

Top Tip

Make notes on how the Uses and Gratifications theory can be applied to *The IT Crowd*.

Activity 5.12

How might the following affect the way in which an audience responds to *The IT Crowd*?

- Age – how might older or younger audiences respond?
- Gender – how might males and females respond?
- Interests – whether they have similar interests to Moss and Roy
- Experience of IT, for example if they work in an IT department
- Taste in comedy – do they like surreal humour? Are they familiar with Graham Linehan's other work?
- Knowledge of *Countdown* – have they seen the programme? Are they a fan?

Quickfire 5.40

How might the online game appeal to fans of *The IT Crowd*?

Key Term**Press release**

A statement about an event or development that a company issues to news organisations in the hope that the story will be included in a newspaper or news broadcast.

- humour that is not specific to technology, such as the aerobics class
- the inclusion of characters such as Jen who do not understand IT.

Marketing

The *IT Crowd* page of the Channel 4 website includes links to the episodes, clips and 'extras' and character profiles, typical of many television programme websites. There are also some specific elements to appeal to *IT Crowd* fans:

- A game that invites the audience to 'Assist Jen, Moss and Roy in protecting Reynholm Industries from hordes of electronic nasties!' This encourages interactivity and further suggests that the programme is targeting an IT-literate audience.
- A range of *IT Crowd* wallpapers that can be downloaded by fans who wish to customise their desktop. This reinforces some of the ideas in the programme as Roy's desk is surrounded by memorabilia relating to popular culture, and this allows viewers to do the same.

Channel 4 ran an *IT Crowd Night* in December 2013. This was an evening of programming devoted to the show, featuring *The IT Crowd Manual* (a documentary about the making of the programme) and favourite episodes including one that was chosen by fans. This demonstrates the lasting appeal of the programme, even after the final episode had been screened. Channel 4 issued a **press release** for the event that used specialist lexis such as 'reboot' and 'decrypt' to appeal to the fans of the show.

This use of such language reinforces the branding in the title sequence of the programme and also the DVD cover. The series 1 DVD, for example is called 'Version 1.0' to reflect the IT context. These also reference video games and further appeal to the specialised audience.

Contexts

The characters are young adult 'millennials', in contrast to the Generation X characters that feature in *Friends*. Moss, Roy and Jen work for a large company and seem to have responsible jobs, although Roy in particular feels quite inadequate in this episode in comparison with his old friend Alistair. This relates to the contemporary social context where young adults have high student debts and many have to work in jobs for which they are overqualified. Roy's character demonstrates insecurities, which makes a link to modern concerns about anxiety and mental health issues.

The IT team shows greater cultural diversity than *Friends* as there are characters from different social and ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the context of contemporary London.

The *Countdown* sequences reflect the cultural context as that programme is extremely popular with particular audiences and is 'cult' viewing for many university students. The programme transports *Countdown* to a contemporary urban setting but then upholds the stereotypical view that the contestants are not actually radical. The transformation of Moss's image reflects the cult of celebrity in contemporary society where people who have appeared on television achieve fame and status and take on the trappings of celebrity.

Section B: Music Video and Online Media**Overview**

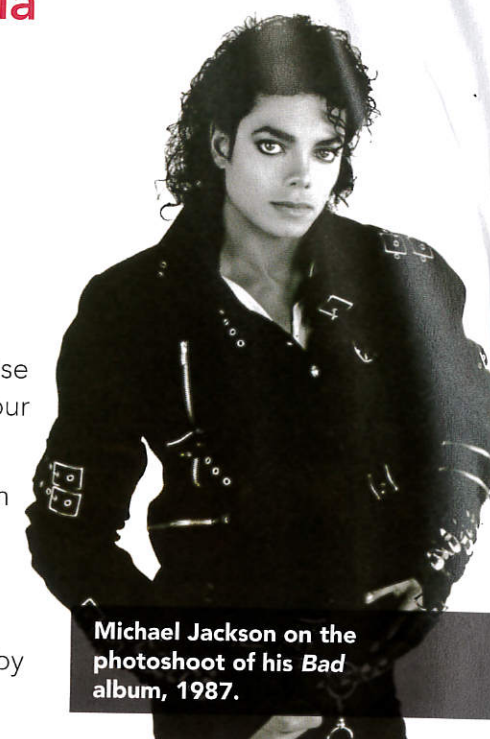
In Section B, you will study three music videos:

- one contemporary music video by a female artist
- one contemporary music video by a male artist
- one older music video from the 1980s or early 1990s.

This chapter includes analysis of some different music videos by the same artists to illustrate the codes and conventions of the form and to contextualise the set products. You will need to analyse the set music videos chosen by your teacher in detail.

You will also explore online, social and participatory media products in relation to the two contemporary artists whose music videos you have analysed.

This chapter includes some illustrative examples from the artists' websites and social media accounts, but these types of media product are regularly updated and you will need to study appropriate current examples, chosen by your teacher, during your course.

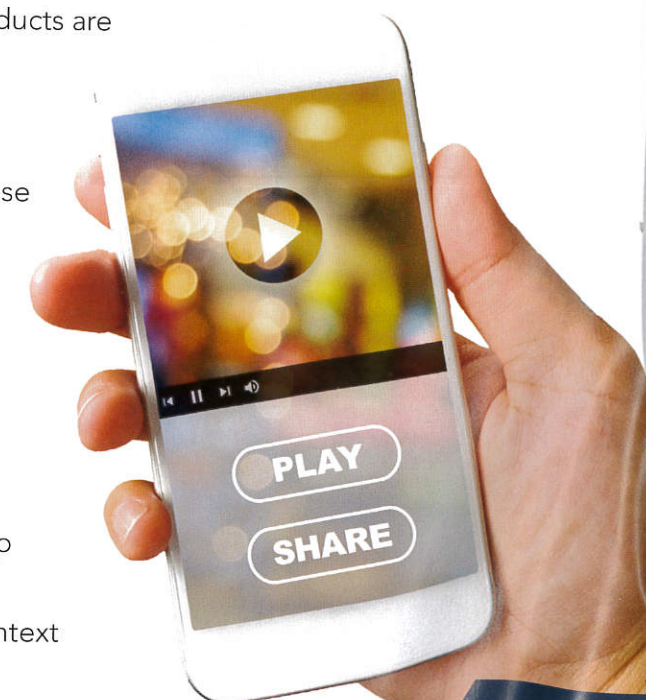


Michael Jackson on the photoshoot of his *Bad* album, 1987.

Contemporary music videos	Music videos from the 1980s and 1990s	Online, social and participatory media
Two music videos from the following options: Either Katy Perry, 'Roar' (2013) or Taylor Swift, 'Bad Blood' (2014) and either Pharrell Williams, 'Freedom' (2015) or Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars, 'Uptown Funk' (2014)	One of the following music videos: Either Duran Duran, 'Rio' (1982) or Michael Jackson, 'Black or White' (1991)	Either katyperry.com or taylorswift.com and either pharrellwilliams.com or brunomars.com

You will analyse the music video from the 1980s or 1990s in relation to media language, representations and contexts. The contemporary products are studied in relation to all areas of the theoretical framework:

- **Media language**, including:
 - the relationship between technology and media products
 - the codes and conventions of media language and how these become established as 'styles'
 - intertextuality
- **Representations**, including:
 - representations of gender, ethnicity and age
 - viewpoints, messages, values and beliefs
 - stereotypes
- **Media industries**, including:
 - production, ownership and control; conglomerate ownership
 - the impact of convergence across different platforms
 - how music operates as a commercial industry in a global context



- **Audiences**, including:
 - interactivity via online platforms
 - audience targeting, consumption and response
- **Contexts**: how the music products reflect the society and culture in which they were made.

Analysing the Set Products

Studying the two contemporary music videos alongside the artists' websites and social media pages will allow you to consider the way in which record labels use convergence to:

- market the artists and their music
- establish a brand identity for the artist
- appeal to audiences.

In analysing an example of an older music video together with contemporary examples you will explore:

- how codes and conventions change over time
- how the products reflect the contexts in which they were made in relation to:
 - the use of media language, including technology
 - representations of gender and ethnicity
 - themes and issues explored
 - the messages and values communicated.



Overview of the Music Industry

Music is a very large global media industry. In Britain, the music industry contributes billions of pounds to the economy, and is the third largest market for recorded music in the world. The music industry has faced many challenges in recent years as record sales have been decreasing and the internet has changed the way audiences consume music.

Downloading and sharing music has been an issue for some time, although audiences can download music legally from sites such as Amazon and iTunes.

Online streaming services such as Spotify and Deezer have become very popular and streaming now accounts for more than 50 per cent of music consumption in the UK according to the **BPI**.

These services allow users to access a wide range of music, and the record label receives a payment every time a track is streamed. The sites are funded by advertising (some allow users to listen for free if they accept advertising) and subscription fees (where listeners pay for an advert-free service and enhanced features such as the ability to listen offline). In addition, most artists also have their own YouTube and Vevo pages which generate income from advertising.

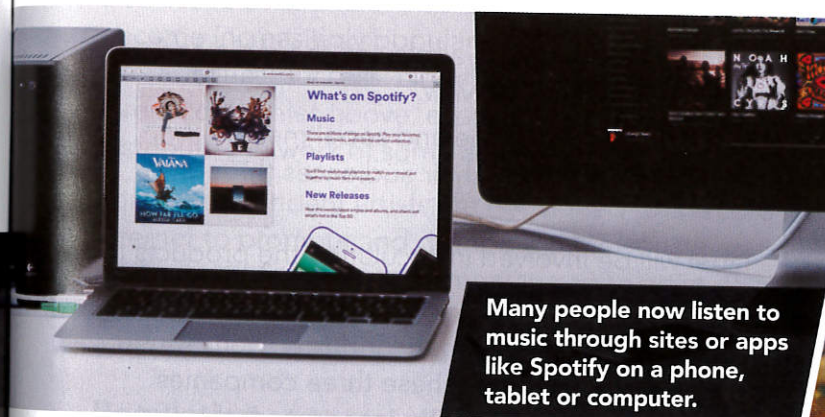
Key Terms

Online streaming services

Websites and apps that allow users to listen to music (or consume other digital content, such as television or film) via the internet. (Depending on the service and subscription level, listeners might be able to save their music to listen to offline.)

BPI

The British Phonographic Institute, a trade organisation that represents the British recorded music industry. The BPI organises the annual BRIT Awards and Mercury Prize.



A record shop in Iceland with shelves full of CDs.



Top Tip

Make a list of the streaming and download sites linked from your contemporary artists' websites.

Stretch and Challenge 5.24

Research the contemporary artists to find out if they have released any of their music on vinyl and consider why they might have done so.

The technological developments that once seemed to threaten the future of the industry have allowed it to generate profits in different ways. The availability of music online enables artists to extend their reach to audiences in different parts of the world.

