR-like technology which enables non-mainstream uses. The minority use of the technology to create personal archives of tapes and digital files, and perhaps to create vids, is at odds with the digital multi-receiver model proposed by Bennett. Format-shifting (DVD ripping) to generate source material continues fandom's history of using home video technology for more

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<sup>29</sup> These amateur archivists create a version of Newcomb and Hirsch's viewing strip, preserving advertising, interstitials and station identifiers.

<sup>30</sup> Several vids analysed in this thesis were produced collaboratively, including *Who Can It Be Now?* (Kathleen Reynolds and Mary E. Overstreet, ca. 1981-1985), *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005) and *On the Prowl* (sisabet and sweetestdrain, 2010). See Turk (2010) for further discussion regarding collaborative processes in vidding.

than playback or archiving. For example, Penley mentions *Star Trek* films, 'copied from video store rentals' and used as source material for vids (1991: 145), and the breadth of sources included in Chapter Four's multifandom vids represents the ultimate extent of this practice.

Gripsrud suggests two factors that negate the rhetoric of digital change as transformative to television: first, that renting a video is no more difficult than ordering on-demand from a cable supplier; and second, that a computer can be an uncomplicated replacement for a television set, rather than inspiring radical new practices (2004: 217). James Bennett (2008) argues that the 'database' model of BBC's iPlayer fundamentally disrupts television's flow and turns the television 'viewer' into a 'user'; however, an identical shift is also claimed for videotape.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, this transformation is not necessarily solely enabled by the digital.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of convergence, defined by Jenkins as 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want' (2006: 2) is used to describe a digitally-intensified mobility of media content, which 'depends heavily on consumers' active participation' (2006: 3). As Anne Jerslev notes, the proposed 'convergence' state in which consumers/audiences participate in the production of broadcast media is hampered by a vagueness around the definition of 'participation' (2010: 169); indeed, the utility of the convergence and participatory culture concepts seem more relevant to online self-presentation in social media contexts (cf. Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Lucas Hilderbrand, 'VCRs made television viewers into users' (2009: 18, author's emphasis).

<sup>32</sup> iPlayer greatly simplifies the act of time-shifting (just as the remote control simplified the act of changing channels), but does not introduce time-shifting as a concept. This is not to say iPlayer and the like are unwelcome innovations, just that they make already-existing practices more convenient.

Reading, 2009; Garde-Hansen and Gorton 2013) than in relation to traditional media such as television. Further, doomsday predictions about the ‘death of television’ – typified by questions such as ‘whether television will survive in a way that warrants its continuing to be the object of a field of scholarly study’ (Allen and Hill 2004: 535) – are presently unrealised. As Ib Bondebjerg argues, ‘there are very few indications of traditional media seriously losing power: on the contrary we increasingly see a merging of old media and new media; the merging of genres and formats on new platforms’ (2010: 123). However, as Lisa Parks points out,

The convergence of television and computers is not just about technological mixing; it also activates gendered assumptions about “active” users and “passive” viewers, class-based discourses related to digital access and speed, and broader issues of cultural taste and social distinction. Convergence introduces the necessity of institutional reorganization and shifts in the format of programming as well. (Parks 2004: 134)

The activity of vidding fans, demonstrated through their use of media technologies to capture, share and re-edit media texts, and their obvious competence in doing so, provides a case study that opposes certain of the assumptions Parks mentions (gender, see below) while affirming others (class, as access to technology correlates with wealth). Issues of cultural value and programme format are central to the discourse of ‘quality’ television, as discussed below.

As Mittell notes, digital technologies ‘have given viewers even more immediate power to replay and redistribute images’ (2010: 6). Where VCRs and DVRs permit the skipping of advertising breaks, and DVD box sets present a sequence of episodes in an ad-free flow, users who share digital files of television episodes through peer-to-peer



networks access television in a method beyond the authorisation of broadcasters or producers. Chapter Three examines how the vid text reveals one way in which technological developments in television and home video have enabled critical and historiographical interventions in media texts; vidders' methods of access as a mostly-female group (see Introduction) are significant because gendered assumptions of high-level digital competence persist in understandings of online activity.

While recent studies suggest gender does not significantly affect users' *attitudes* towards file-sharing (Al-Rafee and Cronan 2006; Wang and McClung 2011), data suggests file-sharing itself 'positively correlates with masculinity' both in terms of gender itself and gendered discourse (Proserpio, Salvemini and Ghiringhelli 2005: 38).<sup>33</sup> File-sharing of television episodes is little-discussed in academic literature, with most studies focusing on film and music; the practice by-passes broadcast flow, values the individual episode above the experience of 'ordinary' television, but also potentially perpetuates a persistent scepticism about television's value. The presumption that computer users are male, argues Michael Z. Newman, means that downloading episodes can be seen as a 'sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and masculinized form of television consumption' where 'the culture of filesharing is part of a wider development in which TV is shifting its location on the cultural hierarchy from low and disreputable to a more legitimated level' (2012: 465).<sup>34</sup>

The gendered nature of discourse around the internet is explicitly evoked by Ann Bartow in her article titled 'A Portrait of the Internet as a Young Man' (2010), in which she reviews Jonathan Zittrain's book *The Future of the Internet - And How to*

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<sup>33</sup> One file-sharing community allows users to self-report gender; only 20% list themselves as female.

<sup>34</sup> This is 'sophisticated and cosmopolitan' because of the time and effort needed to learn about these file-sharing networks as well as the confidence and competence to successfully navigate them.

*Stop It* (2008) and finds in it a 'decisive invocation of maleness' in its metaphors (Bartow 2010: 1081) and its representation of cyberlaw as a 'Boys Club' (1082).<sup>35</sup> In *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (2009), Matthew Hindman writes of 'the small group of white, mainly educated, male, professionals who are vastly overrepresented in online opinion' (19). Vidders who distribute their works online as digital files, who upload their vids to video streaming sites, and who access their source material through these methods, represent another use of file-sharing; as with vidders' VCR use, this is not a majority practice, but is important to examine for the ways in which it intersects with emerging narratives of online norms. As discussed in my Introduction, media fandom is 'predominantly' (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 197), or even 'overwhelmingly' (Coppa 2009: 107; Mittell 2010: 377), 'female-dominated' (Lothian 2009: 131); fan works are highly likely to have been made by women. The technical competence of women in fandom – and particularly, of vidders – provides an exception to a recurring presumption of masculine competence in relation to media technologies as seen in interactions with VCRs (Gray 1992, Dinsmore 1998), computers in general (Seiter 1999) and the aforementioned peer-to-peer file-sharing networks. Whilst this thesis does not constitute a study of vidders or vidfans, this technical competence is apparent through an analysis of the vid form. For example, this can be seen in the existence of videotape editing and of digitally clipped and masked images in vids such as *The Test* (here's luck, 2010; Chapter Three), in the seamless combination of a vast array of source material originally produced with differing aspect ratios in multifandom vids such as *Starships!*

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<sup>35</sup> Bartow also finds it problematic that Zittrain considers neither the fact that women are 'most visible' online 'as objects of sexualized commentary and derision' (2010: 1082), nor 'the persistent underrepresentation of women in the computer science and related information technology ("IT") fields' (2010: 1083). Ramon Lobato's chapter on digital distribution in his book-length study *Shadow Economies of Cinema* (2012) does not address gender.

(Bironic, 2012; Chapter Four), and in the comprehensive curation of clips across a television programme's many episodes, as with *Dualbunny's* trilogy (see Chapter Five). Perhaps more significantly, and particularly as revealed in the vids analysed in Chapter Four, vids provide textual evidence of a gendered point of view – a female, or vidderly, gaze – on media texts.

### **'Quality' and Archives**

The masculinisation of television access noted by Newman in his overview of peer-to-peer file sharing has occurred concurrently with the rise of so-called 'quality' television, typified by long-form serial narratives produced by HBO, such as *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007) or *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008). Newman argues that television shared over peer-to-peer networks 'tends to be the most highly valued and aestheticized, scripted prime-time comedies and dramas addressed to younger, more affluent, and masculine audiences' (2012: 466). These 'quality' programmes are typically lauded as 'challenging exercises in cinematography, editing, dramatic structure and narrative form' (Caldwell 2005: 91). However, rather than being a novel form, they are part of an established history of engaging 'televisuality' (cf. Caldwell 1995) in which 'television rewards discrimination, style consciousness, and viewer loyalty' with programming that 'can be quite intense and ingrained over time' (Caldwell 1995: 26). Vids can be understood as offering textual traces of this loyal, intense viewing.

In *Television in Transition* (2010), Shawn Shimpach argues that these '[s]tylistically exhibitionist, character-driven narrative television programs have taken on a new sort of value' (29). This 'new sort of value' creates an unflattering comparison to existing television: Charlotte Brunson points out that once film

scholars began to pay attention to ‘quality’ television, there is ‘often a stress on the way in which television has become more cinematic, or at least, less televisual’ (2010: 65). Mittell also notes this tendency, writing that programmes which ‘do garner critical praise and prestige typically rise above the average value of television via metaphors to other media, [with praise such as] “cinematic” or “televised novels”’ (Mittell 2010: 369). This characterisation of ‘good’ programmes as *not* ‘television’ – as seen through, among many examples, the cable-access channel HBO’s marketing of its programmes as being something other than television (cf. Nelson 2007) – is particularly troubling when, as Brunsdon argues, the programming that remains is implicitly characterised as lesser, bad, and above all, feminine: ‘The technologies may develop, but the gendered metaphors through which they are thought persist’ (2008: 128).<sup>36</sup>

Despite the gendered implications of ‘quality’, the textual evidence provided by fan works suggest that women in media fandom are viewers of these programmes (as mentioned above, and in the Introduction, media fandom is female-led). *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), which is the focus of the vids discussed in my final chapter, is an example of this kind of ‘quality’ programme: a long-form serial narrative which is characterised by a genre hybridity<sup>37</sup> and style of narration well-suited to ‘undistracted viewing (e.g. via DVD, DVR, or on-demand)’ (Shimpach 2010:

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<sup>36</sup> This use of ‘quality’, designating a particular kind of long-form serial narrative programme, is different than the term’s use in debates about national broadcasters, as described by John Corner, in which “quality” signals a concern with defining more clearly what, in television terms, can be assessed as a good product and thereby used as a marker in both public and corporate audits of the industry’ (Corner 1999: 106). Corner argues this usage is derived from management theory, and as such the question is not of cultural value, but of ‘industrial standards... for instance, technical and craft production values, delivery of schedules in line with stated company policy, and responsiveness to demands of those audiences indicated in the public or commercial remit of the channel’ (ibid).

<sup>37</sup> Shimpach notes that these series’ reliance on melodrama ‘has increasingly characterized all genres of primetime television narrative’ (Shimpach 2010: 36). Glen Creeber has called this tendency ‘the “soap operatisation” of long-form television drama’ (Creeber 2004: 13).

48) in which many time-shifted episodes can be watched in a single sitting.<sup>38</sup> This format eliminates the need for extended exposition sequences every episode, meaning this leaves narrative space for character development and complex narratives. This practice of sustained viewing was also a part of VCR viewership in media fandom (Bacon-Smith 1992); what is novel in 'quality' programmes is the development of serial narratives which seem to encourage an existing practice.

Returning to technology, DVD releases reinforce a hierarchy of 'quality' and also cult programmes over 'ordinary' television which has not been released on home video (Hills 2007). This leads to questions of archival practice, in which DVD releases create a false sense of a complete archive, and one that reinforces the idea that only 'the out-of-the-ordinary, the critically acclaimed, and the internationally significant' television is worthy of preservation, leaving ordinary daily television – such as programmes for daytime viewing by women – without much record (Moseley and Wheatley 2008: 156). Bjarkman argues that through tape-sharing, 'Fans and collectors build counter-canon to rival the "classic" television canon, often conferring great value on failed series that were denied a chance to develop or find an audience' (2004: 226). These forgotten programmes can find a new life through fannish attention; for example, vids made from digital transfers of off-air videotape recordings (such as *Fireworks* (Jayne L., 2010), mentioned in my Introduction), increase the visibility of such a series.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> And consumed through 'binge watching', as mentioned earlier (Brunsdon 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Use of this kind of source material also advertises the existence of digital versions of episodes that can be shared. The rise of digital recording devices has meant a marked increase in the image quality for non-DVD source. While Denzell Richards notes the value of file-sharing and DVD releases, such that 'new works such as fan videos can be created from the digital archive of already existing materials' (2010: 186), the existence of a digital archive is not treated as unusual, and implications of the vid as archivally-derived are not explored. Chapter Three is based on this last point.

Compton (2007) discusses the effect of DVD releases on the academic as well as the consumer:

...if scholars write only about the programs that are available on DVD or currently being broadcast, then they miss out on most of television's history... hundreds of lesser-known series, unpopular or only regionally seen specials, forgotten pilots, and outtakes that archivists are working against time and budgets to preserve that may never make it outside the archives. (132).

By allowing DVD releases to dictate scholarship, much significant information is lost to the archivist and scholar (see also Kirste 2007; Moseley and Wheatley 2008; Mills 2010). On a smaller scale, this loss is echoed by Bjarkman's observation that videotapes which preserve advertising and other material from the broadcast flow can be highly valued by a fan-archivist for whom 'video recordings are themselves objects of historical interest that seem to seal in traces of the televised "event"' (2004: 234).

Mittell argues that the box set is evidence of an engaged, active audience experience: 'For viewers watching a DVD of their favourite program on their high-end entertainment system, pleasure stems from active engagement with a show's narrative and textual style, not a passive acceptance of whatever might be on' (2010: 372).<sup>40</sup> While 'quality' television is notable for its ability to offer pleasures of spectacular visuals and spectacularly complex narratives which invite a more intense kind of viewership, there has long been sufficient evidence that 'viewers *are* deeply engaged in specific programs – and do find *pleasure* in entranced isolation while watching a show, star, or favorite performer' (Caldwell 1995: 27; author's emphasis).

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<sup>40</sup> This passivity and acceptance are, again, typical markers of the traditional female television audience. Further, Mittell's description of the 'high-end entertainment system' implies a domestic re-creation of a cinematic viewing context in which distractions are minimized and focus on the screen is absolute.

Indeed, videotape-era vids provide evidence of an engaged audience that refutes Mittell's suggestion that the DVD box set initiated this mode of viewing. The fascination with and pleasure in images which characterise the real person and multifandom vids in Chapter Four demonstrate a similarly intense focus on performance, *mise-en-scène*, and other elements across a large number of films and television series. Additionally, while the *Battlestar Galactica* vids in Chapter Five are made from a 'quality' series, Chapter Three demonstrates that the same intense regard was part of fannish viewing experience of the episodic cop drama *The Professionals* (ITV, 1979-1983), the gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966–1971) and the science fiction franchise *Star Trek* (Paramount, 1966-1969).

In summary, the idea of televisual flow as a sequence of segments, and the resulting need to account for programmes within this context, is important for understanding what exactly vids are made from. Audiences' use of videotape as an archival medium is part of their continually changing relationship with the texts of television broadcasting. The vid form is textual proof of fans using the tools at their disposal to intervene, respond, and create in a context wherein they have no official role. This began with fans using the home video technology at their disposal: VCRs dramatically affected the audience relationship with both films and television programmes, signalling the ability to manipulate and create personalised flows. This thesis is based in television studies; it also draws on and is contextualised by work from fandom studies and other fields in its approach to the vid form's relationship with archives, visual pleasure, and adaptation.

## Chapter Three – Archives, Vids, and Vernacular Historiography

### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the practical and material dimensions of vids. Central to this are the following assertions: vids originate in personal archives, they describe a history of home video, and themselves act as an archive in collating, organising, and memorialising a body of work. The next chapters of my thesis will approach the vid as a form of video art, and as a narrative form related to adaptation. For this chapter, my concern is the vid's place within the context of changing home video technology, specifically the creation and maintenance of home video collections which provides its raw material. There is a dimension of materiality in the vid form beyond the transformation that occurs when video clips are re-edited into new works, and exploring the traces of this materiality is the purpose of this chapter.

I use *home video* to encompass: television episodes recorded off broadcast television (onto videotape, DVD or hard drive), films obtained in the same manner, as well as film and television sold in pre-recorded formats, obtained directly or duplicated<sup>1</sup> from existing recordings. Home video collections will often include recordings of both television and film, and there is no useful reason to separate film from television in this instance when their distribution and storage is so similar. Vids are made from both film and television sources – often separately, but vids will mix media – and therefore vids embody this technical parity. What matters is the availability (and quality) of clips necessary to make vids; as will be shown in the *Star Trek* examples throughout this chapter, to make vids of a franchise with narrative

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<sup>1</sup> This duplication may be through tape-to-tape dubbing, format-shifting or downloading a copy of a file.



continuity across television and film will require the use of both kinds of source material.

A vid is made by an individual who uses their personal media collections, music and home video alike, selecting and editing together songs and clips from recorded media in their possession. These collections have a dual presence, comprising of physical videotapes, DVDs and/or other digital storage formats, and the media content contained therein.<sup>2</sup> As is explored below, wide-scale consumer access to the means of creating one's home video collection began with the videocassette recorder.

Consequently, videotape, as an object and embodying an aesthetic, is an important part of this chapter. The CDs, DVDs and hard drives on which digital video is stored are all physical objects which require shelf space. Since these collections are built from time-shifted broadcast sources, or format-shifted media, it follows that vids – made out of these collections – carry traces of that transformation. The obvious dislocation of clips from the broadcast flow carries with it a bootleg aesthetic (Hilderbrand 2009) that lends an archival textuality to vidding as the borrowing of clips from a collection – borrowed, not excised, because the original clip is not destroyed (and was not in fact the original to begin with) – and leads the vid's viewer back to its source material.

Vids are made out of the history of film and television; sometimes very recent history, for a series just aired or a film just released. To consider vids as archival, in relation to the broader 'archival turn' in the humanities, is to illuminate specific forms and practices of the vid, and to a lesser extent, of vidders and vidfans. As technologies for home viewing erase the material difference between film and television sources,

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<sup>2</sup> This tension between housing and content highlights the differences between a collection of home video and other kinds of collections: home video is reproducible, the intangible contents – recordings on magnetic tape, digital files – are not fixed to (or determined by) their physical form.

histories of television, in particular, must recognise the breadth of home video – which includes, for example, off-air broadcast recordings of films alongside television episodes. Vids are the direct result of these technological and material changes; the devices which have historically complicated theories of broadcasting (for example, time-shifting and downloading) are the same devices on which vids are made. Vidding can thus be seen as a variety of amateur film and television historiography: vids are constructed to communicate a reading of a historical source product, and represent a critical perspective on that source. I follow Steve Bailey's definition of fan works as evidence of interpretation, and not simply as acts of production (see Methodology). This affirms a connection between the analytical and narrative core of historiography and 'the interpretive work central to the fan experience' (Bailey 2005: 50).

The chapter will also consider the purpose of an archive, and what distinguishes a collection from an archive in relation to a way of thinking about vidding as form of vernacular historiography. In later chapters, I discuss the visual and narrative pleasures contained in vids, but in this chapter I analyse vids as audio-visual documents that present an interpretation of the experience and collective memory of fandom. This will be expanded upon in the first section of this chapter, but speaking broadly, whereas an archive is a public record for public use, a collection is intensely personal and private. This is not to say that being an archivist, curator or historian (professional or not) precludes an intense personal relationship with archives. A collection, however, is most commonly the work of an individual, for his or her own reasons and edification. An archive emerges from a different scale of individual participation, built over many

years and by many people.<sup>3</sup> The categories do intersect: one's personal collection can be archived (as a legacy), and it is possible for archived objects to be sold to (or pilfered by) collectors. The circulation of vids means these works represent an archive of a different sort of home video where each text communicates its own commentary on its source material. In this sense, the vid is evidence of a practice which is more archive than collection because it is more public.

This chapter is in four parts. First, I will discuss what is at stake in thinking of an object as collectable or archival, and the implications (in purpose and value) of gathering objects together. Thinking of home video objects in terms of archives and collections helps to understand how these concepts relate to the vid form. The personal collection becomes archival when it is put to use. Second, this chapter details how vids themselves have been collected and/or archived. This will include a discussion of contemporary and past distribution networks, and will support Constance Penley's observation that fan practices mimic the production, distribution and exhibition cycle of official media (1991: 140). Indeed, the methods of accessing vids mimic the distribution life of the television and film sources of those very vids. Vids are parallel to, and are a product of, the distribution and exhibition of film and television.

The third section is an analysis of the aesthetic of vids made out of the personal collections of individual fans, in relation to the bootleg qualities of home video. This section is indebted to Lucas Hilderbrand's work on the erotics of videotape and freedoms of bootlegging, and will demonstrate vidders' use of a private collection to create a public work, showing evidence of how contemporary fan audiences watched a text, and most importantly, how that watching leaves its own archival traces. Finally,

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<sup>3</sup> The practice of individuals collecting vids illustrates this distinction. Vidding is an archival interaction with recorded media; collecting vids is for personal use, not to create further works.

this chapter concludes with a closer look at three *Star Trek* vids made in the last decade to illustrate the ways vids can evoke their archival origins. This will build on the idea of ‘archive’ established in the first section and elaborated through subsequent sections’ demonstrations of: how vids can look and feel archival, how they can be ‘textually archival’, and in their form reflect an archival aesthetic. A further concern is with the representation of memory, as these works interact with *Star Trek* by constructing a kind of historiography based in an imagined shared the experience of a media text, and with the formal representation of memory in film and television.

### **Collection and Archive**

A vid is made out of a personal collection that through the practice of vidding is being treated as an archive. This requires that a distinction be made between archive and collection; this distinction rests not on any intrinsic properties of the objects archived or collected, but in the practices and perspectives that lead to an object’s collection or archiving. The 2006 *Oxford Paperback Thesaurus* lists the following suggestions for *archive*: ‘noun 1: records, annals, chronicles, accounts; papers, documents, files; history. 2: record office, registry, repository, museum, chancery.’<sup>4</sup> The notion of an archive therefore seems to promise something public, something to do with governance or the maintenance of order through documentation, and something related closely to official sources or – through the historian’s efforts in interpreting archived objects – something always with the potential to become part of an official record or history.

In contrast, the same thesaurus’s suggestions for *collection* connote something much less officially useful (though no less chaotic), including ‘hoard, pile’,

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<sup>4</sup> The context example for the verb *to archive* is, pleasingly, ‘the videos are archived for future use’.

‘accumulation, reserve’ and ‘supply’. In contrast to the orderly connotations of an archive’s formation, as potentially indiscriminate but ultimately useful, collection implies a focused gathering together of objects for the gratification of the collector alone. While there are limits to basing analysis on listing synonyms, this does provide a starting place for suggesting the expected connotations for ideas about *archive* and *collection*. These are value-laden connotations, with implications for access, use and the public/private split between these objects.

What I propose in this section, using two central critical texts, is two ways of looking at vids, coming out of my difficulty in neatly labelling vids as relating to either archival practices or collection practices. Vids are made out of ‘fans’ private collections’ of home video (Penley 1991: 145); and, once circulated amongst fans, vids potentially become a further part of others’ collections. However, the work of vids is public: they communicate and document an analysis of source material as part of a discursive community, they are made from works in the public record, and they are publically available. My understanding of the collection is based in my reading of Walter Benjamin’s essay ‘Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting’ (trans. 1968), and I balance that with concepts drawn from Carolyn Steedman’s exploration of archives, *Dust* (2001). Both works examine the relationship between individual and significant objects in their lives.

In ‘Unpacking My Library’, Benjamin attempts to ‘share... a bit of the mood’ aroused by his book collection’s liberation from two years in storage ([1968] 1992: 61). Benjamin writes passionately about the books in his collection: not of the value of each volume (either emotional or financial value) but of ‘the relationship of a book collector to his possessions, into collecting rather than a collection’ (ibid). This relationship is

located in a 'dialectical tension' between an orderly collection proudly displayed and the chaos that characterises a collector's 'relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness' (Benjamin [1968] 1992: 62). Indeed, despite characterising his collection as a library,<sup>5</sup> these books are not printed resources to be read for pleasure or consulted for research. This is a functionally inert group of objects, albeit an emotionally active one.

The literature on collecting argues that collectors construct their collections to express individual identity, demonstrate knowledge and mastery over a subject area, and focus their attention on the possession of unique objects (cf. Baudrillard [1968] 1994, Windsor 1994, Pearce 1995). Collecting, notes Susan Pearce, is characterised by its 'subjective nature' (1995: 16). The objects of a collection have intense significance to the collector: they offer 'an enclosed and private world, where collections mirror and extend [the collectors'] bodies and souls' (Pearce 1995: 21). Jean Baudrillard notes that 'although the collection may speak to other people, it is always first and foremost a discourse directed toward oneself' ([1968] 1994: 22). Regarding the lack of utility in his own collection, Benjamin argues, '...the non-reading of books' ([1968] 1992: 63) is not unusual; rather, it is 'characteristic of collectors' (ibid: 64). The value of these objects comes from the collector's memory of their acquisition (in a shop, through a dealer, or sight-unseen through a catalogue) and in pride of possession (both of the object and the story of its collection), and not the text contained within each volume, not their utility as objects. The search for objects to complete a collection becomes a completion of self-image. For these reasons, the collection itself is of little value to anyone except the collector. This will change if the collection is organised and

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<sup>5</sup> Which may be the work of his translator, Harry Zohn.

displayed, excerpted and contextualised; however, once this happens and the private collection is presented to a public, it ceases to be only a collection.<sup>6</sup>

The archive, by contrast, gives a different kind of experience, but one that is no less passionate. In *Dust*, what Steedman begins as a semi-joking response to Derrida's notion of 'Archive Fever' (2001: 10; after Jacques Derrida, 1995) nevertheless reveals the emotional investment in 'those quietly folded and filed documents' (2001: 6) whose discovery promises to fulfil a historian's 'desire to find, or locate, or possess' (2001: 3) clues on which to base the writing of history. Historiography implies the creation of a work that is part of a more public enterprise of uncovering, analysing and disseminating knowledge and information. Unlike the collector's intense personal satisfaction found in acquiring objects only for him- or herself, a historian's searches through archives are inspired by 'wider passions, of *finding it* (whatever it is you are searching for), and writing the article or book, writing history' (Steedman 2001: 29, author's emphasis). The key is the translation of discovery into a work that can communicate something of the value and meaning of the objects, and their context. A further point of difference is that collectors will own their collections, whereas historians do not personally own the material they work through in libraries and archives. Vid-making corresponds to both positions: while a fan may possess copies of films and television series, they do not personally hold the copyright to this material. However, until the historian's intervention, objects in the archive lack the same fundamental utility as objects in a collection:

The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, which began as private collection and subsequently opened to the public.

preserve and that just ended up there. ...And *nothing happens to this stuff, in the Archive*. It is indexed, and catalogued, and some of it is not indexed and catalogued, and some of it is lost. But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativized. (Steedman 2001: 68, author's emphasis)

It is the reading, use, and narrativisation which creates the difference between collections and archives. Both a collection and an archive will have been formed through accumulation; however, where a collection (as Benjamin describes it) has private meaning to the collector (the contextual narratives of acquisition have value really only to that individual), archives, on the other hand, are *for* something more than the pleasure, memories and self-identity of a collector.<sup>7</sup> Fittingly, Hilderbrand argues that the legal principle of fair use which guides artistic appropriation of copyrighted material 'implies that audiences do not merely copy a preexisting work but make *use* of it by interpreting it, building on it, reinventing it' (2009: 18, author's emphasis). As soon as a collection is opened up to curators to use in museum exhibitions, it is used as an archive by researchers. In which case, the objects become public (to some degree) and are therefore accessible – to be read, and to be *used* – and are therefore open to narrativisation, as their meaning re-inscribed in analytical projects.<sup>8</sup> Transposing these ideas to the vid, as soon as a viewer uses a technological apparatus to intervene in intangible moving images, fragments of film and television can be relocated from ephemeral flow to a fixed form able to communicate critical or analytical commentary. This is the process of narrativisation described above.

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<sup>7</sup> The idea of use also adds a material dimension to the object; where the emotional value of a collection overshadows its practical utility, an object in use also becomes a tool.

<sup>8</sup> The use of an archive can also be artistic, as for example in Fiona Tan's gallery-based examinations of Dutch colonial film archives (Noordegraaf 2009) and Grayson Perry's recent exhibition 'The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman' (2011) which addressed the British Museum's archival holdings.



Common in descriptions of both archival practice and collecting is the passion which these experiences of objects inspire. Steedman's descriptions of interactions with public archives are characterised in terms of 'passions' and 'desires' (not to mention 'fever', 'anxiety' and 'delirium'), revealing a public records office to be a kind of passionate archive, while maintaining a pretence of being an orderly or rational space. Writing history from archives is a continually-frustrated hunt for papers that do not or cannot exist, and the search for coherence through 'the infinite heaps of *things...* the notes and traces that these people left behind' (Steedman 2001: 18). The collector's absences are solved through searching for the objects to complete the collection; the archive's absences, to Steedman, are simply part of the archive's 'condition of being' (2001: 68). Steedman's description of archival work is very similar to the process of selecting clips to make a vid: the formal structure and content of a vid is evidence of not just an *interpretive* 'path through a text' (Gray 2010: 161), but of a potentially time-consuming search for clips to create a work 'that pull[s] together scenes and moments from across the [films and/or] series' (ibid: 158). This search may require re-visiting hours of home video material to create a vid's interpretation of narrative and character; this is compounded in multifandom vids (see Chapter Four), which include clips from many series or films. In this respect, perhaps the vidder is performing the job of the collector, the archivist, and the historian: gathering artefacts and then using them to write a story.

I do not wish to over-determine or over-classify the vidder along a strict binary opposition of collector versus historian, curator or archivist. In noting that the purpose of the curator, archivist or historian is, broadly, historiography (either directly or in the preservation and/or acquisition of objects which aid in the same), I offer a contrast

with the insular connotations of collecting. With personal media archives, especially of the sort that end up providing a vidder with their source material, there is a definite overlap; the archival qualities (or rather, the archival potential) exists in a collection, and the collector's use of home video is manifested in vids' archival approach.

Hilderbrand's use of 'archive' and 'collection' in relation to home video is instructive: 'By no means *archivally pristine*, home recording nonetheless works to timeshift texts on a semipermanent basis when they become part of a bootleg *collection...*' (Hilderbrand 2009: 13, my emphasis). This sets up an implicit division between a carefully-preserved, possibly even restored, object resting in an archive, and a worn thing surviving in a personal collection. However, Steedman argues convincingly for archival practice as 'the grubby trade' (2001: 18), where one is literally breathing in the dust of decaying documents, consuming 'the dust of the workers who made the papers and parchments; the dust of the animals who provided their skins for their leather bindings' (2001: 27). Benjamin describes how his collection was built through his own efforts, time and resources. Consequently, every object in the collection has its own aura: each mass-produced book (even a rare edition) takes on the status of the unique object. The emotional connection is to the specific physical iteration of that mass-produced object, sometimes regardless of what is actually printed in those pages. The collection does not need to be built solely from purchases; any means of acquisition are possible, and indeed the mundane and extraordinary stories (histories) which are created (and known by) the collector in pursuit of these texts is what creates that aura.

The material specificity of a collection, with the intensely personal Benjaminian-style aura of one's own copy of a mass-produced object, can be translated to a digital

context. Beyond the unique quirks and imperfections of videotape, creating a duplicate digital file version of an episode, series, song, or film will reproduce exactly the flaws of the original file. The value of a personal archive to its owner comes from recognising the value of mundane, mass-produced objects because they are not mundane when they serve as one's own curated collection. There is what could be termed a DIY cachet; a different *kind* of aura and authenticity.

Structurally, a vid is a montage of extracts from episodes and/or films in a personal archive. Functionally, the 'exchanged glances, gestures, and expressions [of] actors' (Jenkins 1992: 228) in each clip are, by their inclusion, positioned as significant moments, often referring to points of character development or narrative moves in the source material. As Amy Holdsworth argues in relation to 'milestone moments' in long-running series, recap (and similar) sequences, which are often constructed of archival clips drawn from previously-aired episodes, 'operate as an aide-memoire' for audiences to recall significant moments relating to 'character and diegesis' (2011: 36). Obtaining copies of *Star Trek* episodes enables the collector to re-visit these moments; if episodes are subsequently edited into a vid, the clips chosen will have a similar aide-memoire function for the vid's audience in constructing a path through the show (cf. Gray 2010). While each viewer of the vid will have individual experiences of *Star Trek*, I borrow from Holdsworth an understanding of the 'complexity of memory formation with regards to television as both private viewing experience and cultural form' (2011: 46) to presume that geographically and temporally distinct viewers may nevertheless share memories and experiences of the franchise via the vid.

To illustrate how a personal collection of home video is used to construct the vid, I will first analyse the *Star Trek* vid *It's All Coming Back to Me Now* (Kandy Fong,

1997), which uses Céline Dion's song of the same name as its soundtrack. This vid was made at the cusp of digital home video – 1997 saw the 'debut' of DVDs (Hilderbrand 2009: 36) – therefore the vid was made from at least second generation videotape, rather than higher-quality digital video. The DVD transfer of this vid preserves the flaws and glitches of the tape, which are modest and limited to slight discolouration and some tearing along the bottom edge of the frame (see Figure 3). This vid takes video recordings of the television series and films as archive footage to use as source from which to write a particular history of one character as seen by the vidder: formally, the vid's montage structure – characteristic of the vid form – resembles a televisual strategy of representing memory as a flashback collage in order 'to effectively conjure that sense of what remembering feels like' (Holdsworth 2011: 44). In this case, the *Star Trek* archive is tapped for evidence in writing the history of the half-human, half-Vulcan Spock as he is at the start of *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (Leonard Nimoy, 1986), during his recovery from resurrection-induced amnesia. It is not concerned with a drastic re-presentation of the series, but instead guides the viewer through an interpretation of this character. There is a doubling effect in this vid: it is concerned with re-enacting an imagined representation of Spock's memory through archival evidence, and also represents a personal memory of the series, accumulated over many hours of programming, and performed through the assemblage of clips. The collection of videotaped *Star Trek* episodes and films that this vid was made from (and therefore, the collection which is represented in the vid) has thus been used as an archive from which a historiographical work has been produced.



**Figure 3**, *It's All Coming Back to Me Now* (Kandy Fong, 1997): beginning sequence. Clips from the fourth *Star Trek* film (top row and bottom left) are immediately followed by clips from the television series (bottom right).

*All Coming Back* begins with a clip from *The Voyage Home*, complete with original soundtrack. The sequence cuts between a close-up of Spock's face and a computer monitor, and finishes with a freeze frame of the question displayed on the computer 'HOW DO YOU FEEL?' (Figure 3, top row). It is a significant question for Spock at this point in the narrative because, as stated above, he is recovering from amnesia; after we see the computer's question, the vid cuts to Spock's puzzled reaction (Figure 3, bottom left). The vid then cuts to a clip from the television series (Figure 3, bottom right) as the song begins. Where the film continues with Spock discussing this question with his mother, the vid proposes an answer to the question with evidence from the vidder's archive, drawing on her own knowledge of the *Star Trek* franchise, and constructing connections between images and lyrics that are meaningful to an audience who shares her experience of this series. This includes knowing that Spock is a touch-telepath, capable of communicating 'mind-to-mind' through his hands. By

selectively matching clips to appropriate lyrics, the vid argues that the only way ‘it’ can ‘all come back’ to Spock is through (as the lyrics state) being ‘touch[ed...] like this’.

Spock’s amnesia was shown to be redressed through touch at the end of *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* (Leonard Nimoy, 1984), but the vid suggests that further touch – from Kirk – is needed to help him remember how he feels.



**Figure 4,** *All Coming Back*, left to right ‘...there were moments of gold/and there were flashes of light’.



**Figure 5,** *All Coming Back*, Spock’s memory enacted in a dissolve from series to film; the hand-clasp is synced to the lyrics ‘If I kiss you like this...’

While the lyrics imply a rush of returning memory inspired by a lover's embrace, the vid is constructed to suggest that when he is touched, Spock will recall, as the song says (see Figure 4), ‘moments of gold’ (i.e. Kirk’s gold uniform) and ‘flashes of light’ (on the *Enterprise* viewscreen), but also his entire life, significant friends and relations, his education, hobbies and interests. Formal techniques such as the dissolve (see Figure 5, centre image) are used in this vid to show the relationship between events of the film and the preceding series, causing two points of Spock’s past to exist simultaneously. The dissolve functions as a visual representation of memory, with a temporal flattening of distant events. The mix of film and television sources is used to

denote the length of Spock's relationship with Kirk, but also is a way for the vidder and viewers to recall their own relationships with the series over as many years. In relation to how memory is used in television narratives, Holdsworth writes of television series which construct 'reflective and self-reflexive spaces within serial drama that "reference back" on their own long perspectives' in order to 'reward certain levels of audience investment in character and diegesis' (2011: 36); however, *All Coming Back* constructs this referential space to 'reward' an audience also invested in character and diegesis.



**Figure 6**, Vulcan hands: left, Spock in *All Coming Back*, clip from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*; centre and right: Spock's parents Sarek (Mark Lenard) and Amanda (Jane Wyatt) in *Star Trek* episode 'Journey to Babel'.

The version of *Star Trek* history written in this vid emphasises a slash (homoerotic) reading of Spock and Kirk's relationship, based not only in single gestures, but demonstrating a reading of the gesture in a wider textual context. For example, a clip from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise, 1979) showing Spock and Kirk clasping hands is captioned with the line '...if I kiss you like this' (Figure 5, right; and Figure 6, left). The clip's place the vid's structure (at the start of a chorus immediately following an emotional crescendo in Dion's performance), plus its captioning, emphasises this moment's significance. However, the equation of handclasp to kiss is more than a meaning made for the vid: it demonstrates a careful reading of the gesture in reference to at least three (inter)textual frames, each relating to the importance of Spock's hands.

First, as Chris Gregory notes, 'Spock's "devices" such as the Vulcan hand signal, the "neck pinch" and the "mind meld"' are widely recognised (2000: 37); the latter two

are accomplished by touch, and all three are gestures/actions which involve the hands. Second, in the episode 'Journey to Babel' (airdate 17 November 1967), touching fingers is narratively presented as a gesture of intimacy and affection for Vulcans (see Figure 6, centre and right), establishing a further diegetic Vulcan touch to the 'neck pinch' and 'mind meld': in this case, one similar to a kiss. Vulcan hands are therefore established as a potential site for erotic contact.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the handclasp scene itself can be read as important in the history of Kirk and Spock's interactions. Writing in *Cinema Journal*, Isla J. Bick evocatively describes the scene: '[Kirk and Spock] wordlessly express their feelings for one another, engage in an intense few minutes of mutually affirming looks, and then profess that the touch of their hands, this "simple feeling," is more important than all the knowledge V'ger<sup>10</sup> possesses' (Bick 1996: 56). Bick notes the significance of this moment derives, in part, from the fact that this is only the second time in the franchise where the two men 'touch in quite this way' (ibid), so 'that homoerotic elements can be consciously expressed' (Bick 1996: 55). Therefore, the historiographical account of *Star Trek* offered in this vid re-writes the homosocial bond between Kirk and Spock as a homoerotic attraction, as it re-captions a touch shared after a near-fatal mission as a passionate lovers' embrace, within a broader context of intertextual readings of the franchise.

Also at work in this vid is a temporal flattening, as a contemporary song is used to discuss clips first broadcast in the 1960s, as reflected in the lyrics 'so long ago/but it's all coming back to me'. Nearly twenty years separate the 'how do you feel' sequence (1986) and the clip that follows it (from ca. 1968); another decade after that

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<sup>9</sup> Penley notes that Spock's alien physiology is elaborated upon in fan fiction, for example, in order to give Spock 'extra erogenous zones' (1991: 158).

<sup>10</sup> An alien probe that nearly cost Spock his life.



(1997) is the vid's release date. For the long-time fan watching the vid,<sup>11</sup> the rush of memory would be familiar. While these clips and the moments they signify are important to a limited number of *Star Trek* fans, arguably they are still endowed with the same mnemonic power as more prominent media events which 'provide shared reference points, the sense of a common past, [and] bridges between personal and collective history' (Dayan and Katz [2006] 2011: 363). *All Coming Back* moves with ease through these many decades of fan discourse surrounding the series, and incorporates key moments from its history.

The peculiarities of videotape, DVD and digital file collections allow for a manner of collection that is more *archival* than a stereotypical relationship of a collector to their group of unique objects. Unlike Benjamin's admission that as a book collector, it is the volume he values and not the printed words on its pages, the videotape (or slickly-produced collector's DVD box set, or hard drive) is a vessel of sorts that houses that which has been collected. The immediate analogy would be to the cabinet which presents the curiosities, not the curiosities themselves.<sup>12</sup> The seventeenth-century cabinets of curiosities, for example, took many forms, but 'in each, spaces and individual subjects had the function of bringing together a number of material things and arranging them in such a way as to represent or recall either an entire or partial world picture' (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 78). So too is the vid a curated group of objects, arranged in such a way to represent a vidder's interpretation of their

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<sup>11</sup> And, indeed, making it, as *All Coming Back* is made by the same Kandy Fong whose slide show work in the mid-to-late 1970s is credited with inspiring the first VCR vidders (Coppa 2008).

<sup>12</sup> The hard drive is the more obvious 'cabinet', especially as contemporary vids cannot be made directly from DVDs: the hard drive is the housing for the digital files that are created when format-shifting the home video content. However, since the close readings of film and television which are essential to vid-making are just as likely to be performed via DVD as though playing digital files, the contents of a pre-recorded DVD are unlike the unread pages of Benjamin's books.

source material. *All Coming Back* this displays a curatorial arrangement of sequences (from a variety of sources) with appropriate lyrical captioning.

Though I will return to the idea of curiosities, the cabinet in this analogy refers to a range of storage media, a number of technologies which are collected as genuinely as the contents they possess. When viewed from the perspective of the vid, the television episodes copied from off-air broadcasting or format-shifted from digital media can be divided into: episodes in a series, as segments of a longer narrative, an archive of clips which may be extracted and re-used, and a collection of gestures and moments, whose varied significance are determined in part by the collector's (and viewer's) knowledge and memory of that relationship to the narrative.

As noted in my Review of Literature, audiences' use of videotape as an archival medium has been understood as part of their changing relationship with television broadcasting. Ann Gray's description of videotape use notes a 'predominantly male' adherence to 'the assumption that there will be more than one viewing of the product' (1992: 216). Furthermore, Gray concludes that women who time-shift to keep up with a series find no value in revisiting known narratives, and do not collect or archive recorded material. However, given the predominance of women in fandom (see Introduction) early vids indicate a different kind of women's viewing, beyond a delayed experience of broadcast television, and the fact that these tapes were not immediately re-used for more time-shifting.<sup>13</sup> Constance Penley (1991) notes that syndication and time-shifting of *Star Trek* enabled the emergence of women's Kirk/Spock slash fiction.

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<sup>13</sup> The *Starsky & Hutch* vid *The Boy Can't Help It* (Kendra Hunter and Diane Barbour, ca. 1980-1985) demonstrates a mode of viewership focused on an actor's body. The vid's final sequence replays the same short clip: a slow-motion clip of Starsky (Paul Michael Glaser) shot from behind, leaning against a car, and suggestively moving his hips. This replicates (or, perhaps, enshrines) the act of rewinding and replaying an especially favoured moment. See Chapter Four for more actor-focused vids.

This occurred 'as fans recognized, through seeing the episodes countless times in syndication and on their own taped copies, that there was an erotic homosexual subtext there, or at least one that could easily be *made* to be there' (Penley 1991: 137, author's emphasis). Importantly, it is videotape here that enables careful, intense fannish viewing and subsequent analysis of texts. Penley's description of subtext as being '*made*' is significant for her later overview of songtape-making/vidding practices; indeed, she presents the changes in home entertainment technology in a way that makes vidding seem an expected outcome.

Videotape's archival potential is also part of the audience's changing relationship with film, as home video led to a 'domestication' of cinema (Dinsmore 1998: 315) in which films could be treated like time-shifted television series, thereby flattening the difference between film and television. Uma Dinsmore (1998) compares two videotape collections, one of genre films and one of classic Hollywood films, which were built from off-air recordings as well as pre-recorded releases; both are for the collectors' personal satisfaction, not for public consumption or sharing. In her work on videotape-sharing communities, Kim Bjarkman (2004) describes a group of 'avid fan-collectors', for whom the VCR's ability for time-shifting becomes, as she argues, 'a tool for *place*-shifting' (219, author's emphasis). International tape-sharing communities (now supplemented by digital file-sharing) allow these collectors to build multiple collections containing duplicate artefacts; the movement of rare tapes does not mean the relocation of objects, but their reproduction. These 'self-styled media historians', Bjarkman argues, are engaged in 'resisting the impermanence of television and of memory by preserving physical records of cherished television moments' (Bjarkman 2004: 239). The vids in this chapter – and indeed, all vids – uses these preserved

television moments to produce an interpretation of the series and films at hand through the vid form. I therefore explore vids in this study as textual evidence of the practices described above. Hilderbrand argues that Bjarkman's 'research subjects – and Bjarkman herself – act as curators' of television (2009: 64). This archive must be accessible to the potential vidder, in a format that allows for its manipulation and duplication, in a context where these archived materials are available beyond the broadcast flow, and in excess of official home video releases.

Hilderbrand notes that bootlegging is a way to fill market gaps where barriers of time and space block access to home video. The objects themselves are in a format which can be used to create archives, as Hilderbrand states, and to create new works which populate fannish discourses. The fan audience is an example of what Hilderbrand calls 'semi-institutionalized networks' who circulate bootlegged media (2009: 63); episodes (in whole and in part) are shared by interested amateurs, who also share information about past television.<sup>14</sup> These circulations dislocate certain historiographical practices; they also undercut the connotation of chaos and lack of utility in 'collection', as the collectors who participate in these networks interact with private home video collections which are duplicated and shared. As Hilderbrand notes, 'VCRs made television viewers into *users*, and videotapes introduced new *uses* of television' (2007: 18, author's emphasis); again, vids are possible because videotape technology makes television into something reproducible, not just transmittable – vidding is one of these 'new *uses*' of television in its reproducible state. Critically, this

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<sup>14</sup> In the UK, for example, groups like TV Ark and link-heavy sites like The Classic TV Archive supplement work done by academic or commercial organizations such as the BFI, and networks and production companies themselves (in some cases, the amateur sites are much more publically accessible than private corporate archives). The delightful Moving History site lists detailed information about the UK's public sector archives. TV Ark, <http://www.tv-ark.org.uk>; The Classic TV Archive, <http://ctva.biz/index.htm>; Moving History, <http://www.movinghistory.ac.uk/>

ability to *use* the collection is possible because copying a videotape, optical disc or digital file will not immediately destroy the original (despite perceptible wear on dubbed videotape).

Public and private are not absolute categories. Videotape collecting's public and private aspects rely on an individual's movement from outsider to insider: access to tapes, the opportunity to build one's personal collection, is determined by participation in semi-underground networks. Fandom has moved online (Busse and Hellekson 2006; Coppa 2006), with visibility outside fandom moderated in several ways. Access to vids is similarly restricted to individuals with insider knowledge; while vids are currently openly available on the internet, as is information about vid-centred conventions, knowing where to look for vids comes with participation in the fandom community.<sup>15</sup> These are passive, not active, exclusions. Vids posted on user-populated video streaming sites (YouTube, Vimeo, blip.tv, the now-defunct imeem, and others) can appear in search results when a user's search terms were intended only to return an official music video. Sites such as Vimeo allow for password-protected files, restricting access to only insiders; however, measures taken to protect against discovery by copyright-holders also diminishes newcomer participation.<sup>16</sup> Sites such as these are not meant to be used as a broadcaster of anything but original content, but they can and have, in practice, become a compelling – if unstable – update of the temporary time-shifting found in frequently-used videotape.

No matter how extensive they appear, like all archives, home video archives ultimately contain dislocated fragments, as they are comprised of films and television

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<sup>15</sup> As discussed in the Introduction and Methodology chapters, in order to conduct textual analysis of vids, I drew on my understanding of fandom as a participant in order to locate my corpus.

<sup>16</sup> These measures can include using acronyms in tags or metadata, or 'delisting' a posted video so that it can only be accessed through a direct link, and not through search functions.

episodes that have been removed from their initial context.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, similar to clip shows which re-present historical television footage, 'what is central to the textual re-encounters with past television is not the recovery of the original broadcast or viewing experience but its positioning within new frames and contexts' (Holdsworth 2011: 98). As the vid relates to collections, a vid emerges from a collector's ownership of and control over private home video; though collections are sometimes made public, they are conceived of initially as private, and vids are part of a personal relationship with media products and home video. As historiography, vidding involves searching through existing media and making something of it (which perhaps echoes Steedman's description of archival research). As the source material of the vid, home video exists in a space between the collection and the archive, though ultimately 'archive' is more accurate in describing the use of these accumulations as fans and vidders use them in a project of historiography.

### **Archiving the Vid (Distribution and Exhibition)**

As discussed in my Methodology chapter, unlike more traditional television or film scholarship, I cannot assume that the contexts or locations of vids' distribution and exhibition are generally familiar to a wider audience. Therefore, I draw here on my own experiences of watching and collecting vids (a personal history which I discuss in my Introduction) in order to frame the analysis which follows in this section. My aim is *not* to attempt to produce an ethnographic study of vidding practice, but it is necessary to sketch these practices in order to provide a context in which to situate my

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<sup>17</sup> Bjarkman notes the potential significance of this context for videotape collectors, as amateur off-air recordings 'complete with original commercials, [are seen] as somehow more authentic' (2004: 234).

argument about the archival qualities of vids which emerge from a textual analysis of vid texts.<sup>18</sup>

Building on the previous exploration of the archive and the collection, this section examines the various material and experiential practices that surround the circulation of vids, and demonstrates how these contexts enable the experience of shared fannish readings of texts, based in ‘shared reference points’ and a ‘sense of a common past’ (Dayan and Katz [2006] 2011: 363) prompted by a vid’s use of recognisable clips. Aleida Assmann argues that an archive is a ‘central and paradigmatic institution’ of ‘passive cultural memory’, housing artefacts which ‘are open to new contexts and lend themselves to new interpretations’ ([2008] 2011: 335), and await being ‘remembered and circulated in active cultural memory’ (ibid: 336); vids are arguably made from clips that have been shifted into this latter category. In this section the idea of ‘archive’ has a double meaning, addressing both a physical archive of videotape and hard drives, and a metaphorical archive from which fandom derives its ‘interpretive conventions’ and shared readings (Jenkins 1992: 239). In vids, the physical archive is used to write a history of the source films or television series, but does so in reference to the communally-constituted codes and conventions which guide fannish interpretation.

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<sup>18</sup> To take vids seriously as texts in their own right, the aesthetic and textual qualities of the form may also be complemented by contextual information. Again, while my aim is not to produce an ethnographic study of vidding practice, I do acknowledge that my own experience of vidding fandom have been an essential part of my research: primarily, but not exclusively, as a way of obtaining and viewing the texts I proposed to study. The observations which underpin my analyses in this section are based in my experiences with the circulation of vids online and offline, and I have relied upon tacit knowledge gained during my 10+ years of vid-watching (and as a casual viewer of other online and viral video) to be able to understand the norms and conventions of vid distribution and exhibition. This section also relies on assumptions and extrapolations made in light of my knowledge and understanding of the functions and capacities of videocassette recorders and personal computers, as an interested and technologically-literate individual.