Although CD sales are in decline as much of our music consumption has become digital, **vinyl records** are becoming more popular again. In 2017, more than 4 million vinyl albums were sold in the UK, which was almost one in ten physical record sales (BPI statistics), suggesting that this is an important trend in the industry. Some music fans prefer to own a physical copy of their favourite music and take pleasure in holding it and looking at the album artwork and sleeve notes. Nostalgia is also a possible factor here, as older music fans might enjoy the format they remember from their youth, while younger people might be attracted by the current trend for vinyl.

The music industry has to adapt to change and respond to audience demands, as Matt Ingham from independent label Cherry Red Records, commented, 'The combination of new and old technology means the industry can continue to rise to the challenge of providing the public with music to treasure forever.' (bpi.co.uk/news-analysis/rising-uk-music-consumption-enjoys-fastest-growth-this-millennium)



Ownership and the music industry

Record labels are companies that make contracts with artists and release their music. Record companies usually fund the costs of producing, distributing and circulating music to audiences. The process of creating and releasing music includes:

- Artist and repertoire, the department of the record company that finds and nurtures new artists. An 'advance' is often paid to the artist before they have released any music. This allows them to pay their living costs while they are developing new material.
- Production: the recording and mixing of the music, and production of physical formats such as CDs.
- Distribution and circulation: marketing, press and promotion teams to advertise and publicise the music:
 - A single release from an album will usually be accompanied by a music video which becomes a major part of the marketing campaign.
 - Publicity for a new single or album will be generated through, for example, articles in newspapers and magazines and television appearances by the artist.
 - The promotion department will also arrange airplay on the radio and broadcast of the video on channels such as MTV.
- Record labels usually have a dedicated online and social media department to ensure that the artists reach their audiences through digital platforms.
- The sales division of a label will be involved in circulating the products to shops and online retail outlets.

Key Term

Horizontally integrated

The structure of a large media organisation which owns companies that produce the same type of media product.

Quickfire 5.41

What is the advantage for a major record company of owning many subsidiary labels?

There are currently three major record labels within the industry: Sony Music, Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group. These three companies are part of major conglomerates and are **horizontally integrated**: they have subsidiary record labels that operate under the main organisation. Some of these subsidiary labels have previously been independent and are associated with a particular genre. Island Records, for example, owned by Universal, was established in Jamaica and originally produced a lot of reggae music.

The major labels detailed below belong to large, powerful media organisations and are able to invest large amounts of money in artists that are, or are likely to be, commercially successful. There are high costs involved in producing music. Videos for major artists often have a budget of over a million dollars.

These organisations operate with high budgets on a global scale and are able to reach large audiences through high-profile marketing campaigns. They also have the potential to benefit from synergy with other companies in the conglomerate.

Record label	Conglomerate	Subsidiary labels
Sony Music	Sony Corporation. Sony also produces films, games consoles, smartphones and other electronic goods.	Columbia Epic RCA
Universal Music Group	Vivendi. Studio Canal is another Vivendi brand that produces film and television.	Capitol EMI Island
Warner Music Group	Access Industries. This industrial conglomerate has interests in many areas including media and communications, chemicals and technology.	Atlantic Asylum Parlophone

There are also many independent record labels, such as Big Machine and Warp Records, that are not linked to a major label. Some very high-profile artists with mainstream appeal, including Taylor Swift, are signed to independent labels, although these are often associated with more alternative acts. 'Indie' music was traditionally non-mainstream, but has become increasingly popular, with many Indie artists achieving commercial as well as critical success. Nonetheless, the industry is still dominated by the 'big three' companies above, especially as they are vertically integrated and also distribute the work of some artists from independent labels.

Some independent artists are not signed to a record label at all and use the internet to promote and distribute their work. It could be argued that this has made the industry more democratic as an artist does not necessarily need to be tied to a record deal. Many independent artists have their own websites and use social media and sites such as YouTube to reach an audience.

Regulation

The music industry is not regulated by a single organisation, but there are regulatory guidelines that apply to music products such as music videos in Britain.

The BPI runs the 'Parental Advisory Scheme', a voluntary system that uses the 'Parental Advisory' logo to notify audiences about content that might be offensive or unsuitable for children. The record company has the responsibility for assessing the product (for example, a song or a music video) and applying the logo where appropriate, using the BPI guidelines. The criteria include:

- strong language
- depictions of violence
- sexual behaviour
- discriminatory behaviour, for example racism
- dangerous or criminal behaviour, such as drug abuse.

The logo is applied as a sticker on a physical product such as a CD. It is also used online, for example next to the icon for a song or music video on a streaming service.



Quickfire 5.42

What type of synergy might a record company develop with another media organisation in the same conglomerate, for example a film company?



Stretch and Challenge 5.25

Research an independent artist who has achieved success by using the internet to reach an audience.



Quickfire 5.43

What are the similarities between the 'Parental Advisory' guidelines and the BBFC categories for classifying film? Why do you think these categories are alike?

**PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT**



Stretch and Challenge 5.26

Visit the BBFC website to find out how the contemporary artists' work has been rated. You can also access further resources: bbfc.co.uk/education-resources/student-guide.

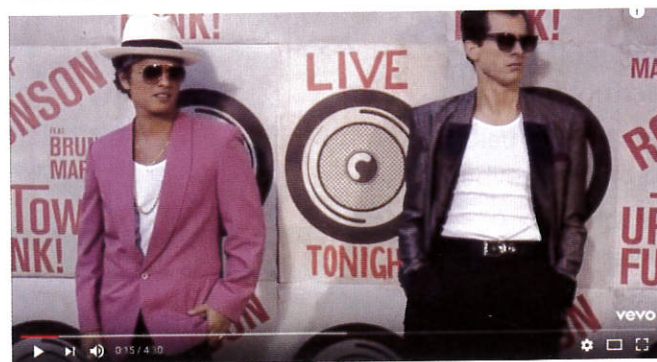
Regulating music videos released on DVD

The Video Recordings Act of 1984 states that certain types of product released on DVD or Blu-ray do not need to be classified by the BBFC. Music videos are in this category. An amendment from 2014, however, requires all products to be classified if they contain material that 'could be potentially harmful or otherwise unsuitable for children'. (bbfc.co.uk/education-resources/student-guide/legislation/video-recordings-act) All music videos on DVD now need to be classified if they would achieve a 12 certificate or above.

Regulating music videos online

The internet presents many challenges to media regulators, as content can easily be created and shared online. Internet service providers are subject to regulation and the Internet Service Providers' Association works to promote online safety, especially for children.

Since 2014, the BBFC has been working with YouTube and Vevo to age-rate online music videos. This is an additional service to the Parental Advisory system. UK record companies are required to submit any video for classification if they feel it would gain at least a 12 certificate. 'Uptown Funk' received a PG rating, shown as 'Partner rating' under the video on Mark Ronson's YouTube channel. BBFC research indicates that 78 per cent of parents value this guidance.



Mark Ronson - Uptown Funk ft. Bruno Mars

2,967,755,783 views

MarkRonsonVEVO
Published on 19 Nov 2014

Mark Ronson's official music video for 'Uptown Funk' ft. Bruno Mars. Click to listen to Mark Ronson on Spotify: <http://smarturl.it/MarkRonsonSpotify>

Partner rating PG

SHOW MORE

Quickfire 5.44

What is the difference between the Parental Advisory system and the BBFC age ratings for online videos?

Key Term

Star persona

The image or identity associated with a major artist.

Marketing: the star persona

The set products of music videos, online, social and participatory media are all examples of marketing that record labels use to try to reach a target audience in a global context. The image of an artist that we see in the media is a constructed representation, not simply the 'real' person. This is called the **star persona** and is established through many different elements, including:

- the music and lyrics
- the visual image of the artist shown on album artwork, in music videos and in publicity shots
- the design of the record artwork, website and merchandise
- the artist's social media posts.

This persona embodies particular values and beliefs and communicates messages to consumers. While music artists are real people, the image presented to the audience is often carefully constructed by the artist and the music producers to appeal to the target audience. An artist's persona is not fixed, however. It will change and develop over time as the artist gets older and possibly moves into different musical genres.

The Spice Girls each had an individual persona, such as 'Sporty Spice', which conveyed a message about the importance of individuality. Together, the group embodied values of 'girl power'.



Activity 5.13

Define the star persona of the contemporary artists that you are studying.

Refer to the website and social media pages that you have studied in class, including the images of the artist, such as album artwork and other photographs, clips from songs and music videos, merchandise, comments on social media etc.

Make notes on:

- visual and technical codes used to construct the star image, including dress codes, colour palettes and iconography
- messages and values communicated on the website, in the music and the social media posts.

Write a detailed paragraph explaining how the artist's persona has been constructed to appeal to the target audience.

Music Audiences

Music plays an important role in many people's lives and is often linked to their identity. It is particularly associated with youth culture, as many people develop a keen interest in music during their teenage years and become fans of particular genres. Rock and roll music became popular in the 1950s and 1960s in America and Britain, particularly as many young people had money to spend on leisure and consumer goods when the economy recovered after the Second World War.

Many genres have developed over time. Pop music, for example, is a very broad genre that originated in rock and roll but now covers a range of mainstream styles and targets a wide audience, while genres such as rap or country music have more specific conventions and appeal to a narrower audience.

Different musical genres, especially those that are less mainstream, often have a particular identity or image associated with them. Fans may respond positively to the music and then adopt the style of clothing and appearance linked to the genre. They might also share the particular values and beliefs that are communicated through the music and lyrics. The punk culture in the 1970s, for example, conveyed rebellious, **anti-establishment** beliefs that challenged **mainstream values**. This genre was considered to be a possible threat to society by some people at the time, showing that different audiences have varied responses to music.

Young people in particular can enjoy the experience of belonging to a group or 'culture' associated with a genre of music as they grow up and explore their identity. Friends might dress in similar clothes, listen to music and attend concerts together. In the digital age these interactions are less likely to occur in person than online as communities of fans around the world can meet in a virtual space and share their enjoyment of the music.



Quickfire 5.45

What visual codes connote rebellion in the image of a punk?



Stretch and Challenge 5.27

Make notes on how the current star persona of your set contemporary artists compares with their image in the set music video.



A poster advertising Bruno Mars' appearances at the Park Theater in Las Vegas.

Key Terms

Anti-establishment beliefs

Ideas that challenge authority or go against the accepted 'norms' in society.

Mainstream values

Ideas that the majority of people agree with, such as family values or a desire for material wealth.



Activity 5.14

Identify the target audience for your contemporary artists.

Consider the music video and the examples of online and social media that you have studied.

- What is the demographic profile of the audience (age, gender, ethnicity and so on)?
- How can the audience be defined by psychographic factors (interests, personality type and so on)?
- Do you think the current target audience is the same as the audience for the set music video?

Stretch and Challenge 5.28

What opportunities do the contemporary artists' websites offer for audiences to engage in fandom?

Quickfire 5.46

How might being a fan offer the pleasures of personal identity and social interaction, applying the Uses and Gratifications theory?

Target audiences

The main target audience for popular music tends to be young people: teenagers and young adults. This is the age group that has time to enjoy and money to spend on music, and might be using popular culture to help establish their identity. It is also often assumed that music targets more males than females. Some music magazines target male readers and many music videos have tended to represent women in quite a sexual way, arguably to appeal to young men. The audience demographic for music, however, is actually very broad. The generation that first experienced rock and roll music in the 1950s has retired, and there are now more artists of both genders, different ages and ethnicities that appeal to a wide range of people. Particular genres will have more specific audience demographics and each artist within the industry will target a specific group or groups of listeners.

Fandom

Music offers many opportunities to actively engage in fandom, a particular pleasure or gratification for audiences who are really interested in a particular genre or artist. They might, for example:

- buy physical artefacts such as CDs and vinyl records, including limited editions and rare releases that could become valuable
- collect memorabilia such as concert tickets, posters and programmes
- purchase official merchandise such as T-shirts and bags
- dress in the style of a genre or artist
- attend concerts or festivals
- follow an artist on social media, and engage in activities such as competitions
- join an online fan community such as Katy Perry's 'Katy Cats', or even create their own fan site.



The internet, and social media in particular, allow audiences to feel that they 'know' the artists and have an insight into their lives, perhaps imagining that they are 'friends' with them if they interact on social media sites. This provides a particular kind of pleasure and also links to the idea of identity, as a fan can feel that they are part of the artist's world. The boundary between fantasy and reality can sometimes become blurred, especially in modern society where social media can make a star seem 'available' and 'real' rather than a constructed persona.

Some artists do engage with their followers, for example by 'liking' their tweets or even arranging to meet groups of fans, which offers additional gratifications to audiences.

Fandom also benefits the industry as audiences can play an important role in sharing information and promoting the artist to generate more sales.

Theoretical perspectives: active audiences

Audiences now have more choice of music than ever and can access bands and artists online that they might not have heard in the past. They can also listen to music when and where they wish on portable devices. Downloading sites offer audiences the ability to select and buy particular songs rather than purchasing an entire album, and, like streaming services, allow audiences to create personalised playlists. This suggests audiences are more active than in the past, when listeners bought an album of several tracks chosen and structured by the artist or media producers. Listeners today choose from what is available on these sites, which also generate suggestions of other music that they might like. This arguably suggests that, while listeners are more involved and have more choice, the industry is still in control of what the audience can listen to.

Audiences are important in driving developments in the industry. If, for example, a particular artist is popular, the record company is likely to release more of their music and might also develop similar products from other artists in the same genre. Record companies are able to use technology to gather data from record sales and from digital platforms to show which music is popular with which audiences, and this can inform what producers invest in.

The Contemporary Artists

The contemporary male and female artists that you study are mainstream solo artists who have achieved major success in terms of record sales and critical acclaim. Analysing them allows you to study all areas of the theoretical framework in relation to music videos and online media. Each artist has a clear star persona, although this is fluid and develops over time, and each could also be considered to be a 'brand' that can be marketed and 'sold' to audiences.

Katy Perry

Katy Perry is an extremely successful singer who has won several American Music Association Awards and is currently a judge on the television show, *American Idol*. She is signed to Capitol Records, part of Universal Music Group.



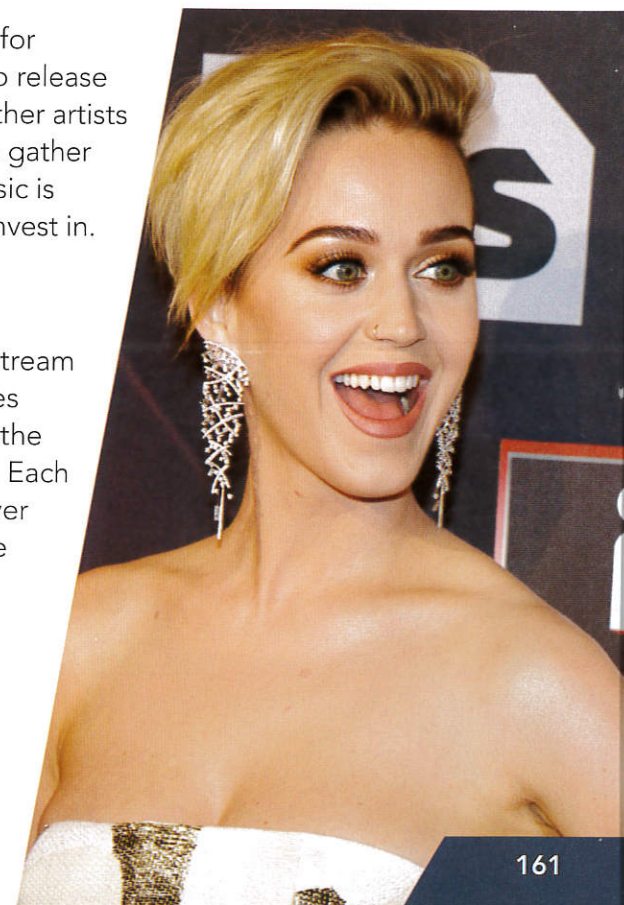
Top Tip

Note specific examples of fan behaviour that you identify on the set artists' websites and social media.



Stretch and Challenge 5.29

Make a list of all the ways in which a music audience can be actively involved in their choice of music and of the ways in which the industry controls music output. Write a paragraph explaining how far a contemporary audience can choose the music they consume.



Quickfire 5.47

Why might an artist release additional products to tie in with an album release?

Key Term**Platinum record**

A record that has sold more than 1 million copies.



Her most recent album, *Witness*, has not achieved the **platinum record** sales of her first three albums, but she is still a major commercial success. In June 2017 she was presented with Diamond Awards by the Recording Industry Association of America for three songs, including 'Roar', that have achieved over 10 million sales and streams in America. Katy Perry currently (early 2018) has more Twitter followers than anyone in the world, over 108 million.

Perry regularly makes significant changes to her image and her onstage persona is very theatrical with elaborate costumes, hair and make-up. Her recent persona is more androgynous than the feminine image constructed in her earlier work.

To tie-in with the release of *Witness*, Perry created a video called 'Will You Be My Witness', recorded when she went into a 'live streaming' house for four days. The video is available to buy and has similarities with the release of the 'making of' video released alongside Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' in the 1980s.

Taylor Swift

Taylor Swift is a Grammy award-winning American singer-songwriter who has released six albums and achieved extremely high record sales. She has over 85 million followers on Twitter, placing her fifth in the world in January 2018.

Swift is signed to the independent label Big Machine Records, which is part of the Big Machine Label Group based in Nashville, USA. The label mainly specialises in country music, although Taylor Swift is now a much more mainstream pop artist. Big Machine's music is distributed through Universal Music Group, one of the three major record labels, which ensures that her music reaches a wide audience.

Swift's persona has developed over time and her website was completely rebranded to tie in with the release of her latest album, *Reputation*, in 2017. Her early persona was youthful and created a sense of the 'girl next door' that young female fans could relate to. This image is evident in the video for 'Love Story'. As Swift has grown older, however, her image has changed and her fans will be able to identify with the more mature persona that has developed. 'Bad Blood' shows an independent and more sexualised persona for example. *Reputation* demonstrates a further development as Swift looks more grown up and 'stripped back', and the branding uses starker, black and white imagery in contrast to the more colourful tones on her previous albums. The themes at this time seem to reflect on her relationship with the media and the 'reputation' that she has developed.

She has recently launched 'The Swift Life' app which offers customers exclusive insights and the chance to connect with her. It has received very positive responses from her fans, sometimes known as 'Swifties'.

**Bruno Mars**

Bruno Mars is a very successful Grammy award-winning artist who has appeared at the Superbowl and was named on the Forbes '30 Under 30 List' in 2014. He is signed to Atlantic Records, which is part of Warner Music Group. Mars has also been a producer, plays several instruments and voiced a role in the film *Rio II* in 2014. His music covers many different styles including pop, R&B and dance and he has been influenced by artists such as Michael Jackson and Prince.

Pharrell Williams

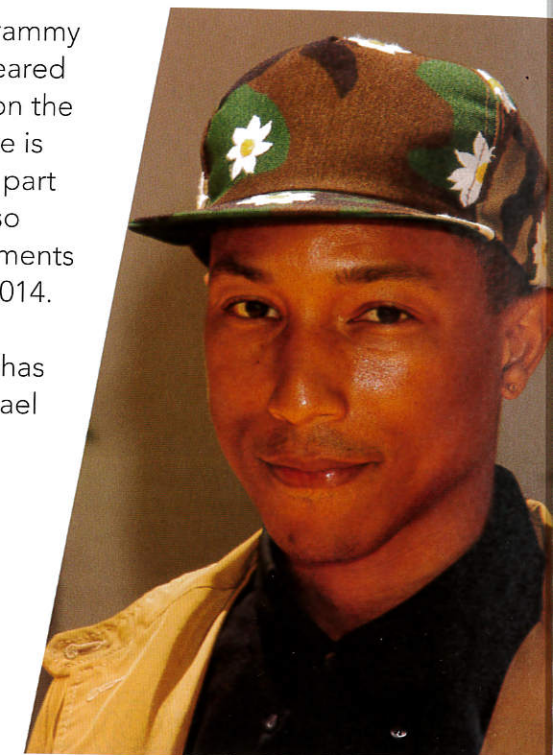
Pharrell Williams is signed to Columbia Records, part of Sony. He works in a range of media forms, produces music for other artists and was a producer for the film *Hidden Figures* in 2016. He can be considered a mainstream artist, perhaps best known for his very successful single

'Happy', which was included on the *Despicable Me 2* soundtrack and won the Academy Award for Best Original Song. Pharrell has the potential to appeal to a wide range of people, beyond a traditional pop music audience. For example, his website includes an article about his residency at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, which might appeal to academics and artists.

Analysing Music Videos

A music video is a 'clip' that usually fits the length of the song, although some have a narrative that begins before the song. It is a commercial product, designed to promote the music, and coincides with the release of the song as a single. It is important that the video captures the key elements of the song, along with the artist's persona, to engage the audience. Many music videos have very large budgets and demonstrate high production values to help sell the product. Exotic settings and special effects are often used to create an aspirational 'fantasy' world.

As a form of advertisement, music videos may be seen as 'disposable' and not intended to last, but they are also media products in their own right, and many are highly creative and artistic. They often use codes and conventions of film and some film directors, such as Michel Gondry, Anton Corbijn and Spike Jonze, began their film careers by directing music videos. There are specific award categories, for example at the Grammys and the MTV Awards, that recognise the artistic achievement of music videos.



Taylor Swift at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards in Los Angeles.