To consider the physical archive, this section will include a discussion of contemporary and past distribution networks, and will support Constance Penley's observation that fan works mimic the production cycle of official media. Fans have accomplished this, she argues, by 'enthusiastically mimicking the technologies of mass-market cultural production' (Penley 1991: 140). The exhibition and distribution of vids also echoes the distribution of television and film. The process of curating and commissioning vids for a screening programme, known as a *vidshow*, at fan conventions resembles the curation of film festivals. The distribution of vids via compilation tapes/DVDs and downloads is complemented by screenings at conventions of programmes of older works and brand-new vids; this last resembles rep cinema screenings, or repeats of television programmes. Vidders produce and sell DVD copies of their work with the physical DVD box potentially sitting alongside commercial home video and television box sets on a vidfan's shelf.

In the current digital context, there are several ways vids may be screened, shared and stored. Currently, vids are typically either watched on a fan's computer (desktop or mobile device), or at conventions (in vidshows or in informal groups). In playback, videotape compilations of vids are limited to a single possible sequence of vids, in contrast to the potential of on-the-fly playlist creation with digital files; however, compiling vids in a fixed sequence is not merely a relic of the videotape era, as vid DVDs have a similar flow. On vidders' own DVDs releases, this sequence can be determined by production order.<sup>19</sup> The vidshows produced at fan conventions also interact with flow, both when the vidshow is played and when its playlist is published in a convention programme or made available online. The VividCon convention

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<sup>19</sup> In the course of my research, I have seen vids listed in chronological and reverse-chronological order.



maintains a library of previous vidshow discs, preserving that sequence of vids; these are available to attendees during the convention.

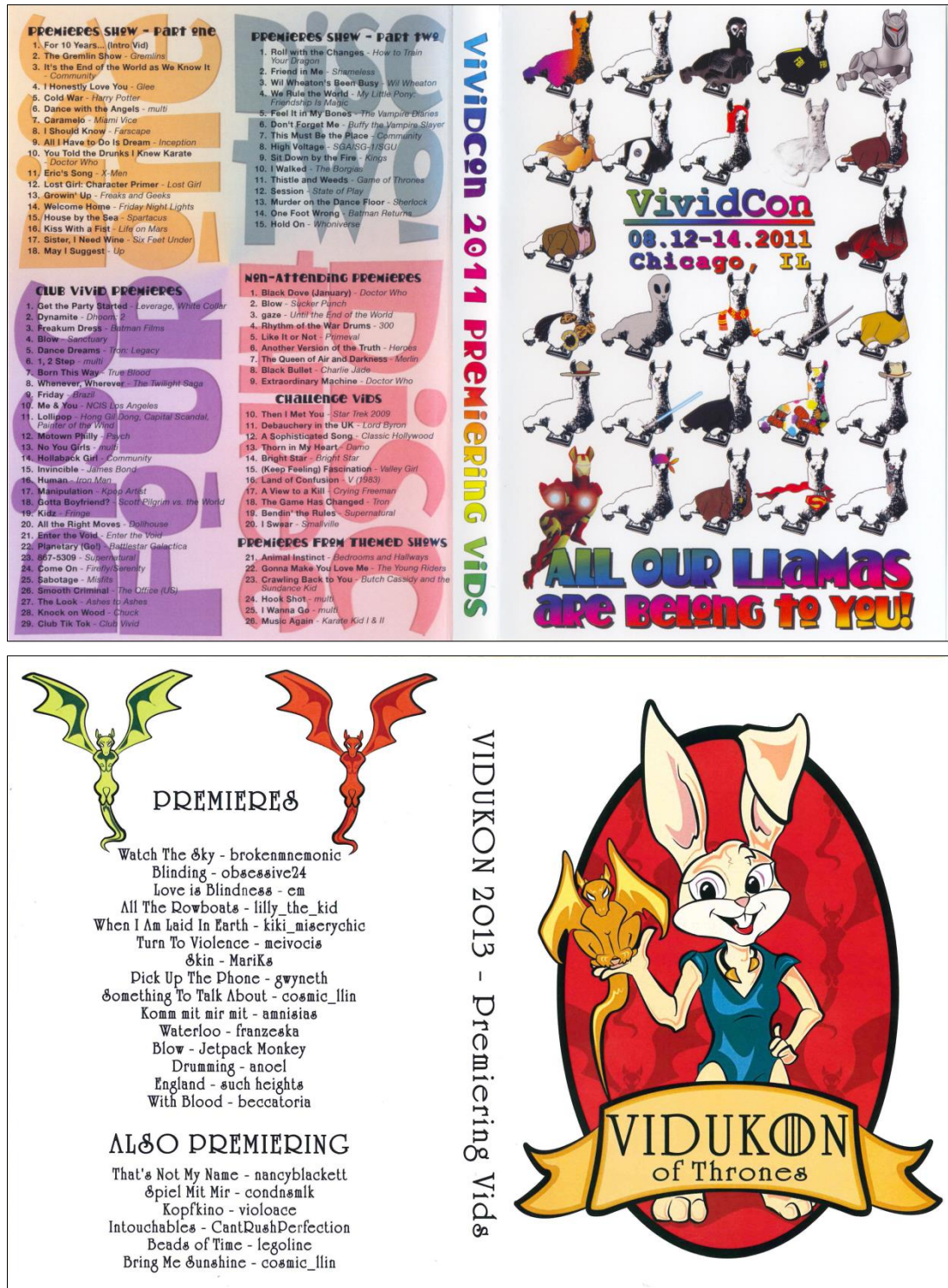


Figure 7, DVD sleeves for VividCon 2011 (top) and VidUKon 2013 (bottom). VividCon's llama mascot appears 'in costume' as a different character every year; these will refer to a particularly notable contemporaneous character or fandom. In 2011 (pictured), the cover art featured many different llamas to celebrate the convention's tenth anniversary by referencing popular fandoms past and present. Similarly, VidUKon has similar themes for its bunny mascot; in 2013 the cover art was a reference to *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011-present).



Figure 8, VividCon 2010 DVD set; each disc features the name of the convention in the style of *Doctor Who* logos.

Vidders' DVDs are self-produced and sold on commission at fan conventions. Vid DVDs with the highest production values are typically those produced by conventions and vid-making collectives<sup>20</sup>; see Figure 7 for examples of DVD sleeves from VividCon and VidUKon disc sets, and Figure 8 for custom-printed disc art. Penley's argument about fan productions' mimicry of the media industry is particularly notable in relation to the disc art for the VividCon 2010 DVD set (see Figure 8), as these borrow

<sup>20</sup> This is likely because convention DVDs may have a higher budget than an individual vidder when the cost of producing a DVD set is included in the convention's registration fee.

the branding of *Doctor Who* (both of the new series and the classic serials). This displays an affection for *Doctor Who*, but is also a playful acknowledgement of the relationship between fan works and the source material from which they are derived. Individual vidders' DVDs tend to be less polished, with less complex graphic design and home-printed DVD sleeves and disc labels.

Currently, however, most vids are distributed online through streaming sites for user-generated content; this mimics the networks' on-demand services like iPlayer (BBC) and 4oD (Channel 4), and on-demand subscription services like Netflix and Amazon Instant Video (formerly LoveFilm). Vids are also available as direct downloads, mimicking distribution of film and television in official capacities (such as, in limited markets, through Apple's iTunes service) and in bootleg contexts via peer-to-peer networks or digital lockers. Streamed vids may be 'saved' through bookmarking, though for reasons to be explored later, this is not a stable way to build a collection. Downloading copies of vids raises the issue of labelling (renaming) and sorting files so they may be easily retrieved.

Penley characterises creative fan practices as a vertically-integrated industry, with 'control over every aspect of production, distribution, and consumption' (1991: 140). Just as fan writers also act as editors, publishers, and publicists (cf. Penley 1991), vidders must similarly plan (locate the source video and audio), edit (having gained mastery over their editing apparatus or software), and release a vid (for exhibition and distribution). Penley's argument regarding the predominantly-female, (see Introduction) vidders' 'relation, as women, to those technologies, through both the way they make decisions about how to use the technological resources available to them and the way they rewrite bodies and technologies in their utopian romances'

(1991: 140), is compelling and well-argued, and need not be replicated here. With regards to distribution, the concept of a vid collection (an archive of vids) mirrors other practices associated with home video more generally – bootleg tape-sharing, DVD production, digital downloads – with familiar concerns of indexing, storage, and curatorial practice (cf. Gray 1992, Dinsmore 1998, Bjarkman 2004, Hilderbrand 2009).

While vids' distribution equally mimics film and television distribution, it slightly favours film over television in certain specialised contexts. Special-event releases – such as premiering a vid at a convention – borrow more from a film festival premiere (a single screening to an exclusive audience, followed by a wider release) than a television series' pilot episode (available broadly). The majority of aesthetic conventions developed by videotape vidders are still relevant to the discussion of vids in a digital context, as earlier and later iterations of the vid form 'share an aesthetic tradition and an analytical impulse' (Coppa 2008: 1.4) which bridges technological change. I am less concerned in this section with the technical aspects of vid-making, than how the movement of vids as objects often follow the same paths as official media releases, or of bootleg distribution. In this, vids are both a subsidiary form of film and of television, and an alternative audio-visual medium.<sup>21</sup>

Two pieces of domestic technology are central to the distribution and archiving of vids: the videocassette recorder, and its successor, the personal computer. Both the VCR and computer are tools functioning as apparatuses that enable a fan's own exploration and exploitation of their archive. As Penley describes it, the VCR becomes the site of creation, distribution and exhibition of the objects of fandom. Computers are complemented by optical disc (Blu-ray, DVD) players and digital video recorders

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. which is not quite film or television, but not sufficiently anything else.

(DVRs) in playback, but the computer is so far the only apparatus that allows for playback as well as the VCR's particular interventions, such as duplicating episodes for redistribution, creating a backup for personal use, and as the basic technology for vidding.<sup>22</sup> Penley notes that the VCR:

...along with the zine publishing apparatus, is the lifeblood of the fandom. The ubiquitous VCR allows fans to copy episodes for swapping or for closer examination of their slash possibilities, and provides the basic technology for producing songtapes [vids]. Fans are deeply invested in VCR technology because it is cheap, widely available, easy to use, and provides both escape and a chance to criticize the sexual status quo. As one beautifully embroidered sampler at a fan art auction put it, "The more I see of men, the more I love my VCR". (1991: 146)

Within fandom, computers are as ubiquitous today as VCRs once were, as the stack of videotapes required for gathering and cuing clips has been replaced by high-capacity hard drives. The physical visibility of a vidding fan's collection or archive is obscured by digital technology, and not enumerated through material accumulation of videotape; however, the multifandom vid genre (explored in Chapter Four) makes the extensiveness of this collection visible in a different manner.

Writing in the early 1990s, Penley notes that vidding was a less active practice than fan writing and zine publication; owing in part to 'the greater difficulty of access to video equipment, than to desktop publishing and photocopying technologies, which

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<sup>22</sup> Recordable DVDs, DVD-Rs, can be used as backup or for distribution, but are not an apparatus on which vids can be made. Additionally, at the time of writing, tablet computers lack the processing power and the generous (or expandable-to-generous) storage space necessary to save and manipulate the data required to make a vid, despite the availability of mobile video editing apps; this perpetuates the utility of desktop and laptop computers.

are often available in the fan's own workplace and can be used even while on the job' (1991: 145). As a more time-consuming and technically daunting form of fan work, producing a vid requires a significant commitment of time (to learn the technology and to create the work itself), and money (to purchase the technology). However, the *distribution* of vids only requires the technology and patience necessary for basic duplication. When videotape predominated, any time-shifting television viewer with access to a second VCR – her own, or borrowed from friends or family – could distribute videotape vids with as much ease as bootlegging home video. Today, it is the computer-using fan who accesses digital home video and vids alike.

While VividCon programming includes a mix of premiering vids and existing works, its Premieres vidshow is a concentration of new works, in which more than 30 new vids are shown.<sup>23</sup> Vidders with new work who cannot travel to the convention have their own vidshow (and section of the convention DVD set, titled Non-Attending Premieres. VividCon's 'Nearly New' vidshow – of recent but not premiering vids – is not included in the DVD set presumably because they are typically available elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> Conventions' premieres lists can act as a distribution catalogue, which is useful to the fan and researcher in the absence of a comprehensive production database of vids.

Conventions and individual vidders go to the trouble and expense of authoring DVD collections, even when the vast majority of vids now produced are also available as digital files, accessible for downloading, streaming, or both. Beyond a direct

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<sup>23</sup> In contrast, an analysis of VividCon's convention books reveals that a vidshow typically has between 12-15 vids, of which one or two (if any) are never-before-seen 'premieres'.

<sup>24</sup> However, it is available (as is each vidshow) in the convention's library, along with scores of other vid discs that can be borrowed by the convention attendees, for private viewing. (And, potentially, surreptitious duplication.)

industrial mimicry of the success and persistence of the official media's home video releases, DVD releases maintain vids' connection to physical objects which can be collected and archived. Like Benjamin's books or Steedman's documents, there is an affective pleasure of handling a physical object. Digital storage media bears an extra burden of being the tangible manifestation (of sorts) of its less-tangible contents. The benefit to the vidder is that, unlike downloads which are provided for free, DVDs can be sold for real-world currency.<sup>25</sup> Purchasing an individual vidder's DVD (or a DVD produced by a small group of vidders) can also be a way of recognising a favourite vidder's work in a way that is acceptable within fandom.

A DVD can also alter how a vid is watched, moving the vidfan away from the choice offered by folders full of vids saved as digital files to the disc's flow. The DVD's sequence recalls the videotape-era compilations of several vids on a single tape (allowing for ease of storage and distribution, rather than a single tape for every separate vid). In the videotape era, fans would collect vids regardless of familiarity with the source material, 'assuming that one day they may have a meaningful context' for the works (Bacon-Smith 1992: 179); this practice also reveals the instability of vid supply. There is also a degree of familiarity and an archival confidence in the illusion of a more fixed version of the vids; a DVD is not vulnerable to hard drive failure, but still vulnerable to physical damage and technological obsolescence.

Indeed, web links only show where a vid once could be found, in the digital version of Steedman's 'returned call-slip' that confesses a desired archival holding is long-lost, "destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War" (2001: 68).

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<sup>25</sup> Creating fan works in exchange for money occurs in auctions, such as those run by VividCon and VidUKon to augment expenses (or to raise money for charity), where a vidder creates a custom vid for a winning bidder. A central principle of fan works is that they are not created for profit (Hellekson 2009).

Vidders use streaming sites and digital lockers as distribution facilities, but vids distributed through these means can be subject to deletion because of inactivity (too long between downloads) or claims of infringement.<sup>26</sup> In Eve Ng's experience, even the promise held by a request on a message board to re-post a vid was not usable, as 'some of the download sites were no longer active by the time that [she] visited them' (2008: 110). Private server space is expensive, but can offer more stability.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 9, *Who Can It Be Now?* (Kathleen Reynolds and Mary E. Overstreet, ca. 1981-1985): opening credits.

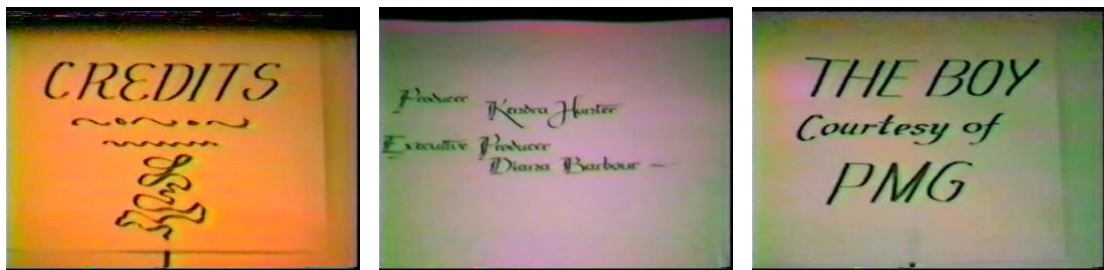


Figure 10, *The Boy Can't Help It* (Kendra Hunter and Diane Barbour, ca. 1980-1985): hand-lettered credit cards.

As Jenkins argues, the accessibility of home video as a format allows for the same unobstructed circulation of vids as the videotape from which they are made (Jenkins 1992: 248). He notes this circulation could lead to a lack of proper attribution of authorship, though he was wrong to state that vidders 'lack the technology to generate their own credits' (Jenkins 1992: 248). Credit sequences are generated through early computer graphics, such as with *Who Can It Be Now?* (Kathleen Reynolds

<sup>26</sup> Vidders do not obtain permission from copyright-holders to use the source material, leaving vids vulnerable to takedown orders. Some jurisdictions protect artistic transformations of copyrighted material, others expressly ban format-shifting, etc.

<sup>27</sup> This is, of course, dependent on the vidder's own interest in maintaining this service. During the writing of this thesis, certain vids which I had accessed through digital streaming options were removed from online circulation. Fortunately, I had previously downloaded copies.



and Mary E. Overstreet, ca. 1981-1985, see Figure 9), or even by filming hand-written notes as with *The Boy Can't Help It* (Kendra Hunter and Diane Barbour, ca. 1980-1985, see Figure 10). The three shots which open *Who Can It Be Now?* announce the names of the vidders, the song and artist used (vids are typically given the title of the song which is used for the soundtrack), and a shot taken from the credits from the source show itself, *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966–1971); *The Boy Can't Help It* credits 'PMG' , likely referring to *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) actor Paul Michael Glaser. This last is less usual in more recent vids, but has the benefit of introducing the character and actor which are the focus of this work. Early vidders were evidently not naïve about the circulation of their work; credits provide some assurance of continued attribution as fellow fans added these pieces to their own collections.

Currently, vids may be distributed without appropriate attribution (credits, dedication, disclaimers) and may potentially be re-posted, for example, from a private host to a third party YouTube account.<sup>28</sup> Vids can be produced with watermarks unique to a vidder so pilfered sequences can be identified, or provided through streaming sites with a password-protection facility to (somewhat) regulate access to the work, or uploaded in a compressed file format that requires a password, and so on. None of these methods will prevent unauthorised mirroring or re-attribution but they do act as gatekeepers of sorts. In all these cases, credits sequences and watermarks affirm vids as authored texts, rather than orphaned or anonymous works. Credits provide a way of cataloguing a vid collection constructed in compilation tapes;

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<sup>28</sup> For example, *Closer* (T. Jonesy and Killa, 2003) has been removed from the vidders' websites, but is still available online due to re-posting by users who had (presumably) locally saved their own copies.

however, these identifying marks are a further way in which the vid text contains within itself textual traces of its authored, archival state.

File-sharing increases the potential number of participants in this expression of fandom,<sup>29</sup> as it allows for a more anonymous and geographically-dispersed way of interacting with these works that does not require in-person interaction with other fans. A vid can be downloaded with only page counts as traces, for example, whereas sharing a videotape would require face-to-face interaction, or moving beyond fan pseudonyms to reveal mailing addresses.

The exhibition and circulation of vids as outlined here relates to the concept of the archive because the history of vids is knowable through individual vidders and vidfans, and through institutions such as fan conventions, each maintaining their own collections of vids. As with any historical reading, new generations of vidders and vidfans can access the history of the form through dedicated efforts of history-minded fans. The circulation of vids is important because sharing vids means sharing the analytical readings – the ‘discourses’ (cf. Bailey 2005) – of the contexts and individuals at play in creating the work. This discursive participation does not need to mean every vid saved demands its own unique exegesis from every person who saves it, but publicising a work – by recommending it in some way, or sharing a collection with a friend – is a public recognition of a discursive position, and a contribution to a history of the form and the source material.

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<sup>29</sup> Including, as noted in my Review of Literature, the anonymous and otherwise invisible ‘lurker’ whose audience activity does not leave traces.

### Vids from the Archive

This section is structured around an analysis of videotape-based vids from the 1980s and 1990s, made from personal archives constructed by television fans (Penley 1991, Bacon-Smith 1992); the section concludes with an overview of some digital equivalents. The collections generated by audiences through time-shifting television programmes become archival in their use as a source for vids. In a contemporary digital context, 'the powerful archiving force of the institution' (Garde-Hansen 2009: 147) is being 'challenged by the personal archiving power of increasingly popular and easy-to-use digital media' (ibid: 148); nevertheless, the existence of videotape vids points to a pre-digital precedent for the construction of personal media archives. Of interest here is less an individual connection to one's own collection of videotape (and digital equivalents) and more the texts produced from that relationship.<sup>30</sup> This is the historiography of a vid, akin to the historian's 'grubby trade' (Steedman 2001: 18), accomplished by working through videotape of potentially poor quality. On their surface, storage media do not appear to be subject to the same intense material decay as fragile paper or vellum archival documents. Indeed, Holdsworth, when discussing objects held by the National Media Museum in Bradford, notes 'a definite absence of dust that might have previously characterized the archive' (2008: 141). However, in the case of videotape, this dust is invisible until one attempts to play the tape itself and see what it contains.

The media archive has a parallel existence, at least when one considers the material objects (storage media) and the content contained ('stored') therein. This

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<sup>30</sup> As already mentioned, time-shifted television may never be watched (Gray 1992); a similar fate potentially faces pre-recorded media and downloads. However, as vids are the object of this discussion, unwatched corners of one's personal archives will not be explored further.

allows that an individual videotape or hard drive is a form of archive – in much the same way an individual building holding material files can be similarly recognised. The circulation of videotape, and of videotape’s successor digital files, is just as important in thinking of vids and of the constitution of personal archives as are the representations (the shows, films, songs) contained therein.<sup>31</sup> Sandvoss’s definition of fandom, ‘*the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text*’ (2005: 8, author’s emphasis), involves a continual return to one’s object of fandom, as acts of ‘sustained, affective consumption’ (ibid: 9). This repetitive consumption is registered textually in that the wear on tapes – for example, ‘white noise, the jittery image, the unnatural colours, the grain, the momentary loss of signal that triggers the blank blue TV screen or the flash of tracking’ (Hilderbrand 2009: 65) – as seen in vids are a visible, publicly-available record of the literal consumption of the text; wear is the mark of the consumption of that raw material.<sup>32</sup>

Degraded VHS hints at how a historical audience watched a text, augmenting contemporary reports of that viewing context. Hilderbrand writes that the materiality of videotape allows for the curious quality of being able to read the previous views in the tape, insofar as the uneven degradation of the tape itself indicates its previous use. He argues that the act of making a bootleg duplicate leads to the ‘distortion of the image and sound tracks, [which will] materially record and reveal this process of creation and history of circulation’ (Hilderbrand 2009: 61-62). The wear on old videotape can be part of the format’s pleasure: as Hilderbrand notes, for texts like cult

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<sup>31</sup> The notion of vidding from an archive raises issues of bootlegging and copyright, and therefore of access. As videotape objects, vids ‘offer lessons in progressive media policy and remain essential tools of media access, even in the era of their apparent obsolescence or irrelevance’ (Hilderbrand 2009: 20). These implications are beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> Digital duplication avoids this, but opposition to file-sharing presumes a different loss (monetary).

films which do not have slick production values ‘the addition of bootleg video aesthetics – whether from sketchy distributors or personal copying – may well enrich the text and add to the experience’ of viewing them (Hilderbrand 2009: 65). This aesthetic enrichment is familiar in media fandom: Penley argues that in slash zine production in the late 1980s and early 1990s, published zines that were ‘not as slick as they could be’, a situation that ‘may arise from an impulse to keep them looking *slightly* tacky to give them that illegitimate pornographic cast’ (1991: 141, author’s emphasis). For these zines, the ‘slightly tacky’ aesthetic is a deliberate decision that mimics accidental degradation, for the same effect.

In her discussion of appropriate and appropriated technologies, Penley highlights a tension between the appearance of professionalism in zines and vids and that the concept of amateur, or bootleg, is tied to an aesthetic and a material realisation of these objects.<sup>33</sup> However, in the videotape era, making a vid look too much like a music video was less probable than publishing a zine that too closely resembled a literary magazine. The rougher look and feel of vids is most likely a result of technical limitations guiding the form’s overall aesthetic, which is a point that Penley does not highlight in her description. At this point, given the available source material for making a vid – off-air recordings and copies taped ‘from video store rentals’ (Penley 1991: 145) – and production equipment of limited sophistication, an aesthetic ‘commitment to amateurism’ (Penley 1991: 144) had few alternatives.

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<sup>33</sup> Since the time of Penley’s writing, the production of print fiction has been supplanted by online publishing, and technologies for self-publishing are available in the home as well as workplaces.



**Figure 11**, *Who Can It Be Now?*: Loomis answering the door. Note the rainbow discolouration in the top-right

The vid *Who Can It Be Now?*, mentioned earlier, uses clips from the Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966–1971)<sup>34</sup> that feature the character Willie Loomis (John Karlen). The unwilling servant to the vampire Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid), Loomis’s duties include answering the front door of his master’s house. The vid’s soundtrack is the Men at Work song ‘Who Can it be Now?’, in which the song’s narrator knows he has a caller, but wishes to be left alone;<sup>35</sup> by pairing these lyrics with clips of Loomis’s repeated trips to the front door, this vid works as a character study that explores Loomis’s feelings about his servitude. As shown in Figure 11, the vid collates multiple examples of this, a result of the vidders having recognised this motif and then curated these collected moments into a vid (intercut with other clips of the character). In the vid, as in the series, Loomis is condemned to answer the door; as

<sup>34</sup> *Dark Shadows* ‘mingled tales of vampires, werewolves, time travel and parallel universes with the more traditional family saga of the daytime soap opera’ (Wheatley 2006: 146).

<sup>35</sup> With lyrics, ‘Who can it be knocking at my door? / Go 'way, don't come 'round here no more.’

a work of narrative analysis and character study this vid gives voice to his resentment, using the clips from the archive to respond with a mixture of humour and pathos to the character's role within the narrative. The quality of the clips in this vid is well below broadcast standard, and the effect of VCR-to-VCR dubbing is clearly visible in the blurred and discoloured image (see Figure 11). Importantly, the poor quality of the images indicates the probable frequency of the source videotapes' use before being excerpted in a vid, and indeed of the use of the videotape on which the vid itself was recorded and shared.

With videotape, the bootleg aesthetic connotes a freedom from strict controls: even though 'everyday recordings of copyrighted material quickly seemed to lack any transgressive edge' (Hilderbrand 2009: 19), it still is material evidence of the tape's prior use; videotape's use creates its aesthetic texture. Indeed, as Jonathan Price (1977) notes, this degradation is an essential part of the experience:

The fuzziness makes it hard to see, and your natural impulse to stare is heightened by the difficulty of figuring out exactly what is going on up there. The effect is like a striptease: Now you see it, now you don't. And your imagination will inflame you more than a realistic picture could. (qtd in Hilderbrand 2009: 66)

Though Hilderbrand's examples are of rented pornographic videos, and the wear comes from repeated pausing or rewinding around particular sequences, the effect is similar to the creases and stains on library books or to marked and worn archival documents. However, the repetition of and focus on particular sequences is the basis not only of meaning-making in vids but of the fannish close (re-)reading of episodes and characters.



**Figure 12**, *Wind Beneath My Wings* (3 sisters, ca. 1983-1985): varying video quality, showing inconsistent wear across the work's source videotapes.

Vids that survive from this era show all the marks Hilderbrand expects to find on worn videotape. For example, as seen in Figure 12, the *Star Trek* slash vid *Wind Beneath My Wings* (3 sisters, ca. 1980-1985) has been made from clips of dramatically varying video quality, indicated by factors such as inconsistent colour saturation. The textuality of these works is confirmation of the bootleg origin of the source material and vid alike. In the learn-to-vid workshop that Penley attended, participants could use 'video segments... taken from fans' private collections of the 78 (plus the pilot) *Star Trek* episodes, and also the five *Star Trek* films, which [were] also on tape, copied from video store rentals' (1991: 145).<sup>36</sup> What makes this private collection public is its use, but these are not just the narratives which are worked over (as with fan fiction) but copies of the episodes themselves. The episodes and clips have had a role in a vidders' collection *before* they became vidding fodder.

<sup>36</sup> Seven more *Star Trek* films and four spin-off television series have subsequently been produced.



Bacon-Smith observes that ‘fans interpret the image as erotic based not on the state of undress or the apparent passive receptiveness of the figure, but on the interpretation of glances, gestures, and postures that signal a focus on an equally engaged second figure’ (1992: 184). As can be seen in Figure 12, *Wind Beneath My Wings* uses clips where Kirk is looking at Spock; the vid collects moments of this focused attention and captions them via the song’s lyrics as evidence of Kirk’s attraction. The lyrics of ‘Wind Beneath My Wings’ are about looking back and honouring the contributions of another person;<sup>37</sup> this is done in an explicitly romantic context, and therefore characterises Kirk’s professional regard for Spock as being coupled with more intimate feelings. The vid has Kirk declare his recognition of Spock’s importance to him, and by extension, to the narrative of the series; following Coppa’s (2008) analysis of fandom’s regard for Spock, this articulates a position already held by fans. Like *All Coming Back*, *Wind Beneath My Wings* functions as the vidders’ demonstration of their reading of the characters’ relationship. The captioning work of the lyrics is bolstered by a version of the song recorded by a male vocalist, Gary Morris (who released the track as a single in 1983<sup>38</sup>), thereby tightly aligning the male voice and first-person address of the lyrics with Kirk’s proposed inner monologue.

An analysis of many early vids reveals the variation in image quality between clips, even within the same vid; as shown in both *Wind Beneath My Wings* and a vid of *The Professionals* (ITV, 1977-1983) titled *You Can't Hurry Love* (Tolbran, 1994; see Figure 13-15). This indicates that the source video is not all from the same recording, and has received different amounts of wear from clip to clip, suggesting a collection of

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<sup>37</sup> As stated, for example, the third verse: ‘It might have appeared to go unnoticed/ But I've got it all here in my heart/ I want you to know, I know the truth, of course/ I would be nothing without you’.

<sup>38</sup> The vid pre-dates Bette Midler’s well-known 1988 recording of the song.

tapes built up over time, or of certain tapes getting more wear than others and therefore degrading at different rates. The very nature of time-shifting broadcast television means the episodes from which the vids' clips are extracted will have been recorded at different times, but while time-shifting must have occurred for it to be possible to make vids, vidding is not necessarily the initial intended outcome of building a home video collection.



**Figure 13**, *You Can't Hurry Love* (Tolbran, 1994): varying video quality, as with *Wind Beneath My Wings*, suggests inconsistent wear across the work's source videotapes.

Camille Bacon-Smith claims the majority of American fandom-based viewers of *The Professionals* watched episodes that were severely degraded as a result of being many generations removed from their initial off-air recording (1992: 124)<sup>39</sup>. This generational degradation is clearly seen in *You Can't Hurry Love*, which was produced before the series was repeated in syndication and using videotape copies that are

<sup>39</sup> Bacon-Smith describes watching videotapes that were 'close to the source – faces of the actors were usually visible' (1992: 124). One American fan convention in 1984 invited actors from British series to attend as special guests because '[f]ans wanted to see what the actors really looked like' (ibid).

profoundly worn. As shown in Figure 13, and as with *Wind Beneath My Wings*, this vid shows the discolouration, tracking tears and grain (cf. Hilderbrand 2009: 65) that loudly announce the motley origin and use of the vid's source tapes. While the precise genealogy of these copies may not be exactly as Bacon-Smith describes, this vid was potentially made from video source ultimately 'derive[d] from one set recorded in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in 1981-82 and distributed via torturous channels throughout the country' (1992: 123-124). These copies therefore were, at moments, nearly indecipherable from the resulting generations between initial taping and duplication.



**Figure 14**, *You Can't Hurry Love*: the effect of videotape degradation in this clip, which preserves the reaction shot edit of the source episode (note the consistently discoloured sky), alternately removes Bodie's (Lewis Collins) face (left) and nearly decapitates him (right).

As Price (1977) and Hilderbrand (2009) suggest there might be, there are moments of wear preserved in vids made from this source material that signal scenes of particular interest. One particularly striking example in *You Can't Hurry Love* is in the near-decapitation of a discoloured Bodie (Lewis Collins) as shown in Figure 14. This glance is a significant clip as, following the logic of the vid's premise, Bodie is meant to be gazing at his partner Doyle (Martin Shaw). Throughout the vid similar clips are captioned with lyrics that guide the viewer's interpretation of this as a slash vid and Bodie's glances as longing; he does not 'hurry' love, but instead waits and watches.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The vid's use of the Phil Collins cover of 'You Can't Hurry Love', rather than the original version as recorded by The Supremes, further establishes the vid's point of view as originating with Bodie. As

The clips containing glances and gestures upon which fans build their slash readings can therefore, understandably, be the most affected clips in a vid.



**Figure 15**, *You Can't Hurry Love*: ending of vid. Degradation is amplified by many repetitions of pause-and-rewind viewing of a significant moment.

This is seen throughout *You Can't Hurry Love*, for example in the final sequence, in which the protagonists look out of a window, smile at each other, and then move to either side of a nearby bed while they remove their jackets (Figure 15). In the narrative of the vid, this sequence is at the very end of the work: the love that can't be hurried, referred to in the title of the song, is in the process of reaching its consummation. Through the wear on the tape used as a source for this clip, we know this moment was subject to attention by fans revisiting a notable sequence. But unlike the pornographic tapes described by Price (1977), this video striptease does not hide nudity. Rather, it *reveals* a potential fan reading of this moment as significant in describing a slash narrative for these characters. In the context of the vid, this expression of comradeship (eye contact, smiling) in a scene with moderate undressing is sufficient to signify the narrative extension of this scene into a culmination of homoerotic attraction. The evidence in the video image of its tape's heavy use matches the descriptions in Penley (1991) and Bacon-Smith (1992) of the VCR's use to closely watch and review scenes of significance. That this wear has been preserved in a vid built out of these moments is a

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such these longing glances are accompanied by a masculine vocal performance and masculine subjectivity. (It does, however, replace the voices of black women with that of a white man, which should not pass without mention.)

public record of these readings and viewing practices. Throughout the vid the clips most affected by wear are the clips of the gestures and glances upon which a slash reading is based; speaking practically, they are also the clips used to make a slash vid.

Bacon-Smith does not evoke the archive to frame her experiences of watching episodes on tape at fan conventions in the United States. However, her descriptions of the close readings (pause-and-rewind), and the ‘common’ practice of the ‘marathon viewing weekend’ (1992: 121)<sup>41</sup> resemble Carolyn Steedman's account of archival research in *Dust* (particularly her statement that ‘You know you *will not finish*, that there will be something left unread, unnoted, untranscribed’ [2001: 18]). Both authors write of the frantic compressed time-frame in which to watch (or read, or photograph) key moments of a series (or document, or 18th-century account-book) and, temporally speaking, to get the most out of one's limited exposure to the texts. What videotape's reproducibility offers, and what digital file-sharing carries forth, is a duplicate archive. Preserved within a vid may be these traces of invested viewing with the potential to ‘perform in mnemonic ways [...] to project the multiple, multiplying layers of complex connections between people, places, pasts and possibilities’ (Garde-Hansen 2011: 42-43). The frantic consumption before even more of the artefacts are consumed by wear and time can now be somewhat stayed by digital duplication, be it a digital transfer of videotape or digital photograph of a document. The limited use that must occur in order for these copies to be made is unfortunate, as it contributes to the accumulation of wear on the tape, but is necessary.

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<sup>41</sup> Bacon-Smith describes watching ‘taped episodes of *Blake's 7* for sixteen hours [in one] weekend’ (1992: 121), and reports that one of her interviewees had watched ‘at least seven hours of *The Professionals*’ the night before a group interview (1992: 123).

Jenkins notes that at the time of his writing, vidders 'increasingly rely upon laserdiscs for their masters to allow more flexibility and sharper images' (1992: 244). In his chapter on vids (what he calls 'fan music video'), the question of image quality is mentioned only once more, and as part of his concluding comments on the lack of control that videotape vidders had over their work. He notes that, 'Having worked so hard to overcome "rainbow lines" and other glitches' vidders report being 'concerned about the quality of these multiple-generation copies and are worried that people often see their videos only in technically flawed prints' (Jenkins 1992: 284), though he is silent on the aesthetic or material consequences of using bootleg tape. Though Penley notes 'the high level of everyday technological skills' of fans in fandom (1991: 141), the quality of taped source material limited the visual sophistication of the resulting works. If the vidder purchased consumer-grade home editing devices, more control over the editing of clips was possible, and could limit some of the negative effects (the 'jittering' and 'rainbow lines') of tape-to-tape transfer, but could not restore source videotape that is already degraded.

The degradation that is so central to the experience of watching videotape for Bacon-Smith and Hilderbrand is missing from Jenkins's description of videotape vids. Hilderbrand seems genuinely excited at the aesthetic and affective sides of tape degradation. Bacon-Smith takes this as an unavoidable condition of the form, plainly stating that in addition to the audio source, the video source and the audio/visual sync, a vidder 'also needs as much source material as possible, in as clear copy as possible' (1992: 175), which alludes to the existence of copies which are not clear. While she notes vidders are 'sensitive to the technology of videotape' and knowledgeable about the potential for laserdisc and Betamax to provide higher-quality images, 'few

community members are able or willing to devote the financial resources necessary for the use of multiple technologies' (Bacon-Smith 1992: 176). The wear evident in vids made using videotape source material, as indicated by degraded image quality, is evidence of an engaged audience's repeat viewings of significant moments.

It is interesting that Jenkins presents the problem of video quality as arising in the editing process rather than the image itself; in *Who Can It Be Now*, the 'rainbow lines' appear at the start and end of clips, at the edit points (see Figure 16). Perhaps this is because variations in image quality in individual clips is so integral to the medium that it was beyond comment, despite being part of the experience of watching a vid, or of the visual texture of vids. Part of the goal for this chapter is to demonstrate how flaws in videotape images are markers of the vid's particular historiography.



**Figure 16,** *Who Can It Be Now*, instances of 'rainbow lines' at the edit points.

Despite Busse and Hellekson's assertion that 'VCR tapes of fan vids have given way to sophisticated, perfectly synched, high-quality electronic files' (2006: 16), the

textual traces that would betray the bootleg history of a vid's source video is not limited to videotape. Nor, indeed, is the potential for a bootleg thrill absent; instead, these traces are shifted into a different register of signification. In digital vids, there are three common ways to make a vid with source material that has not been ripped from an official DVD release and therefore shows traces of digital bootlegging. These also represent three different contemporary origin points for media in one's personal home video archive.

First, a vid could be a contemporary re-working of archived videotape that has been format-shifted from videotape: a digital rip of analogue time-shifted footage. The aforementioned vid *Fireworks* (Jayne L., 2010) is made from the Canadian television series *Power Play* (1998-2000), which focused on the management of a fictional professional ice hockey team; this series has not been released on DVD but its modest fan-base shares the VHS rips of the series (Jayne L. 2010: n.p.), keeping it in circulation long after its cancellation. Quality will vary, depending on the age of the videotapes before they were ripped, and the quality of the conversion. A slightly overlapping category is vids made from digitally time-shifted television episodes (i.e. digitally recorded). For example, the *Supernatural* vid *Alone Now* (hay1ock, 2007) includes clips from Canadian and American broadcasts of the series, as indicated by watermarking preserved in the vid (from channels CityTV and The CW, respectively). Like the first group, these can include station-specific broadcast watermarks that reveal a series' international market, the global stretch of fandom, and the digital equivalent of cross-border videotape sharing.

Finally, vidders may also use copies of films (openly available online, and of poor image quality) that have been recorded in a cinema or duplicated from a



screening copy.<sup>42</sup> In recent years, the cycle of Marvel Studios superhero films have been frequently vidded from this ‘cam’ source material, as fans seek to participate in fannish discourse using their preferred form of fan work in the moments between the theatrical release of a popular film and its DVD release date. Where fans who write fiction or who create fan art have the capacity for immediate response to a series or film, a vidder can seek out bootleg copies of these objects to participate in the initial rush of fannish enthusiasm.<sup>43</sup> Examples of works which use cam footage include the *Iron Man* (John Favreau, 2008) vid *Freedom Hangs Like Heaven* (quigonejinn, 2008); the *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011) vid *Set Fire to the Rain* (talitha78, 2011); and the *Avengers Assemble* (Joss Whedon, 2012) vid *A Circus of Heartbreaking Divas* (such heights, 2012).



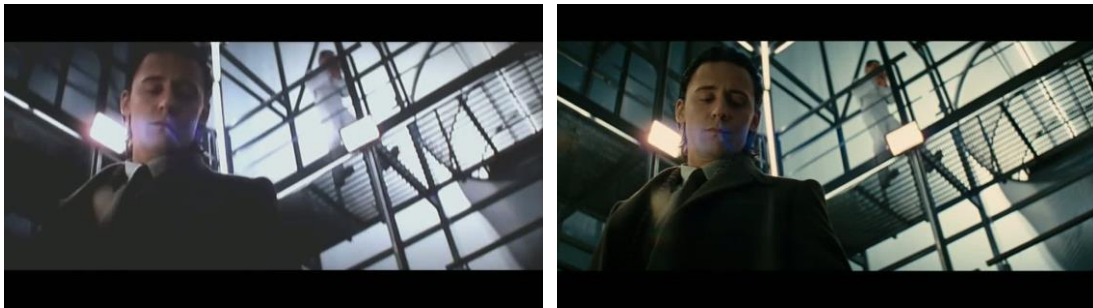
**Figure 17**, *Freedom Hangs Like Heaven* (quigonejinn 2008): note the bottom-left corner of each frame which is obscured by head of cinema audience member sitting between the camera and the film being recorded.

In each of these examples, the source video is easily recognisable as a digital bootleg; the difference is clearly seen when compared to a DVD rip of the same footage. The viewer’s ability to read the image quality adds a thrill of illegitimacy, though I would dispute that these vids are made to showcase the flaws in the video

<sup>42</sup> For work on user-led digital distribution, see Strangelove 2005, May 2007, Lewis 2007, Lobato 2012, Newman 2012.

<sup>43</sup> The Marvel film cycle, in addition to generating massive box office returns (*Avengers Assemble* was the top-grossing film of 2012 at USD \$1.5bn worldwide), at the time of writing has an exceptionally large and prolific media fan following.

quality. Rather, as with *Wind Beneath My Wings* and *You Can't Hurry Love*, the clips are used *despite* their flaws, as part of the passionate thrill of finding evidence to communicate different interpretations of the films in the franchise. The notes in the vidder's blog post announcing the release of *Freedom Hangs Like Heaven* bemoan the cinema audience member who appears in the frame, marring the shot (quigonejinn 2008: n.p.; see Figure 17). This draws attention to the imperfection of the source material, excusing its poor image quality while simultaneously emphasising the timeliness of the vid.



**Figure 18**, two versions of *Set Fire to the Rain* (2011), talitha78's original (left, cam) and isagel's remaster (right, DVD rip). The cam source has a more blue/grey colour palette, less-defined contrast and cropped framing.

In another example, *Thor* was released on home video four months after *Set Fire to the Rain* was made; the vidder isagel took this opportunity to produce a shot-for-shot remake (known as a 'remaster') of talitha78s's vid using the newly-available DVD rip footage. A comparison of images is shown in Figure 18: the left-hand image, made from cam source, is noticeably washed-out and blurred in contrast to the right-hand image, which boasts a slightly different colour palette and a much crisper image. This potential to revise and update vids raises a question of what a vid is *for*, and how that purpose may change: using cam footage is about the vidders' immediate response to a film, but remaking a cam footage vid with better quality source suggests that aesthetics and visual pleasure are just as important in vids as is timely participation in fannish discourse (or, contributing to the canonisation of a particular media event, cf.

Dayan and Katz 2011). A vid constructs a way to revisit the interpretive, narrative, and visual pleasures of the source material; for example, the remastered *Set Fire to the Rain* reveals certain visual pleasures of *Thor* which are obscured when bootleg source material is used. For vidders engaged in the interpretation of films such as the Marvel Studios franchise, using low-quality source material is a reasonable option in the absence of better footage, in order to contribute to the creation of fannish interpretations of these popular texts.

Hilderbrand's assumption that the existence of bootleg home video indicates 'their source copies were probably actively sought' (2009: 61) is interesting when thinking about the audiences of home video. This is not merely watching films or television by channel-surfing or by turning down pages in *TV Guide* or *Radio Times* (i.e. waiting to see what is on); this is seeking out that which has already been televised or exhibited, in order to watch closely and make use of the media. A personal home video archive, built over time, allows access to present and past film and television. As Assmann argues, 'The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past' ([2008] 2011: 335). Home video is therefore more than a collection: it has the potential to be archival, and carries with it traces of its archive.

### **Vids' Archival Aesthetic**

Returning to a selection of *Star Trek* vids, this section discusses vids that are not only made from fans' personal archives, but that also directly invoke the idea of archive and an archive's relationship with personal and collective memory. These vids look and feel archival; they are *textually* archival in their form, as they reflect an archival aesthetic. The vidders' access to source material of varying quality or the decision to use worn

videotape (or in one case, film) is a sign of and reference to the vids' source material as coming from a larger repository of work. As detailed earlier, this section will focus on using three re-uses of *Star Trek*, through the original television series and the spin-off films, though not the four subsequent television series. A vid can be a way for film and television audiences to interact with current and past media, which offers a challenge to the assumptions surrounding a well-known franchise such as this.

The first vid, *Star Trek: Tik Tok* (MissSheenie, 2009), remakes the voyage of discovery undertaken by the *USS Enterprise* into a frivolous pleasure cruise, whereas *Closer* (T. Jonesy and Killa, 2003) proposes a dark alternate version of a *Star Trek* single episode. Finally, like *All Coming Back, The Test* (here's luck, 2010) works explicitly with the importance of memory (and, by extension, self-knowledge) to a specific character. Each vid represents how the vidder (and vid-watcher) understands and remembers the specific relationships the vid represents, in terms of characters and scenarios in the narrative, the broader context of *Star Trek* as a series, and the role played by audience expectation in watching works that affirm or estrange the viewer's understanding of the franchise. These vids also represent a technological progression to digital production and online streaming, from the videotape practices that began with home VCR technology.<sup>44</sup>

Steedman's 'prosaic definition' of an archive is useful here: 'archive' is 'a name for the many places in which the past ([...] which cannot be retrieved, but which may be represented) has deposited some traces and fragments' (2001: 69). The clips used in these works are taken from the vidders' archives of *Star Trek* episodes and films;

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<sup>44</sup> Cam footage (discussed earlier) is not represented in this section, however, examples do exist: *Don't Stop Believing* (arefadedaway, 2009) and *I'm On A Boat* (kiki\_miserychic, 2009) were both made within one month of the theatrical release of *Star Trek* (J. J. Abrams, 2009) using clips from the film, and therefore were made well in advance of the film's home video release.

they are ‘traces and fragments’ of past television series and films broadcast and released. The experience of watching *Star Trek* – of viewing the series, of the discursive interaction in fandom – cannot be retrieved, but the vid’s re-use of clips can communicate the interpretation/analysis of narrative moments, thereby representing a version of its history. For example, the act of recognising the close friendship or romance between Kirk and Spock will have initially happened once, in the past, but the representation of that recognition can be narrativised and held in a vid. The non-linear sequencing of clips in vids allow a vidder to represent a connection (thematic, narrative, formal) between different parts of a series, and to collect those isolated moments of significance into a suggestive whole. Vids represent where those deposited traces and fragments of home video’s past come to represent certain slices of that history. The clips become significant objects, containing the representation of actors, in character, performing gestures, glances and movements that turn a collection of episodes into an archive out of which viewers and vidders can build narratives. Vids as individual works may write a history of their source material, but to do so they reflect the memory and imaginative work of fans in recalling and experiencing their fandom. This is the interplay of archive, memory, and history in vids.

I do not intend to make a claim about the inner lives of fans, but to examine what may be at stake when the vid form carries with it textual traces of its archival origins. Joanne Garde-Hansen proposes a double articulation of the past as written (history) or recollected (memory); significantly, while ‘History (authoritative) and memory (private) appear to be at odds with each other,’ media ‘negotiate both history and memory’ (2011: 6) and the vid form acts as a site of reciprocation between written and recollected versions of a film or series. The vid appears to provide a variation on

Alison Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory, 'which emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past' (e.g. through a film, museum exhibition, etc.) wherein 'an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history' (2004: 2). Instead of offering viewers 'memories of places and experiences through which they have not lived' (Garde-Hansen 2011: 62), the vid-as-prosthetic-memory potentially offers an access to historical fan discourses, mediated through a vidder-created context. Individually, a vid's clips 'are shorthand for much longer segments of the program narrative' (Jenkins 1992: 234), but the vid as a whole can arguably be read as shorthand for much more extensive relationship between a text, how it may be interpreted personally and collectively, and how it may be articulated, re-framed, memorialised in a vid.



Figure 19, *Star Trek: Tik Tok* (MissSheenie, 2009): many clips highlight alcohol consumption.

It is Steedman's assertion that the desire to interact with an archive is 'expressive of the more general fever to know and to have the past' (2001: 75). With a parodic and playful vid such as *Tik Tok*, this knowing and having do not have to result in an honest reconstruction of the history the traces might point to. The vid *Star Trek: Tik Tok* (MissSheenie, 2009) uses Kesha's club hit 'Tik Tok' to suggest life on the *Enterprise* is a non-stop party for Captain Kirk and his crew (Figure 19). The primary pleasure of watching this work is in recognising the difference between the received notion of *Star Trek's* staid image as a venerable cult television text (albeit one that has

been subject to intense affection), and the vid's somewhat estranging exaggeration of its camp *mise-en-scène* to parodic extremes. In the vid, the series is re-written as a carefree and consequence-free world, populated by a crew revelling in their out-of-control lifestyle as they careen around the universe.

*Tik Tok's* vivid colour suggests that the vidder used restored and remastered DVD releases as source footage, not ageing videotapes. There is a crisp authority implied in the restoration's clarity that aids in the vid's joking pretence to being a definitive view of *Star Trek*. The digital compression of the vid as it is on YouTube restores some of the fan-dance tease of the archival aesthetic found in degraded videotape; however, its use of simple cuts and split-screen manipulation (see Figure 19, right image) rather than dissolves or fades to construct its montage, enacts a visual 'texture of memory' (Holdsworth 2011: 45) that is authoritative and matter-of-fact, and not one in which the past is 'forgotten, misremembered, repressed' (Kuhn 2000: 184). Lyrically, the song is concerned with celebrating fashion, alcohol, partying, and fighting: it begins with the narrator waking up and using whiskey as mouthwash before continuing the previous night's party. This is certainly at odds with the earnest and family-friendly perception of the series, which has a reputation for being 'inflexibly "moralistic" in presenting the "American ideal"' (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 167). For example, as shown Figure 19, the frequent shots of drinking combine with the lyrics' narration to give the impression of regular drinking while on duty.