A brief history of the music video

The music video became established as a form in the 1970s, as record companies began to release a visual accompaniment to help promote a new song. Music videos were shown on television programmes such as *Top of the Pops* and became an important part of the marketing and promotion of singles. MTV was launched as a specialist music video channel in 1981, allowing music videos to reach a much wider audience. Now, music videos can reach an even bigger global audience online, through platforms such as YouTube.

Music videos often use cutting-edge technology to create products that look very contemporary at the time they are made, although as time passes these effects can appear 'dated' and old-fashioned. The use of technology adds to the 'aspirational' value of the video as a promotional tool. For example, A-ha combined animation

and live-action footage in the video for 'Take On Me'. This video explores the boundaries between fantasy and reality as the female character imagines that the lead singer comes to life from a cartoon strip.



The 1985 video for A-ha's 'Take On Me'.

Codes and conventions of music videos

Performance

Most music videos, especially mainstream artists' videos, will include an element of performance:

- The singer will usually be filmed **lip-synching** the lyrics; band members might be shown playing instruments.
- The performance might be at a live concert, in a rehearsal room or filmed on location.
- There might also be choreographed dancing, depending on the genre of the music.

This helps to sell the music and establish a connection with the audience.



Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars on a location set in the video for 'Uptown Funk'.

The video for Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in 1975 is considered to be one of the first genuine music videos and used groundbreaking technologies such as a prism camera lens, shown in this still, to create strong visual images.

Quickfire 5.48

What message might the video for 'Take On Me' communicate about the relationship between fans and music artists?

Key Term

Lip-synching

Mouthing or miming lyrics exactly in time to the recorded song in a music video or other performance.

Narrative

Many music videos also have an element of narrative, usually interwoven with performance footage. It is unlikely that a music video will contain a complete narrative due to its length, but there might be elements of narrative or images that communicate stories, themes and messages.

Most music videos show a clear link to the words and ideas in the song in interpretation of the lyrics. Sometimes there will be a literal link between the lyrics and visual images, but it is more usual that the links are metaphorical. In the video for 'Human' by The Killers, for example, the phrase 'cut the cord' is matched to a visual image of an eagle hovering over the desert, connoting a sense of freedom linked to the lyrics.

The video usually reinforces the star persona, the image of the artist designed to appeal to the target audience and promote the artist and their music.

- The artist might appear as a performer (on stage, in the rehearsal room) and/or as a character within the narrative.
- The artist often directly addresses the audience, creating the impression that they are singing directly to the viewer.
- In some music videos the artist or band does not appear. This tends to be the case in independent or alternative videos, where there is less of an emphasis on the star persona.

Technical codes

- There are particular filming conventions in music videos:
- A range of shots is usually used, including multiple close-ups of the artist.
- The video is usually edited to the beat of the music; often fast paced.
- Narrative sequences might use techniques of continuity editing.
- Intertextuality:
 - Artists are often influenced by other musical genres or bands, as well as by other forms of popular culture such as television and film.
 - As music videos are very short products, intertextual references can provide a 'shortcut' to communicate a message quickly and clearly.
 - Music video is also a relatively new media form, so videos often 'borrow' ideas from film or other texts and use them to create something new. Madonna's video for 'Material Girl' in 1985, for example, directly references the film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* from 1953, starring Marilyn Monroe. An audience familiar with Monroe would recognise the physical similarity to Madonna, and those who had seen the film would appreciate the links between 'Material Girl' and the iconic scene where Monroe sings 'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend'. There is a consumerist message in both songs, relating to the value of material possessions, which also reflects the context of each product: the 1950s and 1980s were periods of economic success.



In the Killers' 'Human', the eagle image fits with the setting, and the feathers on Brandon Flowers' jacket also link his persona to the majestic bird of prey.



Top Tip

Use this list of codes and conventions when you analyse the set products.



Quickfire 5.49

How does 'Material Girl' intertextually reference *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*?



Analysing an example: 'Love Story' by Taylor Swift, 2008

'Love Story' is a song about a relationship between a young male and female and references the Shakespeare play, *Romeo and Juliet*, in the lyrics.

The video constructs a 'love story' between two young students and Taylor Swift plays the role of the female character. It juxtaposes a contemporary college setting with a fantasy element set in a castle and garden.

The music video uses expected conventions:

- Swift sings/lip-synchs the lyrics in many sections of the video. She performs from an arch in the castle, part of the 'world' of the narrative, and is dressed in period costume.
- The narrative depicts a recognisable story of two young people falling in love. The setting connotes a sense of the 'fairy tale' romance. We can apply theoretical perspectives on narrative:
 - The reference to the 'prince and princess' in the lyrics is reinforced by the dress codes and behaviour of the characters, and links to Propp's character types of the hero and princess.
 - There is a sense of disruption as the female's father disapproves: an obstacle to be overcome. We do not see any conflict, but the female is alone for much of the video before she is 'rescued' by the man and there is a classic happy ending.
 - There are some binary oppositions, for example the present versus the past, and the young people versus the father. The ending reinforces a message that problems can be resolved and love can conquer all.
- The narrative shows the young female's point of view and the audience is positioned with her character. The lyrics refer to the man 'saving' her from loneliness and proposing marriage, which conforms to stereotypical representations of gender and reinforces the view that women 'need' men. The video upholds traditional values relating to relationships and marriage.
- The lyrics are interpreted quite closely throughout the video and the narrative is very easy to follow. In some cases the lyrics are matched exactly to the image, which communicates the story very clearly and literally. Other images are more metaphorical, for example the close-up shot of Swift picking the fruit, which has connotations of eating forbidden fruit, referencing Eve in the Garden of Eden and suggesting that there is a sexual attraction between the characters.

This image is edited to appear just after Swift sings about going into the garden in 'Love Story'.



Top Tip

Always apply theoretical perspectives on narrative when you analyse the set products. Consider the messages that are communicated through the narrative.

Stretch and Challenge 5.30

How might you apply feminist theoretical perspectives to 'Love Story'?

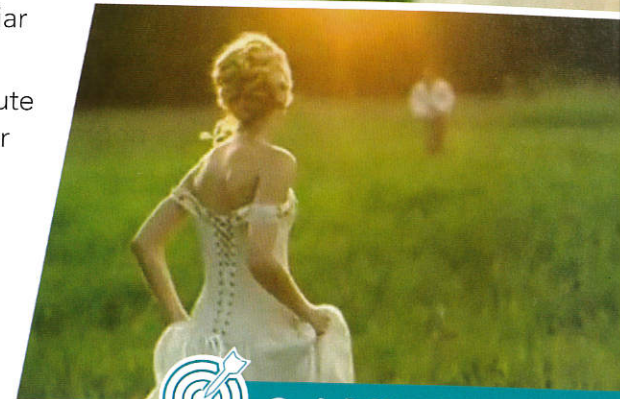
- Taylor Swift's persona is constructed as a relatable 'girl next door' college student at the beginning of the video, which allows her primary target audience of young females to identify with her. The construction of the 'princess character' is more aspirational and creates an image of Swift as a star persona:
 - The framing of her in the arch, backlit by sunlight, connotes that she is an almost angelic presence, and it shows her high status.
 - The hairstyle and dress construct an image of a princess familiar from fairy tales and products such as Disney films.
 - The light colour palette, blonde hair and use of sunlight contribute to the sense of innocence and romance, but the off-the-shoulder dress with laced-up bodice connote a slightly more daring, passionate persona that is reinforced by some of the lyrics. This suggests that Swift is a mature young woman and some of her fans may relate to this more 'grown up' persona.
- Technical codes:
 - There are multiple close-ups of Swift to reinforce her star image. There is direct address to the audience to establish a relationship with the viewer.
 - Some of the shots frame Swift through arches, inviting the audience to look closer.
 - The video is edited in time to the beat. The sequence where 'Romeo' and 'Juliet' run towards each other uses continuity editing to cut between the two characters and increases in pace in time to the music to show their excitement.
- Intertextuality:
 - *Romeo and Juliet* is a very familiar story that has universal appeal.
 - The period costumes, settings and choreography reference the play.
 - The narrative is closely linked as two young lovers are separated by the disapproval of the father, although this version ends happily.
 - The play has influenced many other media products, including the films *West Side Story* and *Warm Bodies*, so the references are very recognisable to a range of audiences.

Exploring Music Videos from the 1980s and 1990s

You will analyse either 'Rio' by Duran Duran or 'Black or White' by Michael Jackson.

Context

The 1980s began with a period of economic instability in Britain and there was high unemployment. From the mid to late 1980s, however, the economy grew and this is often seen as a period of 'excess'. The **yuppie** lifestyle, characterised by wealthy young people with disposable income to spend on luxury goods, became an aspiration. The fashion trends for bright colours, bold patterns and shoulder pads reflected this sense of optimism and confidence.



Quickfire 5.50

Which element of continuity editing is evident in these two shots from 'Love Story'?



Quickfire 5.51

How has Taylor Swift's star persona developed from 'Love Story' to 'Bad Blood'?

Key Term

Yuppie

'Young urban professional' or 'young upwardly mobile professional', a term used in the 1980s to describe a young middle-class person who had achieved financial success and was enjoying material wealth.

Stretch and Challenge 5.31

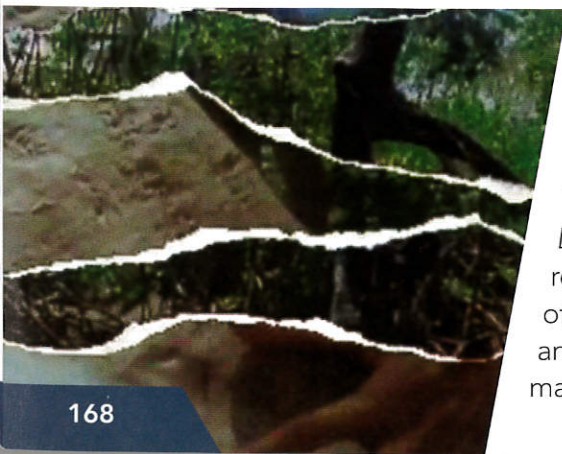
Research the clothing fashions of the 1980s and note how these are evident in the video for 'Rio'.

**Key Term****Synth-pop**

A genre of music that became popular in the 1980s, where a synthesiser is a main instrument.

Quickfire 5.52

How do the page-turning and page-ripping effects in 'Hungry Like the Wolf' communicate messages to the audience?



The feminist movement was developing in society, and women were gaining more power in the workplace, but much of the mainstream media was still creating traditional and stereotypical representations of gender. One of the early Duran Duran videos, 'Girls on Film' from 1981, caused controversy for the sexualised images of women that it featured.

There was also social unrest in Britain the early 1980s, including miners' strikes and riots in Brixton and Toxteth due to the level of racial inequality at the time. In America there was also racial tension. While progress had been made towards equality during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, in the 1980s people from minority ethnic groups tended to have low levels of income and a poorer quality of life, showing that society was not yet integrated.

The set product: 'Rio' by Duran Duran

Duran Duran is a British band who had many big hits in the 1980s, including 'Rio'. Their music had mainstream appeal during this period and can be categorised as the **synth-pop** characteristic of the 'New Romantic' bands. Their early career coincided with the launch of MTV, and music videos were extremely important to their success. Their videos were imaginative and, as their success grew, high budget, and included many techniques that have now become established as video conventions, including narrative sequences, intertextual film references, special effects and exotic locations.

Analysing 'Hungry Like the Wolf' by Duran Duran

The video for this single from the *Rio* album was shot in Sri Lanka and released in 1982. It was directed by Russell Mulcahy, who created many videos for Duran Duran in the 1980s.

'Hungry Like the Wolf' is not the set product that you will need to study for the exam, but the following analysis will help you to understand the conventions used in Duran Duran's videos and the context of the set product, 'Rio'.

Media language

The mise-en-scène of the city, for example the dusty, busy streets, the market, the restaurant, is juxtaposed with the jungle to create an exotic world where the narrative takes place.

The camera work, for example the hand-held camera and tracking shots, immerses the audience in the exciting world of the narrative.

The use of special effects, such as the page-turning and page-ripping effects, shows off the technology available at the time.

There are intertextual references to the Indiana Jones film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which was extremely successful at the time and would have been recognisable to the audience. This gives the music video an additional layer of meaning and appeal to 'sell' the music. Visual references include the hat and clothes Simon Le Bon wears and the protagonists having to overcome many challenges in a hostile environment.

This intertextual reference to Indiana Jones establishes Le Bon as a hero who is rewarded with the 'princess', according to Propp's theory.

The success and 'excess' of the 1980s context is evoked through some shots of the band in bright suits, drinking champagne surrounded by attractive females, connoting the glamour and luxury of the pop stars' celebrity lifestyle.

Theoretical perspectives: representation

The star persona of lead singer Simon Le Bon is constructed to be strong, active and desirable to a young female audience. He is shown swimming in the river through the jungle, connoting fearlessness and independence, stereotypically masculine traits. Other band members have longer hair and in some shots are shown wearing make-up, suggesting that they do not conform to stereotypically 'macho' representations. This reflects changes in society and a move towards less rigid definitions of masculinity and femininity that contemporary audiences will recognise.

Feminist theoretical approaches see that females in the video are mostly passive and often objectified. There are several shots of women's bare legs, for example. The title of the song connotes male desire and, while the female in the jungle shows some strength in fighting, she is ultimately 'captured' by the male who has been 'hunting' her.

The representation of the female character in the jungle is constructed to connote a sense of the 'exotic': she is wearing bright face paint and is framed behind foliage to suggest mystery. She is quite scantily clad, suggesting that she is an object of desire. She is also represented as 'prey', hunted by the male, implying that white men have dominance in society.

There are some further stereotypical representations of ethnicity, for example Sri Lankan children wearing rags running along dusty streets and a woman begging on the roadside, connoting poverty in a developing country. Other characters, however, in the restaurant and market appear to be wealthier, suggesting that the society is socially diverse.

These representations reflect the context of the 1980s where there was less equality in society and therefore gender and ethnic stereotypes were more evident.

'Rio'

The video was also directed by Russell Mulcahy. It was filmed in Antigua and also released in 1982.

The video is typically set in an exotic location and creates a 'fantasy' world where the carefree band members enjoy a luxury lifestyle. It uses many technologies that were cutting edge at the time, including split-screens, filters and overlays. The video is structured as a series of 'moments' of the characters engaging in various activities by the sea, and there is limited sense of a linear narrative.



'Hungry Like the Wolf' intertextually references *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, released in 1981.

**Quickfire 5.53**

Where else in the media might you see representations of poorer people in developing countries?

Activity 5.15

Watch 'Rio', pausing to make notes. Then answer these questions, with examples:

- Describe the mise-en-scène in detail. What do the visual codes say about the world of the video?
- How does the mise-en-scène reflect the context of the 1980s and an 'excessive' celebrity lifestyle?
- What impact do the special effects have?
- Identify intertextual references to Bond films. Why are these used?
- Outline the narrative. Can you identify any of Propp's character types?
- How are representations of males and females constructed? Are stereotypes upheld or subverted?
- Consider whether the female is viewed more as a passive object or active subject in the narrative. Is she sexually objectified?
- How did you respond to the representations? How might an audience in the 1980s have responded differently?



David Naughton and Griffin Dunne in *An American Werewolf in London*.

The video intertextually references James Bond films and represents males as successful and fun-loving with a keen interest in women. The main female is beautiful, exotic and rarely fully clothed. She is clearly an object of desire, but she is not completely passive within the narrative and the males are not completely in control.

The set product: 'Black or White' by Michael Jackson

Michael Jackson was a pop superstar who had a significant influence on music and popular culture. He died in 2009.

He began performing as a child with his brothers in the Jackson Five, before becoming a solo artist. He achieved major critical and commercial success, winning many Grammy awards, and his 1982 album *Thriller* is still the best-selling album in the world, selling over 65 million copies.

His videos were innovative and groundbreaking. Jackson was also a very influential artist in a social context. *Thriller* was important in 'establishing him as a black star who appealed to audiences of all backgrounds and paving the way for future African-American stars'. (telegraph.co.uk/music/artists/michael-jacksons-thriller-pioneering-album-broke-racial-barriers/)

Analysing 'Thriller' by Michael Jackson

'Thriller' is not the set product that you will need to study for the exam, but the following analysis will help you to understand more about Michael Jackson's persona and use of groundbreaking techniques.

The video was directed by John Landis, who had directed the horror film *An American Werewolf in London*, and was released in 1983. It is a 13-minute film that extends beyond the length of the song and uses many techniques from film, which has since become a convention of music videos. 'Thriller' has been copied, parodied and used as a reference many times in media culture and was described by Phil Hebblethwaite in the *Guardian* as 'less a promo clip than a cultural phenomenon'. (theguardian.com/music/2013/nov/21/michael-jackson-thriller-changed-music-videos)

The video was played extensively on MTV and was premiered in the UK on Channel 4. The video had a very high budget and the producers filmed a documentary about the making of 'Thriller' which was released for fans to buy, contributing to the financial success of the project.

Media language

The horror genre was extremely popular in the 1980s and audiences would have recognised familiar codes from films such as *The Fog* and *An American Werewolf in London*. This links to the cultural context and how Jackson was reflecting popular cinema culture of the time.



The horror genre is clearly established through the use of conventions:

- The settings and locations such as the forest, graveyard and isolated haunted house are typical, and recognisable as places of danger.
- Visual codes such as the full moon in the night sky, low-key lighting, shadows and smoke/fog effects, create mystery and menace.
- There are typical horror characters, such as zombies and the werewolf, but also the young couple and the 'innocent' **final girl**.
- Special effects from the horror genre are used, such as the werewolf transformation.
- Tense and dramatic music is used in the narrative sections not accompanied by the 'Thriller' track.
- Vincent Price, a famous horror actor, narrates the section in the middle of the song.

Narrative

There are different narratives within the video, all featuring Michael Jackson:

- The young couple at the start whose car has broken down are characters in a 1950s-style film. The couple watch the film and then encounter the zombies rising from the grave. The girl wakes up from a dream at the end.
- It is not clear which situation is 'real'. There are narratives within narratives, which creates enigma and blurs the boundary between reality and fiction.
- At key points of tension the narrative cuts to a 'safer' place to reassure the audience.
- In relation to Propp's characters, the female is in need of rescue so could fulfil the princess role, while Jackson is the protagonist, a protective boyfriend, or hero. However, he also transforms into a werewolf and a zombie, which suggests the role of the antagonist, or villain.
- There are stylised, choreographed dance sequences, which have become a typical convention of music videos.

The costumes reflect 1980s fashions, especially the young woman's bright blue jumpsuit and Jackson's iconic red leather jacket.

Representation

Michael Jackson's star persona is emphasised.

- He was very well-known for his dancing skill (his 'moonwalk' became particularly famous) and this video showcases his abilities.
- Jackson is usually central in the frame and there are multiple close-ups and low-angle shots to reinforce his star image and appeal to the audience.
- He plays different roles in the narrative: the 1950s college student, the modern-day boyfriend, the werewolf and the star performer. This creates a complex persona: the 'boyfriend' is stereotypically strong and protective, while the werewolf is dangerous. The zombie/werewolf occurs in the 'fantasy' or 'dream' world of the video and the pop-star persona returns at the end, with something of a twist.

The female roles fulfil many stereotypes: sweet, passive, frightened and dependent on males, which reflects the social context at a time when women were still fighting for equality in society.



Key Term

Final girl

A central female character in a horror film who is 'good' – hardworking, responsible, innocent – and survives at the end.



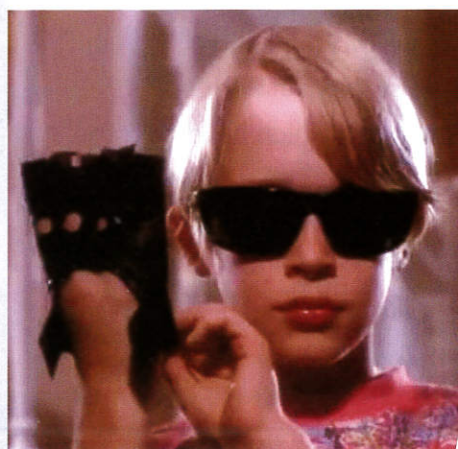
The central characters are black, which shows a positive development in representations of ethnicity in mainstream media products. Michael Jackson was breaking boundaries in the 1980s, especially as his videos became a permanent feature on MTV.

'Black or White'

The video for 'Black and White' was also directed by John Landis and had an extremely large budget of approximately \$4 million. It premiered on Fox Television in the USA, scheduled after an episode of *The Simpsons*, on 14 November 1991. It was also shown on the same day on cable networks MTV, BET (Black Entertainment Television) and VH1 (Video Hits 1) as well as on *Top of the Pops* in the UK. The premiere of the video was a major cultural event, viewed by an estimated audience of 500 million people worldwide.

The video begins with a short narrative sequence starring the young actor Macaulay Culkin, famous at the time for his role in the film *Home Alone*. This has similarities with the beginning of 'Thriller' and reflects Landis's background in film directing.

The main body of the video is constructed as a montage of sequences where Michael Jackson appears in various locations with dancers from different ethnic groups, communicating a message about racial equality.



The video uses many special effects, most notably the 'morphing' technique where one person transforms into another at the end of the video. This technology was relatively new at the time, having been used in the film *Willow* in 1988.

The video originally included a controversial dance sequence after the end of the song where Jackson transformed into a panther. It received negative reviews and audience responses when it aired on American television and the final four-minute sequence was cut from future broadcasts.