**Figure 20**, *Star Trek: Tik Tok*: the first line, 'Wake up in the mornin' feelin' like P. Diddy...'



**Figure 21**, *Star Trek: Tik Tok*: the second line, 'Grab ma glasses I'm out the door...'

The vid's purpose is not to re-write particular storylines, but to use the evidence found in the clips to momentarily shift the overall tone of the series. The vid's most crucial moment is therefore the opening sequence, as quick edits and literal matches between song lyric and visual content establish the vid's comic premise (see Figure 20 and Figure 21). The lyrics that begin the song are matched with corresponding action in the frame: waking up (close-up on the actor's face, as he rises from a bed) firmly aligns the song's narrative to the actions as (re-)presented and establishes a less metaphorical application of song to image. The next line, 'grab my glasses, I'm out the door' is paired with two quick shots of Kirk and Spock in eyewear; this continues to set up the joke of the vid, to connote the vidder's preferred range of meanings through audio captions, as the protective gear shown in the clips are transformed to the height of extreme fashion. From there, the vidder locates commensurate clips and builds the alternate version of the series out of disconnected moments in the available archive of moving images. Textually, there is no narrative



beyond that which is provided by the song, which also makes the vid accessible to viewers with casual knowledge of *Star Trek*.

The emphasis of *Tik Tok* is on broad gestures rather than subtle glances, where motion within the frame is matched to the song's rhythm, as it highlights many of the series' flamboyant visual moments. As both an adaptation of and an argument about *Star Trek*, we are made to *look* at the series rather than to *hear* its arguments about the series' themes of compassion and tolerance. As the vid's purpose is to construct a joke from playful juxtaposition of classic science fiction television and party song, the force of the song's narrative overwhelms the specific connection between the clips' original context. Holdsworth argues that 'moments of return' in television narratives – moments which recall previous events and thereby reward a committed viewer – are 'best characterised by the brevity of these momentary appearances' (2011: 64); in *Tik Tok* the clips chosen represent brief moments of another sort, which in their re-presentation are foregrounded. Even if there were only single scenes with an alien celebration or alcohol consumption every several episodes, the concentration of these clips provides evidence to support the vid's argument about the *Enterprise* as a party boat.<sup>45</sup> The resulting group of moving images end up functioning as the vidder's archive of the camp and colourful visual style of *Star Trek*; this is a history of the show's visual style, and not a presentation of its (real or imagined) narrative history or cultural significance. This vid is a knowing mis-reading of archival traces, which exploits the potential of *Star Trek* as an open text.

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<sup>45</sup> While several clips are from 'The Trouble With Tribbles' (airdate 29 December 1967), the use of clips from several other episodes makes it more than an interpretation of one sequence.

In contrast, the vid *Closer* (T. Jonesy and Killa, 2003) is a dark take on the original series, using the Nine Inch Nails song 'Closer' to propose a different version of the episode 'Amok Time' (airdate 15 September 1967). In the episode, Spock's behaviour becomes erratic; the crew discovers that his alien physiology means he must return to his home planet to take a mate or face death. The situation is resolved through a convoluted scheme, involving ceremonial combat in which Spock believes he has killed Kirk. In the vid, the episode is re-cut (with some additional external footage) to suggest Spock's compromised state and superhuman strength result in his sexual assault of Kirk. The vid uses shots in which Spock appears menacing and in which Kirk appears fearful to build a narrative of mental and physical violation. *Closer* constructs the possibility of a volatile world under the surface of this utopian military setting through the combination of violent and sexually explicit lyrics with shot choices.



**Figure 22**, *Closer*: digital addition of film effects, including a 'tear' in the film (left) and pronounced grain (right).

The distressed, sepia-toned digital effect used in the vid, as well as frequent use of jump cuts, resembles the visual style of the song's commercial music video. As Coppa argues, however, this aesthetic quotation is not only to mimic Mark Romanek's 'notorious music video' for the song but is 'used to provide new meaning to the source footage' (2008: 1.3). Manipulation of the contrast levels and the addition of various filters creates a digital mimicry of decomposing and/or unevenly-processed nitrate film

stock, and therefore makes a knowing reference to the moving image as found in the archive. There is an added sense of urgency from the digital effect; Paolo Cherchi Usai (1994) notes that as cellulose nitrate stock disintegrates, 'the image tends to disappear and the base takes on a brownish colour' (20). *Closer* alludes to this disappearance (see Figure 22, left) with effects such as a digital 'tear' in the pseudo film stock, and off-centre framing. The manipulated images pretend, therefore, to be only a few steps away from being lost forever, disappearing into 'an indistinct mass covered by a brownish crust' and eventually 'reduced to a whitish object or even to powder' (Cherchi Usai 1994: 20). Therefore, the vidders' visual quotation of the heavily-stylised original Nine Inch Nails video becomes a reminder of the fate of footage lost in the archives, with its 'discovery' bringing with it the appeal of the exotic, that is, the rare and nearly-lost. (The jump cuts are created by removing short sections of footage; these gaps could be read as footage which had already been lost.) This put-on uniqueness – though this vid is digital, and exists in many copies – allows for the pretence that this is a singular object, and it therefore must be witnessed before it is completely destroyed.

In addition to the alteration to the original narrative, the degraded visual aesthetic of the vid also connotes the disintegration of Spock's self-control. Like *Tik Tok*, underneath the digital manipulation the source material for *Closer* appears to be free from the kind of videotape degradation as seen in *Wind Beneath My Wings* or *All Coming Back*. What differs is the digital processing of *Closer* which evokes a rhetorical position regarding what the vid pretends is the origin of its footage, and what that aesthetic decision could suggest about the performance of that archive. To begin, there is a suggestion of authenticity-through-age in the imperfection of the images.

The sepia tone, light bleed effects and desaturation of some areas of image create an aesthetic of obscurity, of a distrust that restored footage might tidy up vital elements. By using this effect, the vid evokes some hidden truth that has been uncovered and archivally substantiated. This responds to the indexical power of a photograph or moving image, or more precisely a trust in what Arild Fetveit calls ‘the evidential credibility of photographic images’ ([1999] 2004: 543). The evidence presented in this vid is blatantly at odds with what happens in the episode ‘Amok Time’, and yet the indexical proof offered by the images – that the bodies captured on film did move through these locations – can be so easily made to serve another version of that history, another writing-up of the traces discovered in the archive.<sup>46</sup>

In this respect, *Closer* suggests itself as the last look at a hidden record that may not be restored and saved from being eaten away through improper preservation. There is always the possibility that archival research will reveal a dirty secret or other unpleasant truth; this is a concept of the archive as a place where the historian's task in writing up the fragments and traces becomes a problem of balanced narration. As a textual performance of the idea of archival evidence, and the state of objects in archives, the pretence offered in *Closer* plays with an idea of what truths can be derived from the archive, becoming a kind of play with perceptions of reality.

*Closer* is especially compelling because its source narrative, the episode ‘Amok Time’, has become central to several decades of fan attention (S. Winters 2012: 2.1-2.2). Where *Tik Tok* can be enjoyed solely through the context of the song, *Closer*

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<sup>46</sup> The sonic dimension also follows this line of obscurity; the bass rhythm that begins the song itself is a two-beat (akin to a heartbeat), composed of a regular bass drum hit and a burst of sound on the off-beat that recalls electronic static or perhaps even steam. This aural element helps colour the soundscape of the vid in a similar manner as the faux-distressed film effect: the mechanical failures implied in the degraded video and distorted audio together work to create this aesthetic performance of a crumbling, uncertain, archival object.

perhaps requires an awareness of the original episodes for complete effect; this ‘feral’ Spock is not the vid’s invention, but a narrative element taken from the series. Indeed, Sarah Fiona Winters argues that being able to recognise the vid as a reference to this specific episode ‘allows the viewer to identify both men as victims of a lack of control’ (2012: 2.1) by recalling the episode’s context for the characters’ actions. The comprehensibility and analytic power of a vid is in the addition of a subsequent narrative and layer of textual meaning, and not the replacement of the original meanings.<sup>47</sup> This is an individual sense of archive, where an audience’s memory of a series, constructed in part thanks to television’s ‘provision of a public sphere, a shared experience and a communal space’ (Holdsworth 2011: 125) can be substantiated through a personal collection of episodes.

Finally, *The Test* (here’s luck, 2010) blends the reboot/remake film *Star Trek* (J. J. Abrams, 2009) with clips from the previous films and the original television series.<sup>48</sup> It works as a performance of memory, performing an understanding/reading of references (intentional or unintentional) to the original franchise in the reboot film. This creates an explicit continuity across the franchise for the fan who is either aware of these connections, or would benefit from having those connections made clear; like *All Coming Back*, the vid’s representation of ‘what remembering feels like’ (Holdsworth 2011: 44) for its central character is also a performance of fan memory and intertextual knowledge. This is especially significant, as the concept of a ‘reboot’, borrowed from comic book publishing, ‘seeks to render a previously established

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<sup>47</sup> The process is similar to watching an adaptation (Chapter Five expands on this point), where an audience familiar with the work being adapted will ‘inevitably fill in the gaps in the adaptation with information from the adapted text’ (Hutcheon 2013: 121).

<sup>48</sup> Featuring a new cast of young actors, *Star Trek* (2009) constructs an alternate story of how Jim Kirk became captain of the *Enterprise*.

narrative universe null and void [...] and beginning again from “ground zero” (Proctor 2012, n.p.), thereby resetting or erasing the familiar actors, art direction, and tone of the Shatner/Nimoy years. Although the only original cast member to appear in the reboot is Leonard Nimoy, the other actors are made to appear in the vid and – for the vid’s audience – become a proper part of the reboot’s alternate diegesis, and re-introduce the history of the franchise that the reboot seeks to supersede.



**Figure 23**, *The Test*: the right-hand side of the frame contains added, digitally clipped, footage of Spock’s memory as experienced by Kirk (and, therefore, by the audience as well).

A key sequence in the vid (and the film) takes place in an ice cave, in which the old Spock telepathically gives the new Kirk (Chris Pine) a flashback exposition sequence to explain the reboot film as an alternate timeline. The vid replaces this exposition with a rapid sequence of clips featuring Kirk and Spock from the original series, captioned by the lyrics ‘Devil came by this morning/ Said he had something to show me/ ...Pictures and things that I’ve done before/ Circling around me...’. After the flashback sequence, Kirk’s reaction elicits Spock’s apology for ‘emotional transference’, which can be read as Spock’s apologising for burdening Kirk with Spock’s own guilt and shame for having caused the destruction of two planets, or of Spock’s emotion of seeing his old (dead) friend again. In the vid, here’s luck composites partial frames from the original franchise, constructing a visual representation of memory that resembles videotape (see Figure 23). Like Holdsworth’s description of BBC broadcast of *Life on Mars* (BBC 2006-2007), in which episodes were preceded by ‘the 1970s test card and colour bars flickering onto the screen’ so that ‘Television appeared to be

breaking down or rewinding to a different time' (2011: 111), *The Test* takes on a specific visual signifier to indicate a 'aesthetic shift in time' (ibid). What we see in the vid is the result of Spock's emotional transference: this new Kirk's artificial memories of a life not his, but that he now remembers. Unlike the relative clarity of *Tik Tok's* editing, the digital mimicry of analogue degradation is used as a textual representation of Kirk's imperfect recall even as the comparison of images performs the vidder's critical comparison of the reboot with the original cast's films and episodes.

*The Test* intervenes in the narrative of the reboot film using clips from *Star Trek's* previous incarnations. Where *All Coming Back* performs a fan's memory of the franchise, as represented through archival clips of that franchise, to 'rebuild' Spock's own memory, *The Test* argues that this new Kirk has gained access to that same historical information through the original Spock. In both *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979) and *Star Trek* (2009), Spock arrives on the bridge of the *Enterprise* to publicly request Kirk's permission to re-join the *Enterprise* crew.<sup>49</sup> The 2009 film visually quotes its predecessor, as in both films Spock enters through a door on the right side of the frame, pauses, and then moves right to left through the shot; the vid's complex invocation of memory and archive occur through digitally compositing the two scenes (see Figure 24). The overlay of the 1979 Spock (Leonard Nimoy) on the 2009 Spock (Zachary Quinto) appears intentionally rough, clearly positioning the older footage as a memory (or hallucination) that intrudes on Kirk's view of his current crew member. The vid does more than point out a similarity in framing and blocking: it asks its

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<sup>49</sup> In *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979), this takes place partway through the film, whereas in *Star Trek* (2009), the scene is the dénouement. Shifting this reunion to the end of the film fulfils the narrative promise of a reboot; the vid constructs a diegesis in which Kirk expects to see Spock, because of his foreknowledge of a similar moment from his alternate's past. This expectation is shared by the audience, who shares the same memory of the previous incarnation.

audience to read the new film in a deeper historical context, which is achieved by a 'textual re-encounter' (Holdsworth 2011: 98) with these older texts.

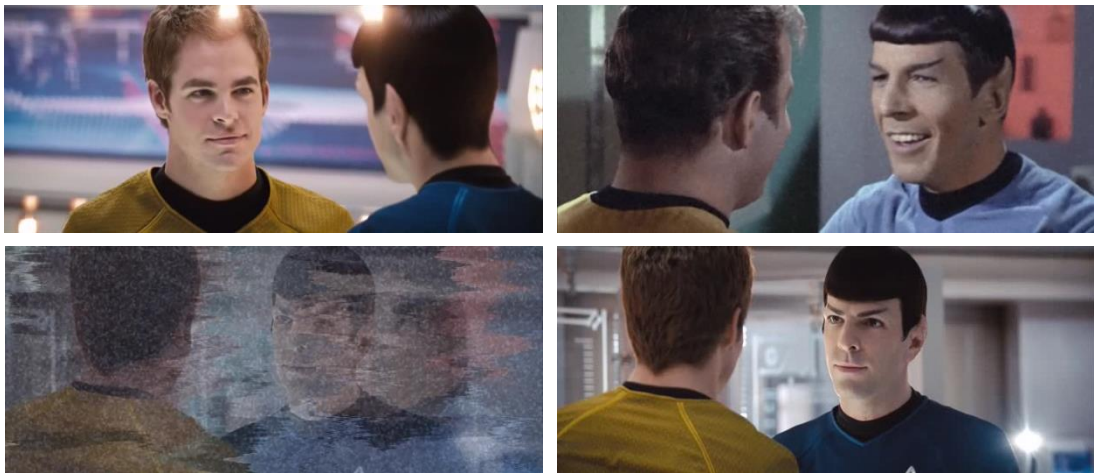


**Figure 24**, *The Test*, top to bottom: visual quotation by J.J. Abrams of the first *Star Trek* film, acknowledging the history of the franchise and proposing a look through Kirk's eyes as Kirk 'recalls' the alternate/original Spock.

As a film, *Star Trek* (2009) is more concerned with Kirk as an agent of science fiction action than in permitting moments of reflection or introspection. Therefore, *The Test* works to fill in Kirk's intensely personal journey to establish self-worth and value in the eyes of Spock (who has power over him as lecturer, as superior officer on the



ship and then as his captain), even as he blows up alien spaceships and flees monsters. It does so by suggesting that Kirk's own past, and his knowledge of the alternate timeline, is constantly present in his mind, in his recent memory. In Figure 25, which is a continuation of the sequence detailing Spock's return to duty shown in Figure 24, new Kirk's memory of old Spock's happiness at seeing Kirk alive and well (at the end of 'Amok Time') is suggested through juxtaposing a clip from the original series episode with a clip of similar composition from the film (a two-shot from behind Kirk's head and showing Spock's face) and context (Spock and Kirk seeing each other after a period apart). The film's echo of the episode's framing (Figure 25, top right and bottom right) is recognisable as being from different source material: while the aspect ratios of both are the same, the television source appearing slightly cropped, the film (bottom left) is differentiated by a lens flare effect and more detailed set decoration. The videotape distortion links this 'memory' with the new Spock's more reserved response.



**Figure 25,** *The Test*, Kirk's memory of a different timeline bleeds through in the middle of a reverse shot.

Unlike *All Coming Back* and *Closer*, which both make Spock the main character, *The Test* retains Kirk as the main character. It positions Spock as watching Kirk, who himself is aware of being watched and judged (as established through dissolves/fades) by Spocks from two universes/timelines. The question asked in the chorus ('Did I pass/

The acid test') is made into Kirk's search for approval from Spock, who in this timeline is not his friend (or lover). As with the previous two vids, there is a voyeuristic quality to these more intimate works that sets them apart from the inclusive narrative of *Tik Tok*. *Tik Tok* contains a very public world, whereas the introspection of *The Test* and the torment of *Closer* are invitations to view deeply personal moments for the characters which are exposed for the pleasure of the audience.

This performance of memory is shared by the vid's audience: we are led through a historiographical exercise constructed in archival clips, as a refresher (or first experience) of the franchise. Indeed, as they are framed in *The Test*, these moments of significance may also be read as a performance of the history of Kirk/Spock vids. The visual quotations and narrative parallels in the reboot film take on extra significance as they are called out by the vidder and integrated into a story of Kirk making sense of his world and experiences. In these vids, and particularly in *The Test*, certain moments – the handclasp from the end of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, 3D chess, Spock appearing at the bridge – come to act as shorthand for larger character and narrative arcs. Clips repeated in vids are moments Kirk and Spock *would* find meaningful if they were emotionally complex people given to self-reflection. Therefore, clips from the original series act as the characters' memories, and of the fan performance of their own readings.

Thus the vids in this section suggest three different ways of watching *Star Trek*, three different archival 'discoveries', and three different representations of the franchise can be remembered. *The Test* deals explicitly with a character's recovery of memory, where *Tik Tok* and *Closer* suggest reinterpretations of the original narrative, and by extension, of the way a series can be used as an archive for fan works that play

on the expectations of an audience. Also, to make sense of each clip and its place in the vid, the vid watcher must recall that overarching narrative; therefore, vids demand a dense and active reading predicated on one's memory of a series, or of similar works, codes and conventions. For *Closer* and *The Test*, the aesthetic of memory – how memory is represented in these vids – is achieved through digital effects replicating degraded film or video. In *Tik Tok*, unaltered footage evokes a different role for the archive: it does not attempt to replicate the 'look' of an archival artefact, but instead demonstrates what stories may be told through the mastery or command of an archive.

Therefore, vids help to variously constitute, recall and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a series. The vid form permits a diverse range of expression and comment by vidders, who invite their audiences to share in their interpretations. Vitally, the form's inherent reflexivity demands the vid be viewed and read alongside the viewer's memory and understanding of its source series as a whole. Vidding's historiographical role moderates the tension between the destruction of the series' grand narrative (by being pulled apart and having small sections removed) and its maintenance in vids (as the master referent without which the vid is not comprehensible).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter's discussion of the differences between archiving and collecting, and between archives and collections, shows how vids demonstrate vidders' use of their personal media collections as archives to create works that both constitute and respond to the shared experiences of media fandom. This defies the logic of 'disposable television', as clip choices made in vids will often highlight the personal

meanings attached to texts and show evidence of extensive re-watching over time. The experience of watching a vid can become part of a shared history of watching a series or film, particularly in convention vidshows.

Vids have an intimate relationship with the history of media in the home in that vids are made out of a time-shifted collection or archive. The home video archive is something that has the potential to be continually reworked. The digital permits a historical flattening, where the contents of a DVD shelf or hard drives can permit this manner of interaction across several decades. What digital provides is not the ability to create these kinds of works, but more numerous and much more accessible material with which to play. Therefore vids describe the close relationship between personal archives, individual and collective memory, and the way memory and history is represented.

Raymond Williams's hallucinatory account of watching American commercial television in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974) implies a mode of interacting with television – central source, disseminated to receiver-boxes with very limited intervention possible from the receiver-human – that can no longer be assumed when conceiving of the audience who watches a programme (let alone the audience who watches the advertising breaks, etc.). Vids, as objects of film and television and made from home video, provide one way of considering a subset of film and television audiences. Multiple sites of watching and methods of access, as well as temporal and spatial dislocation from an initial broadcast, complicate the question of what television this television audience is watching. The pictures showing on a box in a living room might come from many sources, so it becomes easier to think of television programmes as archived materials accessed by curator/collectors and historians *or at*

*least* the metaphor might prove fruitful when considering how vids come to be, both technically (in terms of their technical heritage/genesis) and conceptually (the frameworks, contexts, practices and modes of watching) that enable such works.

The relative stability of a personal archive is an attractive grounding point in the middle of so many points of access; syndication, box-set releases, home media releases of any variety, the ability to self-generate these archives via taping things off the air or copying tapes (from friends, from video rental stores or from public libraries) removes the point of access from a rigorously linear frame. The unique aura of *one's own copy* persists even when versions can be found online. YouTube is a false archive: copyright disputes or the whim of the uploader can remove content, break links and gut playlists. In many senses, YouTube reaffirms Benjamin's criteria for a personal library (or in this case, a clip library): with VHS, discs or digital files, the collector's own copies are in the collector's control, whereas a streaming or digital locker link marks only where something once was, not that it still exists.

The relationship between collections and archives, and with difference in use between collected object and archived object (allowing that the same artefact can occupy both positions), and the utility of the object suggests complementary framings of the vid form, which together help inform an understanding of vids as discourse, and as a kind of history and an object of historiography.

## Chapter Four –

### Fascinating Images: The Vid and Visual Pleasure

#### Introduction

This chapter looks at vids as works which describe the act of critical engagement as a form of fascination. Vids are about excess: emotion, spectacle, eroticism. All three forms of excess are grounded in intense fascination with the image. The works that are created out of this fascination are themselves intense; this fascination is seen most intensely in multifandom and real person vids, which will be the foci of this chapter. As described in my Introduction, those who make and watch vids are members of a predominantly-female subculture; as such, I reiterate that the arguments made in this thesis are firmly grounded in an academically-substantiated assumption that women are the creators and viewers of vids, and as such provide textual evidence of a female mode of media spectatorship. This chapter thus analyses vids in this context, reading their fascination with the image accordingly.

Where other vid genres use a single series, film, or franchise as their source material, multifandom vids use multiple sources in their construction. As a series, film, or franchise is known as a *fandom*, multifandom vids are so called because they are made using clips from different media products, or ‘multiple fandoms’. The *Star Trek* vids in the previous chapter are not ‘multifandom’ because the many series, films, and alternate timelines produced in the last several decades are considered (by rights-holders and by fans) to be part of a unitary *canon* of *Star Trek*, and therefore constitute a single fandom. Since a multifandom vid uses clips from multiple fandoms to make a work that compares several texts, the resulting vids do not offer detailed

arguments about singular character relationships or pairings, as with character study, or 'ship' (relationship) vid genres. Indeed, by definition, multifandom vids cannot spend as much of their focus on a single source as is possible in other genres.

Therefore, the focus of multifandom vids – and the textual evidence presented by vids grounded in fascination – are in their representation of a comparison between different film and television texts, and in commenting on trends and tendencies in popular media. When these comments relate to a single genre, the resulting vid is comparable to a critical genre study because the identifiable markers/icons of genre are isolated and presented for comparison in the final work. Multifandom vids follow the same general limit on duration as in single-fandom vids (the duration of its popular song soundtrack), and are characterised by extremely rapid editing. They can therefore appear even more fragmented than a single-source vid. As sequences of images, these types of vids do not have the time to make detailed comments on specific nuances in a story, but draw attention to more basic rapid identification of clips.<sup>1</sup>

Vids are made by members of an audience, not by artist/practitioners of a different (gallery, high-art, academic) sphere. This is key because a vid's segmentation and reconstruction of whole narratives into parts can be read as indicative of the way this kind of audience watches media, consumes narratives, and configures desire. Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel, in noting the concurrent development of *Star Trek* vidding and feminist textual analysis, describe how 'fans cut up scenes in *Trek* to foreground what they saw as the homoerotic relation between the characters' (2008: 8): a vid is therefore a trace audience interpretation. Jonathan Gray's argument

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible to watch a massively multifandom vid and not recognize a portion of the clips. These vids are comprehensible not because every clip is identifiable: when *enough* clips are familiar, and the vid's concept is apparent, the unknown clips are not disruptive. Indeed, unfamiliar clips in a multifandom vid can be akin to receiving a recommendation for a film or series.

equating marginalia to the vid form notes 'the titillating nature of reading someone else's marginalia, and thereby gaining a window into their own experience of a text' (2010: 154). Vids provide a window into an experience of film and television which is governed by fascination. As Francesca Coppa writes, regarding the multifandom vid *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005), the vid's segmentation of many different television series 'is staging a way of watching television familiar to most female fans and to all fan vidders: a selective seeing' (2009: 109). A vid's clips are, by definition, parts of films and television series that have been selectively noticed by fans, and deemed noteworthy for inclusion because of the clips' significance or aesthetic appeal.

The intense fragmentation of vids, particularly of the kind demonstrated in multifandom vids, reveals the fascinations of television and film texts beyond narrative concerns. Coppa argues, in her description of Clucking Belles, 'These vidders see parts – tropes, movements, frames – within larger narratives that are presented to them as unified and complete, and they reassemble them into coherent wholes of their own devising' (2009: 110). This purposeful fragmentation and then re-use of clips means that though they are dislocated from their source narratives, clips in a vid maintain a connection to their source material. This connection results from the clips' recognisability, either through the audience's familiarity with the source material or through generic clues in *mise-en-scène* or form. Unlike found footage films where the specific context and location of clips become less important than the bravura re-editing of the artist, for example in the work of Bruce Conner (discussed later) and Craig Baldwin's science fiction spectacle *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* (1991), or in a critical re-appraisal of media representation as with Dara Birnbaum's



work, clips in multifandom vids are not abstracted or presented in a way that puts a critical distance between the clips and the audience. While images predominate, these are not *anonymous* images.

Anne Friedberg's analysis of montage and audience interventions into television's broadcast flow is relevant here. She writes that the remote control, has changed the nature of montage; every viewer is a ready-made *montagiste*, cutting and pasting images from a wide repertoire or sources at the push of a button. Montage, once an analogy to dialectical thought or the shock value of the surreal, now also signifies a form of consumer choice with the controls in the hands of a new virtual shoppe. (1993: 141-142)

This is not the first time the argument has been made: the action of changing channels as montage compares to the description by Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch ([1983] 2000) of the 'viewing strip' as a text created out of the experience of changing channels to move between different unrelated items. Both theorisations refocus the agency of viewership back to the audience, rather than the anonymous 'author' of the channel's scheduler. Therefore, this manner of viewership is understood as authorship, and is both mimicked and formalised/memorialised in a vid's editing; the vid form enacts the behaviour of an active television audience, which is not specific to vid fandom, and makes an enduring record of it.

Coppa argues the building blocks of the vid, these 'parts – tropes, movements, frames' are 'reappropriate[d] by vidders who then 'turn them into sites of pleasure and surplus' (2009: 110). Vitrally, this is a surplus, she argues, that 'is not just psychic but economic. Vidding is a nonprofit activity partly because there's no scarcity: the same footage can be used to make thousands of different vids' (Coppa 2009: 110). This

potential for abundance means multifandom vids are therefore well-placed to offer critical responses based in broadly-spanning comparisons of many film and television texts. However, these critical comparisons are not made without emotion. While Coppa defines the fannish tendency to describe a vid's thematic alignment as 'a visual essay that stages an argument' (2008: 1.1; also cited in S. Winters 2012: 1.7), using the term 'argument' potentially connotes a reserved, pedagogical, or didactic mode of address, which disavows their emotional intensity and the visual pleasures of vids' semiotic density. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that vids make their particular form of argument through emotional appeals. The many sources of a multifandom vid evokes a sense of plenty, excess, and fascinated celebration of the many pleasures of television viewership. Therefore, the vid form relates to the pleasures of watching broadly, across many texts. Indeed, the act of recognising and identifying the many different sources in a massively multifandom vid is one of the chief pleasures of the genre. The vid form enacts an intense fannish spectatorship that is characterised by fascination. This chapter examines three kinds of fascination; with actors, with bodies, and with genres. The vids discussed here are about the representation of these areas.

This chapter will address the vid form in reference to the better-known history of avant-garde forms of moving image re-use; my aim is to make use of critical reactions to other re-uses of moving images to better understand the vid's approach to images themselves. These vids are distinct from narrative-based recombinations and resequencing in slash or character study vids. This is found in multifandom vids' close consideration of bodies: in the actors' performances, physical attributes/embodiment and in the interpretation of representation in the absence of narrative context in the vid. Experimental moving image re-use manipulates cinematic and televisual time, but

in different methods and to different ends than the vid. The artistic purpose in re-using moving images is generally held to be some sort of critical evisceration of media culture, intended to 'question and critique traditional history and institutions' (Yeo 2004: 25), but the vid is a comfortably ambiguous form that mediates the conflict between a textual distancing and the fascination and pleasures offered by film and television.

Kevin Hatch writes that Bruce Conner's found footage films, particularly *A Movie* (1958) and *Cosmic Ray* (1961), 'offer the viewer an apparent intimacy and abundance, only to snap that viewer's attention back to the inescapable void at the heart of the cinematic experience' (2012: 116). That cinema has an 'inescapable void' at its heart is, of course, problematic and debatable. Similarly, as John Corner argues, television has been the victim of 'a long tradition of seeing the medium as an agency of the culturally trite or even of cultural debasement' (1999: 93). This perspective informs artists' responses to the medium. For example, Dara Birnbaum's video *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978) is explicitly critical of the TV series *Wonder Woman* (ABC, 1975-1977; CBS, 1977-1979) and was intended to educate its viewers on the failings of the series and the representation of its title character via a feminist psychoanalytic framework. In Birnbaum's words, her work is concerned with 'unveiling TV's stereotyped gestures of power and submission, of self-presentation and concealment, of male and female ego' (qtd in Reidy 1985: 61).

William Wees distinguishes between critically-pointed collage and vacuous appropriation; where the former ('exemplified' by the 'avant-garde film'; Wees 1992: 39) involves 'conscious, creative, and critical viewing of cinematic representations', the latter (exemplified by music videos) 'lacks the deconstructive strategies and critical

point of view' (1992: 45).<sup>2</sup> While Wees is careful to clarify that these distinctions are dependent on context, there are implications for the role of pleasure in such works that are inherent in dividing the 'conscious, creative, and critical' aims of experimental film from the non-critical commercial version of the form.

Most important is Wees's comment that works which re-edit moving images of stars may inadvertently 'betray their makers' fascination with the source of their images and show less interest in opposing than in reinterpreting and reevaluating the images Hollywood produces' (Wees 2002: 4). The notion that an artist is at risk of losing their critical faculties in the wake of overwhelming visual pleasure follows his earlier comments separating collage from appropriation. What persists is the insistence that evidence of fascination is a betrayal of the potential in moving image re-use for critical opposition. In contrast to these divisions between pleasure and critical reactions, the vid argues for an incredible richness of meaning and pleasure, both in the visual pleasures of film and television and through the deeper critical competence at play in reading across texts.

A certain resolution of this tension is seen in early scholarly work on vids. Henry Jenkins argues videotape vidders were, through their vids, 'making the series [that has been vided] represent subtexts it normally represses' (1992: 227-8). This framing of the relationship between television and the vid seems to suggest the vid form has a therapeutic role in unburdening television series of their repressed desires; however,

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<sup>2</sup> Wees proposes three 'methods of using found footage'; compilation (signifying 'reality', used for documentary purposes), collage (signifying 'image', used in avant-garde film) and appropriation (signifying 'simulacrum' and exemplified by music video), with the 'aesthetic bias' of each methodology as, respectively, realism, modernism, and postmodernism (1992: 39). The answer to whether vids are more like collage or appropriation in Wees's 'continuum of uses' (1992: 39) lies in whether it can be argued that vids promote, as collage, 'an analytical and critical attitude toward its images and their institutional sources' (1992: 53). The answer depends on the vid itself, meaning some vids could be more 'appropriation' and others more 'collage'.

this implies television is troubled, and in need of such an intervention. Jenkins argues that such vids interrogate ‘codes of conventional male conduct’ (1992: 228), while ‘the pleasure of the form centres on the fascination in watching familiar images wrenched free from their previous contexts and assigned alternative meanings’ (1992: 227). This ‘wrenching free’ is applicable to vids which radically re-present their source material; in multifandom, gen, and character study vids, or vids which follow canon pairings, the context (narrative structure) does change but the images’ meanings are not necessarily read subversively. Coppa takes a different position on the pleasure of viewing vids, arguing it ‘is explicitly the fun of watching, not of being watched’ (2009: 113). Instead of exposing the failings of film or television, or failing themselves to overcome the lure of their images to oppose these media, within fandom the success of a vid is judged on its ability to communicate its point, and to amuse and entertain.<sup>3</sup>

Wees argues that, despite the variety of methods possible in the re-use of moving images, and no matter how much of a betrayal of critical potential, ‘found-footage films nearly always have the effect of bracketing the images and calling attention to them as images, as constructed representations, and therefore as something that can be deconstructed or “undone”’ (Wees 2002: 4). Calling attention to images as images, and therefore as ‘constructed representations’, leaves open the possibility for the reconstruction of those images, and more specifically, the creation of coherent sequences of moving images out of previously-existing clips in order to highlight those representations. The fascination contains within it the potential for critical re-arrangement. However, it also reaffirms the dislocation of the clips from

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<sup>3</sup> For example, according to the convention programme books, the ‘Vid Review’ panel at VividCon, is a two-hour session in which every premiering vid of that year is discussed in these terms.

their narrative origin to a more surface purpose as images. Michael Zryd argues that the context of moving images is just as vital in determining meaning as the images themselves, noting that the meaning and significance of film footage is 'extraordinarily malleable' (2003: 47-8). He notes that experimental films which re-use moving images 'mark a specific mode of film montage that hyperbolizes this malleability, recontextualizing footage to foreground and critique the discourses behind the image' (Zryd 2003: 47-8). In the case of multifandom vids, the discourses which are foregrounded and critiqued are articulated through sequences of montage that, for example, gather similar clips from different film and television sources to note the similarities and differences in the various iterations of representational tropes. The constructed nature of these representations is never in question in a vid of this kind; the pleasure in 'undoing' these representations in vids includes sharing the proof of their constructed-ness with others, rather than solely as earnest or humourless 'commentaries on a world saturated with media imagery' (Hatch 2012: 117). The vid form's approach to images – separated from their narrative context, and recombined to create pleasurable and/or critical texts – is the focus of this chapter.

### **Fascinating People**

Joseph Cornell's film *Rose Hobart* (1936) is an important starting place for this section on the vid form's treatment of actors, celebrities and their star images. Cornell, who was 'best known for his surrealist collage art' (Rees 2011: 72), edited the feature-length adventure film *East of Borneo* (George Melford, 1931) into a much shorter piece that focuses on its star, Rose Hobart. Cornell altered the footage by tinting it (in some versions blue, in others pink; Pigott 2013: 114 n17), and the soundtrack replaced by 'Brazilian samba music' (Barefoot 2011: 160). The result is a dreamlike piece that

makes use of glances off-screen, moving camera shots and a lack of dialogue to keep the viewer adrift in its formless presentation of clips that (we trust) once had meaning, but defeat attempts to re-attribute a narrative to the decontextualised images. *Rose Hobart* begins with a group shot, of a crowd watching at something taking place off-screen, not with a shot of Hobart herself (see Figure 26, top left); significantly, this shot is not from *East of Borneo* and is an addition of Cornell's (Pigott 2013: 16).<sup>4</sup> When cited in discussions of found footage film, *Rose Hobart* is characterised as a film about Cornell's fascination with the actress's star image (particularly, Rony 2003); the addition of this opening shot establishes and underscores the film's concern with looking, as the group's gaze past the top-left of the frame is easily read as analogous to Cornell's position as both audience and editor (and to his audience's position as spectator).



**Figure 26**, *Rose Hobart* (Joseph Cornell, 1935): stills from the film's opening.

<sup>4</sup> Pigott describes the four shots added by Cornell as 'interferences' (2013: 16).

*Rose Hobart* is by no means the first work to re-use existing footage<sup>5</sup>, but it is 'the most prominent early collage film' (Pigott 2013: 9), and one which addresses the relationship between screen images and their audience. There are conflicting stories about the source of the footage, which is alternately given as a complete print from Cornell's private collection of films or scraps of film from a garbage pile; the latter is a better 'fit' with a historical narrative in which an artist rescues mass culture by re-presenting it in his own work, but the former seems to be more accurate (Barefoot 2011: 156). Scholarship on *Rose Hobart*, particularly its focus on a single actress's performance, provides some tools for discussing the intense fannish spectatorship required to create vids about real people, rather than fictional characters. The piece was made for exhibition in a gallery context; Hauptman reports films by Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray were screened alongside *Rose Hobart's* premiere, in a programme that also contained cartoons and newsreels<sup>6</sup> (1999: 95). This is relevant because – as discussed earlier – vids are made for a variety of distribution and exhibition contexts; *Rose Hobart's* place in a programme of heterogeneous works resembles a convention vidshow more than a single release to be viewed in isolation.

Jodi Hauptman argues that *Rose Hobart* is a portrait, rather than a film, as it 'offers less private or public information about this actress and more about how performers in general are constructed and interpreted on-screen, [and] reveals little of her habits and history and much about the desires of every fan' (Hauptman 1999: 87). Hobart herself remains fascinating and enigmatic but out of reach, but Cornell's

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<sup>5</sup> As noted in the Introduction, the first known example is an 1898 Lumière programme segment which purported to directly illustrate the Alfred Dreyfus scandal of 1894, but was in fact unrelated footage of military demonstrations and state buildings (Leyda 1964: 14).

<sup>6</sup> Salvador Dalí was present, and in response to *Rose Hobart*, he 'screamed that Cornell had stolen his ideas right out of his head, plans Dalí had thought about but had yet to execute' (Hauptman 1999: 95).



concerns are apparent in how her image is manipulated. Fatimah Tobing Rony calls the film 'an homage to the androgynous beauty of the actress Rose Hobart. [It] embodies a kind of infatuation, or *amour fou* (crazy love), on the part of Cornell for Rose Hobart, and its qualities of disruption, disjunction, and the oneiric are still focused on the pursuit of an ideal woman' (2003: 132). This is perhaps where a distinction can be made between commercial use of stock footage – where convention holds that producers' motives are profit-based – and non-commercial (artistic and fan-driven) uses of pre-existing film and television. For the latter, this is not an attempt at seamless illustration of fiction (as in Barefoot's examples) or documentary; the recontextualisation of clips into vids is disruptive, and reflexive, in the instances where the distance between clips' origins and use in their vids is meant to be noticeable. Cornell's film is notable because it concentrates the star image of a single actress (taken from a single film) into an intense work that betrays what we might read as his excessive engagement with Hobart, as well as his familiarity with more general formal film conventions. Hauptman notes that '...Cornell understood the medium intimately from years of carefully watching films, collecting footage, and cutting up and re-using bits of celluloid' (1999: 88). Cornell's fascination with the potential of Hobart's image was enabled through a different fascination: that of film form, which provided the tools to enact that fascination.

Barefoot writes that Hobart herself is 'now known for being forgotten' (2011: 153); the irony of Cornell's film, is therefore that his intense regard for Hobart's star image is why she is remembered at all. Barefoot's essay challenges the idea, repeated by Rony (2003) and others, that *East of Borneo* was a similarly forgettable B-picture. As 'a relatively expensive picture for a relatively cheap studio, starring a maverick second-

rank star directed by a once high-ranking director', it was not a financial success (Barefoot 2011: 157); this economic and cultural subtlety is necessary to speculate on the nature of Cornell's fascination with Hobart's performance in *East of Borneo*. While Cornell's piece was made for gallery/artistic audiences, a narrative of an artist elevating 'trash' cinema by turning it into a transformative experience of the unconscious increases the distance between artist/auteur and the object of his fascination. The common critical perspective on *Rose Hobart* is that this film is about the star image, and not the narrative of the film from which the clips are taken. This fascination with a single performance from a single actress provides a comparison to the operation of the star image in vids which take a single individual as their subject. This blurs the lines between real person (RP) and multifandom vids, because the 'fandom' manifest in the vid is the individual, located across many television series and films. An RP vid takes a single star image as its subject and analyses it, while also contributing to perpetuating that same star image.

In *Stars* (1979), Richard Dyer proposes that the 'star image' is constructed through four categories of media texts: promotion of the star by their studio<sup>7</sup>, publicity generated by other media, critical responses to the star's work, and finally the star's work itself. He points out that, 'The fact that [stars] are also real people is an important aspect of how they signify, but we never know them directly as real people, only as they are to be found in media texts' (Dyer 1979: 2). What is at stake in the understanding of star images is the play of locating an authentic or genuine individual through those four categories, and that the public persona of a celebrity is not solely generated through official interviews, tabloid exposés, or starring roles (while a film

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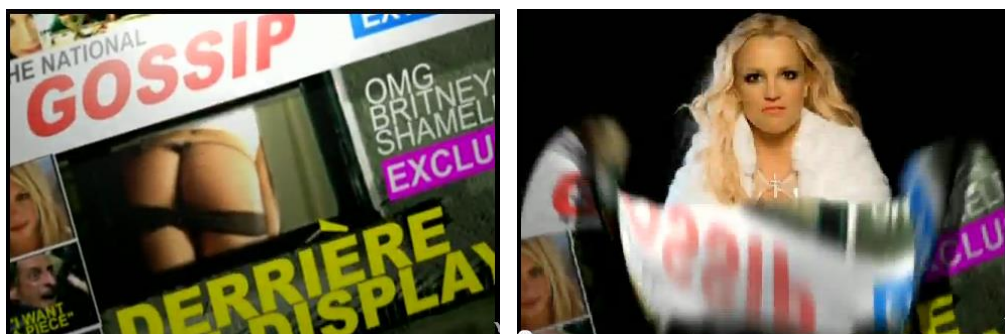
<sup>7</sup> Or, in contemporary terms, production company, film distributor, and/or television channel.

star or other celebrity can decline to give interviews; any mention of the lack of public appearances can still count as publicity). As Jason Mittell notes, news programmes, talk shows and reality series 'regularly frame subjects as heroes and villains... Viewers interpret real people using the narrative traditions of [fictional] characterization' (2010: 216). Real person vids are based on a celebrity's public image, not solely the characters they play, and the vids are made out of the media texts which constitute that image. This section will first address two vids about pop singers (which include clips from all four of Dyer's categories) before analysing RP vids with a greater emphasis on the vids' subjects as actors, rather than as celebrities. The subjects of this latter group are not mainstream stars; their star image is of relevance specifically to cult/fandom audiences. RP vids textually represent a fascination with and pleasure in screen appearances, and arguably, as Hauptman argues about Cornell in relation to *Rose Hobart*, rely on an intimate understanding of media enabled by years of engaged spectatorship (1999: 88).

Whilst vids are predominantly concerned with fictional subjects, occasionally a celebrity or actor is used as the subject of this form. This interaction with the star image is not simply a way to collate celebrity images, but is a method through which vidders communicate an analysis of the individual's celebrity status and representation. However, as argued earlier, the vid form allows for an emotional intensity that communicates something of the vidder's fascination with these celebrities and intense regard for the celebrity in question. RP vids directly addresses the celebrity image as a construct, but like Cornell and *Rose Hobart*, there is also a degree of infatuation or fascination with the stars who are the subject of these vids. As with all vids, RP vids rely on their audiences' ability to rapidly decode the associations

created between shots and song lyrics; these carefully-chosen juxtapositions use the lyric to spark a recontextualisation of the image. As re-presentations of representations, vids have the potential to affirm or challenge a public image or dominant reading of a text through an argument constructed in sound and image.

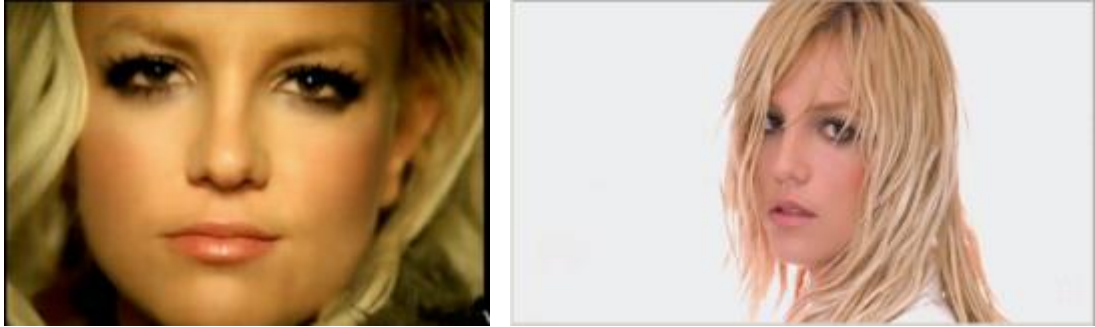
RP vids occupy a middle ground between the invocation of a real person behind a star image, and the image as constructed through media texts. Where character-based vids construct a space in which a fictional person can be imagined as possessing emotional depth and complexity beyond the allowances of their narrative context (as discussed in Chapter Five), RP vids use the same codes and structures to suggest that stars – known only through their media texts – possess similar qualities. Indeed, this form can be used to question aspects of the celebrity's public persona, to speculate about their emotional authenticity, and to collect together the texts which constitute their star image.<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Gray argues that vids 'can work as highlighters and underliners, plotting a course through a *narrative* and leaving tracks for others to follow' (2010: 154, emphasis added); in contrast, RP vids plot a course through a public figure's career and highlight elements of their star image.



**Figure 27**, Britney Spears: 'shamless' but defiant; clip from 'Piece of Me' official music video, image taken from *Piece of Me* (obessive24, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Unlike the notable (non-vid) evaluations of celebrity *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (Todd Haynes, 1987) and *Rock Hudson's Home Movies* (Mark Rappaport, 1992), RP vids are not typically made with footage created by the vidders: the soundtracks provide framing and commentary, the images are exclusively the star's public representations.

If promotion and publicity are the controlled and uncontrolled making of the star image, Britney Spears has spent much of her career experiencing the tension between these two. Her 2007 single 'Piece of Me' was released amid well-publicised personal and legal troubles. The official music video is defiant; being a celebrity looks exciting (a central sequence shows Spears evading paparazzi with gal-pal decoys), and she looks happy, healthy, and stable as she addresses these issues by tearing down a fake tabloid spread (see Figure 27). In contrast, obsessive24's vid, also titled *Piece of Me* (2008), edits clips of the negative publicity to which the song refers together with Spears's own music videos (a hybrid category of promotion and works) to present something much less confident, much less certain than her official music video. Critically, however, it is also more sympathetic in that it argues for an authentic, vulnerable, and complex understanding of Spears. Many of the clips in this vid come from Spears's own music videos, particularly ones where she is a victim of paparazzi harassment (such as the video for 'Every Time'), but also includes lower-resolution television news footage and scans of court documents. This has the effect of laying out evidence for a jury of the audience: the song's lyrics quote a paraphrased version of the criticism levelled against Spears ('...that Britney's shameless') while the works and publicity that prompted that criticism are shown, creating what appears to be a more authentic confession. The tension found in blending the official promotion of Spears with the unofficial, uncontrolled tabloid imagery is part of the fascination that Spears holds for her audience, and is at the core of this vid.



**Figure 28**, left: final image of official music video; right: final image of *Piece of Me* (obsessive24, 2008).

As proposed in my Introduction, the lyrics of the song ‘Piece of Me’ are used to caption the vid’s sequence of images in order to suggest a particular range of interpretations; in this case, using Spears’s own words to caption an alternate interpretation of her public image. There is a haunting effect of the official video in the re-made one, particularly in the final shots which offer different conclusions to the song’s rebuttal. The official video (see Figure 28, left) finishes with a close-up on Spears’s face as the singer stares directly into the camera: her slight sneer, the dramatic lighting, and her carefully coiffed hair and polished make-up are designed to leave the viewer with the impression that Spears can offer a convincing rebuttal to her detractors. Obsessive24 ends the vid with a much different version of Spears (see Figure 28, right): the vid’s final clip redeploys an official image of Spears in character as a victim – from the music video for her single ‘Every Time’ – to stand in for her real-life troubles, re-establishing Spears as vulnerable. In this shot, she is positioned lower in the frame and in a longer shot that emphasises the stringy hair that partially covers her face, against a white background, and with her body turned away from the camera. With wide eyes and mouth slightly open, she looks as if she has experienced some manner of trauma, and therefore is – the vid argues – more accurate to the ‘real’ Spears that those who have watched her might extrapolate from the publicity she (unwittingly) generated.



Figure 29, *Tightrope* (sweetestdrain, 2010): examining Adam Lambert's celebrity.

To offer another example, Adam Lambert's appearance on the eighth season of reality competition series *American Idol* (FOX, 2002-present) was overshadowed when prominent right wing talk show *The O'Reilly Factor* (FOX News Channel, 1996-present) broadcast photos of him kissing a man (see Figure 29, centre). Lambert came second in the competition, possibly because of his rumoured sexuality (he confirmed his orientation after the competition ended), but nevertheless earned a recording contract. *Tightrope* (sweetestdrain, 2010) uses Janelle Monáe's song 'Tightrope' to propose an imagined internal monologue for Lambert during his rise to fame, concerning the constant performance required to live semi-closeted in the public eye. The song's lyrics describe the struggle to negotiate a public identity through positive and negative reactions (e.g. 'When you get elevated / They love it or they hate it'). Though the songs of Lambert's first album have similar themes, the use of an external source evokes the sense of a less controlled, less censored authentic inner life of a celebrity. As a method of writing the life of Adam Lambert, this vid uses the media texts which construct his star image to confirm (or affirm) his public narrative. Reality television genres complicate Dyer's categories: as a form of television, the transformation of private citizen to celebrity within the narrative arc of a reality series can interact with all four categories within single segments, not to mention across episodes. *Tightrope*, however, includes more than *American Idol*, containing music video clips and promotional appearances produced after the series.

Many of the clips were selected through careful re-watching of the reality series, but including other footage more critical of Lambert gives a broader context to the balancing act described in the vid, as captioned by the lyrics ('Some calling me a sinner/ Some calling me a winner'). The collection of these contextualising clips is the result of the vidder's extensive research, and is comprised of performance sequences, 'candid' behind-the-scenes clips from the reality series, public appearances, and televised commentary on and parodies of his costuming excesses. These texts are subjected to the same kind of close reading as fictional texts. Figure 29, far right image, shows a much different response to Lambert than the centre image – representing, as with the first shot of *Rose Hobart*, a diegetic audience for the star under examination. However, unlike Cornell's film, this representation of an audience within the vid is not an unrelated clip; the audience in the clip is responding to Lambert. Beyond clips from media appearances or *American Idol* itself which show Lambert's fans, the vid includes itself in that audience: the vid's first title card dedicates the work to a fellow fan, providing textual evidence that this fascination is shared, and that the vid form is a way to express that shared way of watching. Therefore, this vid's creation has a purpose (a utility) in sharing with others the visual pleasures of Lambert's public persona. In contrast to vids made from fictional narrative source material, *Piece of Me* and *Tightrope* are not made from clips found on any box set release: these are interventions made by vidders into the media which fascinates them as they re-edit the lives of stars, as constructed out of television appearances.

Unlike fan fiction, which is limited only by the fan-writer's imagination, vids are limited by what source texts actually exist, re-presenting them in a context which



layers in additional (sometimes retrospective) meanings.<sup>9</sup> In RP vids, the scenes from the representations of a life become evidence in the vid's critical assessment of that star; but they also contribute to the star status of the individual by providing another piece of commentary/criticism. *Piece of Me* and *Tightrope* share a reflexive commentary on the degree to which the personal lives of these pop singers (primarily, the mental health of Spears and sexual orientation of Lambert) are a part of their celebrity image. This is more than the close watching of a single text, as with *Rose Hobart*, but is the result of careful consideration of an array of a celebrity's appearances, both within and beyond their works and official promotional activities. This intense spectatorship textually demonstrated in vids perpetuates the pleasures of watching star performances.

A growing group of vids focus on cult actors, individuals who are known for their various guest and starring appearances in non-leading roles; these vids make them stars of their own vids, and giving them the same treatment as bigger-name celebrities. The amount of television a fan must watch to notice recurring guest characters is not immense, but still requires an affectionate and focused spectatorship to achieve. This subgenre grants these familiar faces a measure of celebrity on their own merits, as they star in this tribute to their continuing employment. The intense viewing of fandom is not limited to narrative, but relies on audiences who are familiar with minutiae such as guest actors. Unlike the *Star Trek* vids of the previous chapter, or

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Soviet film editor Esfir Shub, a 'friend and coworker of Sergei Eisenstein and Lev Kuleshov' (Yeo 2004: 14), constructed *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) out of existing newsreels to reveal the tsarist regime's oppression of ordinary Russians. The film includes footage of servants waiting to clear a count's table. Bill Nichols notes the count's purpose in staging the sequence was 'to document his estate life' and therefore his wealth and power; when the clips appear in *Romanov Dynasty*, 'the document's moral value is reversed: it stands as a condemnation of what it once celebrated' (2001: 76).

the *Battlestar Galactica* character study vids in the next chapter, these actor-focused vids are not interested in the interiority of fictional characters, but in the star image of actors who are not usually considered to be ‘stars’.

British actor Mark Sheppard is featured in the vid *One Way or Another* (diannelamerc, 2010), cut to the Blondie song of the same name. A character actor best known for guest roles in North American television series<sup>10</sup>, he tends to play smug villains; these characters tend to express their adversarial position through verbal/intellectual sparring rather than in an action genre context. The application of the song’s lyrics – describing a search/stalking that experiences a reversal, as ‘One way or another I’m gonna find ya’ at the start of the song turns into ‘I’m gonna give you the slip’ by the last verse – refer to the frequency at which Sheppard’s character is either pursuing or being pursued by main characters. This is typically in a narrative in which Sheppard’s character appears to hold power over the protagonists but is outfoxed at the last minute. This language of pursuit is playfully echoed in the vid’s textual demonstration of the vidder’s (and audience’s) pursuit of Sheppard through his career; in the vid he seems poised to escape, not from police custody, but to his next guest appearance. The song promises ‘I’m gonna get ya’; like Joseph Cornell’s possession of Rose Hobart’s image, Sheppard’s audience can likewise dominate and manipulate copies of his appearances.

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<sup>10</sup> Including guest appearances in: *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002), *Sliders* (FOX, 1995-2000), *The Practice* (ABC, 1997-2004), *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *JAG* (NBC/CBS, 1995-2005), *The Invisible Man* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2000-2001), *Charmed* (WB 1998-2006), *Firefly* (FOX, 2002), *Jake 2.0* (UPN, 2003-2004), *Las Vegas* (NBC, 2003-2008), *Monk* (USA Network, 2002-2009), *Without A Trace* (CBS, 2002-2009), *Medium* (NBC/CBS, 2005-2011), *Bionic Woman* (NBC, 2007), *In Plain Sight* (USA Network, 2008-2012), *The Middleman* (ABC, 2008), *NCIS* (CBS, 2003-present), *Burn Notice* (USA Network, 2007-2013), *Chuck* (NBC, 2007-2012), *White Collar* (USA Network, 2009-2014), *CSI: NY* (CBS, 2004-2013), *Warehouse 13* (Syfy, 2009-present), *Doctor Who* (BBC, 2005-present), *Prime Suspect* (NBC, 2011-2012); recurring roles in *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), *Supernatural* (WB/CW, 2005-present) and *Leverage* (TNT, 2008-2012); and two characters on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-present) in episodes aired seven years apart. He is sometimes credited as Mark A. Sheppard.

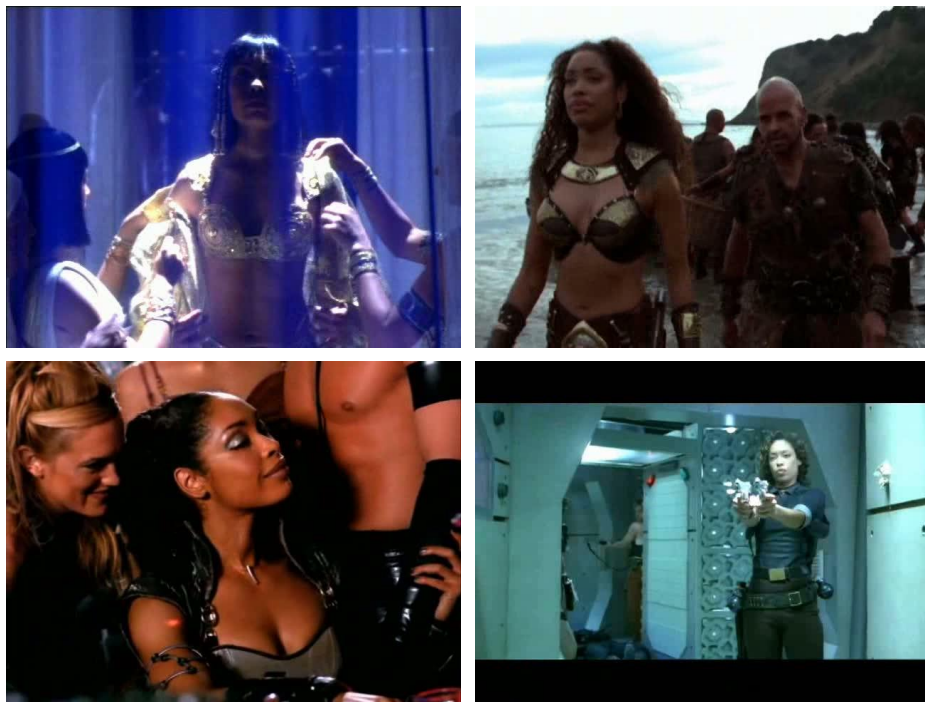


**Figure 30**, *One Way or Another* (diannelamerc, 2010): final sequence, featuring Mark Sheppard. The black frame is present because the vid preserves the various aspect ratios of the source material.

The vid closes with a reverse-shot sequence from an episode of *Burn Notice* (USA Network, 2007-2013) in which his bank robber mastermind is being arrested; his laughter (Figure 30, left) is because the getaway vehicle has been destroyed (the explosion in the background). However, the final shot of the vid (Figure 30, right) shows him looking off-screen, with a more considered glance as he appears to be already planning his next move. The ‘real’ Mark Sheppard is not as much a concern in this vid as the pleasures of being reminded of his frequent appearances in different series: as a familiar face, in clips where he is in the frame (or shares a reverse-shot edit) with recognisable cast members serving as a reminder of his ubiquity. For the audience, Sheppard’s appearance in a guest role brings a particular set of narrative expectations. In this, the individual characters matter less than the trope of his appearance. The vid creates a sequence of images out of many narratives that replicates his typical single-episode character; whether or not this narrative analysis applies to each specific instance, the accumulation makes a convincing case. *One Way or Another* takes pleasure in recognising Sheppard’s typecasting and then demonstrating (using the clips as evidence) this tendency in operation.

The next example, *Brick House* (Gwyneth, 2010), is made up from clips taken from many different screen appearances by Gina Torres. As with *One Way or Another*, the vid includes clips from many different series, but rather than these series being the subject of the work, *Brick House* vids something less tangible: an appreciation for the

cool strength and power of Torres's television appearances across genres. The Commodores song used as the vid's soundtrack includes lyrics like 'She's the one, the only one/ who's built like an Amazon'; the vid adopts the 'Amazon' label as inspiration to examine how Torres's various roles construct a star image that can creditably be captioned as Amazonian. This navigates some of the same territory as *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (see next section), concerning the issues of representing a woman as attractive and active at the same time.



**Figure 31**, *Brick House* (Gwyneth, 2010): opening, introducing Gina Torres as the subject of the vid. This sequence follows a montage of desiring male gazes directed at a then-unseen Torres. Like *One Way or Another*, some of the vid's clips appear letterboxed.

The vid begins with over a dozen reaction shots from different characters in several series – mostly men but also women – who share similar desiring looks, all of which are directed at someone as yet unseen. The vid then cuts (see Figure 31, top left) to Torres as Cleopatra in *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Renaissance Pictures/Universal TV, 1995–2001), being partially undressed. Similar to the strategy used by Cornell at start of *Rose Hobart*, this opening constructs a relationship between Torres as the

subject of the vid and the audience actively engaged in watching these many fragments of her career. The sequence continues with three clips of Torres in roles from different series. In each shot, though in different ways, she is active (see Figure 31): walking away from or leading a man in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (Renaissance Pictures/Universal TV, 1995–1999), ogling a man’s bare torso then sharing a smile with the woman on her other side in *Cleopatra 2525* (Renaissance Pictures, 2000–2001), and (fully clothed) wielding a pair of guns in *Firefly* (FOX, 2002). From then on, Torres dominates the vid, as clips alternate between images of Torres as a figure of desire and as an agent of action (or sometimes, both at the same time).

The vid, therefore, becomes a space in which the actress’s star image mediates her objectification (as an ‘exotic’ woman of colour, dressed in revealing costumes) because she dominates all but a few of the clips that follow this initial sequence. The majority of the clips feature Torres in motion, moving herself though the frame or her gaze towards other characters. However, in the absence of narrative context for the vid’s clips of physical combat, of calmly confident self-presentation, and of seduction, what remains is a positive lyrical affirmation (‘She’s mighty mighty’) supported by clips which provide textual evidence of her power. The lyrics are somewhat subverted in order to describe empowerment, redirecting lines such as ‘She knows she’s built and knows how to please/ Sure enough to knock a strong man to his knees’ to a critical position that equally notices the roles she plays – strong women in control of themselves and, frequently, those around them – and constructs a possible space for identification as well as desire.

The vid ends with a shot of Torres from her (then-) latest recurring role, a more restrained (and clothed) role as a partner in a law firm in the series *Suits* (USA

Network, 2011-present). This can be read in various ways, simultaneously: as a career maturation in which she leaves behind the rather more camp performances of her earlier appearances in science fiction/fantasy, the shot tilts up from her feet to her face to show all of her conservative pantsuit (in contrast with the science fiction club wear of *Cleopatra 2525*) and as an intertextual joke in which fans who know Torres's past work can read a potential for the same exuberant personality behind the suit. Significantly, this final clip follows two in which Torres is shown in hand-to-hand combat; another reading is that her movement down the hall is towards another kind of confrontation. These are not mutually exclusive, as all meanings may be inferred and co-exist without conflict. As a work that responds to the star image of a cult actress, this vid performs the pleasures of noticing representation, and to give this woman of colour a starring role in a fan-created overview of her appeal.

The difference between Adam Lambert and Britney Spears vids and these actor-focused multifandom vids is that the vids which use media images of big-name celebrities are explicitly addressing that star's public image, while the subjects of cult actor vids are less famous. The cult actors are presented as actors, in their various roles, not in their various public performances of 'themselves'. The intense fascination fans have in these actors is not a fascination for their personal lives, but in the pleasure the fans have in following these actors through their careers, or in identifying their casting across media texts. *Rose Hobart* offers an interesting precedent to actor-focused vids, which blur the lines between RP and multifandom vids, when the focus is the actor or actress. The performance of this intense, fascinated viewership is evident when genre is considered: *One Way or Another* demonstrates that Sheppard's typecasting has been featured across several genres. The fascination demonstrated in

*Brick House* is with Torres's physical attributes as much as her acting ability, but takes pleasure in demonstrating that her presence on American television – in roles where the colour of her skin is apparent, but not a vital point of her characterisation – has not gone unnoticed.

These close readings of celebrities' and actors' works demonstrate a fascination with star images and performance, and with what can be accomplished through the manipulation of media texts. For Rose Hobart herself, however, the other categories of media texts which contribute to the star image are lost to the contemporary viewer, meaning her works are the only way we know her. The film *Rose Hobart* presents a version of her star image without any biographical inflection or breadth of critical responses to her career; indeed, the narrow focus that makes it a compelling text increases the unknowability of its subject as time passes and her context is forgotten. Unlike RP or actor-focused vids, which are about translating the distance of celebrity representations to a more intimate fan-produced version of that star image, the intensity of Cornell's gaze reduces Hobart into a scopophilic object. The actor-focused vid is a moving image version of a scrapbook, from many sources, selected with different degrees of critical – and perhaps curatorial – engagement with the clips. These vids are as much about the creation and maintenance of cult stardom as they are about the intense scrutiny and dedication required to notice and clip all these actors' guest appearances. RP and actor-focused vids are both vid genres about paying close attention to the individuals in question, and sharing the pleasures and fascinations of this mode of spectatorship with fellow fans.

### **Fascination with Bodies: Desire, Spectacle, and Identification**

This section is about the centrality of bodies in the vid form. A focus on bodies is common to all vids – vids make meaning out of looks and gestures, and those looks and gestures are performed by bodies – but this focus is particularly apparent in multifandom vids. This particular regard for performers' bodies is not necessarily related to the individuals' own star images, but to a way of watching that is an intense, scopophilic, and highly engaged form of viewership that Coppa argues is typical of fandom. Her example, *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005), is one of several variations of a subgenre of multifandom vids that reflects and creates a spectacle of bodies.<sup>11</sup> This is not only about carnal objectification but also about the pleasures of viewing bodies in action, and the overlapping viewer motives of desire and identification which ultimately point to the complexities of understanding the vid form as exploring the female gaze. This critical looking as a form of fascination is a forthright statement about desire/pleasure, and textual evidence of the ways fans watch films and television programmes. Rather than a tension between (erotic) desire and identification, the multifandom vids in question are comfortably ambivalent in their presentation of silenced bodies: these are open texts in which the evacuation of narrative encourages an easily mobile and unfixed relationship between the viewer's potential desire for and/or identification with the visual spectacle they present.

While a vid's song may be edited by the vidder, this will be a cut for length and not a remix: for example, a verse that would belabour the vid's point may be cut for a

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<sup>11</sup> In addition to *Fannish Taxonomy*, multifandom vids in which bodies are displayed for the viewer include: *Smut* (Mary Van Deusen, ca. 1985-1990), *I Think I'm A Clone Now* (Z Team, 1992), *Men in Tights* (Perri, 2000), *Candyman* (jagwriter78, 2008), *Girl 4 All Seasons* (Foomatic, 2008), *Take it Off* (greensilver, 2009), *On the Prowl* (sisabet and sweetestdrain, 2010), *Pornstar Dancing* (Jayne L., 2011), and *Hook Shot* (kuwdora, 2012). The framework of desire is largely made explicit by the vids' titles, which are derived from their song's titles and therefore hint at the vids' contents and focus.



vid, as it is the image that is being vided (as the subject of the transformation), not the song (a tool or mechanism to enact this transformation). Bereft of their diegetic and non-diegetic music, sound effects, noise, and most importantly, dialogue, the clips used in vids are effectively muted: with words and music gone, only gestures are left. As argued elsewhere in this thesis, in this new context the significance of actors' glances and gestures may be reframed to augment a subtext of romantic interest, as with slash vids (see Chapter Three), or collected to condense and intensify a particular actor's performance, as with character study vids (see Chapter Five). With these two other vid genres, clips are chosen to reference the clip's narrative context: an isolated gesture has meaning in the vid because it signifies a relationship between characters, or is indicative of a point of character development.

However, focusing too completely on vids as responses to narratives – either the fictional narratives of film and television, or the narratives created alongside celebrities' star images – leaves out the *visual* aspect of the vid form. Vids are made of fragments isolated from the usual narrative information; as argued throughout this thesis, like a series of moving snapshots, the intelligibility of a vid relies on the viewer's knowledge of the clips' source context. In circumstances where this knowledge is not available or necessary, as with a vid made from an unfamiliar text or multifandom vid that combines several texts, it is the moving images themselves which are the front line of meaning-making. Their recombination does not automatically ask a vid's audience to reconsider the finer details of a specific story, or to examine character development or relationships; instead, such vids are often about how the images themselves are watched in the context of other images (also present in the vid). This chapter argues that the potential distance created by some vid genres between images

and the narratives they originally convey reproduces a form of media viewership particular to fandom audiences. To account for vids solely in terms of narrative denies the fascination with moving images expressed through the form. Multifandom vids in particular demonstrates a mode of spectatorship that is a media-literate and actively analytical, capable and willing to identify and share that which is pleasurable, spectacular, erotic, and fascinating in and about film and television.

Indeed, in *all* vids the effect of muting the clips leads to an enhanced focus on camera movement and actor movement within the frame, and effective vidders take this motion into account when choosing clips, as narrative significance is not the sole criteria for selection. The vast majority of vids that I have screened during this research project avoid using so-called ‘talky face’ clips; that is, clips in which characters are shown speaking. The benefit of using such clips is in their direct reference to the source material, permitting the vid to (mutely) repeat an important piece of dialogue in the service of the vid’s (re-)construction of that narrative moment. However, this arrests the vid’s pacing as it forces the viewer to lip-read and puzzle out the significance of that dialogue, if the moment is not sufficiently iconic for that viewer to recognise.<sup>12</sup> In the vid form, therefore, the clips’ utility as *image* is predominant: this removal of dialogue and emphasis on gestures, glances, and movement both within the frame and of the camera emphasises the visual, the spectatorial, and the representational aspects of a vid’s video source material. This is why the role of a vid’s song is so vital: it captions (narrates) the vid’s images in order to suggest a range of meanings in which to read each clip’s inclusion.

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<sup>12</sup> *All Coming Back to Me Now* (see Chapter Three) uses a ‘talky-face’ clip from *Search for Spock* (‘your name is Jim’); the vid hinges on that moment (Spock’s recall) and its exclusion would be noticeable.

Vids' emphasis on images separated from sound, and on bodies separated from speech, presents those bodies to the viewer as images primarily *to be looked at*. Beyond this formal construction, these are images separated from narrative. Two primary questions that guide this chapter, in the context of re-using images, are about who is doing the looking, and where this looking is happening. Editing a vid is about the careful re-watching of a film or series, therefore a vid arguably preserves certain aspects of the gaze of the vidder, and by extension, of the viewer as well. Multifandom vids preserve that gaze as it moves across several different television and film sources. As vidders and vidfans tend to be women (see Introduction) this gaze is a *female gaze* (cf. Gamman and Marshment, 1988); as the subjects of this gaze are both men and women, this is arguably frequently a queer female gaze insofar as it describes women casting a desiring gaze at other women.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of '*to-be-looked-at-ness*' is drawn from Laura Mulvey's influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' ([1975] 2004); this essay argues that women in classic Hollywood cinema are the passive (sexualised) subjects of an active (desiring) male gaze. Whilst a psychoanalytic framework underpins Mulvey's work, this chapter does not strive to engage with psychoanalysis itself. However, as Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment note, 'the notion of a "male gaze" as dominant in all mainstream genres has since become something of an orthodoxy' in the years following the publication of Mulvey's essay (1988: 5). Therefore, as the gendering of (and assumptions surrounding) spectatorship, objectification, desire, and identification form a significant part of this chapter it would be remiss to ignore this theorisation of

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<sup>13</sup> I acknowledge conflating biological sex and performative gender in a binary is reductive and not uniformly accurate. However, for brevity's sake I use 'woman' and 'female' interchangeably and include trans\* identities as an opposition to the cisgendered male gaze assumed by Mulvey. ('Cisgender' is the current term for a non-trans\* experience of sex and gender.)

the gaze (who is looking) where my primary concern is representation (who/what is being looked at). My argument is not directly about patriarchy or ego, but about the collected images of desire and fascination in vids that densely edit together film and television clips. The blatant fetishisation that occurs in the desire/identification type of multifandom vids happens at the hands of a community which is female/feminist, and subverts the uniformity of the male gaze.

Mulvey's argument proposes that classic Hollywood cinema divides viewing along a male/active, female/passive split, where 'in their traditional exhibitionist role', female characters:

...are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motiff [sic] of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. ([1975] 2004: 841)

Women are therefore forced to be merely images, bereft of agency and entirely subjected to the 'male gaze' of narrative cinema. Mulvey argues that scopophilia, 'in which looking itself is a source of pleasure', is a fundamental part of film audiences' relationship with cinema images. This is a safe place in which the conventions of mainstream cinema provide the viewer with 'a hermetically sealed world [...] indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic phantasy' (Mulvey [1975] 2004: 839). The correction to this, Mulvey argues, is for women's avant-garde filmmaking to free the camera apparatus and the gaze of the audience from their twinned subjection to the male-dominated gaze 'within the screen illusion' ([1975] 2004: 847) in hopes that awareness

of the filmic apparatus and critical readings would expose the illusion of conventional narrative film. However, Gamman argues, such a hard-line position means Mulvey's ultimate goal is 'the "destruction" of all the old pleasures associated with Hollywood' (1988: 24). The vid form and other re-uses of moving images work from the source material as it has been shot – altering that screen illusion, rather than shooting new images – showing that 'the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions' (Mulvey [1975] 2004: 847), and similarly monolithic conventions of representation in television's fictional narratives, are malleable and open to subversion. However, while vids are interventions into screen illusions, they are not the 'unacceptably puritanical' (Gamman 1988: 24) moves away from visual pleasures. Therefore, vids which gather clips under a rubric of desire/identification offer models of viewing that twist the psychoanalytic model of visual pleasure. Mulvey's blanket characterisation of 'woman as image; man as bearer of the look' ([1975] 2004: 841) is inverted in erotic vids, which locate decontextualised images of men as the subject of a desiring gaze. The 'largely female' (Jenkins 1992: 1) fannish context means it is reasonable to assume it is a female audience and set of producers who are engaged in fetishising the male form.

*A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005) is a spectacle of male, female, and cross-dressed bodies engaged in a variety of actions/poses all organised under a loose rubric of 'hotness'; following the vid's song, 'Hot Hot Hot' by Buster Poindexter, the vid proposes that hotness is what the vid's audience finds attractive. In this way, vids let vidders enact a desiring gaze of their own. However, the psychoanalytic truism that a fetish substitutes for a lost object is not necessarily applicable in multifandom vids which enact the pleasure of watching bodies. Coppa notes: 'for many fannish vidders, fetishism is not associated with lack and loss, but

with surplus and pleasure. ...[*Fannish Taxonomy*] invites its female spectator to a veritable orgy of scopophilia and stages, as its playfully scientific name suggests – sufficient emotional and visual distance to qualify as fetishistic’ (2009: 107). The opening sequence makes it clear this vid is about the pleasures that its viewer may find in film and television. The vast majority of the clips feature men; however, the vid’s first few clips are a montage of dancing women from different sources. This is followed by a trio of clips, see Figure 32, starting with a male stripper (the first man in the vid), followed by a live performance clip of the boy band N’Sync, and cutting directly to a close-up of a young woman<sup>14</sup> whose gaze to the left of the frame signals her appreciation for the two preceding clips.



**Figure 32,** *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness* (Clucking Belles, 2005): pre-credits sequence wherein a male dancer and boy band (left and centre) perform for an appreciative female spectator (right).

The expression on her face – she is clearly looking at something which pleases her – appears to be an intentional substitution for the gaze of the women in the audience, replicating their expressions as they watch the vid (and, indeed, the original sources for these clips). It is important in this sequence that the stripper and boy band are each performers: while the majority of clips that follow are not so reflexive, this set-up establishes that the men shown subsequently – for the purposes of the vid – performing *for* their female audience, just as the male stripper and boy band have stereotypically female audiences. After the credits, the vid is organised into sequences

<sup>14</sup> This is possibly Eliza Dushku.

of ‘hotness’ tropes, each segueing into the next; for example, a montage sequence of sword fights moves to a collection of clips in which men tip their hats<sup>15</sup> with a clip in which a bowing sword-fighter tips his hat. Like RP vids which ‘plot a course’ (cf. Gray 2010: 154) through vidders’ reading of a star image, multifandom vids similarly document a form of fascinated spectatorship that reads across narratives and leaves tracks for the vid’s audience to follow.



**Figure 33**, *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness*: the ‘plain t-shirts are “hot”’ sequence. Also note that as with *One Way or Another* and *Brick House*, this multifandom vid uses source material with different aspect ratios.

It is tempting to find in vids a feminist liberation of the image of the body from a controlling, possessive male gaze; gender roles are neatly swapped as active women

<sup>15</sup> This is typically used to acknowledge an off-screen female character; this sequence includes a pair of clips where the hat-tip is directed at a woman within the frame, arguably further constructing the vid’s audience as female by aligning the men’s diegetic gazes with off-screen women (eg. the vid watcher).

collect images of passive men for a female viewer's visual pleasure. In addition to watching pleasurable bodies, there is also the visual pleasure of watching a vid's staging of pleasurable tropes, as represented in these bodies. A full accounting of the numerous actions, scenarios and tropes included in *Fannish Taxonomy* is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, as they refer to conventions and clichés in media fandom (see Coppa 2009 for a more exhaustive list); a portion of the pleasure generated in watching this work is in recognising these tropes *as* tropes, as a fulfilment of the kind of intense viewership typical of fandom. The range of references includes, costuming (for example, men in plain t-shirts; see Figure 33), degrees of undress and nudity, narrative tropes in which a hero loses power (imprisonment, confinement to psychiatric care, beatings/torture)<sup>16</sup>, men in make-up, sword fights, expressions of desire (embraces of various kinds) and seeing ensemble groups together (the team trope). In these sequences, the individual identities of the men represented are largely subsumed in these tropes; in Figure 33, the focus is on bodies wearing plain t-shirts, not star images.

The diverse source material of the vid is preserved in the varying quality of the clips, the changes in aspect ratio (Figure 33, swapping between widescreen and 4:3 within sequences) and the various station watermarks preserved on TV-rips. In Figure 32, for example, watermarks include the cable channel TeenNick and network FOX; this suggests fannish attractions exist across many channels, as well as in films and 'quality' television. Therefore, the fetishes of *Taxonomy* are about the abundance of aesthetically pleasing forms, as well as manifesting traces of fannish textual analysis

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<sup>16</sup> Coppa makes the important point that these sequences respond to narrative tropes and clichés: 'Straitjackets are popular on television, if not in hospitals; similarly, characters in prison tend to be found literally behind bars' (2009: 109).



(cf. Brunsdon and Spigel 2008: 8). Vids of this type are visual orgies that span decades and draw upon a sizable archive, reproducing what may be a lifetime's fascination with media and intense engagement with its tropes. Functioning partially as a scrapbook of past and current attractions, and a catalogue of sources not fully explored, the massively multifandom vid offers both the mastery of a subject area and the opportunity to fill in gaps in one's knowledge; the repetition of this form updates and reinforces the canon of attraction.

There are many vids which focus on the presentation of attractive male bodies, but the vid form is not limited to a simple inversion of women watching men: many other vids present female bodies.<sup>17</sup> Underlying these issues is the question of what it means for a woman to watch other women; I will examine the issue with reference to Jackie Stacey's (1988) non-psychoanalytic response to Mulvey's essay to discuss the overlap of desire and identification, in a model that suggests the pleasures of such spectatorship is not essentially masochistic. According to Demos, Mulvey's essay was the 'signal text' (2010: 50) guiding Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978).<sup>18</sup> This video art piece is an attempt to demonstrate the patriarchal structure inherent in *Wonder Woman* (Warner Bros. Television, 1975-1979), as

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Skud, 2010) discussed in the Introduction, further examples of female-focused multifandom vids include: *Girl 4 All Seasons* (Foomatic, 2008), *Glorious* (such heights, 2009), *Around the Bend* (Danegen, 2010), *Tightrope* (such heights, 2011), and *Hook Shot* (Kuwdora, 2012), which arguably reveal the pleasures of watching attractive women in active roles. *Tightrope* uses the same song as the Adam Lambert RP vid mentioned earlier. Vidding the same song to different source material is a potentially fascinating avenue of inquiry.

<sup>18</sup> Demos cites this video as 'prefiguring' (2010: 2) current forms of moving image re-use, but its 1978-9 production date places it between Kandy Fong's first proto-vid slide show in 1975 and the first VCR vids of the early 1980s. Birnbaum claims that VCRs were not available, and she relied on friends with access to professional video recorders (Demos 2010: 4). Consumer video recorders were available 'as early as 1975' though only reached 25 percent of US households a decade later (Hilderbrand 2009: 36); Friedberg gives this figure as 20 percent as of 1985 ([2000] 2004: 917). Wasser (2001) discusses relative market shares in 1978 of Betamax and VHS formats. A 1985 profile of Birnbaum notes she abandoned her critiques of television by that point because 'the proliferation of home video equipment has enabled almost anyone to create his or her own deconstructions' (Reidy 1985: 61).

indicative of the media's unconscious tendency to oppress. Birnbaum's video work in this era is described by Robin Reidy as 'dense video and aural collages that examined as well as undermined television' (1985: 61). However, Birnbaum's piece has lost its critical edge over the years, meaning that it fails to convey its analysis: contemporary audiences of the video piece see Wonder Woman (Linda Carter) but not her systems of oppression (Demos 2010). This is an issue with the contradictory signification of Wonder Woman herself, who was created as a female Superman, an 'attempt to join feminine strength and power with allure and beauty' leaving her a contested figure 'either as a feminist icon, celebrated for her superior abilities, physical power and independence, or as a sex object, denigrated as a crass product of commercial exploitation' (Demos 2010: 19). The 'rapid fire editing' of the piece 'entirely eliminates the narrative from the original TV series, leaving only the fantasy element' and results in a visual spectacle of special effects disconnected from purpose or context (Meigh-Andrews 2006: 172). Unlike a vid, Birnbaum manipulated the audio source as well as video. Similarly perhaps, the vid *Titanium* (Gianduja Kiss, 2013) takes the same clips that Birnbaum argued were symptomatic of oppression in *Wonder Woman* and re-presents them, with additional clips from the series, as an affirmation of independent female agency. The fascination of the image endures, not the anti-television criticism.<sup>19</sup>

Demos refutes Birnbaum's own assertion that *Technology/Transformation* is a resounding blow against sexualised representation of women, as this interpretation is perhaps guilty of 'overestimating the masochistic nature of women's identifying with

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<sup>19</sup> *Titanium* shows Wonder Woman's interaction with femininity (in clothing stores, rejecting men's advances) as something she *overcomes* to be herself. The vid's criticism is levelled at a broader cultural context, rather than the specific series or medium. However, this critique operates in tension with the vid's otherwise uncomplicated presentation of Wonder Woman's costume.

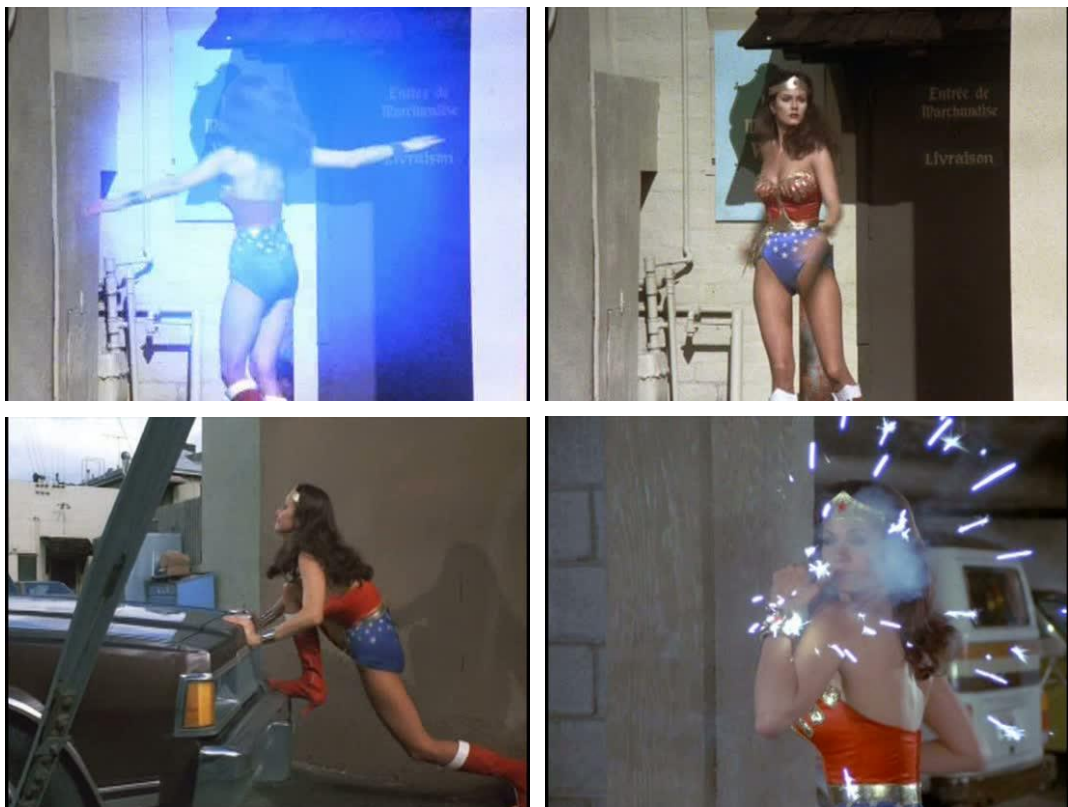
the forces of sexual objectification and commodification, or in dismissing the transformative energy that Birnbaum's video contains and unleashes as part of a tradition of oppositional and emancipatory image-making' (Demos 2010: 73-74). Perhaps one difficulty with using this iteration of psychoanalysis to read works which re-use moving images is signaled in the title of Mulvey's essay: neither Birnbaum's work nor vids are the 'narrative cinema' of Hitchcock's Hollywood. The removal of narrative from image evacuates the original subject position, though Demos (2010: 20) notes Birnbaum's consternation that women and children would uncritically enjoy the (to her) obvious sexual objectification of Wonder Woman, and not see the structures of patriarchal oppression. This creates a problem of ambiguity/ambivalence in its 'affirmative collusion with its object of critique' (Demos 2010: 6); the final work shows only the image of Wonder Woman, not the series *Wonder Woman*, that is, the narrative structures from which the character was taken. Demos adds the caveat that Birnbaum's work is 'not a simple attack [since] an element of fascination remains evident' (2010: 49). The video is a success of feminist video art not because it critiques an oppressive representation, but because it accidentally releases that representation from its structures of oppression.

Michael Pigott, in discussing found footage films of Joseph Cornell and Ken Jacobs, notes a 'key characteristic' of that work is the 'removal of structures in order to reveal or release something contained, or latent, within the footage' (2013: 10); in this context it is arguable that Birnbaum unintentionally released Wonder Woman herself, or at least the notion of gendered representation, by removing the structures of narrative. The vid *Titanium* communicates the positive, affirmative aspects of Wonder Woman because it does not attempt to constrain the representation. The vid presents

the series in a more positive (unambiguously feminist) light than Birnbaum's work, with impassioned vocal performance (by the singer Sia, in a song by DJ David Guetta) and lyrical affirmation of emotional strength – 'I'm criticized, but all your bullets ricochet/ You shoot me down, but I won't fall/ I am titanium' – matched with clips of Wonder Woman blocking bullets with her bracelets and other super-powered feats of physical strength. These take the song's metaphor literally, making this image of Wonder Woman overcome the limitations of the series to create a version of the character who is aware of her physical abilities and ability to overcome doubts and criticism levelled at her. What emerges is a possible way to successfully watch the series *Wonder Woman* without problematic narratives undermining what an image alone could *be made to* represent. The vid does not attempt to excuse or explain contradictory elements of the character's representation, but it takes the pleasurable images – a beautiful woman with superpowers, at the centre of her own narrative – and responds to the fascination such representations still hold for an audience.

*Technology/Transformation* 'eliminates the TV show's storyline and instead draws on the imagery for its own deconstructive, analytical purpose' (Demos 2010: 48), using clips from the television series as well as the opening credits song, manipulating both image and sound. According to Meigh-Andrews (2006), *Technology/Transformation* '...was one of the earliest video art tapes to appropriate broadcast television material as part of a critical strategy' (170); the repetition of clips in this work is apparently 'a simple multiple repeat-edit strategy to critique and deconstruct the fantasy TV programme, unlocking some of the assumptions behind the programme's message by highlighting and exaggerating its absurdity' (171). Meigh-Andrews does not explore these 'assumptions'; one assumption in episodic television,

taking John Ellis's (1982) work into consideration, is that an established scenario will repeat in the subsequent episodes. Ellis writes that the 'characteristic mode' of television narrative 'is not one of final closure or totalising vision; rather, it offers a continuous refiguration of events' (1982: 147). Birnbaum's response to *Wonder Woman's* structure as an episodic series strives to emphasise the cumulative impact of 'oppressive' special effects; the vidder Gianduja Kiss finds in the repetition an accumulation of *Wonder Woman's* good works, using the narrative repetition in episodes of the series as evidence of her constant use of superpowers to help others and thwart evil.



**Figure 34**, *Titanium* (Gianduja Kiss, 2013): transformation sequence, where *Wonder Woman's* transformation (top row) is followed by examples of physical strength and agility.

In neither work does the act of transformation refer to a specific narrative; instead, both address the issue of representation. Demos argues that Birnbaum's purpose in using the spinning sequences is to expose the betrayal of the television

series' feminist possibilities: Wonder Woman spins in isolation and achieves nothing, in an illusion of emancipatory female power (2010: 21). In *Titanium*, three different transformation clips are used, and are placed at the start of sequences which show Wonder Woman using her powers to deflect bullets, stop moving vehicles with seemingly-minimal effort, and perform other feats of strength (see Figure 34). As with Birnbaum's work, the narrative context for the action is removed and the clips are given a different purpose; however, unlike Birnbaum, Gianduja Kiss presents these clips in a causal sequence that justifies this action. Wonder Woman spins in order to transform, she transforms in order to use her powers, and then uses her powers to help people. The sequences are structured such that her spin begins at the end of the chorus, just as the word 'titanium' is heard, thereby captioning this motion (and subsequent transformation) as the moment where Wonder Woman is at her strongest. There is a forward motion and purpose to her actions: she is not trapped alone and struggling in an endless cycle of exploitation created by 'the manipulative spectacle of special effects' (Demos 2010: 21). *Titanium* also benefits from its temporal distance from the *Wonder Woman* series, as Carter's sometimes stiff and awkward performance as Wonder Woman has its own appeal; too, special effects that may once have seemed invasive or dishonest now appear harmless and primitive. However, this does not take into account the (retrospective) pleasure of watching bodies in action. As the special effects (as reproduced in *Technology/Transformation* and *Titanium* alike) seem to be mostly practical effects and some post-produced flashes of light, there is an authenticity (or, perhaps, fidelity) that can be read into a version of Wonder Woman that is an embodied, rather than computer-generated, performance.

*Titanium* ends with an extended sequence that commences at the climax of the song, showing Wonder Woman recruiting, training with and being rescued by various other women. One way to read this trajectory in the vid is that women within the series, upon meeting Wonder Woman, are inspired to fight alongside her; another possible (simultaneous) reading is that women watching the vid can similarly be included in *Wonder Woman's* feminist project. Significantly, the shot that immediately precedes this sequence is another clip of a spinning transformation; again, Wonder Woman is not 'continually spinning around in circles but getting nowhere' (Demos 2010: 21) but immediately after transforming, is shown running alongside Wonder Girl and other Amazons (see Figure 35).



**Figure 35,** *Titanium*: ending sequence, showing Wonder Woman with female characters, insisting on the character's role in a community of other women, rather than emphasising her isolation.

In this sequence, the many different female characters shown with Wonder Woman creates an invitation for the viewer to be her companion in her quest for

justice. In this, her costume takes on a different meaning: in the many clips, none of which repeat and therefore have the effect of being individual examples, the costume is only one element in a sequence which emphasises her interaction with the other female characters on screen. When taken in the context of her actions, the low-cut top, short skirts, and skin tight briefs do more than present the character as a sexualised spectacle/fetish: her interaction with other women within the frame (themselves in similar costumes) destabilises the singularity and limitation of her presentation as mere fetishised subject of a male gaze.

Working through the issue of the female spectator and the female gaze, Stacey (1988) writes of the ways that '*Desperately Seeking Susan* [(Susan Seidelman, 1985)] and *All About Eve* [(Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950)] tempt the woman spectator with the fictional fulfilment of becoming an ideal feminine other, while denying complete transformation by insisting upon differences between women' (129). In multifandom vids featuring women, the many different women exist in separate diegeses, and are not in conflict with each other. As they are not rivals, the vid connects and unites them, showing a group of women not narratively compelled to be in opposition for identification/affection of the audience. In multifandom vids, the fragmentation of larger narratives into isolated clips means the female characters are free from narrative, free from the arguments sustained by narrative resolution that might restrict their freedom, independence, desirability or suitability for identification.

Re-editing films and television series to remove narrative results in a concentration of bodily spectacle. For Birnbaum, this concentration was intended to condemn the spectacular visual presentation of Wonder Woman. In *Titanium*, a similar concentration is not intended to be about erotics alone, but has a more comfortable,



more confident approach to the fascination with the resulting sequence of spectacular moving images. Its spectacle is, additionally, one of representational affirmation. The multifandom vids which are primarily about active and desirable bodies enact the confident female gaze to look erotically (and unambiguously) at images of men and women alike. The interpretation of gazes cast by one woman at another is limited in psychoanalytic theory, which supports the 'rigid distinction between either desire or identification' and 'fails to address the construction of desires which involve a specific interplay of both processes' (Stacey 1988: 129). The narrative constraints on these characters can be significant, and knowledge of such constraints can add poignancy to seeing these women freed and in the company of others similarly unrestricted.

This section will finish with a discussion of the multifandom vid *On the Prowl*, as its explicit eroticism takes the vided body to an extreme of fetishistic scopophilia that reframes the male presence on screen as the sexual object of the female desiring gaze. The soundtrack of this vid, 'On the Prowl', features Lydia Lunch's vocals on a track by DJ group Blow-Up<sup>20</sup>; its lyrics are a clear statement of female erotic desire (and intention) as the song begins, 'I was thinking about picking up some/ Young boys...'. Mulvey's characterisation of 'woman as image; man as bearer of the look' ([1975] 2004: 841) is, as already argued, flipped in erotic vids; this is augmented in *On the Prowl* with its rapid montage of passive men who begin the vid showing off muscled torsos, but who very quickly are shown crying, bleeding, held captive, and finally tortured.<sup>21</sup> The hurt/comfort genre of fan works has a long history in media fandom (cf. Bacon-Smith 1992, S. Winters 2012): the 'hurts' can be psychological or

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<sup>20</sup> The vid exclusively credits Lydia Lunch, as does Winters (2012).

<sup>21</sup> None of the violence in the vid is explicitly sexual, nor does the vid include clips of pornography.

physiological, with the former represented in the vid by tears and the latter through the many instances of beatings, mutilation, and blood-stained faces. As a genre of fan fiction, 'hurt' is typically followed by 'comfort' – via emotional and/or physical support from another character – and is often a prelude to a romantic coupling. However, what makes this vid compelling is its subversion of the genre's norms: 'A fan watching "On the Prowl" might well expect all the hurt to be followed by comfort at perhaps the halfway point but is confronted with its persistent absence' (S. Winters 2012: 3.11). This use of and response to the genre and its tropes is part of a 'long history of self-reflexive meta in fan works' (ibid: 3.19). The vid's final shot, a brief clip of Marion (Karen Allen) kissing an injured Indy (Harrison Ford) in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981), provides a brief moment of comfort, referring at the last to a fulfilment of the trope and while denying its potential cathartic effect.

*On the Prowl* takes its examples of 'hurt' from mainstream and cult film and television.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, some, such as *The Princess Bride* (Rob Reiner, 1987), are

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<sup>22</sup> The clips are taken from: *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (Chris Weitz, 2009), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), *I, Robot* (Alex Proyas, 2004), *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (FOX, 2008-2009), *The Salton Sea* (D. J. Caruso, 2002), *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979), *Quantum Leap* (NBC, 1989-1993), *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000), *Doctor Who* (BBC, 2005-present), *The Outsiders* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1983), *Supernatural* (WB/CW, 2005-present), *Point Break* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1991), *Man on Fire* (Tony Scott, 2004), *Smallville* (WB/CW, 2001-2011), *Merlin* (BBC, 2008-2012), *The Matrix: Revolutions* (The Wachowski Brothers, 2003), *Say Anything* (Cameron Crowe, 1989), *The Boondock Saints* (Troy Duffy, 1999), *Burn Notice* (USA Network, 2007-2013), *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006), *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (Renaissance/Universal, 1995-1999), *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB/UPN, 1997-2003), *Farscape* (Nine Network/Sci-Fi Channel, 1999-2003), *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1987), *Bones* (FOX, 2005-present), *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010), *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002), *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), *Sherlock Holmes* (Guy Ritchie, 2009), *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *12 Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), *Terminator: Salvation* (McG, 2009), *The Covenant* (Renny Harlin, 2006), *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994), *Star Trek* (J. J. Abrams, 2009), *Due South* (CTV/CBS, 1994-1999), *Roadhouse* (Rowdy Herrington, 1989), *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (Starz, 2010), *Firefly* (FOX, 2002), *The Vampire Diaries* (CW, 2009-present), *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010), *Legend of the Seeker* (Renaissance Pictures/ABC, 2008-2010), *True Blood* (HBO, 2008-2014), *Torchwood* (BBC, 2006-2011), *Angel* (WB, 1999-2004), *The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kirshner, 1980), *The Da Vinci Code* (Ron Howard, 2006), *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006-2013), *Wiseguy* (CBS, 1987-1990), *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988), *Spider-Man* (Sam Raimi, 2002), *The Princess Bride* (Rob Reiner, 1987), *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005-present), *Stargate Atlantis* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), *Near Dark* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987), *China Beach* (ABC, 1988-1991), *Star Trek:*

considered children's viewing. This breadth reveals the prevalence of heroes in peril that arguably inspires the genre; moreover, the vid's many examples reveals the breadth of viewing necessary to construct such a work.<sup>23</sup> As in *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness*, the montage is grouped in sequences of tropes; for example, the pathos (or pathetic fallacy) of crying in the rain, close-up shots of actors expressing sadness or despair, of physical restraint, of torture involving blades, and even a sequence of religious angst. Throughout, male forms dominate the screen; however, while the vid's rapid succession of male protagonists 'command the stage' as a Mulveyan analysis would expect, no man shown in this vid either 'articulates the look [or] commands the action' (Mulvey [1975] 2004: 842). As with all vids, *On the Prowl* is a montage of silenced bodies, though this silencing is considerably more aggressive: mouths opened in (silent) screams are overridden by Lunch's breathy moans of 'And then I wanted more' (for example, see Figure 36, left). In addition to being silenced, these bodies are frequently alone in frame; occasionally there is a full shot where two men are at blows, but in close-up shots, decontextualised hands and arms emerge from outside the frame to act upon these isolated and passive bodies (see Figure 36, right). An argument could be made that the vid's unseen torturers are the vidders whose editing work 'commands the action', in reference to the well-established history in fan fiction (Bacon-Smith 1992, S. Winters 2012, Larsen and Zubernis 2012) of writing male characters into stories of pain and passivity for the pleasure of female readers.

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*Next Generation* (Paramount, 1987-1994), *Carnivàle* (HBO, 2003-2005), *The Invisible Man* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2000-2001), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (Gavin Hood, 2009), and *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981) (sweetestdrain 2010: n.p.).

<sup>23</sup> As Bacon-Smith found while investigating hurt/comfort, to her surprise, that a third of *Starsky and Hutch* episodes contained scenarios of 'injury or [...] threat of death to one of the two heroes, while the other worried or saved him' (1992: 258).



Figure 36, *On the Prowl* (sisabet and sweetestdrain, 2010): silenced screams, bloody faces, and passive bodies.

Indeed, this vid was an entry in the 2010 VividCon 'self-portrait' Challenge vidshow; this raises the question of who it is meant to represent: the vidders themselves (as fans, as women, as individuals comfortable expressing an affiliation with BDSM), fandom as a whole or in various formations (slash fandom, hurt/comfort writers and readers, vid fandom), or even as reflections within the vid of the repeated (and therefore, perpetuated) narrative trope of causing the hero pain. If *Rose Hobart* is Joseph Cornell's portrait of the actress, *On the Prowl* is a far less definable – though much more erotic – portrait of the operation of desire, manipulation, and power within screen representations, and of its understanding within media fandom.

Sarah Fiona Winters's (2012) examination of viewer responses to *On the Prowl*'s use of male bodies reveals certain disquieting truths about fans' comfort levels in accepting representations of bodies in pain. She addresses a message board discussion wherein fans expressed discomfort in recognising their pleasure at seeing hurt/comfort played out (in an intense, erotic fashion) while simultaneously acknowledging that they would find such imagery unconscionable were the genders to be reversed (S. Winters 2012). The freedom granted by adopting a scopophilic position does not provide a place of absolute comfort, and these comments recognise the escalation of objectification in the vid as both a staple of a long-standing mode of fannish engagement with texts, and a disquieting tendency within film and television. Katherine Larsen and Lynn S. Zubernis mention this vid in the context of fannish desire

and internalising shame, concluding that an explicit vid ‘allows both expression of genuine desire and the opportunity for validation, which is an important component of reducing shame’ (2012: 73). Accordingly, the path the vid constructs (cf. Gray 2010) is through the vid’s many source texts, coupling the song’s narrative of female sexual desire with a mode of spectatorship that identifies and fetishises these moments of passivity and pain when they appear in a narrative.

Among its various effects, *On the Prowl* is an effective demonstration of the ‘hurting hero’ trope, and as with all multifandom vids it poses broader questions about representation: in this case, how masculinity is depicted across a broad cross-section of fictional narratives. This vid troubles John Ellis’s definition of a televisual body as distinct from a cinematic one, as television’s ‘techniques of rapid cutting prevent the access of the gaze at the body being displayed’ (1982: 142). Televisual bodies are ‘hidden, made obscure by the heavy emphasis that broadcast TV gives to various kinds of close-up’ (Ellis 1982: 143); the vid, in turn, gathers these glancing looks into an object that promotes a sustained (and desiring) gaze across the whole vid. In the vid, filmic and televisual bodies are indistinguishable from each other, with both appearing in brief clips of equally-short duration. As with the elision of the medium-specificity of vids’ source material, there is a similar lack of distinction in its images. *On the Prowl* begins and ends with film clips (*The Twilight Saga: New Moon* [Chris Weitz, 2009], and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, respectively) and features a near-even split between film and television sources, with 32 of the vid’s 63 sources taken from films. The television sources are drawn from episodic network series as well as high-end ‘quality’ dramas, and these televisual bodies are therefore equally as able to be spectacular objects of a fetishised gaze as are filmic bodies. There are two separate pleasures at play in *On the*

*Prowl*: that of identifying the clips, and that of fetishistic scopophilia. The work done by the viewer in unpacking the vid's semiotic density is another way in which the form mediates critical detachment and fascination with images.

Mulvey's concerns about psychoanalytic readings of subtextual manifestations of patriarchy are less useful in analysing vids, because vids tend to unambiguously declare their meaning. Their interpretation requires an explication of context, rather than an examination of subtext. Vids are engaged in a play with subtexts in narrative and performance, which is a different kind of subtext than that which is uncovered through psychoanalysis. Vids take a position on the 'highly contradictory constructions of femininity in mainstream films' (Stacey 1988: 127), and television, by removing the narrative constraints that would condemn the (female) spectator's desiring gaze. In watching vids which collect representations of female characters being active, there is not an internal structural or narrative denial that refuses (or complicates) the desire and/or identification. Vids' clips are both the images themselves and also points of orientation that lead back to the source narrative; however, in multifandom vids that dislocate the images of bodies from their narratives, the images can replicate an erotic fascination while simultaneously re-creating representational norms.