Activity 5.16

Watch 'Black or White', pausing in key places, for example in each different location, to make notes. Then answer these questions, giving examples:

- Describe the mise-en-scène in detail. How do the visual codes communicate meanings about the different worlds of the video?
- What impact do the special effects have?
- Outline the structure of the video. Can you identify elements of narrative such as disruptions or oppositions?
- What is Michael Jackson's star persona and how is it established?
- How are representations of different ethnic groups constructed through visual and technical codes? Are stereotypes upheld or subverted?
- What messages are communicated? How do they reflect the social context of the early 1990s?
- How did you respond to the video? How might an audience in the 1990s have responded?

Representation in Music Videos

Gender representation: females

Music videos often feature quite stereotypical representations of gender, and some genres, such as rap, have been criticised for constructing sexually objectified images of females. The focus on constructing a star persona results in many close-up camera shots on the artist's, and other actors', faces, and other parts of their bodies, to create an image that will 'sell' the music. Saul Austerlitz argues in his book *Money for Nothing* (Bloomsbury/Continuum, 2006) that women are usually represented as fantasy objects: 'Music videos, for the most part, are intended for men's eyes, providing them with endless opportunities to delectate in the spectacle of beautiful women performing for their pleasure.' Music artists have large fan bases and are potentially influential as role models, so it is important to consider the messages and values communicated through the representations in their music videos.

Applying feminist theoretical perspectives

Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory argues that, in film, the female is represented as a passive object of desire, to be looked at by a male character or spectator. This can also apply to music videos. The male gaze can be shown through the use of the camera, for example by using a male point of view or close-up shots of women's bodies. Dress codes can also suggest that a female is objectified. Revealing or tight-fitting clothing might 'sexualise' a character.

The Male Gaze theory can be applied to the music video for 'Rio'. Many shots objectify the female by showing fragments of her body in a sexualised way to construct her as a fantasy object of desire for a male audience. She does have considerable power in the video, however, and is shown to outwit and make fun of the males, as she, for example, catches one band member in a fishing net. This possibly reflects the fact that women were gaining more power in society in the 1980s.

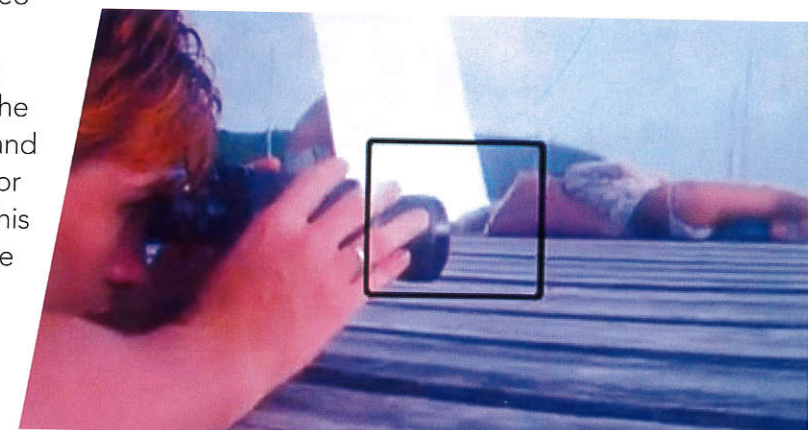
The video for 'Uptown Funk' also upholds many gender stereotypes. The video begins, with similar images to 'Rio', with a tracking shot of bare female legs. The male performers, especially Bruno Mars, are constructed as dominant, high-status stars and the females in the video are seen through their eyes. At the beginning of the video a woman in high heels and low-cut short dress walks across the frame, objectified by Mars' gaze in the background. She plays no role in the narrative.

There is also a sequence where Mars and Mark Ronson appear next to an older female in a hair salon. They wear curlers and use stylised feminine gestures. This suggests that they are either making fun of women or do not take their star personas too seriously, which might reflect the breaking down of gender barriers in recent years.



Quickfire 5.54

How does this image from 'Rio' fit with the Male Gaze theory?



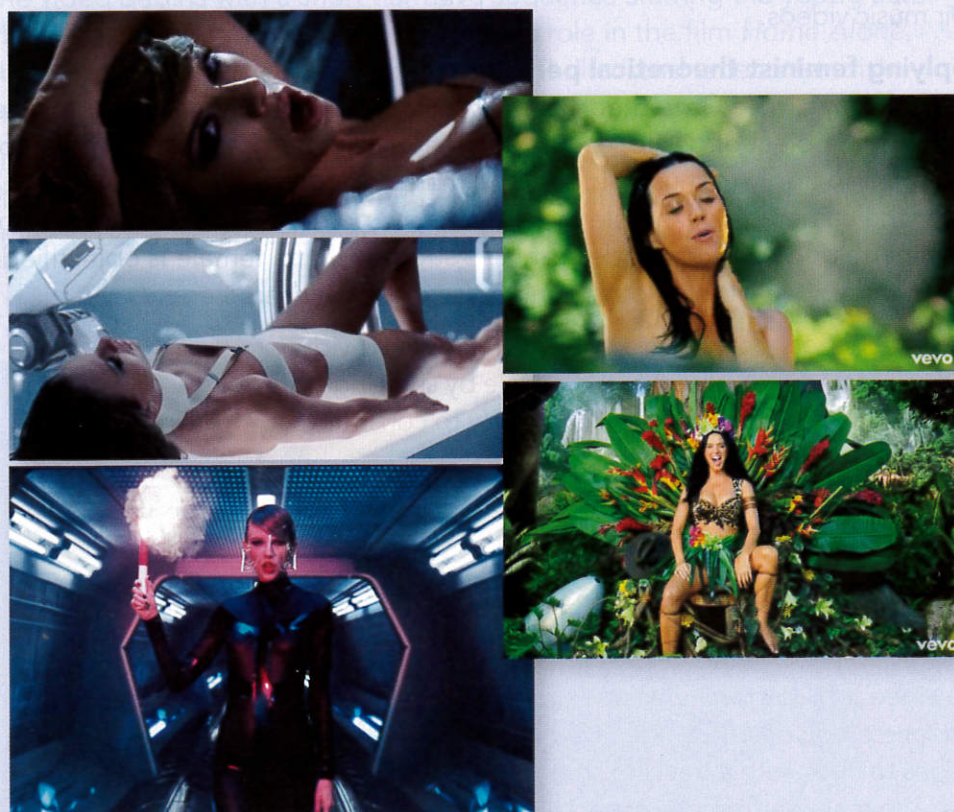
Bruno Mars demonstrates an exaggerated feminine 'pout' in this close-up.

The set products by contemporary female artists, 'Bad Blood' and 'Roar', are interesting because both construct representations of strong, independent females, demonstrating the fact that these are two very successful female stars with strong personalities. Swift and Perry are shown to be in control of the narrative and do not rely on men, which subverts many female stereotypes. The artists are arguably also objectified, however, which reinforces feminist perspectives that gender equality is not fully established within the mainstream media.

Activity 5.17

Watch 'Bad Blood' or 'Roar'. In 'Bad Blood', Taylor Swift plays many different roles that resemble characters from action films. In 'Roar', Katy Perry plays one character that develops as the narrative progresses.

Use the images below as a starting point and complete the following tasks.



Make detailed notes on the following visual codes:

- Costume, hair and make-up
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Colour and lighting
- How are these elements used to construct the representation of the star persona?
- Note examples of the following types of camera shot:
- Close-ups on the artist's face
- Shots of different parts of the female's body.

Does the combination of visual and technical codes suggest that the female is sexually objectified? How?

Write a detailed paragraph about the representation of the female star, applying feminist perspectives.

Representation of ethnicity

Popular music is created by artists from different ethnic backgrounds and many black artists, for example, achieved great success in the industry throughout the 20th century. In the early 1980s, however, MTV attracted criticism for playing very few videos by black artists. This reflected the under-representation of people from black and minority ethnic groups in many media industries at the time. It has been argued that Michael Jackson brought about a change when videos such as 'Billie Jean' and 'Thriller' were regularly played on MTV. Later in the 1980s, videos by black rap and hip-hop artists became a popular feature of the channel and a wider range of representations has been in evidence since.

The video for 'Black or White' presents the issue of racial discrimination and promotes a positive message about equality, reflecting the lyrics. The sequences of Jackson appearing with different ethnic groups, such as Native American, Russian and Thai dancers, suggest that music and dance can break down barriers and unite people. The lyric 'I'm not gonna spend my life being a colour' reinforces the point of view that skin colour should not define a person and this message is further supported at the end of the video when a wide range of people are featured 'morphing' into each other, connoting that we are all the same, regardless of our ethnicity.

Contemporary music videos encompass a diverse range of ethnicities and there are some interesting representations to explore in the set products. White ethnicity, for example, is constructed in 'Roar' through the patriarchal male who fails to survive in the jungle and the resourceful female who succeeds in taming the wild animals, but there is an absence of people from other ethnic groups. 'Bad Blood' juxtaposes the representation of Swift as a blonde-haired white female star with Kendrick Lamar as the black rapper, dressed in black with dark glasses and baseball cap. There are perhaps some stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities, for example in Arsyn, played by Selina Gomez, as the antagonist.

In 'Uptown Funk', the male performers, who are from different ethnic backgrounds, demonstrate a clear sexual interest in females, which upholds a masculine stereotype, particularly of Latin and African American men. Bruno Mars is an American artist whose father is Puerto Rican. *Latina* magazine recently stated that Mars is 'embracing the Latin Lover archetype' (*Latina*, February 2017). The video is set in an urban location and many of the characters are from ethnic minorities, although the shoe-shine men are older white males in a very low-status role, which subverts expectations and stereotypes.



Quickfire 5.55

Watch 'Black or White'. What is the connotation of the image at the end of the video of the black and white babies sitting together on the Earth?



Quickfire 5.56

How might the representations of Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar in 'Bad Blood' appeal to different audiences?



Quickfire 5.57

How do the technical and visual codes in this image from 'Uptown Funk' construct the male representations?



The video for Pharrell Williams' 'Freedom' represents many different situations, social groups and creatures in the wild to communicate a message that everyone has a right to freedom. Many of the images show ethnic minorities in positive situations, and Williams is a strong and empowering presence throughout the video.

Other scenes, however, show minority groups being oppressed in order to convey the key messages and values of the song. The sequence where black males are breaking stones shows what people still face in some countries and has connotations of the historical slave trade and 'chain gangs' for example, while the factory scene references contemporary 'sweat shops'.

Quickfire 5.58

What polysemic meanings can you identify in these images from the 'Freedom' video?

Stretch and Challenge 5.32

Can you identify any influences from older music videos on the contemporary products?