### **Fascination with Genre**

The final form of fascination with images discussed in this chapter is a fascination with genre. The critical engagement of this kind of multifandom vid is based in the intense spectatorship of a given genre, focusing on its particular spectacle, and therefore creates a form of visual critical genre study. Two examples for this section draw on science fiction sources. *Starships!* (Bironic, 2012), is a very affectionate and intensely emotional view of science fiction, based around central images of the genre. *Seven*

*Nation Army* (Charmax, 2009) reframes the genre to create a fantasy version of its tropes and tendencies, underneath its more manifest examination of robot fiction. What genre-focused multifandom vids present to the viewer is an engagement with film and television genre, based in the pleasures of viewership: the fascination with, and identification of, the tropes, conventions, and tendencies of genre.<sup>24</sup>

A fascination with genre is related to, but separate from, the fascination with images of bodies that appear in other multifandom vids: genre-focused vids perform a variation on the scholarly genre study, collecting examples, and highlighting key works of a genre to a particular (potentially critical) end. As with desire/identification multifandom vids, the source clips have been muted for their re-purposing. A further similarity is in the clips' isolation from their source narrative. This isolation is less complete than perhaps with desire/identification multifandom vids because it is the total idea of the character (and their action in the frame) and by extension the whole source film/series that is being represented, rather than precise story elements or moments of character development.<sup>25</sup> Unlike vids that focus on pairings or characters, multifandom vids are not divided into well-defined categories. Multifandom vids can compare a set number of texts in detail, such as seven versions of organised robot antagonism in *Seven Nation Army*, or the comparison of four science fiction heroes from different series in *Boulevard of Broken Songs* (destina and barkley, 2007), or take on the expansive quality of massively multifandom vids such as *Starships!* that include

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<sup>24</sup> *Data's Dream* (GF & Tashery, 1994; remastered by Morgan Dawn, 2004) is a precedent for vids which address specific science fiction tropes, in this case, of sailing and flight. Other related vids include *Boulevard of Broken Songs* (destina and barkley, 2007), and *Space Girl* (Charmax, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> This is shifted somewhat in multifandom vids which focus on a single actor through various roles; however, since the actor is primary by virtue of being the subject of the vid and therefore their presence in the vid does not need to be further decoded – the 'game' of a multifandom vid about an actor is identifying the specific series/episodes and films, rather than the actors themselves.

clips from many times that number of sources.<sup>26</sup> The existence of this latter type of vid suggests that one of the pleasures of media viewership is the identification and comparison of different film and series, in both narrative and aesthetic terms. This is as much about *watching* broadly – recognising narrative and aesthetic/visual tropes across media – as it is about the interpretation of individual narratives.

The massively multifandom vid type – vids which include many sources, and tend to use clips for their iconicity, rather than to perform an analysis of a limited set of narratives – also displays a fan’s knowledge of a genre or subject area; inclusion of non-fannish sources indicate the vidders’ effort in researching and collecting relevant clips. Including mainstream and/or classic film references in a vid of this type makes an implicit statement about the vid’s sophistication (and by extension that of the vidder) as the work is not limited to a canon of cult or fan-favourite texts. Also, the more clips included, the greater the implication of the unlimited application of the vid’s recontextualisation. Fan-created wiki site Fanlore.org defines massively multifandom vids as ‘garbage can vids’ or ‘kitchen sink vids’, noting that these works can use source material which ‘may not necessarily be fannish in nature’ (n.p.).<sup>27</sup> Recognising multifandom vids as potentially including non-fannish clips is important in describing the complexity of this genre. *Starships!* includes the expected cult/fannish science fiction films and series, such as *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), and *Battlestar Galactica*, but also parodies such as *Spaceballs* (Mel Brooks, 1987) and the

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<sup>26</sup> *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Skud, 2010), analysed in my Introduction, is a further example of this kind of multifandom vid, as are *Fannish Taxonomy* and *On The Prowl* from the previous section in this chapter. I have adopted the ‘massively multifandom’ phrasing from the world of video games, specifically the ‘massively multiplayer online role-playing game’ genre.

<sup>27</sup> The distinction is relevant, as a limited range of texts inspire the bulk of fannish activity. This is offset by annual events that encourage participation in these ‘small fandoms’, such as Festivids (for vids) and Yuletide (for fan fiction).



'Pigs in Space' sketches from *The Muppet Show* (ATV/Henson, 1976-1981), and 'serious' science fiction films *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *Sunshine* (Danny Boyle, 2007). These different inclusions also demonstrate the difference and overlap between fannish texts, cult texts, and genre texts; in this way, *Starships!* is about a basic setting of science fiction – the spaceship – and the many different stories and *kinds* of stories told using this setting. Due to this 'unlimited' range of source material, multifandom vids can therefore be considered *tours de force* in recognition of the time and effort necessary to locate and sequence the clips. For the vidfan, the breadth of sources presented potentially also has a nostalgic function in reminding the viewer of forgotten texts and characters; the vids therefore possess a hint of archival discovery in their presentation of unanticipated inclusions. In the process of conducting research for this thesis, as detailed in my Methodology chapter, I learned that multifandom vids are consequently well-suited to convention viewing, where a group audience can react together and indulge in this performative nostalgia.

Vids that focus on genres create a kind of video ur-text that isolates and amplifies iconic elements of each genre by collecting and presenting the fragmented pieces into a new flow. These works are critical as well as pleasurable. In *Seven Nation Army*, the jump cut's fracturing of time and space, with the diegetic blending of generically similar narratives, function as a detailed cycle of references to other similar works which are themselves textually present. The cross-cutting between the various sources heightens the argument of similarity and comparison found in much earlier VCR vids like the multifandom work *That's What Friends Are For* (3 Sisters, 1985). As shown in Figure 37, *That's What Friends Are For* begins with title cards of *Man From UNCLE* (NBC, 1964-1968), *Riptide* (NBC, 1983-1986), *I Spy* (NBC, 1965-1968), *Alias*

*Smith and Jones* (ABC, 1971-1973), and continues with clips from each series that demonstrate the vid's exhibition of friendship between male protagonists on these television series. As the clips spans decades, this vid can be read as documenting the recurrence or persistence of buddy cop shows across spy, cop and western genres; it can also be read as catalogue of 'slashable' shows: that is, television series which have homoerotic subtext (or, through fannish reinterpretation, can be *made* to have this [cf. Penley 1991]). It shows friendship by using clips that feature gestures and glances – laughing together, offering physical support, sharing looks.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 37**, *That's What Friends Are For* (3 sisters, 1985): opening sequence. Note the wear on the bottom of each image. This use of the series' own title cards, to show the audience which series are included, is not usual for multifandom vids. It is more typical to have a single title card at the end of the vid listing titles of sources.

Multifandom vids can demonstrate why certain genre tropes seem familiar or natural: we have seen them in previous works. Coppa (2009) argues that *Fannish*

<sup>28</sup> The vid uses Dionne Warwick's cover of 'That's What Friends Are For', from her album *Friends* (1985), for its soundtrack, and not Rod Stewart's earlier recording. The song features Gladys Knight, Elton John, and Stevie Wonder, thereby constructing a further (inter-)textual reference to the theme of friendship through the different performance styles of the singers, marking each as distinct.

*Taxonomy* could be made with such an abundance of different sources because ‘the clichéd nature of much mass media imagery means that a good vidder can slide easily between one visual narrative and another’ (108); the viewer, eager to read the vid as a coherent whole, reads the connections between clips from within the conceptual frame offered by the vid’s soundtrack. One truly compelling aspect of genre-based multifandom vids is how these works create a visual catalogue of the accumulation of tropes which are recognisable as relating to a particular genre. For instance, the procession of similar-looking actors performing similar actions in similar costumes – be they the buddy cops of *That’s What Friends Are For* or the ‘hot’ men (and women) of *Fannish Taxonomy* – give examples of a trope and show its variation in its repetition. That is, the repetition of actions and settings that created the trope lays out the evidence that subsequently created the expectation for certain narrative conventions or representational norms. Most importantly, as the soundtrack and dialogue of the clips are removed, the markers of genre that remain are visual: *mise-en-scène*, lighting, camera movement and framing. The actors’ movements are, of course, also present; however, the clothes they wear and the spaces they move through speak just as loudly in a vid (as it were) as their gestures and glances. This is the visual representation of genre, as seen through a vidding gaze.

The soundtrack of Bironic’s vid *Starships!*, Nicki Minaj’s ‘Starships’, is not a song that ‘fits’ the usual aural soundscape of space-based science fiction, typified by lush neo-romantic film scores, stately French horns of *Star Trek* television theme songs, and the use of pre-existing orchestral pieces (for example, the Strauss that begins *2001: A Space Odyssey*; cf. Whittington 2007). Instead, it is a blend of pop genres, featuring electric guitar and synth, synthesised drum and bass, and rap verses mixed with a sung

chorus. As the song is performed by a woman, Minaj's voice signifies a female framing to the joys of science fiction that complements the vid's (presumably female) gaze at male characters and advanced technology. Indeed, its upbeat tone means that it suits the vid's more joyful and less reverential presentation of spacecraft and the pleasure derived from watching narratives of space exploration.<sup>29</sup> Early in the vid there is a montage in which different spacecraft are launched, take off, or are seen mid-flight (see Figure 38); these sequences show off the model work, computer graphics and other special effects necessary to accomplish these shots. This sequence evokes the joy of flight, and helps to constitute science fiction's particular blend of utopian narrative and excitement of frontier exploration by showing examples of this trope in action.



Figure 38, *Starships!* (bironic, 2012): ships in flight sequence.

The song lyrics argue that 'starships are meant to fly', and as such the vid invites a reading of the clips where an establishing shot of a space station becomes a joyful fulfilment of purpose – it is *meant* to be there, therefore it is right and good; so, for example, Wall-E reaching up to the wave of golden space particles is intensely emotional. In this way, the vid can be read as a reaction against 'edgy' recent 'reimaginings' of generic tropes, where the gritty realism of new interpretations replace the genre's escapist pleasures. It is notable that along with these genre-

<sup>29</sup> It does, however, elide Minaj's music video for this song, which shows a kaleidoscopic, psychedelic beach party that can be easily read in terms of the history of black women's self-representation in Afrofuturism. (In contrast, the vid does not contain many representations of non-white characters, though this is more an issue with science fiction than the vid.)

spanning clips, there are also clips taken from media produced for children and for adults, including the aforementioned clip from Pixar Animation's *Wall-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008). The clips are not presented in a way that suggests the vidder's experience with the genre over time is a journey toward maturation (of the individual or of science fiction), with children's cartoons giving way to post-watershed television; the non-linear and, more importantly, non-hierarchical sequencing of clips reflects much more the broad span of fannish fascination (and the longevity of its memory) rather than a traditional historiography.



**Figure 39**, *Starships!* pilots: from left to right, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, and *Firefly*. The sequence also includes *Star Trek* (2009), *Battlestar Galactica*, *Community*, and *Stargate Atlantis*.

The intense and attentive viewership displayed in genre-based multifandom vids finds pleasure in spelling out sequences of what might be called unarticulated expectations in a genre: one might not start watching a space-based science fiction film or television series with a checklist of genre tropes, but when these tropes and scenarios do play out on screen, they are recognisable as appropriate for the genre. For example, as shown in *Starships!*, piloting a spacecraft is not about fighting aliens or other reasons particular to a character or narrative, but represents the generic act of piloting a spaceship. The vid's piloting montage (see Figure 39) shows pilots of various races and genders engaged in varieties of piloting and gunnery from both combat and mundane narratives. As much as the images of many different spaceships constitute 'science fiction', this vid is about more than machinery: it is about the emotional dimension of watching science fiction, and therefore showing pilots connects the

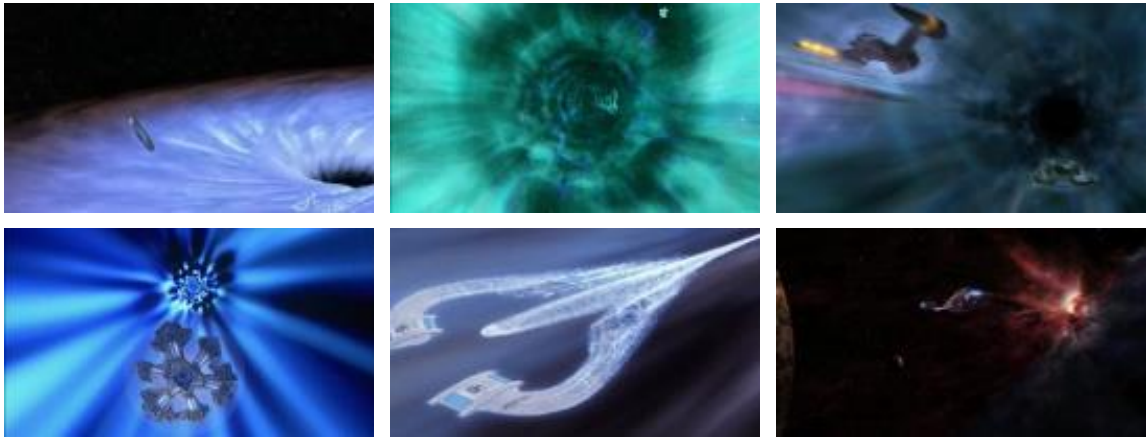
disembodied special effects with an embodied and personal connection. If starships are meant to fly, then one of the pleasures of science fiction is the possibility of identification with the characters making this happen; the vid's many different piloting clips demonstrates the prevalence of the trope.



**Figure 40**, *Starships!*: a clip from *Spaceballs* (far right) is used at the end of a sequence to send up the trope of computer alert screens. These close-up shots pictured are intercut with reaction shots and science fiction action.

In relation to the vid's project of showing off the pleasures of watching science fiction, and of noticing the tropes that contribute to a genre, *Starships!* translates moments of terror/horror to a gentle teasing about the excesses of the genre. In one sequence, during an instrumental section of the song that features siren effects, the vid uses clips of space battles and other ship-based combat and acceleration, punctuated by alert/alarm computer messages (see Figure 40). The sequence is full of motion and quick cuts, building a sense of excitement. The warning messages are intercut with close-ups of console dials being manipulated, implying that, in the hybrid diegesis of the vid, the many different spaceships are being pushed beyond their safe operating limits in a collective forward motion. This section finishes with clips from the original *Star Trek* series, featuring a wildly swinging camera and actors pretending to be jolted by weapons fire, intercut with a shot from *Spaceballs* of a futuristic speedometer reading 'Ludicrous Speed': this punchline to the sequence emphasises that this vid is about the pleasures and joys of watching genre tropes being enacted and subverted, even if the individual narratives from which these are drawn can be quite serious. While 'highlighting' a path (cf. Gray 2010) through these different

science fiction texts, the vidder points out the repetition and variation at play across the genre in this particular trope.



**Figure 41.** *Starships!*: space tunnels final montage sequence, including one of *Farscape*'s wormholes, *Doctor Who*'s time tunnel, and various iterations of 'warped space' travel.

Coppa's argument about *Fannish Taxonomy* is that ultimately, the vid 'isn't about people; it's about tropes' (2009: 108). A similar argument can be made that *Starships!* is not about any specific film or series, but is meant to be a shorthand for *all* the tendencies and clichés that the vid invokes, and the audience's enjoyment of recognising these tropes. Establishing shots of outer space or of spacecraft repeat throughout films, television series and across space-based science fiction; this visual (rather than narrative) trope is a spectacularly pleasurable repetition that demonstrates that the attractions of genre are visual as well as narrative. The sequence that concludes *Starships!* is composed of a dozen clips (see Figure 41) each showing a different kind of 'space tunnel' or related representation of movement through space, and of movement away from the 'camera' and towards something unseen. This continues the sense of forward motion throughout the rest of the vid, but also demonstrates the variations between these different visually pleasing representations. In this, the genre is condensed in the vid to a spectacular sequence of special effects and a jubilant version of what space-based science fiction can look like.

The vid articulates this process of recognition, and makes the connections seem obvious and natural, and even comical once pointed out, as with ‘speed’ acting; it does not make a critical argument about the evolution of the genre over time. The vid is a demonstration of the vidder’s critical look and therefore represents another form of fascination, related to but distinct from the erotic pleasures of watching attractive bodies, or of the fascinations of star images.



**Figure 42**, *Seven Nation Army* (Charmax, 2009): sequence highlighting the repetition of tropes and visual presentation of cyborg/machine duplication (in opposition to human individuality). From left to right: Cylons from *Battlestar Galactica*, NS-5 robots from *I, Robot*, and Cybermen from *Doctor Who*. The sequence continues with Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) from *The Matrix*, who is technically a malevolent computer programme, but nevertheless is represented as a number of identical copies.

In a different example of genre-oriented vids, *Seven Nation Army* (Charmax, 2009) reflects on the prevalence of killer robot narratives from film and television, and is set to a heavy industrial remix (by Efficce) of the White Stripes song of the same name. The ‘seven nations’ from the song are the evil robots from recognisable franchises – including *The Matrix* (The Wachowski Brothers, 1999), the new series of *Doctor Who* (BBC, 2005-present), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984), its sequels and spin-off television series *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (FOX, 2008-2009), and the film *I, Robot* (Alex Proyas, 2004) – which, in the vid, come together to suggest an alliance of cinematic and televisual killer robot armies (see Figure 42), facing a unified human resistance. This vid has an interesting uncanny undercurrent due to the heavy electronic manipulation of the song’s vocal line; while the vid is on the side of the humans, the robotic effect on the lyrics suggests that a sacrifice or loss of humanity will be the price



of the victory against the robot armies. Therefore *Seven Nation Army*, a vid that has the even more tenuous connection between genre-specific tropes, is not about the individual narratives, but about recognising the connection between the different film and television texts and the similarities and overlap of a type of story being told in different media and across many years. This repetition sparks a question about this type of science fiction narrative as a whole: what is so compelling in sending extraordinary individuals against robot armies? The vid seeks to answer that question by building a loose common narrative out of disparate parts, suggesting that the images of individuals overcoming indistinguishable robot collectives are a source of fascination or pleasure.



**Figure 43**, *Seven Nation Army*: a sequence in which a grenade meant for *Battlestar Galactica*'s Cylons (left) leaves *Doctor Who*'s Cybermen (centre and right) unaffected.

One effect used in *Seven Nation Army* is the confusion of eyeline matches and reverse-shot edits across its multiple sources to imply an overlapping narrative space. For example, in a sequence in which human characters are shown attacking (or more properly, fighting back in defence) – firing guns, throwing grenades – one edit cuts from the *Battlestar Galactica* remake to *Doctor Who* (see Figure 43), with the effect that it appears the characters from the former series are attacking a marching column of Cybermen from the latter. The cut is structured as a reverse-shot edit, where one would expect the dynamic action in the first shot (rapid motion forward in the frame) to carry into the second shot where its effect would be seen (in this case, the exploding grenade). Despite being from a different series, the unflinching forward march of the

Cybermen in the instant of the cut denies the efficacy of Adama's assault to underscore the robot armies' supremacy. Even though both clips are recognisable as being from separate series, the temporary coherence of the vid overlaps these two distinct events in an effective manner. This enacts a pleasure of participating in the comparison of tropes, and playing with the interchangeability of such moments.



**Figure 44**, *Seven Nation Army*: showing women and people of colour as protagonists in science fiction (left to right: Lena Headey as Sarah Connor (*Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*), Billie Piper as Rose Tyler (*Doctor Who*) and Will Smith as Del Spooner (*I, Robot*)).

The economies of space in *Seven Nation Army* mean that the proportion of women and characters of colour to white men in the vid appears higher than could be otherwise expected; this is, however, fairly typical of fannish shifting of perspective and orientation when re-making films. The focus on humans versus robots means the close-ups of Laura Roslin (*Battlestar Galactica*), of Sarah Connor (*Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*), Rose Tyler (*Doctor Who*), and Del Spooner (*I, Robot*) (see Figure 44) alongside white men present a less monochrome and less mono-gendered version of this particular thread of science fiction. In showing these select moments, it re-creates the segmented narratives into more inclusive version of themselves, thereby performing a critical analysis through careful selection of clips.

To move back to the experimental re-uses of moving images, Luckhurst argues that, '[Bruce] Conner's most significant discovery was that the coherence of spliced collages could be held together by the instant recognition of genre iconography and narrative formulae' (2008: 195). This discovery has been exploited frequently since Conner: Matthias Müller's film *Home Stories* (1990) is similar to a multifandom vid in

the way it compares distinct texts under a genre-based rubric (gestures, performance styles, stock settings) by editing together many similar scenes found in Hollywood films from the 1950s and 1960s<sup>30</sup>. *Home Stories* creates an intense space of six minutes' duration where many separate films are made to echo each other with gestures, camera movements and *mise-en-scène* alike creating a unitary, if fragmented, archetypal melodrama out of contemporaneous films.



**Figure 45**, *Home Stories* (Mattias Müller, 1990): in which women are seen to perform 'identical gestures [such as] peering out of windows' (Lippit 2008: 119).

Müller's work has been subject to different interpretations, categorised alternately as New Queer Cinema (Hallas 2003) and as 'a revealing and amusing moment of meta-film noir' (MacDonald 2005). Lippit describes how, in the film, 'Ingrid Bergman, Tippi Hedren, Kim Novak, Lana Turner, among many others, appear to repeat virtually identical gestures in a compulsive and mechanical manner: falling onto a bed, shutting a door, listening at a shut door, turning on and off lights, peering out of windows [see Figure 45], being frightened by noises, running to and from rooms in a

<sup>30</sup> Including *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955), *Written on the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, 1956), *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), *Peyton Place* (Mark Robson, 1957), *Madame X* (David Lowell Rich, 1966), *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), *The Man Who Knew too Much* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956), *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963) and possibly also *Charade* (Stanley Donen, 1963); this list compiled with thanks to Patrick Pilkington.

house' (2008: 119). Müller replaces the audio of the individual clips with a score composed for his film, including subtle sound effects, which creates a continuous aural space in which to situate the disparate clips; a similar effect is accomplished in multifandom vids. *Home Stories* compares similar scenes, costuming, performances, *mise-en-scène*, not making a new story, but suggesting a way to read any individual source used in the work as an example of a wider genre.

In noticing the repetition of similar gestures and art direction, *Home Stories*, *Seven Nation Army*, *Starships!* and *That's What Friends are For* demonstrate a fascination for or pleasure in searching for these markers of genre; showing off both the visual pleasures shared by these works' audiences and the investment of time necessary to construct these works. Müller's blend of Sirk and Hitchcock draws out the more mundane domestic spaces of Hitchcock's thrillers and adds a thread of horror to the melodramas. Multifandom vids likewise demonstrate a comparison between similar texts, the idea being that the vid watcher can appreciate the connections and will look for comparable connections in future viewing. The mechanical artificiality that Lippit finds in Müller's work seems less apparent in *Seven Nation Army* or *Starships!*, perhaps because of the nature of the repetitions presented. With *Home Stories*, Müller constructs sequences of gestures performed by individual women alone in the frame that mimic or mirror their immediate predecessors, for example, turning on a lamp or wall light switch. In *Seven Nation Army*, fluid motion within the frame moves back and forth between the robot armies and their human opponents to construct a semblance of a shared diegesis not subject to those jarring ruptures. Mechanical repetitions in *Seven Nation Army* are used, for example, in collecting several clips that show massed ranks of robots which have been 'filmed' in CG using nearly-identical tracking shots:

the fluidity of motion through these shots, again, construct a sense of a shared diegesis.

The jump cuts in *Seven Nation Army*, in which longer shots with motion within the frame have frames removed (a fairly conventional method in vids of adding speed or motion to a clip without altering its frame rate), signal the constructed nature of the vid, and of the vid as a text composed of *re*-constructed and potentially otherwise altered source material. The rapid editing between shots taken from different killer robot narratives and the spatiotemporal interruptions of the jump cuts should suggest a fracturing of the individual diegetic spaces and dissolution of the whole; instead, the song's first-person narration unifies the various stories of resistance to robot armies.

*Seven Nation Army* and *Starships!* prompt critical views of their sources based in images, but they also level and homogenise insofar as they collect the moving images to show differences and similarities. In reference to Wees's methodologies of the uses of found footage, 'appropriation' could be a fitting description of vids; especially as the more critical option, 'collage', limits and judges the intention of the vidder and the viewer's assessment of the success of the work, and is not an objective categorisation. As has been stated before, vids are re-presentations of representations, but despite appearing ahistorically postmodern<sup>31</sup> – as, for example, the haphazard chronology of *Seven Nation Army* – these works' historical tethers are tied to their audience, not to the structure of the works themselves. These are not clips presented out of historical context; the totality of the vid *provides* the context.

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<sup>31</sup> Relevant here is Anne Friedberg's argument distancing avant-garde from modernism, that 'even to approach a discussion of the cinema in postmodernity, one wades further into a nominalist quagmire' (1993: 163).

The experimental film approach to re-working fictional narratives focuses on the material alteration of the film text to create the work of art, revealing (and revealing in) the interruption of classical Hollywood continuity. The re-use of recognisable, iconic moving images in experimental film and video works can often rely on the manipulation of cinematic time in a way that is not usual to the vid. Vids manipulate time in the sense that they chronologically dislocate clips (*Seven Nation Army* skips back and forth across a decade of source material), or reposition clips their original place in their linear narratives – but that is a manipulation of sequencing, the effect of which is similar to compiling examples in an argument. Occasionally, a vidder will alter the speed of an isolated clip in a sequence in order to improve the vid's pacing, but this is seen as a compromise when the available clips do not precisely match the vidder's requirements. Other than marginal, momentary increases or decreases of a frame rate, it is not common for vidders (or, for creators of successful vids) to draw attention to cinematic time in the same dramatic fashion as experimental film and video artists.

One such artist is Martin Arnold, whose work is best known for his slowing and looping of single shots from Hollywood films, particularly in the three related pieces *pièce touchée* (1989), *passage à l'acte* (1993) and *Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy* (1998). In these works, Arnold takes these single shots and re-edits the fluid motion of the clip into jagged loops that advance the motion a few frames, only to jump back to near the start, forcing the actors' gestures and movements to appear stuttering and mechanical. Akira Lippit argues this work creates 'uncanny' bodies out of the actors' performances, stating that 'they have been severed from the 'flow of life' and recast in an irreducibly distant space, cinema' (2008: 123). For Lippit, Arnold's work erases

actor, narrative and meaning from the source clips, having ‘evacuated [the bodies] of all personhood and inscribed them into an emptied-out cinema space’ (2008: 122). What remains is an uncanny resurrection of these cinematic bodies, where the evacuation of personhood leaves only a star image. However, while the same could be true with multifandom vids – where the pace and coherence of clips could result only in a sequence of ‘gestures without bodies’ (Lippit 2008: 127) – the recognisability of clips retains meaning. The bodies in vids are not inert or static. They are reinscribed in emptied-out cinematic space that is then stuffed to abundance with so many disconnected clips, in a visual feast comprised of an abundance of pleasurable images. Where Arnold’s work slows the pace of movement to a point where the actors are deparicularised into disembodied star images, multifandom vids’ presentation of bodies in rapid succession creates this pleasure of semiotic density. Multifandom vids enact the vidders’ power to collect so many bodies, or examples of genre tropes resulting from critical viewing, together to be at the mercy of the audience’s gaze. This is a selfish feast, based in the manipulation of time and image, without consequence of expressing desire (as women, and *for* men and women), and within a cultural context that positions intense critical readings of texts as a fundamental pleasure of viewership.

The issue of pace is significant because it relates to the variety of distribution and exhibition contexts for vids, and the particularly well-suited pairing of multifandom vids to Club Vivid (with music video pacing).<sup>32</sup> Club Vivid vids are made for the VividCon convention’s club night dance party. These vids have a special emphasis on highly-identifiable images and uncomplicated audio-video connections

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<sup>32</sup> According to Vvividcon.Info, almost every vid in this chapter has been shown at Club Vivid.

and are intended for a distracted, but still enthusiastic, audience. The songs used for Club Vivid are typically fast dance tracks: the fast pace of the editing consequently raises the number of cuts in the piece and therefore the number of possible texts included in a multifandom vid made for this context. The pace of clips in vids has increased with improvements in editing technology available to consumers. The increased pace of editing permits a higher number of fandoms to be represented, and consequently turns the multifandom vid into a 'game' of identification where the rapid pace of the vid moves too fast for anything more complicated than recognition. The key difference is that the fannish affection for or fascination with the image-bodies keeps them from being read as empty or void. The star image, the location of a clip within an understanding of genre, or the recognition of fascination and/or pleasurable images is not severed in the clips, even though a nuanced connection to the narrative is disrupted because the fascination of the image is strong enough to override the violence of the cut. Therefore decontextualised, muted bodies become images, in that they are primarily read as images, not as indicating character or plot in the same way as other vid genres, and not thereby in constant dialogue with the source material. The foregrounding of the image allows the vid form in general and multifandom vids in particular to function as sites of concentrated pleasurable representations. The fascinations of film and television guides this viewership, and revels in the pleasures possible in popular media texts.



### ***Cut Up* and Vids in the Gallery Space**

A recent exhibition at the Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI) in New York City, *Cut Up* (29 June to 15 September 2013)<sup>33</sup>, identifies many different kinds of re-edited moving images and highlights the unique context of vids' distribution and exhibition. The vast majority of the works in the exhibition had a previous life as viral internet video – short clips shared widely – and while some vids have attained this level of recognition, they are (as previously argued) made from within a tradition that reaches back beyond the viral video age. According to the exhibition's web page, the videos had been selected for inclusion in the exhibition, because they have been made by 'self-taught editors and emerging artists', not established video art practitioners. None of these pieces are canonical examples of experimental film or video art; Charles Ridley's re-edit of *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935) would likely be the most well-known piece outside internet viral video contexts, and then as a precursor to later video art (as in Meigh-Andrews 2006: 84). *Cut Up* gathers fifty-four examples of work produced predominantly in the last decade, but includes six pieces produced pre-2000 as precedents of the digital-era pieces. Three of these six works are vids, which puts vids in an interesting historical position in relation to the other works. The oldest vid, Kandy Fong's *Both Sides Now* (1980) is technically a filmed slide show; however, it is generally claimed as a direct antecedent to current vidding and is not a problematic inclusion. This suggests the exhibition could be called a retrospective, charting the development of different forms of moving image re-use. The vids in the MOMI exhibition are from the American convention vidding tradition (via Escapade,

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<sup>33</sup> MOMI website, <http://www.movingimage.us/exhibitions/2013/06/29/detail/cut-up/> No catalogue was produced, but curator Jason Eppink kindly shared the wall text of the exhibition with me.

MediaWest, and VividCon) and as such represent the history of vidding as it is currently understood.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of these vids alongside other re-editings such as trailer mash-ups, long-form re-edits of feature films (supercuts), explicitly political video pieces, and a few variations based in popular music invite an analysis of the exhibition's curation. The increasing visibility of vids means that curators of film and video have started to include vids in gallery exhibitions of recent video works. There is perhaps a distinction to be made between gallery exhibitions of new and recent work, and museum-based exhibitions with a historical focus, though the important part of this example is in the gallery or museum as a public context for presenting and viewing works as opposed to in a domestic context.

An analysis of the exhibition's listing provided on the Museum's website reveals the predominance of works by men, where gender may be identifiable or inferred; some works are credited pseudonymously. However, the six vids included in the exhibition are all by women.<sup>35</sup> Any conclusions drawn from this observation will be speculative, but rather than taking this as proof of women's marginal participation in creative re-uses of media, it raises the possibility that women outside the fine-arts experimental tradition are more likely to be aligned with fandom than with other forms of moving image re-use if they are interested in this kind of direct intervention into popular culture. The community of vidders and vidfans provides an audience and technical support, and has an ambivalent (and evolving) relationship with exposure beyond the community itself. There is also some overlap between other forms of

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<sup>34</sup> European and global fan studies are emerging areas. Anglo-American fans are similarly taking notice of the reach of fandom. For example, UK-based convention VidUKon includes a 'Eurovision' vidshow which features vids using European (non-English language) source and songs.

<sup>35</sup> *Both Sides Now* (Kandy Fong, 1980), *Temper of Revenge* (MVD and Caren Parnes, 1984), *Data's Dream* (GF & Tashery, 1994), *A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness (Hot Hot Hot)* (Clucking Belles, 2005), *I Put You There* (Laura Shapiro and Lithiumdoll, 2006), and *Vogue* (Luminosity, 2007).

online video re-use and the vid itself: vids are not music videos, but similar; not about politicians, but can be read as political. Multifandom vids in particular may combine highlights/catchphrases from mainstream or cult sources similar to a supercut, but do so with much more rapid editing and with a focus on gestures rather than speech acts. Vids are concerned with creating novel sequences of moving images, not auto-tuning speeches into songs; it is much more about confidently presenting an emotional response to popular culture than it is about creating an ironic distance from it.

As mentioned earlier, the re-use of moving images shifts the intended audience and context of exhibition. The *Cut Up* exhibition is compelling in its relocation of vids and other non-commercial video from domestic spaces and screenings for insider/knowing/subculturally-aware individuals and small audiences to the more public context of a museum, as they are included in the museum space as historical artefacts. The brief introduction on the exhibition's website states that *Cut Up* is about online video and its precedents; by definition, online video is accessed through individual computers (and, recently, mobile devices) and while total views for a single clip may be in the millions, the physical space around a computer screen limits the size of the audience who can view together to significantly fewer than a cinema audience. (In fact, the number of people gathered around a single computer screen at a given moment is approximately the same number who could comfortably gather in a living room to watch a television broadcast.) This is unlike vids, which have a history of being projected onto large screens at conventions as well as distributed online; the three internet-era vids in *Cut Up* were originally part of either the Club Vivid or Premieres shows at VividCon). Many of the non-vids in the exhibition are from a tradition that is based in viral-style link-sharing online and therefore have a different assumption for

their audience. This likely has an impact on the works' visual style and pace; as described earlier (see Methodology), there was a difference in VCR-era vidding between living-room vids and convention vids, for more specialised and more general audiences respectively. *Cut Up* brings online video offline, and changes where and how this work is viewed, trading the pleasures of individual or small-group viewing of television for the social pleasure of community viewing.

*Cut Up* takes a further step in making museum/gallery space and domestic spaces overlap by including links on its website to all but two of the exhibited works, allowing the exhibition to exist in a facsimile of its original decentralised, computer-based context. In keeping with the persistently underground nature of vidding, the non-vids are available on YouTube and Vimeo, while of the vids, it is only Luminosity's *Vogue* (2007) that directs to a YouTube video. This reinforces the vid as parallel to other forms of contemporary non-artist moving image re-use, and not necessarily as a part of it.

The exhibition's name, *Cut Up*, returns to the persistent issue of what to call video and film works which are made from other, pre-existing, film and video sources. While the exhibition does not propose a general re-naming – and indeed, presents each type of re-use under its own specific category – the choice of *Cut Up* is interesting for a few reasons. By moving away from the term 'remix' (as in the title of Brett Gaylor's 'open source' documentary *Rip: A Remix Manifesto* [2008]), the exhibition takes this perpetual and infinitely varied impulse to 'mess around' with one's mediascape away from the music metaphor and back to a film metaphor. The word 'cut' preserves the implicit violence of editing, and at the same time encourages a conception of film clips as pieces of a whole that still remain recognisable even in their

fractured state. This is in contrast to ‘mixing’ which implies blending and homogenisation (as with baking, where visually distinct ingredients become dough or batter). The iconicity of the images - their fascination - resists such generalisation. Also, the exhibition’s title is a likely partial reference to the colloquial expression of ‘cut up’ meaning a joke or someone who jokes, as well as the use of ‘to cut’ as an informal synonym for ‘to edit’, which emphasises the humour of the exhibition’s selections at the expense of more political possibilities.

Indeed, the political parody selections make their subjects into slapstick performers rather than proposing ideologically-based criticism. For example, the oldest work listed in the exhibition, the British wartime propaganda film *The Lambeth Walk (Nazi Style)* (Charles A. Ridley, 1942)<sup>36</sup>, re-cuts *Triumph of the Will* to music from the pre-war Lambeth Walk dance craze so it appears that the ranks of troops are dancing along. To a contemporary audience the obviously manipulated and purposely jerky movements is not an engagement with fascist ideology but does make the Nazi troops appear ridiculous; the political aims of this work (made mid-war) are diluted. Like the *Wonder Woman* examples from earlier in the chapter, and *Rose Hobart’s* apolitical focus on celebrity, it can be difficult to override a star’s aura or the referentiality of narratives to create a political message. These works, vids and other

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<sup>36</sup> As credited in MOMI listing. Digital copies of a *Lambeth Walk – Nazi Style* (1941) may be found online, which is the date given by McIntosh (2012); the website *Public Domain Review* lists it as 1942, and the IMDb.com trivia page for *Triumph of the Will* credits it as *Germany Calling* (1941). The MOMI exhibition website links to a video titled ‘Gen. Adolph Takes Over, 1942/01/07 (1942)’. Meigh-Andrews (2006: 84) lists *The Panzer Ballet* (Charles Ridley, 1940), which is probably the same film; in his notes, he cautions against confusing it with *Swinging the Lambeth Walk* (Len Lye, 1939). This is likely a response to Leyda (1964: 55) where the Lye film is given the description of Ridley’s work and a 1940 date; Lye’s work was mainly hand-painted abstract colour animation (Le Grice 1977, Rees 2011). Scott MacKenzie (2007) goes halfway, citing a *Swinging the Lambeth Walk* (Charles Ridley, 1941). The 2013 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam website covers all bases in listing a *Germany Calling/Lambeth Walk/Panzer Ballet* (Charles Ridley, 1941).

video pieces alike, are evidence of ways of seeing that are no less critical, intense or actively engaged in media as experimental film and video pieces.

### **Conclusion**

Underlying many of the concerns of this chapter are questions of value, particularly in the contrast between experimental artistic works for gallery presentation and similar-seeming vids made by women in domestic spaces for sharing amongst friends. The chapter's recourse to theorisations of experimental film raises the issue of perceived differences between art and craft. Primarily, the descriptions and experiences of experimental works tend to position visual pleasure or fascination as parts of media that are negative, seductive, or part of an oppressive structure of representation, and therefore must be deconstructed. Vids may include such criticisms, but they also 'show off' images that are themselves sources of pleasure, and that use clips to create pleasurable critical analyses of film and television texts.

Gillian Elinor offers a provocative distinction between art and craft (and one that echoes Chapter Three's distinction between archive and collection): 'Art is consumed in ownership and valorisation occurs at the point of exchange. Craft is consumed in usage and valorisation is in terms not of exchange, but of utility' (1989: 30). In an archive, an object is useful in the writing of history, but in a collection is confined to a static existence; the use of a personal archive of television and film clips, is not for exchange but to engage in the utility of pleasure. Vids are made to have a use: they entertain. Elinor's analysis is based in a specifically Marxist distinction between an object's use-value (its utility) and its exchange-value (in relation to other objects, typically mediated by currency). In her analysis, craft is a quilt made to cover a bed and keep the bed's occupant(s) warm: its value is in its utility as bedding, as a

functional domestic object. Hand-crafted garments and home accessories represent a similar investment of time (albeit individually, in contrast to the potential collective effort of a quilting bee) but a similar undervaluation in terms of exchange value. Such objects may be made as gifts<sup>37</sup>. If the same quilt is displayed in a gallery, its transformation into an art work occurs alongside its revaluation away from utility, as an isolated object 'not used or demonstrably usable' (Elinor 1989: 30) in the gallery space. Writing of material objects – handicrafts in particular – and the less tangible nature of moving images would trouble the idea of a material utility in film or TV in the sense that Elinor means, however non-material social utility does exist as tools for communication and community-building.

However, it is difficult to precisely define whether vids are either art or craft according to Elinor's definition. This is because her argument is about utility, and a vid's utility is neither purely functional nor is it an object of exchange. However, lack of easy categorisation is productive because it opens up questions about the purpose – the utility – of the vid. As works primarily of entertainment, the utility of a vid is in its ability to leverage visual pleasures of television. Vidding is not-for-profit, without currency-based exchange value, and the benefits to the vidder include the acclaim of peers and the development of technical skills. Further, the vid's use is social: for communication, for pleasure, and as a medium through which to exchange ideas. Watching *That's What Friends Are For* expresses a particular mode of watching, that of finding pleasure in the persistence and evolution of the buddy cop genre on television – and also simultaneously affirming that mode by suggesting it is not an unusual way to watch these series. Additionally, consuming vids through dubbable videotape and

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<sup>37</sup> See Karen Hellekson (2009) for a discussion of online fan gift culture.

easily-duplicated digital files – in potentially infinite copies – disrupts Elinor’s clear distinction between a specific object’s everyday use and its banishment from utility to exchange; this means there is no single vid as there might be a single quilt in an either/or conception. Vids *are* potentially useful and potentially ‘not used or demonstrably useable’ (as a text that enacts a subculturally-specific way of viewing). An implicit argument about value and valorisation that underlies this chapter can question the distinction between vidding and experimental filmmaking; this distinction is collapsed when the works are exhibited in a museum. Perhaps it is the same intense fascination that overrides the critical pointedness of Birnbaum’s video art which clouds these distinctions: the hand-made social object of the vid (as an example of craft), when placed in the gallery space will not be useful in the way it was to those who crafted it and for whom it was made. What remains is the bare structure: the evidence of fascination.

What haunts this tension is also the Romantic notion of the ‘great work’, in which an extraordinary individual through singular effort creates a unique piece of art, and where re-uses of pre-existing material lacks the implication of original genius. This is not the place to re-hash debates about authorship, but it must be noted that the concept (of, say, a painter struggling alone) persists even though it does not accurately account for cultural production. Walter Benjamin’s work on ‘aura’ has provided an enduring perspective from which to view twentieth-century artistic practice and the role of the artist and work of art, as technological change interrupts and varies the relationship between all parties concerned. In works that re-use existing media, though particularly those concerned with the re-use of film and video rather than print



collage or sculptural assemblage<sup>38</sup>, the 'artistic' expression of singular individuals (the artist-editor or vidder) comes in conflict with the collective effort of collaborative production that created the film and video source material. Moving image re-use in general, and vids in particular, highlight the layers of authorship at play on these works. It is broadly accurate to state that the individual re-using film and video clips does impose an editorial (perhaps, *curatorial*) control on these pre-existing texts, but it is questionable whether the transformations can be considered authorial. However, the actor's authorship of the character (in physical performance), and the writer, director, and/or producer's authorship of the scenarios in which the characters are presented, and the authorship of the source work's art direction (to visually realise those scenarios) are all equally present as competing authorial voices in the source clips.

As Coppa (2008) and Brunsdon and Spigel (2008) argue, vidding is about how fannish women watch television and this careful viewership is enacted through the vid form. The two broad types of multifandom vids that have been the focus of this chapter demonstrate the qualities of this fannish viewing because of this genre's potential to place particular emphasis on the presentation of stars, bodies and genre tropes. These 'parts' are re-used to create dense expressions of desire and fascination that argue for the desirability and irresistibility of those parts to their audience, and in doing so preserve that way of watching. If this is a way of watching particular to fandom, expressed through the vid, perhaps this female-focused, queer gaze is best described as a *vidding gaze*. The vidding gaze is directed not only toward spectacular media populated by bodies, or attracted to celebrities, but also to more abstract

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<sup>38</sup> Remix authorship is relatively straightforward, as the DJ is credited alongside the source artist.

spectacular attractions represented by multifandom vid: those of critical analyses of genre, and the visual pleasures of special effects.

My purpose in adopting critical frameworks originally applied to experimental film and video is to provide a level of exposure to these 'underground' works and argue for the ways they have cultural value for those who create and those who watch them. The exhibition *Cut Up* brings together pieces meant for gallery exhibition, internet distribution, and Club Vivid vidshow playlists. In multifandom vids in particular, the rapid presentation of clips from diverse source material creates a spectacle for the pleasure of the vid's audience, and emphasises the fascinations of images at play when analysing the visual side of the vid form. This chapter continued the implicit work of the first chapter by demonstrating the role of song lyrics as the fundamental mechanism by which the decontextualised images are anchored to a defined range of meanings, and make a nonlinear re-edit of existing moving images into a comprehensible, legible sequence. As I will argue in the next chapter, the interaction of audio and video sources goes beyond simple captioning, as the connotations of a pop song's clichés and tropes. However, the vid remains a form about watching, and about taking pleasure in watching; therefore the scopophilic aspect of this form of fan work should not be forgotten in more literary analyses of lyrical functioning.

## Chapter Five –

### Vids as Adaptations: Music, Narrative, and Genre

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses on a case study of three related *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009) vids by the vidder Dualbunny – *God Is A DJ* (2006), *Cuz I Can* (2007) and *I'm Not Dead* (2009) – to analyse the construction of narrative and argument through the interplay of popular music and moving images in the vid form. Like the previous two chapters, this chapter will answer fundamental questions about meaning-making in vids; unlike the previous chapters, the discussion of the role played by popular (pre-existing, pre-recorded) music will have a more prominent role in my analysis. There is a growing body of literature on the use of music on television; this chapter will refer to this in order to more fully and explicitly investigate the aural aspect of the vid. More specifically, this chapter is concerned with songs – as music with lyrics – and ‘found’ music rather than a more general category of ‘music’ including traditional scores. The vids in the case study use the moving image’s relationship with songs to reform and refocus the complex text of *Battlestar Galactica* into a trilogy of character-focused works that foreground the experience of the female fighter pilot, Kara ‘Starbuck’ Thrace (Katee Sackhoff) using songs from the pop/rock recording artist Pink<sup>1</sup>. The interaction of the Pink songs with the close focus on clips of Kara creates vids that present a female-centred narrative, adapting the science fiction world of *Battlestar* in a way that augments the melodramatic aspects of the series’ generic hybridity. The change in focus means the distance between source material and vid is

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<sup>1</sup> Pink (sometimes styled P!nk) is the stage name of Alecia Moore.

critically compelling; in addition to a direct narrative analysis, this chapter will also examine the semiotic implications of adopting Pink's music and celebrity image to help inform this adaptation.

In remaking the narrative, these character study vids produce a critical adaptation of *Battlestar* that analyses its source text. Vids can be explicitly critical texts, as seen, for example, in Laura Shapiro's *Stay Awake* (2010), which highlights and condemns the deeply problematic representation in science fiction of female bodies and human reproduction. Shapiro's editing choices turn Suzanne Vega's a cappella cover of a lullaby from *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevenson, 1964) into a nightmarish concentration of alien/demonic pregnancy plotlines from several series.<sup>2</sup> The breadth of sources drawn on in this vid and the repetition of reaction shots with female characters appearing understandably frightened and horrified, combine to create a chilling response to this trope. However, vids made without such pointed criticism may carry implicit critiques of their source texts through their editing choices; this is the analytical work of character study vids. The interaction between image choice and song lyrics seems intended to provoke an immediate emotional reaction, but the viewer's response may well also be grounded in a critical understanding of the effects of juxtaposing pop music and moving images beyond the vid form.

Deciding to use a particular song in a vid is more than choosing apt lyrics to illustrate a point: the vidder will have made a decision about artist and genre, tempo and timbre, selecting an album track over a radio single or acoustic version (or vice versa), and whether to use a cover version (which might then add a further layer of

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<sup>2</sup> Including *Angel* (WB, 1999-2004), *Farscape* (Nine Network/Sci-Fi Channel, 1999-2003), *Stargate SG-1* (MGM Worldwide Television/Sci-Fi Channel, 1997-2007), *Stargate Atlantis* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009), *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Paramount, 1987-1994), *Torchwood* (BBC, 2006-2011), as well as *Battlestar Galactica* itself.

intertextual complexity to the song and therefore the vid). Beyond the bare lyrics, the rest of this information – genre, artist, aural texture – becomes a metaphor used to describe the particular version of the primary (source) work as presented in the vid. This is implicit critique as metaphor because it employs one system of connotations to describe another, but does so without listing them or plainly stating the various points of comparison. Of course, the vid form has evolved to rely on this kind of metaphor because precise literal matches are frequently impossible. Recalling *Star Trek: Tik Tok* (MissSheenie, 2009) discussed in Chapter Three, for instance, neither lyrics nor instrumentation in Kesha’s song ‘Tik Tok’ describe *Star Trek* (see Chapter Three). The effect of MissSheenie’s vid is created through the suggestion that the song and the source can – if only temporarily – be considered similar in plot and theme. This effect is achieved in part through the captioning effect of the lyrics (as explained in my Introduction, since vids use song lyrics as captions to suggest and direct the interpretation of the re-used moving images). With the Kara/Pink trilogy, Pink’s songs suggest a vast amount of information about how to read the character of Kara even as the lyrics provide and direct explicit meanings within the vid itself.

It is useful to understand vids as adaptations – particularly, character study and relationship vids, which adapt a single text – as a vidder creates a version of the source material through selecting and extracting moving images to construct a narrative space for characters’ emotional lives as an expression of their imagined subjectivity. Music is the method or tool of the vidder’s authorial intervention as adapter, giving the character a ‘voice’ by using the lyrics, instrumentation, and other connotations of the song itself to animate what is otherwise a sequence of silenced images. Colin McCabe defines an adaptation as a work ‘that relies for some of its material’ on an already-

extant text (McCabe 2011: 3). In the case of the vid, this reliance is both a literal re-use of film and television texts and a narrative transformation where the choice of song and re-sequencing of moving images creates the new work.<sup>3</sup> In discussing authorship in collaborative adaptations, Linda Hutcheon notes the complexity of film and television's collaborative 'model of creation' and the resulting difficulty in establishing a 'primary adapter' beyond the usual candidates of director and screenwriter (2013: 80-81). Hutcheon notes in particular the roles of music directors and editors in shaping a text: 'the music director/composer... creates the music that reinforces or provokes reactions in the audience and directs our interpretation of different characters' (2013: 81). She quotes film editor Walter Murch, who argues that, as an editor, he 'identifies and exploits underlying patterns of sound and image that are not obvious on the surface' (qtd in Hutcheon 2013: 82). The recognition of these contributions to collaborative work reinforce a view of vidders as adapters, as music and editing greatly influence how narratives are presented.

As Hutcheon observes, cross-media adaptations, for example, films from novels, may often be 'reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity' (2013: 36). However, she argues that rather than viewing this reduction as a 'subtraction' and therefore detrimental, in fact 'when plots are condensed and concentrated, they can sometimes become more powerful' (Hutcheon 2013: 36). In the *Battlestar* vids discussed in this chapter, it is not only plot that is condensed, but the presentation of the character, from seventy-five episodes (not including the initial miniseries) down to the duration of three pop songs. This raises the question of absences in the vid: what is

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<sup>3</sup> Paul McEwan argues that if one accepts 'adaptation more generally, [as] a legitimate form of art, it becomes impossible to justify any criterion of cultural value that excludes what has followed the film [...]. The fan fiction [...], and the videos that fill the gaps between looks and gestures, are all, in their own ways, essays on the original text' (2011: 45).

at stake in considering what is left out, and what does a vid's audience make of what has been left in. The volume of material cut will always exceed that which is included, as an average vid is approximately four minutes long and reduces the many hours of its source material. By viewing vids as a critical responses enacted as adaptations, we see that the choices made in building (adapting) a vid out of a longer text indicate what the vidders want to say about their source material, how it has been interpreted, and how the vidders want to present their work or their argument. This selection process certainly includes which narrative moments are shown in the vid and what is only alluded to, but the choice of song is also a significant factor in the process of adaptation. Questions of scope and inclusion are at the core of adaptation, especially when adapting between media forms. One key change made by the Kara/Pink trilogy is that of genre, as the vids turn a masculine-coded 'quality' serial drama into a more traditionally feminine-coded melodramatic or soap operatic work, following the emotional life of a single female character through the series. It is through the vid form – in which popular music is made to function in a manner similar to musical montage sequences in television or music video (discussed below) – that this adaptation takes place.

### **Overview of *Battlestar Galactica***

The *Battlestar Galactica* used as source video for Dualbunny's vids is the Sci-Fi Channel (now SyFy) remake<sup>4</sup> of the original series, led by executive producer Ronald D. Moore; the 2003 miniseries became the pilot for a series (2004-2009) that expanded on the Glen A. Larsen original (ABC, 1978-9, 1980). In both, a small group of humans have

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<sup>4</sup> Many commentators use 're-imagining' to describe the series, not remake or reboot, apparently to emphasise Moore's auteurship and to elevate the series to 'quality' standards by eliding its status as an adaptation.

survived a nuclear attack by a robot race (the Cylons) and flee across space to a mythical planet called 'Earth'. In the remake Cylons were built by humans, not an alien race, and have been absent for a generation-long armistice that followed a human/Cylon war. The Moore series 'offers itself as an allegory of the politics of war and terror after 9/11' (Tranter 2007: 45), including 'post-9/11 debates about women in the military' (Sharp 2010: 61), representations of torture (Randell 2011), and of organised resistance to military occupation (Herbert 2012). The central tension of the series is between the civilian President of the Colonies – the former secretary for education who was the highest-ranking surviving member of government – and the military commander of the titular spaceship, the *Galactica*.

Its focus on policy and governance invites comparisons to prime-time dramatic series outside of science fiction, a comparison that Jennifer Stoy argues was unfortunately taken to heart by the series' writers and producers (Stoy 2010: 23-31)<sup>5</sup>. Stoy suggests that the narrative weakening of *Battlestar* in its latter seasons was in part due to its disavowal of 'the science fiction tradition', for 'one cannot upend clichés if one has lost a grip on them' (2010: 25). While *Battlestar* has been taken to be an 'explicitly allegorical show, endlessly dissected on discussion boards by fans and in popular print by critics' (Nishime 2011: 452), Daniel Herbert argues that its 'overt address' in relation to the American 'War on Terror'<sup>6</sup> is not consistent across the series: it 'refers to social issues in abstract ways, twisting their social meanings such

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<sup>5</sup> A truism of convergence-era television is the easy and frequent communication between producers, critics, and fans. Stoy argues this closeness was not beneficial, writing that *Battlestar* 'had some truly retrograde science fiction clichés, and its raving fan critics bought into them fully, from disparaging the fanbase to turning a blind eye to the actual flaws of the show. Apparently, science fiction that appeals to middlebrow genre-distrusting critics is forgiven any number of ludicrous sins' (2010: 29).

<sup>6</sup>In broad strokes, *Battlestar* addresses viewers as post-9/11 perpetual warriors, playing upon the kind of Manichaeism and ever-readiness that characterized Bush-doctrine rhetoric following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001' (Herbert 2012: 195).



that the relation between the program and reality is incoherent' (2012: 195). Herbert notes that the 'apparent polysemy' of the series is derived from the characters' own inconsistencies (2012: 196), which makes it difficult to identify an unambiguous social or political position taken by the series (also cf. Dzialo 2008). However, the 'moral complexity' of the series' politics potentially reflects 'the problematic morality of the Iraq war and the tactics employed by both sides in that real-life situation' (Rawle 2010: 144). Unlike *Star Trek*, in which the main characters are mostly senior officers in a system of rank where meritocracy elides class difference, *Battlestar* includes very clear stratification between deckhands, pilot-officers, civilian workers, social and political elites, and so forth. The vids in this case study are not concerned with the struggle for humanity's survival, or with questions of governance as in the series, but with the experiences of one character, the fighter pilot Kara 'Starbuck' Thrace.



**Figure 46**, Kara Thrace (Katee Sackhoff) adopts an exaggeration of the fighter pilot image, posing with cigar and sunglasses before giving a briefing in 'Bastille Day' (1.3); still taken from *God Is A DJ* (Dualbunny, 2006).

In Larsen's *Battlestar Galactica*, Starbuck was a male character. In the new series, 'Starbuck' is the call-sign of female officer Lt. Kara Thrace. Hutcheon writes that, when experiencing an adaptation '*as an adaptation*', awareness of the adapted text will 'oscillate in our memories with what we are experiencing' (2013: 121, author's emphasis). For what she calls the 'knowing audience' (2013: 120), both adaptation and

adapted text are present in the experience of the adaptation. In the change from Starbuck to Kara Thrace, the oscillation between these two characters became a point of controversy in the lead-up to the broadcast of the miniseries, and affects the way the character is approached in scholarship. Derek Johnson argues that the remake ‘effectively transgendered the familiar Starbuck character, transforming the tough-talking, cigar-chomping, male action hero played by Dirk Benedict in the original series into the tough-talking, cigar-chomping, female action heroine played by Katee Sackhoff in the remake’ (2011: 1089; see Figure 46). Some of the controversy came from statements made by Dirk Benedict himself, who seemed to find the decision both personally offensive and symptomatic of a feminist corruption of science fiction in particular and of western civilisation in general (cf. Kungl 2008, Johnson 2011). Johnson’s use of ‘transgendered’ is disconcerting; this word choice echoes Sharp’s (2010) description of the ‘gender-bending’ (58) ‘woman fighter pilot Starbuck’ (57). Under this naming, Starbuck is ‘transgendered’ due to intertextuality, because, twenty years before, a character with a similar name was played by a man.

This reluctance to accept a female action heroine is not unique to Kara Thrace. Yvonne Tasker, in her analysis of female characters in the *Alien* films<sup>7</sup>, notes the ‘arguments made by some critics that figures like Ripley [(Sigourney Weaver)] are merely men in drag’ (1993: 149); by implication such heroines are not just unfeminine, but inauthentically or insufficiently female. Kara typifies the persistent problem of genres such as action and science fiction where representations of ‘femininity, defined and redefined through the body’ in a military (or other action) context rupture

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<sup>7</sup> Primarily in relation to *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986). The character Ellen Ripley also appears in sequel *Alien 3* (David Fincher, 1992). Weaver also starred in *Alien: Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997).

expectations and come to represent a 'transgression of the kinds of behaviour considered appropriate for women' (Tasker 1993: 148). Kieran Tranter's labelling of Kara as 'a post-feminist pinup' (2007: 56), both acknowledges the character's potential for progressive representation and recalls the contradictions in representing female characters. The subjective sexual connotation of 'pinup' as a flattened image reduces the character to a passive object. As a female character, Kara embodies the problems in representing women in science fiction and action genres; as a long-form serial narrative, *Battlestar* has space available to address both her profession as military pilot and her private life. Hutcheon writes that a favourable adaptation is 'successful in its own right... for both knowing and unknowing audiences' (2013: 121); however, it seems difficult for a female Starbuck to defeat the oscillation of memories of the Larsen series and be a woman in her own right. Understanding the vids as adaptations of the already-adapted series, however, relies on that oscillation between Moore's series and the vids to create narratives that emphasise and naturalise Kara Thrace as a complex female character.<sup>8</sup>

The remake of *Battlestar Galactica* is, according to Shawn Shimpach, a 'frequently cited example' of so-called 'quality' television (see Review of Literature): 'lavishly produced, multi-character narrative dramas featuring characters whose

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<sup>8</sup> In academic literature Kara is frequently referred to as Starbuck (without scare quotes) and not her given or family name; this is in contrast to the male pilot, Lee 'Apollo' Adama, who is simply called 'Lee' (see, for example, Kirkland 2008, Rawle 2010, Sharp 2010; call signs are used for both in Tranter 2007). Turning Starbuck into Kara Thrace is more than changing the gender of the character; introducing a given and family name is, as Rawle notes, 'a significant part of the series' attempt to diminish its obvious basis in fantasy' and to emphasise the realist aspects of its allegory (2010: 133). A surname implies the existence of a family and therefore history outside the narrative; likewise, a given name implies a unique identity outside her profession or allegorical function. Subsuming Kara under Starbuck aligns her with her male predecessor; other characters in the Moore series refer to her variously by her given name, call sign, or rank. There is an uncomfortable subtext to referring to the character as only Starbuck, given that re-writing the character as a woman had caused such offense prior to the series premiere. Doing so diminishes the reality effect of granting her a more complex potential identity.

actions are motivated by deep and complex syntheses of psychology and biography, revealed piecemeal over the course of several seasons' (2010: 49). Shimpach argues that the genre hybridity of such series is characterised by their 'blending of traditional action elements with significant aspects of the televised domestic melodrama' (2010: 36). In *Battlestar*, plotlines concerning political, social and economic stability are set against more intimate family dramas (understood as an engagement with representational politics, cf. Hellstrand 2011; or interracial marriage and adoption, cf. Nishime 2011), a characteristic that Steven Rawle argues is part of the series' formal and aesthetic 'overt documentary realism' (2010: 131) as its commitment to narrative realism is found throughout the series. Writing more generally, Shimpach argues that melodrama's focus on domesticity:

...involves more than these characters simply having love lives. Their narrative worlds are intertwined with complex domestic issues, blurring public and private, domestic and professional. [...] The famously mutable, emotionally excitable characters of melodrama meanwhile are the antithesis of stoic, masculine heroism. (Shimpach 2010: 37)

This blurring of public and private narrative worlds occurs regularly in *Battlestar*; for example, when called upon to train new pilots in the first season, Kara is reluctant to return to her pre-series role as flight instructor because of lingering guilt over inadvertently causing the death of her fiancé, a trainee pilot whom Kara decided to let pass despite knowing his flying was inadequate. Her private life directly relates to her public, professional abilities: her commanding officer on *Galactica* is her deceased fiancé's father. The problem of Kara Thrace as a female hero can be viewed as being worked through in the trilogy of vids in this case study: in the most simple stereotypes,

as a woman she is indeed ‘the antithesis of stoic, masculine heroism’. As an adaptation, the trilogy of vids imagines a coherent subject position for Kara, working to resolve contradictions in how the character is presented by aligning this with the Pink’s own public self-narration (discussed below). The vids certainly do address Kara’s love life; however, beyond romance, they intensify the melodramatic aspects of the series in their emphasis on the character’s interiority.<sup>9</sup> If, as Shimpach (2010) notes, the characters of television melodrama are shown to be ‘motivated by deep and complex syntheses of psychology and biography’, then the vids construct spaces in which these motivations are brought to the fore.

Dualbunny’s vid trilogy concerns Kara’s specific character development across the series; in order to make sense of this, what follows is a brief overview of her place in the narrative. She is introduced before the Cylon attack as a confident and competent fighter pilot, who enjoys a father/daughter relationship with her commander (William Adama, played by Edward James Olmos) and the respect of her fellow officers despite a tendency towards swaggering arrogance. Throughout the first series she proves her piloting skill and tactical abilities, she successfully trains *Galactica’s* new pilots, and her religious convictions lead her to accept President Laura Roslin’s (Mary McDonnell) secret mission to fulfil vision and prophecy by seeking an artefact back on her abandoned home world of Caprica. At the start of the second season Kara is still on Caprica, separated from the fleet. She falls in love with the leader of the resistance, Samuel Anders (Michael Trucco), but must leave him and his followers on the planet when she returns to the fleet. The surprise appearance of

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<sup>9</sup> That is not to say the vids remove references to action and science fiction genres; indeed, the spectacular special effects and Kara’s status as an action heroine are just as important.

another surviving warship leads to her promotion and reassignment to the other vessel; the responsibilities of the position and guilt over personnel losses increase her reckless and self-destructive behaviour. After leading a mission to fulfil her promise to return for the humans on Caprica, she marries Anders, and leaves the fleet to join a settlement on the newly-discovered planet of New Caprica. In the final episode of the second season, the narrative advances a full year; Cylons arrive and occupy the colony.

In the third season, after the humans escape their failed colony and return to space, Kara's recklessness returns in the wake of her imprisonment and torture<sup>10</sup> during the period of occupation; she experiences nightmares and disregards her marriage to Anders to start an affair with Commander Adama's son, Lee Adama (Jamie Bamber). Her inability to maintain a stable romantic life is mirrored in her decreasing ability to adequately perform her duties as a pilot. A few close calls while piloting over the season foreshadow her apparent death toward the end of the season. She returns, however, in the season's final episode, claiming to know the location of the mythical planet 'Earth'. In the final season, she fights general suspicion that she is a Cylon (because of her miraculous re-appearance), struggles to convince the fleet to follow her directions back to Earth (which turns out to be a nuclear wasteland), remains loyal during a mutiny (during which Anders receives severe brain injuries), and finds a more adequate faux-Earth to settle on thanks to elaborate visions featuring her long-absent father. By the end, it is revealed that Kara did indeed die in the third season: what returned was an 'angel' whose function was to lead the humans to their new home, and this supernatural Kara disappears into thin air at the end of the season.

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<sup>10</sup> Unlike the 'waterboarding' used by humans on Cylon prisoners, Kara's imprisonment takes the form of house arrest and extended emotional abuse in a domestic setting. *Cuz I Can* addresses this plotline.

In the episodic-seriality of the hybrid format aspect of *Battlestar*, the character of Kara changes over time; as with many of the other characters in the show, her decisions have consequences later in the narrative. The vid trilogy at the heart of this chapter addresses these changes by closely reading the elements which construct the representation of the character, and using Pink's songs to re-present this fractured representation as a cohesive whole. When discussing Kara as a female character in science fiction, Kungl recalls Sherrie Inness's argument in *Tough Girls* (1998) 'that placing tough women in the future serves as an effective means of containing them: women in science fiction or postapocalyptic narratives [...] operate at a safe distance from the present, mitigating their ability to challenge the status quo...' (2008: 204). This raises questions around the popular presentation of *Battlestar* as an allegory (if a confused one; cf. Dzialo 2008, Herbert 2012) for contemporary American foreign policy and society: whether the distancing effect of science fiction prevents an allegorical reading, or if the strictly-defined political analogy permeates this genre boundary while representational politics are rendered ineffective. Kara's death and pseudo-resurrection could be read as a decision to avoid the issue of identification completely. As Patrick B. Sharp argues, 'the subversive potential of the Starbuck character is limited by her status as a supernatural creature' (2010: 58); she can only be a token (feminist) challenge to the status quo if she is contained not only by her 'safe distance from the present' but also her non-human state. Kara's romantic life<sup>11</sup> and her professional abilities are both rejected by the series, and her angelic resurrection further removes her from the series' more realist human characters: as (merely) a supernatural creature, guided by predestination and stripped of her agency, Kara's

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<sup>11</sup> For example, her husband Anders is severely injured and becomes a barely-articulate cyborg.

potential to challenge the status quo is diluted. However, *I'm Not Dead*, the final vid of the trilogy discussed in this chapter, addresses this change and presents the fourth-season Kara as possessing an interiority as complex as her human predecessor; this is accomplished in part through the continuity of character and narrative development implied through the use of Pink's songs. More significantly, this is accomplished because the vids are adaptations that work to make sense of the character's experience with an emotional immediacy which lessens the distancing effect of paranormal science fiction. *Battlestar's* use of complicated personal narratives is amplified in the vid trilogy; the vids eliminate discussions of political and social philosophy and policy to focus on the immediate emotional experience of a single character.

### ***God Is A DJ (2006), Part One***

I begin my discussion of this case study with an analysis of Dualbunny's vid *God Is A DJ* (2006), a vid that highlights issues of representation of gender in the television genres of science fiction and action. As one character in *Battlestar Galactica's* ensemble narrative, Kara's story is one of several plot threads across the series. Dualbunny's trilogy, which continues with *Cuz I Can* (2007) and *I'm Not Dead* (2009), elevates Kara to a starring role, and addresses the character's representation of non-traditional womanhood. *God Is A DJ* extracts this one character from the elaborate narrative, and adapts that narrative in terms that emphasise her story and make her into the hero of this version of *Battlestar*. As a mini-melodrama, the vid is the story of a woman, and is constructed out of clips that represent both that which is most important to her, and that which is vital in understanding her as the main character of this adapted narrative. John Mercer and Martin Shingler's overview of melodrama notes that this genre is



regularly equated with the ‘woman’s film’ in feminist film scholarship (2004: 27); insofar as this vid has a female protagonist, uses a female artist’s song to tell its story and make its argument, and is produced for a largely female audience, this vid can be considered a variant of the woman’s film, and indeed, can elicit a response of intense emotion common to the melodrama/woman’s film.<sup>12</sup> The vid is not concerned with the series’ political allegories: other characters appear only in relation to Kara. It is not a work that extracts only ‘girl-friendly’ parts of *Battlestar*, but one that reconfigures the character’s representation in relation to the longer narrative from which it is taken. Nor is it constructing an argument about what modern women *should* be; rather, it focuses on how this specific female character can be viewed.



Figure 47, *God Is A DJ*: left to right, top and bottom, opening sequence of the vid.

*God Is A DJ* premiered at VividCon 2006, as part of the Club Vivid vidshow<sup>13</sup>, following the end of *Battlestar*’s second season. As a character study, it begins and

<sup>12</sup> As discussed in my Introduction, early scholarship established this particular fan culture as overwhelmingly female; later work has not demonstrated significant change.

<sup>13</sup> Since melodrama is a genre of emotional excess, it is notable that Club Vivid replaces orderly lines of chairs and silent audiences with a dance floor and an audience encouraged to sing and dance.

ends with what we know of the character. The vid's first clip is from Kara's introduction in the first episode, and the final clip is from the final episode of the second season. The vid uses this introduction to her character as its starting point, it sets up the expectations of the vid: the focus/character, the tone it takes, and the themes it will draw on. The vid opens (see Figure 47) with a scene of Kara winning at cards, with title cards punctuating the actions of gathering in her winnings and drinking alcohol. While the beginning suggests the vid will be about pleasure and/or leisure, this presumption is tempered by the next (pre-lyrics) sequence of quick clips, including a flashback to her fiancé's funeral and of her crash onto a desert planet. This shift from showing Kara in control to more vulnerable moments, from facing the camera and dominating the frame to having her face alternately obscured and moving out of the shot, establishes that this character has moments of strength and weakness, and that the vid will address those highs and lows. The vid ultimately constructs a version of *Battlestar's* narrative that argues Kara's outlook on life is about making the best of positive and negative moments, largely by seeking pleasure and distraction. In the words of the song, her ability to 'take what you're given/ it's all how you use it' is what helps her to overcome various obstacles. Further, the opening sequence establishes the vid's balanced blend of personal and professional narratives. As noted earlier, this is typical of contemporaneous long-form serial television drama; the vid preserves these two aspects of the character's life in its adaptation of the larger series.

Unlike a scholarly analysis might, *God Is A DJ* does not contrast this character with other female characters in *Battlestar*, or to more general representational norms: it narrows its focus down to the representation of Kara herself. As previously noted, the context of *Battlestar* as an adaptation caused this non-traditional femininity to be

read in terms reminiscent of Yvonne Tasker's 'comic-strip' type heroines, whose prowess 'marks them as transgressive, as perverse' (1993: 30). The intertextual 'transgender' reading, explored earlier in this chapter, is an insufficient explanation of this feminist performance of gender: in Moore's *Battlestar*, Kara Thrace has always been female. As a representation of femininity, this vid preserves Starbuck's cigar-smoking, liquor-drinking, card-playing habits, and showcases the character's abilities both in piloting and in hand-to-hand combat; however, her female gender is reinforced by the actress's physical presence. *God Is A DJ* does not argue that to see a woman perform actions usually performed by men is perversion; rather, its assertive and persuasive mode of address naturalises the Kara shown in this vid and does not mark this version of the character's presentation as transgressive.<sup>14</sup> Pink's song, with its rough and throaty vocals and electric guitars, is the vid's other model of femininity. The vid does not approach Kara as a problem; it confidently integrates masculine military stereotypes with feminine attributes in its representation of this female character. The vid naturalises the female-centred diegesis it creates, through the unambiguous confidence in Pink's performance of her song.

Instrumentally, the song is introduced with a plucked acoustic guitar under a subtle synthesised sound; this electronic thread is quickly joined by simple drum fill and more ambient (though rhythmically structured) synthesised noise. The blend of the acoustic guitar, albeit electrified through a pickup, and live drums with electronic

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<sup>14</sup> I do not read the vid as purposely representing transgressive behaviour or subjectivity; the predominant pleasure is arguably closer to an aspirational science fiction social construction that makes a diegesis where Kara is not transgressive, rather than a pleasure in watching Kara's transgressive acts. There is transgression in the vidder's manipulation of existing texts; however, within vid genres, character study vids are based in a promise for a truthful or authentic (re-)presentation of the character. The Kara in the vid is shown performing actions that are wholly her own and not overtly compared either to male fighter pilots or to Dirk Benedict.

sounds connotes a blend of rock sensibility and processed pop to position the song (and therefore the vid) as adopting the acoustic semiotics of both the authentic self-expression of a singer-songwriter and a more fabricated pop persona. The tension embedded in this construction of authenticity is heard in the choice of live drums instead of a drum machine. The core of the instrumentation, the guitar and drums, is therefore less mediated and can connote a direct, honest and authentic form of musical self-expression. Accordingly, the electronic elements are used as fill and colour to augment that authentic core. Acoustically, then, the song begins with this statement of authenticity cloaked in a more polished pop sensibility; this is not an unusual technique in pop music, but worth noting when it is used. This double-claim to a polished exterior (or a public face) and a rougher subjectivity is well-used in the latter half of the vid to undercut the devil-may-care enthusiasm of the vid's beginning.

Before the lyrics begin, Pink hums and laughs over the introduction. This connotes a woman (both the star persona of Pink and the fictional Kara) who cannot be contained by a strict verse-chorus structure. The vid's first three clips are taken from the character's introduction in the series. The quick upward camera movement of the clip between the title cards – following Kara raising and drinking from a shot glass – begins with a tightly-framed shot of her cleavage; the sequence establishes Kara as the main character of the vid, and also makes a clear statement of *this* Starbuck's gender. The song's suggestion of rule-breaking establishes this character as woman who narratively challenges authority and whose representation also defies simple norms. Even without her voice, Kara's subjectivity is affirmed through the vid's frequent use of shots of her face. Significantly, these are not shots of her speaking, but of looking, inviting the audience to view the world from her perspective: how she sees them and

how she sees herself. Considering the lyrics ‘it’s all how you use it’, her look implies a constant evaluation of her circumstances to figure out how to use what she has.



**Figure 48**, *God Is A DJ*: ‘It’s all how you use it’; Kara makes her escape, clips taken from a sequence which visually quotes press coverage of American soldier Jessica Lynch (cf. Sharp 2010).

*God Is A DJ* constructs and emphasises moments where Kara appears to be living by Pink’s philosophy of ‘take what you’re given/ it’s all how you use it’. In the final chorus, Kara’s escape from the Cylon breeding experiment in ‘The Farm’ (2.5), depicted in Figure 48, uses her act of stabbing her captor (the Cylon Simon [Rick Worthy]) as a message of control and empowerment. Yvonne Tasker’s work on female action heroes details the scarcity of such characters: instead, ‘More often female characters are either raped or killed, or both, in order to provide a motivation for the hero’s revenge’ (Tasker 1993: 16). One of *Battlestar*’s early successes in trope subversion, of the sort that Stoy (2010) applauds in her overview of the series’ narrative decay, addresses this use of women in action genres. The Cylon facility in ‘The Farm’ is designed to use captured human women as tissue donors and living

incubators for the production of Cylon/human children.<sup>15</sup> Despite her injuries, Kara fights her way out alone – captioned in the vid by the lyrics ‘you get what you’re given/ it’s all how you use it’ – not waiting for (or expecting) any male characters to rescue her. This violation is therefore not a set-up for heroic revenge, but for Kara herself to accomplish her own escape. Sharp argues that the episode’s art direction and blocking ‘evokes the most famous image’ (Sharp 2010: 64) of the 2003 rescue of captured American soldier Jessica Lynch. The vid cuts directly from a clip of Kara falling unconscious to a scene several days later where she stabs the Cylon ‘doctor’ in the neck. The vid does not include clips from intermediate scenes – in which Kara discovers that the seemingly-benign, human-run hospital is a Cylon facility – and instead cuts directly to this action. Rather than preserving sequences where she appears to be a passive victim, the vid chooses a clip full of motion, positioning Kara as actively reacting to her circumstances. This is not about her knowledge, or her investigative skills, but rather the actions she takes to rescue herself. As a construction of Kara’s subjectivity, the upbeat tone of the vid suggests an inner life for the character that does not dwell on these moments of powerlessness. Unlike the characters described by Tasker, this is an instance of the vid drawing attention to the feminist potential of Kara, as a female character in an action genre able to take her own revenge. Aesthetically, the motion within the clip matches the surrounding clips of explosions and science fiction action. As the final repetition of the chorus, the emphasis placed on this moment solidifies the analysis of this character as resilient and self-reliant.

As explored here, character study vids demonstrates a complexity in the way images can be used to serve a song, as shown in the way the narrative of two seasons

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<sup>15</sup> As already noted, Laura Shapiro’s multifandom vid *Stay Awake* (2010) addresses this trope.

of *Battlestar* are condensed and reshaped in the vid's adaptation to emphasise Kara's agency and motivation. The relationship between song and image in a vid exists in a more complex hierarchy – negotiating two pre-existing texts, rather than a sequence of images created to serve the song – meaning there are different matters at stake in handling the realities of diegesis and visualisation of lyrics. Through the combination of song and re-edited moving images, Kara inhabits Pink's landscape of LA parties and broken families, just as Pink inhabits Kara's post-apocalyptic allegorical science fiction.

### **The Star Image of Pink**

As already stated, narrative and meaning in popular music are communicated through lyrics and instrumentation, as well as structure, genre, and public persona. The three vids in this case study each use a different song from the artist Pink. Pink is known for a deeply confessional and confrontational style of autobiographical (albeit co-written) songwriting, expressing a rich interiority across a body of work, covering an abusive childhood, a failed marriage and the tension between revelling in the freedom of a life filled with alcohol and excessive behaviour, while understanding those destructive aspects. The personal details Pink includes in her lyrics – both confessions and boasts – are made to broadly match elements of Kara's story; the vids take these existing correspondences and intensify the link between singer and character as they adapt and condense the episodes.

By using Pink songs for all three vids, the vidder Dualbunny employs consistent point of cultural reference, adapting aspects of Pink's celebrity image to inform this re-

presentation of Kara.<sup>16</sup> This celebrity image draws on ‘tough’ (tomboyish, aggressive) connotations more expected in rock genres than in pop music, sometimes shaping her public performance to directly address gender stereotyping. Diane Railton and Paul Watson offer the following analysis of the music video for Pink’s song ‘Stupid Girls’ (2006), which parodies and satirises ‘fellow female pop stars and other famous women. [... T]he video deploys parody to critique normative definitions of sexualised female identity, that is to say, a culture which equates idealised femininity with “stupidity”’ (2011: 17).



**Figure 49**, ‘Stupid Girls’ music video: in which Pink’s ‘putative challenge to normative femininity [is] realised through Pink’s performance of what are traditionally male roles’ (Railton and Watson 2011: 17), as politician (left) and equal participant in casual sport (right).

These representations of such stereotyped female celebrity identities, performed by Pink herself, are balanced by counter-examples, such as politicians and sports stars, that offer a ‘putative challenge to normative femininity [...] realised through Pink’s performance of what are traditionally male roles’ (Railton and Watson 2011: 17; see Figure 49). A further effect is to demonstrate the way identity, and particularly gendered identity, is ‘selected, produced and performed within specific

<sup>16</sup> Dualbunny has frequently used Pink songs in vids. These include: *One Foot Wrong* (2011), a character study of Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) as she appears in *Batman Returns* (Tim Burton, 1992); *Missundaztood* (2011), a character study of Wickham (Tom Riley) from *Lost in Austen* (ITV, 2008); and *Who Knew?* (2010), a Kara/Lee *Battlestar Galactica* relationship vid. This specific Kara-focused trilogy is identified as such by the vidder. Each vid’s title is taken from the title of its soundtrack.



discursive formations' (2011: 19) but the binary choice offered in the music video between 'stupid' feminine activities (e.g. playing with dolls), and the masculine alternative (e.g. joining an American football team) 'negates the possibility of engaging with and finding value in the multiple identity positions which are possible within the overarching categories of femininity and womanhood' (2011: 20). While this might seem, as Railton and Watson argue, to reject femininity in favour of feminism, in their analysis of Pink's celebrity image beyond the single music video, they find that the 'model of contemporary womanhood' she provides 'is one in which it is possible to be intelligent and good-looking, to be politically motivated and work within the popular, to be sexy *and* respected, to be successful *and* feminine'; therefore the 'Stupid Girls' video is less a rejection of femininity, and more one where a 'relevant form of postfeminist feminist identity' can be negotiated<sup>17</sup> (2011: 35).

As discussed in the Introduction, the music video form is a relevant reference point for the discussion of popular music in television narratives and in the vid; while the form is mainly concerned with performance (cf. Gow 1992). Diane Railton and Paul Watson have described a 'narrative' genre of music video, where a 'fictional diegesis', or narrative sequence, illustrates or augments the narrative described by the lyrics (2011: 41-65).<sup>18</sup> According to Railton and Watson, part of the purpose and function of music video is to 'perform some function of legitimation and authentication' on behalf of the performer (2011: 62). With vids, the authenticity of the recording artist is less the issue; if anything, the lyrics need to be 'read' more directly so as to not overwhelm

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<sup>17</sup> This potential for an embodied 'postfeminist feminism' is therefore used in the trilogy to complicate the aforementioned 'post-feminist pinup' label applied to Kara (Tranter 2007: 56)

<sup>18</sup> Where musical montage sequences in television narratives are a step away from the narrative towards non-linear abstraction, the narrative music video begins from a point of abstraction and works towards audio-visual storytelling.

the play of recontextualising images. The burden of authenticity, then, shifts to the relationship between the vid's source material and the vid-as-adaptation, and how 'truthful' a vid is, or if it has emotional resonance. The character in a vid remains distinct from the singer; the two are not conflated into a singular identity, so the overture to authenticity is made in spite of this distance. Kara Thrace is not an LA party girl, and Pink does not fight alien robots in space, but the broad strokes of their parallel experiences inform the character study performed in the vids.

Hutcheon suggests that adaptations are possessed of a "palimpsestuous" intertextuality' as texts which are 'openly and directly connected to recognisable other works' (2013: 21). Particularly palimpsestuous adaptations occur when previous versions are exceptionally visible in the new work: in that vids are directly made from their source, this visibility is compulsory. The definitions established in *Battlestar Galactica* and in Pink's music – of serious, 'quality', realist science fiction and of aggressive pop-rock femininity – must both be present and visible in Dualbunny's three vids in order for the vids to function as complete texts. Hutcheon argues that, 'no matter what our response [to a palimpsestuously intertextual adaptation], our intertextual expectations about medium and genre, as well as about this specific work, are brought to the forefront of our attention' (2013: 22). In watching the vids as re-edits of *Battlestar* and recontextualisations of Pink, the expectations of series and songs inform and direct the vids' audience.

The Kara trilogy therefore draws out and emphasises one aspect of *Battlestar's* hybridity. Dualbunny's trilogy adapts the series in such a way that it argues for a rich interiority for the female Starbuck in science fiction, a genre which is less known for its emotional aspects as its intellectual consideration of humanity, its brash adventuring,

or its fondness for killer robots. As adaptations, vids remake their source material: the new work (vid) recalls the narrative of the source, but presents it differently.

Fundamentally, this is more than summary; it is analysis (cf. Mittell 2006, Brunsdon and Spigel 2008). The vid's potential for critical analysis is a different kind of work than academic analyses, not work that trumps or replaces critical writing, but that has different aims, and that is able to present an argument in an entirely different way. As an adaptation, repetition of the original narrative is narrowed, directed and its context augmented by the song choice.

### **Popular Music and Television**

It is important to situate the use of popular music in vids within a broader discussion of how music is used in film and television because the songs are the mechanisms through which the character studies are produced in this vid genre. As argued in my Introduction, the song choice in a vid directs and shapes the audience's decoding of the vid. Unlike a print collage, which can be experienced at the viewer's leisure and allows some freedom in making sense of the work's fragments as the eye can wander in any order, vids are more restricted. The constraints of duration and linear progression of lyrics introduced by the song function as captions, and narrow the range of possible interpretations.<sup>19</sup> These constraints are of particular use in a character study vid, due to the precision of the analysis needed to create an incisive or perceptive character study.

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<sup>19</sup> These constraints are malleable; given the technical skill on display in an average vid, it is presumably not beyond a vidder's editing abilities to remove an unwanted repetition of a chorus or to swap verses. However, even if the song is reconstructed, its linearity and temporality do offer a structuring boundary to the vid's possibilities.

Despite obvious differences between film and television, interactions in the immediate moment between image and sound are comparable in both media. Both are forms of audio-visual storytelling and a pop song may be used as readily in a film as on television. While television's use of sound and music have functions beyond the narrative, the connotations (and interpretive keys required to unlock them) of specific pre-existing songs in television episodes are sometimes the same as in film.<sup>20</sup> This discussion of the use of music in film and television therefore begins with discussing the relationship between music and narrative as a way to contextualise vids' use of instrumentation and lyrics, and is followed by an overview of the connotation of musical idioms and clichés, an analysis of examples of songs used in television narratives through musical montage sequences, and a suggestion that the vid form exploits a use of music as compensation for film and television's medium-specific shortcomings.

The study of music on television is dominated by analyses of performances, leaving the use of pre-existing music on television distinctly under-theorised. In his introduction to the collection *Popular Music and Television in Britain* (2010), Ian Inglis states that 'popular music has become an integral, almost indispensable, feature of TV entertainment, either as soundtrack or subject' (4); however, only three of fourteen chapters in this collection are concerned with the use of music as 'soundtrack', with

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<sup>20</sup> Where sound in film exclusively supports the narrative (with the exception of production bumpers), televisual sound has other uses. Rick Altman (1987) argues that television audiences are distracted; television sound therefore signals when to pay closer attention. K. J. Donnelly (2002) suggests the fragmentary nature of television is at odds with sustained film-like scores: 'Instead, what is required is that certain moments are emphasised, noted as significant, monumentalised and aestheticized' (331). Simon Frith (2002) argues that 'the most common' uses of music on television are conventions derived from advertising spots, and therefore an interruption (or even corruption) of the 'realism' of television. Michele Hilmes (2008) offers a more subtle view of sound as guiding the audience, noting the 'prominence and importance of metadiegetic and extradiegetic sound (nondiegetic narration, particularly) in television's varied levels of textuality – episodic text, series text, and supertext' (155). To Hilmes, sound indicates when, how and where that attention should be focused.

the rest being concerned with music as subject (e.g. via music performance and documentary). Genre and format complicate a general theorisation of the use of pre-existing music; note the difference, for example, between light entertainment programmes using a pre-recorded track for artists to mime their 'performance' and narrative fiction using popular songs as non-diegetic score. A further difficulty is the lack of a singular 'music' or 'television' with which to generalise. Hilmes (2008), in particular, argues that television's generic complexity renders impossible a simplistic description (let alone theorisation) of television music. Unlike a narrative fiction film 'there is no television ur-text' (Hilmes 2008: 154), indicating that 'television' itself can refer to production, exhibition, and all the other fiction and non-fiction and textual fragments, and the layers of diegesis at which they appear. This means that talking about television music first requires answering the question 'which television', as well as 'which music'. For this chapter, the most pertinent use of music in television is a pre-recorded song of any musical genre used outside the diegesis of an episode of narrative.<sup>21</sup> Arguably, music video is a subgenre of television which is also related to the vid, but in the non-performance narrative genre described above (Sackoff's performance is not edited to make it look as if Kara is performing Pink's song). Non-performance uses of music on television remove a textual connection between song and performer, but instead supply a wealth of other semiotic information. In exploring this field, I focus on instances where some or all of a pre-recorded song is heard as part of the sound mix of a television presentation. I am particularly interested in the interaction between song and narrative, specifically in genres such as narrative fiction

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<sup>21</sup> Rather than a score in the film sense (composed for the programme or compiled from existing cues), or a performance segment with the artist playing live or miming a pre-recorded track.

where specific popular songs may be used in presenting a story, but are not the programme's subject.

Claudia Gorbman (1998) writes that the classical Hollywood film score 'inflects scenes with emotional or dramatic resonance, suggests character, setting and mood, influences perceptions of narrative time and space, creates formal unity and a sense of continuity' (44). In this, film music has a subsidiary role, working behind or under the audience's attention to create its effects. After the studio era, the use of pre-recorded music allows for a postmodern reflexivity in scoring that does not 'function illustratively and subordinately' but instead 'shatter[s] the aesthetic of unobtrusiveness' of the classical scores (Gorbman 1998: 45). The vid form takes full advantage of this kind of reflexivity: if the song choices made by vidders resulted in unobtrusive 'scores', vids would not be legible texts. The overall argument of *God Is A DJ*, discussed above, relies on 'reading' the lyrics of Pink's song against the life and decisions of Kara; as the vid's score, the song must be obtrusive. Film scores are never neutral, and even if music is not obtrusively reflexive, it still acts upon the narrative and the audience. Even the few vids made to songs without lyrics demand their audiences notice the music, as the song choice will structure and guide the interpretation of the vid's recontextualised images.<sup>22</sup> While random allocation of song to image can produce compelling juxtapositions, vids are constructed with much care

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<sup>22</sup> The 'Let My Lyrics Go!' vidshow at VividCon 2012 included eighteen vids without lyrics, such as a *Doctor Who* vid titled *1969* (beccatoria, 2011) set to Daft Punk's 'Rinzler', to *Danse Macabre* (chaila, 2012), which paired *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* with the Camille Saint-Saëns work of the same name. A further example, which premiered at the same convention, is *Mr. Brightside* (jarrow, 2012). This compelling example uses a Vitamin String Quartet cover of the song 'Mr. Brightside' by The Killers in a vid of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999). The vid responds to the love triangle narrative of the song's lyrics, even as the lyrics are not actually heard in the vid; the classical instrumentation of the cover version arguably better suits the film's period setting and evocation of European glamour than the original. In the convention programme, the description of the vid is a line from the song ('How did it end up like this?'), creating an explicit connection to the aural space where lyrics could have been, if the original song had been used.

and deliberation: a vid song choice must 'fit' in some way, as the song must be made to stand as a reasonable commentary on the vid's source material (an argument made through editing choices). This could be either an apparently close textual match – Pink and Kara share a general physical resemblance and attitude – or something entirely unrelated that can be made into a coherent metaphor. In working with vids, especially with character study vids, it is tempting to begin and end an analysis with song lyrics – as a function of structure and narrative – without also considering instrumentation, though as I have and will argue, such an approach leaves a great deal unexplored in relation to the way meaning is made through music in the vid.

In the special issue of *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* on film music and narration (Spring 2012), Nick Davis offers a Klein bottle as a way to describe how music can be both 'inside' and 'outside' narrative space (2012). A Klein bottle is a mathematical surface (or 'topological figure') that 'has no inside and outside, no recto and verso, but is one continuous surface' (2012: 14); in Davis's analogy, songs in film and television are not wholly outside (or above) a story, but part of its fabric, experienced simultaneously as part of and separate from the narrative form and content. A song might be extradiegetic, but it is not extranarrative. With pre-recorded music in film and television, not only are the songs part of a continuous narrative surface, but they are also part of their own separate social or cultural narrative. Put another way, the composer Igor Stravinsky's famous dismissal of film music as 'aural wallpaper' (Dahl [1946] 2010: 275) misses a significant point that a film score 'may be just as essential as wallpaper (or set design generally) in characterising the *feel* and emotional content of the space in which the action takes place - but does not narrate said action any more than wallpaper does' (B. Winters 2012: 5). Instead, rather than

music being separate from the narrative, it should be considered one of many elements that combine to create the narrative, even if it is not directly narrating action. The melodramas of Douglas Sirk typify the possibilities of 'expressive' use of *mise-en-scène*, 'in which colour, gesture, costume, music, lighting and camera-work all conspired to produce cinematic texts rich with suppressed meaning and significance' (Mercer and Shingler 2004: 2). In the vid, it is the interaction between the song and the source video/s that creates meaning; neither element dominates in creating the vid's narrative. Kara Thrace, tough female character, is not over-determined by Pink, outspoken female recording artist. Instead, Pink's song structures an examination of Kara but does not itself completely define that reading. Pre-recorded popular music can therefore be used like a prop: it may remain in the background of a scene or become an essential part of the action.

The use of music as a prop or wallpaper is especially apparent in historical television series; for example, in WWII-set comedy *Dad's Army* (BBC, 1968-1977), period-appropriate songs 'are used to link scenes within the episodes and, not least, ...create a sense of ironic humour while defining and recapturing the mood of the period' (Whiteley 2010: 124). Likewise, as Estella Tincknell (2010) argues, the use of early-seventies rock music in *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007) is a form of aural set-dressing that adopts the loose set of ideas and associations the listener may have with the songs. Sets and costume can be meticulously constructed to suit the historical period; song choices have a similar ability to 'dress' a soundtrack. The use of music from a noticeably different time period – contemporary music for a period piece – is a reflexive device that prompts the audience to consider thematic links between the contemporary sentiment and historical narrative. Vids, on the other hand, frequently



employ contemporary songs in vids of older films or television series; this can have the effect of taking on the vidder's voice, speaking from the present to evaluate historical texts. The deliberately anachronistic aural set-dressing is not meant to help construct a seamless historical diegesis, but will work thematically in other ways. The *Star Trek* vids discussed in Chapter Three are examples of this variety of anachronism, as are *Starships!* (Bironic, 2012) and *Titanium* (Gianduja Kiss, 2013) discussed in Chapter Four, whereas the Kara/Pink trilogy is roughly contemporaneous with songs and series all produced within the last decade.<sup>23</sup>

The experience of popular music is similarly informed by accumulation of meaning. Kay Dickinson points out that pre-recorded songs used in television and film, 'have already established a set of definitions for themselves' as they 'usually held a prior place in the world' (2004: 100). There is, however, a danger in using 'music to connote the past... given the polysemic character of music as a cultural form and the way in which pre-recorded song may be stitched into (or pulled apart from) diegetic meaning' (Tincknell 2012: 163). Indeed, it is reasonable to argue that pre-recorded popular music can be 'more powerful than traditional cues' in connoting specific cultural information both 'in a certain time and place' and 'through a span of generations' (Rodman 2010: 81). Songs have a greater mobility than films or television episodes: individual songs are heard in public and private spaces, incidentally or by choice, and over time. Traditional cues will not have had a prior place in the world;

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<sup>23</sup> Bacon-Smith notes that vids provided motivation for the fans in her study to reintroduce themselves to popular music and/or engage with a musical zeitgeist (1992: 177); the use of current songs, no matter the age of the video source, can become an implicit statement about the topicality of the vid and its analyses. This is one possible reason why Barkley and Destina used Disturbed's recent cover of 'Land of Confusion' in their vid of *V* (NBC, 1983-1985), *Land of Confusion* (2011), rather than the 1986 Genesis original, and why Kandy Fong used Céline Dion in her 1997 vid *It's All Coming Back to Me Now* (discussed in Chapter Three), rather than a song contemporary to the video source's original release.

even in the use of stock cues (cf. Donnelly 2005: 119-129) their prior place will have been *as scores*, not as independent works. These instances will aggregate associations a listener can make with a song, informing their next experience of it. These associations are beyond the control of a music director; however elements such as genre, time period, instrumentation, style of vocal performance and tempo can be relied upon for their connotation, and are duly 'stitched into' a sequence. In the context of vids, these formal elements are added to a sequence made from video that already has its own 'established set of definitions' (Dickinson 2004: 100). In relation to this chapter's case study, the arguments about Kara Thrace are constructed by her textual proximity to Pink in each vid through the vidder's authorial intervention and use of music to create the imagined subject position.

A song's specific connotations are used, as Alexander Binns says, 'to deepen the narrative for those with the interpretative keys' (2007: 195). This raises a question of the audibility and noticeability of popular music in a score: what are the implications for using a referent that *requires* unlocking? Of course, the use of certain instruments, arrangements or specific 'musical idioms' (Dickinson 2004: 106) and 'referential clichés' (Binns 2007: 195) go a long way to provide the interpretive keys. Even if the specific song is unfamiliar, its genre, meter and instrumentation will supply a matrix of information to aid the interpretation. Electric guitars align with a musical idiom of rock music, and a cliché of youthful rebellion. The acoustic guitar, on the other hand, tends to be quieter, slower, and more intimate. These idioms and clichés can be used ironically or subversively: for example, a heavy rock song can be used as aural wallpaper for a character failing to achieve (or reclaim) the said spirit of youthful rebellion and therefore used to suggest the character is 'trying too hard' or is 'uncool',

whereas the same song used for a performance that aligns more closely with the ideals of youthful rebellion will have the opposite effect. There is a large amount of cultural information communicated by a song's idioms and clichés, and much can depend on the audience's foreknowledge. Lyrics provide more precise and more complex connotations than the more open semiotics of instrumentation; working together, these are used in character study vids to construct a narrative space for subjectivity.

Indeed, the audience's knowledge of a specific song may affect the way the narrative is experienced. What follows are two contrasting examples of recognisable music used non-diegetically to this end. The oscillation of memory that Hutcheon (2013) describes in the experience of adaptations is evocative in illustrating the different, yet simultaneous, use of songs as wallpaper or as prop. For example, the opening chords of Jeff Buckley's 'Last Goodbye' are used at a key moment in *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001). The song's use is ironic, although the opening lyrics – 'This is our last goodbye' – are not heard. Its use non-diegetically signals the end of a romantic relationship during a sequence which seems to establish the film's central couple, David and Sofia (Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz). For audience members unfamiliar with the song, its minute-long introduction is easily read as a light pop-rock cue, in which the song's laid-back solo slide guitar augment the couple's happy and flirtatious parting. For viewers who know the song, however, its use as an instrumental cue seems incongruous. The next sequence contains the car crash that separates David from Sofia in reality; their subsequent scenes together take place in a virtual-reality dream, meaning therefore that their parting was indeed their last goodbye.<sup>24</sup> The song's instrumentation creates an immediate emotional effect, but knowledge of its

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<sup>24</sup> And perhaps, as the lyrics eventually conclude, that 'maybe [he] didn't know [her] at all'.

unheard lyrics contradict this emotion by way of foreshadowing the plot's central twist. The denotation of the song's unheard lyrics is at odds with the connotations of its instrumental clichés. 'Last Goodbye' functions perfectly well as wallpaper in this sequence, though as a prop its meaning is much more pointed.

The single use of popular music in *Battlestar Galactica* demonstrates the resilience of popular music's connotations. Having previously relied on traditional scores, in its third and fourth seasons the series featured a cover of Bob Dylan's 'All Along the Watchtower', reportedly produced so as to not resemble any 'Earth' pop song (Papanikolaou 2008: 230). Eftychia Papanikolaou argues,

Producer and composer seem to be asking of us the impossible: to strip the song of all its musical and cultural codes, to resist reading in the music any attempt to historicize the narrative. They are asking us to listen to it as pure sound, as if for the first time, irrespective of any previous encoding – intertextuality is turned on its head. The televisual narrative has appropriated a culturally, historically, and musically specific song, whose aesthetic substance is readily available to the perceiver, and whose diegetic profile in relation to the plot is yet to be determined. (2008: 230-231)

*Battlestar* asked its audience to resist understanding the song's connotations, in opposition to how music is commonly used. The semiotic evisceration of 'All Along the Watchtower' upsets the expected role of popular music in film and television, a puzzling move for a series so concerned with realism and allegory. Its re-coded instrumentation and vocal performance<sup>25</sup> cannot fully mask the song's recognisable

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<sup>25</sup> With Middle Eastern percussion and 'mystical' vocal performance that is markedly different to the original recording made by Bob Dylan, or the well-known Jimi Hendrix Experience rock cover.

lyrics, melody, or basic chord structure. To return to the analogy of music as a prop, the song as used throughout *Battlestar* becomes an element of set-dressing so visible as to be distracting: '[u]sually it is the narrative characters who are deaf to the music – they are not supposed to be able to listen to nondiegetic sounds; here it is the perceiver who is impelled to be deaf' (Papanikolaou 2008: 231). Given this de-specification at play in the lone piece of popular music in *Battlestar*, vids of the series that use recognisable and contemporary radio singles are, perhaps, creating a version of the series that uses music in a more familiar mode. Song choice as a tool for familiarising the series relates to the vid adaptations of *Battlestar* into melodramas.

Musical montage sequences in television are often used to communicate mood or emotion, with non-diegetic music used to evoke subjectivity rather than advancing plot. Music, both pre-existing and specially-composed, is used on television in episodic credits sequences; Hilmes's description of the form and function of credits (2008: 159) broadly resembles the vid form's relationship with music. As Hilmes describes it, the music and visuals in a credits sequence offer a thematic overview of the series, set up generic expectations for the episode to follow, and operate outside the episode's diegesis, but not completely externally to the series as a whole. The use of music here has a function in narrating a summary of the series, but not necessarily the specifics of that week's episode. Donnelly (2005) notes the oddity of pop songs used as theme songs: this is 'musical material that is apparently alien to the programme subject matter' that is nonetheless 'assimilated by television' (145). Indeed, the band The Who is unrelated to forensic science, but that was no barrier to using that band's songs as theme tunes for *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000 – present) and its spin-

offs.<sup>26</sup> In the vid form, songs are naturalised in their new context not because of repetition (as in Donnelly's example of the *Coronation Street* [Granada Television, 1960 – present] theme tune) but through the intensive correlation of lyrics to images and the juxtapositions created therein. The so-called *recruiter* vid (cf. Gray 2010: 154) is somewhat similar to a credits sequence that uses popular music: a recruiter vid being one used by one fan to 'recruit' another into the vid's fandom. These vids are very clear in how they communicate points of interest, such as featured cast and key relationships, or representing the source's use of genre tropes as an enticement to watch the film or series. *God Is A DJ* can be used as a recruiter vid because its summary of Kara offers a thematic overview of her role in the series, and models an emotional response to this character, though as already discussed, it is more likely to be understood as a character study vid.

More traditional uses of pre-existing songs in television occur in musical montage sequences; these montage sequences can have different roles to play in the narrative. One frequent use of songs in television narratives is as a non-diegetic accompaniment to a montage sequence within the narrative, where lyrics and instrumentation colour and shape the sequence's emotional pitch.<sup>27</sup> Musically-accompanied and dialogue-less, montages can also be used as codas at the ends of episodes in contemporary serial drama; for example, *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005-present) will regularly use this as a non-narrative 'breathing room' for the audience to

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<sup>26</sup> Each series uses a different song by The Who, as follows: *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, 'Who Are You'; *CSI: Miami* (CBS, 2002-2012), 'Won't Get Fooled Again'; *CSI: New York* (CBS, 2004-2013), 'Baba O'Riley'. The relevance of the songs' lyrics to the series' themes of investigation becomes arguably more tenuous with each spin-off.