Analysing the Contemporary Set Music Videos

You will need to analyse the media language and representations in the set music videos that you are studying and consider how these may appeal to audiences. You can use the list of codes and conventions on pages 164–165 to structure your analysis. When analysing contemporary videos, compare them with the older example you study, identifying similarities and differences in:

- the codes and conventions of music videos, for example:
 - use of the camera and editing
 - performance and/or narrative
 - intertextuality
- the use of technology
- representations of gender, ethnicity or issues
- the way in which the video reflects its contexts.

You will also need to study industry and audience in relation to the contemporary music videos by, for example, considering how the videos target an audience and how audiences respond to them.

Contemporary contexts

Consider the ways in which the products by the contemporary artists you study reflect the context in which they were made.

Social contexts

Society is now more equal than it was in the past. There are laws in Britain, for example, to prevent discrimination against people in relation to their age, ethnicity or gender. However, there are areas where progress still needs to be made. In some industries, women do not yet receive the same level of pay as men.

The issue of gender equality in the Hollywood film industry has recently been the subject of attention, not only in relation to equal career opportunities and pay for women, but also from the accusations that some powerful men in the industry have sexually assaulted women. This highlights that some areas of society are still male dominated, and that some individuals might abuse the power they have, although there is a hope that the film industry will become a more equal one as a result of these revelations.

There are also issues relating to racial equality in society. For example:

- A report published in 2016 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission showed that, while progress had been made, there was still racial inequality in Britain and that people from ethnic minorities were more likely to live in poverty and less likely to achieve a position of power within the workplace.
- There is a concern that Brexit might result in further racial discrimination in Britain. Immigration had been a focus for much of the referendum campaign and there was an increase in cases of racial abuse being reported following the referendum.
- In the USA, and to a lesser degree in the UK, the Black Lives Matter movement has developed to campaign against police brutality towards black people.

Social inequality is a global issue, as many people worldwide live in poverty. In Britain, issues such as zero-hours contracts and changes to the welfare system in recent years have impacted on people's quality of life. The use of 'sweat shops' in countries such as China and India, where factory workers work very long hours for extremely low pay, concerns many people. These countries supply low-priced products such as clothing and electronic goods to overseas markets, so this is a global economic issue.

Cultural contexts

There is increased hybridity in many areas of popular culture, such as film and music, and many older, 'retro' styles have influenced contemporary artists in recent years. This is also evident in fashion, as versions of clothing trends from the 1970s and 1980s have become popular again.

Popular culture also reflects social change. Mainstream films, for example, are now more likely to feature a female action hero than in the past.

Technology contributes to the cultural framework of media products such as music:

- Although audiences can stream and download music legally, there is still a potential threat to the music industry through illegal downloading, which many artists are working to prevent.
- Modern media makes stars seem much more accessible than used to be the case. 'Gossip' magazines have always featured stories about artists' lives, but this is added to by aspects of modern living, such as stars including personal posts on social media. These make audiences feel closer to these artists, as though they 'know' them.

'Roar' by Katy Perry

The video for 'Roar' makes use of CGI technology and intertextually references films such as *Tarzan* and *The Jungle Book*. The linear narrative conveys a clear message about female empowerment as Perry's character leaves behind a domineering male and takes control of her destiny. Lyrics such as 'I am a champion' are illustrated with images of Perry taming wild animals, and humour is created through visual codes such as the 'Katy Perry' tag. It has been suggested that the video is partly autobiographical as Perry had recently split from her husband, a story much covered in the media.

The video was extremely popular and had over 2.3 billion views on YouTube by January 2018; the eleventh most viewed on the site.

An anti-racism rally in London in 2016.

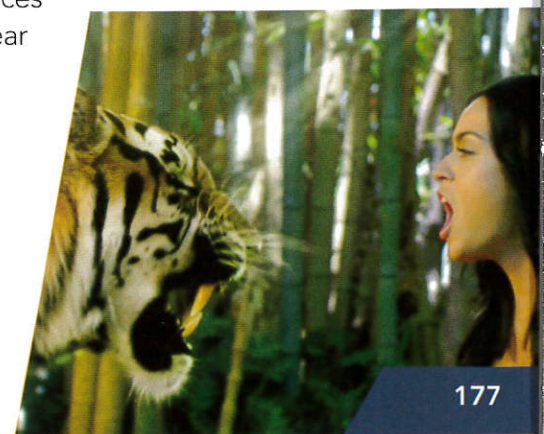


Top Tip

Make notes on the way in which the contemporary products you study reflect their social context. Not all of the social issues listed relate to every product, but think about which ones apply.

Top Tip

Make notes on how the contemporary music videos you study use hybridity and/or 'retro' influences.



Top Tip

Make detailed notes on the ways in which each music video targets and appeals to the artist's audience.

'Bad Blood' by Taylor Swift

The song features hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar, showing how music genres can be hybridised and how artists broaden their audience by working with different performers. The collaboration with Lamar, who works in a very different genre from Swift's earlier country-influenced pop music, arguably widens each artist's appeal and is mutually beneficial. Directed by Joseph Kahn, the video has had over 1 billion views on YouTube and won the best music video Grammy in 2015.

The video stars some very high-profile female performers, such as Jessica Alba and Ellie Goulding. This reinforces Swift's elite persona as she can attract such stars to her project. This will also appeal to fans of the other stars and potentially introduce Swift to new audiences.

The video has very high production values and is constructed as a mini-film with captions that mirror film credits. There is a clear narrative, interspersed with performance, and Swift fulfils the role of action heroine assisted by a range of character types. There are many intertextual references to comic-book action films, in particular *Sin City*, which offer gratifications to fans of this genre.



Mark Ronson on stage at the Dcode music festival in Madrid.

'Uptown Funk' by Mark Ronson, featuring Bruno Mars

The song was released as a single featuring Bruno Mars by Mark Ronson, a DJ and record producer who is known for collaborations with artists such as Amy Winehouse. Ronson is signed to Columbia Records, a subsidiary of Sony Music, and so the song was released on this label. It also appeared on his album *Uptown Special*. Sony described the song as having a 'fresh new retro sound', influenced by funk and R&B artists of the 1980s.

The video was released in 2014 and stars Bruno Mars, Mark Ronson and Mars' backing band, The Hooligans. 'Uptown Funk' is a performance-based video filmed in a city location and the stylish choreographed dance sequences reference artists such as the Jackson Five. The video has high production values and the mise-en-scène also creates a 'retro' feel through the costumes, settings and props. This combination of factors potentially attracts an audience of fans of both Mars and Ronson, as well as people who enjoy the older styles that are intertextually referenced.

Examples of audience responses

The song and video were phenomenally successful and gained positive critical responses:

- The song became the fifth best-selling single of all time in Britain in 2015 and achieved a Diamond Award from the Recording Industry Association of America for over 10 million sales and streams. 'Uptown Funk' also won Record of the Year at the 2016 Grammy Awards and Best British Single of the year at the 2015 Brit Awards.
- The video won the MTV Video Music Award for Video of the year and has had over 2.8 billion views on YouTube as of January 2018. It is the fifth most viewed video on the site.

Top Tip

Note down examples of how elements of media language construct the 'retro' world of the 'Uptown Funk' video.

The video for 'Uptown Funk' was released on YouTube in November 2014 and it was widely reported that the record was due for release in January 2015. However, a performance of the song by a contestant on *The X Factor* in early December gained an extremely positive response and this version of the song went to number one in the iTunes chart. The record release was then brought forward and Ronson and Mars topped the charts. As both Simon Cowell's record label Syco and Mark Ronson's label Columbia are part of Sony, this can be seen as a commercial success for the organisation and an example of the benefits of horizontal integration.

Audience responses to the song included model and actress Cara Delevigne posting a video on Instagram of friends performing the track at Thanksgiving, which received over 270 000 likes. This type of post can act like a celebrity endorsement and allow the product to reach a wider audience.

The song was also received positively by other musicians. Chilly Gonzales, for example, said, 'We have a mix of the old, the new, the modern and the classic. And that's why I love "Uptown Funk".' (bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/30900427/why-does-everyone-love-mark-ronsons-uptown-funk) This also adds to the status of a product and might encourage more people to buy it.

There were many online responses from fans too, including cover versions of the song and video that were posted on YouTube. Mark Ronson clearly sees this as a positive response to his music and commented, 'That's when you know that something has resonated with people.' (youtube.com/watch?v=C2THq4UG_Eg) He later collaborated with six of these YouTubers to create his own cover version of the song, which shows how audiences can become active participants and create media products themselves.

'Freedom' by Pharrell Williams

The song 'Freedom' features on the soundtrack for *Despicable Me 3* (Williams composed other songs, including 'Happy', for *Despicable Me 2*). The video for 'Freedom' was released on Apple Music on 30 June 2015 and launched on YouTube some weeks later. It was directed by Paul Hunter, who has also directed music videos for artists such as Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake.

The video is a montage of images that all relate to the central message of the song: freedom. There are many shots of animals and birds in the wild to connote a free life, juxtaposed with footage of humans freely expressing themselves, for example in church. There are also many references to slavery and a lack of freedom which act as a binary opposition. Williams features throughout the video as a star presence, but he is dressed simply in jeans and a shirt and performs the song in a heartfelt manner to convey the seriousness of the issue. This contrasts with previous videos such as 'Happy', where he dances and is dressed stylishly and colourfully to reflect the different mood of the song.



A scene of free expression from the video 'Freedom'.

Top Tip

Find other examples of audience responses to 'Uptown Funk'.

Quickfire 5.59

What are the benefits to audiences and industries from this type of collaboration between an artist and their audience?

Quickfire 5.60

What are the benefits of a song being used on a film soundtrack?

Online Media: Analysing Websites

A website is an important platform in the contemporary music industry. Each of the contemporary set artists has a website that reinforces their star persona, or brand image, and ensures that they can reach a wide global audience. The record company is able to use an artist's website to promote the latest single or album and associated products such as merchandise and tour tickets. This is extremely important as the industry is competitive and artists' work needs to generate a profit. Most websites are regularly updated and rebranded to reflect the current image of the star and their music.

Websites use convergence to bring together the different aspects of an artist's work, for example the music and the videos, as well as other projects such as films or charity work that the star may be involved with. This also potentially offers opportunities for synergy with other parts of the media conglomerate.

The website is likely to offer interactive features and links to download or streaming sites where audiences can listen to and/or purchase the music, increasing the potential for audience contact and commercial success.

The importance of social media

Websites will also include links to the artist's social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, offering audiences the opportunity to respond and interact by following their favourite artists. The artists' social media accounts are usually carefully managed by the record company. Katy Perry, for example, releases tweets on most days.