<sup>27</sup> This is particularly effective in genres such as police procedurals, where using a song (whole or fragmentary) relieves the burden of having the writers find dialogue for the characters during repetitive scenes, all the while trading on the emotional authenticity of the song's instrumentation.

rest and reflect after the episode's climax.<sup>28</sup> This may also be used for a more general tool for examining character interiority. For example, the series' seventh-season finale episode ('Run' 7.24) takes place at the wedding of one of the team; another character tells her co-workers she will be leaving their team, and consequently, tells the audience she is leaving the series. The song 'As It Seems' by Lily Kershaw plays over the ceremony and dance that follows; continuity edits show the newly-wed couple, their co-workers and friends dancing and laughing, over which the female vocalist sings about change and love. The editing suggests different sections of the lyrics apply to different characters and we are shepherded into reading the relationships between the various members of the ensemble cast as they are narrated by the lyrics.<sup>29</sup> This technique uses a single song to allude to the complexity of relationships and emotional connections at play in this ensemble drama, and to temper the joy of the wedding with pathos regarding the impending change in cast for the upcoming season. In *Criminal Minds*, the ensemble cast typically gathers for a meeting at the start of each episode; therefore this sequence uses this musical montage to unite the team for a final contemplation of these relationships. In contrast, a vid commonly takes a more intensive focus, and includes clips from across the temporal span of the narrative, but the concept of using music to create an introspective or reflexive space is similar.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Julie Brown argues the musically-accompanied montages that are 'a particular favourite for the play-out' of *Ally McBeal* (Fox USA, 1997-2002) episodes serve 'a dramatic recapitulatory function of helping to draw together the various story-lines of the episode' (2001: 285).

<sup>29</sup> This is jarring for a vidfan because the sequence does not maintain a consistent subjectivity.

<sup>30</sup> Somewhat related to this use of music in credits is *Supernatural's* unique take on the 'previouslies', an episode-starting sequence common to serial dramas that compile key clips from previous episodes. While it is common for series to create these sequences from clips containing significant lines of dialogue with subtle re-use of the series' score, the *Supernatural* episode 'Salvation' (1.21) set this sequence to the Kansas song 'Carry On Wayward Son'. The sequence does not entirely replace the clips' original sound, but its emphasis on movement and gesture and song lyrics which mapped well onto the series' themes of filial obligation, helped this sequence appear as a rather vid-like summary of the previous episodes.

The critical literature on the uses of music in film and television offers two ways of using music to convey character and narrative information without actors performing synchronised speech acts: through silent scores, and in programmes in which rely on voice-over acting. Michel Chion sees a similarity between silent cinema and music videos in particular, arguing that ‘it is precisely insofar as music does form its basis, and none of the narration is propelled by *dialogue*, that the music video’s image is fully liberated from the linearity normally imposed by sound’ (1994: 167, author’s emphasis). When providing an overview of the history of film music, Gorbman suggests the ‘semiotic functions’ of silent film scores ‘compensated for the characters’ lack of speech’ before synchronised sound became the norm (1998: 46). K. J. Donnelly, writing on Barry Gray’s scores for Gerry Anderson’s various puppet-based series (such as *Thunderbirds* [ATV, 1965-1966]), notes that ‘the music to some degree compensates for the limited range of facial expressions, adding a further sense of emotion that was lacking in such “wooden” drama’ (2005: 120). In both cases, music is used to offset an emotional deficit caused by the lack of the simultaneous presence of actors’ bodies and their synchronised voices.<sup>31</sup> In silent films, the actor’s body is present without their voice; in puppet work (and indeed, in animation) the actor’s voice is present without their body. Notably, both examples use the word ‘compensation’ to describe the function of music in each kind of production. In one, scores stand in for speech, and in the other musical cues do the work of facial expressions and bodily performance. Not only does this suggest that speech and facial expressions, if missing or drastically limited, leave a gap in performance (and therefore, in the potential of the audience’s

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<sup>31</sup> I acknowledge re-recording dialogue in post-production but for simplicity’s sake will assume unity (in fact or perception) of actor’s body and voice.



identification with or enjoyment of the character being performed), it also argues that the common element to fully realise these characters is to augment their performance with music.

Gorbman's aside about silent cinema scores standing in for the emotive voices of actors and Donnelly's analysis of the role played by humanising the frozen faces of the puppets are therefore important in understanding the function of songs in vids. The parallel between silent cinema and vids is more immediately apparent than with the *Thunderbirds* example; in vids, the characters are silenced by both the literal removal of the source video's soundtrack, and by the development of an aesthetic convention that discourages the use of dialogue-heavy clips in favour of reaction shots, gestures and glances. Glances and gestures become indicators of subtext or a character's motions, but are also provide much more interesting visuals with which to construct a vid. These 'talky face' moments (discussed earlier) are avoided because shots of an actor performing dialogue tend to be framed in close-up, from a static position, and therefore do not include much action or movement in the frame.<sup>32</sup> However, the result is a sequence of clips where characters might not appear to have any power of speech. Like Anderson's marionettes, the version of Kara as seen in *God is a DJ* does open and close her mouth, but not to speak. Like silent films, the vid form relies on non-diegetic sound and intertitles, not synchronised sound, for conveying complexities of character information beyond the actors' bodily performances. The compensation offered by popular songs to the vid is the provision of a voice: not

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<sup>32</sup> A variation is the *Stargate Atlantis* vid *My Brilliant Idea* (lim, 2007), which shows the vid's 'narrating' character delivering an extended monologue – following the rambling, stream-of-consciousness lyrics of the song (Jason Robert Brown's 'I Could Be In Love With Someone Like You') – illustrated with dynamic gesticulation. The amount of motion within the frame and the vid's mode of address (i.e. from the perspective of this verbose character) demonstrates how careful use of dialogue-heavy clips can be true to characterization. The vid also makes heavy use of lim's own animations to add motion.

directly, as dialogue, but as a subjective expression of the emotional lives of characters. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that songs used in vids, especially in character studies, can stand in for the character's internal monologue because the song does not function exclusively as an external addition imposed on the semiotic world of the source material. It *is* an imposition, but one that fills in a missing piece and therefore an imposition that sits quite comfortably. In the adaptation of the vid, music compensates for the contextual unmooring of image and sound alike.

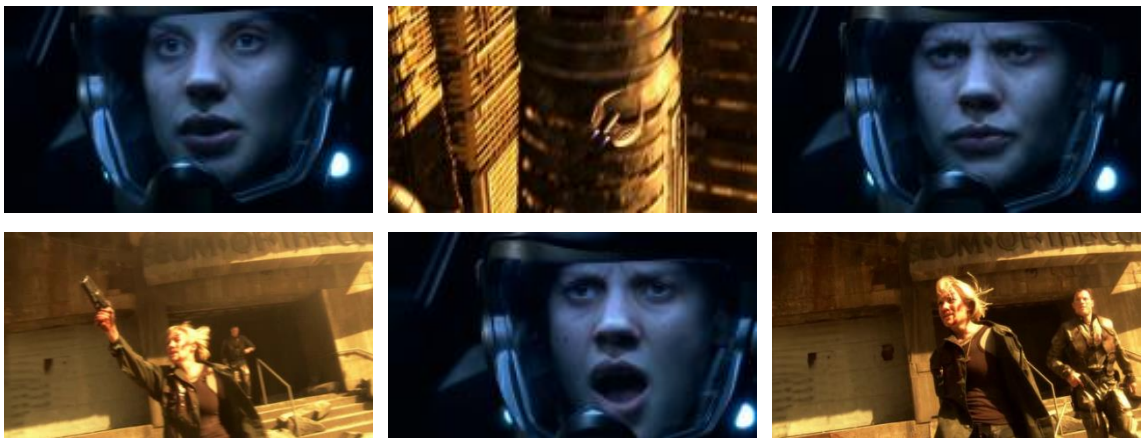


Figure 50, *God Is A DJ*: bridging sequence.

Finally, to test this discussion against one of the vids in question, I finish this section with an analysis of a short sequence in *God Is A DJ* that plays with these concepts of compensation, of the presence and absence of embodied vocalisations, and the familiarity of conventional uses of popular music in film and television. There is a moment of pleasurable subjective disruption in *God is a DJ* when the singer Pink's vocalisations are made to match the head-shaking and mouth movements of Kara (see Figure 50). After the first chorus but before the second verse there is a brief transition passage where the majority of the instrumentation drops away, leaving the bass and live drums for a few measures to play under some abstract vocalisations. Unlike the song's opening, where a similar non-verbal vocalisation leads into the first verse, this section disrupts the high-energy chorus as the electric guitars and other instruments

drop out leaving only percussion and subtle ambient synthesiser tones over which is mixed record-scratch noises and a fractured manipulation of the vocal line.<sup>33</sup> In the vid, this scat-like singing is matched with Kara blinking and shaking her head to bring herself to alertness. Here, more than any point yet in the vid, Pink's voice stands in directly for Kara's. Further, the noticeable manipulation of the vocal track in the song resonates with the formal disruption of the narrative in the vid's re-sequencing of clips.

This sequence rapidly intercuts a blue-tinted close-up of Kara's face with a yellow-tinted sequence taken from the Caprica/Arrow of Apollo plot arc that starts the second season.<sup>34</sup> Following the song's cue, the sequence is a transition between Kara's life aboard *Galactica* and her covert return to the planet Caprica; where the first verse and chorus drew from the miniseries and episodes earlier in the season, the second verse and chorus broadly contextualise the end of the first season and the character arc at the start of the second. The blue-tinted head shake is a single gesture broken up between her arrival on the planet. These yellow-tinted scenes take place on either side of a kinetic fight sequence which itself is not shown in the vid until later, during the second chorus.

This vid sequence takes the in-between lyrical/instrumental moment and makes it signify a moment of change for the character; the yellow sections are taken from a plot arc that saw her defy her commander, leave the fleet and meet her future husband. As the voice of Pink is dubbed onto Kara's movements, it turns the image into a puppet of sorts, aligning the first-person subjectivity of the song with the close-up of Kara by blurring the distance between Pink and Kara. The constraints of the vid

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<sup>33</sup> This aural quotation of remix soundscapes is a continuation of the DJ metaphor in the title/lyrics.

<sup>34</sup> The tinting is present in the original episodes, and not an addition by the vidder.

form limit the amount of the actor's voice that is typically used in any given vid. The loss of Sackhoff's voice is compensated for in Pink's performance; further, what is lost in the concentration of the character is augmented by the connotations and narrative of the chosen song. This decision by the vidder does not exactly break the custom of choosing clips without dialogue, but does subvert the convention sufficiently for a moment of disjuncture that collapses the conceptual segregation between audio and video sources.

However, *compensation* is not a sufficient term: both Gorbman and Donnelly give examples of music contributing efficiently to the audience's ability to read a character, but since vids add lyrics, the denotation of more specific meanings are added deeper than television would otherwise allow. In all three genres discussed above – vids, silent films, and puppet work – music is used to convey an emotional complexity, in which music's specific addition is to make these characters more 'real' or relatable. Beyond these formal instances, music has a history of being used to do the work of dialogue or speech. The expression of profilmic excesses associated with melodrama (see Williams [1984] 2004, 1998) are not limited to performance or dialogue: the combination of music and art direction are actively involved in expressing intense emotions, where 'the *mise-en-scène* directly represents the emotions and conflict that the film's narrative and characters cannot articulate' (Mercer and Shingler 2004: 23). Drawing on Railton and Watson's argument that music videos are used to 'perform some function of legitimation and authentication' of recording artists' credibility (2011: 62), I argue that the use of popular music in vids – particularly in character study vids – helps to elide the ruptures inherent in the artificial/collage nature of the vid form in order to construct a space for character analysis that trades

on the connotative and denotative aspects of popular music to create works that perform authentically and credibly complex characters.

### **Vid Responses to *Battlestar Galactica***

Dualbunny is one of many fans who have vided *Battlestar Galactica*. While the series was still in production, it was the subject of many vids, and this has continued after its finale<sup>35</sup>. Before starting an in-depth analysis of the three main vids of this chapter, I will briefly discuss a few of these contemporary examples to provide an overview of other vid responses to the series. These other vids examine a range of themes, characters and relationships, with each condensing the episodes into vid form. As in the series, Kara is not the main character in these works; these vids use different sections of the series' sprawling story and ensemble cast. *45* (dragonchic, 2008) is about William Adama and his son Lee, and the development of their relationship over the course of the series. The hard rock song used in the vid, from the band Shinedown, deals with themes of anger, guilt and depression; the chorus ends with the lyrics, 'No real reason to accept the way things have changed/ Staring down the barrel of a .45'. The vid puts this specific father/son relationship in the context of the larger events of the series, where clips recalling personal tragedies (such as the accidental death of Lee's brother, which contributed to Lee's estrangement from his father) are balanced with clips of the larger military and civilian losses from the humans' ongoing battle with the Cylons.

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<sup>35</sup> In relation to arguments made in my Review of Literature and Chapter Three, *Battlestar* vids were made prior to the series being released on DVD (cf. Leaver [2008] for a discussion of downloading the series outside the US). For example, the video source for the Kara-focused character study vid *A Place Inside* (dragonchic, 2007) has Sci-Fi Channel watermarking on the lower-right corner of the frame, and is therefore not likely to have been made from format-shifted DVD source.

This vid is primarily concerned with the emotional turmoil suffered by the two men, both who are military leaders (the father as Commander of the fleet, the son as sometimes ranking officer of the pilots<sup>36</sup>), and who are therefore responsible for the well-being of the entire fleet. Like the Dualbunny trilogy at the centre of this chapter, this focus amplifies the melodramatic elements of these characters' stories, drawing out this aspect of *Battlestar's* generic hybrid in vid form. Kara barely appears, though there is one brief shot from the New Caprica storyline after she resigned her commission to join the colonists, but no more where her face is clearly visible. There are clips of Adama's model ship and its figurehead – given to him by Kara, and something that he associates with her – and clips of Lee falling after being caught by Kara's friendly fire (in 2.16 'Sacrifice'), but Kara herself is in neither of those scenes. In the former, the scene in which Adama smashes his model is included to signify the extravagant expression of Adama's response to Kara's apparent death. In the latter, the representation of Lee being shot is about his experience of the physical trauma. Kara herself does not appear in either vid sequence; her off-screen actions take precedence over her direct representation in favour of showing their effect on the vid's two main characters. Instead, the vid is about the emotional crises of the Adama men, particularly Adama's thoughts on his failings as a leader and as a father. The interaction between song and image in this vid allows the brooding lyrics and heavy guitars to build a claustrophobic narrative that condenses the tragedies of the fleet.

A much lighter example is *My Girlfriend Who Lives in Canada* (Fahrbot Drusilla, 2007), which uses a song from the off-Broadway musical *Avenue Q* (Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx, 2003) to parody the relationship between Gaius Baltar (James Callis) and the

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<sup>36</sup> Both characters take different ranks over the course of the series

particular Cylon model Six (Tricia Helfer) who seems to exist as Baltar's hallucination. The song is a frantic explanation of all the virtues of the narrating character's girlfriend 'in Canada', where the happy couple's long-distance relationship explains why no one else has met this remarkable woman, who is beautiful, intelligent, sexually voracious, and likely fictional. The vid collects hallucination sequences, all of which emphasise the supermodel physique of the Six and Baltar's enthusiasm for the situation. In the vid, the double joke is that the Head Six (as she is known, to differentiate her from the other Sixes) enjoys appearing to Baltar in revealing dresses and propositioning him, but while only he can see her, his verbal and physical responses to her can be heard and seen by anyone. Therefore, the rambling narrative of the song becomes a hypothetical explanation Baltar could offer for his behaviour. The other half of the joke relies on the viewer's knowledge of the series' Canadian filming locations and the large proportion of Canadian actors in lead and supporting roles (including Helfer, though not Callis). The double-recognition is one way 'to fully appreciate the transnational ironies arising from the [*Battlestar*] remake's Canadian contexts of production' (McCutcheon 2009: 5). This referential net adds to the pleasure of the vid, with the viewer feeling flattered for knowing the nationality of the actress, or the location of the house that appears extensively in the clips. However, even without this knowledge, the vid is successful in its re-casting of the nervous, serious Baltar as the comically overcompensating narrator of the song.

In contrast, *Perfect Drug* (Dualbunny, 2006), treats the same relationship as *Girlfriend in Canada*, but using a darker song (by the band Nine Inch Nails, from the soundtrack of *Lost Highway* [David Lynch, 1997]) to provide a less frivolous view of Baltar and Head Six through the metaphor of addiction. While *Girlfriend in Canada*

presents the relationship as amusing and essentially harmless, the more fatalistic *Perfect Drug* is set to an industrial song (rather than musical comedy) and makes more of Baltar's lack of control over Head Six's appearances. While he enjoys the release she brings, her narcotic-like effect means that she dominates him entirely. The song lyrics 'you see the truth' and 'without you, everything falls apart' are made to refer to Head Six's role as Baltar's guide through the apocalypse; she provides information that helps him maintain a veneer of sanity, even as his noticeable responses to her call that sanity into doubt. The difference between *Girlfriend in Canada* and *Perfect Drug*, which are both subjective expressions of Baltar's emotional life and use many of the same clips, demonstrates the importance of song choice and authorial intervention by the vidder that is just as significant as the precise re-sequencing of moving images.

Finally, *Fix You* (SDwolfpup, 2006) subverts the Coldplay song 'Fix You' to explore the Cylons' perspective on their actions. This vid can be read as a darkly comic character study for the Cylons, though the balance between dark and comic can shift on repeat viewings. The vid argues that the Cylons' relentless pursuit of the human fleet stems from their belief that submitting to the oppression of a killer robot army is the answer to human suffering, 'in a twist of the "white man's burden" discourse' (Dzialo 2008: 179). The vid's structure is important in selling this view, expanding from small personal problems to larger conflicts to suggest humans are not capable of living in peace with each other. *Fix You* starts with a collection of introductions from the miniseries, matching each couplet in the lyrics to an appropriate moment that suggests why each character is unhappy. Kara's is 'you get what you want/ But not what you need', over a clip of her smirking after punching a superior officer, Col. Saul Tigh (Michael Hogan); this immediately cuts to her sitting alone in the dark, knees drawn up



and looking haunted. These vignettes are intercut with the opening sequence of the miniseries, set on a space station, in which a lone human meets (and is killed by) a human-model Cylon. The quiet organ accompaniment through this section, played under these moments of private despair, continues to the lyric 'Could it be worse?' at which point a piano and string section join the instrumentation, and we see a shot of the space station doors opening to admit the Cylon (at this point in the vid, she has not yet been seen by the audience or the human characters). The swell in the music, and the use of these specific instruments such as the organ, suggests a sly match between the hints of church-like music and the series' own religious preoccupation, and the monotheistic evangelism of the Cylons. Where in the song itself the question 'Could it be worse?' is a rhetorical flourish or hyperbole, in the vid it can be answered by the humans: yes, it could indeed be worse. However, since the Cylons are the focus of the vid, the clips of Six edited to the lines that immediately follow ('Lights will guide you home / [...] And I will try to fix you') align the first-person narration of the song to the Cylons, setting up the Cylon view of humans as continually suffering, and the Cylon role in alleviating that anguish. This vid flips the perspective of the series, though it does not change events, only their meanings.

Therefore, different vid adaptations of *Battlestar Galactica*, none of which significantly re-figure the narrative course of the original material, demonstrate the various ways a series can be adapted in vid form to focus in on different aspects of its narrative, characters, and themes. Borrowing Chion's evocative metaphor from his description of music videos, each vid discussed here 'turns the prism' of the source series 'to show its facets' (1994: 166). As adaptations of *Battlestar*, each vid creates an intense focus on one feature of the series' generic hybridity, through prioritising the

experience of a few characters in the ensemble cast or plot points in the multi-strand narrative. In each, there is a re-telling of *Battlestar's* story in such a way that emphasises an interpretation of different plot threads or relationships; the naked emotion of the pieces manipulate the melodramatic plot elements and intensify their effect, particularly in *45's* invitation to witness the Adamas' trauma. Even *Fix You*, which takes the position of the series' antagonists, neither changes the narrative nor challenges the interpretation of the Cylons' stated motivation. *Girlfriend In Canada* and *Perfect Drug* create two different interpretations of the Baltar/Head Six relationship, which examine the uneasy presentation of that relationship as variously comedic (Baltar's awkward behaviour played for laughs) and disturbing (as his hallucinations increase his feelings of guilt and emotional distress). Each vid is another turn of the prism that shows a different facet of the series. Dualbunny's three vids about Kara Thrace turn the prism of the series to reveal a facet of *Battlestar Galactica* that adapts the series into a female-centred melodrama, where Kara becomes the main character and her identity and emotional journey are these works' sole concern.

### ***God Is A DJ (2006), Part Two***

In this context, Dualbunny's trilogy of Kara character study vids is a unique document of the character over time, as the vids' production followed the series. It provides snapshots of the character, following her development, using the songs to give Kara a 'voice' through which to explain the character's motivations. The interventions of the authorial adaptation intensify the character, and suggest how Kara feels about familial connections, sexual independence, and ability to perform her role as a soldier.



**Figure 51**, *God Is A DJ*: surrogate family. Left to right: Kara with ‘mother’, ‘father’, ‘brother’.

*God Is A DJ* shows Kara *doing* things – punching a superior officer, performing maintenance on a Viper, flirting – and actively engaged in her world. Amongst this activity is an exploration of Kara’s emotional connections to other characters; in the absence of Kara’s own self-expression, the song lyrics structure an interpretation of these relationships. In the latter half of the first verse, Pink’s naming of family members in the lyrics is matched to characters with whom Kara shares narrative threads, if not family ties. The sequence emphasises the ‘intricacies of personal relationships between recurring characters’ that develop across the ‘genre hybrid of action and domestic melodrama’ (Shimpach 2010: 36), literalising the melodrama in *Battlestar’s* genre hybridity by explicitly captioning certain of Kara’s relationships as familial (see Figure 51): ‘Mommy I love you’ (left: hugging President Laura Roslin); ‘Daddy I hate you’ (centre: Cmdr. William Adama); ‘Brother I need you’ (right: with fellow pilot Karl Agathon [Tahmoh Penikett], call sign Helo). Kara’s relationships with Roslin (as citizen to president), Adama (as officer to commander), and Agathon (as fellow pilot) are allocated additional context in the vid’s adaptation, in which the condensation of the series into the vid requires the elision of the complexities of these relationships.<sup>37</sup> This adaptation edits in step with the rapid-fire lyrics to draw out a reasonable subtext for these relationships, as Kara finds surrogate family amongst the survivors: explicitly relating these relationships in terms of family intensifies the

<sup>37</sup> Kara’s parents are shown in flashback in later seasons, and are included in Dualbunny’s sequels.

melodrama of the series. This is a subjective imagining of Kara's emotional connection beyond her professional relationships with these characters. The song lyrics connote a variation on the shared histories and the emotional complexities hidden in the vid's elisions, using the metaphor of family and its attendant complications to recall the melodramatic aspects of the series' generic hybridity, while maintaining Kara as the main character of this adapted narrative.



**Figure 52**, *God Is A DJ*: the vid has Kara appear to reject long-term relationships with Baltar (top left) and Lee (bottom left) in favour of flying her Viper (bottom right), in a sequence where she is in motion and they are still.

The familial sequence continues with Kara's abandonment of two potential romantic partners – captioned by the lyrics 'Lover, hey fuck you' and cutting between their reaction shots and Kara walking through a door– in favour of the Viper launch that starts the next sequence (Figure 52). Kara's rejection of these partners, and by extension, romantic attachment, is due to her preference for demonstrating her confidence in and enjoyment of her accomplishments as a fighter pilot; while the Kara of the series may not be so casual with her affections, in this instance Pink's words help construct a more independent and confident Kara. This studied indifference to emotional attachment in sexual relationships recalls what Glen Creeber, writing on *Sex*

*and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), suggests is ‘the attitude toward sex that men have taken for centuries’ (2004: 144). This is another instance of the vid condensing *Battlestar’s* attempt to create a feminist representation, not only in terms of Kara’s professional abilities, but in terms of sexual equality as she pursues sexual partners without a motive of marriage and family. In the song, this is Pink’s identity statement, and it is presented as a boast or challenge, not as a confession. In the vid, this Kara is similarly confident, and in this section, seemingly (comically) disappointed in the calibre of available partners. This shows a confident Kara, as it constructs a version of the character’s rich inner life in which we are shown her choices and motivations.

This first chorus is a very densely edited montage of Kara’s life on and off duty; this is purely non-narrative and not an attempt to re-iterate plot points, but functions as an emotional break.<sup>38</sup> The choice of clips in this sequence – the majority of which show Kara smiling or celebrating – also suggests this character gains equal satisfaction from these diverse areas of her life, from executing military manoeuvres and planning operations, to downtime with her fellow pilots. In this section of the vid, costuming – undress and dress uniforms, as well as civilian formal dress – indicates the complexity of Kara’s character by showing her in various contexts. While the knowing audience recognises the separate narrative moments contained within this montage, the unknowing audience can read these costume changes as constructing a female character with a variety of experiences within the series. It would have been possible to create a vid out of clips of Kara only in a combat uniform, but including these other costumes constructs a representation of contemporary womanhood that

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<sup>38</sup> In this section, clips include: Kara targeting an enemy, dancing in her seat, bailing out of her Viper (fighter spacecraft), roughhousing with Lee in officers’ quarters, celebrating the success of a risky military manoeuvre she designed, and dancing at a formal celebration.

unproblematically balances personal and professional life.



**Figure 53**, *God Is A DJ*: Leoben interrogation, intercut with reaction shot (bottom left) from an earlier episode; the change in lighting between interrogation and card game marks these clips as originating in different scenes.

The vid's final section, from the second chorus to the end, uses more serious clips than the montage of the smiling, happy Kara from the first chorus and verses. The song's upbeat tone continues; the distance between the happy pop song and clips of, for example, physical threats and emotional challenges, constructs a critical overview of the character that suggests something of the effort Kara expends to maintain her positive outlook. In this, the captioning of the lyrics sets up an opposition between the serious clips and playful song, which can suggest certain motivations for Kara's actions. One episode used in this latter section of the vid concerns Kara's interrogation of a captured Cylon, Leoben (Callum Keith Rennie, see Figure 53). Randell (2011) suggests this episode, 'Flesh and Bone' (1.8) is notable because the 'weight of gender obligations' is missing: it 'is not a torture scene of macho aggression, but instead one of discussion, empathy, spirituality, and ultimately frustration' (171). Due to the vid's muting effect – showing gestures, not dialogue – the episode's discussion, empathy,

and spirituality are excluded in favour of Leoben's attempts to intimidate Kara, and close-ups in which the series' audience was able to read Sackhoff's subtle performance of inner conflict. Though lyrics do repeat 'If God, if God, is a DJ' through this section, coming during the song's bridge, it seems this is less a theological point and more to build the intensity of the song to a final chorus.

In this section, clips in which Leoben flips a table and holds Kara against a wall are intercut with a reaction shot of Kara taken from a similarly-staged scene in the miniseries, when her card game with Tigh ends in blows (see Figure 53, bottom left). The equation of these two clips – both scenes in which Kara is challenged by male characters, seated across a table – shades the interrogation sequence with further significance, as the imagined subjectivity lent by the song means this version of Kara 'remembers' the previous encounter, and compares the two instances of male characters attempting to intimidate her. This arguably returns the weight of the gender obligations to the way this character is represented, regendering Kara insofar as her characterisation matches something more expected from the body of a slight, blonde woman. While Tigh's side of the original reverse-shot edit is not included, the knowing viewer can place the scene and its significance (and can see the top of his head at the bottom of the frame); the unknowing viewer can read her sarcastically gleeful reaction shot against the more wary reaction from the interrogation sequence. The reaction shot troubles the breeziness of the lyrics and *Battlestar's* more serious attempt to question the torture of political prisoners; however, the image of Kara laughing unsettles the intensity of Leoben's physical assault. This could be taken in several ways: that Kara is truly not afraid, despite contradictory close-ups, that her approach to prisoner interrogation involves putting on a poker face, or even that this

kind of assault can be brushed off by a stoic heroine. This could alternately be taken as an authorial intervention on the part of Dualbunny, used to communicate character information as well as diffusing the intensity of the interrogation scene.

The song's message is, in its words, to 'get your ass on the dance floor' of life: a feel-good call to embrace the challenges and opportunities of existence with enthusiasm (if not decorum). In the vid, this sentiment becomes Kara's own life philosophy: her decisions and actions throughout the series are used to confirm the song's live-large-no-regrets message.<sup>39</sup> While the song ends in the same relaxed vocalisations following the lyrical affirmation of partying as a metaphor for life, the character is aware of the colony's invasion by the hostile forces that had already pursued them through two series. The final shot, of a low angle close-up on her unsmiling face, preserves the cliffhanger ending of the series' second season; however, this does not dampen the effect of the vid overall. *God Is A DJ* constructs a version of the series and of Kara that can easily be re-visited in its condensed form. Character study vids – like all vids – are designed to be re-watched, as each is a document of the heightened emotions of an intense analysis of a character, and offers pleasures in returning to a known text. In this case, the vid aligns the character with the public persona of Pink through adopting Pink's voice, words and music to construct a pleasurable confident and feminist adaptation of *Battlestar*.

Continuing the trilogy, the sequel vids *Cuz I Can* (2007) and *I'm Not Dead* (2009) respond to the problematic development of the Kara character in the second half of *Battlestar*. As Stoy argues, 'after the interesting and genre-refuting narratives that the

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<sup>39</sup> The vid excludes some of Kara's failures, for example, being forced to accept the trainee pilots despite her own reservations about her capacity as an instructor, or shooting Lee in a friendly fire incident. The effect is to eliminate events which cause her to doubt herself and construct a more favourable portrait. The song is not about dwelling on the past, therefore it is weighted towards moments of triumph.



female characters have in the first half of the series, the writers seem unable to be creative any further and lapse back into the same sexist clichés' (2010: 13); Kara becomes an unhappy wife and (temporarily) a mother, and the sequel vids address this much more traditional female character. *God Is A DJ* is a character study that examines a successful balance of personal and public roles, and the two sequel vids compensate for the series' failings by continuing their female-centred feminist narratives in order to make sense of the source material's anaemic character development. With their greater focus on domestic emotional and existential questions, the sequels are closer to the subgenre of the family melodrama, especially with *Cuz I Can's* explicit reference to Kara's experiences with motherhood (as a daughter, and temporarily believing that she is a mother herself), and dissatisfaction with her choice of spouse. *I'm Not Dead* concerns the character's transformation into a supernatural being, and addresses that narrative decision in the context of the Kara already established in the series. Where *God Is A DJ* functions best as a summary of the character and her feminist potential, the next two build on that foundation to construct more pointed self-reflection for the character and analyses of her development.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Cuz I Can* (2007)**

*Cuz I Can* has a much darker tone than *God is a DJ*. It begins with an intertextual joke borrowed from the song, as Pink is heard asking 'missed me?', acknowledging (along with the use of the same font for the vid's titles) that this vid is a sequel. In this moment, the character, singer and vidder are all potentially asking this question of the audience. The opening shot – of Kara sliding down a ladder – signals the vid will

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<sup>40</sup> 'Cuz I Can' follows 'I'm Not Dead' on the album *I'm Not Dead* (2006), but the vids reverse the track order; the reversal creates a narrative where the defence of 'bad' behaviour is followed by a confessional account. ('God is a DJ' is from Pink's 2003 album *Try This*.)

concern her downward spiral in the third season, which contains significant emotional trauma, an increase in self-destructive behaviour, and her apparent death in action.<sup>41</sup> The song itself is more aggressive, defensive and angry, and its confrontational lyrics and heavy drum and bass distinguish it from the lighter and more playful sincerity of 'God is a DJ'. The lyrical repetition of '[I] don't give a damn' overstates a lack of emotional attachment and a refusal of responsibility. The contrast between reserved reaction shots and emphatically disinterested lyrics means the vid's performance of Kara's inner monologue is constructed through the disjuncture between Pink's expressive vocal performance and this subdued Kara. In contrast to the joy of *God Is A DJ*, *Cuz I Can* contains few shots of Kara looking happy. *Cuz I Can* makes frequent use of the boxing matches which are the focus of the episode 'Unfinished Business' (3.9), maintaining visual energy and movement within the frame. This muscular display sets up a tension between the action heroine Kara and the Kara experiencing emotional consequences of her imprisonment, which comprises the vid's other significant thread.

In the third season of *Battlestar Galactica*, Kara's representation as female action hero took a domestic direction to include a husband, a faux-daughter, and (in flashback) a mother. The second season's finale advanced the story by a year after the fleet settled on the planet New Caprica; in that time Kara left the military, married Anders, and let her hair grow long, thereby appearing more traditionally feminine. In the early episodes of *Battlestar's* third season, Kara is held by the Cylon occupiers in a prison made up like a family home, and presented with Kacey, a child she is told is her biological daughter and the successful outcome of the breeding experiment from 'The Farm' (2.5). Kacey is actually the daughter of a fellow colonist, but this is kept from

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<sup>41</sup> She returns some episodes later, in the season finale, having no memory of her explosive demise.

Kara (and the audience) until later in the season. In these episodes, Kara is removed from action to be a wife and mother, though she is not docile, and attempts escape. As a Cylon, her captor Leoben has access to unlimited clone copies in which to ‘download’ his consciousness: every time Kara kills him he returns again in a fresh body, and the cycle continues until Kacey is introduced. Sharp is explicitly critical of Kara’s incarceration on New Caprica, seeing Leoben’s actions as his ‘attempts to force Starbuck into a conservative and traditional woman’s role [...] representing domestic life as captivity’ (Sharp 2010: 76). Peirse (2008) argues that this captivity arc is entirely fraught with the weight of gender obligations, unlike Randell’s (2011) reading of the interrogation of Leoben by Kara (referenced in *God Is A DJ*), and reads Kara’s actions as *Battlestar’s* take on rape-revenge narratives. This recalls Tasker’s analysis of Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (James Cameron, 1991), where the representations of a ‘heroine as mother, an image which emphasises her womanhood’ is so contradictory it can only be reconciled if the character is also mentally ill (1993: 27). For Kara, the apparent reconciliation of her representation as heroine and mother occurs while she is a prisoner in a dark parody of domesticity. In contrast to the metaphorical family constructed in *God Is A DJ*, the third season’s footage gives *Cuz I Can* the material to address this family melodrama, not in terms of critical comparisons to established tropes and genres, but as an analysis of what these narrative changes mean to Kara’s development, as expressed through Pink’s song.



**Figure 54**, *Cuz I Can* (Dualbunny, 2007): seeing Kacey with Leoben (left) triggers a flashback of Kara as a child (centre), and prompts a reaction (right).

The sequence that addresses this imprisonment includes Kara's flashback to physical abuse perpetrated by her mother; this backstory was foreshadowed in the second season.<sup>42</sup> The sequence recalls this point in how it represents Kara's initial reaction to Kacey, cutting from a shot of young Kara facing her mother taken from later in the season (see Figure 54, centre), to a reaction shot (Figure 54, right) in which the angle of lighting casts deep shadows over her eyes. The sequence continues by showing Kara attempting to care for the injured Kacey, into which is cut Kara's flashback of her mother breaking Kara's fingers. Kara initially believes the child was injured due to her own negligence, but the injury was really part of the Cylons' elaborate scenario, engineered so that Kara accepts Kacey and motherhood. The vid takes these flashback scenes from later in the season and uses them to contextualise the earlier episodes. The lyrics which complete this section, 'You try but you can't beat me' therefore caption Kara overcoming her mother's abuse as well as surviving Leoben's manipulation. This synthesis of many points in the character's arc creates a coherent commentary typical of a character study vid.

The vid helps explain Kara's behaviour and choices in this season by using Pink's words to suggest that Kara suffers from low self-esteem and believes that she deserves these bad things happening to her. While the 'no-regrets' theme of 'Cuz I Can' is similar to that of 'God is a DJ', the vid *Cuz I Can* pairs the song to images that subvert the lyrics – with a focus on loss and emotional trauma – which aligns with the more desperate vocal performance and aggressive instrumentation to give the vid an air of

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<sup>42</sup> It is suggested to Kara in 'The Farm' (2.5) that her aversion to motherhood was her fear that she would perpetuate the cycle of abuse on her own children. Kara did not either confirm or refute this; however, introducing the Kacey plot turns Kara's decision to choose a career over domesticity into a symptom of the inadequacy of Kara's own mother (who was also career military and a single parent). It also unproductively separates *career* from *motherhood*.

its more sombre tone. The vid's examination of Kara's emotional response to motherhood continues through the subsequent repetition of the lyrics 'I'm fucked because/ I live a life of sin', where the vid equates physical and emotional defeat by rapidly cutting between clips where she flees her mother's flat (in flashback) and discovers Kacey is not her child, with a scene in which Kara is knocked from her feet in the boxing ring (see Figure 55).



**Figure 55,** *Cuz I Can*: a sequence of emotional and physical blows: Kara fleeing her mother and receiving a knock-down blow in the boxing ring, preceding the 'failure' of her own motherhood with the revelation that the child is not her own.

The interiority imagined by the vid for Kara constructs explicit irony by pairing the lyrics 'It's all right/ I don't give a damn' with Kara's reaction to Kacey's reunion with her real mother (see Figure 55, bottom row). The song lyrics have Kara express indifference to these profound disappointments, but the vid undercuts this reaction by intercutting the boxing fall, arguing the emotional pain Kara feels is as real as physical harm. After the character growth of first rejecting Kacey and then allowing herself to respond with maternal affection despite her own childhood trauma, this trajectory is undercut when Kara learns the truth. Using Pink's lyrics, the vid gives Kara an internal

monologue that sounds credible for the character in that moment, and then exposes that monologue as an exercise in self-deception. The vid's Kara believes the violence done to her is justified because she deserves it – as payback for her 'life of sin' – but the vid simultaneously argues that she lies to herself about how much she 'give[s] a damn', thereby performing an analysis of the character even as the character's interiority is explored. The bragging in the lyrics and raw emotion of the vocal performance do not negate Kara's story, and instead explicate her inner conflict. The vid does not step back from the idea of 'domestic captivity' to condemn it as a retrograde feminist representation, and rather stays with the character's experience to make sense of it on a more intimate level, as a series of challenges and revelations.

*Cuz I Can* uses the song lyrics to express Kara's discomfort with being the object of unwanted attention. The verse which shows the domestic captivity plot begins with the lyrics 'you think I'm rare/ you stop and stare/ you think I care/ I don't', and produces a montage of the male gaze, pairing clips of men who watch Kara – Leoben, Adama, Anders and Lee – with Pink's words to imagine a conversation with these characters that does not happen in the series. In its original context, the verse reads as a response to critics of Pink's celebrity lifestyle, as the verse boasts about her material wealth.<sup>43</sup> In the vid, it signals that Kara's breezy independence in *God Is A DJ* and the first two seasons of *Battlestar* has been replaced by emotional isolation related to others' scrutiny and expectations. This can further be read as the vid's commentary about Kara's representation in this third season. The lyrics that recall being the passive object of a gaze (as a celebrity) and of material wealth are used to highlight the perversion of domesticity in the New Caprica captivity plotline. The lyrics where Pink

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<sup>43</sup> The subtext is that Pink has earned – through her own hard work – all that she possesses.

boasts she can ‘fit your home in my swimming pool’ because ‘my whole life’s a fantasy’ are subverted as the vid uses these references to celebrity excess to work through Kara’s feelings about Leoben and Kacey. The reference to domesticity (home/pool), and the twist on ‘fantasy’ here does not connote a perfect life but a dark parody of one. As argued earlier, one constraint of the vid form is that lyrics structure the presentation; in this case, without an obvious match between clips and song, the creative adaptation of the vid finds a ‘fit’ that resonates, communicating something about the character through irony.



**Figure 56,** *Cuz I Can*: opening lyrics ‘I drink more than you/ And I party harder than you do’.

As critical texts that supplement scholarly work, vids can construct an emotional analysis of the source material. For example, Kungl (2008) lists a few episodes – ‘The Farm’ (2.5), ‘Precipice’ (3.2) and ‘Maelstrom’ (3.17) – as essential to understanding Kara’s character and motivations, and just like the vid uses specific textual references to prove the point. In discussing Kacey’s return to her family, Kungl concludes, ‘For several episodes, she [Kara] exhibits a recklessness and carelessness about herself and others that reflects what is for her the death of her child’ (2008: 207). Where these ‘several episodes’ must have accumulated to give the impression of ‘recklessness and carelessness’, specific instances are not detailed. In the vid, Katee Sackhoff’s performance of Kara provides this evidence, either showing scenes that the vid’s audience is either already aware of as exemplifying her careless behaviour or using clips in a way that would lead to that interpretation. The vid’s opening (see

Figure 56), for example, features Kara drinking with Lee, paired to a boast typical of the lyrics: 'I drink more than you/ And I party harder than you do'. Beyond arguing that Kara believes she is better than Lee at performing the traditional trappings of masculinity, *Cuz I Can* shows the reckless moments, the reflection of the loss, and uses the song to frame this analysis.

In contrast to the emotional traumas of the maternal melodrama references in this vid, the boxing sequences are used as metaphors for Kara's combativeness, an attempt to take control of her life, and as a return to seeing Kara's actions as gender-bent machismo (McCutcheon 2009). Including boxing scenes also means Kara's tattoos are visible – notably a large arm piece matching that of her husband, Anders – signifying both the temporal distance from the previous vid and Kara's marriage itself. The boxing sequences are aggressive, sustaining Kara as an action heroine, but this is balanced with clips from Kara's romantic entanglements and the problem of motherhood. The vid's first chorus establishes the vidder's view of the Lee-Kara-Anders love triangle: the lyrics 'cash my cheques and place my bets' are used to suggest Kara sees her marriage to Anders as a gamble, and therefore her dissatisfaction is the result of bad luck, not her own poor decision. While the continuation 'I hope I always win' is paired with Kara's enthusiastic embrace of Anders, on the lyrical caveat 'even if I don't', the vid cuts to Kara with Lee (just before what the knowing audience recognises as her proposal to Anders). The vid's sympathies are with Lee, but the vid also explores Kara's motivation; the gambling connotation of the lyrics is used to suggest Kara could not make the choice the vidder would have liked to see, because such a choice would not have been in character. Romantic complication is absent from *God Is A DJ*, which clearly states a preference against attachment. In



contrast, *Cuz I Can* questions *Battlestar's* softening of the previous seasons' feminist assurance by showing Kara struggling with self-doubt.

The vid finishes by meshing scenes from 'Unfinished Business' and 'Maelstrom', where the aggressive boxing match that ends in Kara and Lee embracing (and, the knowing audience will recall, restarting their affair<sup>44</sup>) is intercut with Kara's death (the prelude to which is a series of hallucinations featuring her mother, in which Kara's overtures of sympathy and comfort are not rejected by the other woman on her own deathbed). Given that the vid concludes with her return, the rhythm of the cross-cuts along with the pace of the song creates a sense of forward motion, arguing for the narrative inevitability of Kara and Lee's reconciliation and of the hallucinatory resolution of Kara's relationship with her mother's memory. While the fourth season later revealed the Kara who died was not the Kara who returned, at this point in the series it was possible to understand Kara's dying hallucinations as the character earning peace and closure after the emotional trauma externalised in the boxing sequences. The representation of Kara's interiority condenses and narrows the scope of the series to her own experience, implicitly arguing that an action heroine *can have* a complex inner life.

As a character study vid *Cuz I Can* offers an analysis of Kara's journey through the series, beginning with her captivity, continuing with the breakdown of her marriage, and ending with her death. It primarily concerns Kara's various models of family as other concerns of the season – an extended political/historical allegory in the aftermath of the Cylon occupation of New Caprica (cf. Herbert 2012: 195) – are not

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<sup>44</sup> Which had been interrupted by Kara's marriage to Anders, and Lee's marriage to supporting character Anastasia Dualla (Kandyse McClure).

part of the vid, except as a broader context to the clips. Kara is shown suffering from specific emotional traumas, not political disillusionment: her reckless behaviour comes about because of jealousy and self-doubt, not the larger political questions that guided the founding of the colony. It is an intensely personal and emotional response to *Battlestar's* political allegory.

A reviewer of the scholarly collection *Cylons in America* (2008), published between *Battlestar's* second and third seasons, mourned the volume as 'a victim of its timeliness' due to its inability to provide a comprehensive critical perspective on the series (Murphy 2011: 128). However, as an adaptation, *Cuz I Can* is able to critically discuss the character's progression through the available narrative without the pressure to produce scholarly conclusions. Indeed, as a sequel to *God is a DJ*, this vid is a mid-stream analysis of the character development since the first work; that it does not wholly repeat the first – taking a different focus – reveals its intention not to create a definitive overview of the character, but to offer a critical perspective on the immediate story as it developed. It is possible to read *Cuz I Can* as expressing dissatisfaction with the reduction of the character's agency and vibrancy in this third season. The vid uses Pink's bravado to adapt and rebuild the character's strength even as it summarises her failings. While Kara's apparent death in 'Maelstrom' and mysterious return in the season finale leave the character unresolved at the end of the season, *Cuz I Can* provides its own resolution by intensifying the themes of self-discovery and forgiveness after much pain and doubt.

### ***I'm Not Dead* (2009)**

The vid trilogy provides three different iterations of self-expression: from confident, competent and playful in *God Is A DJ*, to the defiantly self-destructive response to the

melodramatic tropes of a lost child and unhappy marriage in *Cuz I Can*, to a new level of introspection and spirituality in *I'm Not Dead*. Sharp's analysis of Kara's transformation in the fourth season from a human woman into an 'angel'<sup>45</sup> – that it 'dulls the critical edge of any progressive readings' of a character that had, '[f]or most of the series... defied and exceeded traditional gender norms' (2010: 76) – is at odds with the version of Kara shown in the third vid of this trilogy, *I'm Not Dead*. This vid presents a woman struggling to define herself, her relationships and her place in the world after a series of traumatic events; 'her status as a supernatural agent' (Sharp 2010: 76) is relevant to how the vidder presents Kara's attempts to reconcile her own subjectivity. While critical frustration with the representation of fourth-season Kara as a 'traditional hysterical woman' (Sharp 2010: 76) is entirely justified, as with *Cuz I Can* the vid's project as an adaptation makes sense of the character herself and how she might try to understand her own existential shift from fighter pilot to 'angel'. The solid and certain embodiment of Kara as a feminist female character from the first two seasons, and *God Is A DJ*, is replaced by an uncertain and fundamentally insubstantial character. However, *I'm Not Dead* includes several clips from early seasons to bolster the shaky edifice of that early representation that was so full of feminist potential. Taken as a trilogy, these vids integrate different forms of female identity in a work that, like Pink's public image, argues for a 'model of contemporary womanhood' that integrates multiple contradictory identities (Railton and Watson 2011).<sup>46</sup> It could be

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<sup>45</sup> By guiding the fleet to a new home planet before disappearing into thin air in the final episode.

<sup>46</sup> While beyond the scope of this chapter, it could be fruitful to consider the contradictions and ambiguities of the character's development and presentation in terms of post-feminism, particularly in relation to Alison Horbury's recent argument that academic responses to post-feminist discourses have created an 'impasse in feminist media criticism' (2014: 219).

argued that the faults in Kara's development as a character reflect the persistent difficulties in representing these contemporary contradictions.



**Figure 57**, *I'm Not Dead* (Dualbunny, 2009): credits sequence, with text superimposed over moving images, not separate title cards. Unlike *God Is A DJ*, Dualbunny's credit appears at the very end of the vid.

The song 'I'm Not Dead' features a quieter, more acoustic instrumentation than the previous two songs, immediately giving this vid a different tone to the previous pair. Its verses and bridge use electric guitars, live drums, back-up vocals and more typical rock instrumentation, but the choruses pare back this full sound to the single voice, strummed acoustic guitar, and subtle background drum machine fill. This structures the vid's balance between the more energetic verses that make use of frequent moving-camera shots and clips with a significant amount of motion within the frame, and the subdued-but-earnest choruses, which favour calmer close-up reaction shots. The vid's opening is a shot of a pyre that tracks left to Kara watching, isolated against a black background (see Figure 57). This is Kara's own body, discovered several episodes after Kara mysteriously returned to the fleet. In burning the body, the living Kara is literally laying her past self to rest, a significantly symbolic moment; in continuing this trilogy with another Pink song, Dualbunny constructs a continuity of

character that bridges this rupture. This opening is tonally opposed to that of the first vid: *God is a DJ* begins with Kara triumphant, enjoying her victory at cards and in the middle of action, whereas *I'm Not Dead* begins with Kara directing her own funeral at which she is the only mourner. The title of the song seems an obvious match for the character's return; however, the vid attempts to propose what the statement 'I'm not dead' means to Kara throughout the season, particularly in answering what she *is* if she is 'not dead'. Matthew Jones (2010: 175) points out that the end of the series is one of the only times Kara appears totally at ease; despite critical failings in her representation, *I'm Not Dead* finds a way to follow the character's journey to peace.

This vid is something of a eulogy, summarising Kara's life, with references to happier moments in previous seasons intercut with significant events from the series' final season. The mode of address in the lyrics shifts away from a general life philosophy (*God is a DJ*) or exercise in self-justification (*Cuz I Can*) as *I'm Not Dead* works through the Kara's relationship with specific individuals. The vid's structure is important: the lyrics are focused on an unnamed third party (e.g. 'you're my crack of sunlight'), and the vid returns to Kara's significant relationships. The first section examines Kara's relationship with her surrogate parents, Adama and Roslin. The middle section looks at her history with Lee, making the argument in favour of Lee as a preferred partner for Kara over her (estranged) husband Anders, who is largely absent from this vid. The vid ends with an extended look at Kara after her reappearance, integrating the complicated series mythology with an overview of the character's role in the series. It is not an adaptation of the fourth season alone, but defines Kara in the context of her final development. In the fourth season, Kara becomes a 'hysterical' oracle whose insistence that she can lead the fleet to Earth is only reluctantly believed,

and the urgency of the song's verses thematically match Kara's need to fulfil her mission and reconcile her new mystical tendencies with her more grounded temperament. By including references to previous seasons, the vid works to present the character's alteration as credible and 'in character', which brings the more recent changes to the character in line with the more progressive previous representation.



**Figure 58**, *I'm Not Dead*: 'I was never looking for approval from anyone but you'; a sequence showing Kara fleeing her mother (also referenced in *Cuz I Can*) and seeking parental affection from Adama and Roslin.

For example, clips representing Kara's fourth-season failure to convince Roslin and Adama that she has vital intelligence – Roslin pointing a gun at Kara; Adama tackling Kara to the floor – are followed by clips from the previous seasons that show these relationships in more amiable circumstances (see Figure 58, second through fourth images). To establish that Kara sees Roslin and Adama as surrogate parents, the sequence begins with Kara fleeing her mother's flat (Figure 58, top left). While this sequence lacks the explicit familial captioning of *God Is A DJ*, the lyrics 'I was never looking for approval from anyone but you' and the actor's expressive close-ups are used to suggest Kara's emotional investment in the judgement of Roslin and Adama.