Social media has become increasingly important in recent years, as artists can connect with listeners, and fans can receive frequent updates from the stars they admire. This symbiotic relationship benefits the industry and the audience: the record company can

gain greater brand loyalty, promote the artist's music and potentially attract new listeners through audience 'likes' and 'shares'; while audiences feel part of a community, identify with the artist and interact with other fans. Kate Franklin of Brandwatch has summarised the benefits of social media for music audiences: 'Social media is where music audiences naturally congregate, forming their own communities and sharing their experiences of bands and artists.' (brandwatch.com/blog/social-media-the-music-industry/)

Artists' websites and social media accounts also reflect the social and cultural contexts in which they are produced. Current clothing trends might be shown, for example, or artists might reference other creative products such as films that influence or interest them. Many artists are involved with charities, so stories or comments about this work can reveal issues in society at the time. The website might refer to contextual issues in the music industry, for example by encouraging fans to download music legally.

Top Tip

Make a list of the ways in which the artists' websites show convergence of different types of media product.

Stretch and Challenge 5.33

Visit the websites for the set artists and look for examples of synergy, for example with a television programme or film produced by the same media organisation.



Katy Perry's Twitter page from 2013.

Quickfire 5.61

How does the Uses and Gratifications theory apply to the music industry and social media?

Codes and conventions of music websites

The homepage usually has a menu that links to other pages, including:

- News
- Biographical information
- Music and videos
- Tour details
- Store/merchandise. Some artists also have a range of their own products, for example Katy Perry's cosmetics collections.

The layout and design of the website usually includes:

- a clear 'house style' with consistent use of colour palette, font and so on
- branding of the latest single or album release, with images and information about the music and promotional performances.

In January 2018 Bruno Mars' website constructed a house style through a colour palette of black, white and gold, connoting high production values. The new single, 'Finesse', was promoted through a looped extract from the video and audiences were invited to 'Watch Finesse. Download or Stream. Buy 24K Magic. See Bruno on Tour'.

Typically, an artist's star persona is clearly established online through:

- images of the star
- videos, including personal posts that give fans 'exclusive insights'
- quotes from the star or blog entries
- news items, for example showing the star winning an award or undertaking charity work

The 'Photos' page of Katy Perry's website includes a range of images to portray different aspects of her identity such as:

- her glamorous onstage persona that fans admire and might aspire to.
- Perry as an 'ordinary' person away from the music that fans can identify with.

The website usually promotes the music and encourages interactivity and purchases, for example:

- Images and the music video for the latest release of the music
- Opportunities to listen to clips from songs and links to streaming and/or downloading sites where listeners can make a purchase
- A store page selling CDs and official merchandise such as clothing and other collectible items
- Links to a ticket agency where fans can buy tour tickets
- Links to the artist's social media pages.



Stretch and Challenge 5.34

How do the examples from artists' websites and social media that you have studied reflect their cultural context?



Top Tip

Identify all of the opportunities for audiences to interact with the websites that you study.



Top Tip

Make notes on how each artist is represented on their website and then think about how this star persona is similar to, or different from, the image constructed in the set music video.



Top Tip

Analyse the pages from the contemporary artists' websites selected by your teacher, using the list of codes and conventions. Note the ways in which the websites follow, or subvert, conventions.

Stretch and Challenge 5.35

Study the artists' websites at different points through your course and note how the site is updated to reflect the latest single or album releases.

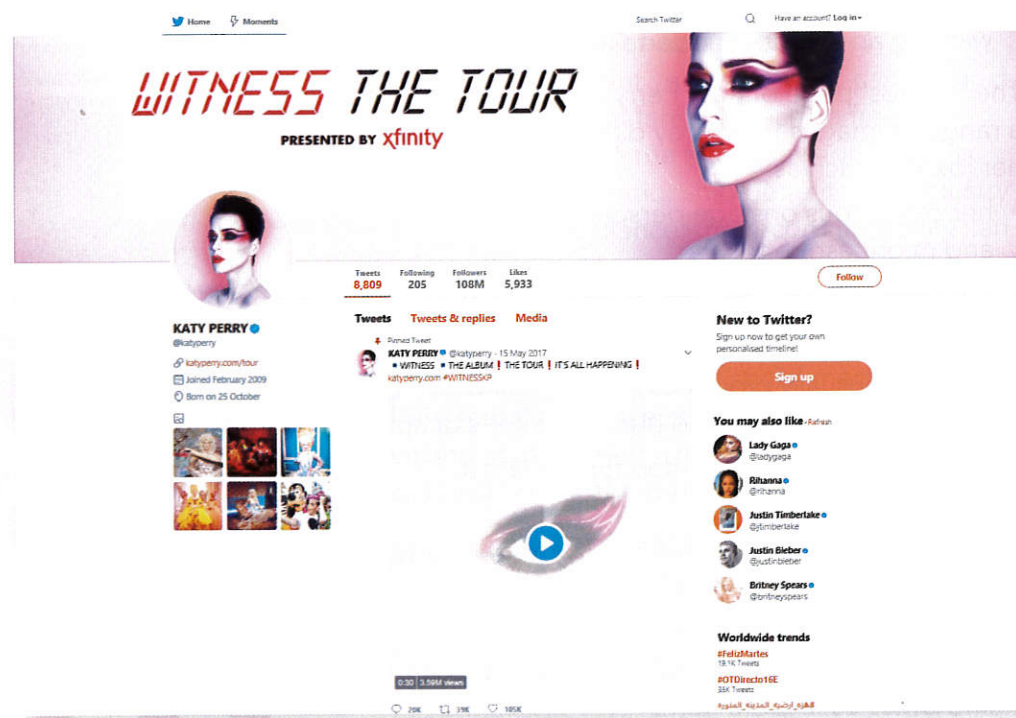
Pharrell Williams' website includes a link to his separate 'I am Other' site. This reinforces his persona as an acclaimed and versatile artist who works in different forms and collaborates with other artists.

An example of how Katy Perry uses social media to engage audiences

Perry's Twitter page of January 2018 is branded to match her latest album and tour and her image is quite androgynous. Her short hair and bright, stylised make-up create a striking image reminiscent of 1980s popular culture. The tour is currently the main selling point, as the album was released in 2017.

The pinned tweet from May 2017 reinforces the branding and shows how this has been extended over a long period of time:

- '*Witness* The album! The Tour! It's all Happening!': the latest album is the main focus, showing a commercial imperative to sell the product.
- The use of the eye, the logo for the album, links to the idea of being a witness and seeing what is happening in the world.
- Exclamation marks create an engaging sense of immediacy. Perry is constructed as a current, dynamic artist who is making things happen.
- The link to the website and the hashtag invite fans to engage further.
- The pinned tweet includes an embedded trailer for the tour featuring live footage from previous concerts, including theatrical performances of her most famous hits such as 'Roar' and 'Firework' to appeal to long-standing fans. The image at the beginning and end references the current album and the trailer ends with a clip from 'Chained to the Rhythm' from her latest album. This creates a strong sense of branding for the new work and might appeal to new audiences as well as existing fans.



The 'Holidays are over' tweet from 13 January 2018 includes an embedded video clip of Katy Perry visiting charitable organisations that she supports, such as the Boys and Girls Club of America:

- The clip includes footage of Perry dancing with the children and a young fan explaining why 'Firework' inspired her.
- This demonstrates the charitable work that many major stars undertake and gives a social context.
- It also creates a very positive representation of the artist as a 'real' person away from her music.
- The end of the video offers audiences the opportunity to interact further by watching the full video, while the inclusion of the charities' Twitter handles encourages users to find out more about the organisations.
- Fans have also commented, shared and 'liked' the Tweet, which potentially increases the reach of Katy Perry to a wider audience.

An example of a social media marketing campaign: Taylor Swift

In 2017 Taylor Swift released *Reputation*, and her image was rebranded. The slogan posted on her new website and social media sites was, 'The old Taylor Swift can't come to the phone right now.' This communicates a clear message that the star persona has been reinvented and that she has left behind her 'old' image.

Taylor Swift removed all posts from her social media pages in August 2017, resulting in speculation in the media that she was about to release a new album. She then began to post again, including three short videos of snake imagery on her Instagram and Twitter accounts. This created an enigma and generated a great deal of discussion on social media and in the news. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, ran an article speculating about the meaning of the videos. This shows that music artists use similar viral techniques to film companies to create interest in a product: in this case a 'buzz' was created around the upcoming release of her new album.

Swift's social media pages became a marketing vehicle for the new album. Her Instagram account featured:

- video clips of the new songs
- branding for the new album including a UPS delivery truck featuring *Reputation* artwork (UPS was the official delivery partner for the album)
- the front cover of *Vogue* magazine featuring Swift
- reviews of the album and statistics about sales
- some personal videos, such as Swift with her cat, but mainly posts relating to the new music.



Quickfire 5.62

How might Katy Perry's Twitter account generate different audience responses? For example, how might a fan respond compared with someone who is not familiar with the music?



Taylor Swift's Twitter page in 2014.



Quickfire 5.63

How does Taylor Swift's new Twitter page differ from the old version, and what message does this communicate?



Quickfire 5.64

Why do artists include personal posts on social media?

Taylor Swift is known for her online and in-person interactions with audiences. The 'Secret Sessions' footage posted on her Instagram page, for example, shows her playing her new album to fans from around the world before it was released. This 'exclusive insight' and opportunity to meet Swift generated a very positive response from her fans, who are shown to be excited and share enthusiastic comments about the new music. This type of activity encourages loyalty to an artist and helps to promote the music as the fans 'spread the word' among their friends and on social media.

The marketing campaign was clearly successful: *Reputation* became the biggest-selling album of the year in America in just its first week of release.



An example of how an audience plays an active role: Pharrell Williams

Pharrell Williams' website – as of April 2018 – is quite unconventional as there is a loading page before the main homepage. This almost-empty page features a small image of Williams and the instruction, 'Discover Pharrell's world through his fans'. This offers audiences a different experience from most websites, which are constructed by media producers to prioritise the latest commercial products: album, tour, merchandise and so on.

The design of the homepage features a montage of images, or 'cards', written and

5.65 Williams' with the United at the social work?



selected by fans relating to different areas with which Pharrell is involved, such as 'Music', 'TV & Film' and 'Social Good'. Audiences can select the areas they wish to explore and are able to create their own cards for the website if they wish. This engages audiences in an interactive experience and they can also become active participants and creators of media content. The pages do include many of the expected features of a website, for example the 'Music' section, which includes a 'behind the scenes' video about the making of 'Freedom'.

5.66 Behind the about the freedom' and about the process.



In 2015 Williams worked with the United Nations for the International Day of Happiness and audiences were invited to submit short video clips of themselves dancing to Williams' song 'Happy'. They also signed a 'Live Earth' petition to campaign for action on climate change. These videos are featured on the website and show how audiences have responded to Williams and supported the causes he is involved with. It also demonstrates his high status, as he worked with a major international organisation.

5.66 Different respond to Pharrell site?



Although Williams is signed to a major label, his website is quite unconventional and does not simply promote his latest album release, which shows that he has been able to create a more personal, alternative product. The fans select the cards that appear on the website, but they are only able to choose from specific categories, so the media producers control the main content of the site.