As the third part of a trilogy, knowledge of the previous works guides a reading of this sequence as a reference to the proposal made in *God Is A DJ* that Kara views this pair as surrogate parents; this maintains a consistent subjective exploration of the character across the trilogy. This structure, with clips from the fourth season followed by earlier clips, allows the vidder to have Kara explain her own actions, using Pink's voice and words. In this way, Kara reminds Roslin and Adama that Kara once held their trust, both personally and professionally; it constructs Kara's defence against seeming irrational (the 'traditional hysterical woman'; Sharp 2010) by conveying it in these terms, and providing a frame through which to analyse Kara's relationship with authority figures. As an adaptation, the vid does not judge Kara's mystical transformation as a betrayal of a feminist character, but puts the narrative events in the context of long-developing character relationships.

The address of the second verse shifts to Lee, and begins with the lyrics 'You can do the math a thousand ways but you can't erase the facts/ That others come and others go but you always come back.' Under these lines there are clips taken from at least five scenes featuring Kara with Lee – not important plot events, but moments where they are working and laughing together over the series – with this handful of scenes intended to stand in for the 'thousand ways' Kara's attractions could be tabulated. The others who come and go in the lyrics are Anders (alone in the frame) and Kara at her fiancé's funeral (in a clip taken from a flashback shown in a first-season episode), which effectively dismisses Kara's husband and deceased fiancé in favour of Lee. The verse continues with a kiss between Kara and Lee that occurs late in the season and quickly intercuts the pair fighting side-by-side later in the episode, implying their professional *simpatico* proves they should not have married other characters.

One advantage in an adaptation that condenses the narrative is that the vidder's disagreement with Kara's choice of husband, for example, is expressed in a version of the series where Anders barely appears and Lee is central to Kara's life. The vid does not deviate from the series, but carefully chooses clips that present Lee as a steadfast and constant companion. This verse summarises Kara's romantic story across the whole series, but emphasises that these men are hers to pursue, continuing the feminist representation of Kara as a character able to choose her partners.



Figure 59, *I'm Not Dead*: ending 'I'm not dead just yet'.

At the vid's climax, rising music and Pink's scream are accompanied by spectacular science fiction explosions, as the lyrics continue 'I'm not dead just yet' (see Figure 59). While these images of space battles follow a sequence concerning Kara's body, and could be read as drawing a parallel between the fragile integrity of the spaceships and Kara's fluid mortality and unsettled embodiment, they are more an affirmation of Kara's professional competence. The activity and energy of Kara in the final sequence – narratively and aesthetically, as well as musically through the song's excess of emotion – gives a strong impression of Kara's continuing vitality as she is



shown piloting her Viper. The chorus of 'I'm not dead/just changing' becomes Kara's articulation of her own struggle to accept the 'destiny' she must fulfil, most significantly in the second chorus which compiles the visions of her long-absent father that give Kara the clues to her role in leading the fleet to its eventual permanent home. Unlike confrontational boasts in the lyrics of 'Cuz I Can' that are made into symptoms of inner turmoil, *I'm Not Dead* turns its lyrics into an expression of acceptance, even as they become the vidder's attempt to make sense of the character's retrograde development. When Kara is faced with her own corpse, she must confront her own sense of embodied identity; the vid takes similar stock of Kara as her story is reshuffled to maintain the feminist agency of the character.

### **Conclusion**

The key difference between *Battlestar Galactica* and the Kara/Pink trilogy is one of genre, as the story of the series is not altered in any way. Dualbunny's trilogy turns a quality television text into a melodramatic vid, following the emotional life of a single female character through the series. As is often the case, the presence of female characters as the focus of the narrative 'are a well-known rarity' (Stoy 2010: 3) in science fiction. While academic writing on Kara tends to focus on the complicated coding of the character as she meets and defies various gender norms and expectations, the vids seem much more comfortable in setting aside direct commentary on what the character may represent and instead focus on what she feels. Insofar as vids present a view of a series or film, supported by a set of examples (clips), vids make arguments (cf. Coppa 2008, Gray 2010). They can, and must, be understood as a creative manifestation of the critical work done by the engaged viewer of a complex drama. This trilogy's argument is that Kara can be imagined with a

complex interiority; as with all character study vids, the trilogy argues in favour of a rich emotional life that augments, rather than supersedes, the character as she appears in *Battlestar*. Through constructing a Kara with complex subjectivity via internal monologues which are articulated by Pink, the vids comment on Kara's representation. The Kara of *God Is A DJ* is a confident party girl who has not yet had to face the complex challenges of her later development. *Cuz I Can* and *I'm Not Dead* show that character study vids gives a character a 'voice' that helps explain questionable character development in terms of the hypothetical inner life of that character. In the vids, Kara is neither stoically masculine-military, nor passively (or hysterically) feminine; the works augment a complex female character and realise her feminist potential outside of binary stereotypes.

While all three songs used in the vid trilogy are from the same artist, and fall within the broad generic confines of a top-40 pop-rock, differences in lyrics, instrumentation and tempo provide three iterations of self-expression from a single artist. This chapter has been an opportunity to discuss certain uses of music on television as proximate forms to vids. Additionally, focusing on Dualbunny's three vids as a trilogy forces sustained awareness of the Pink songs used in these vids. This trilogy works the connotations of Pink's voice and celebrity against the feminist potential of *Battlestar Galactica*. Vids, especially character studies, highlight a tension between emotional and critical responses to texts, as lapses in the source material can be ameliorated or explained in an adaptation. While not altering the narrative, the vid form can construct a female-centred narrative out of a political allegory by selectively adapting the source material. Dualbunny's three works describe not only the way a hybrid-genre 'quality' series accomplishes some form of character development over a

serial narrative, but also how audiences might work to understand and integrate those changes in their view of a specific character. As adaptations which drastically condense their source, character study vids take silenced images and use lyrics, instrumentation and other connotations of the song to interpret and analyse that character.

## Conclusion

### Vids as Vids and the Afterlife of Television

This thesis began with a question of what vids are, and what vids are to television. I have answered this question via textual analysis in order to approach 'vids as vids', to paraphrase V. F. Perkins (1972), taking the vid seriously as a work of art and culture. I have shown that vids are a highly-developed form with a history that runs parallel to the history of home video and the found footage film. More importantly, an analysis of vids reveals material interventions into television and film that suggests a mode of engaged spectatorship that runs counter to academic histories of media audiences and technologies. The vid is not the only form to creatively and critically re-use moving images; however, the rich range of vids that have survive (despite changes in media) preserve ways of watching television and films that demonstrate a fluid and contingent relationship with narratives and visual images. Clips from *Battlestar Galactica* are arguably used mnemonically in Chapter Five's examples (to prompt a viewer's recall of a scene's place in the series' narrative arc, and to evaluate its use in the vid), and iconically in Chapter Four's multifandom examples (to prompt comparative reflection on generic or meta-narrative patterns, as the pace of editing is too swift to allow for sustained reflection upon *Battlestar* alone amid the many other sources represented). Vids collect and redistribute the visual and narrative pleasures of television series and film, while at the same time communicating the vidder's interpretation of the source material. The vid therefore reveals both critical activity and an articulation of intense textual engagement and fascination.

At the time of writing, and to the best of my knowledge, this thesis is the first extensive exploration of the vid form in terms of its aesthetic and textual qualities. As such, I do introduce several texts to academic literature and thereby expand a critical canon of vids; I heartily invite further research which may challenge these additions. Following the descriptions of media fandom as presented in the existing literature (see Introduction and Review of Literature), this thesis is also an exploration of an articulation of women's interpretations of long-form narratives and visual pleasure. As Constance Penley argues, it was 'through seeing the episodes countless times in syndication and on their own taped copies' (1991: 137) that these female television fans began to play (semiotically and materially) with media texts. The afterlife of television, as indicated by vids' existence and complexity, is based in returning to favoured or compelling texts after their broadcast or cinematic release, at which point it becomes possible to articulate texts' pleasures and to construct critical responses to these works.

### **Summary of Findings**

In my Introduction, I described and analysed the vid *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Skud, 2010) to demonstrate the intensity and scope of a multifandom vid which revisits the representation of women in period dramas. This was followed by a history of fandom as presented in the current literature, an overview of the critical consensus that media fandom is a gendered (female) subculture, and a discussion of vids' proximate forms in experimental film and music video.

The Methodology chapter provided a defence of textual analysis as my approach to studying the vid as a form worthy of serious scholarly attention. I reflected upon my awareness of vids' context as a media fan myself, but ultimately chose to

affirm my original aim of writing a thesis about the vid itself. This chapter also discussed in detail my choice of examples, and finished with a proposal that the relationship between lyrics and images in vids can be understood as a form of aural captioning that directs the interpretation of a vid's recontextualised moving images.

In my Review of Literature, I noted that the scholarship on fandom has only recently begun to address vidding beyond a handful of brief references. This has not yet included a study of vids as a form that can withstand critical and aesthetic analysis. My overview of television studies argued that the changing ways audiences experience and access television is highly significant to the study of vids, as the same technologies and practices which allow time-shifting also create source material for vids (cf. Brunsdon and Spigel 2008). Debates around 'quality' television and the rise of digital describe modes of sustained and attentive viewing, something which can be seen in vids' careful selection and use of significant clips, as vids textually enact this form of viewing. However, vids are made from a range of television series and films and pre-date digital change; the impartiality with which vids re-present both film and television also underscores a lack of difference between film and television once both become 'home video'. Indeed, the present diversity of vid source material suggests vids preserve counter-canons of media consumption through clip choices.

In Chapter Three, I argued that vids use home video as archives and framed vids as products of domestic technology which enact a kind of vernacular historiography. Through an analysis of analogue and digital vids, I argue vids are documents of a sort, sometimes quite worn-looking documents due to their source material and circulation prior to digital transfer, which preserve interpretations and viewing contexts particular to the vids' creation. I argue that the textures and

textualities of the vid's image – as wear, decay and interference on videotape and digital images – reveal the origins of its source material. Further, the public uses of these private collections are an archival use of media: vids present selections of clips from videotape, DVD, and digital files in such a way as to present critical and/or creative interpretations or counter-readings of the series or film source. Particularly with the *Star Trek* examples, vids document a way of watching and understanding the franchise, and their textual qualities indicate how home video technologies enable the collecting, re-watching, and sharing of television episodes and films beyond traditional broadcasting or cinema distribution.

In Chapter Four, I answer the question of what vids are through an analysis of re-uses of moving images isolated in a concentration of spectacle. A vid is the textual representation of fascination with star images, bodies, and genre. This chapter analysed many multifandom vids, which emphasise the decontextualised (non-narrative) presentation of the spectacular and visually pleasurable aspects of film and television. Underlying these presentations is a reflexive sensibility that takes pleasure in the images themselves and deals in a pleasurable recognition of the images as being part of genre tropes and conventions of representation. In Chapter Three, I argue the vid can be read as a history of attentive viewership focused on specific characters or pairings; in Chapter Four, I show that this attention ranges beyond individual series or films, with the focus expanding to compare texts based on their relationship to spectacles of stardom, actors' bodies, and/or genre. Therefore, the vid textually demonstrates attentive viewership ranging broadly across texts. Unlike the vids of Chapter Three, the majority of which are slash vids and therefore concerned with reading and re-presenting characters' relationships, the vids of Chapter Four largely

isolate their source images from narrative context to perform an encounter with representation and the gaze.

In Chapter Five, I argue that vids are critical adaptations of the source material, in which the vidder's intervention is enacted through choices in editing and song selection. The relationship between image and sound is critical to this chapter as it is mainly related to the intimate connections made between song and fragmented episode. The character study trilogy in Chapter Five are presented as feminist rewritings of texts; as adaptations they condense and intensify character presentation. While the trilogy of *Battlestar Galactica* vids is an exceptional example – revisiting one character over the life of a series to follow that character's development is highly unusual – the vids provide a model for addressing character study vid as a genre and a critical activity: without altering the source narrative, character study vids rely on careful choice of song to relate an interpretation of the character's interiority. Vids are tools for critical analysis, but the analyses they produce also reproduce (and intensify) the aesthetic pleasures of the source material. The vid is a site of mediation between critical detachment and the fascinations and pleasures of film and television.

### **Songs and the Vid Form**

Chapter Five focused on the role of music, particularly in constructing subjectivity in character study vids, but song choice is still relevant to the other vid genres analysed in this thesis. In *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins argues that, when watching vids, '[f]an viewers are often totally disinterested in the identity of the original singer(s) but are prepared to see the musical performance as an expression of the thoughts, feelings, desires, and fantasies of the fictional character(s)' (1992: 235). To argue that, whereas music videos 'treat[...] the performer's voice as the central organizing mechanism,



nondiagetic [sic] performers play little or no role within fan videos' (Jenkins 1992: 235), is to suggest that a song's lyrics take precedence over its other aural connotations. While this is frequently true – the individual performer may be irrelevant to the vid's immediate construction – the song's instrumentation and the performer's voice are fundamental to how vids are understood. Nondiegetic *performers* may have little or no role, but their *performances* are vital.

In the context of vids, the musical performance is meant to express a character's interiority, and the instrumentation (accompaniment) to those lyrics is just as influential and theoretically complex as screen music more generally. In this thesis, I argue that the study of the vid form requires recognising the importance of genre, instrumentation, and performance in providing context for the re-used clips beyond lyrical signification. Tone of voice can greatly alter meaning when speaking; similarly, genre of song and performance attributes in vids do much of vids' 'heavy lifting', in terms of conveying and directing meaning. The captioning effect of songs is more than the captioning of lyrics alone. Indeed, the present wealth of examples make it apparent that the whole audio is involved in interpreting a vid.

The importance of a song's performances is apparent in examples used throughout this thesis. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, the use of Pink's songs in all three vids of Dualbunny's trilogy is an essential part of the intertextual logic that connects *God Is A DJ* with its sequels and constructs the trilogy as a related set of works. However, performance is significant in every vid. The work discussed in the Introduction, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, relies on Joan Jett's vocal performance and strength of the electric guitars for its energy and power; an acoustic or more mild-mannered performance would create a much different effect. The vid's

rapid editing provides its own energy, but the particular timbre of Jett's voice and her half-screamed, half-sung performance creates, within the vid's diegesis, the appearance of a growling and defiant sensibility that unites the many different clips and provides a single point of reference for each separate representation of women in period dramas.

In Chapter Three, *You Can't Hurry Love* uses a Phil Collins cover of the song rather than the original by The Supremes; doing so constructs an exploration of male desire in this slash vid, using a man's voice. For 'an action-adventure program about a civilian antiterrorist squad' (Bacon-Smith 1992: 116), Diana Ross's feminine glamour would have provided a less credible interior voice than that of Phil Collins. In relation to the final example of Chapter Four, *Seven Nation Army*; if lyrics were all that mattered, the Efccee cover with its electronically processed vocals would not be necessary, and the lo-fi original would be sufficient. As argued in that chapter, and for similar reasons to *You Can't Hurry Love*, the shift in the cover song to an electronic/industrial genre is a more credible interior voice for the mechanical/electronic menaces featured in the vid. Additionally, as with *Vindication*, *Seven Nation Army* is a multifandom vid which uses the song to relate each film and television source to the others.

While other vid genres rely on images to tell their story or present their analyses, multifandom vids are more abstract and rely on the signification of the image as an image. Whereas slash vids work well with love songs (for example, one slash vid described in Chapter Three – *It's All Coming Back to Me Now* – uses a passionate Celine Dion song), and character study vids tend to need lyrics that describe a person and/or their motivations (as with the Pink songs used in Chapter Five's examples),

multifandom vids can be successful with less concrete lyrics. Songs produced as dance music, featuring short verses and long repeating choruses or nonsensical lyrics, provide a structure for the vid but put the burden of meaning-making on the clips themselves and the performances in the song. Indeed, as it is possible to make successful vids using instrumental songs, lyrics are not always necessary.

### **Future Work**

There are avenues for future work on the vid form within film and television studies specifically, or within a broader field such as media studies. One possible direction would be an examination of vid genres not covered in this thesis, such as constructed reality and/or meta vids, for a more comprehensive analysis of the form's variations. These two genres are less common than those covered in this thesis, and arguably offer different pleasures to the viewer. The centrality of narrative in constructed reality vids would make a compelling contrast to multifandom vids, in which narrative context is largely jettisoned. Further, meta vids explicitly perform critical readings of texts, where other vid genres can be read as implicit critiques through clip choice and captioning.

Another avenue would be a more intensive comparison between vidding and other avant-garde and appropriative practices, perhaps with an emphasis on the material constraints of the vid form. This may potentially involve a more structural approach; for example, by taking a set of relationship vids made by different vidders but all focused on the same pairing. This would be an opportunity for quantitative content analysis, to determine the frequency of recurrent clips which may point to the significance of specific moments in a source text, out of which could be developed an argument regarding the vid's role in establishing (through repetition) a fannish canon

of significant moments. An analysis of editing as a tool for making meaning in the vid may also be fruitful. I hypothesise there may be a difference between older vids, which tend to have longer clips and therefore rely on iconic (easily recognisable) narrative moments, and more recent works, which tend towards shorter clips and seem to rely on more impressionistic<sup>1</sup> editing techniques to communicate meaning.

Ethnography and audience studies is another potential route for future work on vidding. While this thesis did contain a measure of (auto)ethnographic observations to contextualise certain practices, these are based in my direct experiences of vidding fandom, and as such represent a limited view. In addition to interviews and shorter survey responses, it could also be quite productive to conduct an analysis of the commentaries produced by fans when vids are posted online or released on DVD, and/or the short descriptions of vids included in vidding convention notes. The text which frequently accompanies a vid's release would provide insight into the vidders' intent or process; convention vidshow notes are written by the vidshow's curator and function as taglines or framing that indicate why the vid has been included in the vidshow. An analysis of the former could form the basis for understanding vidding as an authorial practice, and the latter could expand a view of the vid form as part of fannish discourse.

I am particularly keen to expand the findings of this thesis with archival research, for example in relation to the vids and fanzines in the Morgan Dawn Collection (at the University of Iowa). The collection includes many older vids, as well as fanzines from the 80s and 90s; the vids themselves represent the development of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wheatley (2007) for a discussion of tele-impressionism. There is still work to be done in connecting impressionistic montages in avant-garde filmmaking and video art with aesthetics of narrative television beyond the music video form.

the vid form, and the fanzines may make mention of vids themselves and the process of vidding. This kind of knowledge is passed orally and at conventions; for example, Penley (1991) describes attending a vid-making workshop at a convention, however Bacon-Smith cites a brief passage from a zine regarding audio/visual technology (1992: 175). Joan Marie Verba's memoir-cum-catalogue of *Star Trek* zines, *Boldly Writing: A Trekker Fan and Zine History, 1967-1987* (2003), does not mention the vid or its antecedents: however, there are tantalising references to 'editorial content', which may include convention reports<sup>2</sup> with overviews of vidshows, or correspondence regarding videotape sharing, appropriate technologies, or tutorials. I am interested to see what precedents exist in the Collection's print zines for online vidding tutorials, including information about ripping/trading source material, and for discussions of individual vids and vidshows as they developed. Histories of vids and vidding may also be found in archival material beyond the zines: some of the works included in Kandy Fong's DVD transfers of vid compilations from the 1980s are accompanied by a few words of description about the vidders, their practices, and their works. Aside from vidding itself, the Collection may contain descriptions of 'marathon' viewing, which would deepen current academic perspectives on 'binge watching' practices (cf. Brunsdon 2010) by demonstrating a precedent for concentrated viewing beyond a brief mention by Bacon-Smith (1992: 121-123).

This archival work would also be in aid of answering the earlier question about an evolution of the vid form, from its origins to the present. While convention-based exhibition is still significant in vidding, there is a question to be asked about the

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<sup>2</sup> A form of writing similar to an academic conference report, providing an overview of events recorded for posterity and to inform those who did not attend of significant panels, events, etc.

present state of vidding as a specifically digital practice; for those in vidding fandom, vids are conceivably one of the 'ordinary experiences of being online' (Garde-Hansen and Gorton 2013: 11). If this is the case, it would be worth investigating whether the vid form as described in this thesis is an old media practice borne out on new media<sup>3</sup>, or whether, for example, the digital accessibility of source material elides medium specificity in a manner unique to (or typical of) new/digital media.

### **Final Thoughts**

In *The DVD Revolution: Movies, Culture and Technology* (2005), Aaron Barlow argues that the DVD brings new possibilities 'both as a source for material [...] and as a means of distribution' to fan works, writing that, '[t]echnological possibilities have progressed to the point where film and video, as well as fiction, can be used to create significant fan art. [...] The use of the moving image in fan art, however, is still in its infancy' (56-57). However, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the use of the moving image in fan art significantly pre-dates the DVD and has unquestionably reached its maturity. It is important to emphasise that the vid does not date from the introduction of the DVD, or of YouTube, though these are both significant technological developments in its history. The personal media archive, containing film, television, music, photos, etc., is something that has the potential to be continually reworked. Digital technology permits a historical flattening, where the contents of a DVD shelf or hard drive can permit this manner of interaction across several decades. What digital technologies give us is not the ability to create these kinds of works, but much more vast and accessible material with which to play.

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<sup>3</sup> Particularly in light of recent fannish re-uses of moving image more closely associated with communities based on YouTube; these tend to prize skilful manipulation of images themselves, where that manner of intervention is much more rare.

In this thesis, I have sought to describe and analyse the critical and creative output of a keenly attentive audience, whose method of watching and interpreting television and film has not been previously well-documented. The history of vidding, as seen through the vids themselves, is a history of a geographically-dispersed community's engagement with television. This is not a mainstream use, but it does demonstrate a sustained and multi-generational response to television.

The vid form represents a diverse range of expression and comment. The existence of vids relies on the existence of home video technologies – first analogue, now digital – for the access to source material. The vid form's inherent reflexivity demands vids be read alongside the viewer's memory and understanding of its source texts as a whole. Vids help constitute an individual's knowledge and understanding of a series, film, franchise, or broader viewing landscape.

Kim Bjarkman, writing about videotape collections, offered that 'While museums turn history into spectacle, video archives turn spectacle into history' (2004: 235). This is true of vids, as collections of older vids serve as a record of past fannish interpretations. Vids are, on the whole, intended to provoke an immediate reaction: to incite the emotions of a spectator (laughter, sorrow, desire) and to operate within a framework of contemporary fannish discourse (e.g. critical perspectives on 'hot' fandoms). Past this immediate moment, vids take ordinary television, films, 'quality' television, and cult texts, and textually represent how a character, pairing, series, film, genre, or set of tropes can be interpreted. Ultimately, this thesis is about how film and television can be watched: the vid form demonstrates complex responses to media in a community that is increasingly visible, but also offers a model of how to be an attentive audience.

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24. Created by Joel Surnow, Robert Cochran. Perf. Kiefer Sutherland, Mary Lynn Rajsakub, Elisha Cuthbert, Carlos Bernard, Glenn Morshower. FOX, 2001-2010, 2014.
- Alias Smith and Jones*. Created by Glen A. Larson. Perf. Pet Duel, Ben Murphy, Roger Davis. ABC, 1971-1973.
- Alien*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Tom Skerritt, Sigourney Weaver, Veronica Cartwright, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Ian Holm. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1979
- Aliens*. Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Sigourney Weaver, Michael Biehn, Jenette Goldstein, Carrie Henn, Lance Henriksen, Bill Paxton. 20th Century Fox, USA, 1986.
- Alien 3*. Dir. David Fincher. Perf. Sigourney Weaver, Charles Dance, Charles S. Dutton, Lance Henriksen, Paul McGann. 20th Century Fox, USA, 1992.
- Alien: Resurrection*. Dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Perf. Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Ron Perlman, Dan Hedaya, Brad Dourif, Michael Wincott. 20th Century Fox, USA, 1997.
- All About Eve*. Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Perf. Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, George Sanders, Celeste Holm. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1950.
- All My Children*. Created by Agnes Nixon. ABC, 1970-2011.
- All That Heaven Allows*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Jane Wyman, Rock Hudson. Universal Pictures, USA, 1955.
- Ally McBeal*. Created by David E. Kelley. Perf. Calista Flockhart, Greg Germann, Jane Krakowski, Peter MacNicol, Lisa Nicole Carson, Portia de Rossi, Lucy Liu. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television, USA, 1997-2002.
- Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy*. Dir. Martin Arnold, 1998.
- Amazing Grace*. Dir. Michael Apted. Perf. Ioan Gruffudd, Benedict Cumberbatch, Romola Garai, Albert Finney. Momentum Pictures (UK), Samuel Goldwyn Films (USA), 2006.
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- American Psycho*. Dir. Mary Harron. Perf. Christian Bale Willem Dafoe, Jared Leto, Josh Lucas, Samantha Mathis. Lions Gate Films, USA, 2000.

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*Badlands*. Dir. Terrence Malick. Perf. Martin Sheen, Sissy Spacek, Warren Oates. Warner Brothers, USA, 1973.

'Bastille Day'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 1, episode 3. Dir. Allen Kroeker. Writ. Toni Graphia. Sci-Fi Channel, 1 November 2004.

*Batman Returns*. Dir. Tim Burton. Perf. Michael Keaton, Michelle Pfeiffer, Danny DeVito, Christopher Walken. Warner Bros, USA, 1992.

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*Battlestar Galactica*. Created by Ronald D. Moore. Perf. Edward James Olmos, Mary McDonnell, Katee Sackhoff, Jamie Bamber, James Callis, Tricia Helfer, Grace Park, Michael Hogan, Aaron Douglas, Tahmoh Penikett. Sci-Fi Channel, 2004-2009.

*Beau Brummell: This Charming Man*. Dir. Philippa Lowthorpe. Writ. Simon Bent. Perf. James Purefoy, Hugh Bonneville, Phil Davis, Matthew Rhys. BBC Four, 20 December 2006.

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*Bionic Woman*. Created by David Eick. Perf. Michelle Ryan, Miguel Ferrer, Molly Price, Lucy Kate Hale, Mark Sheppard. NBC, 2007.

*The Birds*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Tippi Hedren, Rod Taylor, Jessica Tandy, Suzanne Pleshette, Veronica Cartwright. Universal Pictures, USA, 1963.

*Blade Runner*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos. Warner Brothers, USA, 1982.

*Blake's 7*. Created by Terry Nation. Perf. Paul Darrow, Michael Keating, Sally Knyvette, Gareth Thomas. BBC One, 1978-1981.

*Bones*. Created by Hard Hanson. Perf. Emily Deschanel, David Boreanaz, Michaela Conlin, T. J. Thyne, Tamara Taylor. FOX, 2005-present.

- The Boondock Saints*. Dir. Troy Duffy. Perf. Willem Defoe, Sean Patrick Flanery, Norman Reedus, Billy Connolly. Indican Pictures, USA/Canada, 1999.
- Brotherhood of the Wolf*. Dir. Christophe Gans. Perf. Samuel Le Bihan, Vincent Cassel, Émilie Dequenne, Monica Bellucci, Jérémie Renier, Mark Dacascos. Canal+, Universal Pictures, France, 2001.
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Created by Joss Whedon. Perf. Sarah Michelle Gellar, Nicholas Brendon, Alyson Hannigan, Charisma Carpenter, Anthony Stewart Head, David Boreanaz, James Marsters. The WB, 1997-2001; UPN, 2001-2003.
- Burn Notice*. Created by Matt Nix. Perf. Jeffrey Donovan, Gabrielle Anwar, Bruce Campbell, Sharon Gless. USA Network, 2007-2013.
- Byron*. Dir. Julian Farino. Writ. Nick Dear. Perf. Jonny Lee Miller, Vanessa Redgrave, Philip Glenister. BBC Two, 27-28 September 2003.
- Cagney & Lacey*. Created by Barbara Avedon, Barbara Corday. Perf. Sharon Gless, Tyne Daly, Al Waxman. CBS, 1981-1988.
- Carnivàle*. Created by Daniel Knauf. Perf. Michael J. Anderson, Adrienne Barbeau, Patrick Bauchau, Clancy Brown, Debra Christofferson, Tim DeKay, Clea DuVall. HBO, 2003-2005.
- Casanova*. Dir. Lasse Hallström. Perf. Heath Ledger, Sienna Miller, Jeremy Irons, Oliver Platt. Touchstone Pictures, Buena Vista Pictures, USA, 2005.
- Casino Royale*. Dir. Martin Campbell. Perf. Daniel Craig, Eva Green, Mads Mikkelsen, Jeffrey Wright, Judi Dench. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Columbia Pictures, UK/US/Czech Republic/Germany, 2006.
- Catherine the Great*. Dir. Marvin J. Chomsky and John Goldsmith. Perf. Catherine Zeta-Jones, Paul McGann, Jeanne Moreau, Omar Sharif. A&E Television Networks, Germany/USA/Austria, 1995.
- Charade*. Dir. Stanley Donen. Perf. Cary Grant, Audrey Hepburn, Walter Matthau, James Coburn. Universal Pictures, USA, 1963.
- Charmed*. Created by Constance M. Burge. Perf. Holly Marie Combs, Alyssa Milano, Rose McGowan, Shannen Doherty, Brian Krause. The WB, 1998-2006.
- China Beach*. Created by William Broyles, Jr., John Sacret Young. Perf. Dana Delany, Nan Woods, Michael Boatman, Marg Helgenberger. ABC, 1988-1991.
- Chuck*. Created by Josh Schwartz, Chris Fedak. Perf. Zachary Levi, Yvonne Strahovski, Joshua Gomez, Sarah Lancaster. NBC, 2007-2012.
- Cleopatra 2525*. Created by R.J. Stewart and Robert G. Tapert. Perf. Gina Torres, Victoria Pratt, Jennifer Sky. Renaissance Pictures, 2000-2001.
- Coronation Street*. Created by Tony Warren. Granada Television, 1960-present.



*Cosmic Ray*. Dir. Bruce Conner, USA, 1961.

*The Covenant*. Dir. Renny Harlin. Perf. Steven Strait, Taylor Kitsch, Toby Hemingway, Chance Crawford, Sebastian Stan. Screen Gems, USA, 2006.

*Criminal Minds*. Created by Jeff Davis. Perf. Mandy Patinkin, Thomas Gibson, Lola Glaudini, Shemar Moore, Matthew Gray Gubler, A. J. Cook, Kirsten Vangsness, Paget Brewster, Joe Mantegna. CBS, 2005- present.

*The Crow*. Dir. Alex Proyas. Perf. Brandon Lee, Ernie Hudson, Rochelle Davis, Michael Wincott, Bai Ling. Dimension Films, Miramax Films, USA, 1994.

*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. Created by Anthony E. Zuiker. Perf. William Petersen, Marg Helgenberger, Jorja Fox, Gary Dourdan, George Eads, Paul Guilfoyle, Eric Szmanda, Robert David Hall. CBS, 2000-present.

*CSI: Miami*. Created by Anthony E. Zuiker, Carol Mendelsohn, Ann Donahue. Perf. David Caruso, Emily Procter, Adam Rodríguez, Khandi Alexander, Rory Cochrane, Kim Delaney, Sofia Milos. CBS, 2002-2012.

*CSI: New York*. Created by Anthony E. Zuiker, Carol Mendelsohn, Ann Donahue. Perf. Gary Sinise, Melina Kanakaredes, Carmine Giovinazzo, Vanessa Ferlito, Hill Harper, Eddie Cahill, Anna Belknap, A. J. Buckley, Sela Ward. CBS, 2004-2013.

*Cutthroat Island*. Dir. Renny Harlin. Perf. Geena Davis, Matthew Modine, Franch Langella, Maury Chaykin. Canal+, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA/France/Italy/Germany, 1995.

*The Da Vinci Code*. Dir. Ron Howard. Perf. Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou, Ian McKellen, Alfred Molina, Paul Bettany. Imagine Entertainment, Columbia Pictures, USA, 2006.

*Dad's Army*. Writ. Jimmy Perry, David Croft. Perf. Arthur Lowe, John Le Mesurier, Clive Dunn, John Laurie, James Beck, Arnold Ridley, Ian Lavender, Bill Pertwee, Frank Williams, Edward Sinclair, Janet Davies, Colin Bean. BBC, 1968-1977.

*Dangerous Liaisons*. Dir. Stephen Frears. Perf. Glenn Close, John Malkovich, Michelle Pfeiffer. Warner Brothers, USA, 1988.

*A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia*. Dir. Christopher Menaul. Perf. Ralph Fiennes, Siggid El-Fadil (Alexander Siddig), Denis Quilley, Nicholas Jones. Anglia Films, Enigma Television, UK, 1992.

*Dark Shadows*. Created by Dan Curtis. Perf. Joan Bennett, Grayson Hall, Jonathan Frid, Nancy Barrett, Alexandra Moltke, Louis Edmonds, Kathryn Leigh Scott, David Selby, David Henesy, Lara Parker, Thayer David. ABC, 1966-1971.

*Desperately Seeking Susan*. Dir. Susan Seidelman. Perf. Rosanna Arquette, Madonna, Aidan Quinn, Robert Joy, Laurie Metcalf. Orion Pictures, USA, 1985.

- Dexter*. Created by James Manos, Jr. Perf. Michael C. Hall, Jennifer Carpenter, Desmond Harrington, Julie Benz, Aimee Garcia. Showtime, 2006-2013.
- Die Hard*. Dir. John McTiernan. Perf. Bruce Willis, Alan Rickman, Alexander Godunov, Bonnie Bedelia. Silver Pictures, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1988.
- Doctor Who*. Created by Russell T. Davies, Steven Moffat (Based on *Doctor Who* (Sydney Newman, C. E. Webber, Donald Wilson, BBC, 1963- 1989). Perf. Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant, Matt Smith, Peter Capaldi, Billie Piper, Freema Agyman, Karen Gillan, Arthur Darvill, Jenna Coleman. BBC, 2005-present.
- The Duchess*. Dir. Saul Dibb. Perf. Keira Knightley, Ralph Fiennes, Hayley Atwell, Charlotte Rampling, Dominic Cooper. Qwerty Films, Pathe Distribution, UK/US, 2008.
- 'The Duchess and the Devil'. *Hornblower* (1998-2003). Episode 3. Dir. Andrew Grieve. Writ. Patrick Harbinson. Perf. Ioan Gruffudd, Robert Lindsay, Paul McGann, Paul Copley, Cherie Lunghi, Sean Gilder, Jamie Bamber. ITV, 24 February 1999.
- Due South*. Created by Paul Haggis. Perf. Paul Gross, David Marciano, Callum Keith Rennie, Gordon Pinsent, Camilla Scott, Ramona Milano. CTV (Canada)/CBS (USA), 1994-1999.
- East of Borneo*. Dir. George Melford. Perf. Rose Hobart, Charles Bickford, Georges Renavent, Lupita Tovar, Nobel Johnson. Universal Studios, USA, 1931.
- The Empire Strikes Back*. Dir. Irvin Kirshner. Perf. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Lucasfilm Ltd., 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1980.
- 'The Farm'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 2, episode 5. Dir. Rod Hardy. Writ. Carla Robinson. Sci-Fi Channel, 12 August 2005.
- Farscape*. Created by Brian Henson, Rockne S. O'Bannon. Perf. Ben Browder, Claudia Black, Virginia Hey, Anthony Simcoe, Gigi Edgley, Paul Goddard, Lani Tupu, Wayne Pygram, Jonathan Hardy. Nine Network (Australia)/Sci-Fi Channel (USA), 1999-2003.
- Fight Club*. Dir. David Fincher. Perf. Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, Helena Bonham Carter. Regency Enterprises, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1999.
- Firefly*. Created by Joss Whedon. Perf. Nathan Fillion, Gina Torres, Alan Tudyk, Morena Baccarin, Jewel Staite, Sean Maher, Summer Glau, Ron Glass. FOX, 2002.
- 'Flesh and Bone'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 1, episode 8. Dir. Brad Turner. Writ. Toni Graphia. Sci-Fi Channel, 6 December 2004.
- Game of Thrones*. Created by David Benioff, D. B. Weiss. Perf. Sean Bean, Michelle Fairley, Richard Badden, Sophie Turner, Maisie Williams, Isaac Hempstead-Wright, Kit Harington, Gwendoline Christie, Mark Addy, Lena Headey, Nikolaj

Coster-Waldau, Peter Dinklage, Charles Dance, Emilia Clarke, Jason Momoa.  
HBO, 2011-present.

'The Girl in the Fireplace'. *Doctor Who* (2005-present). Dir. Euros Lyn. Writ. Steven Moffat. Series 2, episode 4. BBC One, 6 May 2006.

*Hard Core Logo*. Dir. Bruce McDonald. Perf. Hugh Dillon, Callum Keith Rennie, John Pyper-Ferguson, Bernie Coulson, Julian Richings, Megan Leitch. Terminal City Pictures, Shadow Shows, Ed Festus Productions, Téléfilm Canada, Canada, 1996.

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Dir. Chris Columbus. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Richard Harris. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2001.

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Dir. Chris Columbus. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Richard Harris, Kenneth Branagh. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2002.

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Gary Oldman, Emma Thompson. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2004.

*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Dir. Mike Newell. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Gary Oldman, Emma Thompson. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2005.

*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Evanna Lynch, Gary Oldman, Imelda Staunton, Helena Bonham Carter, Ralph Fiennes. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2007.

*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Helena Bonham Carter, Ralph Fiennes. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2009.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Evanna Lynch, Ralph Fiennes. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2010.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*. Dir. David Yates. Perf. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Robbie Coltrane, Tom Felton, Alan Rickman, Maggie Smith, Michael Gambon, Evanna Lynch, Ralph Fiennes. Warner Bros. Pictures, USA/UK, 2011.

*Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*. Created by Christian Williams. Perf. Kevin Sorbo, Michael Hurst. Renaissance Pictures/Universal TV, 1995-1999.

- Heroes*. Created by Tim Kring. Perf. Santiago Cabrera, Jack Coleman, Tawny Cypress, Greg Grunberg, Ali Larter, James Kyson Lee, Masi Oka, Hayden Panettiere, Adrian Pasdar, Zachary Quinto, Sendhil Ramamurthy, Milo Ventimiglia. NBC, 2006-2010.
- Highlander: The Series*. Created by Davis-Panzer Productions. Perf. Adrian Paul, Stan Kirsch, Amanda Wyss, Jim Byrnes, Philip Akin, Michel Modo, Lisa Howard, Elizabeth Gracen, Peter Wingfield. Gaumont Télévision, 1992-1998.
- Home Stories*. Dir. Matthias Muller, Germany, 1990.
- Hornblower*. Dir. Andrew Grieve. Perf. Ioan Gruffudd, Robert Lindsay, Paul McGann, Paul Copley, Sean Gilder, Jamie Bamber. ITV, 1998-2003.
- I Spy*. Created by David Friedkin, Morton Fine. Perf. Robert Culp, Bill Cosby. NBC, 1965-1968.
- I, Robot*. Dir. Alex Proyas. Perf. Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan, Bruce Greenwood, James Cromwell, Chi McBride, Alan Tudyk. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 2004.
- Imitation of Life*. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Perf. Lana Turner, Juanita Moore, John Gavin, Sandra Dee, Susan Kohner. Universal International Pictures, USA, 1959.
- In Plain Sight*. Created by David Maples. Perf. Mary McCormack, Fred Weller, Nichole Hiltz, Lesley Ann Warren, Paul Ben-Victor, Rachel Boston. USA Network, 2008-2012.
- The Incredible Journey of Mary Bryant*. Dir. Peter Andrikidis. Writ. Peter Berry. Perf. Romola Garai, Jack Davenport, Alex O'Loughlin. Powercorp, Australia, 2005.
- The Invisible Man*. Created by Matt Greenberg. Perf. Vincent Ventresca, Paul Ben-Victor, Eddie Jones, Shannon Kenny, Mike McCafferty. Sci-Fi Channel, 2000-2002.
- Iron Man*. Dir. John Favreau. Perf. Robert Downey, Jr., Jeff Bridges, Gwyneth Paltrow, Terrence Howard, Shaun Toub. Marvel Studios, Paramount Pictures, USA, 2008.
- JAG*. Created by Donald P. Bellisario. Perf. David James Elliott, Catherine Bell, Patrick Labyorteaux, John M. Jackson, Scott Lawrence, Tracey Needham, Zoe McLellan. NBC, 1995-1996; CBS, 1997-2005.
- Jake 2.0*. Created by Silvio Horta. Perf. Christopher Gorham, Philip Anthony-Rodriguez, Judith Scott, Marina Black, Keegan Connor Tracy. UPN, 2003-2004.
- Jefferson in Paris*. Dir. James Ivory. Perf. Greta Scacchi, Nancy Marchand, Thandie Newton, Gwyneth Paltrow, Nick Nolte, Jean-Pierre Aumont. Touchstone Pictures, Merchant Ivory Pictures, Buena Vista Pictures, France/USA, 1995.
- 'Journey to Babel'. *Star Trek* (1966-1969). Season 2, episode 10. Dir. Joseph Pevney. Writ. D. C. Fontana. Perf. William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, Nichelle Nichols, Jane Wyatt, Mark Lenard. NBC, 17 November 1967.

*The Lambeth Walk (Nazi Style)*. Dir. Charles A. Ridley, 1942.

*Las Vegas*. Created by Gary Scott Thompson. Perf. James Caan, Josh Duhamel, Nikki Cox, James Lesure, Vanessa Marcil, Molly Sims, Marsha Thomason, Tom Selleck. NBC, 2003-2008.

*Legend of the Seeker*. Created by Sam Raimi. Perf. Craig Horner, Bridget Regan, Bruce Spence, Craig Parker, Tabrett Bethell. Renaissance Pictures/ABC, 2008-2010.

*Lethal Weapon*. Dir. Richard Donner. Perf. Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Gary Busey. Silver Pictures, Warner Brothers, USA, 1987.

*Leverage*. Created by John Rogers, Chris Downey. Perf. Timothy Hutton, Gina Bellman, Aldis Hodge, Christian Kane, Beth Riesgraf. TNT, 2008-2012.

*Life on Mars*. Created by Matthew Graham, Tony Jordan, Ashley Pharoah. Perf. John Simm, Philip Glenister, Liz White, Dean Andrews, Marshall Lancaster. BBC, 2006-2007.

*Lost*. Created by Jeffrey Lieber, J. J. Abrams, Damon Lindelof. Perf. Matthew Fox, Evangeline Lilly, Jorge Garcia, Josh Holloway, Harold Perrineau, Terry O'Quinn, Daniel Dae Kim, Dominic Monaghan, Michael Emerson, Elizabeth Mitchell, Henry Ian Cusick. ABC, 2004-2010.

*Lost Highway*. Dir. David Lynch. Perf. Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Robert Loggia, Gary Busey, Richard Pryor. October Films, USA, 1997.

*Lost in Austen*. Dir. Dan Zeff. Writ. Guy Andrews. Perf. Jemima Rooper, Elliot Cowan, Alex Kingston, Morven Christie, Tom Mison, Gemma Arterton. ITV, 2008.

*Madame X*. Dir. David Lowell Rich. Perf. Lana Turner, John Forsythe, Ricardo Montalban. Universal Picture, USA, 1966.

'Maelstrom'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 3, episode 17. Dir. Michael Nankin. Writ. Bradley Thompson & David Weddle. Sci-Fi Channel, 4 March 2007.

*The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*. Created by Sam Rolfe. Perf. Robert Vaughn, David McCallum, Leo G. Carroll, Barbara Moore. NBC, 1964-1968.

*Man on Fire*. Dir. Tony Scott. Perf. Denzel Washington, Dakota Fanning, Radha Mitchell, Christopher Walken. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 2004.

*The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. James Stewart, Doris Day, Brenda De Banzie. Paramount Pictures, USA, 1956.

*Marie Antoinette*. Dir. Sophia Coppola. Perf. Kirsten Dunst, Judy Davis, Rose Byrne, Jason Schwartzman, Rip Torn. American Zoetrope, Columbian Pictures, USA/France/Japan, 2006.

*Mary Poppins*. Dir. Robert Stevenson. Perf. Julie Andrews, Dick Van Dyke, David Tomlinson, Glynis Johns. Walt Disney Productions, USA, 1964.

- The Matrix*. Dir. The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski, now credited as The Wachowskis]. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne, Hugo Weaving. Village Roadshow Pictures, Silver Pictures, Warner Brothers, USA/Australia, 1999.
- The Matrix: Revolutions*. Dir. The Wachowski Brothers [Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski, now credited as The Wachowskis]. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne, Hugo Weaving. Village Roadshow Pictures, Silver Pictures, Warner Brothers, USA/Australia, 2003.
- Medium*. Created by Glenn Gordon Caron. Perf. Patricia Arquette, Jake Weber, Miguel Sandoval, Sofia Vassilieva, Maria Lark. NBC, 2005-2009; CBS, 2009-2011.
- Memento*. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Perf. Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano. Summit Entertainment, USA, 2000.
- Merlin*. Created by Julian Jones, Jake Michie, Johnny Capps, Julian Murphy. Perf. Colin Morgan, Bradley James, Katie McGrath, Angel Coulby, Richard Wilson, Anthony Stewart Head, John Hurt. BBC, 2008-2012.
- The Middleman*. Created by Javier Grillo-Marxauch, Les McClaine. Perf. Matt Keeslar, Natalie Morales, Mary Pat Gleason, Brit Morgan, Jake Smollett. ABC, 2008.
- Monk*. Created by Andy Breckman. Perf. Tony Shalhoub, Bitty Schram, Jason Gray-Stanford, Ted Levine, Traylor Howard. USA Network, 2002-2009.
- A Movie*. Dir. Bruce Conner, USA, 1958.
- The Muppet Show*. Created by Jim Henson. Perf. Jim Henson, Frank Oz, Jerry Nelson, Richard Hunt, Dave Goelz, Louise Gold, Steve Whitmire, Kathryn Mullen, Eren Ozker, John Lovelady. ATV/Henson Associates, 1976-1981.
- NCIS*. Created by Don P. Bellisario, Don McGill. Perf. Mark Harmon, Sasha Alexander, Michael Weatherly, Pauley Perrette, David McCallum. CBS, 2003-present.
- Near Dark*. Dir. Kathryn Bigelow. Perf. Adrian Pasdar, Jenny Wright, Lance Henriksen, Jenette Goldstein, Bill Paxton. DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group, USA, 1987.
- Northanger Abbey*. Dir. Jon Jones. Writ. Andrew Davies. Perf. Felicity Jones, J. J. Felid, Carey Mulligan. ITV, 25 March 2007.
- 'Occupation'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 3, episode 1. Dir. Sergio Mimica-Gezzan. Writ. Ronald D. Moore. Sci-Fi Channel, 6 October 2006.
- The O'Reilly Factor*. Created by Bill O'Reilly. FOX News Channel, USA, 1996-present.
- Orlando*. Dir. Sally Potter. Perf. Tilda Swinton, Billy Zane, Lothaire Bluteau, Charlotte Valandrey, John Wood. Sony Pictures Classics, UK, 1992.

*The Outsiders*. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. C. Thomas Howell, Matt Dillon, Ralph Macchio, Patrick Swayze, Rob Lowe, Diane Lane, Emilio Estevez, Tom Cruise. Zoetrope Studios, Warner Brothers, USA, 1983.

*passage à l'acte*. Dir. Martin Arnold, 1993.

*Persuasion*. Dir. Adrian Shergold. Wri. Simon Burke. Perf. Sally Hawkins, Rupert Penry-Jones. Clerkenwell Films (UK), WGBH Boston (USA), 2007.

*Peyton Place*. Dir. Mark Robson. Perf. Lana Turner, Hope Lange, Lee Philips Lloyd Nolan, Diane Varsi. 20th Century Fox, USA, 1957.

*pièce touchée*. Dir. Martin Arnold, 1989.

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*Point Break*. Dir. Kathryn Bigelow. Perf. Patrick Swayze, Keanu Reeves, Gary Busey. Largo Entertainment, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1991.

*Power Play*. Created by Glenn Davis, William Laurin. Perf. Michael Riley, Kari Matchett, Dean McDermott, Katerina Scorsone, Gordon Pinsent, Al Waxman. CTV, 1998-2000.

*The Practice*. Created by David E. Kelley. Perf. Dylan McDermott, Michael Badalucco, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Steve Harris, Camryn Manheim, Kelli Williams, Lara Flynn Boyle, Marla Sokoloff, Jason Kravits, Ron Livingston, Jessica Capshaw, Chyler Leigh, Rhona Mitra, James Spader, Ray Abruzzo. ABC, 1997-2004.

'Precipice'. *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009). Season 3, episode 2. Dir. Sergio Mimica-Gezzan. Writ. Ronald D. Moore. Sci-Fi Channel, 6 October 2006.

*Pride and Prejudice*. Dir. Simon Langton. Writ. Andrew Davies. Perf. Jennifer Ehle, Colin Firth, Susannah Harker, Benjamin Whitrow, Alison Steadman, Lucy Briers, Polly Maberly, Julia Sawalha, Crispin Bonham-Carter. BBC One, 1995.

*Pride and Prejudice*. Dir. Joe Wright. Perf. Keira Knightley, Matthew Macfadyen, Brenda Blethyn, Jena Malone, Rosamund Pike, Judi Dench, Donald Sutherland. StudioCanal, Working Title Films, Focus Features, France/UK/USA, 2005.

*Prime Suspect*. Created by Lynda La Plante. Perf. Maria Bello, Brian O'Byrne, Kirk Acevedo, Peter Gerety, Tim Griffin, Elizabeth Rodriguez, Aidan Quinn. NBC, 2011-2012.

- The Princess Bride*. Dir. Rob Reiner. Perf. Cary Elwes, Robin Wright, Mandy Patinkin, Chris Sarandon, André the Giant, Christopher Guest. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1987.
- The Professionals*. Created by Brian Clemens. Perf. Martin Shaw, Lewis Collins, Gordon Jackson. ITV, 1977-1983.
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- Quills*. Dir. Philip Kaufman. Perf. Kate Winslet, Geoffrey Rush, Joaquin Phoenix, Michael Caine. Industry Entertainment, Fox Searchlight Pictures, USA/UK/Germany, 2000.
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- Riget (The Kingdom)*. Created by Lars von Trier. Perf. Ernst-Hugo Järegård, Kirsten Rolffes, Holger Juul Hansen, Søren Pilmark, Ghita Nørby, Baard Ove, Birgitte Raabery, Udo Kier. Danmarks Radio, 1994-1997.
- RiP!: A Remix Manifesto*. Dir. Brett Gaylor. National Film Board of Canada, Canada, 2008.
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- Road House*. Dir. Rowdy Herrington. Perf. Patrick Swayze, Kelly Lynch, Sam Elliot, Ben Gazzara, Jeff Healey. Silver Pictures, United Artists, USA, 1989.
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- Rose Hobart*. Dir. Joseph Cornell, 1936.
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- Say Anything....* Dir. Cameron Crowe. Perf. John Cusack, Ione Skye, John Mahoney. Gracie Films, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, USA, 1989.



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- Sherlock Holmes*. Dir. Guy Ritchie. Perf. Robert Downey, Jr., Jude Law, Rachel McAdams, Mark Strong, Kelly Reilly, Edie Marsan. Silver Pictures Village Roadshow Pictures, Warner Brothers, UK/USA/Australia, 2009.
- Simon & Simon*. Created by Philip DeGuere. Perf. Jameson Parker, Gerald McRaney, Tim Reid, Mary Carver, Jeannie Wilson. CBS, 1981-1989.
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- Smallville*. Created by Alfred Gough, Miles Millar. Perf. Tom Welling, Michael Rosenbaum, Kristen Kreuk, Allison Mack, Sam Jones III, Annette O'Toole, John Schneider, John Glover, Jensen Ackles, Erica Durance. The WB, 2001-2006; The CW, 2006-2011.
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